

Botswana gets the afternoon off

AFP, Gaborone

President Mokgweetsi Masisi gave Botswana the afternoon off on Friday to celebrate Letsile Tebogo, the country's first Olympic gold medallist and the first African to be crowned 200-metre champion at a Games.

Masisi hailed the 21-year-old sprinter as "Botswana's Sensation" after his outstanding performance on Thursday.

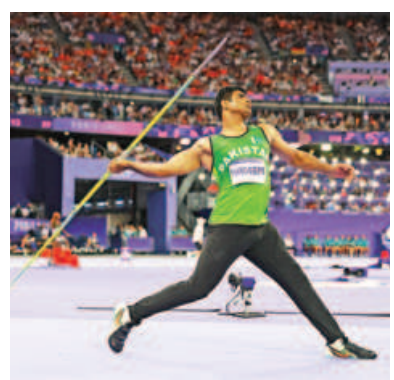
"Botswana's finest sporting moment," beamed the Mmegi newspaper after Tebogo produced a stunning run in the 200m to take gold, leaving pre-race favourite Noah Lyles trailing in third.

To add to his performance, he also set an African record of 19.46sec.

Tebogo's achievement will be "etched in the annals of the history of the republic", the president said.

The Olympic medal is Botswana's third after Nijel Amos won silver in the 800m at the 2012 London Games and the men's 4x400m relay team took bronze in Tokyo in 2020.

Videos shared on social media showed students at the University of Botswana dancing and singing into the night, while people across the southern African nation posted their pride on X and Facebook.



Botswana's Letsile Tebogo poses with his national flag following his stunning victory in the men's 200m final of the athletics event at the Paris Olympic Games at Stade de France on Thursday. (Inset) Arshad Nadeem of Pakistan throws his javelin to a gold-medal winning and record setting distance men's javelin throw final at the same venue.

PHOTO: REUTERS

TODAY'S GOLD RUSH

ATHLETICS	CANOE SPRINT
Men's Marathon 12:00 pm	Women's Kayak Single 500m 4:40 pm
Men's High Jump 11:00 pm	Men's Kayak Single 1000m 5:10 pm
Men's 800m final 11:05 pm	Women's Canoe Single 200m 5:40 pm
Women's Javelin Throw 11:30 pm	MEN'S VOLLEYBALL 5:00 pm
Women's 100m Hurdles 11:35 pm	RHYTHMIC GYMNASTICS Group All-Around 6:00 pm
Men's 5000m 11:50 pm	Diving Men's 10m Platform 7:00 pm
Women's 1500m 12:15 am (Sunday)	WOMEN'S HANDBALL 7:00 pm
Men's 4 x 400m Relay 1:00 am (Sunday)	TABLE TENNIS Women's Team 7:00 pm
Women's 4 x 400m Relay 1:14 am (Sunday)	WOMEN'S WATER POLO 7:35 pm
GOLF Women's Individual Stroke Play 1:00 pm	WOMEN'S FOOTBALL Brazil vs USA 9:00 pm
WEIGHTLIFTING Men's -102 kg 3:30 pm	BASKETBALL France vs USA 1:30 am (Sunday)
Women's -81 kg 8:00 pm	
SPORT CLIMBING Women's Boulder and Lead 4:35 pm	

Nadeem makes Pakistan proud

AFP, Mian Channu

Dozens of villagers gathered in front of the modest home of Pakistan athlete Arshad Nadeem to watch the hulking javelin thrower take part in the Olympic Games final late Thursday.

The event was broadcast live by a digital projector onto a screen hanging on the back of a truck in his farming village near the small city of Mian Channu in Punjab province.

As the javelin soared through the sky in Paris to a new Olympic record and a gold medal for Nadeem, thousands of kilometres (miles) away the cheers of the villagers rang into the night.

"He did a great throw and created history. We are proud of him," said Nadeem's 35-year-old brother, Muhammad Azeem.

Men danced to the celebratory beat of a drum and others clapped and chanted slogans as it became clear he had won.

The women, meanwhile, sat crowded around a small TV inside Nadeem's home.

"He had promised me that he would play well, go abroad, win a medal and make Pakistan proud," his mother Raziah Parveen said straightforwardly.

USA go for gold against Marta's Brazil

AFP, Paris

A resurgent United States under new coach Emma Hayes are hoping to establish themselves as the leading force in women's international football once again by claiming the gold medal in Saturday's Olympic final against Brazil and their legendary skipper Marta.

The USA came into the Olympics with a rejuvenated squad and a point to prove after a poor showing at last year's World Cup, when they were eliminated in the last 16.

They also performed below par at each of the last two Olympics, finishing out of the medals at Rio 2016 before taking bronze three years ago in Tokyo.

But the arrival of renowned English coach Emma Hayes from Chelsea has given the USA the boost they needed, and they have been inspired on their way to the final by the exciting attacking trio of Sophia Smith, Mallory Swanson and Trinity Rodman.

They have each scored three goals at the tournament, with the USA winning all three group games against Zambia, Germany and Australia before dispatching both Japan and the Germans in extra time in the knockout rounds.

Now they are hoping to add to their women's football record haul of four golds

and win the title for the first time since London 2012.

"Emma came in so soon before this tournament, so we knew that was going to be a challenge, but she just came in flying and we absolutely love her," said Smith, the Colorado-born forward who turns 24 on the day of the final.

"She has worked every day to build our trust and show us she cares about us. She is such a great coach and such a great mentor.

"We are a completely different team and a lot of the credit goes to Emma. She has communicated everyone's roles very clearly. We are really excited for her to be our coach for a really long time."

The USA's position as the undisputed global powerhouse of the women's game looked to be gone for some time following last year's World Cup in Australia and New Zealand, when a brilliant Spain team led by Aitana Bonmati were crowned champions.

However, Spain missed out in their bid to add Olympic gold to that title and the UEFA Nations League after they were surprisingly beaten 4-2 by Brazil in Tuesday's semi-final in Marseille.

Instead it is the Brazilians who will meet the USA in the gold medal match and they will be attempting to make it third time lucky after losing to the same opponents

in the Athens final in 2004 and in Beijing in 2008.

Both of those finals were won by the USA in extra time, and both featured Marta, the Brazilian legend and multiple winner of the FIFA world player of the year award.

Now 38, she is appearing at her sixth and likely last Olympics, and is hoping to sign off with gold to go with her two silver medals.

Marta missed both the quarter-final win against hosts France and the semi-final against Spain due to suspension after being sent off for a reckless challenge in Brazil's final group game, also against the Spanish.

"Now she will be able to finish her Olympics playing in a final, where she deserves to be. I hope she manages to come away with the gold medal," said Gabi Portillo, who scored in both the quarter-final and semi-final.

It remains to be seen if the final will turn out to be Marta's farewell on the international stage for her country, or whether she could be tempted to keep going until the 2027 World Cup which Brazil will host.

"Marta has changed the game of soccer around the world," said Rodman of Marta, who has spent much of her club career in the United States.

Korean shooter collapses at PC

REUTERS, Seoul

South Korean Olympic silver medallist pistol shooter Kim Ye-ji, whose cool demeanour and appearance when competing at the Paris Games made her a social media sensation, collapsed at a news conference on Friday, apparently due to stress and exhaustion.

Kim was speaking at the event in Imsil, the county that she represented for seven years in the southern part of South Korea, when she collapsed, a county official said by telephone. Kim regained consciousness and was taken to hospital, he said.

The 31-year-old did not receive CPR (cardiopulmonary resuscitation) as some media reported, the official said.

Kim who won the silver medal in the 10-metre air pistol event has become a social media phenomena due to the futuristic glasses she wears to improve precision and her cool style which earned her the nickname the "smiling assassin" at home.

On Wednesday, Kim thanked Tesla chief Elon Musk for making her famous after he said on his social media platform X that she "should be cast in an action movie. No acting required!"



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Football stuck in a limbo

SPORTS REPORTER

With only 10 days left to complete the players' registration for the Bangladesh Premier League (BPL), the participating clubs are facing difficulties to complete the transfer procedure following the recent developments in the country.

Following the resignation of former prime minister Sheikh Hasina on August 6, miscreants vandalised and looted the club offices of Abahani and Sheikh Jamal Dhanmondi Club, putting them in no position to complete the players' registration formalities within the timeframe.

"We don't know what to do in this situation. We are waiting for directives from club high-ups," said Abahani football team manager Nazrul Islam.

In light of the recent developments, officials of Sheikh Russel KC, Rahmatganj MFS, Sheikh Jamal and Brothers Union have verbally requested the Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) to extend the transfers' window, which is scheduled to close on August 19 after getting underway on June 1.

Club insiders informed that they are expecting changes in their respective committees and also have been unable to communicate with donors to secure funds for signing players.

Brothers Union manager Amer Khan said, "We have requested the federation to extend the transfer window because it will not be possible for all clubs to complete the registration within the given time."

Not just the clubs, the BFF is also going

through a period of instability with senior vice president Abdus Salam Murshedy stepping down from his post a couple of hours after the Prof Muhammad Yunus-led interim government took oath on Thursday.

Members of the BFF executive committee, most of whom known as pro-Awami League organisers, have not turned up to the BFF headquarters since the resignation of Sheikh Hasina and the BFF secretariat has been carrying out the day-to-day activities in their absence.

Bangladesh has a busy schedule ahead in both age-level and senior level football with the men's under-20 and under-17 teams set to take part in separate SAFF Championships this month in Nepal and Bhutan respectively while the national men's and women's teams are supposed to play a few FIFA friendly matches in the coming months.

The BFF elections are also scheduled to take place on October 26. But now, everything seems to be up in the air.

"Some executive members visited the BFF today [yesterday] and majority of the members are expected to come tomorrow [today]. The secretariat is carrying out everything as per the directives. Bangladesh U20 team will fly for Nepal on August 16 and U17 will also fly for Bhutan in a timely manner," said BFF general secretary Emran Hasan Tushar.

"BFF executive committee is supposed to form the election commission in September and we will also hold discussions with the national team coach Javier Cabrera, who returned today [yesterday]."