

What to WATCH

DAY'S EVENT

GTV & MAASRANGA

BBPL

Rangpur v Rajshahi

Live from 1:30pm

Sylhet v Cumilla

Live from 6:30pm

BANGLA TV

Federation Cup

First semifinal

Mohammedan v Rahmatganj MFS

Live from 4:00pm

SONY SIX

Australia v New Zealand

Third Test, Day One

Live from 5:30am (Friday)

STAR SPORTS SELECT 1

English Premier League

Liverpool v Sheffield Utd

Live from 2:00am (Friday)

Bangabandhu Bangladesh Premier League

Venue: Sylhet Int'l Cricket Stadium

Rangpur v Rajshahi

Time: 1:30pm

Sylhet v Cumilla

Time: 6:30pm

Federation Cup

First semifinal

Venue: Bangabandhu National Stadium, Dhaka

Mohammedan v Rahmatganj MFS


Time: 4:00pm

Brighton & Hove Albion's Iranian forward Alireza Jahanbakhsh scored a spectacular bicycle kick to salvage a point against Chelsea at the Brighton Stadium on Wednesday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

# Brighton spoil Chelsea's party

AFP, London

 Alireza Jahanbakhsh's spectacular overhead kick earned Brighton a share of the points against Chelsea and dampened Frank Lampard's New Year celebrations on Wednesday as Aston Villa secured a vital win against Burnley.

Kicking off a packed day of top-flight action, Chelsea's 1-1 draw on England's south coast meant they missed out on the chance to pull seven points clear of fifth-placed Manchester United in the race to secure Champions League football for next season.

Cesar Azpilicueta gave the visitors an early lead, tapping in from close range following a corner in the 10th minute but Brighton were never out of it and pulled level in the 84th minute courtesy of Jahanbakhsh's moment of magic.

Chelsea were quickly on top from the start of the match but Brighton came into the contest as it wore on, enjoying a spell of possession towards the end of the first half.

Leandro Trossard tested Kepa Arrizabalaga with a powerful strike but the Chelsea goalkeeper parried the shot with his right hand.

Lampard's team were again dominant

after the break. Christian Pulisic came close to doubling Chelsea's lead at Brighton after 55 minutes while N'Golo Kante and Reece James were denied.

But Brighton kept battling and Kepa was forced to produce an outstanding save from Aaron Connolly in the 80th minute as the home side pushed for an equaliser.

Their persistence paid off minutes later. Lewis Dunk kept the ball alive from a corner-kick and Iranian midfielder Jahanbakhsh acrobatically found the bottom-left corner to give his team share of the points.

In the other early kick-off, Villa beat Burnley 2-1 despite seeing Jack Grealish's opening goal controversially chalked off by VAR.

Wesley put Villa ahead in the 27th minute and captain Grealish doubled his side's advantage four minutes before the break as his powerful effort found the top corner.

Chris Wood pulled a goal back for Burnley with 10 minutes to go.

Pep Guardiola's Manchester City are hosting Carlo Ancelotti's Everton in one of the early evening matches before Ole Gunnar Solskjaer's Manchester United kick off against Arsenal in the late match. Runaway leaders Liverpool face Sheffield United on Thursday.

## BFF fined Tk 37 lakh

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) has recently been slapped with fine of approximately Tk 37 lakh by FIFA and AFC for different reasons, confirmed BFF general secretary Abu Nayeem Shohag yesterday.

FIFA fined BFF 15,000 Swiss franc [US\$15,478] for violation of order and security while AFC imposed US\$ 28,000 sanction for irregular attendance of BFF's local coaches who are paid by the Asian football body.

"We have recently been showcased twice by FIFA and AFC. At the end of the Qatar-Bangladesh match of World Cup qualifiers on October 10, 2019 at the Bangabandhu National Stadium, some spectators tried to enter the ground over the fence, which was photographed by the match commissioner. That's why FIFA fined 15,000 Swiss franc for violation of order and security," Shohag said, adding that they had previously paid Tk 7 lakh fine for the same reasons as some Australian fans tried to enter the ground at the end of Australia-Bangladesh Word Cup Qualifying match in November, 2015.

"The AFC penalised BFF to the amount of US\$28,000 due to irregular attendance of our local coaches, who are paid by the AFC. Out of 19 paid coaches, 15 coaches had irregular attendance. The AFC audit committee found it out and deducted money which is equivalent to three months' salary of 15 coaches," Shohag said, adding that they failed to ensure regular attendance of the coaches despite repeated instructions.

# MSC, Rahmatganj have eyes on final

SPORTS REPORTER

Both Mohammedan and Rahmatganj are looking to make it to the final of the TVS Federation Cup as they square off in the first semifinal at the Bangabandhu National Stadium today, with the match scheduled to kick off at 4:00pm.

The season's curtain-raising tournament has already produced some major upsets, with five former champions – Abahani, Sheikh Jamal, Brothers, Sheikh Russel and Muktiyoddha Sangsad – already eliminated.

Out of six former champions, only 10-time winners Mohammedan have survived exit and the Black and Whites are now dreaming of making it to the final after 10 years. However, Rahmatganj, after beating 11-time champions Abahani, are standing on their way and hoping to qualify for the final of any top-flight tournament for the first time.

"We have nothing to lose, but something to achieve. We are dreaming of playing in the final after the young guns put up a brave performance in the last match,"

Rahmatganj coach Syed Golam Jilani said yesterday.

"The match is going to be difficult and we have to play well against a youthful Mohammedan, who have strong willingness to do well. We are hopeful of availing goal-scoring chances as our attacking line-up has been creating chances regularly," said Jilani, whose side is playing the Federation Cup semifinal for the first time since 2017.

Mohammedan coach Sean Lane is not taking Rahmatganj lightly as his young charges have less experience of playing such a pressure match.

"We know Rahmatganj will be a tough team to beat. We don't consider them to be minnows. They have had a very successful Federation Cup to date and they will be equal favourites," Lane said. "We will need to be at our best if we are to progress to the final. The boys need to cope up with situations like this. They dealt very well with the pressure of quarterfinals. However, I am confident in their ability and mental attitude to cope up with the pressure of semifinal."

## Venus out of Brisbane International

AFP, Brisbane

Venus Williams pulled out of the season-opening Brisbane International on Wednesday after a "setback" during practice.

The American veteran said she still hoped to play at the Adelaide International later this month ahead of the Australian Open, the first Grand Slam of the year.

"Unfortunately I will not be starting my season in Brisbane due to an unexpected setback during my training," the 39-year-old seven-time major winner said in a statement.

"I look forward to being in Australia in the new year and will see everyone in Adelaide."

The tournament, featuring a strong field including world number one Ashleigh Barty and Australian Open champion Naomi Osaka, gets underway on January 6.

Organisers will announce a replacement for Williams on Thursday.

## 'Everton ready for Man City, Liverpool'

REUTERS, undated

Everton manager Carlo Ancelotti said his players must relish the opportunity to test themselves against the best teams ahead of Wednesday's Premier League clash against defending champions Manchester City.

Everton also face their local rivals and European champions Liverpool in the third round of the FA Cup on Sunday, and the Italian is confident he can continue his strong start at the club having taken over from Marco Silva this month.

"Against City it'll be a fantastic test to see where we are. They are a really strong team but we have confidence to do our best," Ancelotti told a news conference on Tuesday.

"At the moment it is good to have this kind of test. Also against Liverpool. We have to try to be competitive against the top teams of England and Europe."

Everton beat Burnley 1-0 in Ancelotti's first game in charge and followed it up with a 2-1 win over Newcastle United to climb to 10th in the standings, building a five-match unbeaten run in the Premier League that began under caretaker manager Duncan Ferguson.

"Am I surprised? No, because we are working to try and win games," Ancelotti added. "I was surprised with the spirit of the team. I think the work Duncan did was really good."

"I found the players with character, with good attitude so I think this was the reason I didn't change a lot... The players showed confidence in games, and I hope this can continue in the next games which are really difficult."

### SHORT CORNER

#### Fahad stuns Russian GM

International Master Fahad Rahman stunned Russian GM Maxim Lugovskoy in the second round of EKA IIFL Investment Managers 5th International Grand Master Chess Tournament in Mumbai on Tuesday.

IM Fahad, along with 15 other players, shared the lead in the points table with maximum two points each while GM Ziaur Rahman beat Manish Kumar to earn 1.5 points.

-- SPORTS REPORTER

#### BGB retain handball title

Boarder Guard Bangladesh retained the title of National Handball Championship with a 31-17 goal win against Bangladesh Police Handball Club in the final at the Shaheed Captain M Mansur Ali Handball Stadium yesterday.

It was the ninth successive title for BGB, who dominated over Bangladesh Police in the first half with a 20-7 goal lead. Police came back strongly in the second half but their effort was not good enough as they had to be content with 15th consecutive runners-up trophy.

-- SPORTS REPORTER

#### National football c'ship split into nine zones

The Bangabandhu National Football Championship is set to roll out across the country from January 17 as the draw of participating 78 teams was held at the BFF House yesterday.

All 64 districts, except for Kishoreganj, along with six universities, five educational boards, BKSP and three services teams have been divided into nine zones with eight zones comprising 63 district teams while remaining 15 teams have been placed in services zone.

-- AFP

The matches of district teams will be played on home-and-away basis while universities, educational boards, BKSP and services teams, split into four groups, will play round-robin league matches. Champions of eight zones and champions and runners-up of services zone will advance into the 10-team final round to be held in Dhaka.

Harunur Rashid, chairman of organising committee of National Football Championship, informed that each district will receive Tk 1.5 lakh while each university, educational board, BKSP and services teams will get Tk 50,000 as participation money.

-- SPORTS REPORTER

#### Diego Alonso made Inter Miami coach

Diego Alonso has been named the first head coach of David Beckham's Inter Miami ahead of their inaugural season in the North America's Major League Soccer.

"In Diego we found a manager that fits our culture and has a strong desire to build a winning club for our fans," said Inter Miami spokesman Paul McDonough.

"He brings a lot of experience and championship-winning mentality as we begin our drive to be among the best clubs in the Americas."

Inter Miami, which opens the season March 1 against Los Angeles FC, is owned by five people, including Beckham.

Alonso, the only coach to win the CONCACAF Champions League with two different teams, reportedly beat out former New York City manager Patrick Vieira and former DC United midfielder Marcelo Gallardo for the job.

The 44-year-old Alonso most recently served as head coach for Monterrey in Mexico.

## Chelsea reveal £96.6m loss

AFP, London

Chelsea recorded a loss of nearly £100 million (\$132 million, 118 million euros) for the year ending June 30, according to financial results published by the club on Tuesday.

Turnover grew slightly to £446.7 million, with Chelsea citing a lack of Champions League football, a record spending on players Kepa Arrizabalaga, Christian Pulisic, Mateo Kovacic and Jorginho, as well as the costs involved in changing manager at Stamford Bridge, for the £96.6m loss.

Chelsea chairman Bruce Buck, in a statement, said: "Consistent revenue growth and careful financial management over recent seasons has allowed the club to make significant levels of investment in the playing staff whilst maintaining compliance with UEFA Financial Fair Play regulations."

"This has contributed to another Europa League victory at the end of the 2018-19 season and a return to the highest level of European competition."

"This solid commercial foundation, allied to a young and exciting team now led by Frank Lampard, means that the club is well placed to sustain its pursuit of success both on and off the pitch as well as maintain its financial stability over the coming years."

# Guardiola says City are 'team of the decade'

AFP, Manchester

Pep Guardiola has insisted Manchester City are English football's team of the decade, despite his side heading into 2020 some 14 points behind runaway Premier League leaders Liverpool.

Statistics appear to prove him right given City have won 13 domestic trophies since 2010, with only Chelsea (nine) within touching distance of that mark.

City have clearly benefitted from the financial clout they have enjoyed since being taken over by Abu Dhabi ownership in August 2008.

City manager Guardiola reached the peak of his powers when he oversaw an unprecedented treble in the 2018/19 season that saw the club win all three major English trophies -- Premier League, FA Cup and League Cup -- in the one campaign as well as the Community Shield.

Even though their league form has been a disappointment in the first half of the current season, Guardiola is in no doubt City are "the" team of the decade in England.

"I think this in the last decade was the best team in terms of points, in terms of goals, in terms of everything, titles even. So congratulate Manchester City for that," he said.

"When we analyse every single day here, what happened day-by-day gives us perspective in what happened in the last 10 seasons, especially when people from Abu Dhabi took over the club and bought good players, interesting managers."

The former Barcelona and Bayern Munich manager, who joined City

in 2016, added: "I think we did it incredibly well."

"People say 'how was 2019?' Now people are saying it is a disaster. We won four titles in 2019, so it was an incredible year for us, we enjoyed it a lot."

"In some games in this last part of the year we have struggled a bit but it was an incredible year for us. Congratulations for all the people working here."

"They were fighting with huge elephants here in England, big, big clubs with the biggest history. For the past decade we were part of them. That is amazing."

Despite their current 'troubles', City could still win any, or all, of the three cup competitions in which they are involved and Guardiola expects the club to remain a major player in the English game in the decade ahead.

"The big clubs here in England are always looking forward, we are going to try and analyse not just in terms of the squad but as a club how we can do better," he added.

"Hopefully in the next decade this club can be here for more time."

In the short term, Guardiola has long since conceded the race for this season's Premier League title to Liverpool and admitted they had to "pray" if they were to win a third successive domestic championship.

But the Catalan manager, who again ruled out being active in the January transfer window, believes his current squad could still have competed for the title had injuries and, he hinted, VAR not sidelined their bid.

"Work harder, play better, and pray," said Guardiola when asked how City can close the gap to Liverpool.