

POGBA ON A PILGRIMAGE

The world's most expensive footballer Paul Pogba has posted pictures of himself at the holiest site of Islam, days after helping Manchester United to victory in the Europa League final. He also issued greetings for the Muslim holy fasting month of Ramadan, which began on Saturday. On Instagram, the Frenchman posted a photo of himself standing in front of the Kaaba, a black cube towards which Muslims turn for their five daily prayers. "Most beautiful thing I've seen in my life," wrote Pogba, shown wearing the white cloth of Muslims performing umrah, the lesser pilgrimage which is popular during Ramadan. "Ramadan Kareem bon Ramadan #makkah #blessed", Pogba, 24, wrote on his Twitter account where he posted a selfie of himself in front of the throng surrounding the Kaaba. The midfielder was transferred for more than £89.3 million in August 2016 from Italian club Juventus. FIFA are to investigate the transfer, a source at world football's governing body told AFP this month. —AFP



Novak Djokovic of Serbia hits a forehand return against Spain's Marcel Granollers during their French Open first round match at the Roland Garros in Paris yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

ASIA CUP PRELIMINARY SQUAD

Four seniors snubbed

SPORTS REPORTER



The Bangladesh Hockey Federation (BHF) announced a 40-member preliminary squad yesterday for the upcoming Asia Cup with the exclusion of four senior players - forward Rasel Mahmud Jimmy, midfielder Kamruzzaman Rana, forward Krishna Kumar and defender Imran Hasan Pintoo.

Those four players were a part of the 18-member squad that played in the Hockey World League (HWL) Round-2 in Dhaka in March this year where the hosts finished fifth. Jimmy was not considered on disciplinary grounds while the other three paid for their poor performances in the HWL.

"Actually Jimmy has not been dropped from the squad; rather he is not in the squad due to disciplinary issues," said chief selector Kamrul Hasan Kismat when contacted. "We will sit with the coach [Oliver Kurtz] and [general secretary Abdus] Sadeque bhai to solve the Jimmy issue. Bangladesh needs Jimmy in the Asia Cup which is a big tournament for us. There is no doubt that he is an important player."

Jimmy was recommended for a three year suspension from the national team by a

BHF probe committee on disciplinary grounds during the HWL Round-2.

When explaining the rationale behind the exclusion of Rana, Krishna and Pintoo Kismat said, "They were supposed to be dropped from the squad before the HWL due to their poor form. You saw how poorly they played in that tournament. Our target was to beat Oman but we lost to them."

"Besides, they have been playing for a long time and it is time to give room to new players ahead of a busy season. However, we don't have anything against those three players."

Interestingly however, the selection committee kept Sarwar Hossain in the preliminary squad despite the fact that the midfielder was suspended for two international matches during the HWL.

On the other hand, two senior strikers - Pushkor Khisa Mimo and Hasan Jubair Niloy, who were not in that squad - have been recalled following their brilliant performances in the just-concluded National Hockey Championship. In addition, five other players have been called up for the national team camp for the first time.

The selected players have been asked to report to Mahbul Ehsan Rana, the national team's coordinator, on June 2, the day when the camp will get underway at the Maulana Bhasani Hockey Stadium.

QUICK SINGLES

The following are a few samples of stories that did not make the print edition. However, if they pique your interest, you can always read them online on The Daily Star website by simply scanning the QR codes listed below:

Indian government rejects Pakistan cricket series

India ruled out any cricket series against Pakistan until "cross-border terrorism" stops. The Indian and Pakistani cricket boards are scheduled to meet in Dubai to discuss a possible bilateral series.



South Africa pursue great obsession

South Africa's quest for a major international cricket trophy has become enough of an obsession for star batsman and one-day international captain AB de Villiers to put his Test career on hold.



Four killed, dozens injured at Honduran soccer match

At least four people died and dozens were injured in a stampede when hundreds of fans tried to break past barricades to get into a national soccer final match in the Honduran capital.



'LOSERS TRAIN' BREAKS DOWN

A high-speed overnight train whisking 800 Angers fans home to Brittany after their last-gasp own-goal 1-0 French Cup final defeat to Paris Saint Germain instead broke down and stopped for four hours.



Nadal, Djokovic cruise

AFP, Paris



Rafael Nadal launched his pursuit of a record 10th French Open title in convincing fashion, while defending champion Novak Djokovic eased to victory under the gaze of new coach Andre Agassi.

Reigning women's champion Garbine Muguruza began her Roland Garros defence with a straight-sets triumph over 2010 winner Francesca Schiavone.

Nadal, who was forced to withdraw before last year's third round with a wrist injury, brushed aside 45th-ranked Benoît Paire 6-1, 6-4, 6-1 inside two hours.

"I'm very happy to be back here after what happened last year. It's great to feel the support," said the 14-time major champion.

Nadal broke Paire eight times and recovered from a slight second-set wobble when he dropped serve twice in a row to surge into a round two meeting with Dutchman Robin Haase.

"It's always at the start, happy for the victory. Was not an easy opponent in the first round, obviously. He's an uncomfortable opponent that already he had some good victories this year," added Nadal.

Title-holder Djokovic strolled through his opener against Marcel Granollers of

Spain, advancing 6-3, 6-4, 6-2.

With 1999 French Open champion Agassi in the players box for the first time after agreeing a short-term coaching role, Djokovic experienced some trouble against the world number 77, being broken four times.

"It's great to have Andre Agassi as coach and as a mentor. I will try to learn as much as I can from him," said Djokovic.

The Serb, seeking to become the first man in the Open era to win all four majors on at least two occasions, will take on Portugal's Joao Sousa next.

Muguruza's middling form this season saw her arrive in Paris with just three wins on clay, but the Spaniard dispatched former Paris champion Schiavone 6-2, 6-4.

The fourth seed will meet Estonia's Anett Kontaveit for a place in round three as Schiavone, who turns 37 in June, bid farewell to the tournament for possibly the final time.

"I cannot believe in the first round we have two ex-champions. Not only that but Francesca is a legend and I was very excited to play on Philippe Chatrier court with her," said Muguruza.

"I know I played good here before. That doesn't make me extra confident this year. I think I just have to earn that confidence here, and, like today, going out there, trying to deal with things. That's what brings me confidence. Not

remembering how I played last year."

Muguruza defeated Serena Williams to win her maiden Grand Slam a year ago, but the 23-year-old needs to return to the final to stay in the world's top 10.

Canadian fifth seed Milos Raonic raced into round two with a routine 6-3, 6-4, 6-2 victory over Steve Darcis of Belgium.

Raonic, whose best run at the French Open came when he made the 2014 quarterfinals, fired 15 aces and 44 winners to book a meeting with Mikhail Youzhny of Russia or Brazil's Rogerio Dutra Silva.

Former US Open champion Marin Cilic and Belgian 10th seed David Goffin also progressed, but American 14th seed Jack Sock was blown away in three sets by towering Czech left-hander Jiri Vesely.

Rising German star Alexander Zverev, seeded ninth, begins his campaign against veteran Spaniard Fernando Verdasco later.

The 20-year-old Zverev defeated Djokovic in Rome a week ago to become the first player born in the 1990s to land a Masters title.

Jelena Jankovic's 54th consecutive Grand Slam maiden draw appearance was a fleeting one as the three-time French Open semi-finalist was consigned to another first-round exit by Dutch qualifier Richel Hogenkamp.

Reus sidelined for months



AFP, Berlin

Marco Reus' injury misery continued Monday when Borussia Dortmund confirmed the winger partially tore his cruciate ligament in Saturday's German Cup final - a set-back which could sideline him for months.

"In the coming days, there will be further tests and a decision will be made on the necessary treatment," said Dortmund in a statement.

"Borussia Dortmund will not be able to make a precise prediction about his possible downtime and we wish our 'cup winner' a speedy recovery."

Reus, who turns 28 on Wednesday, suffered the injury in the first-half of Dortmund's 2-1 German Cup final win over Eintracht Frankfurt in Berlin on Saturday.

With his leg heavily strapped, he ran on after the final whistle to celebrate with the team.

"Perhaps I have 'a bit' of a cruciate injury, but I can take that, I'm just really happy," he beamed after the cup win.

Dortmund's cup win was the first title of Reus' career, but bad luck has blighted him in recent years and Monday's news is a fresh set back for the Germany star.

He had already been left out of Germany's plans for next month's Confederations Cup in Russia to get himself fit for the 2018 World Cup.

Torn ankle ligaments in a warm-up match saw him miss Germany's triumph at the 2014 World Cup final.

After the groin injury which ruled him out of Euro 2016, a heel problem in November and a torn hamstring in March, this is Reus' fourth injury this season.

AFP, Madrid



Even for a man and a club synonymous with European Cup glory, Zinedine Zidane and Real Madrid stand on the brink of history in Saturday's Champions League final against Juventus in Cardiff.

Since the European Cup was rebranded and expanded into the Champions League in 1992, no team has been capable of defending the trophy.

However, just 18 months into his first senior managerial role, Zidane is one match away from joining a stellar

cast as just the 20th coach to win the competition twice.

Moreover, a 12th European crown for Madrid would reaffirm their status as self-proclaimed kings of Europe with a third Champions League in four seasons.

"I am the coach which means I am doing something right, but everyone in this squad is doing a phenomenal job," said Zidane after Real withstood an Atletico Madrid onslaught in the semi-finals.

Zidane has had a hand in all of Real's last four trips to the final.

He famously scored one of the greatest ever Champions League final goals to win the game against Bayer Leverkusen back in his playing days in 2002 and was

part of Carlo Ancelotti's coaching staff that ended a 12-year wait for Madrid's 10th European Cup in 2014.

Zidane went one step further by joining Ancelotti as one of just seven men to win the competition as both player and coach when Real squeezed out local rivals Atletico on penalties in Milan in last year's final.

Yet, it is Real's run back to European football's showpiece occasion this season which has been his most impressive feat in his first full season in charge.

While Madrid rode the luck of the draw and from the spot last season, Zidane's men have overcome Napoli's flair, the might of Bayern Munich and Atletico's intensity for the right to be in Cardiff.

Former Bayern Munich captain Philipp Lahm poses beside his new Hall of Fame star at the club's museum "Erlebniswelt" in Munich yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP



Zia, Reefat lead in India

SPORTS REPORTER

Grand Masters Ziaur Rahman and Reefat Bin Sattar shared the lead along with seven other participants at the end of the fifth round of the 10th KIIT International Chess Festival in Bhubaneswar, India yesterday.

Both Zia and Reefat have 4.5 points each from five games after Zia drew his match against GM RR Laxman of India in the fifth round while Reefat beat Shubham of India.

GM Niaz Murshed and FM Fahad Rahman earned 3.5 points each while FM Syed Mahfuzur Rahman and Anisuzzaman Jewel secured 2.5 points each.

Tiger Woods arrested

AGENCIES, Florida

Tiger Woods was charged with DUI yesterday after being arrested in Jupiter, Florida.

Woods was booked at 7:18 a.m. ET and released on his own recognizance at 10:50 a.m.

Tiger Woods was booked for DUI on Monday morning. Palm Beach County Sheriff's Office

Woods had fusion surgery on his back in April -- his fourth surgery on his back dating back to the spring of 2014. Last week he said that he has no plans to retire.

"I want to say unequivocally, I want to play professional golf again," Woods wrote on his website, in his first public comments since the April 19 surgery.

But Woods cautioned he has a long recovery to endure.

Milan want Donnarumma decision

AGENCIES, Rome

AC Milan have urged Gianluigi Donnarumma to make a decision over a contract renewal soon as uncertainty grows over the 18-year-old's future at San Siro.

The goalkeeper's existing contract is due to expire in June 2018 and no agreement has yet been reached over a new deal.

A number of clubs are keeping a close eye on Donnarumma's situation and Milan general director Marco Fassone has told the youngster to make up his mind as the Rossoneri prepare for next season.