

# SPORT



Josh Hazlewood (2nd from R) is congratulated by skipper Steven Smith (C) and teammates after the Australia paceman dealt the series-deciding blow by removing England batsman Dawid Malan on the fifth day of the third Ashes Test in Perth yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

## Youth Games get underway

SPORTS REPORTER



The inaugural Bangladesh Youth Games got underway yesterday at different districts amid modest enthusiasm as athletes from different upazilas assembled at the headquarters of their respective districts to show their potential.

Out of the 64 districts, some started the games in full swing, some began on a small scale while a few are still waiting to start tomorrow due to the unavailability of grounds. However, all are committed to complete the competition within a seven-day time-frame that was set by the Bangladesh Olympic Association (BOA).

"During the opening ceremony, athletes from 13 upazilas took part in a march-past with enthusiasm and band parties playing at the district stadium," Sylhet District Sports Association (DSA) general secretary Mohiuddin Ahmed Selim said over phone. "I want to thank the BOA for taking such an initiative as sports festivity was felt on the opening day."

Sylhet's programmes started with football with the participation of 13 Upazilas while other disciplines, namely kabaddi, volleyball, athletics and badminton, will start gradually and end within the stipulated time-frame.

"The BOA asked us to complete each discipline within one day, but how is it possible to hold a 13-team football event to be completed within a day! It could have been better had we got more time. However, we have been managing it in our own way," said Selim, who is also a member of the Bangladesh Football Federation.

Barisal's DSA general secretary Alamgir Khan Alo informed that the opening ceremony took place at the Abdur Rob Serniabat Stadium, which will host seven disciplines—football, archery, kabaddi, athletics, swimming, karate and chess.

However, Khulna joined the party only symbolically as they just started only athletics without any opening ceremony due to the unavailability of the Khulna Stadium.

"We started athletics at the Crescent Ground due to unavailability of stadium and we will hold the opening ceremony on December 20 at the stadium but we will hold football at circuit house ground," said Khulna's DSA general secretary Kazi Shamim Ahsan.

Replying to a query, Ahsan said, "We urged the upazilas several times, but they hardly responded about sending entries. It seems they realised the importance of the games late, hence we are facing problems to include them. Two upazilas are requesting us to include them in the football event although they initially did not send entries while a few upazilas are requesting us to include them in wrestling."

While many districts are hosting the games at a single venue, Dhaka has chosen a few upazilas to host the disciplines. Athletics was held at Nawabganj upazila while Keraniganj will host badminton; Dhanmondi Basketball Gymnasium will stage basketball; BKSP will host hockey and Nawabganj will host football.

"Dhaka district does not have any stadium like other districts, so we don't have any option to host all the games at a single venue which is why we have chosen different upazilas to complete the games," said Dhaka's DSA general secretary Golam Kuddus Nabi.

"At upazila level, there is less interest in sports but the Youth Games have created some enthusiasm. However, there is huge enthusiasm about football," said Nabi adding that prominent organiser Mozaffar Hossain Poltu inaugurated athletics events as chief guest.

Rajshahi, meanwhile, will begin the games tomorrow. "We will start the games on December 20 and complete it within the stipulated time-frame," said Rajshahi's DSA general secretary Rofius Shams Paddy, adding that they are facing some technical issues.

"We are supposed to host seven disciplines but there is huge demand from the upazila level to include four more disciplines and we are considering including those disciplines with our fund," said Paddy, adding that they would need an additional Tk 2.5 lakh to include those four disciplines and the sum would be provided by the DSA.

## 'I was crying in the sheds'

AGENCIES, Perth

An emotional Steve Smith praised his "exceptional" team as Australia reclaimed the Ashes with an innings win over England in the third Test in Perth on Monday, and set his sights on a series whitewash.

Smith broke down in tears in the Australian dressing room at the WACA as he came to terms with having led a team to Ashes glory in his first tilt as captain in a Test series against England.

The world's best batsman led from the front with his second player of the match award in three matches and was on Monday night digesting the greatest moment of his two years at the helm as Australia's full-time captain.

"I was crying in the sheds a minute ago. Everything just came out," Smith told ABC radio.

On the back of pacer Josh Hazlewood's five-for, Australia dismissed England for 218 in their second innings after rain delays and a pitch controversy on the final day in Perth to win back the urn in the last Ashes Test to be played at the WACA Ground.

That gave the home side an innings-and-41-run win and an unbeatable 3-0 lead in the five-match series, having won the opening two Tests in Brisbane and Adelaide.

"We have worked incredibly hard. It has been a great couple of weeks and I am really proud of everyone back in that room."

Smith opened the series with a fighting hundred, his slowest in Test cricket, at

the Gabba, and added his fastest ever in Perth en route to a magnificent, career-high 239 that along with Mitchell Marsh's 181 changed the course of the match irrevocably.

In between, he was under the pump for his captaincy in Adelaide, specifically his decision not to enforce the follow-on on the third evening when Australia had England on the back foot. The team ultimately won comfortably there but even as he re-wrote the post-Bradman record books with his run-scoring Smith knew the job was not done until the Ashes had been won.

"It was my first Ashes series as captain and I wanted to make that mark and do something really special," Smith said at his post-match news conference.

"I've really enjoyed every moment of it. We've put in so much hard work, the preparation and everything that has come with this series. It's been huge to know that everything has worked and we've been able to get that urn back.

"What the boys have done over the past couple of weeks has been exceptional. England have had their foot in the door...and we've been able to claw our way back. When we've done that we've been able to put our foot on the throat."

### SCORES IN BRIEF

ENGLAND: First innings 403  
AUSTRALIA: First innings 662 for 9 decl.  
ENGLAND: Second innings 218 (Vince 55, Malan 54, Woakes 22; Hazlewood 5-48, Cummins 2-53, Lyon 2-42)  
Result: Australia won by an innings and 41 runs and led 5-match series 3-0.  
Player-of-the-match: Steven Smith.

## Root defends senior pros

REUTERS, Perth

England captain Joe Root refused to blame his senior players for the tourists' stunning Ashes defeat but lamented his own failures to lead the way with the bat against Australia.

Former skipper Alastair Cook has scored only 83 runs in the series at an average of 13.83, comfortably the worst of England's specialist batsmen. England's most prolific Test runscore was playing his 150th test at the WACA.

Veteran seamer Stuart Broad went wicketless for 142 runs as Australia racked up a mammoth 662 for 9 declared, his worst test bowling figures.

Meanwhile, spin-bowling all-rounder Moeen Ali has managed only three wickets for the series at a miserable 105.33 apiece.

Root, appointed captain only in February, backed Broad and Cook to still be playing for England in 12

months' time.

"I'd like to think so," the 26-year-old captain told reporters.

"They've got huge amounts of experience and they do offer a lot to the group and their performances over a long period of time speak for themselves.

"They've been in situations where things haven't gone for them before and that's why they've played so many games. "It's important we don't panic and make hasty decisions after three games."

Root turned the focus on his own failures with the bat, having been dismissed for 20 and 14 in Perth when his team desperately needed a big captain's knock.

"Probably the thing that's been my biggest detriment is trying too hard," said Root, who is averaging 29.33 for the series.

"I've been desperate for us to win this series. Things just haven't felt like they've run for me out in the middle," he added.

## Mehedi gets promised land

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Bangladesh off-spinner Mehedi Hasan Miraz was granted a plot of land by Khulna Development Authority (KDA) in a formal ceremony at its premises on behalf of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday.

The Premier made the announcement of a plot of land for the cricketer on November 2, 2016, two days after Mehedi had sensationally bowled Bangladesh to a series-levelling win in his debut series against England, taking 19 wickets in two Test matches.

The Prime Minister approved the

plot for Miraz for a symbolic price of Tk 1,001.

"When I got a phone call from the Prime Minister and learned that I had a chance to meet her I was overwhelmed. After learning of my family's financial hardship, she allotted the land as an inspiration, like a mother," said an overjoyed Mehedi after his interaction with the PM yesterday.

"I had to struggle immensely for this position. So I want to promote cricket and share my experiences with newcomers," Mehedi added.

Brigadier General Ashanul Mia, Chairman of KDA, told The Daily Star that Mehedi was given 3.07 kathas or 0.05 acres of land at KDA's commer-

cial-cum-residential area at Mujgunni main road under Khulna City Corporation.

Mehedi's father Jalal Uddin thanked the Prime Minister for her kindness.

"Mehedi is not only my son; he is a son to all Bangladeshis," said Jalal Uddin, a rent-a-car driver who lives with his family in a small, tin-shed house in Khalishpur BADC road.

KDA arranged a ceremony to give him the plot in the presence of local lawmakers Mizanur Rahman Mizan, Begum Monnujan Sufian, Khulna city corporation mayor Moniruzzaman Moni and KDA chairman Brigadier General Ahasanul Hoq Miah.

The Khulna Development Authority members hand over Bangladesh off-spinner Mehedi Hasan Miraz the land documents to the plot promised him by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at the KDA premises in Khulna yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR



Defending champions Saif Sporting Club conceded their lead to Bengal Sporting Club in the Premier Division Chess League after a 2.5-1.5 point defeat against the latter in the ninth round yesterday. Saif SC's local GM Enamul Hossain Razib and Russian GM Aleksey Goganov lost their boards while Ukrainian GM Kravtsov Martyn was held to a draw. The last round of the league will be held today, with Bengal currently leading the title race by one point.

PHOTO: STAR

## Jakaria Babu quits Team BJMC

SPORTS REPORTER

Team BJMC head coach Jakaria Babu recently resigned following the team's fourth straight defeat, which includes one against relegation-threatened Farashganj SC, in the Bangladesh Premier League (BPL).

"I am not enjoying my job [here] because things are not happening the way I wanted. That's why I resigned from the post of head coach on December 14," said Babu, who steered BJMC away from relegation in the previous season and remained at the helm till his resignation.

During this year's BPL opening leg BJMC, under Babu's supervision, collected 15 points from 11 matches but could only earn a single point from the next five games.

However, even without a head coach, BJMC earned a valuable point against Mohammedan on Sunday.

Team BJMC are currently in seventh position on the 12-team league table with 17 points from 17 games.

They have won four games, drawn five and lost eight matches.

## Gayle boost for Windies

AFP, Wellington



The West Indies will hope short-form master Chris Gayle can inspire a misfiring batting lineup in the one-day international series against New Zealand starting on Wednesday.

The tourists meekly surrendered with the bat as they slumped to a 2-0 Test series whitewash against the Black Caps, and need a major improvement in the three ODI games.

Gayle, arriving fresh from a record-breaking stint in the Bangladesh Premier League, prom-

ises to inject the aggression and confidence lacking so far during the tour of New Zealand.

He smashed a record 18 sixes in an unbeaten 146 off 69 balls in the BPL final to add to the slew of titles he already holds in the ultra-short form of the game.

Afterwards, the 38-year-old told ESPNcricinfo he was "the greatest batsman of all time".

His self-assessment may be debatable but New Zealand paceman Lockie Ferguson said the hosts were well aware of the threat the left-hander from Jamaica poses.