

**Dhaka Premier League**  
Time: 9:00am  
Abahani v Sheikh Jamal  
Venue: KSOAS

Legends of Rupganj v Prime Doleshwar  
Venue: SBNS  
Khelaghar SKS v Gazi Group  
Venue: BKSP-3



Bangladesh players train at the Lao National Stadium in Vientiane, Laos on Monday ahead of today's FIFA Friendly against the hosts. PHOTO: BFF

### Sylhet claim the crown

SPORTS REPORTER

Sylhet Division lifted their first Women's National Cricket League title with a nine-wicket win over Barisal Division in the last match of the league yesterday at the Sylhet International Cricket Stadium. Sylhet finished ahead of Rajshahi Division and Khulna Division in the table on net run rate despite each securing 10 points from seven games.

This year's WNCL was a Twenty20 event with eight divisional teams – Dhaka, Chittagong, Khulna, Rajshahi, Sylhet, Rangpur, Barisal and Mymensingh participating. Mymensingh's wicketkeeper-batter Nigar Sultana was adjudged the player of the tournament, scoring 248 runs. She also affected seven stumpings and took four catches.

## Booters take on Laos today

SPORTS REPORTER



The Bangladesh national football team's long wait for an international match is over as they are set to play against Laos today, 17 months after their shocking 3-1 defeat against Bhutan.

Ahead of today's FIFA friendly, Bangladesh have prepared for nearly six weeks at home and abroad and played two warm-up matches against Thai Premier League clubs before heading to Laos, who had beaten Bangladesh 2-1 in their lone meeting during the 2003 Asian Cup qualifiers.

Head coach Andrew Ord has picked a squad with mixture of experienced and young players. The 38-year-old coach will certainly look to heal the wounds of that defeat 17 months ago while trying to put up some positive signs to get the team back on the track of improvement.

Performing on the pitch though will be tough for the booters, who are believed to be short of confidence after staying away from international football for so long.

However, the team's performance against Bangkok Glass FC in a warm-up match can motivate the players. The return of seven Abahani players, who joined the camp following their AFC Cup engagements, will also provide a further boost.

"The coaching staff has done everything possible to prepare the players for this game. We have treated the camps like a professional club environment; we have tracked and monitored everything that the players do," Ord was quoted as saying on a Bangladesh Football Federation statement yesterday.

"Whatever we have practised so far, we have to implement it on the field. We have to be able to execute our game plan. We cannot throw away the game in any way which would make things difficult for us," Ord said. "Mentality is way better than when we first started. The players have tried hard and come out of bad habits that they had before. The good thing is that I have 17 players who can all start the game now."

### SPAIN V ARGENTINA

## Forward spots up for grabs

AFP, Madrid



Two of the World Cup's leading contenders will meet in Madrid on Tuesday but neither Spain nor Argentina have yet settled on a forward line for this summer.

For Argentina and Jorge Sampaoli the question is who best to stir Lionel Messi, with the two-time winners again boasting an embarrassment of riches up front, while showing little indication they know how to deploy them.

The supporting trio of Gonzalo Higuain, Sergio Aguero and Angel di Maria could reunite in Russia but they have disappointed together before, when all were younger and arriving in better form.

Meanwhile, Paulo Dybala, one of the game's most exciting young forwards, faces a fight for inclusion after being left off Sampaoli's latest list, and Mauro Icardi is expected to find his 26 goals for Inter Milan this season insufficient to make the squad.

Argentina may have to continue their search at the Wanda Metropolitano without their key component as Messi has been struggling with pain in his hamstring and adductor.

He trained on Sunday but is unlikely to be risked.

"Spain already has its team and knows how it will play at the World Cup," Sampaoli said. "We have to find that certainty."

But for Spain and Julen Lopetegui, there is also uncertainty in the final third where it is less a question of too many choices but too few as Diego Costa, Rodrigo Moreno, Alvaro Morata and Iago Aspas all jostle for the lead striker role.

Costa was the clear favourite after

starting five of Spain's opening six World Cup qualifiers but his fall-out with Chelsea, which led to five months stewing in Brazil, prompted Lopetegui into a rethink.

"The coach was always very clear with me," Costa said on Friday.

"He told me: 'If you do not play, you cannot come'. But he also told me that when I played again, if I did it right, I had the doors open."

In the last seven games, four of them qualifiers, Costa is yet to start while Morata has been picked twice and Moreno three times.

It would seem too late now for Aspas but, unlike Morata, he is in the current squad and has the benefit of form, having hit 16 goals for Celta Vigo in La Liga this season, more than any other Spanish player.

Costa, however, is back playing for Atletico Madrid, which makes him the likeliest choice when Spain open up



Argentina superstar Lionel Messi (C) takes part in a training session in Madrid on Sunday ahead of tonight's international friendly against Spain. PHOTO: AFP

## Shooter or official?

SPORTS REPORTER



Bangladesh's shooting contingent for the upcoming Commonwealth Games in Gold Coast has caused a bit of controversy after a young shooter was included as an official.

Amira Hamid, daughter of Bangladesh Shooting Sport Federation (BSSF) general secretary Enthekhabul Hamid, has been drafted in as one of six officials of the 18-member squad featuring 12 shooters. Different quarters have raised allegations that the BSSF general secretary is using his power to promote his daughter while overlooking other talented shooters.

When contacted, Mr. Hamid asked this reporter to call him later, but he did not receive any calls later. Meanwhile, BSSF president Nazimuddin Chowdhury had on Sunday said that Amira would participate in the games as an athlete if she gets the permission from the organising committee.

BSSF chief executive officer Mustaque Waiz, however, said that he had no idea how Amira was selected as an official. He said that she was in the initial 15-member shooters' list, but

the BSSF later decided to send 12 shooters, dropping three which included Amira from that list.

Waiz also claimed that Amira is going to the games at her own expenditure.

Although 16 members of the contingent have already left for Australia, Mr. Hamid is supposed to leave today while Amira is scheduled to fly out on March 30.

The 16-year-old made her shooting debut not too long ago, but she has already played in a couple of international tournaments, namely the 2016 South Asian Games in Assam and the 2017 World Cup in Delhi. She was also supposed to take part in the Junior World Cup in Australia this month, but the BSSF executive committee did not approve of Bangladesh's participation in that tour. She had bagged two silver medals in the Youth Shooting Championships in 2016 and 2017, but skipped the event this year.

It has been learnt that the BSSF used to choose shooters through performance evaluating competitions, but in recent times such competitions are not being held as the selection is done mostly by head coach Klavs Christensen and GS Hamid.

"We could have won a bronze medal in 50m prone in the South Asian Games in Assam had Amira not

been given the opportunity in place of Zakia Sultana Tumpa," alleged a local coach seeking anonymity. "Now we are worried whether someone else will be dropped from the Commonwealth Games to pave the way for Amira."

The coach also claimed that there are a few other brilliant shooters who have been overlooked.

"If Amira participates in international events at her own cost, then other shooters should also be given such an opportunity because there are many clubs ready to bear the expenses of their shooters for international competitions," opined the coach.

Waiz, however, denied that there was any nepotism on the part of the BSSF general secretary.

"It is not that Amira is a talented shooter just because his father is the general secretary or that the federation is flexible in case of Amira. She is really talented for her age even though we have found a couple of good shooters after this year's Youth Championships. Amira was awarded a wild card for October's Youth Olympics and she is also supposed to take part in next World Cup in Korea," said Waiz, adding that the International Shooting Sport Federation had initially granted a wild card for the boys' event but later granted another one for the girls' event.

### 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:

**Shakib, Mushy, Riyad pay respect to freedom fighters**  
The senior cricketers of Bangladesh cricket team paid their respects to the martyrs and freedom fighters over social media posts on Independence Day. Mushhfiqur Rahim posted a photo on facebook captioned: "I'm proud. I'm independent. I'm BANGLADESHI."  
**Fanie tipped off cameramen about ball-tampering**  
Fanie de Villiers, former South African fast bowler says that he tipped off the camera operators to look for signs of Australian ball-tampering after he suspected that Australians were using underhanded tactics.

**Rahane replaces Smith as Royals captain**  
Indian Premier League side Rajasthan Royals replaced Australia's Steve Smith as captain over his role in a ball-tampering controversy. Smith, who is on a \$1.9-million contract with the Royals, will be replaced by India's Ajinkya Rahane.  
**Italy to name new coach**  
Italy's new national coach will be named on May 20, Italian football federation vice-com Alessandro Costacurra said. With U-21 boss Luigi Di Biagio in charge on an interim basis, the four-time world champions suffered defeat in their first game since, losing 2-0 to Argentina.

## Hosts to fight for nine gold

SPORTS REPORTER



Hosts Bangladesh will fight for nine gold medals today in the 3rd South Asian Archery Championships after the local archers moved into the finals of all six team events at the Bangladesh Kriya Shikkha Protisthan (BKSP) yesterday.

Bangladesh had, on the opening day, confirmed final berths in three other events, two of which will be all-Bangladeshi affairs.

On the second day of the meet, the Bangladesh men's team, comprised of Roman Sana, Ibrahim Sheikh Rejwan and Sanuar Hossain, beat Nepal 6-0 in the semifinal to move into the men's recurve team final while the women's recurve team, featuring Nasrin Akter, Radia Akter and Rabeya Khatun handed a 6-0 defeat to their Nepalese counterparts. Bangladesh also beat Nepal 6-2 to ensure their final berth in the mixed recurve event.

In men's compound, Bangladesh handed a massive 224-165 point defeat to Sri Lanka to book a spot in the final while Bangladesh women's compound team and mixed compound team got byes to book their final spots.

Bangladesh will play seven finals against neighbouring Indian archers while the finals of both the men's and women's individual recurve events will be all-Bangladeshi affairs.

### Thauvin out of Russia clash

AFP, Paris

Marseille midfielder Florian Thauvin has been sidelined from France's squad for Tuesday's pre-World Cup friendly in Russia after suffering a hamstring injury, the French Football Federation announced (FFF).

Thauvin, who has made just three appearances for France, has been on fire in the French league this season hitting 16 goals and providing 10 assists for southern giants Marseille so far.

But the 25-year-old's bid to secure a coveted spot in Didier Deschamps' squad for this summer's showpiece remains in the balance.

Tuesday's fixture in Saint Petersburg comes four days after Colombia secured a 3-2 win over France.



Bangladesh archers in mixed recurve and compound events show victory signs after sealing their spots in the respective finals of the 3rd Asian Archery Championships at BKSP yesterday. PHOTO: COLLECTED

## Ghost of 7-1 still haunts us: Tite

AFP, Berlin



Brazil coach Tite says the "ghost" of their 7-1 mauling by Germany at the 2014 World Cup still haunts the 'Selecao', as the teams prepare to meet on Tuesday.

Brazil suffered their heaviest home defeat when Germany hit four goals in six devastating first-half minutes of the Belo Horizonte semifinal nearly four years ago.

Toni Kroos and Andre Schuerle both scored twice over the 90 minutes as Germany's attack ran riot en route to winning the World Cup title.

The teams meet in a friendly for the first time since at Berlin's Olympic Stadium and Tite says Brazil still bear the scars.

"This has a huge psychological meaning - no one needs to fool themselves about that," Tite told German

magazine Kicker.

"The 7-1 from the World Cup is like a ghost."

"It's present, people still talk about it, but the more you talk about it, the less this 'ghost' disappears."

"It won't just be a sporting challenge, but a huge emotional challenge too."

"We are preparing to give our best performance, which will be important, but of course I also want a good result."

Tite has been in charge of Brazil since 2016, but Felipe Scolari was head coach for the mauling by Germany at the last World Cup.

"I was watching the game at home in Sao Paulo with my wife and after the third goal went in, she started to cry," said the 56-year-old Tite.

"That started me off."

"It was a moment of great inspiration for Germany, every shot was a goal - stuff like that doesn't even happen in video games."

"Sometimes you get that in football, a team comes close to perfection and that's what happened to Germany."

"The wound is still open and the match in Berlin is a part of the process of closing it."

Germany lost to Brazil on penalties in the men's final of the 2016 Olympic Games in Rio de Janeiro, but this is their first meeting at senior international level since the 7-1 rout.

Tite told Brazil reporters that Manchester City midfielder Fernandinho will replace Douglas Costa in the only change from the team which beat Russia 3-0 in Moscow on Friday.

Germany head coach Joachim Loew expects to make up to five changes from the starting line-up of Friday's 1-1 with Spain.

Stars Mesut Ozil and Thomas Mueller have been released by Loew to rest while Ilkay Gundogan is expected to start in Germany's midfield.