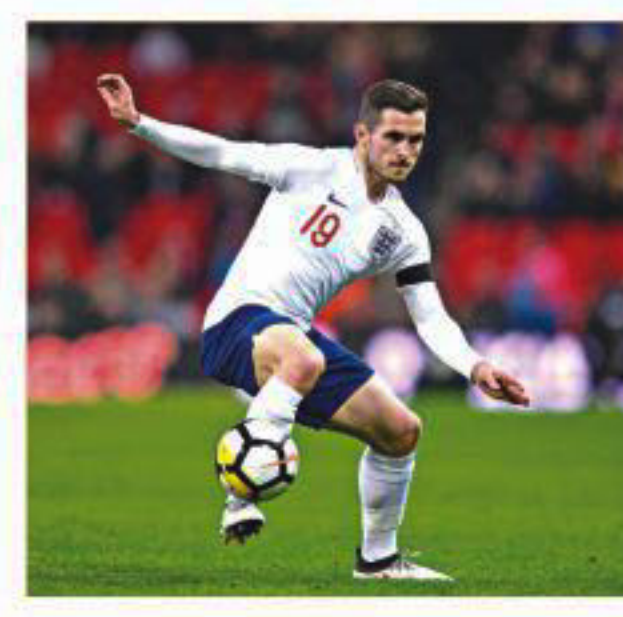


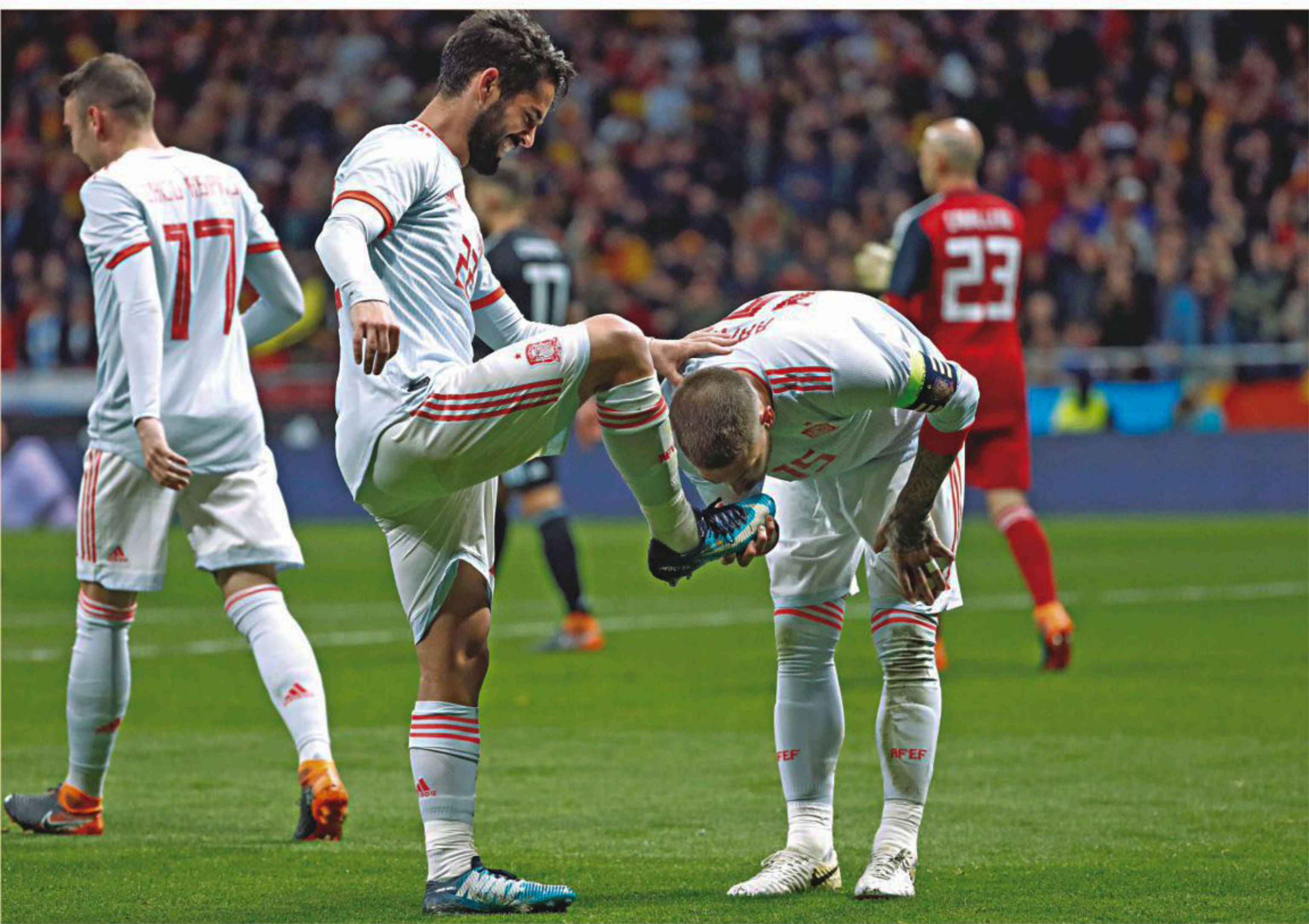
BCB Red v BCB Green  
T20 Match  
Time: 5:00pm  
Venue: SBNSC

## COOK'S ENGLAND BOW NETS GRANDAD £17,000

Bournemouth midfielder Lewis Cook's international debut for England against Italy didn't just fill his grandfather with pride, but also lined his pockets with a £17,000 (19,500 euros, \$24,000) betting windfall. Trevor Burlingham placed a £500 wager that his grandson would win a senior England cap before his 26th birthday at odds of 33/1 four years ago when he was just breaking into the Leeds United first team as an 18-year-old. Burlingham was made to wait by England boss Gareth Southgate as Cook was called-up for November's friendly against Brazil but failed to make an appearance. He was also an unused substitute in Friday's 1-0 friendly win at the Netherlands, but finally made his senior international bow for the final 19 minutes at Wembley on Tuesday. In doing so, Cook became the first ever Bournemouth player to represent England. However, his debut wasn't a complete fairytale as Lorenzo Insigne's penalty three minutes from time salvaged a 1-1 draw for Italy.



—AFP



Spain captain Sergio Ramos honours Isco by kissing his boot after the latter completed his hat-trick in an international friendly against Argentina at the Wanda Metropolitano on Tuesday. La Albiceleste were on the receiving end of a 6-1 thrashing.

PHOTO: REUTERS

# Messi-less Argentina decimated

AGENCIES, Madrid

Spain sent out a warning to their World Cup rivals as Isco grabbed a hat-trick in a 6-1 thrashing of Argentina, who were missing the injured Lionel Messi, in a friendly on Tuesday.

The demolition, which also included goals from Diego Costa, Thiago Alcantara and Iago Aspas after Nicolas Otamendi had made it 2-1, soured what was supposed to be a historic night for Argentina captain Javier Mascherano, who joined Javier Zanetti on 142 caps as his country's record appearance holder.

It will have made uneasy viewing for coach Jorge Sampaoli and emphasised more than ever how reliant his side are on their talisman Messi, who has been struggling with a muscle problem. Should the Barcelona forward be missing at any point in Russia, Argentina are likely to struggle judging by their meek surrender in the Spanish capital.

Without Messi on the pitch there was room for someone to take the game by the scruff of the neck and Real Madrid's outstanding Isco filled the void.

"I'm not going to discover anything else about how much I like Isco and having him here with us," Spain coach Julen Lopetegui said.

"We've beaten a team with a strong history who got to the final of the last World Cup. Obviously, once we're there you start from scratch and they

had a couple of important absentees but we're happy – it's a real match and a deserved win."

On the other hand Sampaoli was left to wonder where it all went wrong, which he said he would do with a thorough analysis of the match, before adding that the media should blame him for the result.

"This result means we have to take responsibility and take another look at who will make the final list," Sampaoli said. "We have to look for the chance to continue working so that these things do not happen to us at the World Cup."

"I take the blame for the goals, don't point to the players," he added. "The difference [between the sides] in the game wasn't as large as the result. We have to learn from this. It cannot happen in the World Cup."

### ISCO QUESTIONS ZIDANE'S TRUST

After the game, hat-trick hero Isco said it was a relief to play for Spain as he feels Real Madrid coach Zinedine Zidane has no faith in him.

"Lopetegui gives me confidence with minutes, with games," Isco said. "With Madrid I do not have the confidence that a player needs, maybe the problem is me, that I have not won Zidane's confidence with the good players there."

Isco signed a five-year contract with Real in September last year but there would be no shortage of suitors should he decide his future lies elsewhere.

"When you don't play a leading role or have continuity in your club team, the games with the

national team give me life," Isco said. "I have the confidence of the coach here (with Spain), I still have a lot of enthusiasm to work, to improve, to be a starter for my club and in the national team."

"I feel that I'm at the beginning and I want to show that I am a good player."

### WE NEED THREE MESSIS, PRESS CLAIM

Argentina were unsurprisingly roundly castigated by the country's media after the thrashing, with Argentine national daily Ole going with the headline: "We need three Messis"

"A historic beating. With Messi sitting in the stands, an Argentina side showing a degree of fragility rarely previously witnessed were on the end of a tremendous thrashing. Conceding six goals isn't normal – the extent to which Argentina were taken to the cleaners was something to behold. With three months to go until the World Cup, this is a thrashing that hits Argentina hard," Ole lamented.

Meanwhile La Nacion went with a perfectly apt 'A slap in the face', writing: "A true humbling, with under three months left until the long-awaited event. A cold, hard demonstration of a problem as colossal as Russia, the country that Argentina aim to conquer: without Messi, the team isn't good enough against the major sides. They may battle, get stuck in, put their foot in, push; but it's unlikely you'll see them play good football, that you'll see them seriously compete against those who carry the tag of candidates to win the World Cup."

# Give local players a chance: Ord

SPORTS REPORTER



Having held Laos to a 2-2 draw in a FIFA friendly on Tuesday, Bangladesh coach Andrew Ord urged local coaches to keep faith on homegrown players and field them in their natural positions during Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) matches.

It seemed that the Bangladeshi forwards could hardly hold the ball in the attacking third to create space and expose the Laos defence before Jafar Iqbal and Mahbubur Rahman Sufil scored two excellent goals to secure a draw after Bangladesh had gone 2-0 down due to defensive mistakes in the first half.

"Jafar barely got a chance to come on as substitute this year. Sufil played most of the BPL as a wingback in 3-5-2 system. [Nabib Newaj] Jibon played on the left wing to accommodate Sunday [Chizoba] or Emeka [Darlington] whereas his best position is centre-forward. I am the one playing these guys in their correct positions at a higher level and they showed yesterday that if given a chance they can do the job. It's time for the BPL clubs to trust these players which in turn will benefit the nation," Ord said through an email interview yesterday.

"We are working with hands tied behind our backs by not giving them a chance to play in attacking positions. Otherwise how can they improve?" questioned Ord, who felt defensive mistakes were inherent among players.

"I can't control individual errors that are of such a basic nature. They are ingrained into the Bangladeshi players and occurred regularly at every BPL game I've attended all year," Ord said. "They are unfortunately going to

keep surfacing until we put enough experience into the new group of young players."

However, the English-born Australian felt the fans should be proud of the way his charges showed fighting spirit to mount a comeback in the match.

"The fighting spirit shown is a direct result of the tough preparation camps we had. The mentality to not give up at 2-0 down was great to see and is a huge step in the right direction. In the second half we looked fitter and stronger and that should give the players more belief and is something to build on."

The fighting attitude among the young players was first seen during the SAFF U-18 Championship and AFC U-19 Championship Qualifiers last year. Bangladesh came back from three goals down to beat India 4-3 and beat Maldives 1-0 with a last moment strike in the SAFF U-18 Championship while the same team beat Uzbekistan 1-0 with a stoppage time strike in the AFC U-19 Championship Qualifiers.

"We played better throughout the match, but it ended in a draw. The result could have been different had we not conceded two goals due to fumbles. We also came back against India in the age-group tournament where I scored two goals. Actually we were confident about a fight and got the outcome of our hard work," said Iqbal.

"There were instances of scoring against Maldives and Uzbekistan in the last moment during our age-level tournaments. This time we worked hard for this match and were really fit, which actually kept us in the match and allowed us to fight for 90 minutes at the same pace," said Sufil, who scored the equaliser in stoppage time.



Coach Golam Rabbani Choton and two of the players of the under-15 girls' team pose for a photograph at the BFF House ahead of their departure for Hong Kong 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:

### Kroos slams below-par Germany

Toni Kroos pointed the finger at his Germany teammates following defeat by Brazil, but coach Joachim Loew insists his team will be ready in time for the World Cup.

### French sports minister blasts racist Russian chants

France's sports minister and former two-time Olympic champion Laura Flessel, has condemned the "inadmissible" monkey chants aimed at French players Paul Pogba and Ousmane Dembele during the international friendly against Russia on Tuesday.

### '12 months is very harsh'

Cricket personalities around the world have their say regarding Cricket Australia banning Steve Smith and David Warner for 12 months, with Michael Vaughan writing: "Steve Smith I think is a good guy who made a huge mistake... He needed punishing but I think this is too harsh... Bancroft who I don't know was led astray but deserved punishing but again too harshly IMO... The other guy I really don't care about."

# We had no anger or hatred: Tite

AFP, Berlin



Defender Thiago Silva believes Brazil restored some pride in the famous shirt after a 1-0 friendly win over Germany in Berlin allowed his team to put their 2014 World Cup mauling behind them.

Gabriel Jesus' first-half goal at a sold-out Olympic Stadium on Tuesday saw Brazil end Germany's unbeaten run of 22 games dating back to their Euro 2016 semi-final defeat by hosts France.

"It was a matter of pride, after all that has been written and said," said Silva, who was suspended for the 7-1 rout in Belo Horizonte nearly four years ago. "This jersey deserves a little more respect. That's why I'm overjoyed about winning against a big opponent."

The victory gained a measure of revenge for five-time world champions Brazil, whose coach Tite had admitted are still haunted by the thrashing in the semi-finals of the last World Cup. The 56-year-old, nicknamed 'The Professor', said his side had learnt the lesson and showed cool heads in chilly Berlin.

"You media has spoken a lot about this [7-1] result, the reality that it is over -- we simply played well here and we won," said Tite. "We had no anger or hatred, you can't play well with emotions like that."

"We weren't trying to rebuild lost pride, we just wanted to put in a good performance."

"There are positive things to take from the game and the result, but we made a few mistakes, we gave away some possession and we lacked some width in our game."

Tite said he was pleased to see Brazil earn wins over Russia and now Germany in the last week without injured star forward Neymar.

"We are learning to play well without Neymar and that is part of our strength," said the Brazil boss.

RESULTS	
Germany	0 - 1 Brazil Jesus 37
Belgium	4 - 0 Saudi Arabia Lukaku 13, 39, Batshuayi 77, De Bruyne 78
England	1 - 1 Italy Vardy 26 Insigne 87+pen
Australia	0 - 0 Colombia
Poland	3 - 2 South Korea Lewandowski 32, Grosicki 45, Zielinski 90+2 Lee Chang-min 86, Hwang Hee-Chan 87

Defending world champions Germany are now winless in their last four games after draws against England, France and Spain.

"We have lost the game, but we can live with it as we have four or five points which we need to intensively work on," said Germany head coach Joachim Loew.

"It was to be expected that Brazil, with

their injured soul, played their best team and were highly motivated.

"It wasn't our day. We made too many mistakes, which allowed Brazil to grow in strength and confidence."

### ENGLAND HELD; LUKAKU SHINES

In the absence of injured striker Harry Kane, Jamie Vardy fired England ahead against Italy on 26 minutes after Jesse Lingard's quick thinking set up the Leicester man to blast beyond Gianluigi Donnarumma.

But England were unable to pad their advantage and conceded for the first time in six matches as Lorenzo Insigne converted an 87th-minute spot-kick, given via the help of VAR after James Tarkowski trod on the foot of Federico Chiesa.

Romelu Lukaku grabbed two goals as a strong Belgium side romped to a comfortable 4-0 victory over Saudi Arabia in Brussels, with Michy Batshuayi and Kevin De Bruyne also on target.



Brazil striker Gabriel Jesus (2nd from L) celebrates his all-important goal with teammates during their international friendly against Germany in Berlin on Tuesday.

# U-15 girls off to Hong Kong

SPORTS REPORTER



Bangladesh under-15 girls' football team left for Hong Kong in the early hours of Thursday to take part in the Jockey Club Girls' (U-15) International Youth Invitational Football Tournament with a hope of clinching the title of the four-nation meet.

Bangladesh will compete against Iran, Malaysia and Hong Kong in the round-robin format tournament, with the top point-getters to be declared champions. The tournament is being organised by Hong Kong Football Federation in collaboration with the Hong Kong Jockey Club Charities Trust as part of the club's five-year football development programme.

"Our opponents, who are from Southeast and Central Asia, are ahead of us in terms of FIFA rankings, but I think all four teams are equal in strength because we beat Iran 3-0 in AFC U-16 Championship Qualifiers in Dhaka," coach Golam Rabbani Choton said at a press conference at the BFF House yesterday.

"After clinching the SAFF U-15 Women's Championship, the girls have been kept in hard training and they are now more fit physically. I think all the matches will be competitive as we will go match by match with the target of winning. If the girls can put their natural performance, I am sure some good results can be expected," Choton said, adding that they would try to display attacking football like they did in the SAFF U-15 Women's Championship.

However, Choton will miss the services of Marzia, Sagorika and Parvin as they have crossed age-limit.

Bangladesh will play their first match against Malaysia on March 30 before taking on Iran on March 31. They play their last game against hosts Hong Kong on April 1.

# Lazio fall for €2m scam

AFP, Milan

Lazio have reportedly fallen for an email scam and paid two million euros (\$2.4m) of the final instalment for defender Stefan de Vrij's transfer from Dutch club Feyenoord to fraudsters.

Italian newspaper Il Tempo reported on Wednesday that hackers with knowledge of the deal tricked the Serie A club into paying the money into the wrong bank account in the Netherlands.

Lazio received an email that appeared to be from the Dutch champions asking for the two million euros along with bank account details, and duly sent the money. But Feyenoord never received the cash and claim to have no knowledge of the email.

Il Tempo said that the prosecutor looking into the case has tracked down the money to a Dutch bank account, which doesn't belong to Feyenoord.

The 26-year-old joined Lazio in 2014 after a successful World Cup with the Netherlands but will leave for nothing this summer after failing to extend his contract.

De Vrij has reportedly been targeted by six-time defending champions Juventus with interest also from English clubs Manchester City and Manchester United.

But Gazzetta dello Sport reported the centre-back is ready to sign for Inter Milan on a free transfer this summer.