

## DAY'S EVENT

**NATIONAL CRICKET LEAGUE**  
(Four-Day Match, Day-2)  
**Khulna v Dhaka Metro**  
Venue: BKSP 3  
**Rajshahi v Barisal**

Venue: BKSP 2  
**Dhaka v Rangpur**  
Venue: SBNSC  
**Sylhet v Chittagong**  
Venue: KSOAS  
Time: 10:00am

## TV BLACKOUT PLAN RUINED

Chelsea manager Jose Mourinho said that his plans to stop his players following Man City's game against Liverpool prior to the League Cup final were thwarted by his goalkeeping coach. "I prepared the players for an impossible mission, which was we don't want to know the Man City result," Mourinho told his post-match press conference. "I want complete silence. I don't want reactions to that. And we were successful on that. But one member of my staff jumped on the bus. Silvano. 'I want to kill the guy. The member of my staff broke the rule!'"



# Titumir takes Muktis into final

All Reds face Sk Jamal in a repeat of last edition

SPORTS REPORTER



Muktijoddha Sangsad set up a final showdown of the Federation Cup against defending champions Sheikh Jamal DC after overcoming a spirited Mohammedan SC 4-3 in sudden-death shootout in the second semifinal at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

Muktijoddha defender Anisul Alam Sweet smashed the seventh attempt at the upper right corner of the net to ensure a repeat final of last edition after the regulation time had ended 1-1 and extra-time failed to find a winner.

The real hero, though, was the Muktijoddha goalkeeper Titumir Chowdhury, who blocked three successive attempts from Mohammedan's Towhidul Alam Sabuj, Mansa Sylla and Habibur Rahman Shohag to take his side through after their own first attempt was thwarted by Mohammedan goalkeeper Mohammad Nehal.

Muktijoddha had the upper hand all throughout the game against a youthful Mohammedan side and should have left the field with a convincing win in regulation time, but they wasted too many scoring opportunities to force the match into extra-

time and shoot-out.

Ten-time Federation Cup champions Mohammedan however went close to taking the lead in the 18th minute when Biplu Ahmed's clever angular shot was denied by the post with goalkeeper completely beaten. Soon the All Reds took the lead from the spot in the 33rd minute.

Senegalese striker Camara Sarba was brought down by Nehal inside the six-yard box and the referee had no hesitation pointing to the spot. Skipper Enamul Haque stepped up and sent the keeper the wrong way side to give the All Reds the lead.

The All Reds could have doubled the lead in the dying moments of the first half but unmarked Enamul drove wide off the target before Mohammedan levelled the margin in the 61st minute. Guinean hitman Ismael Bangoura scored with a clever dink over Titumir, but had to leave the field injured after colliding with the Muktijoddha keeper while scoring the equaliser.

The remaining time was a complete domination of Muktijoddha, who found four scoring opportunities but substitute Sayeemur Rahman Shahed, Camara and Fekry Zeiada failed to capitalise to force the game into extra-time and shoot-out.

**MUKTIJODDHA 1 (4) – MOHAMMEDAN 1 (3)**  
ENAMUL 33 BANGOURA 61



PHOTO: STAR

**A SWEET VICTORY:** Muktijoddha Sangsad players run for joy after Anisul Alam Sweet (not in picture) converted his spot kick to give his side a sudden death victory over Mohammedan in the second semifinal of the Federation Cup at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

## Icardi not for sale

AFP, Milan

Inter Milan on Sunday moved to fend off reported interest from Chelsea and Manchester United in Mauro Icardi claiming the Argentinian striker has a "long-term future" at the club.

Interest in Icardi has blossomed recently after the 21-year-old took his Serie A goals tally this season to 14 to sit top of the league scoring charts alongside Juventus marksman Carlos Tevez.

The English media on Sunday republished reports from Italy a day earlier, claiming Chelsea manager Jose Mourinho has been bombarding Icardi with telephone calls and messages in a bid to lure him to the club.

## BGB defeats BSF in friendly volleyball

OUR CORRESPONDENT from Thakurgaon

A Bangladesh Border Guard (BGB) team beat a team from Indian Border Security Force (BSF) by 2-1 sets in a friendly volleyball match held here yesterday afternoon.

Panchagarh 18 BGB Battalion organised the event at the Mirgarh border in Panchagarh sadar upazila aimed at cementing cordial relationship between the two forces of the neighbouring countries.

A 25-member BSF team led by SK Panwar, deputy inspector general (DIG) of Kishanganj BSF Sector, was earlier greeted by colonel Akramul Haque, commander of Thakurgaon BGB Sector, at the border. The prize giving ceremony followed by discussions was held after the match.



## Sabina to play for Maldives Police

SPORTS REPORTER

Sabina Khatun is set to become the first Bangladeshi female footballer to play in a foreign league as the national women's team is set for a spell with the Maldives Police team in a domestic competition of Maldives, starting from March 14.

Sabina, the vice captain of the national team, caught the attention of Maldives officials during the SAFF Women's Championship in Pakistan last November.

"I was offered to play for a Maldives team by a Maldives football official and it felt like a dream to me," said Sabina, who had struck two goals in Bangladesh's 3-1 win over Maldives.

# Villarreal hold Real

AFP, Madrid



Real Madrid missed the chance to move four points clear of Barcelona at the top of La Liga after being held to a 1-1 draw by Villarreal on Sunday.

Cristiano Ronaldo's early second-half penalty looked to have Madrid on course for a fourth consecutive win, but Gerard Moreno's thunderous equaliser 26 minutes from time earned the visitors a deserved point.

Champions Atletico Madrid failed to gain any ground on the leaders as they battled to a 0-0 draw at Sevilla.

Fourth-placed Valencia are now just a point adrift of Atletico after they were comfortable 2-0 winners over David Moyes's Real Sociedad thanks to a double from Pablo Piatti.

Villarreal were without a host of first team regulars as coach Marcelino continues to prioritise progress in the

## RESULTS

**Valencia 2** (Piatti 53, 56) Real Sociedad 0  
**Eibar 0** Athletic Bilbao 1 (Gurpegui 36)  
**Sevilla 0** Atletico Madrid 0

Copa del Rey and Europa League.

However, the visitors started the brighter and should have been in front on 12 minutes when Iker Casillas made a fine save from Moreno and then Dani Carvajal headed Moi Gomez's follow-up effort off the line.

The European champions began to bombard the Villarreal defence with crosses as the half developed and Gareth Bale came close to an opener when his header from Toni Kroos's corner flashed wide.

Ronaldo saw his first effort on target of the evening well saved by Sergio Asenjo three minutes into the second-half.

But there was nothing the goalkeeper could do to prevent the World Player of the Year opening the scoring

from the spot after he had been pulled down inside the area by Eric Bailly.

Ronaldo should have doubled his tally moments later when he latched onto a wonderful through ball by Bale, but Asenjo rushed from his goal-line to make a brave block.

The roles were reversed two minutes later as Ronaldo teed up Bale, but the Welshman's off night in front of goal continued as he blasted well over.

That miss was to prove costly when Villarreal levelled thanks to a wonderful low finish by Moreno.

Ronaldo had the chance to restore Madrid's lead four minutes later as he showed Bailly a clean pair of heels, but was once again denied by Asenjo.

And the former Atletico Madrid stopper made his best stop of the night seconds leader to turn Ronaldo's powerful header over.

Asenjo nearly undid all of his good work when he flapped at Marcelo's cross six minutes from the end, but was grateful to see Jese Rodriguez slot the rebound wide.

## Pioneer League kicks off today

SPORTS REPORTER

Dhaka City Corporation (North and South) 25th Pioneer Football League gets underway today where 59 teams will be fighting for three qualifying spots for the third Division Football League.

The participating teams, split into 10 zones, will play in round-robin league format in group stages, and two teams from each zone will advance to the 20-team Super League, informed Pioneer League Committee co-chairman Bijon Barua at a press conference yesterday.

Barua informed that they have selected around 2000 booters of U-16 level from amongst 5000 for the tournament last December and also held a coaching course for the coaches and a workshop for the managers of the participating teams.

# Terry hails triumph

AFP, London



John Terry hailed Chelsea's League Cup final triumph against Tottenham as a massive moment in Jose Mourinho's second spell in charge.

Terry put Chelsea on course for a 2-0 victory when the Blues captain fired home on the stroke of half-time and Kyle Walker's second-half own goal ensured Mourinho would claim his first silverware since his return to Stamford Bridge in 2013.

Mourinho's maiden trophy of his original stint as Chelsea manager was also the League Cup in 2005 and that was followed by the Premier League title just months later.

And, with Chelsea on top of the league once again, Terry hopes the win at rain-soaked Wembley will prove a springboard to more glory.

"It's the first trophy this season and it's massive. It meant an awful lot to us when we won it in Jose's first year in 2005 as well," he said.

"That could be the start of something very good. We have to kick on and we have got the league to focus on, but it's a great day and a great win.

"The pressure was there before the game, obviously, but that's what cup finals do to you."

## Rooney backs Di Maria

REUTERS, London

Angel Di Maria is a great player and will rediscover his best form for Manchester United after enduring a difficult time of late, captain Wayne Rooney said.

The 27-year-old Argentine has done little to justify the British record transfer fee of 59.7 million pounds (\$92 million) United spent to recruit the flying winger from Real Madrid.

Di Maria, who has scored three goals in 19 Premier League games this season, was taken off at halftime during United's 2-0 victory over Sunderland on Saturday but Rooney believes the Argentine will come good at Old Trafford.

"It (Saturday) was just one of those days that every footballer has," Rooney told the club's website.

"He is a great player, he has shown that and you don't lose your talent overnight. Hopefully, he will get back to his best and start giving some great performances for us.

"He has got a lot of experience and I think he will figure it out, we all have to do that sometimes. There is nothing worse than when everyone keeps going on at you.

"You have to come to it in your own way and I am sure he will be a big player for us between now and the end of the season."



**Rafael Nadal of Spain bites the Argentina Open trophy after defeating Juan Monaco of Argentina in Buenos Aires on Sunday.**

PHOTO: AFP

# Nadal makes history

AFP, Buenos Aires



Rafael Nadal won his first title in nearly nine months on Sunday, beating Juan Monaco 6-4, 6-1 to win the Argentina Open.

Nadal's triumph was his first since he won a ninth French Open title at Roland Garros last June.

It was Nadal's 65th career crown on all surfaces, moving him into sole possession of fifth place on the Open Era all-time list led by the 109 titles of American Jimmy Connors.

He broke out of a tie for fifth with Bjorn Borg and Pete Sampras.

"They have an impressive history," Nadal said of Sampras and Borg. "That's why it is an honour to be compared to them."

He claimed his 46th career claycourt title, second-most in the Open Era behind the 49 of Argentina's Guillermo Vilas.

Most importantly, the victory showed

Nadal is headed in the right direction.

The Spaniard, who battled injury last year after his Roland Garros triumph, exited early in Qatar and fell in the quarterfinals at the Australian Open in January.

He had fallen to fourth in the world after a semi-final loss to Italian Fabio Fognini in Rio de Janeiro last week, the first time he hasn't figured in the top three since August 2013.

With this win, he's projected to return to third in the world, again overtaking Britain's Andy Murray.

"I'm coming off a season that has not been easy -- injuries, accidents," said Nadal, who had to cope with wrist trouble and an appendectomy in 2014.

"The beginning of this year has been a bit tricky after some time out, but little by little we have found positive feelings."

The 28-year-old left-hander needed one hour and 26 minutes on court to notch his sixth victory over Monaco in as many meetings on clay.

## Viola stun Inter

AFP, Milan



On-loan Chelsea forward Mohamed Salah came off the bench to hit his third goal in four league games as nine-man Fiorentina ended Inter Milan's three-game winning run with a 1-0 success at the San Siro on Sunday.

Fiorentina were unbeaten in 11 competitive matches and travelled to Milan in confident mood having knocked Tottenham out of the Europa League on Thursday when Salah scored in a 2-0 win in Florence.

And La Viola, forced to finish the game with nine men when Nenad Tomovic and Stefan Savic limped off, extended their run to move to within three points of third-placed Napoli.

Vincenzo Montella's men were missing several regulars with Mario Gomez, Mati Fernandez and goalkeeper Ciprian Tatarusanu sidelined and midfielder Borja Valero only fit enough for a spot on the bench.

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