

What to WATCH	GTV & STAR SPORTS 4 Bangladesh v Zimbabwe First T20I Live from 3:00pm	CHANNEL 9 Bangabandhu Gold Cup Malaysia v Sri Lanka Live from 3:00pm	Bangladesh v Nepal Live from 6:30pm STAR SPORTS 1 Australia v India Second ODI	Live from 9:20am TEN CRICKET South Africa v England
	DAY'S EVENT	Bangladesh v Zimbabwe Venue: Sheikh Abu Naser Stadium, Khulna	First T20I, Time: 3:00pm Bangabandhu Gold Cup Venue: BNS	Malaysia v Sri Lanka Time: 3:00pm Bangladesh v Nepal
			Time: 6:30pm Bangladesh Cricket League Four-day Match, Day 4	

PUDGY PEOPLE MAKE LOUIS MAD

Louis van Gaal is no stranger to making controversial remarks but even he might admit that he overstepped the mark by calling a journalist "fat man" following Tuesday's draw. The Dutchman responded in typically prickly fashion to the media's criticism of Wayne Rooney, "You have criticised him, I don't," Van Gaal said before walking away, pointing to a journalist and adding, "You too. Fat man. There." The Sun journalist Neil Cusick was subsequently revealed as the man to whom Van Gaal was referring and he responded by writing: "You are right, Louis, I am fat. I had a knee operation four months ago that stopped me running and going to the gym. That has resulted in me putting on nearly two stone. At least I can hold my



Onlookers were dazzled as the illustrious T20 World Cup trophy was brought on display at the centre of Bashundhara City mall in the capital yesterday. The tournament is to be held in India from March 8th to April 3rd.

PHOTO: STAR

Maldives through Bangladesh U-23s' hopes fade away

SPORTS REPORTER



Bangladesh Olympic team's semifinal hopes in the Bangabandhu Gold Cup faded away when they suffered a 2-0 defeat to Maldives in their second group match at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday. With the second successive win Maldives became the first team to advance to the semifinals with a match in hand leaving Bangladesh Olympic team with a slim chance to progress to the last four as Bahrain are in the second position with four points and they need only a draw against Maldives in the last match to become Group B runners-up. But if Bahrain suffer a defeat to Maldives and Bangladesh beat winless Cambodia in their last matches respectively, the home team will have a chance to advance to the semifinals on

the basis of a better goal difference. Bangladesh Olympic team came into the match against Maldives with a creditable 1-1 draw against Bahrain and showed early promises but two defensive fumbles sank them within the first 25 minutes. The backline marshalled by experienced Rezaul Karim, Kesto Kumar, Arup Kumar and young Shakil Ahmed were exposed time and again by the speedy Maldivians, who tore apart the Bangladesh backline to post a deserved win following their entertaining 3-2 win over Cambodia. Having snatched the ball from Masuk Mia Jonny from the left flank, Nashid Ahmed, the scorer in a 3-1 win over Bangladesh in the SAFF Suzuki Cup match, ran down the left flank to race past defender Kesto Kumar to put a perfect cross for unmarked forward Easa Ismail, who made no mistake to fire home to put Maldives ahead in

the 16th minute. After going down, Bangladesh pressed for the equaliser but the backline made another fumble to restrict Easa Ismail, who managed to overcome the challenge of defenders Kesto and Reza before cutting it back for Imaaz Ahmed, who tapped in to double the margin and took the match away from Bangladesh in the 25th minute. Maldives then exposed the Bangladesh backline a few times but the forwards saw their drives narrowly missed the target, much to the relief of Bangladesh goalkeeper Ziaur Rahman. Bangladesh however dominated the second half with an energetic performance with substitute winger Rubel Mia threatening Maldives with his speedy runs and he also created two scoring chances but forward Aminur Rahman Sajib could not cash in on any of those opportunities in the second half.



The Bangladesh Under-23s could not breach Maldives custodian Faisal Mohamed's (4th from R) defence yesterday as they went down to a 2-0 defeat in the Bangabandhu Gold Cup at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

BANGLADESH V NEPAL Hosts need a draw

SPORTS REPORTER



The Bangladesh national football team will be looking to get into their full rhythm to ensure their semifinal berth when they take on a youthful Nepal in their group's third and final match of the Bangabandhu Gold Cup at the Bangabandhu National Stadium today. The match will get underway at 6:30pm after Malaysia XI take on winless Sri Lanka at 3:00pm at the same venue. Bangladesh and Nepal are on the top of the four-team table with equal four points from two outings but the hosts are in an advantageous position on better goal difference and a draw against Nepal is enough for the home side to move into the last four. Defending champions Malaysia with two points from as many outings must need an outright victory over already-eliminated Sri Lanka to qualify for the semifinals from Group A but a draw between two sides will put both Bangladesh and Nepal into the semifinals before the second match kicks off. Bangladesh were in trouble with their inconsistent performance but they dominated Sri Lanka in the tournament opener with a scintillating performance, especially in the first half of the game. In very next match they put up a dismal performance against Malaysia, who are being represented by a club team, FELDA United FC, and made their

semifinal berth tough playing out a 1-1 draw. The charges of Maruful Haque could not meet the expectation in the last two matches as all three departments failed to perform altogether. The defenders though did comparatively well against Malaysia but the strikers, who were excellent against Sri Lanka, were totally anonymous throughout the game against Malaysia. There were also something missing in the midfield comprising Mamunul Islam, Jamal Bhuiyan, Zahid Hossain and Hemanta Vincent Biswas but there was one thing to be satisfied with the tremendous performance of new goalkeeper Ashraf Islam Rana. Coach Maruful will certainly expect his charges to come up with a better performance and fire all cylinders against Nepal and fulfil the target to qualify for the semifinals. Marful's counterpart, Nepal coach Bal Gopal Maharjan is also optimistic to qualify for the semifinals and believes his boys are ready to take on the challenge. "It will be a tough match for us because Bangladesh will be playing on home ground. But I think both sides have a 50-50 chance to qualify for the semifinals and we are hopeful to win the match," said Maharjan. Nevertheless, Nepal's 1-0 win over Sri Lanka after 28 months will come as a tonic to post another international win and young striker Biman Gharti Magar said that they are fully focused on the match against Bangladesh.

Bahrain brighten chances

SPORTS REPORTER

Bahrain football team's chance to move into the semifinals of Bangabandhu Gold Cup heightened as they edged past Cambodia 1-0 in their Group B encounter at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday. A well placed header early in the game from captain Abdul Aziz Al Shaikh was enough to separate the sides and took Bahrain to the top of group with four points from two outings while Cambodia eventually were eliminated from the group stage after two successive defeats in as many matches. They came into the match on the back of a 1-1 draw against Bangladesh Olympic team and comparatively had the upper hand before Cambodia put up a spirited show in the second half, but all for naught as the damage done earlier proved too much to overcome. Bahrain took the lead in the 11th minute with Aziz Al Shaikh nodding a Jasim Al Shaikh corner home, soon after a fine save by the stretching legs of goalkeeper Mahboob Al Doseri. After resumption, Cambodia enjoyed the lion share of ball possession but could not expose the backline of Bahrain, who seemingly concentrated on holding the lead with their counter-attack strategy. Hence Cambodia conceded their second defeat after a 2-3 loss at the hands of Maldives.

Lahm slams Ballon d'Or

AFP, Berlin

Former Germany captain Philipp Lahm has slammed FIFA's Ballon d'Or award for the world player of the year as nothing more than a "marketing prize". The Bayern Munich full-back said the award favoured "the most popular players" over more deserving ones. Barcelona star Lionel Messi was handed the award for a record fifth time at a ceremony in Zurich on Monday. "I think if FIFA wants to attach a reward, it mustn't be a marketing prize that only honours the most celebrity individuals in the world of football," Lahm told goal.com. Lahm said the vote might as well be had on social media site Facebook, before complaining about favouritism shown to forwards, describing the Ballon d'Or as an award for "attacker of the year". "It's not my perspective as a bitter defender but the intangible voice of the statistics," he moaned. "Maybe in a team sport there shouldn't be only one player (the forward) who is rewarded." The 32-year-old said he would favour separate awards for the best goalkeeper, defender, midfielder and forward.

Atletico, Real get transfer bans

AFP, Zurich



FIFA on Thursday banned Real Madrid and Atletico Madrid from buying players for one year over their dealing in under-age players. The ban will start from the July transfer window this year and finish with the January transfer market in 2017. Atletico were also fined 900,000 Swiss francs (820,000 euros) and Real 360,000 (330,000 euros). "The two clubs were found to have violated several provisions concerning the international transfer and first registration of minor players as well as other relevant provisions with regard to the registration and participation of certain players in competitions," said a FIFA statement. Barcelona has just ended a one year ban for similar reasons. Real and Atletico were "issued with a reprimand and given 90 days in which to regularise the situation of all minor players concerned," FIFA said. They can still sell players during the transfer ban. FIFA said the alarm was raised over the two clubs by FIFA's Transfer Matching System and its disciplinary committee completed the inquiry. Under international football rules, players under 18 cannot be transferred to another country, except in limited circumstances. All transfers need the approval of a special FIFA committee. "The investigations concerned minor players who were involved and participated in competitions with the clubs over various periods between 2007 and 2014 [Atletico Madrid] and between 2005 and 2014 [Real Madrid]," FIFA said. The ban follows a similar sanction handed to European champions Barcelona, who were unable to register new players during 2015. Barca were initially banned in April 2014, but managed to delay the sanction taking effect until the transfer windows in January and the summer 2015 by launching an ultimately unsuccessful appeal to the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS). By delaying the ban, Barca managed to sign the likes of Luis Suarez and Ivan Rakitic in the summer of 2014 to propel them to a treble of La Liga, Champions League and Copa del Rey. The news is just the latest institutional embarrassment for Real Madrid just over a week after they appointed French legend Zinedine Zidane.

FIFA inspector fails inspection

REUTERS, Zurich

FIFA's ethics committee said on Thursday that former World Cup bid inspector Harold Mayne-Nicholls repeatedly asked for personal favours from one of the countries that bid to host the 2018 and 2022 World Cups. Mayne-Nicholls, who was banned for seven years on July 6, "ignored his responsibility as a high-ranking official", the ethics committee said in a statement as it informed him of the grounds of the decision. Mayne-Nicholls could not immediately be reached for comment. He also declined to comment when he was barred last July, citing committee rules. The ethics committee said that Mayne-Nicholls, a former head of the Chilean football federation, was guilty of breaching four articles of its code of ethics, the most serious being the one concerning the offering and acceptance of gifts.

Allen hurts Arsenal

AFP, London



Joe Allen's dramatic last-minute equaliser earned Liverpool a 3-3 draw at home to Arsenal on Wednesday that enabled Leicester City to move level on points at the Premier League summit. The Welsh midfielder volleyed home in front of the Kop at a wintry Anfield to deny leaders Arsenal a victory that would have kept Arsene Wenger's men two points clear at the top of the table. Robert Huth scored an 83rd-minute winner as Leicester won 1-0 at fourth-place Tottenham Hotspur, while Manchester City remain three points off the pace in third after drawing 0-0 at home to Everton. Arsenal travel to Stoke City on Sunday and will do so with renewed doubts after their title credentials after failing to protect the advantage given to them by Olivier

Giroud's 55th-minute goal. Roberto Firmino was preferred to Christian Benteke up front by Liverpool manager Jurgen Klopp and he rewarded the German's faith by slamming home a 10th-minute opener after Petr Cech parried a shot from Emre Can.

RESULTS			
Chelsea (Azpilicueta 20, McAuley 74-og)	2 - 2	West Brom (Gardner 33, McClean 86)	
Liverpool (Firmino 10, 19, Allen 90)	3 - 3	Arsenal (Ramsey 14, Giroud 25, 55)	
Manchester City (Long 17, Tadic 73)	0 - 0	Everton	
Southampton (Walters 49, Joselu 67, Bennett 78-og)	2 - 0	Watford	
Stoke (Walters 49, Joselu 67, Bennett 78-og)	3 - 1	Norwich (Howson 55)	
Swansea (Sigurdsson 21-pen, Ayew 40)	2 - 4	Sunderland (Defoe 3, 61, 85, Van Aanholt 49)	
Tottenham	0 - 1	Leicester	

Barca seal last 8 spot

AFP, Barcelona

Barcelona ended a three-game series of bad-tempered derbies against Espanyol on top by sealing their place in the Copa del Rey quarterfinals 6-1 on aggregate courtesy of a 2-0 win at Cornella-El Prat on Wednesday. Fresh from picking up his record fifth Ballon d'Or, Lionel Messi was once again Barca's inspiration as he brilliantly picked out Munir El Haddadi to open the scoring before the youngster tapped home his second of the night late on. There was less aggression on the field than in the previous two meetings between the sides in the past 10 days, however Espanyol could be punished for offensive banners towards Colombian popstar Shakira - the partner of Barca defender Gerard Pique - and Luis Suarez. Athletic Bilbao, Celta Vigo and Las Palmas also booked their place in the last eight to join Sevilla and Mirandes, who qualified on Tuesday, for Friday's quarter-final draw. La Liga leaders Atletico Madrid host Rayo Vallecano on Thursday tied at 1-1, whilst Gary Neville's Valencia have one foot in the quarters as they lead Granada 4-0. Suarez was banned for confronting Espanyol players in the tunnel after last week's first-leg in which the visitors had two men sent-off. Barca boss Luis Enrique also handed Neymar, Pique, Sergio Busquets and Andres Iniesta a rest, but Messi captained the side just two days after regaining his title of World Player of the Year. Francesc Bardi produced a brilliant save to prevent the Argentine opening the scoring with a fierce volley on 11 minutes.

Messi to end career in Argentina

AFP, Barcelona



Five-time World Player of the Year Lionel Messi has hinted he could end his career by returning to his native Argentina. Messi left his homeland at just 13 years old to join Barcelona, where he has grown up to become one of the greatest players of all time. "I had to go to Europe, start out with Barcelona and make my career there, but I would like to return to Argentinian football one day." Messi hasn't always enjoyed the same popularity in the land of his birth as in Barcelona having so far failed to end Argentina's 23-year wait to win a major international tournament. "It was always my dream (to play in Argentina) when I was a boy, though I had to leave at a very early age because of my situation and it didn't happen," he said in an interview published on FIFA.com days after lifting a record fifth Ballon d'Or. "I had to go to Europe, start out with Barcelona and make my career there, but I would like to return to Argentinian football one day." Messi hasn't always enjoyed the same popularity in the land of his birth as in Barcelona having so far failed to end Argentina's 23-year wait to win a major international tournament.

Indeed, he was even reportedly spat at by River Plate fans at Tokyo airport last month after Barca's 3-0 Club World Cup final win over the side from Buenos Aires, despite his muted celebration after scoring the opening goal. "I know how much effort all those fans made in making that trip, how excited they were and there was me, the Argentinian, scoring the first goal and ruining it all for them." "I don't know if I was actually saying sorry, but it was a type of apology." However, having lost in the World Cup and Copa America finals in the past two years, Messi is confident of finally ending Argentina's wait for glory at the Copa America Centenario in the United States this summer. "We can't say when it's going to end and when we'll finally win something with the national team. After everything we've been fighting for we deserve it." "We've played quite a few finals now and not won any of them. Someday it's bound to happen."

