

National Cricket League
(Four-Day Match, Day-2)
Time: 9:30am
Khulna v Dhaka
Venue: BKSP
Barisal v Rangpur

Venue: SKS, Rajshahi
Dhaka Metro v Rajshahi
Venue: ZACS, Chittagong
Sylhet v Chittagong
Venue: SICS, Sylhet

SAFF U-15 Women's Championship
Bangladesh v India
Time: 11:30am
Nepal v Bhutan
Time: 2:30pm
Venue: BSMMKS, Dhaka

Bangladesh Premier League
Mohammedan v Sk Russel
Time: 4:30pm
Saif SC v Team BJMC
Time: 6:45pm
Venue: BNS, Dhaka

Athletics boss in town

SPORTS REPORTER

The 41st National Athletics Championships are all set to get underway at the Bangabandhu National Stadium tomorrow in presence of Asian Athletics Association (AAA) president Dahlan Al-Hamad, who arrived in the capital yesterday on a three-day visit.

Some 500 athletes from 64 districts, eight divisions, universities, educational boards, services teams and BKSP are expected to compete in 36 events -- 22 for men and 14 for women -- in the three-day event.

"For the first time, a high official of the Asian Athletics Association is visiting Bangladesh and we hope he [Dahlan] will get an idea about Bangladesh athletics during his three-day trip," Bangladesh Athletics Federation's general secretary Abdur Rakib Montu said at a press conference at the BNS conference room yesterday.

Dahlan is not only the AAA president but also a vice-president of International Association of Athletics Federations. He was scheduled to meet state minister for youth and sports Biren Shikdar last night while he is expected to pay homage at the

Dhanmondi residence of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman today before meeting Bangladesh Olympic Association president and Army Chief General Abu Belal Muhammad Shafiqul Huq and deputy sports minister Arif Khan Joy.

Dahlan will declare the national athletics championships open on Friday and leave for Qatar on Saturday morning.

With Bangladesh struggling to take the standard of athletes to an international level, BAF president ASM Ali Kabir said that they would seek help from the AAA president in this regard.

"Bangladesh is far behind the international standard because we don't have any investment and new technology. So we will request him to invest here by setting up a regional (South Asia) development centre under the supervision of AAA so we can produce quality coaches and judges," Kabir said over phone.

Asked whether they would use electronic timer which was last used during 2010 SA Games, federation's member Kitab Ali said: "We have been working on fixing the electronic timer over the past three days. We don't want to be embarrassed in front of the Asian athletics chief. We are hopeful that will be able to hold the events with the timer."



On the eve of their last league match against India, the Bangladesh girls were in a jubilant mood and enjoyed their training session at the BFF astro-turf in Motijheel yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

A dress rehearsal for the final

Bangladesh take on India in last league match today

SPORTS REPORTER

The dress rehearsal for SAFF U-15 Women's Championship's final will take place today when hosts Bangladesh square off against India in the last league phase match at the Birshreshtha Shaheed Mostafa Kamal Stadium in Kamalapur.

The match will get underway at 11:30am before the Nepal and Bhutan face each other in a dead-rubber as those two sides are out of final reckoning.

Having notched up convincing victories in their first two matches, both Bangladesh and India will certainly be looking for a psychological advantage ahead of Sunday's final with a win in this fixture.

Bangladesh handed India two defeats (3-1 and 4-0) during their triumphant AFC U-14 Girls' Regional Championship campaign last year, and since both these squads have a number of players from those squads, the hosts will definitely have a psychological advantage.

"Though we have confirmed the final with a game in hand, we are not taking this match lightly and not giving rest to anyone. Rather we will play with our full strength and same style of attacking football," said Bangladesh coach Golam Rabbani Choton.

The charges of Choton enjoyed superior ball possession against Nepal and Bhutan and played both matches almost entirely in the opposition half, scoring nine goals in total. India, too, dominated those two outfits, scoring a grand total of 13 goals.

"Our target is to win every match and the target remains the same against India," Choton said. "India are always a strong side and they have a good record against Bangladesh at all level. However, we will try to play our natural game and if the girls can display their natural performance, we can expect a win."

However, Choton will be missing the services of striker Sara Ban Tahura, who scored a hat-trick against Nepal and Sajeda Khatun is likely to replace her in the starting eleven.



An action from the women's kabaddi match of the Bangladesh Youth Games between Sylhet Sadar upazila and Kanaighat upazila at the Sylhet District Stadium yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

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:

Man City survive scare

Manchester City held off Leicester to reach the League Cup semifinals following a dramatic penalty shootout, as Arsenal also progressed.



Atletico report Barca for illegal Griezmann approach

Atletico Madrid reported Barcelona to FIFA over illegal contact made to Antoine Griezmann, club sources confirmed.



Meghla, Rafi, Omar sweep pool medals

SPORTS REPORTER



Rajbari swimmers Meghla and Rafi sprung surprises on the third day of the Bangladesh Youth Games yesterday. Both swimmers from the sadar upazila grabbed three gold and a silver medal each in their respective age groups.

Meghla scooped gold in all three freestyle events -- 50m, 100, and 200m -- while winning a silver medal in 50m backstroke while Rafi won gold in 100m and 200m freestyle and 50m backstroke while winning the silver medal in 50m freestyle event. Rafi lost the 50m freestyle event to Shovon while Meghla was second-best to Lilly in the 50m backstroke event.

There was also a three gold-medal haul for Omar of Patuakhali Sadar upazila. He won gold in 50 breaststroke, 100m breaststroke and 100m freestyle events.

Meanwhile, other events such as athletics, football, hockey, badminton, volleyball, handball, table tennis, kabaddi, boxing, karate, wushu took place in full swing across the country.

Approximately 48,118 participants from some 500 upazilas of 64 districts are taking part in 21 disciplines across three phases during this four-month long youth games.

Rosicky hangs up his boots

REUTERS, PRAGUE

Former Arsenal and Czech Republic playmaker Tomas Rosicky ended his professional career on Wednesday after years of injuries often kept him off the pitch.

Rosicky, 37, came through at Sparta Prague, where he is now also finishing his playing days, before moving to Borussia Dortmund in 2001 and to Arsenal in 2006 where he played for a decade.

"My body was telling me for a long time that it does not want [to do it] any more," he told a news conference. "I lived through beautiful moments but unfortunately also terribly negative ones."

"Without even thinking about, I would do it again."

'Neymar was waiting for me'

AGENCIES, Paris



French striker Kylian Mbappe has made a dream start to his Paris Saint-Germain career and heaped praise on his strike partner Neymar for helping him settle in at the club.

The 19-year-old, who celebrated his birthday yesterday, moved to PSG from Monaco and has hit 11 goals in 20 games and Mbappe has revealed that a lot of that is down to Neymar.

"Immediately [after joining PSG], I put myself under his [Neymar's] wing and he helped me integrate. In truth he was waiting for me. Before I arrived at the end of the summer transfer market he sent me messages saying 'When are you arriving?'"

"I told him that it was almost done, but when there were so many delays he

must have thought that I was lying. Once the move happened I could relax. On the field he always tries to pick me out. It helps a lot when a player embraces you in this way."

The teenager also reflected melan-



cholly on missing out on all the fun other teenagers have during their formative years. At 16, Mbappe was already a in Monaco's first team.

"Becoming a good player so quickly made me miss a lot of the normal life of

a normal teenager. Later I cannot even tell my children about the things I did as a teen because I didn't get the time to do that. They will probably ask me why and I will tell them that at eighteen I was already playing for PSG and there was no more time to just be a teenager."

"My situation doesn't allow me to do things like a teenager," he said. "Since I can't go out I bring many friends home. We play, laugh and think of things other than football. These are the only moments when I can behave like a boy my age."

The Frenchman also revealed his lofty 'ten-year plan'.

"Trophies, trophies. My head is full of dreams. I know that a footballer's career is not very long so I have no time to lose."

"Ten years from now I would like to be playing for the best team in the world. If that is PSG, then I'll be here."

Doping claims 'just big talk'

AFP, London



The agent at the centre of an investigation by a British newspaper into world 100 metres champion Justin Gatlin's entourage said Tuesday he invented a story about obtaining banned drugs to impress undercover reporters.

Robert Wagner, who has occasionally represented Gatlin, and Gatlin's coach Dennis Mitchell were secretly filmed by the Daily Telegraph newspaper claiming they could obtain and administer human growth hormone and testosterone for \$250,000.

The newspaper's reporters had gone to meet the pair at Gatlin's Florida training base and had posed as producers interested in making a film about a sprinter -- the drugs were meant to help the film's lead actor get into shape.

But in a statement given to Britain's Press Association by a British-based public relations company, Wagner said the Telegraph's story was "deeply flawed" because it was based on false comments he made up to impress people he thought were in the film business.

"It was just big talk -- I did not actually source or supply the substances the reporters asked for but stupidly claimed I could," the US-based Austrian said. "I apologise to Mr Gatlin, his management and family for saying completely false things about him and I apologise to other completely innocent athletes also wrongly implicated by my words."

Wagner said he reported his meeting with the reporters to the Athletics Integrity Unit (AIU) and would assist the investigation it had started "in every way I can".



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