

DAY'S EVENT

Bangladesh Premier League
Bashundhara Kings v Uttar Baridhara
Time: 3:15pm

Venue: Sheikh Kamal Stadium, Nilphamari
Sheikh Jamal v Chattogram Abahani
Time: 6:30pm

Venue: Bangabandhu National Stadium, Dhaka
Sheikh Russel v Brothers Union

Time: 6:30pm
Venue: Sylhet District Stadium

REFEREE BANNED FOR HEAD-BUTTING GOALIE

An Italian referee has been banned for one year after he lost his cool and head-butted a goalkeeper he had sent off during a minor league game earlier this month, ANSA news agency reported on Tuesday. In a match between Borgo Mogliano and Montottone in Macerata on Feb. 1, the referee Antonio Martiniello had given Borgo Mogliano's goalkeeper Matteo Ciccioli his marching orders as the hosts won 3-1. Then when the pair faced off outside the changing room after the game as the goalkeeper sought an explanation, the referee head-butted Ciccioli, who was taken to hospital to treat his injuries. Martiniello's ban will not only prevent him from officiating games for the next year but also from entering the facilities of teams in the top three tiers of Italian soccer, minor and amateur leagues, and matches involving the Italy national team. --REUTERS



Abahani's Mamunul Islam (R) jostles for possession with Maziya's Cornelius Stewart during their AFC Cup prequalifying match in Male yesterday. The match ended goalless as Abahani were eliminated following an aggregate 2-2 draw, with the Maldivians booking the playoffs spot courtesy of two away goals.

PHOTO: AFC

Draw ends Abahani's hopes

SPORTS REPORTER



Last edition's zonal semifinalists Abahani failed to get out of the preliminary qualifying round of the AFC Cup following a goalless draw against hosts Maziya at the National Football Stadium in Male yesterday. Maziya advanced to the playoffs of the second-tier club competition of Asia, thanks to two away goals they scored in their 2-2 draw against Abahani in the first leg a week earlier.

Six-time Bangladesh Premier League champions Abahani needed a win or a big-scoring draw to get the better of Maziya, but the Sky Blues never looked like a side capable of beating the Maldivians on their home ground where Abahani had suffered defeats against Maziya and New Radiant in 2017 and 2018 respectively.

The charges of Mario Lemos, however,

looked better in the first half of the game with better ball possession and good defending due to the inclusion of central defender Tutul Hossain Badsha in place of Nasir Chowdhury, but they lacked cutting edge in the attacking third as Sunday Chizoba and Nabib Newaj Jibon chased the ball throughout the game while Kervens Belfort had some brilliant moves, but found no one in support.

Abahani had the first shot on target in the 27th minute when Belfort played the ball to Sunday, who hit straight to goalkeeper Ovays Azizi while Belfort himself failed to connect to a well-judged free-kick from Mamunul Islam from the edge of the six-yard box on half-hour mark.

Maziya came close to breaking the deadlock in the stoppage time of the first half but Shahidul Alam Sohel brilliantly parried a curling shot from Ibrahim Mahudhee.

After resumption, Abahani totally failed to keep the tempo and Maziya dominated the first 30 minutes. Abahani were lucky not to concede,

thanks to a brilliant save by Badsha while Sohel made at least two excellent saves.

With long-serving Sunday failing to have any impact upfront, Belfort worked really hard to create an opening as the Haitian entered the box from the left flank to dance past three defenders before providing a cut-back to substitute Rubel Miya, who incredibly drove wide of target in the 81st minute.

In the stoppage time of the second half, Abahani's stand-in-captain Sohel Rana got involved in an altercation with Maziya coach Marjan Sekulovski, who tried to stop the midfielder from picking the ball at the by-line before a Maziya player pushed Rana outside the pitch.

Following the incident, Abahani officials also came off the bench to argue with the match officials and one of the coaching staff of Maziya was sent off, but Abahani could not find the target after resumption and had to be content with back-to-back draws.

Ngidi clinches last-ball thriller

STAR SPORT DESK

Lungi Ngidi took three wickets in the last over and successfully defended seven runs as South Africa won the first T20I against England by one run off the last ball in East London yesterday.

England skipper Eoin Morgan hammered two fours and a six in the penultimate over, which started with England needing 23 to eclipse South Africa's 177 for eight, but was caught off Beuran Hendricks in the last ball of the over. Ngidi then had Ben Stokes, Moeen Ali and Sam Curran caught and with England needing three runs off one ball, but they managed just one as Adil Rashid was run out trying to complete the second.

Morgan had hit 52 and opener Jason Roy a 38-ball 70 to set up the chase, but England lost their nerves at the end.

Earlier, South Africa's score rode on early partnerships between skipper Quinton de Kock and opener Temba Bavuma, who also built a 63-run second-wicket partnership with Rassie van der Dussen.

SCORES IN BRIEF

SOUTH AFRICA: 177 for 8 (Bavuma 43, De Kock 31; Jordan 2-28, Ali 1-22)
ENGLAND: 176 for 8 in 20 overs (Roy 70, Morgan 52; Ngidi 3-30, Phehlukwayo 2-32)
Result: South Africa won by 1 run.

Europe's 'Big Five' dominate world transfer spending

REUTERS, Undated



Clubs in Europe's top five member associations -- England, Spain, Germany, Italy and France -- accounted for 71.8% of fees spent globally during the 2020 January transfer window, world soccer governing body FIFA said on Wednesday.

A record 170 countries had the window open last month, with a total of 4,108 international transfers being completed.

Although clubs from the 'Big Five' accounted for only 14.1% of the total number of transfers, the fees that exchanged hands were 71.8% of the global spend.

Clubs in England spent \$298.2 million in transfers -- the highest in the world -- followed by Germany (\$206.1 million) and Italy (\$126.7 million). The top flight leagues were responsible for 93.1% of the spending on international transfers.

Some of the high profile moves included Bruno Fernandes' move from Sporting Lisbon to Manchester United for an initial fee of 55 million euros (\$60.01 million) while Borussia Dortmund signed young striker Erling Haaland from Red Bull Salzburg.

In all, the Big Five spent \$824.6 million in January -- second only to the 2018 January window when they spent \$1.01 billion in total.

"Spending by clubs of the Big Five leagues seems to continue on the general growth path of the past years, playing a central role in the global transfer market," FIFA's chief legal officer Emilio Garcia said in a statement.

"It is FIFA's duty to carefully monitor and report on those activities, providing greater transparency to the transfer system."

Dembele out for six months

AFP, Madrid



Ousmane Dembele will miss Euro 2020 after Barcelona announced on Tuesday the France international will be out for around six months following surgery on his right hamstring.

Dembele's absence also means he will be sidelined for the rest of this season for Barca, who will be without another attacker after losing Luis Suarez to a long-term knee injury last month.

"The first team player Ousmane Dembele has successfully undergone surgery ... for a ruptured tendon in his proximal hamstring in his right thigh. The Frenchman will be out for around six months," the La Liga champions said in a statement.

The 22-year-old has suffered a number of hamstring problems since joining from Borussia Dortmund in August 2017 in a deal worth up to 147 million euros (\$160.5 million).

Dembele has made only nine appearances this season.

He was close to recovering from a hamstring injury sustained in November before suffering a relapse in training last week.

The former Rennes attacker also



missed the majority of his opening year at Barcelona with a similar problem which kept the forward out for four months.

Dembele's latest disappointment is a blow to France's hopes of following up 2018's World Cup triumph by winning the Euros this summer.

His long layoff could prompt Barcelona to buy a replacement up front, if the club are allowed to make

an emergency signing by the Spanish Football Federation (RFEF).

Barcelona can apply for permission from the RFEF but any new arrival would have to be playing in La Liga or out of contract, and would not be allowed to feature in the Champions League.

Real Sociedad forward Willian Jose, Getafe's Angel and Lucas Perez from Alaves are all reported targets.



Andres Iniesta may be 35 and plying in a lesser league, but he has lost little of his Midas touch, evidenced in abundance in his inspiring performance during Vissel Kobe's AFC Champions League fixture against Johor Darul Ta'zim in Kobe, Japan yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

Casillas eyes Spanish football presidency

AFP, Madrid



Former Spain goalkeeper Iker Casillas plans to run for the presidency of the Spanish Football Federation (RFEF), Spanish media reported on Wednesday.

Casillas told the national sports council (CSD) of his intention to run in the upcoming RFEF elections, reported the Cadena Ser radio station early Wednesday.

According to this media, Casillas "has made the decision to run" for the elections and has informed Irene Lozano, who as secretary of state for sport is president of the CSD.

Contacted by AFP, the CSD made no comment.

The date of the election has not been decided. The AS newspaper, citing CSD sources, Casillas met Lozano and expressed an interest in running.

Casillas, 38, played 167 times for Spain, winning two Euros and one World Cup, and more than 700 games for Real Madrid, with whom he won the Champions League three times. He joined Porto in 2015.

Last April he suffered a heart attack during training and has not played since. His name has been linked with the RFEF presidency for some months.

The Catalan newspaper Mundo Deportivo said that "it was Casillas who requested the meeting" with Lozano.

Juventus extend Szczesny contract

AFP, Milan



Juventus goalkeeper Wojciech Szczesny has signed a three-year contract extension until 2024, the Italian champions announced on Tuesday.

The Polish international joined Juve in 2017 from Arsenal as back-up to club legend Gianluigi Buffon.

The 29-year-old took over as number one after Buffon's departure to Paris Saint-Germain and has held on to the role despite the veteran Italian's return to Turin this season.

"This renewal is a demonstration of the club's trust in me," Szczesny told Juventus TV.

"I'm very happy and I'll try to give my best. I'll be here for another four years and I want more titles, I want to win everything."

"You have to sweat, run and sacrifice yourself to achieve this goal that is mine but also that of the club."

Szczesny joined the club following a



two-year loan spell at Roma and has played 84 matches, winning two Serie A titles, one Coppa Italia and an Italian Super Cup.

Juve's reign as eight-time Serie A champions is under threat this season as they sit in second place in Serie A behind leaders Inter Milan on goal difference.