

CHANNEL 9  
Bangladesh Premier League  
Opening Ceremony  
Live from 4:30pm

DAY'S EVENT

Bangladesh Premier League  
Opening Ceremony

TEN CRICKET  
Pakistan v England  
Fourth ODI  
Live from 5:00pm

STAR SPORTS 2  
Bundesliga  
Hamburg v Dortmund  
Live from 1:30am (Saturday)

## PELPHS SET TO BECOME DAD

US swim star Michael Phelps, who has won a record 18 Olympic gold medals, announced Wednesday on social media that he and his fiancee are expecting a baby boy. On Twitter and Instagram, Phelps sent out a photo with him and the mother-to-be, former Miss California beauty queen Nicole Johnson, holding a tiny pair of boy's swim shorts. "We found out 8 weeks ago we were expecting... Today we're over 12 weeks and it looks like we're having a boy," Phelps said in his message. The news comes after Phelps swam competitively for the first time in three months, winning the men's 200m individual medley at the US Pro Swim Series



Bangladesh women's cricket team celebrate the dismissal of a Zimbabwean wicket at the Sheikh Kamal International Stadium in Cox's Bazar yesterday. The hosts won the match and clinched the series 2-0.

## Jahanara leads from the front BD women win series 2-0

SPORTS REPORTER



Jahanara Alam celebrated her debut as Bangladesh Women team's T20I captain with a 2-0 thrashing of Zimbabwe at the Sheikh Kamal International Stadium in Cox's Bazar yesterday.

The 23-year-old pace bowler from Khulna finished with 3-11, her best T20I bowling figures, in the second and final game which the home side won by eight wickets. Jahanara, who was named captain ahead of the two-match series against Zimbabwe, ripped through the visitor's top-order to erase her previous best of 3-15.

After the early blows, the Zimbabwe Women's team could manage only 69-6 in their share of 20 overs. The home side, who won the opening game at the same venue by 35 runs, ambled to the target of 70 with eight wickets in hand and more than nine overs to spare.

Opener Ayesha Rahman, who hit her maiden T20I fifty in the previous game, struck 28 that contained a couple of sixes, while Shahila Sharmin scored an unbeaten 23 as Bangladesh women raced to victory in 11.5 overs.

### SCORES IN BRIEF

ZIMBABWE WOMEN: 69 for 6 in 20 overs (Mayers 21, Marange 16 not out; Jahanara 3-11, Panna 1-9)

BANGLADESH WOMEN: 70 for 2 in 11.5 overs (Ayasha 28, Shaila 23 not out, Rumana 12 not out; Marange 1-18)

Result: Bangladesh women won by 8 wickets.

Player-of-the-match: Jahanara Alam.

PHOTO:  
COLLECTED

## Neymar comes of age

AFP, Madrid



During Brazilian star Neymar's two-and-a-half year spell at Barcelona, there has been one continuous sound-bite from the softly-spoken 23-year-old: "I'm here to learn from the best".

The "best" he consistently cites is teammate and four-time World Player of the Year Lionel Messi. The two share a telepathic relationship on the field and, along with Uruguayan Luis Suarez, form one of the most lethal strike forces world football has ever seen.

"To play beside the best is very easy," Neymar said during Barca's treble-winning campaign last season.

Yet, whilst Messi has been sidelined for the past two months by knee ligament damage, it is Neymar that has carried the European champions to an unexpected three-point lead in La Liga heading into Saturday's huge clash at Real Madrid.

Given his form in recent months, is there much for Neymar the apprentice to learn from his master Messi? And, with the latter set to return this weekend, will Neymar be happy to hand over the reigns once more to the Argentine?

Initial impressions are that he will. Primarily because Neymar, Messi and Suarez share an equally strong relationship off the field as they do in tearing opponents to shreds on it.

Their social media pages spill over with mutual admiration, whilst Suarez

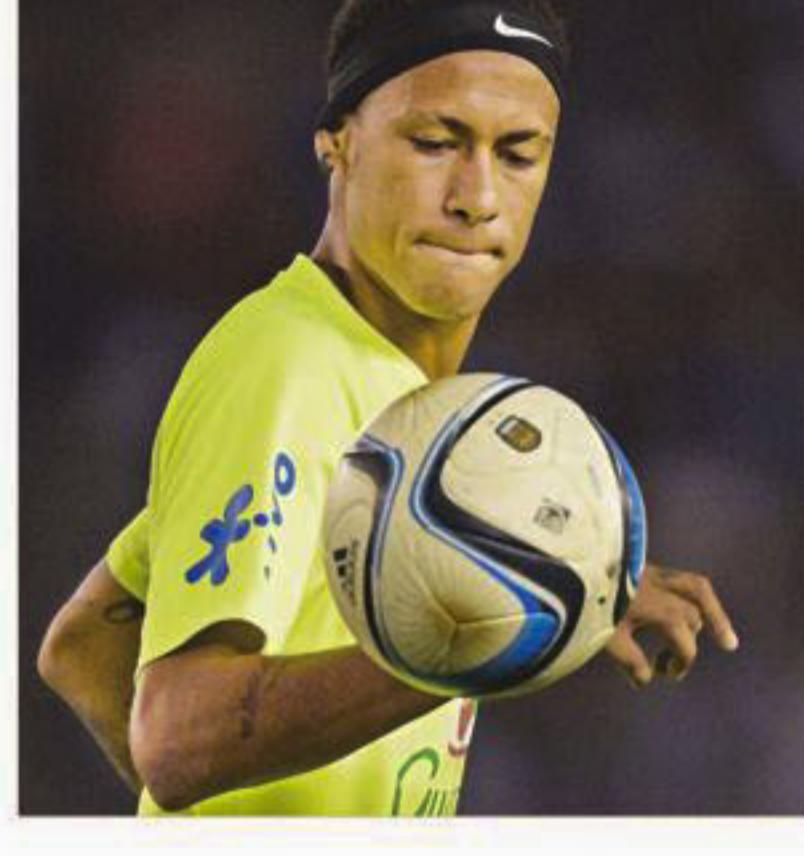
and Neymar have been quick to shout down any suggestions their form has meant Messi's absence has been forgotten.

"People remember him just as well because he is the best player in the world," said Suarez after a recent victory over Getafe.

Yet, Neymar's trajectory suggests he will be the one to finally break Messi and Cristiano Ronaldo's eight-year reign as the world's two best players.

In his first season at Barca, Neymar netted just nine league goals. In 10 games this campaign he already has 11 to lead Ronaldo and Messi as the league's top scorer.

The signs of improvement were clear to see last season. Neymar struck 39 times in 51 games, including becoming the first man to net in both legs of the Champions League quarter



and semi-finals, as well as the final. This season he has gone to a new level.

In Messi's absence he has demanded the ball, created and scored goals. Just as impressively, the petulance that has at times blighted his career to date, most notably in being sent-off and sent-home early from the Copa America in June, appears to have gone.

When he grew frustrated with the rough attention and lack of protection being offered from the referee in Barca's last outing against Villarreal, he channelled the anger constructively by going on to score twice and set up the other in a 3-0 win.

His stunning second provoked Barca boss Luis Enrique to make comparisons with Ronaldinho - another Brazilian that enthralled the Camp Nou on his way to becoming the world's best.

"Since the start of the season he has been electric," added Enrique.

"Neymar has reached a point of maturity. He's in superlative form, nearly at the level of the two footballers who top them all," said Argentina boss Gerardo Martino, who was in charge of Neymar during his first season at Barca.

Messi will almost certainly take home his fifth Ballon d'Or come January as just reward for his starring role in Barca's second treble in six years.

Yet, for the first time Neymar is expected to be standing alongside him and Ronaldo on the podium in what will be the most obvious sign yet of his emergence as the best of the rest.

No official figures have yet been released, but according to reports in the Spanish

## Unparalleled security for El Clasico

AFP, Madrid



A unprecedented series of security measures will be put in place for Saturday's La Liga clash between Real Madrid and Barcelona in response to the attacks that killed 129 people in Paris last week.

The exact number of security personnel will be ironed out in a meeting on Thursday between representatives of both clubs, police and local and national government.

"Security will be greatly reinforced. There will be a lot of security personnel to control not only the access to the stadium, but also the outskirts and the transport that will bring fans to the stadium," said Spanish Interior Minister Jorge Fernandez Diaz.

Spain's anti-violence commission met with political, police and sporting authorities on Wednesday and declared the match as "high risk", which is customary for the biggest games in La Liga, especially those between eternal rivals Madrid and Barca.

However, the events in Paris, allied to a terror threat level of four out of a maximum five in Spain, means that the security measures have "no precedent for the celebration of sporting events," according to Francisco Martinez Vazquez, secretary of state for security.

However, "should those circumstances arise, the priority is to ensure people's lives," he added.

media, there will be a triple ring of security around Madrid's Santiago Bernabeu stadium with over 1,500 police, who will be armed with horses, dogs and metal detectors.

A capacity crowd of 81,000 fans are expected to attend the match widely seen as the biggest in the world with an estimated television audience of 500 million.

The Stade de France, where an 80,000 crowd were watching France host Germany, was one of a series of targets across the French capital on Friday.

As a result of the increased terror threat, Spain's friendly in Belgium was postponed on Tuesday, as was Germany's clash with the Netherlands due to a bomb threat in Hanover.

The Bernabeu was the target of a bomb threat in December 2004, just months after the Madrid train bombings that killed 191 people.

The stadium was evacuated quickly and calmly near the end of a league match against Real Sociedad.

Two years previously, the Basque separatist group ETA planted a car bomb near the stadium on the day of a Champions League semi-final between Madrid and Barcelona causing 17 injuries. However, the game still went ahead.

Fernandez Diaz insisted at the moment there is no reason to think about postponing the game.

However, "should those circumstances arise, the priority is to ensure people's lives," he added.

## El Clasico to hold a minute of silence

AFP, Madrid

Players and spectators at this weekend's mammoth clash between Real Madrid and Barcelona in the Spanish capital will hold a minute of silence for victims of the Paris attacks, the Spanish football league said Wednesday.

The so-called El Clasico that pits the two fiercely rival teams against each other attracts on average a global television audience of some 500 million -- the world's most watched club match.

In a statement, La Liga called for the minute of silence "in memory of the victims" at the start of Saturday's match in the 81,000-strong Madrid stadium.

It has also asked both clubs to broadcast the hashtag #TodosSomosFrancia ("We are all France") during the moment of silence on screens in the stadium.

"In this way, professional football joins hands with international expressions of condolences and expresses its solidarity with the families and friends of victims."

The match kicks off Saturday at 1815 local time (1715GMT) with "draconian security measures", Interior Minister Jorge Fernandez Diaz said Wednesday, after two high-profile international friendlies were postponed in the wake of the Paris attacks that left 129 dead and over 350 injured.

## Nasri out for three months

AFP, London

Manchester City's French midfielder Samir Nasri will be out for a further three months due to a hamstring injury, he revealed on Thursday.

"What doesn't kill you makes you stronger. I will be back better than ever see you in 3 months," Nasri wrote in an Instagram post alongside a picture of him looking pensive as he rested on a pair of crutches.

Nasri, 28, has not played for City since making a substitute appearance in their 5-1 Premier League defeat of Bournemouth on October 17.

He was thought to be closing on a return to action, but will now be out until February.

## Russia to revamp anti-doping body

AFP, Moscow

Russia's sports minister on Thursday pledged to revamp the country's anti-doping body after it was suspended by the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) over non-compliance with international rules.

"We are ready to promptly, effectively and conscientiously cooperate with WADA," Russian news agencies quoted Vitaly Mutko as saying.

"The decision was expected. We are ready to rebuild our whole anti-doping system."

WADA last week published an independent panel report which uncovered a vast state-sponsored doping programme in Russian track and field, plunging athletics into the biggest crisis in its history.

The report accused Russian anti-doping agency RUSADA of "routinely" violating international testing standards and allowing athletes banned for doping to compete despite having been suspended from competition.

RUSADA said in a statement on Thursday that it was already addressing the "deficiencies" identified in the WADA report and was committed to fighting doping.

Following WADA's recommendation, the International Association of Athletics Federation (IAAF) last week provisionally suspended Russia from international competition, raising the possibility of Russian track stars being left out of next summer's Rio de Janeiro Olympics.

But Russian sports authorities have remained adamant that the country's track and field athletes will be at the Olympics, pledging to restore the country's IAAF membership within three months.

Mutko said on Thursday that the sports ministry was poised to jointly conceive a roadmap with WADA to get the country back on track.

The publication of the WADA report also saw the suspension of the Moscow anti-doping laboratory, a situation Mutko said was jeopardising Russia's ability to fight doping.

## Nadal crushes Murray

AFP, London

Rafael Nadal showed he was getting back to his best as he crushed Andy Murray at the World Tour Finals on Wednesday with an impressive 6-4, 6-1 victory.

The Spanish fifth seed was in dominant form as the British world number two's game collapsed in front of a home crowd at the 17,800-capacity O2 Arena in London.

The resurgent Nadal is now through to the semifinals of the season-ending tournament, disputed on a hard court between the year's top eight players.

In Friday's final round-robin matches in their four-man group, Murray will face Swiss fourth seed Stan Wawrinka, with the winner joining Nadal in the last four.

The Spaniard's spot in the semis was confirmed after seventh-seeded compatriot David Ferrer's hopes of making it out of the group evaporated with a straight sets defeat to Wawrinka 7-5, 6-2.

The first set of the match between Nadal and Murray was a high-level contest featuring impressive rallies and smart drop shots, but in the second, Murray's game fell away as Nadal turned up the power.

Nadal, beset by problems during the worst year of his career, at one stage slumped to 10th in the world -- his lowest position since 2005.

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Rafael Nadal of Spain celebrates his victory over Britain's Andy Murray during a group stage match of the ATP World Tour Finals in London on Wednesday.

## Clarke hits back at teammates

AFP, Sydney



Former Australia skipper Michael Clarke Thursday broke his silence on the criticism he received after announcing his retirement during the recent Ashes series loss in England.

Both former teammates Andrew Symonds and Matthew Hayden publicly questioned Clarke's leadership in August and Clarke has used his "Ashes Diary 2015" to hit back.

Clarke also slammed former Australia coach John Buchanan, taunting him for never playing for his country and saying "even my dog Jerry" could have had similar success.

"Andrew Symonds went on TV to criticise my leadership. I'm sorry but he is not a person to judge anyone on leadership," Clarke wrote of his former teammate.

"This is a guy who turned up drunk to play for his country. It's pretty rich for him to be throwing rocks."

The pair were close friends at the beginning of the former Australian captain's career, however, as Symonds' behaviour deteriorated and Clarke entered the leadership ranks, they quickly fell out.

Symonds eventually had his contract cancelled by Cricket Australia in 2009 for breaking a drinking ban while in England.

Clarke, 34, also hit back at Hayden's assertions he refused to field at bat-pad early in his career.

Hayden claimed he heard Clarke tell Ricky Ponting he would "hand back (his) baggy green" if he was forced to put on the helmet and field in close.

However, Clarke says his record speaks for itself.

"I think I've shown over the past 12 years how much I've valued representing my country and how much my 389 baggy green means to me," Clarke wrote.

"If Ricky (Ponting) had asked me to jump off the Harbour Bridge, I would have jumped. I loved playing for Australia that much."