

What to WATCH

DAY'S EVENT

GTV & MAASRANGA
Bangladesh Premier League
Phase Two
Khulna Titans v Rajshahi Kings
Live from 1:30pm
Comilla Victorians v Sylhet Sixers
Live from 6:30pm

Bangladesh Premier League
Phase Two
Venue: Sylhet International Cricket Stadium
Khulna Titans v Rajshahi Kings

SONY SIX
Australia v India
Second ODI (D/N)
Live from 9:20am
SONY SIX & TEN 2
Australian Open
Round-1

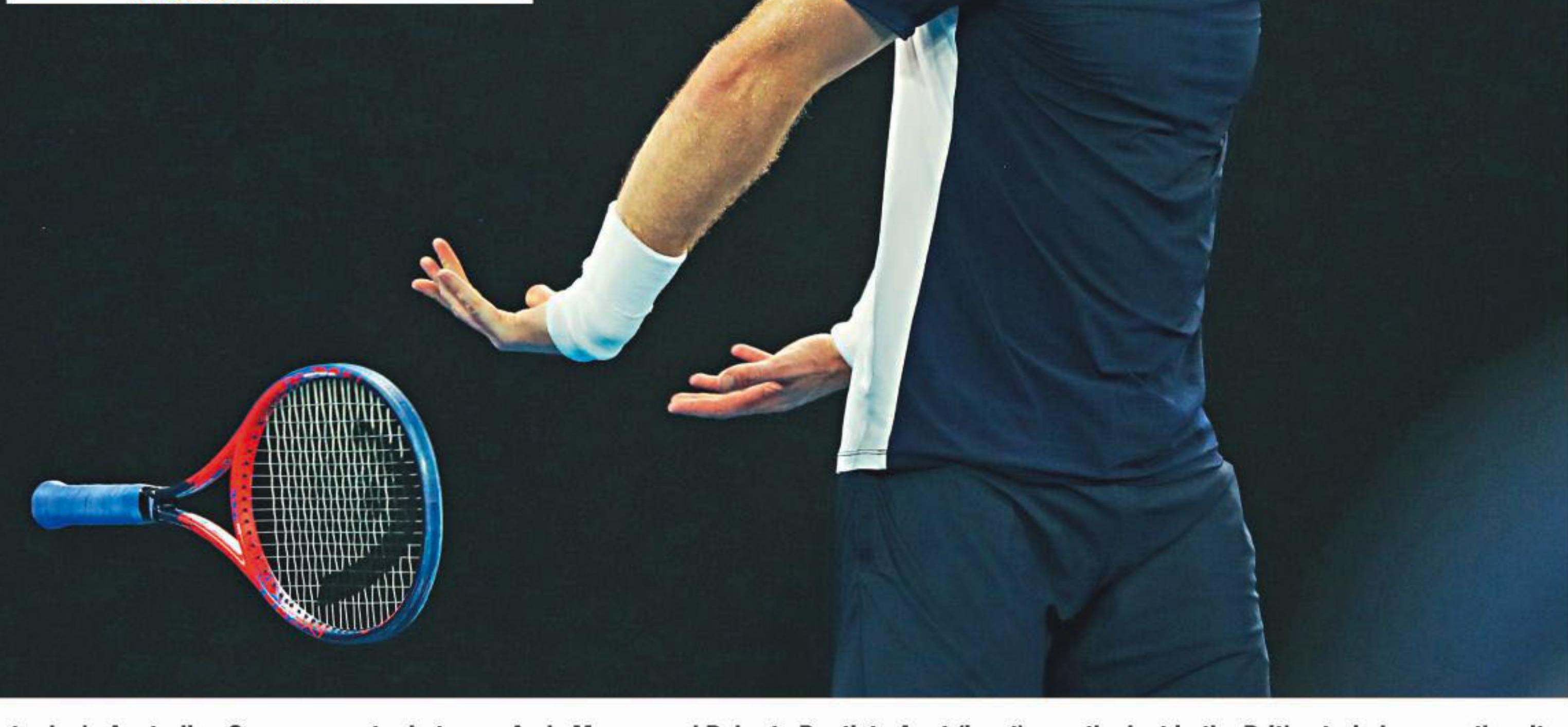
Time: 1:30pm
Comilla Victorians v Sylhet Sixers
Time: 6:30pm

Men's & Women's singles
Live from 6:00am

CHINA GETS LOWEST-EVER T20 SCORE

Cricket's governing body has long dreamed of spreading the game to China, but the latest performance by its women's team is unlikely to inspire many in the world's most populous nation to take up the bat and ball. China were skittled out for just 14 runs at a tournament in Bangkok on Sunday -- the lowest ever score in a Twenty20 international match, for men or women. In reply to the United Arab Emirates' massive 203 for 3, China were bowled out in under an hour and with 10 overs to spare at the Thailand T20 Smash. Hin Lili led their fleeting resistance to the UAE's unsparing attack, top-scoring with four. The Thailand T20 Smash includes fellow cricketing underdogs Malaysia, Indonesia and Myanmar. It is not the first embarrassment to befall Chinese cricket against Asian nations who Beijing dominates in economic and political terms, but struggles to match on the wicket.

—AFP



If yesterday's Australian Open encounter between Andy Murray and Roberto Bautista Agut (inset) was the last in the Brit's storied career, then it was a fitting end which personified his typical fighting spirit. Despite being troubled by a hip injury, Murray fought back from two sets down to force a fifth set but Agut proved too much to overcome as the Spaniard won the match 6-4, 6-4, 6-7 (5/7), 6-7 (4/7), 6-2.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Battling Murray bows out

Federer, Nadal ease to second round

AFP, Melbourne

AO
australian open

Andy Murray said he would make a decision on further surgery that could end his career "within a week" after battling to a gutsy, epic five-set defeat in the Australian Open yesterday.

The Scot fought to the very end before losing his Melbourne first-round match 6-4, 6-4, 6-7 (5/7), 6-7 (4/7), 6-2 to Roberto Bautista Agut.

Murray, who has said he will retire this season because of chronic hip pain, seemed finished at two sets and a break down to the 22nd seeded Spaniard in the first round but somehow battled back to force a fifth set.

Murray had earlier conceded that yesterday's clash could well be his last match as he will soon need a further major operation on his damaged right hip.

Murray had entered a raucous Melbourne Arena to a huge ovation as Scottish Saltires and British Union flags were flown while one banner proclaimed: "There will only ever be one Andy Murray".

The rollicking support lifted him and despite frequently grimacing with pain he moved relatively freely as the Spaniard took

Honestly I've loved playing here over the years. If this was my last match, an amazing way to end. I gave everything I had and it wasn't enough tonight. I could play another match, but I want to improve my quality of life, because even if I take four months, I still can't walk.

ANDY MURRAY

to love with an searing ace to nudge ahead 3-2 before forcing a tiebreak which he took 7-5 with a scream of "come on" and a huge fist pump.

Suddenly the comeback was on.

The fourth set went with serve and Murray again proved the tie-break master on the fourth of his five set points.

Once Bautista Agut broke in the fifth, Murray's resolve finally crumbled and the Spaniard took it 6-2. He will face unseeded Australian John Millman in the second round.

Murray was then shown a big screen tribute from a whole phalanx of top players, including Roger Federer, Djokovic, Rafael Nadal, Caroline Wozniacki and Sloane Stephens.

Earlier in the day, an ageless Roger Federer warmed up for a run at a record seventh Australian Open title by breezing 6-3, 6-4, 6-4 past Uzbek Denis Istomin while long-time rival Nadal showed no mercy to Australian wildcard James Duckworth in straight 6-4, 6-3, 7-5 victory.

SHORT CORNER

Brothers robbed at gunpoint

The brothers of two England footballers -- Marcus Rashford and Trent Alexander-Arnold -- were beaten and robbed at gunpoint while eating breakfast at a cafe in Manchester on Saturday.

Dane Rashford and Tyler Alexander-Arnold were at Littlerock cafe in the Moss Side area when three men armed with a shotgun, machete and baseball bats swooped on the premises according to police sources.

A third man, said to be their friend, was injured in the attack.

The assailants stole a white Range Rover, Tyler's wallet, a white BMW 3 series, and Dane's watch.

Greater Manchester Police (GMP) have arrested six people -- four men aged 18, 19, 23 and 58 and two teenagers aged 17 -- on suspicion of the robbery.

Ziaur wins eighth round

Grand Master Ziaur Rahman returned to winning ways in the 17th Delhi International Open Grandmasters Chess Tournament by beating his Indian opponent FM Shailesh Dravid in the eighth round in New Delhi, India yesterday.

The win helped Zia raise his points tally to six and share third position alongside 16 other players on equal points from eight matches. Iranian Mosadeqpour Masoud took the solo lead at the close of eighth round with seven points while seven players shared second position with 6.5 points each.

FM Fahad Rahman also tasted victory after two successive defeats when he beat compatriot Abid Rahman to secure five points while FM Mehdi Hasan Parag lost to Grahesh. Meanwhile, Tahsin Tajwar Zia drew with Manish Kumar.

Mahadi gets strong start

Mahadi Hasan Alve got a winning start in another ITF-sanctioned tennis tournament in Thailand by defeating Nepal's Chirag Timilsina 6-1 and 6-2 in the boy's singles event of the ITF Asian U/14 Development Championships 2019: Division-II in Bangkok yesterday.

Zubaid Utsob and Roman Hossain followed suit with Alve, who became runners-up in the first U/14 tournament when he and Roman beat Bhutan's Tobden Tshering and Mongolia's Undrakh Purevdorj respectively.

In the girl's singles event, Mashfia Afrin, Suborna Khatun and Sadia Afrin beat their respective rivals to progress to the next round, said a press release yesterday.

—SPORTS REPORTER

Wozniacki launches title defence

AFP, Melbourne

AO
australian open

Caroline Wozniacki fought back tears after launching her Australian Open defence with a convincing 6-3, 6-4 win over Alison Van Uytvanck of Belgium yesterday.

The third seed won her maiden Slam at Melbourne Park last year but has since been diagnosed with rheumatoid arthritis, a debilitating auto-immune disease that has threatened to derail her career.

The Dane, who is bidding to become the first woman to defend the title since Victoria Azarenka in 2013, showed no outward sign of the illness as she eased past world number 52 Van Uytvanck in straight sets.

Wozniacki appeared to move freely despite energy-sapping conditions, engaging in long rallies with her dogged opponent who she described before the match as "tricky". She took no chances against Van Uytvanck, increasing her aggression and attacking the net.

The turning point came when Van Uytvanck defended three break points in the sixth game but conceded a fourth with a double fault.

Wozniacki seized the opening, serving out the set after 48 minutes as Van Uytvanck undermined her own cause with 18 double faults.

The title holder raced through the second set, showing some nerves as she squandered two match points but finally sealing the victory on the third.

Messi gets 400th La Liga goal

REUTERS, Barcelona



Lionel Messi became the first man to score 400 La Liga goals as Barcelona eased to a 3-0 win at home to Eibar on Sunday which kept the Catalans five points clear at the top of the standings.

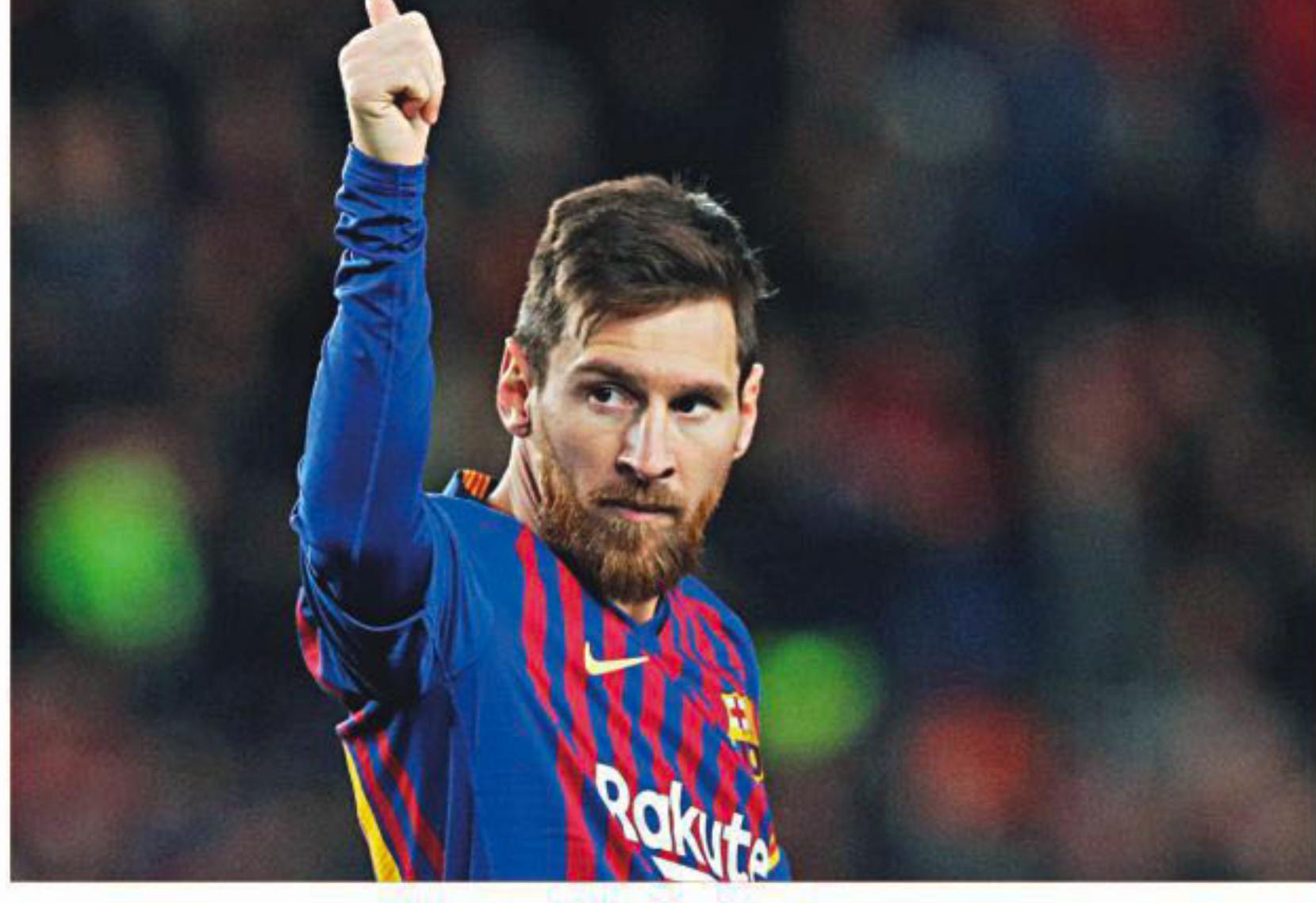
Luis Suarez, who scored twice, helped tee up Messi's landmark goal, which came in the 53rd minute of the Argentine's 435th league appearance for Barca and saw the league's top scorer increase his tally to 17 goals in 17 games this campaign.

"His numbers are stratospheric, they are incredible, but it's not just the goals, it's everything else he does too," said Barca coach Ernesto Valverde.

Suarez had given Barca the lead in the 19th minute by completing a superb team move involving Messi and his former Liverpool team mate Philippe Coutinho, who returned to

TOP FIVE

Rank	Player	Years	Goals	Apps
1	Lionel Messi	2004-2019	400	435
2	Ronaldo	2009-2018	311	292
3	Telmo Zarra	1940-1955	251	278
4	Hugo Sanchez	1981-1994	234	347
5	Raul	1994-2010	228	550



the starting line up for the first time in four league games.

The Uruguayan again combined with Coutinho to set up the historic goal for Messi, who produced a typical low shot into bottom corner after the lay off from Suarez.

It was another remarkable milestone for Messi, who has been the league's leading scorer since 2014, with Cristiano Ronaldo next on the list with 311 goals.

Eibar had been stubborn oppo-

nents in the first half but began to cave in after the interval, with Suarez striking again six minutes later, converting from a tight angle with the aid of a deflection off a visiting defender.

Suarez also heaped praise on Messi for yet another momentous night from the Argentine.

"Obviously, we have to be very proud of Messi because every week he demonstrates how good he is and continues to make history with the club," he said.

Home series set for BD U-19

SPORTS REPORTER



The Bangladesh Under-19 team will begin the new year with a home series against the England Under-19 cricket team, who are scheduled to arrive on January 20, informed the Bangladesh Cricket Board yesterday.

England will take part in a lone T20, three ODI and a two-match youth Test series on their month long tour.

The visitors will start the tour with a warm-up match on January 25 at the Sheikh Kamal International Cricket Stadium (SKICS) in Cox's Bazar before facing the hosts in the lone T20 fixture on January 27.

All the limited over matches will be played at the SKICS in Cox's Bazar with the first of the three-match series scheduled for January 29.

The teams will then travel to Chattogram, where the first of the two-match youth Test series will begin on February 7 while the second game is set to get underway on February 18 at the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium.

FIXTURES

DATE	MATCH	VENUE
Jan 27	Only Youth T20 International	SKICS, Cox's Bazar
Jan 29	First Youth ODI	SKICS, Cox's Bazar
Jan 31	Second Youth ODI	SKICS, Cox's Bazar
Feb 2	Third Youth ODI	SKICS, Cox's Bazar
Feb 7-10	First 4-Day Match (Youth Test)	ZACS, Chattogram
Feb 15-18	Second 4-Day Match (Youth Test)	ZACS, Chattogram

Is the cash flow political?

SPORTS REPORTER



Before the 2016 polls of the Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF), the Kazi Salahuddin-led panel made a 25-point pledge that kept District Football Leagues (DFLs) on the top of its list of priorities. The DFLs, however, have only caught the attention of Salahuddin in the third year of his third straight stint as BFF president.

Since their separation from the government-affiliated District Sports Associations (DSAs) in 2008, the District Football Associations (DFAs) had been overlooked, resulting in narrowing in the pipeline of footballers with no football leagues at district level.

DFAs have been sitting idle because they have not gotten financial assistance from the BFF or the government.

Over nine years -- 2009 to 2017 -- most DFAs had hardly staged district leagues, except in the 2014 and 2015 seasons, during which the BFF provided funds by roping in Prime Bank and Nitol Tata Motors as sponsors.

Most of the DFAs were then given Tk 3 lakh per season to complete their respective leagues and two years later, the BFF in the 2018 season provided money again to DFAs with Tk 1.42 crore aid from the government.

However, the story is different for the 15 to 18 districts who have actually kept football alive. They have supplied players to different Dhaka clubs and have been holding district leagues regularly, regardless of whether they received financial assistance.

The good news is that most DFAs have once again started coming back to life in the wake of financial help from the BFF as well as funding from the

Bangladesh District and Divisional Football Association (BDDFA), an organisation of DFA organisers across the country. Each DFA that staged a league was rewarded with nearly Tk 5 lakh -- Tk 2 lakh from BFF and Tk 3 lakh from BDDFA.

Of the 64 DFAs, approximately 45 had already completed their respective leagues by December 2018 while some leagues are still ongoing. But the DFAs at Munshiganj, Gazipur, Narsingdi, Shariatpur, Kishoreganj, Cox's Bazar, Chaudanga, Kushtia, Moulvibazar and Sunamganj did not stage leagues.

However, most DFAs completed their leagues within a short period, staging it in the format of a tournament rather than participating teams playing each other in a league format.

Both the BFF and BDDFA are happy with the completions of district leagues and promised to keep their financial assistance flowing in the coming season and also to strengthen their monitoring.

However, Sherpur DFA president Manik Datta believes both

BFF and BDDFA have taken this initiative only because the BFF polls are coming up, but he demanded financial assistance from the game's governing body every season.

"I asked the BFF secretariat time and again to hold the annual general meeting (AGM) so that we, DFAs, can raise our problems but the BFF paid no attention to it," said Datta. "They are providing money because the next BFF polls are knocking on the door."

"However, our expectation is that the BFF will provide financial help to all DFAs every year instead of just the year leading into the elections," said Datta, adding that he staged the Sherpur league six times in the last seven years with or without the governing body's help.

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