

DAY'S
EVENT

Bangladesh Premier League
Brothers Union v Mohammedan
Time: 4:00pm
Venue: Bangabandhu National Stadium, Dhaka
Rahmatganj v Sheikh Jamal

Time: 7:00pm
Venue: Bangabandhu National Stadium, Dhaka
Arambagh KS v Saif SC
Time: 4:00pm
Venue: Rofique Uddin Bhuiyan Stadium, Mymensingh

GYAN RETIRES AHEAD OF AFRICA NATIONS CUP

Ghana national team captain Asamoah Gyan on Monday announced his retirement from international football just weeks before the Africa Nations Cup. Gyan said his decision had been taken as a way to protest a plan by coach Kwesi Appiah to deny him the opportunity of captaining the Black Stars in next month's Africa Nations Cup in Egypt. "Upon consultation with my family and team... if the decision of the coach is to give captaincy of the tournament to another player while I am named in the team for the tournament, I wish to excuse myself from the tournament," the 33-year-old player said in a statement. "I also wish to retire from the national team permanently," added the Kayserispor striker.

--AFP



BIRTH CENTENARY OF BANGABANDHU BFF wants to host marquee teams

SPORTS REPORTER



To celebrate the birth centenary of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) has started communicating with the world's top football nations like Germany, Italy and France as well as clubs like Barcelona and Bayern Munich with the aim of holding a friendly match either between the nations or the clubs in Dhaka next year.

Even though the BFF submitted its proposal to the sports and international subcommittee of national committee for national-wide celebration of the birth centenary of Bangabandhu on Monday to host three international tournaments named after Bangabandhu, the game's local governing body already started communicating with football associations and agents three weeks ago.

"We have started communicating with teams like Portugal, England, France,

Germany and Italy and their agents informing them that we want to hold an international football match to celebrate the birth centenary of father of the nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman," said BFF's general secretary Abu Nayeem Shohag.

"We are also communicating with top clubs like Liverpool, Barcelona, Bayern Munich and PSG," Shohag said. "We have communicated with a couple of national football associations but they asked us to communicate with their agents because their schedules are almost fixed."

"I think we are a bit late in communicating with the teams. It could have been better had we started the process in December last year because schedules of most of the teams is already booked. We are trying to hold a match either between nations or between clubs. The match may be held or may not be held. Things will only take a shape within one month," concluded Shohag.



PHOTO: AFP

Arsenal midfielder Henrikh Mkhitaryan (C) practises during a training session at London Colney yesterday. Mkhitaryan will miss the Europa League final against Chelsea in Baku on May 29 amid fears over his safety.

Mbappe to stay at PSG

AFP, Paris

French champions Paris Saint-Germain on Monday insisted that star striker Kylian Mbappe would stay at the club next season, despite the World Cup-winner hinting that he could leave.

The 20-year-old said on Sunday that he wanted more "responsibilities, maybe at PSG, maybe elsewhere" after winning the Ligue 1 player of the season award.

But PSG said in a statement on Twitter: "Strong ties have united PSG and Kylian Mbappe for two years and that story will continue next season."

"It's a highly anticipated moment to also write, together, a big page in the history of our club, in which each major player will have to take his share, all the while working for the squad."

Mbappe's comments on Sunday, with Real Madrid reportedly attempt to lure him to Spain, appeared a calculated move.



NIKI LAUDA (1949 – 2019)

Niki Lauda no more

REUTERS, Vienna



Three-times Formula One world champion Niki Lauda, regarded as one of the finest racers of all time and who later became a successful airline entrepreneur, has died at 70 after battling declining health.

Austrian Lauda, who was treated in hospital in January for about 10 days while suffering from influenza and had a lung transplant last August, died on Monday night, his family said in a statement.

"His unique achievements as an athlete and entrepreneur are and will remain unforgettable," the statement said.

"His tireless zest for action, his straightforwardness and his courage remain a role model and a benchmark for all of us, he was a loving and caring husband, father and grandfather away from the public, and he will be missed."

Lauda won two world championships in 1975 and 1977 with Ferrari and a third in 1984 with McLaren.

He had a near-fatal crash in 1976 when racing at the Nuerburgring but despite suffering horrific burns, he was soon back in his Ferrari with a modified helmet and went on to claim his second world title.

His rivalry with British driver James Hunt, the 1976 champion for McLaren, was intense and became the subject of the acclaimed 2013 film "Rush".

After two less successful years at rival outfit Brabham and then a two-year hiatus, Lauda returned to F1 for another four seasons at McLaren and won the 1984 title by a half-point over teammate Alain Prost.

While taking his first break after Brabham, Lauda set up a charter airline and returned to his aviation business full-time after bowing out of racing.

Through the 1980s and 1990s, he grew 'Lauda Air' into an international carrier with long-haul flights out of Austria across the globe before it was merged into Austrian Airlines in 2012.

Lauda also returned to Formula One in management roles, first with Ferrari in the 1990s and later with Mercedes, where he was appointed non-executive chairman in 2012.

He is credited for helping bring five-time F1 champion Lewis Hamilton to the team from McLaren.

"His passing leaves a void in Formula One," Mercedes team principal Toto Wolff said in a statement on Tuesday.

"We haven't just lost a hero who staged the most remarkable comeback ever seen, but also a man who brought precious clarity and candour to modern Formula One. He will be greatly missed as our voice of common sense."

"Our Mercedes team has also lost a guiding light ... Niki was always brutally honest - and utterly loyal."

"Niki, you are quite simple irreplaceable, there will never be another like you."

Lauda's death rocked the F1 community days before the Monaco Grand Prix, the jewel in the racing calendar, and there were warm tributes paid by drivers past and present as well as the two teams he won world titles with.

"Your passing leaves an enormous void inside me," former Ferrari boss Luca di Montezemolo said in a statement.

"With you I have lived some of the most beautiful moments of my life, we shared many unforgettable Ferrari victories and we were always bound together by great affection, even when we found each other competing on rival teams."

Mkhitaryan to miss final

AFP, London



Arsenal's Armenian midfielder Henrikh Mkhitaryan will miss the Europa League final against Chelsea in Baku amid fears over his safety.

Mkhitaryan's well-being was a concern for Arsenal due to the tense political dispute between Armenia and final hosts Azerbaijan.

The Premier League club have decided against Mkhitaryan travelling with the rest of Unai Emery's squad for next Wednesday's game.

"We are very disappointed to announce that Henrikh Mkhitaryan will not be travelling with the squad for our UEFA Europa League final against Chelsea," an Arsenal statement announced on Tuesday.

"We have thoroughly explored all the options for Micki to be part of the squad but after discussing this with Micki and his family we have collectively agreed he will not be in our travelling party."

Azerbaijan's ambassador to the UK,

Tahir Taghizadeh, had insisted Mkhitaryan would be free from any threat of violence, but it was reported the star didn't believe he would be safe on the pitch.

"Having considered all the current options, we had to take the tough decision for me not to travel with the squad to the UEL Final against Chelsea," Mkhitaryan tweeted.

"It's the kind of game that doesn't come along very often for us players and I must admit, it hurts me a lot to miss it. I will be cheering my teammates on! Let's bring it home."

UEFA, European football's governing body, insisted they had done all they could to ensure Mkhitaryan's safety in Baku.

"Working alongside Arsenal FC, UEFA sought and received assurances regarding the player's safety in Azerbaijan from the highest authorities in the country," a UEFA statement read.

"As a result of these guarantees, a comprehensive security plan was developed and given to the club."

Murray optimistic about return

AFP, London



Andy Murray is confident he can return to competitive tennis and has hinted at a doubles spot at Wimbledon, inspired by American doubles great Bob Bryan's return from

hip surgery.

The two-time Wimbledon champion, 32, in January announced plans to retire after this year's Wimbledon due to injury, expressing doubt as to whether he would even make it to the All England Club.

The Scot has all but ruled out an appearance in the singles draw, nearly four months after surgery on a career-threatening hip problem, but he could



return by playing in the men's doubles.

The former world number one told Tuesday Times there was "very little chance" he would play singles during the grass-court season.

"Potentially doubles, but I'm not trying to get ready for singles just now," he said.

"The thing I said before was that, if I wasn't feeling good, there was more chance that I would play and then stop after Wimbledon."

"Whereas if it's feeling good, it makes a bit more sense to give it time to make sure that it's as good as possible before I try to play singles on it."

Murray, whose ranking has plummeted to 218 due to his time away from the court, said he was pain-free as he spoke about the example set by Bryan.

"I know from seeing what Bob Bryan has done (he had similar surgery last year) that for doubles it will be absolutely fine. I will need to see from there how it would work singles-wise."

SHORT CORNER

Afghanistan level series

Mohammad Shahzad smashed a blistering 101 as Afghanistan fine-tuned their World Cup preparations with a 126-run thrashing of Ireland to draw the one-day international series on Tuesday.

Afghanistan were put in to bat by the hosts in Belfast and Shahzad made them pay with his 87-ball century.

Together with Rahmat Shah, Shahzad put on 150 for the second wicket to help the visitors take control.

Najibullah Zadran added a rapid-fire 60 not out from 33 balls as Afghanistan amassed 305-7 in their 50 overs.

Ireland never looked likely to threaten Afghanistan's total despite Paul Stirling's 56-ball half century -- his fourth successive score of 50 or more.

Gulbadin Naib, who was named Afghanistan's one-day captain last month, was Ireland's chief tormentor.

Naib took 6-43 to record the third-best figures by an Afghanistan bowler in ODI cricket, including the key wickets of Stirling and Gary Wilson, who was Ireland's second highest scorer with 34.

Ireland eventually crumbled to 179 all out as Afghanistan avenged their 72-run defeat in the first game of the two-match series on Sunday.

SCORES IN BRIEF

AFGHANISTAN: 305 for 7 in 50 overs (Shahzad 101, Shah 62, Shahidi 47, Zadran 60*; Adair

3-71, McBrine 2-43)

IRELAND: 179 all out in 41.2 overs (Stirling 50, Willson 34; Naib 6-43)

Result: Afghanistan won by 126 runs. --AFP

Bologna pull off a miracle

Bologna coach Sinisa Mihajlovic hailed his team for pulling off a "miracle" to secure their top flight survival with a 3-3 draw at Lazio on Monday enough to keep the northerners in Serie A next season.

"Nobody, or at least very few believed in us staying up a few months ago," said Serb Mihajlovic, a former Yugoslavia international player.

"I was one of the few. The more that time went by, the more convinced I was that we were on the right road but it was still something of a small miracle."

The club were 18th with just two wins from 21 games when the former Serbia, AC Milan and Torino coach arrived, but since have won eight matches out of 16 and are now positioned 12th.

Giroud gears up to face Arsenal

Olivier Giroud is relishing the prospect of beating his old Arsenal teammates when he lines up for Chelsea in the Europa League final in Baku on May 29.

The 32-year-old French World Cup winner's move across London 18 months ago has failed to deliver the regular first team football he hoped after falling behind compatriot

Alexandre Lacazette and Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang in the pecking order at Arsenal.

However, he has played a huge part in the Blues run to the Europa League final and is the joint top scorer in this season's competition with 10 goals.

"I always like playing against my old teams," Giroud told the Daily Mail.

"It's going to be tough, and it could be painful if it's not going the right way, but you have to put the feelings and memories aside."

--AFP

Xavi's last match ends in defeat for Al Sadd

Xavi Hernandez's dazzling career came to a low-key end when his Qatari side Al Sadd were beaten 2-0 by Iranian giants Persepolis in their last group match of the AFC Champions League on Monday.

The 39-year-old midfield genius, who helped Spain win the World Cup in 2010 and won four UEFA Champions League titles and eight La Liga titles with Barcelona, was cheered by fans at the Azadi Stadium in Tehran.

Several home fans brandished banners reading "Adios Xavi" to show their appreciation of the player who with Andres Iniesta formed the backbone of one of Barcelona's greatest ever sides.

But Al Sadd's second defeat in a row, following their 4-1 thrashing by domestic rivals Al Duhail in last week's Amir Cup final in Doha, meant Xavi's illustrious career ended in a low-key fashion.

--AFP

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CRICKET WORLD CUP 2019

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