

SPORT



Bangladesh Under-19 forward Jafar Iqbal soars to negotiate the ball during their AFC U-19 Championship Qualifiers match against Maldives in Dushanbe yesterday. PHOTO: BFF

Wasteful youths win 1-0

SPORTS REPORTER
A last-gasp strike from substitute Mahabubur Rahman Sufil helped Bangladesh notch a one-goal win over Maldives in their second match of the AFC U-19 Championship Qualifiers at the Republican Central Stadium in the Tajik capital of Dushanbe yesterday.
Sufil, who replaced Rahim Mia at the start of the second half, finally ended the afternoon duck in the 90th minute and kept them in the hunt to achieve their target of qualifying for the final round of the tournament for the first time since 2002.
The Arambagh striker made no mistake to tap home from close range after Maldivian goalkeeper Ahmed Samah Ali partially parried Jafar Iqbal, who danced into the box past two defenders before unleashing a powerful drive.
With a win and a draw Bangladesh are now on top of the five-team table with four points from two matches, one point ahead of favourites Uzbekistan, who mauled Sri Lanka 10-0 in their opening match yesterday.

After a credible draw against hosts Tajikistan, Bangladesh took the field with the mission of getting their first win in the tournament against a relatively easy opposition that they had defeated 2-0 in the SAFF U-18 Championship. However, the Maldivians gave Bangladesh a run for their money as their rock-solid defence prevailed until the 60th minutes.
The lone goal victory however hardly reflected the dominance of Bangladesh in a match where they won 19 corners and created many openings. Unfortunately they failed to cash in on any of them against the deep-lying Maldives mainly due to ambitious solo ventures from their strikers.
"The boys assumed that it would be an easy win over Maldives and they played individually rather than as a team although the instructions were to build up attacks collectively from the back," coach Mahabub Hossain Rosty told The Daily Star over phone, adding that they had created five chances in the first half and 10 in the second.
Striker Jafar Iqbal, Rahim Mia and Mohammad Swadhin squandered numerous

scoring opportunities throughout the match and Rosty added that the Maldivians slowed the pace of the match in the second half by feigning injuries and generally wasting time.
Maldives did sporadically launch counter attacks but they failed to break down the Bangladesh backline or trouble goalkeeper Mahfiz Hasan Pritom.
"We mustered a lot of shots on and off target while some headers narrowly missed. It seemed that the day would not belong to us as nothing was going in our favour despite having approximately 80 per cent possession. If the boys could have opened the scoring in the first half then they would have scored more in the second half," opined the former national player, who however conceded that he was happy to win the match.
"It is also a lesson for the players. They learned what can happen if they take a match casually. I think the boys will improve more in the next match against Uzbekistan, who are a really strong side," concluded Rosty.
The youths will play their Uzbek counterparts at the Hisor Central Stadium on November 6.

Rajshahi & Thakurgaon start strong

SPORTS REPORTER
Rajshahi and Thakurgaon got off to a flyer in their IFA U-14 Women's Championship campaigns by beating their respective rivals at the Bangladesh National Stadium yesterday.
Rajshahi handed a massive 12-2 defeat to Manikganj thanks to a seven-goal haul from Shonna while Haki, Madhuzor, Shamoli and Taslima netted one goal each in the one-side affair, where Mummy was the one to reduce the margin for Manikganj.
In the day's other match, Kalpana slotted a hat-trick as Thakurgaon thrashed Rajbari 5-0. Apart from Kalpana's treble, Bitthika also netted twice.

Finn, Moeen doubtful

AFP, Perth
Fast bowler Steven Finn and all-rounder Moeen Ali will have scans to decide their availability for England's Ashes tour opener this week in Perth, team officials said on Thursday.
Finn injured his left knee while batting at training, while Ali is troubled by a side strain and played no part in Thursday's session.

No better time to walk away than now: Nehra

PTI, New Delhi
Having endured much pain in his 18-year-long injury-riddled yet successful career, Ashish Nehra says his body will be at peace as he bid adieu to international cricket on Wednesday.
"I will miss all this. That's what you train for. One thing which will definitely be at peace will be my body. I said earlier that I can get a couple more years, but there can't be a better time to walk away," Nehra said after his swansong game in international cricket.
Nehra was asked by skipper Virat Kohli to bowl the last over of the first T20 match, which India won by 53 runs.
"I must be the one bowler who sent down the last over most number of times for India. But those times

were different. There was no pressure today," Nehra said the game has changed a lot since he started playing.
"I played my first game here in 1997. The rules have changed and so many games are being scored. But whatever happens, this team is here to stay. The future of Indian cricket is in safe hands for the next six-seven years," he said.
Nehra said there are few moments that define cricketers and such moments also create their image.
"I have played under many different people, but it has been a memorable journey. I was telling Virat also this; he scored so many runs, but people still call him Munster ka Sultan, so you are remembered for a particular moment," he said.
Nehra stopped playing Test cricket many years back but he has no regrets.



At a ceremony titled 'BPL Goes Digital and Meet the Partners', K Sports introduced an LED perimeter board for this edition's tournament at a city hall yesterday, which will be the first time the high-tech device will be used in a Bangladeshi competition. PHOTO: STAR

Horse must lead the carriage

BISHWAIT ROY
Nazmul Hassan had some reservations over taking the demanding job as president of the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) for another term because of the full-time involvement the post demands. Hassan however was re-elected as the boss of the country's richest sports body on Wednesday and took little time in making a commitment regarding his next target -- to decentralise cricket within the shortest possible time.
The goal of forming a regional cricket association or decentralising cricket is nothing less than an appropriate one if someone wants to see the bright and sustainable development of Bangladesh cricket.
Surely one will not hesitate to say that Hassan had a successful four years at the helm of the country's most popular sports body but it is a question of making an undying mark on the history of Bangladesh cricket, then nothing will be better for Hassan than fulfilling the long-standing demand.
However, he will only be remembered if it is functional in the true sense rather than a puppet structure. Only self-governed regional associations will be able to serve the true purpose of decentralisation.
Only time will tell how Hassan moves forward with his new vision in his new term.
The BCB boss however has some other issues which he can fix quickly to make a bold start to his new journey.

When Hassan had expressed his desire to quit the top post publicly after claiming it too demanding a job for a ruling party lawmaker, he did not say anything wrong as he has to deal with many other demanding jobs. It cannot be denied that one needs full concentration on such a vital position, especially considering the volume of work the board is dealing with these days.
But as someone who is also a chief executive officer of a leading multinational conglomerate in the country, nobody knows better than Hassan that if his professional apparatus in the board worked properly, he would be able to focus only on the important policy matters.
If he has the right men in the right places then he need not need to think about whether his head coach is accountable or not, whether his domestic competitions are running properly, whether the development programmes are going on smoothly, etc.
The latest instance is the talk surrounding the role of head coach Chandika Hathurusingha following the debacle in South Africa. However, if someone has become authoritarian then it is the fault of the system. Hassan will definitely look into the debacle in South Africa, but he should also find out whether there is anything lacking in his system which sometimes has led to chaos.
We want to believe that Hassan will look into the current chaotic selection policy so that he can get relief from that headache.
A carriage cannot lead a horse. So only if the country has a truly professional can there be a functional regional cricket association.



Rangpur Riders skipper Mashrafe Bin Mortaza (R) attends a training session at the Sylhet International Cricket Stadium yesterday. Rangpur will take on Rajshahi Kings tomorrow in one of the BPL's opening day fixtures. PHOTO: STAR

Festive Sylhet ready to rock

DWHA CHOWDHURY from Sylhet
Sylhet is always a great welcoming venue, whether it is cricket or football.
This year, the purpose-built Sylhet International Cricket Stadium (SICS) will play host to the glamorous Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) for the first time. And the fans in this part of the country will also get their own team to cheer, for the first time, with the introduction of Sylhet Sixers in the slam-bang domestic competition.
The north-eastern city is already abuzz with festivity as the fans desperately try to get hold of an elusive ticket to one of the eight games to be played at the green venue over four days.
The fifth edition of the T20 competition will take place at three venues across the country and Sylhet will kick-start the first leg with the opening match between holders Dhaka Dynamites and hosts Sylhet Sixers at 2pm tomorrow.
To mark its debut, the SICS has completed all its preparations and all seven participating teams have already landed in the 'City of Green Acres'.
The participating franchisees made brief visits to the venue yesterday as a part of their last minute preparations. The ground staff was seen busy maintaining the hectic schedule for practice as well as protecting the centre wickets of the venue.
Although the venue is popular for its green stand, the gallery is not green enough this time. Perhaps the advent of winter might be a good excuse.
"We are now doing the last moment cleanup, ground nourishing and drills of responsibility ahead of the league opener on November 4. We have also ensured the security perimeter of the venue with the help of law enforcers, officials and volunteers," he said.

Zim's first in 12 years

AFP, Bulawayo
Sikandar Raza's 89 and Regis Chakabva's unbeaten 71 allowed Zimbabwe to hold off the West Indies in the second Test and earn their first draw in 12 years on Thursday.
With Raza making his third major contribution of the match and Chakabva batting out almost 50 overs in an unbroken stand of 91 with captain Graeme Cremer, Zimbabwe reached 301 for seven in their second innings before the two teams shook hands on the draw. The West Indies had looked the likelihood side to secure victory on the final day when Raza's dismissal left Zimbabwe on 210 for seven, leading by just 68 runs with nearly 64 overs still left in the day.
SCORES IN BRIEF
ZIMBABWE: First innings 326
WEST INDIES: First innings 448
ZIMBABWE: Second innings 301 for 7 (Evine 22, Moor 42, Raza 89, Chakabva 71 not out, Cremer 28 not out, Galib 2-34, Roach 2-37, Bishoo 2-74)
Result: Match drawn and West Indies won the 2-match series 1-0.

Player of the match: Sikandar Raza
Player of the series: Devendra Bishoo.