

What to WATCH

DAY'S EVENT

GTV

Bangladesh v Zimbabwe
First T20I
Live from 5:00pm

STAR SPORTS2

Australia v New Zealand
Second Test, Day 1
Live from 8:30am

TEN CRICKET

Pakistan v England
Second ODI
Live from 5:00pm

SONY SIX

Int'l Friendly
France v Germany

Bangladesh v Zimbabwe
First T20I

Nightmare at Dushanbe



Bangladesh's hopes of a maiden win in their World Cup and Asian Cup Qualifiers away in Tajikistan turned into a 5-0 nightmare at the Republican Central Stadium in Dushanbe yesterday.

It was the second 5-0 defeat for Bangladesh in their six qualifiers after the Perth drubbing against the Socceroos in September.

It also means that Bangladesh lie at the bottom of Group B with one point from six outings and their hopes of getting direct entry to the 2016 Asian Cup Qualifiers remain distant, as their two remaining games are against table-toppers Jordan and reigning Asian Cup champions Australia.

Tajik forward Dzhalilov Manuchehr was too tough for Italian coach Fabio Lopez's charges to handle. The 25-year-old marksman tore apart the Bangladesh backline to strike four goals -- two in either half -- amid heavy rain in front of 25,000 spectators, while Nazarov Akhtam converted a spot-kick early in the half.

Tajikistan were far from their best in their five previous matches and subsequently Bangladesh, following a draw against them at home in June, were dreaming of breaking their winless run in the qualifiers by beating the Central Asian nation. However, the hosts emerged from their slump in timely manner and notched their first win in the qualifying campaign.

The result was eerily reminiscent of



Bangladesh players leave the field dejected after losing the 2018 World Cup qualifier against Tajikistan at the Republican Central Stadium in Dushanbe yesterday.

PHOTO: BFF

Bangladesh's 2007 World Cup Qualifiers campaign. Back then, Bangladesh had also earned a 1-1 draw at home before going down 5-0 in Tajikistan.

The inspiring battle against Kyrgyzstan in their previous match gave Bangladesh the confidence to do better against Tajikistan, but Bangladesh could not deal with the Tajik forwards who were too quick for them on a rain-soaked artificial turf.

The Tajik forwards wreaked havoc from the right flank with numerous attacks, as makeshift defender Abdul Baten Komol struggled to stop winger Dilshod Vasiev. Vasiev provided a neat cutback for Dilzhailov's opener in the 16th minute.

Lopez's troops made numerous mistakes in the overwhelming cold and a mishit pass saw Bangladesh concede another goal in the

TAJIKISTAN 5 - 0 BANGLADESH

26th minute. Dzhalilov raced into the box and powered a shot into the near post, despite being tackled from behind by Komol.

After half-an-hour of play, Bangladesh looked a bit better, completing a few exchanges in the middle and mustering their first shot on target. However, left-footed Hemanta Vincent's shot in the 33rd minute could not trouble Tajik goalkeeper Tukhtasunov Dalerdzhone. Captain Mamunul Islam had a great chance afterwards, but his flick from Komol's cutback went inches over the crossbar two minutes later.

After play resumed, Tajikistan held on to their attacking attitude and struck three more goals in the 52nd, 59th and 73rd minutes to complete the rout.

Siddikur starts well

SPORTS REPORTER

Ace Bangladesh golfer Siddikur Rahman opened the challenging World Classic Championship at the Laguna National Golf Course in Singapore with a par 71 yesterday.

Siddikur carded three birdies against as many bogeys to become one of the six players, who have completed their round and have broken par at the challenging 6,935 yards par-71 course dubbed 'The Beast'. He was two shots away from four joint clubhouse leaders -- Singapore-based Australian Scott Barr, Korea's Jeunghun Wang, Australia's Sam Brazel and Thailand's Natipong Srithong -- all finishing on two-under 69.

Berry Henson of the United States together with Philippines' Miguel Tabuena shared fifth place after returning with identical 70s at the US\$750,000 Asian Tour event.

Second win for Warriors

IANS, Houston

A whirlwind innings from Kumar Sangakkara coupled with a disciplined bowling performance helped Warner's Warriors beat Sachin's Blasters by 57 runs in the second match of the Cricket All-Stars Series at the Minute Maid Park on Thursday.

Sangakkara smashed 70 runs off just 30 deliveries to help post a challenging total of 262/5 in their 20 overs. Andrew Symonds (4/70) and Saqlain Mushtaq (2/12) then spearheaded the Warriors' bowling attack as the Blasters could only manage 205/8.

The Warriors, who had won the first match of the three-game series by six wickets on November 7, have thus taken an unassailable 2-0 lead. The final match is scheduled to be played in Los Angeles on Saturday.

Electing to field on winning the toss, Blasters' captain Sachin Tendulkar was left to rue his decision as Michael Vaughan and Matthew Hayden gave the Warriors innings a blazing start. The duo scored around 10 runs an over, smashing Shoaib Akhtar and Glenn McGrath all around the ground.

Maradona's ex-wife's assets frozen

AFP, Buenos Aires

An Argentine judge has frozen the assets of Diego Maradona's ex-wife, whom the football legend blames for the disappearance of millions of dollars from his fortune.

Following a request by Maradona, Judge Gladys Carminati on Wednesday ordered a freeze on the assets of ex-wife Claudia Villafane as a precautionary measure until the case is resolved.

Maradona, 54, says the funds were taken from several of his Argentine and foreign bank accounts. Local media estimate the amount in question is \$8 million.

Villafane, 53, insists on her innocence.

"I think what they want to do is instil fear, but I'm not afraid because I did nothing wrong, and have no regrets," Villafane told the TV show Intrusos.

Maradona and Villafane, childhood sweethearts, divorced in 2003. Both however agreed that Villafane would handle their joint accounts to benefit daughters Dalma (28) and Gianinna (26), who support their mother in the dispute.



Japan midfielder Mu Kanazaki (L) is ecstatic after scoring the opening goal against Singapore during their 2018 FIFA World Cup qualifier in Singapore yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

Japan earn revenge

AFP, Singapore



Europe-based stars Keisuke Honda and Maya Yoshida were both among the goals as Japan wreaked revenge on

Singapore and went top of their World Cup qualifying group with an emphatic 3-0 away win on Thursday.

The Blue Samurai dominated the match at Singapore's National Stadium with strikes by Mu Kanazaki and AC Milan's Honda in a six-minute spell putting them two goals up at the interval.

Singapore struggled with the visitors' pace and movement but they prevented further damage until two minutes from time when Southampton's Yoshida added the third.

Singapore earned a surprise 0-0 draw at Saitama in June, in what was a setback to Japan coach Vahid Halilhodzic in his first competitive game in charge and left him keen to make amends.

After setting the record straight, Japan move top of Asian Group E on 13 points with three matches remaining and in pole

position to go on to the next stage.

Syria are second on 12 points and Singapore are third with 10. Eight group winners and the four best-placed runners-up will go through to the third round of qualifying.

Singapore goalkeeper Izwan Mahbud made 18 saves in the goalless draw at Saitama and he continued to frustrate Japan in the opening minutes on his home ground as the visitors poured on intense pressure.

However, he couldn't prevent the opener on 20 minutes when Honda's cross was knocked down by Yoshinori Muto for Kashima Antlers midfielder Kanazaki, who chested it down before lashing a left-footed volley past Izwan.

The Singapore goalkeeper was also helpless in the 26th minute when Japan broke into the Singapore box and Honda's effort took a deflection off defender Nazrul Nazawi and looped over Izwan.

Japan continued to hold the upper hand after the interval with Izwan making crucial stops to keep out Kanazaki and Muto, while Safuwani Baharudin and Hafiz Sujad went

Blatter leaves hospital

AFP, Geneva

Suspended FIFA boss Sepp Blatter has left hospital and returned home after being admitted over a stress-related medical incident, his spokesman said on Thursday.

Spokesman Klaus Stoeckli said the scandal-tainted Blatter was picked up from the hospital by his daughter Corinne late on Wednesday and taken back to his home in Switzerland's Valais region.

On Wednesday, the spokesman confirmed that the long-serving FIFA leader had been in the hospital for several days with a condition that was not considered serious.

Stoeckli reiterated that position on Thursday, insisting that Blatter's "con-

FIFA approves 5 candidates

AFP, Geneva

FIFA on Thursday approved five candidates to stand in February's vote to replace Sepp Blatter as president of world football's governing body, but Michel Platini has not yet made the list.

The five who met the qualification criteria following a series of integrity tests were: Prince Ali Al Hussein, Sheikh Salman Bin Ebrahim Al Khalifa, Jerome Champagne, Gianni Infantino and Tokyo Sexwale.

The candidacy of Platini, the suspended head of European football who had been the favourite to succeed Blatter, will be examined once his 90-day suspension by FIFA's ethics committee is over.

The only candidate to be disqualified after receiving provisional approval was Musa Bility, the head of the Liberian football association. "The Ad-hoc Electoral Committee did not admit the candidature of Musa Hassan Bility, in view of the content of the integrity check report relating to him," the statement said.

FIFA said it had explained the reasons for disqualification privately to Bility, but it would not make the specifics public.

The race is thought to be wide open given Platini's potential ethics violations, including a probe over a murky 1.8 million euro payment he received from FIFA in 2011.

China hammer hapless Bhutan

AFP, Hong Kong



China hammered 12 unanswered goals past hapless Bhutan on Thursday as they ramped up their World Cup qualifying hopes with their biggest win in 15 years.

Australia, Japan and South Korea also enjoyed comfortable wins on a night of few surprises in Asia's round two -- apart from the giant scoreline in Changsha.

After Mei Fang's 10th-minute opener, Yang Xu hit four including a penalty and Yu Dabao, Yu Hanchao and Wang Yongpo all bagged braces as China ran riot.

The pain didn't finish until two minutes from time for Bhutan when Zhang Xizhe grabbed the 12th and last goal for Alain Perrin's rampant home side.

The 12-0 win heaped further embarrassment on Bhutan, the remote Himalayan kingdom known for its Gross National Happiness index, after they also lost 15-0 to Qatar earlier in qualifying.

After five games in their first appearance in round two, the "Land of the Thunder Dragon" lie bottom of Group C on zero points and a goal difference of minus 42.

RESULTS	
GROUP B	
Australia 3 (Jedinak 40-pen, Cahill 50, Ildar og-69) Kyrgyzstan 0	
Tajikistan 5 (Dzhalilov 16, 26, 59, 74, Nazarov 51-pen) Bangladesh 0	
GROUP C	
Maldives 0 Hong Kong 1 (Paulinho 13-pen)	
China 12 (Mei Fang 10, Yang Xu 13, 21-pen, 37, 52, Yu Dabao 16, 39, Yu Hanchao 34, 72, Wang Yongpo 66, 81, Zhang Xizhe 88) Bhutan 0	
GROUP D	
Iran 3 (Pouraliganji 6, Ezatollahi 64, Dejagah 83-pen) Turkmenistan 1 (Saparow 62)	
India 1 (Robin Singh 11) Guam 0	
GROUP E	
Singapore 0 Japan 3 (Kanazaki 20, Honda 26, Yoshida 88)	
Afghanistan 3 (Zazai 42, Amiri 78, Amani 90+4) Cambodia 0	
GROUP F	
Thailand 4 (Teerasil 41, Pokklaw 52, Adisak 72, Thana 74) Taiwan 2 (Yen Yaki 3, Huang Kai-chun 65)	
GROUP G	
South Korea 4 (Lee Jae-Sung 14, Koo Ja-Cheol 30, Jang Hyun-Soo 82, Nam Tae-Hee 86) Myanmar 0	
GROUP H	
Philippines 0 Yemen 1 (Al Sarori 83)	

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