

## BOLT TO TRAIN WITH A-LEAGUE SIDE

Olympic sprint champion Usain Bolt will train with Australia's Central Coast Mariners as he continues his quest to become a professional soccer player, the A-League team said yesterday. Bolt won eight Olympic golds and since retiring from athletics has trained with Germany's Borussia Dortmund, South Africa's Mamelodi Sundowns and Norway's Stromsgodset. He will link up with the Australian side later this month. "I am very excited about coming to Australia and would like to thank the owner and management of the Central Coast Mariners for giving me this opportunity," the 31-year-old Jamaican said. "It has been my dream to play professional football and I know it will involve a lot of hard work and training to get to the level required to play and make an impact in the A-League." Mariners said the deal did not guarantee a professional playing contract with them. -- REUTERS



# Simanta wants to record her best score

SPORTS REPORTER



ASIAN GAMES  
Jakarta Palembang 2018

South Asian Games gold medalist weightlifter Mabia Akter Simanta said she would look to improve on her best effort in the upcoming Asian Games in Indonesia this month. The 19-year-old has been undergoing training for the quadrennial event for the past five weeks, and she feels she can improve on her score while doing better than her South Asian counterparts in the 63-kg weight category.

The girl from Dhaka, who has been constantly improving her score since she won the gold medal in the South Asian Games in India two years ago, lifted her current best score of 180 kilos during this year's Commonwealth Games in Australia, where she finished sixth. She had lifted 78 kilos in snatch and 102 kilos in snatch & jerk during that event in Gold Coast in April.

However, Simanta knows the competition at the Asian Games is much stronger than that of the Commonwealth Games. Hence she is realistic in her assessment of her prospects.

"It would be unwise or too hopeful if I said that my target is to win a medal because we all know how high-standard the competition at the Asian Games is," she told The Daily Star yesterday. "All I can say is that I would do better than the Indian weightlifters and that I would look to improve on my previous best."

In fact the Asian Games standard is almost similar to the world standard, with China dominating the roost in the continent. In the last edition of the Asian Games in South Korea four years ago, a Chinese Taipei weightlifter named Lin Tzu-chi set a games and world record by lifting 261 kilos.



Weightlifter Mabia Akter Simanta sweats it out at the weightlifting gymnasium in Paltan yesterday as she prepares for the upcoming Asian Games. The SA Games gold medalist will leave for Jakarta on August 16 ahead of her event on August 24. PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

So Simanta would do well if she can achieve her target of improving her score, especially in light of next year's South Asian Games in Nepal, where she would look to defend her title. However, Simanta, who has been training under former national weightlifter Firoza Parvin, said her preparation could have been better.

"I started training on June 28. It's been a month and a half. Training could have been

better if I had a better coach," Simanta said.

Bangladesh Weightlifting Federation's vice president Mohiuddin Ahmed also expressed his optimism regarding Simanta while admitting that the weightlifters need more help in terms of infrastructure and training.

"Simanta is continuously improving her score. I am pretty hopeful that she will record her best score and we would be

happy if she can finish inside the top eight in the Asian Games," Mohiuddin said. "However, weightlifting, which has brought many gold medals from international competitions, needs a proper gymnasium and a good foreign coach if we are to target medals at the world level."

Simanta will leave for Indonesia on August 16 and will take part in the 63-kg category event on August 24.

# Bangladesh to lose one spot?

SPORTS REPORTER



AFC CUP

Only one club from Bangladesh is likely to get the opportunity to participate in next year's AFC Cup following a flawed football season in Bangladesh.

Generally, the defending champions of the Federation Cup and Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) are granted the chance to compete in the AFC Cup, a tournament for second-tier clubs across Asia, subject to meeting AFC Club licensing criteria. The BPL champions are allowed to directly enter the group stages of the competition while the Federation Cup winners must go through a qualifying round.

However the flawed annual calendar, which was announced a few days ago, deprives the BPL champions their chance to play in the 2019 AFC Cup as the tournament's group stage is set to get underway in April next year, one month before the BPL is completed.

On the other hand, the Federation Cup will conclude long before the AFC's deadline to register entries on November 15 as the season's curtain-raising tournament is scheduled to get underway from October 22.

"This time the Bangladesh Premier League champions will not be eligible to play in the 2019 AFC Cup but rather only the winners of the Federation Cup will be eligible to play the AFC Cup qualifiers," BFF general secretary Abu Nayeem Shohag said yesterday. "Although the deadline for sending names of clubs has been fixed on November 15, by which period the Bangladesh Premier League will not be completed, the champions of 2018-19 season will get the chance to play in the 2020 AFC Cup."

Shohag added that for clubs to participate in the AFC Cup they must have AFC Club licensing, which can be renewed every year. Abahani, Mohammedan SC and Saif SC have all previously secured the AFC Club license.

Abahani qualified for last edition's AFC Cup by becoming champions of both the Federation Cup and BPL, and so Saif SC were given opportunity to play in the AFC Cup as the second team from Bangladesh despite finishing fourth in the 12-team league table, courtesy of their AFC Club licensing.

## ASIAN GAMES Hockey squad named

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Hockey Federation (BHF) yesterday announced an 18-member squad for the Asian Games as coach Iman Gobinathan Krishnamurti has pinned hopes on the players who recently toured South Korea for five practice matches against the Asian giants.

The Malaysian started preparations for the Asian Games with a 40-member preliminary squad in June before trimming it to 28 members. Gobinathan's charges then toured India where they played six practice matches against India A and India's junior side. After a disappointing tour, the coach made some changes to the squad for the South Korea tour, where they lost four matches and drew one.

**SQUAD:** Ashim Gope, Abu Sayeed Nippon, Mamunur Rahman Chayan, Imran Hasan Pintoo, Khorshadur Rahman, Farhad Ahmed Shetel, Ashraf Islam, Kamaruzzaman Rana, Shohanur Rahman Sabuj, Sarwar Hossain, Roman Sarkar, Naim Uddin, Fazle Hossain Rabbi, Rasel Mahamud Jimmy, Pushkar Khisha Mimo, Milon Hossain, Mainul Islam Koushik, Arshad Hossain.

# MU reject Barca offer for Pogba

AGENCIES, Manchester



Premier League

Manchester United have rejected a double player-plus-cash deal for Paul Pogba from Barcelona, according to reports.

With just three days of the transfer window remaining Pogba's agent Mino Raiola is reportedly trying to engineer a move for the France international to move to the La Liga giants.

Pogba returned from his post World Cup holiday on Monday and Raiola has been in detailed discussions with Barcelona over the midfielder, according to various reports.

The Daily Mail claims that the club have rejected an offer from Barcelona of £44.6million plus Yerry Mina and Andre Gomes and United insist Pogba is not for sale.

However, it is worrying for United that Raiola appears to be trying to manufacture a move for the midfielder - and it is claimed he has been doing so with his client's blessing.

United only re-signed Pogba from Juventus two years ago for £89million, but, after a season of reports about a rift in his relationship with Jose Mourinho, there has been speculation he could leave the club this summer.

However, the report adds United are aware that Raiola's latest move could be a way to try and land the 25-year-old a bigger contract.

Alexis Sanchez is currently the highest earner at the club, earning £500,000 a week, and Raiola approached the club about a raise for his client after Sanchez made the move from Arsenal in January, adds the report.

Earlier, former Manchester United defender Rio Ferdinand warned the club not to sell France World Cup star Paul Pogba and instead to focus on strengthening the squad.

Ferdinand wants Pogba to stay and Spurs defender Toby Alderweireld to come in. Referring to reports that Pogba's agent, Mino Raiola, is looking at the Camp Nou as a possible new home for his player, Ferdinand said: "Don't you dare allow this ED... #MUFC is Pogba's home!! Silence these rumours ASAP & get @AlderweireldTob through the door."

## 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:

### Kroenke wins full control of Arsenal

American billionaire Stan Kroenke has struck a deal to take full control of Arsenal by buying out Russian rival Alisher Usmanov, valuing the English Premier League club at around \$2.3 billion but enraging some fans of the north London team.



### Serena Williams struggling with 'postpartum emotions'

Serena Williams says she is suffering from "postpartum emotions" as the 23-time Grand Slam winner struggles to deal with juggling family life and tennis.



### Curran's example inspires England new boy Pope

Ollie Pope hopes to follow in the footsteps of fellow 20-year-old Surrey rising star Sam Curran during England's Test series with India. Top-order batsman Pope is set to make his England debut at Lord's later this week.



Lionel Messi (C) and Luis Suarez were just as pleased as Arturo Vidal (R) that another South American had joined their ranks at Barcelona as the trio caught up after training yesterday. PHOTO: COLLECTED

# 'I had a few accidents'

## Liverpool roads a challenge for Salah

AGENCIES, London

Plundering goals appeared easy for Mohamed Salah upon his arrival at Liverpool last year, but adjusting to British road conditions was apparently more of an issue for the Egypt star.

The Reds signed Salah from Roma for an initial fee of £36.9million in June 2017, and he repaid that investment handsomely by scoring 44 times in all competitions.

The 26-year-old had already experienced a taste of life in the UK after moving from Basel to Chelsea in 2014. But it seems getting behind the wheel remained a tricky prospect following his big-money switch to Merseyside.

"In the first few weeks it was hard, I had couple of accidents when I did drive on the sidewalk, but then everything worked just fine," he said during a commercial appearance with two Egyptian actors.

Asked what his favourite prize is of the many accolades he accumulated in 2017-18, Salah replied: "[The Premier League's] golden boot for sure, I had to work hard for that, and concentrate on every match to score, also I had to fight for it with a great players as Harry Kane and [Sergio] 'Kun' Aguero."

A hugely popular figure in his home country, Salah revealed that on one occasion, a seemingly brief act of generosity with a supporter left him facing a steady influx of well-wishers arriving at his home.

"Once I was at home in Egypt, a fan

knocked my door and asked to take a picture with me, I agreed, two hours later he came back with about eight people and asked me to take pictures with them and I agreed," he said.

"At night the door knocked again, I opened and found him and there is a bus behind him full of people, I asked him 'what are you trying to do?'. He told me that he told them to come take pictures with Salah, and that he is going to bring more people the next day."



Cristiano Ronaldo (C) scored his first goal for Juventus on Tuesday, although it will not be found in any record book. The Portuguese and five of his teammates were playing a mixed match with the Juventus under-23 squad with goals also coming from Paulo Dybala and Juan Cuadrado. PHOTO: COLLECTED

## Courtois on verge of Real move

AFP, Madrid

Chelsea goalkeeper Thibaut Courtois is closing in on a move to Real Madrid in a deal worth around 35 million euros, Spanish media reported on Tuesday.

"Courtois, decision imminent", Madrid sports daily Marca ran as its headline, claiming that the record 13-time European champions are "confident of his signing".

"The Courtois soap opera is coming to its end. The target, who yesterday did not attend Chelsea training despite being at the end of his holidays, speeds up the process to sign for Real Madrid, an announcement that could become official in the coming hours," Marca wrote.

Real will pay 35 million euros to bring in the Belgium international, voted the best goalkeeper at the World Cup, according to Marca.

AS, another Madrid-based sports daily, said "Chelsea give Courtois up for lost and want (Athletic Bilbao's) Kepa Arrizabalaga to be his replacement". It added the Premier League club "are willing to pay the 80 million euro release clause to Athletic" for the 23-year-old Spain international.

There is also speculation that Chelsea could try to sign