

What to WATCH

STAR Cricket
 England v Australia
 Second Test, Day 2
 Live from 4:15pm
TEN Action
 Tour de France
 Stage 19
 Live from 5:00pm

TEN Cricket
 West Indies v Pakistan
 Third ODI
 Live from 7:00pm

Chandimal youngest SL skipper

CRICINFO, Colombo
 Dinesh Chandimal will become Sri Lanka's youngest ODI captain, at 23, after being handed the reins for the first two matches against South Africa in Colombo.

Regular captain Angelo Mathews was unavailable after earning a two-match suspension for an over-rate offence in the West Indies tri-nation series. Lahiru Thirimanne was named vice-captain.

Middle-order batsman Jehan Mubarak earned a recall, four years after his last international appearance. Now 32, Mubarak did not show sustained aptitude at the top level in his previous stints with the national team, despite a fine domestic reputation. He hit 42 in the practice match against the South Africans on Wednesday and had been the top-scorer in Sri Lanka's inter-provincial List A competition in January, with an average of 60 and a strike rate of 120.96.

Uncapped middle-order batsman Angelo Perera was named in the 15-man squad as well, after top-scoring for his side in the warm-up match, with 46.

All-rounder Thisara Perera reclaimed his place after missing the West Indies tri-series. An injury to Nuwan Kulasekara's left ring finger, which was sustained in the Caribbean, ruled him out of the first two matches.

Players warn of 'tough stance'

SPORTS REPORTER

The hockey players are likely to take the hard line if the crisis regarding the inter-club players' transfer is not solved immediately.

The players, under the banner of Hockey Players' Welfare Association (HPWA) yesterday tried to meet the sports minister following his commitment to solve the ongoing crisis within a week after their meeting with him on July 7. "One week has already gone but the stalemate is not over yet. Today (Thursday) we talked to the minister on his way out of the office but he asked us to make a fresh appointment," said HPWA president Rasel Khan Bappi who hinted that they might take a tough stance if the crisis is not over immediately.

A national camp for the Asia Cup in September is ongoing, and it is likely that the current crisis will have a detrimental effect on preparations for the regional event.

Sepp wants winter WC

AFP, Berlin



FIFA president Sepp Blatter will push for the 2022 World Cup in Qatar to be moved to the winter after getting a personal taste of the Middle East's blast furnace climate.

There has been widespread concern over the health dangers posed by staging the tournament in the Gulf in June and July where temperatures rocket to 50 degrees (122 degrees Fahrenheit).

Blatter insisted on Wednesday that he will push to have the World Cup moved despite the effects it could have on domestic leagues when the FIFA Executive Committee meets in October.

"The Executive Committee will certainly follow me," Blatter was quoted by AFP subsidiary, SID, as telling a two-day sports conference in Austria.

Blatter said that a recent visit to Jordan and the Palestinian Territories had brought home the dangers of the intense heat.

He expressed his fears despite the Qataris' ambitious plans to build air-conditioned arenas.

"It is clear that you cannot play in this heat in the summer and we have to consider the players," he said.

"It is certainly possible to cool a stadium, but not an entire country. That's why we need to have courage in the Executive Committee and to create awareness among the leagues that we need to change something."

Qatar plans to spend around £65 billion (\$101 billion, 76 billion euros) on infrastructure projects, including building new high-tech stadiums, which the Qatar 2022 Supreme Committee said would likely cost \$4-5 billion.

Average temperatures in Qatar are markedly cooler in December, with highs of 24C and lows of 15C.

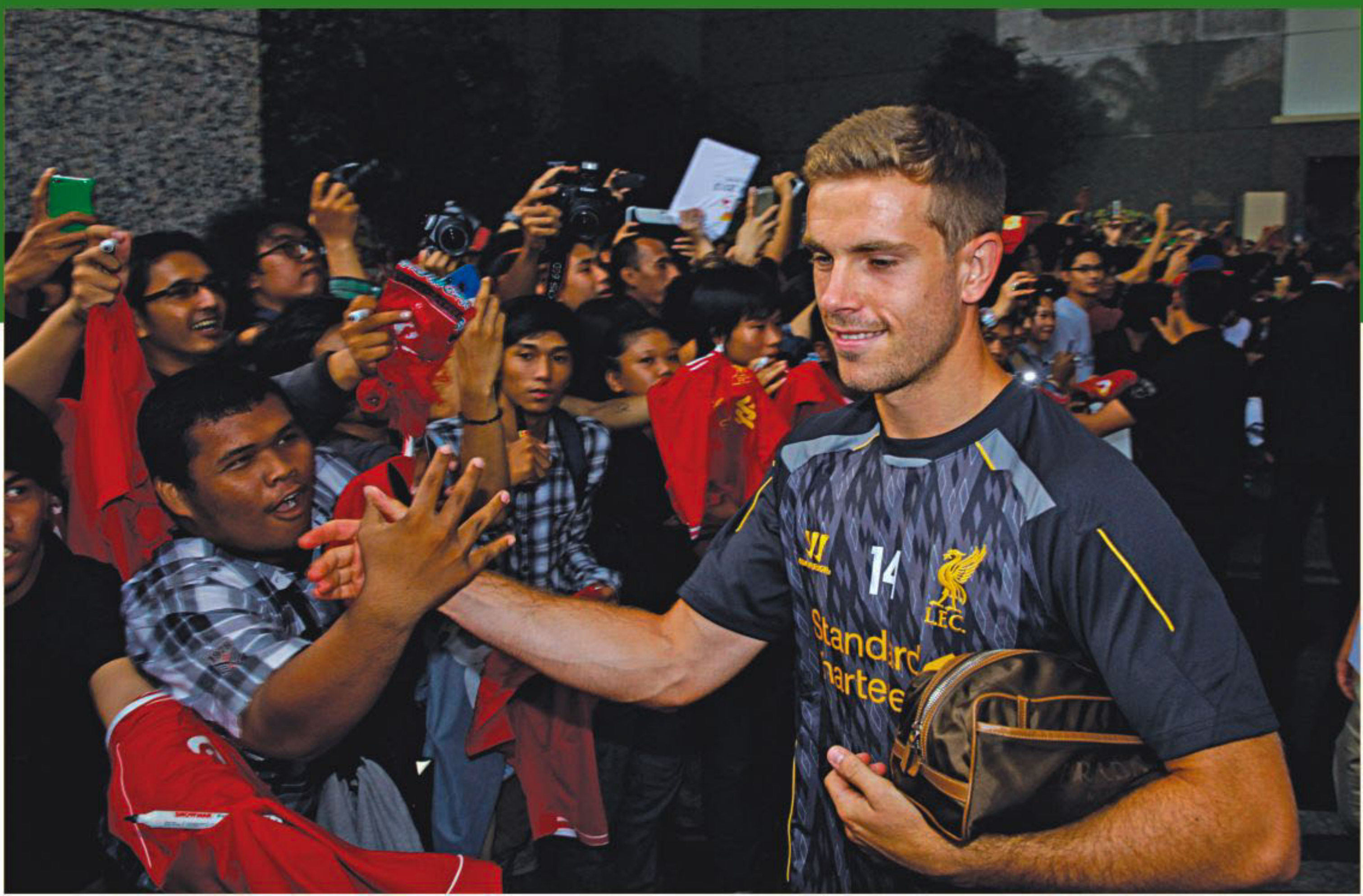
In June this year, UEFA general secretary Gianni Infantino added his weight to calls for the 2022 World Cup to be staged later in the year.

"I fully share the view that you have to play in the best period for football; that is not June or July in Qatar. This is an issue that FIFA has to sort out," he said.

"The sooner they do it, the better. The decision for 2022 was taken in 2010, so in 12 years you can organise yourself."

Qatar has already said it was ready to host the World Cup in summer or in winter.

"Various figures from the world of football have raised preferences for hosting in the winter," the Qatar 2022 Supreme Committee said in a statement earlier this year.



Liverpool midfielder Jordan Henderson walks through Indonesian supporters as he heads to a bus for practice in Jakarta yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Cech welcomes Rooney pursuit

THE GUARDIAN



Petr Cech has become the first Chelsea player to fling his support publicly behind the club's bid for Wayne Rooney as the Londoners prepare to submit an improved offer to Manchester United for the England striker.

Their opening bid, worth around £20m, has been knocked back by the Premier League champions, who have indicated an unwillingness to sell the 27-year-old to a direct rival for the title. Rooney is understood to favour a move to Stamford Bridge, having grown disaffected at Old Trafford after falling down the pecking order behind Robin van Persie, but will have to hand in a formal transfer request to force his exit.

An improved offer closer to £25m is anticipated from Chelsea, with Arsenal also to step up their own interest in the forward, though it may not emerge until United's stance is clarified once Rooney has submitted that request, waiving certain bonuses due over the final two years of his contract in the process.

Lukaku fires Chelsea

AFP, Bangkok



Romelu Lukaku handed Jose Mourinho a winning start to his new reign as Chelsea manager Wednesday with a perfectly timed debut goal after the club confirmed a bid for Wayne Rooney.

The towering Didier Drogba look-a-like drilled a first-half penalty to give new-look Chelsea a 1-0 win over the Singha All-Star XI, who humbled Manchester United by the same scoreline last week.

Lukaku, who starred on loan with West Bromwich Albion last season, has vowed to fight for his place even if Chelsea sign a striker of the calibre of Manchester United's unsettled forward Rooney.

And his goal, on a night of promising debut performances by Chelsea's new signings in Bangkok, comes after the club ended widespread speculation by confirming a bid for the England forward.

Chelsea played with their shirt names and numbers in Thai but home goalkeeper

Narit Taweekul nearly went further with the generosity when he palmed a loose ball against the crossbar.

Kevin De Bruyne was a chief threat on his debut, after returning from a loan spell at Werder Bremen, and he whistled a thunderous shot past the uprights on 23 minutes.

Lukaku was also posing problems early on and he forced a sharp save from Narit after galloping through one-on-one on the half-hour.

But the first goal of Mourinho's new era came from the spot after right-back Wallace, the new signing from Fluminense, went down under a challenge in the box.

And Lukaku made no mistake with his left foot as he drove the penalty low and to the 'keeper's right for his first goal in a Chelsea shirt, with 35 minutes gone.

Chelsea now head to Kuala Lumpur and then Jakarta as they continue their build-up to the new season under Mourinho.

The 'Happy One' won two Premier League titles, two League Cups and the FA Cup during his first stint at Chelsea.



National hockey players go through their paces in a practice session as part of the preparatory camp for the Asia Cup in September at the Maulana Bhasani Hockey Stadium yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

Fed flies into qtrs

AFP, Hamburg



Roger Federer had few problems as he breezed into the quarterfinals of the Hamburg ATP tournament with a straight sets third-round win over Czech opponent Jan Hajek on Thursday.

The Swiss ace, playing his second match since his second-round exit at Wimbledon last month, needed just over an hour to seal a 6-4, 6-3 win over the 29-year-old Hajek to reach the last eight.

"Wins like that do me good," admitted the 31-year-old Federer, who faces Germany's Florian Mayer on Friday.

Federer squandered 10 of his 13 break points, including five match points in the eighth game of the second set, but prevailed in 72 minutes.

Having brushed off his Wimbledon cobwebs by fighting back after losing the first set to Germany's Daniel Brand in Wednesday's second round, Federer fired down seven aces to Hajek's two.

Federer came from behind to win 3-6, 6-3, 6-2 against the German world number 58, who was celebrating his 26th birthday, to reach the third round of a tournament he last played in 2008. He was given a first round bye. That was the Swiss great's 30th career win at the tournament.

Second-seed Tommy Haas of Germany also booked his place in the last eight with a 6-2, 6-4 victory over Argentina's Carlos Berlocq.

The 35-year-old German is bidding to win his hometown title for the first time in 11 appearances -- four of his 14 ATP World Tour titles have come on German soil.

In the quarterfinals Haas faces 12th-seeded Italian Fabio Fognini, who dismissed Marcel Granollers 6-2, 6-4 in 90 minutes.

The 26-year-old Fognini won his first tour title in Stuttgart last week, where he beat Haas in the quarterfinals.

"After his tournament success in Stuttgart, he's currently playing the best tennis of his life," Haas said of Fognini after the German was critical of his own performance against Berlocq.

Seven-star Arsenal

AFP, Hanoi



Arsenal pummelled the Vietnamese national team into submission with a 7-1 romp on Wednesday at the 40,000-seat My Dinh Stadium in Hanoi.

French forward Olivier Giroud scored a first-half hattrick, getting the opener after just five minutes, and following up with two goals in rapid succession just before half-time.

Giroud, who joined Arsenal in June 2012 from Ligue 1 champions Montpellier, now has five goals in two games on the Gunners' Asian tour, after scoring twice in Sunday's seven-goal win over the Indonesian Dream Team in Jakarta.

Manchester United, Manchester City and Chelsea all have new managers this season, giving Arsenal hope that their stability under long-serving coach Arsene Wenger can finally help them end an eight-year trophy drought.

After the team posted a video on the Arsenal website of the fan, Vu Xuan Tien, and his tireless chase of the bus -- which ended with him being invited on board and posing for photos with the team -- "Running Man" became an overnight sensation in Vietnam.

"I am satisfied with (the) performance of our players. They have made a good impression in the eyes of Vietnamese fans," Wenger added, speaking to reporters after the Wednesday match.

Arsenal turned in exhibition stuff at My Dinh as they repeatedly pierced a spirited Vietnamese defence.

After a flurry of half-time substitutions on both teams, teenager Alex Oxlade-Chamberlain scored Arsenal's fourth a minute after the restart.

Arsenal's pacy front man Chuba Akpom scored in minute 56 and again on the hour after Oxlade-Chamberlain passed the ball across to the young striker, who also hit the target against the Indonesians.

Spanish midfielder Mikel Arteta, a 2011 signing from Everton, scored Arsenal's seventh in the 75th minute.

Tran Manh Dung scored a consolation in the 78th minute, delighting the home crowd, who went wild as the Vietnamese forward stripped off his shirt and ran across the pitch in celebration.

It began to pour with rain as a monsoon hit in the final minutes of the game, prompting many of the cheering Vietnamese fans to run for cover, leaving sections of the stands empty.

Vietnam's goalkeeper Tran Buu Ngoc was handed a red card in the 89th minute after he came out of his area, was beaten to the ball but won it with his hand.

Vietnamese defender Dao Van Phong went into goal for the final minutes.

England striker Theo Walcott took the resulting free kick for Arsenal but put it wide.

Arsenal next head to Japan, where their visit includes a game against Wenger's former club, Nagoya Grampus.

Klopp draws line

AFP, Berlin



Borussia Dortmund coach Jurgen Klopp said Thursday he has drawn a line under last season and this season, getting rid of everything in between.

"We will find out what comes next. There are no problems with Robert." Dortmund take part in a pre-season friendly tournament this weekend, which includes hosts Borussia Moenchengladbach, Hamburg, Bayern Munich and Dortmund.

Borussia could meet Bayern in Sunday's final, in what would be a repeat of May's Champions League final won 2-1 by Munich, but the only fly in Dortmund's ointment is the ankle injury to new signing Henrikh Mkhitaryan, which means a four-week lay-off.

"It's basically a stupid thing to happen, especially for a newcomer, but we have all seen that Henrikh fits in here like a fist in your eye or a backside on a bucket," said Klopp colourfully after Mkhitaryan cost 27.5 million euros (US\$36m).

With 35 goals last season, including 24 goals in 31 league matches, Klopp has said he expects the same from Lewandowski when the new season starts on August 9.

ing camp in Switzerland.

"We are quite relaxed about the situation, so is he.

"He feels right at home in the team and we have chosen to draw a line under last season and this season, getting rid of everything in between.

"We will find out what comes next. There are no problems with Robert."

Dortmund take part in a pre-season friendly tournament this weekend, which includes hosts Borussia Moenchengladbach, Hamburg, Bayern Munich and Dortmund.

Borussia could meet Bayern in Sunday's final, in what would be a repeat of May's Champions League final won 2-1 by Munich, but the only fly in Dortmund's ointment is the ankle injury to new signing Henrikh Mkhitaryan, which means a four-week lay-off.

"It's basically a stupid thing to happen, especially for a newcomer, but we have all seen that Henrikh fits in here like a fist in your eye or a backside on a bucket," said Klopp colourfully after Mkhitaryan cost 27.5 million euros (US\$36m).

After fixing, now doping hits IPL

PTI, New Delhi

The sixth edition of Indian Premier League (IPL), which was rocked by the spot-fixing scandal, has now been hit by a doping fiasco, with Delhi and Kolkata Knight Rider's promising left-arm seamer Pradeep Sangwan failing a random dope test during the league.

Sangwan is only the second cricketer in the history of IPL after Pakistani speedster Mohammed Asif to have been found guilty of consuming banned drugs.

"Yes, Pradeep Sangwan has tested positive for banned substances during this edition of Indian Premier League.