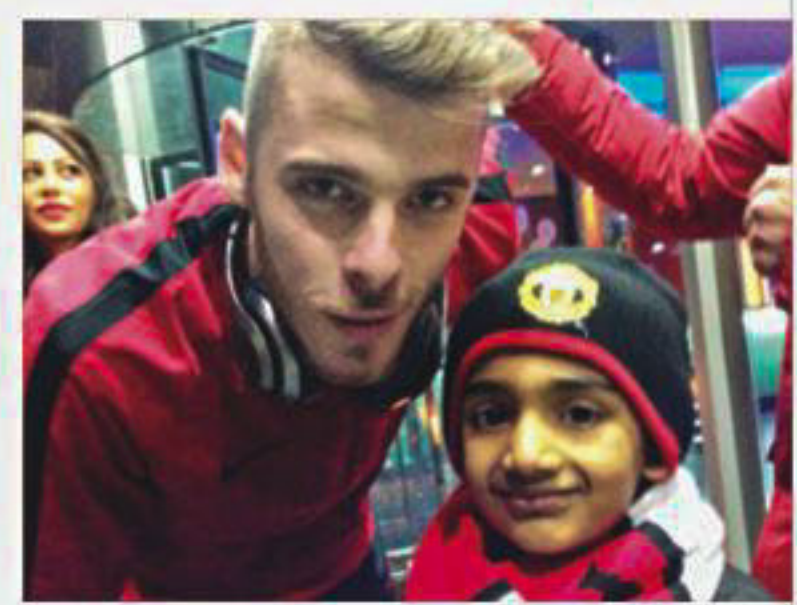


UNITED UNITES FOR FAN

Manchester United players Morgan Schneiderlin and Andreas Pereira surprised 8-year-old Zayaan Khan after his autograph book was nabbed by a stranger with a meet-and-greet at the club's Carrington training ground, along with a personalised replacement book. Not only was he able to meet a number of first-teamers, but he was also invited to watch a training session from the sidelines. "I have waited outside the training ground before but I've never been inside before so to see it and meet two of my favourite players



It's a sight we have seen many times; Cristiano Ronaldo takes off for his signature celebration while a defeated goalkeeper attempts to recollect himself. Ronaldo's 2015 was blighted by injuries, but the Portuguese still managed to score 52 times, including two goals against Real Sociedad at the Santiago Bernabeu on Thursday, capping off yet another fantastic year.

Team	GP	W	D	L	GD	PTS
Barcelona	9	7	1	1	20	22
Real Madrid	9	7	0	2	23	21

Barca maintain one-point lead

AFP, Madrid



Lionel Messi scored on his 500th Barcelona appearance as the European champions moved back to the top of the table with a 4-0 win over Real Betis as La Liga returned from a curtailed winter break on Wednesday.

Atletico Madrid remain level on points with Barca thanks to two goals in the final two minutes from Angel Correa and Antoine Griezmann to emerge 2-0 victors at Rayo Vallecano.

And Cristiano Ronaldo scored twice and missed a penalty as Real Madrid eased the pressure on under-fire coach Rafael Benitez with a 3-1 win over Real Sociedad to stay one point behind leaders Barcelona.

At the Santiago Bernabeu, Ronaldo recovered from a terrible start after blasting his first penalty of the day over the bar to put Madrid in front from another spot-kick just before half-time.

Bruma levelled for an injury-hit Sociedad minutes after the break, but Ronaldo delivered when his side needed a goal once more to restore the lead 23 minutes from time

RESULTS		
Real Madrid	3 - 1	Real Sociedad
Ronaldo 42-pen, 67, Vazquez 87		Bruma 49
Rayo Vallecano	0 - 2	Atletico Madrid
Correa 88, Griezmann 90		
Sevilla	2 - 0	Espanyol
Immobile 16, Banega 41		
Barcelona	4 - 0	Real Betis
Westermann 30-og, Messi 34, Suarez 47, 83		
Celta Vigo	0 - 1	Athletic Bilbao

before Lucas Vazquez added a late third.

"We controlled the game and had a lot of chances, which, if we had taken them, would have made the second-half more comfortable," said Benitez.

"I congratulate the players for their attitude from start to finish. We worked hard, reacted well and got the three points."

Rumours over Benitez's future refuse to go away and the coach has even claimed that there is a media conspiracy against him.

But his side had luck on their side in the first-half as Sociedad's lost top-scorer Imanol Agirretxe and playmaker Sergio Canales to injury and saw referee Jose Luis Gonzalez award Madrid two controversial penalties.

Ibra won't leave PSG

AFP, Doha

Paris Saint-Germain striker Zlatan Ibrahimovic insisted he has no intention of leaving the French champions despite his contract being due to run out at the end of the season.

The 34-year-old has been heavily linked with a move to MLS and the Premier League. But Ibrahimovic said that "nothing was on the table" regarding future offers and he was happy in the French capital.

"I have a beautiful relationship with PSG. I have no intention of leaving," said the Swede when asked about his future plans.

No flex zone

AGENCIES, Los Angeles

Wrestler-turned-actor Dwayne "The Rock" Johnson has revealed that he passed out after striking a pose for a post-workout snap he shared on Instagram.

The 43-year-old athlete made the revelation on Instagram.

"Tonight we trained 'the beefs' aka legs. I passed out after we took this pic from holding my breath and trying to look cool," the actor wrote alongside a snap of him flaunting his muscular thighs in a gym.

Johnson wore a black workout gear and put a white towel on his shoulder. He gasped as he looked at the camera. The post-workout picture came just a day after the actor announced on the social media that he would make appearance at WrestleMania 32 in April.

Barca sign wunderkind

AFP, Barcelona

Barcelona announced the loan signing of 19-year-old Brazilian midfielder Robert Goncalves from Fluminense on Wednesday.

Goncalves will play with Barca's B team in the Spanish third tier for the rest of the season.

"The player has passed his medical and he is expected to begin training with the rest of Gerard Lopez's squad from this Thursday," the club said in a statement on their website.

Barca B are in danger of being relegated for the second consecutive season.

Wenger eyes 'busy' January

AP, London

Arsenal manager Arsene Wenger says the club will be "busy" during the January transfer window in an effort to bolster a squad bidding for the title.

Wenger signed only one player before the season - goalkeeper Petr Cech - to leave Arsenal as the only team in the Premier League to not recruit an outfielder.

"I'm already busy ... we're a bit short to deal with all the competitions we face, especially in midfield," Wenger said.

Asked about signing Mohamed Elneny from FC Basel, Wenger refused to reply.

Platini facing probe again

AGENCIES, Johannesburg

Banned UEFA president Michel Platini is likely to face further probe from FIFA Ethics Committee after he attended an award ceremony in Dubai despite his eight-year-ban from all football-related activities.

Platini had attended the Globe Soccer Awards along with football players namely Lionel Messi and Andrea Pirlo in Dubai.

Messi hungry for more trophies

AFP, Barcelona



Four-time World Player of the Year Lionel Messi has warned Barcelona's rivals that the European champions are determined to match their five-trophy haul from 2015 in the coming year.

Messi scored on his 500th appearance for the club as Barca rounded off the year in style with a 4-0 win over Real Betis to move back to the top of La Liga on Wednesday.

The Catalans lead Atletico Madrid on goal difference and Real Madrid by two points as well as having a game in hand on their rivals from the Spanish capital.

And having won the Champions League, La Liga, Copa del Rey, UEFA Super Cup and the Club World Cup in the past 12 months, Barca also set a new record of 180 goals in a calendar year.

"It has been a spectacular year and we wanted to finish it this way," said Messi.

"It will be difficult to improve on what we have done, but we always try. We have a great squad that are desperate to continue winning."

Barca were given a helping hand on their return to action after a shorter than normal 10-day winter break in Spain, though, as they were awarded a controversial penalty when Antonio Adan clashed with Messi after punching the ball to safety.

Neymar's resulting spot-kick came off the

bar, but Heiko Westermann turned the ball into his own net from the rebound and thereafter Barca were only denied an even greater rout by a series of fine saves by Adan and the woodwork.

A lovely one-two between Neymar and Messi allowed the later to slot home his 425th Barca goal before a Luis Suarez double rounded off the scoring in the second-half.

"We just came back from the holidays so it is normal that the rhythm dips a bit and the games at the Club World Cup always take their toll," added Messi.

"Possibly it wasn't a great game, but we managed to do the most important thing which was to win and start another important period well."

And Barca boss Luis Enrique echoed the sentiments of his star player as he focused on starting the new year with victory away to Espanyol in the Barcelona derby on Saturday.

"Firstly, I have to congratulate the players and the fans that get to enjoy this unique team," he said of Barca's achievements in his first full year in charge.

"The objective is to win again, to win the first game in 2016 and again be challenging to win titles throughout the season for this team, the fans and the club."

"We prepare for the new year with plenty of desire and excitement for the big games to arrive as quickly as possible. We need to try to maintain the same level as 2015."

China to bid for 2023 Asia Cup?

AFP, Beijing

China is preparing to bid for the 2023 AFC Asian Cup, the continent's biggest football championship, the country's top soccer authority said as it hopes to one day host the World Cup.

The Chinese Football Association is soliciting input for a possible application to host the tournament, it said in a letter to its members posted on its website.

The bid will require at least six cities and eight stadiums to host a total of 51 competitions in the month-long contest, which is held every four years.

China is 84th in the Fifa world rankings, and it is on the verge of elimination for Russia 2018 after a 0-0 draw with Hong Kong in November.

President Xi Jinping has called on the nation to up its game with the goals of eventually hosting and winning a World Cup -- a tournament in which it has only appeared once, in 2002.

The drive has seen schools and government organisations looking to promote the game, while local clubs have lured foreign players and coaches with lucrative deals.

Give LvG more time: Moyes

AFP, Manchester



Former Manchester United manager David Moyes believes the Premier League club should stand by under-pressure manager Louis van Gaal.

The Dutchman, 64, has faced weeks of speculation as United slipped to sixth in the Premier League table after limping out of the Champions League in the group phase.

Moyes took over from Alex Ferguson in 2013 but was dismissed after just 10 months with Van Gaal succeeding him in May 2014.

And the 52-year-old believes dismissing Van Gaal 18 months into his reign would be a step in the wrong direction.

"What Manchester United stand for is that they keep their managers, they've always supported their managers," Moyes told BT Sport 1.

"I hope they stick with Louis van Gaal, he deserves more time. It's still a work in progress for him, he's made some signings and from my experience in Spain it will take time for players from abroad to settle in."

"So, I think they should stick with it. They don't want to become a club which continuously changes their manager."

Moyes admits that taking over from the most successful manager in the club's history was never going to be easy.

"I think after Sir Alex the job was going to be very difficult," the Scot said. "It was going to take time to rebuild, it was a rebuilding job at Manchester United."

The former Everton manager also said he was still unhappy about how his reign at Old Trafford ended.

"My understanding was that I was going to a club which always looked after their managers, even when they were in trouble and it wasn't going well, you got your time to sort things out," Moyes said.

Moyes, who was sacked by Real Sociedad last month, insists he would nevertheless take the position at Old Trafford again.

Benteke lifts Liverpool

AFP, Sunderland



Liverpool obeyed the pragmatic instructions of manager Jurgen Klopp in a 1-0 win at Sunderland where quality football was at a premium and there was an element of good fortune in a decisive goal scored by Christian Benteke.

As Liverpool ended the first half of the Premier League season, the result was all that mattered to Klopp, who ordered his team to go toe-to-toe with a Sunderland team fighting to avoid relegation.

"The manager has tried to drum into us that sometimes we've got to be dirtier, fight a bit more and play teams at their own game," said Liverpool midfielder Adam Lallana, who admitted there was luck involved in the goal.

Lallana diverted Nathaniel Clyne's pass towards Benteke after only 22 seconds of the second-half and the Belgian striker scored for the second successive match.

"I don't think I meant the flick to go directly into Christian's path but sometimes you need the rub of the green, especially at tough places like this," Lallana said.

Liverpool should have scored more in a game when Sunderland lacked an attacking edge, yet Klopp was still satisfied with a victory that lifted them into seventh place in the Premier League, five points from a Champions League place.

He said: "Both of us are on 30 points and at this moment Liverpool don't feel too bad, but at Manchester United the atmosphere is not the best."

"You can see how football is sometimes. We wanted 30 points and we got them - perfect. This is not the best we can do, we know this, but we had to fight. We knew about



তামার সোনার বাংলা

For the first time, a 40 piece orchestra performed our national anthem 1 staff notation crafted for perfection, an act of pure harmony and true melody..