What to WATCH

BTV & RTV
Bangabandhu Gold Cup
Burundi v Seychelles
Live from 5:00 pm
SONY ESPN
South Africa v England

Third Test, Day 3
Live from 2:00 pm
STAR SPORTS 3
ICC U-19s World Cup
Australia v West Indies
Live from 2:00 pm

STAR SPORTS SELECT 1
English Premier League
Watford v Tottenham
Live from 6:30 pm
Manchester City v Crystal Palace
Live from 9:00pm

Newcastle United v Chelsea
Live from 11:30pm
STAR SPORTS SELECT 2
Bundesliga
Augsburg v Dortmund
Live from 8:30pm

RB Leipzig v Union Berlin
Live from 11:30pm
TEN 2
Serie A
Lazio v Sampdoria
Live from 8:00pm

Sassuolo v Torino
Live from 11:00pm
Napoli v Fiorentina
Live from 1:45am (Sunday)

DAY'S EVENT
Bangabandhu Gold Cup
Burundi v Seychelles
Time: 5:00 pm
Venue: Bangabandhu National Stadium, Dhaka

Palestine striker Khaled Salem (L) celebrates his last-ditch goal against Sri Lanka during their 2-0 win in the Bangabandhu Gold Cup at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.
PHOTO: COLLECTED

Palestine break Lankan hearts

SPORTS REPORTER

Palestine scored twice in stoppage time to emerge Group A champions of the Bangabandhu Gold Cup following a hard-fought 2-0 win over Sri Lanka at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

Now the group runners-up will be decided through Sunday's match between Sri Lanka and hosts Bangladesh, who also suffered a 2-0 defeat to Palestine.

Sri Lanka kept Palestine at bay for 90 minutes, thanks to some bold performance from the defence and goalkeeper Herath Pranath. However, the 205th-ranked side eventually failed to keep the 106th-ranked side from winning.

PALESTINE 2 - 0 SRI LANKA
(Abuwarda 90+3', Salem 90+6')

Palestine took to the field with five of their players, who had played against Bangladesh, on the bench. The defending champions failed to break the opposition defence in the first half before coach Makram Daboub sent three pairs of fresh legs who were part of the playing eleven against Bangladesh. The three experienced players mounted huge pressure on the Sri Lankan defence, which eventually collapsed. The tournament favourites broke the deadlock in the second minute of stoppage time through a spectacular diving header from captain Mohamoud Abuwarda off a well-judged cross from Sameh Maraaba. Three minutes later, substitute Khaled Salem, who had scored one against Bangladesh, placed a through-pass from Dawoud Iraqi home to give his side all three points.

Cesar due on Jan 22

SPORTS REPORTER

Former Brazil goalkeeper Julio Cesar will visit Bangladesh as a special guest of Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) for the Bangabandhu Gold Cup, confirmed BFF president Kazi Salahuddin yesterday.

Cesar, who represented the Selecao 87 times, was a member the country's 2004 Copa America winning team as well as 2009 and 2013 FIFA Confederations Cup winning teams. At club level, Cesar won five Serie A titles, three Copa Italia trophies and one UEFA Champions League title with Inter Milan apart from numerous other trophies for other clubs in Europe and South America.

"Brazil legend Julio Cesar is our special guest for the Bangabandhu Gold Cup," Salahuddin said during a press conference at the BFF House yesterday, adding that FIFA has selected Cesar from their Legendary Panel after BFF had asked the world football's governing body to send a player for the Bangabandhu Gold Cup.

The 40-year-old is scheduled to land here on January 22 and on the following day he will have a host of programmes to attend, including a visit to Dhanmondi Road No. 32 for a homage to Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, visit to Fortis-BFF Football Academy in Badda for a session with budding footballers and a session with goalkeepers of different level. He will then go to the BFF to attend a training session of Bangladesh women's football team. The legendary goalkeeper is then scheduled to watch the second semifinal of the Bangabandhu Gold Cup before leaving Dhaka later that night.

COPA ITALIA

Pellegrini lifts Roma past Parma

AFP, *Milan*

Italy midfielder Lorenzo Pellegrini scored both goals to send Roma into the Italian Cup quarter-finals with a 2-0 win over Parma on Thursday.

In a match between fifth-placed Roma and Parma, in seventh, the side from the capital prevailed to return to winning ways in the Ennio Tardini Stadium after back-to-back league defeats.

Pellegrini, 23, struck the first just after the break and added the second from the penalty spot on 76 minutes after an Antonino Barilla handball in the penalty area.

School C'ship to start with 52 teams

SPORTS REPORTER

Having organised the national school football championship on a large scale with 5,000 schools across the country in 2013, the Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) will hold the tournament on a much smaller scale, with just 52 schools participating.

The 2019-20 edition of the tournament will start in eight separate venues from Monday and the best school teams of 52 districts, split into eight zones, are set to take part in a round-robin phase, after which the eight champions will advance to the final round to be held in February.

BFF schools committee chairman Bijon Barua informed that they have chosen the best school team from each district on the basis of the results of the Summer's School and Madrasa Sports Competition.

"Everyone knows that school tournaments are an important tool to develop footballers. It is not only a school tournament but also a social event through which children get an opportunity to play sports and stay healthy. It is a tournament of community building as the parents also get involved," said BFF president Kazi Salahuddin at a press conference yesterday.

Athletes race through the uneven grass surface of the MA Aziz Stadium in Chattogram yesterday, risking serious injuries, during the 43rd National Athletics Championship.
PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

Bruised, disheartened

MOHAMMAD SUMON *from Chattogram*

The 43rd National Athletics Championship is being held at the MA Aziz Stadium in Chattogram, the first time in 14 years that the national meet is being held outside the capital and also on grass. And the championship has already garnered criticism from athletes even though the organisers have defended their decision.

On the second day of the three-day meet, athletes have complained that they are facing difficulties adjusting to uneven grass pitch after having trained on synthetic track round-the-year.

Bangladesh Biman's Abdur Rahim, who finished fourth in 1500m race yesterday, said none of the athletes have been able to show their natural performance due to the surface being uneven and soft.

"We always train on synthetic track. When the athletes learnt that the events will be held on grass surface and the records will not be official, everyone got disheartened," Rahim told The Daily Star.

The same team's Rajibul Islam, who finished third in long jump event, echoed the same sentiment.

Chattogram Jela Krira Shangstha's athletics committee chairman and the co-chairman of the organising committee of the championship, Mozammel Haque, though said, "Due to budget constraints this championship is not being held on synthetic track, which is why the records are not official."

However, he claimed that taking the event to Chattogram will help decentralise the sport and will encourage local clubs and organisers to come to athletics.

Bangladesh Athletics Federation's general secretary Abdur Rkib Montu claimed no one has made any official complaint as yet. "Athletes are trained on both synthetic and natural surface. No one has complained to us yet."

When drawn his notice about two athletes getting injured, Montu said that this is a regular occurrence in athletics and it has nothing to do with the surface.

"If we had to install a synthetic track on this ground, we would need Tk 10 crore. And that is a jurisdiction of the sports ministry. We have a budget of only Tk 29 lakhs and we are trying our best to do our job with this money," said Montu.

Young agrees Inter move

AFP, *Milan*

Manchester United defender Ashley Young has agreed a move to Serie A club Inter Milan, according to reports on Thursday.

The 34-year-old will arrive in Italy on Friday for a medical before signing an 18-month contract, Gazzetta Dello Sport reported.

United will receive 1.5 million euros ($1.6 million) plus bonuses for Young who has spent the past eight-and-a-half seasons at Old Trafford since arriving from Aston Villa in 2011.

Young, who has played 39 times for England, has made 261 appearances for the Premier League club and scored 19 goals.

Club structure has pegged football back: Salahuddin

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Football Federation president Kazi Salahuddin yesterday said that club structure has pegged the country's football back as the game's local governing body could not bring the clubs in a professional structure despite repeated attempts over the past 10 years.

The BFF president said this during a press conference in reply to media's query regarding the national team's performance against Palestine in the ongoing Bangabandhu Gold Cup which they lost 2-0.

"I am not disappointed with the result, but I am sad. We can't play on the ground; we can only provide all kinds of facilities the team needs," said Salahuddin.

In a reply to a supplementary question, Salahuddin said, "Producing footballers is clubs' duty, not the federation's. But it is true that we could not bring the clubs in a professional structure despite repeated initiatives such as holding seminars with FIFA/AFC experts, instruction of building youth teams etc. The club structure has pegged our football back. It is also true that we need clubs, who, however, have been changing their mentality."

Except for a couple of clubs, there has been no youth squads of the professional clubs since the introduction of the professional football league in 2007. The clubs have also not taken any visible initiative in this regard and performed their duty by only forming teams ahead of any youth tournament. Besides, BFF is focused on holding top-flight leagues such as the premier league and the championship league and it is apparently reluctant to hold leagues at lower levels and district level.