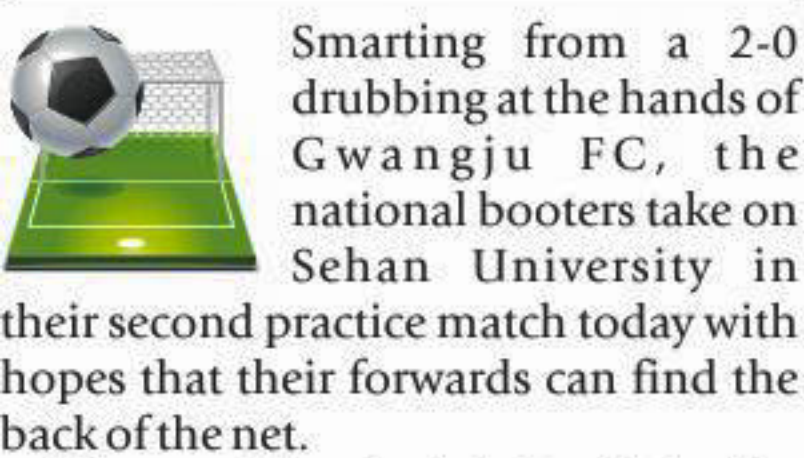


Forwards in the firing line

Bangladesh take on Sehan University today

SPORTS REPORTER



Smarting from a 2-0 drubbing at the hands of Gwangju FC, the national booters take on Sehan University in their second practice match today with hopes that their forwards can find the back of the net.

The match is scheduled to kick off at 1:00pm (BST) at the Mokpo International Football Center in South Jeolla.

Bangladesh are in South Korea for an intensive training programme and to play three practice games as part of their preparations for the upcoming Asian Games and SAFF Championship.

English coach Jamie Day's charges had a comparatively good match against second-tier professional side Gwangju, creating a few good chances. However their forwards could not cash in on those chances due to poor finishing, a long-standing problem for the national team.

Although they made a few mistakes in regards to their defensive organisation against Gwangju, Day emphasised on scoring ability in yesterday's training session so that the forwards would be sharper up front.

"As our main problem is scoring, we worked with the forwards on their finishing in today's [Thursday] practice. The forwards failed to cash in on scoring opportunities in the first practice match, so Day wants the forwards to capitalise on the opportunities they will get in the match against Sehan University tomorrow [Friday]," said assistant coach Mahbub Hossain Roxy over the phone yesterday.

Saad Uddin, Mohammad Abdullah and Rabiul Hasan got one scoring opportunity each in the first half against Gwangju but they failed to find the target. Saad did find the back of the net once in the first half, but the goal was ruled out due to an offside.

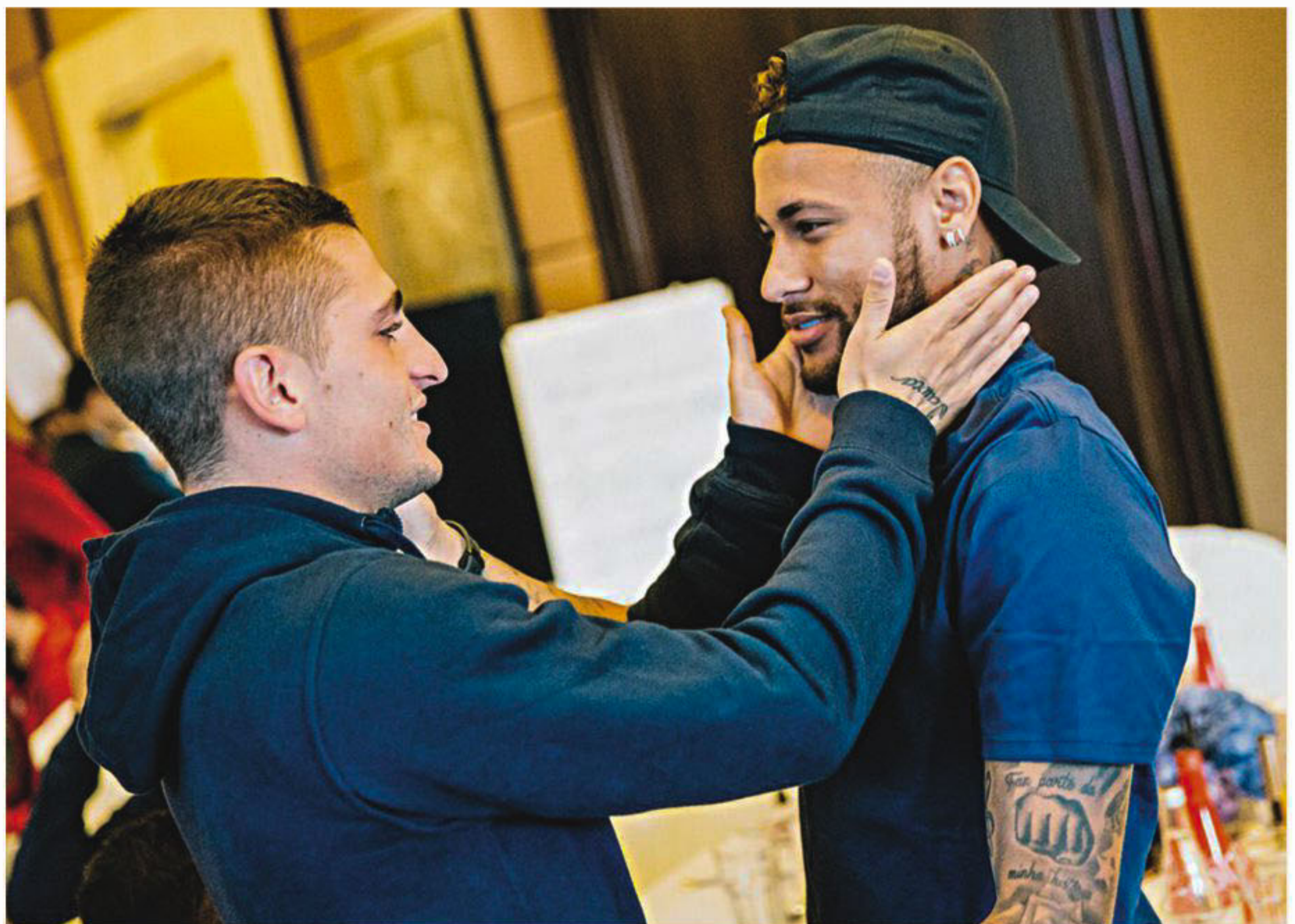
Day had previously informed that he would play the Olympic squad in the last two practice matches to give some much-needed game time to the

players who are going to play later this month in the Asian Games, where Bangladesh have been drawn against Qatar, Thailand and Uzbekistan in Group B of the football event.

Day opted to stick with the same squad that played against Al Mesaimer FC of Qatar when his side took the field against Gwangju, before sending out an entirely new eleven for the second half. It is expected that the same team will start today.

The former Arsenal player prefers a 4-2-3-1 with Rahmat Mia, Tapu Barman, Tutul Hossain Badsha and Biswanath Gosh in defence with Jamal Bhuiyan and Masuk Mia Jonny as holding midfielders. Rabiul Hasan, Mohammad Abdullah and Mahbubur Rahman Sufil will be in charge of creative duties behind lone striker Saad Uddin.

However although Day has concentrated on solving the scoring problem, he must also focus on the players' lack of concentration in the dying moments of matches, during which time Bangladesh have often conceded crucial goals.



Neymar travelled to China yesterday to join the Paris Saint-Germain squad at their base in Shenzhen as the Brazilian superstar begins preparations for his second season with the French champions.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

Higuain, Bonucci set for medicals



REUTERS, Milan

Italy defender Leonardo Bonucci has arrived in Turin for a medical ahead of a return to Juventus from AC Milan while Argentina striker Gonzalo Higuain is set to move in the opposite direction, the Serie A clubs said Thursday.

Milan said that Higuain, who has spent two seasons at Juventus, had also arrived for his medical.

"Look who's in Milan ready for medicals..." the club said on Twitter in a post accompanied by a photograph of Higuain in a Milan training shirt.

Several dozen fans waited outside the clinic where Higuain was pictured arriving at 0930 local time (0730 GMT).

Juventus said on their website that Bonucci, who spent seven seasons at the club before joining Milan a year ago in a 40-million euro move, had arrived in Turin for his medical.

Higuain moved to Juventus in 2016 for



90 million euros (\$105 million) after scoring a record 36 Serie A goals in the previous season for Napoli and his sudden departure infuriated that team's supporters.

The 30-year-old has won Serie A and Coppa Italia titles in each of his two seasons with Juventus and scored 55 goals in 105 appearances in all competitions, including 40 goals in 73 outings in Serie A.

Critics, however, say he has failed to make an impact on the big occasion.

He had a subdued World Cup where he started one game, appeared as a substitute in two more and failed to score a goal. He was left on the bench for the second round match against France as Argentina lost 4-3 and were knocked out.

Bonucci's return to Juve would reunite him with Andrea Barzagli and Giorgio Chiellini, who together formed the so-called 'BBC' defence, which proved to be one of Europe's most formidable rearguards.

Barzagli, 37, extended his contract for another season in June.

Gold Cup in October?

SPORTS REPORTER



The Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) has announced a tentative timeline for hosting the Bangabandhu Gold Cup from October 1-15, just two weeks after the completion of the SAFF Suzuki Cup in Dhaka.

The game's governing body deferred its annual international calendar for the fourth time since the completion of the last edition of Bangabandhu Gold Cup in January 2016. The BFF had previously shown different causes for the deferment of the tournament such as unavailability of participants and needing more time to invite foreign teams.

In its meeting yesterday, the BFF executive committee also decided to sell all the rights of the tournament to the K Sports, who will provide one crore taka to the BFF and bear all expenditures related to holding the six-nation tournament involving teams like Afghanistan, Nepal and Palestine.

It was also decided that general secretary Abu Nayeem Shohag -- who had allegedly threatened BFF vice president Badal Roy not to enter the BFF House -- would be awarded a three-year contract. Later, a section of former footballers staged a protest demanding Shohag's resignation due to his threats towards Roy.

"We have examined every detail of the issue of Badal Roy. There were a few

misunderstandings, which have now been cleared," said probe committee chairman and BFF senior vice president Abdus Salam Murshedy, adding that BFF president Kazi Salahuddin would soon sit with the agitating former footballers to explain the matter.

However, a BFF member seeking anonymity said that Shohag was warned by the executive committee following his apology to Badal and interestingly it was Badal who proposed the extension to Shohag's contract.

The meeting also gave Paul Smalley, the strategic and technical director of BFF, another year's contract following the completion of his two-year agreement.

Neymar returns to PSG

AFP, Shenzhen

Dozens of screaming fans welcomed Brazil star Neymar on Thursday as he flew in to China to rejoin Paris Saint-Germain after his disappointing World Cup.

The world's most expensive player, wearing a canary-yellow hoodie, posed for pictures with airport staff before his noisy welcome in the arrivals hall.

Footage on Neymar's Twitter account showed him signing Barcelona, Brazil and PSG shirts before being guided through the crowd by minders and security staff.

Neymar's arrival, ahead of Saturday's French Super Cup game against Monaco in Shenzhen, comes more than five months after his last appearance for PSG following a foot injury in late February.

The flamboyant forward then endured a turbulent World Cup as Brazil were stunned by Belgium in the quarter-finals and he was widely lampooned for his play-acting.

"I didn't want to see a ball, or to see any more football played," the 26-year-old told AFP last month in an interview describing his World Cup disappointment.

BD break winless run

SPORTS REPORTER

Following two consecutive defeats, Bangladesh played out a 2-2 draw against Iraq in the fifth round of the Asian Nations Cup Chess at Hamadan, Iran yesterday.

Bangladesh, who were playing their sixth round game against Lebanon when this report was filed, are in 11th position out of the 14 participating nations with one win and one draw from five matches.

In the fifth round matches, IM Minhaz Uddin Sagar beat Noah A.H. Al-Ali while FM Fahad Rahman and FM Sheikh Nasir Ahmed drew with Ahmed Abdul Sattar and Salem Hatam Taleb. However, GM Enamul Hossain Razib lost to IM Hussein Ali Hussein.

Nasri doping ban increased to 18 months

AFP, Nyon

UEFA extended former France international Samir Nasri's doping ban from six to 18 months on Wednesday over the intravenous drip treatment he received at a Los Angeles clinic in 2016.

The 31-year-old, who is currently without a club, was suspended for six months in February after taking a multi-vitamin booster in contravention of World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) rules.

The ban was backdated to July 1, 2017, meaning the ex-Manchester City and Arsenal midfielder will be cleared to return next January. He can resume training with a club at the start of November.

Nasri had the drip treatment while he was on loan at Sevilla during the 2016-17 season, prompting the Spanish anti-doping agency to open an investigation.



The raffle draw for the third round of the 'Rangs Toshiba - The Daily Star World Cup Football Quiz 2018' was held at The Daily Star Centre yesterday. Razaul of Uttarkhan won the first prize, Mim of Kazirbag bagged the second while Kawsar of Motijheel won the third prize.

PHOTO: STAR

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