Time: 4:00pm Venue: Sheikh Kamal Stadium, Nilphamari

#### **ASENSIO** SUFFERS LIGAMENT INJURY

Real Madrid forward Marco Asensio is facing several months out of action after suffering a torn anterior cruciate ligament in his left knee during a pre-season friendly against Arsenal in the United States. The Spanish winger scored the equaliser for Real in the second half before his foot seemed to get caught in the turf as he tussled for possession with Arsenal's Pierre Emerick-Aubameyang at the 60-minute mark in Maryland on Tuesday. Asensio was taken off on a stretcher with an injury that coach Zinedine Zidane described as "worrisome", and his fears were confirmed when doctors revealed the extent of the damage to player's knee. "The player will be surgically operated on in the next few days."



# Bangladesh-Iran likely in Doha?

SPORTS REPORTER



The Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) is in discussion with its Iranian counterpart for a FIFA Friendly ahead of the two teams' first match of the World Cup Qualifiers in September.

A high-placed BFF official yesterday confirmed that they have sent a proposal to the Iranian Football Federation regarding a friendly match in Doha, Qatar in the first week of September, however, the fixture is far from set.

"We have contacted Iran Football Federation regarding a match, and their initial reply is a positive one. However, we have a few other teams on our list and the fixture is not finalised as yet," BFF's general secretary Abu Nayeem Shohag told The Daily Star.

"Since our first match of the qualifiers in Tehran.

on September 10, we would like to have an 8-10 days' training camp in Doha after a few days' training in Dhaka. We are planning for a friendly match against a national team during that time in Doha. The match could be held on September 4 or 5, so that the team can fly straight out of Doha for the first qualifying match against Afghanistan," Shohag added.

Tehran Times, a leading Iranian newspaper, earlier reported that since both the teams have their first matches on September 10, a September 5 fixture between Iran and Bangladesh is being negotiated by the two federations.

Iran are the highest-ranked Asian team at the moment, currently 20th in FIFA Rankings. Bangladesh, on the other hand, are ranked 183rd.

Bangladesh last met Iran during the 1990 World Cup qualifiers in 1989. Bangladesh lost both matches, 2-1 in Dhaka and 1-0 in



Chittagong Abahani striker Nkwocha Chigosu (C) runs to celebrate his late equaliser against Abahani in their Bangladesh Premier League fixture at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday. PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

### Bangladesh, India to face off in Kolkata?

SPORTS Reporter



India host may Bangladesh in their third match of Group qualifiers for Oatar 2022 World Cup and China 2023 Asian Cup at the Salt Lake Stadium in Kolkata on October 15, according to a football website.

The Indian edition of Goal.com reported saying it can confirm that Guwahati and Kolkata have been chosen to host India's first two matches of the campaign, with Guwahati set to host Oman in the first home match while Salt Lake Stadium in Kolkata to host Bangladesh in their second home match.

However, the website did not quote any official of the All India Football Federation, neither did it specify the source of the news.

If the news is true, Bangladesh will play in Kolkata for the first time in 32 years. The last time Bangladesh played at the capital of West Bengal was in 1987 during South Asian Games.

The last time Bangladesh played against India was a FIFA Friendly in 2014 in Goa.

The match ended in a 2-2 draw.

According to a news of PTI, Guwahati, Kolkata and Mumbai are in consideration to host India's home matches, even though the final decision on the venues will only be taken after AFC's green signal.

Bangladesh have been drawn in Group E alongside India, Oman, Qatar and Afghanistan in the joint qualifiers. Bangladesh will take on India in their third match after playing away to Afghanistan on September 10 and having hosted Qatar on October 10.

Meanwhile, the venue for the away match against Afghanistan has not been decided yet. The last date of sending venue names to the FIFA and AFC is July 31.

Bangladesh Football Federation has expressed its uneasiness regarding the team's travel to Kabul or any other Afghan city if the war-torn country is given the right to host the matches this time.

The last time Afghanistan used Iran for their home matches of the 2018 World Cup and Tajikistan for their home matches of the 2019 Asian Cup qualifiers. However, Afghanistan played a FIFA Friendly against Palestine in Kabul last year.

# Abahani's hopes all but over

#### Rain keeps Bashundhara Kings waiting

SPORTS REPORTER



Defending champions Abahani's slim chances of retaining the Bangladesh Premier League title all but extinguished after they

City

twice threw away the lead in a 2-2 draw against Chittagong Abahani at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

The Dhanmondi giants came into the match following postponement of the match between league leaders Bashundhara Kings and Mohammedan in Nilphamari, which saw rain and thunder put an end to day's play after just four minutes. With that game to be played today, Abahani had their chance to get to within one point of Bashundhara Kings. But they failed to bag all three points despite dominating Chittagong Abahani.

Abahani came close to breaking the deadlock in the 44th minute, but Mamun Mia's shot was kept well out by Chittagong Abahani goalkeeper Mohammad Nehal.

The goalkeeper denied Nabib Newaz Jibon at the start of the second half while Kervens Belfort saw his shot go wide of the target. However, Nehal was helpless in the 64th minute against

an effort from Mamun, which took a deflection off a Chittagong Abahani defender.

Mamun then turned into villain as he MUKTIJODDHA brought down an opposition player inside Abahani's danger zone 11 minutes later, with Daniel Tagoe netting the equaliser from the

Chittagong Abahani came close to taking the lead in the 77th minute, but Koushik Barua's shot came off the crossbar.

Jibon restored Abahani's lead in the 80th minute following a throw-in from Raihan Hassan, but as the Dhanmondi giants were looking to snatch all three points, Nkwocha Chogisu sank them with a strike from a goalmouth melee into the stoppage time.

The draw saw Abahani move to 55 points from 23 matches, with only one game in

Bashundhara Kings, meanwhile, have 58 points from 21 matches which means a point from one of the three remaining matches will ensure them of their debut title.

In case Bashundhara lose all three matches while Abahani win their last match, the two teams will be equal on points and the title will

be decided through a play-off. SHEIKH RUSSEL WALLOP

Sheikh Russel KC continued their resurgence in the latter stage of the league with a 6-1 thumping of Muktijoddha Sangsad at the Sheikh Fazlul Haque Moni Stadium in Gopalganj.

Valerie Gryshyn and Raphael Odoyin bagged a brace each while Alison Udoka and Biplu Ahmed scored one apiece for Sheikh Russel, who consolidated their third position in the 13-team table with 48 points from 22 matches. They lead fourth-placed Saif SC by four points.

Ballo Famoussa scored the consolation goal for Muktijoddha, who remained in ninth position with 23 points from 22 matches. CONSOLATION WIN FOR TEAM BJMC

Away at the Shaheed Bulu Stadium in Noakhali, already-relegated Team BJMC notched a consolation 1-0 win against Arambagh KS. Mukhamedov Otabek scored the only goal of the game in the 56th minute. The win helped Team BJMC to 11 points from 22 matches while Arambagh remained in fifth position with 30 points from 23 matches.

#### Under-19s lose to India by 35 runs

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh U-19s suffered a 35-run defeat against India in their second match of the Tri-Nation Under-19s Tournament in Worcester in England yesterday.

Chasing a tall target of 265, the Bangladesh innings ended at 229 in 47.1 overs, despite some rearguard effort from the middle and the lower order.

Bangladesh suffered an early collapse, losing five wickets for 79 runs within 18 overs. While opener Tanzid Hassan scored a 45-ball 44, the other top-four batsmen failed to reach double figures. However, a 75-ball 56 from skipper Akbar Ali and a 69-ball 46 from Shamim Hossain revived their hopes. The fall of the two batsmen brought on another collapse, with Mrittunjoy Chowdhury's 27-ball 33 only minimising the margin of defeat.

Earlier, India opener Yashasvi Jaiswal set the tone for a commendable total, scoring 63 off 90 before being dismissed off a Rakibul Hasan delivery in the 32nd over. India skipper Priyam Garg then went on to score an unbeaten 100 off 97 to help his side post 264 for five in their 50 overs.

#### Kulasekara calls it a day

PTI, Colombo

Sri Lanka seamer Nuwan Kulasekara has decided to call time on his international career, finishing as the third highest wicket-taker among his country's pace bowlers after Chaminda Vaas and Lasith Malinga.

Real Madrid forward Gareth Bale (L) celebrates his goal with teammate Marco Asensio during their International Champions Cup match against Arsenal in Landover, Maryland on Tuesday.

PHOTO: AFP

## Real turn it around

AFP, Washington



win over Arsenal.

Special Offer:

Gareth Bale shrugged off uncertainty over his Real Madrid future Tuesday, his second-half goal helping the La Liga giants rally for a friendly

Madrid clawed back from two goals down to finish full time at 2-2,

and prevailed 3-2 in the penalty shootout dictated by the International Cup exhibition Champions tournament format.

Welsh star Bale didn't play in Madrid's 3-1 loss to Bayern Munich in Houston on Saturday, manager Zinadine Zidane saying Monday he declined to dress for the match as the club pursued options for offloading him.

Zidane said at the weekend he thought it would be "best for everyone" if Bale's departure could be arranged quickly -- comments Bale's agent branded "disrespectful" of a player who helped the side to a Spanish league title and four Champions Leagues since arriving from Tottenham six years ago.

Zidane insisted Monday he meant no disrespect.

First-half goals from Alexandre Lacazette -- who converted a penalty in the 10th minute -- and Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang had put Arsenal up 2-0 at the break.

Bale pulled one back in the 56th minute, latching onto a loose ball and slotting it home.

Marco Asensio drilled the equalizer three minutes later, blasting a low Marcelo cross past Emiliano Martinez.

#### BCB XI get huge win

SPORTS REPORTER

BCB XI registered a whopping 10-wicket victory on the third day of their four-day match against KSCA Secretary's XI in the Dr Thimmappiah Memorial tournament at the M Chinnaswamy Stadium in India yesterday.

Secretary's XI started the day on 100 for three, trailing by 155 runs. Riding on a brilliant 117 from Abhinav Manohar and contributions from Vinay N Sagar (59 off 92) and Praveen Dubey (55 off 83), Secretary's XI managed 340 in 85.2 overs, setting a target of 86 runs.

Openers Jahurul Islam and Shadman Islam remained unbeaten on 32 and 52 respectively as BCB XI chased the target down in just 24.1 overs.

#### Messi, Tapia punished

AGENCIES, Asuncion



Argentina captain Lionel Messi has been banned for one game and fined \$1,500 after being sent off against Chile in the Copa America

third-place playoff and levelling accusations of "corruption" at South American soccer chiefs.

Messi was shown the red card after clashing with Gary Medel and afterwards alleged that the tournament had been fixed Association's Claudio Tapia as their official in favour of the hosts Brazil, who beat representative at FIFA.

Argentina in a controversial semifinal on their way to claiming the title.

CONMEBOL said on Tuesday that Messi's comments were "unacceptable" but backed down from imposing a tougher sanction on the five-time world player of the year.

The ban is expected to be served in Argentina's first qualifier for the 2022 World Cup.

In another Argentina-related decision Tuesday, CONMEBOL removed the head of the Argentine Football



Dutch-Bangla Bank Limited became the sole sponsor of Bangladesh versus Sri Lanka cricket matches on TV. BTV, Maasranga and Gazi TV will telecast the matches live. Mr Abul Kashem Md. Shirin, managing director & CEO of Dutch-Bangla Bank was present during the press conference at a local hotel yesterday. PHOTO: COLLECTED



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