

What to WATCH

STAR SPORTS1
Australia v India
Fifth ODI
Live from 9:20am

TEN CRICKET
South Africa v England
Fourth Test, Day 2

STAR SPORTS HD
Australian Open
Live from 6:00am & 2:00pm

Primera Liga
Malaga v Barcelona
Live from 9:00pm

Deportivo v Valencia

Live from 11:30pm
Granada v Getafe
Live from 1:30am (Sunday)
Rayo Vallecano v Celta Vigo
Live from 3:30am (Sunday)

SONY SIX
Serie A

Fiorentina v Atalanta
Live from 11:00pm

Empoli v AC Milan
Live from 1:30am (Sunday)

STAR SPORTS4
English Premiership
Norwich City v Liverpool

Live from 6:45pm
Man United v Southampton
Live from 9:00pm

West Ham v Man City
Live from 11:30pm

STAR SPORTS2
English Premiership

Crystal Palace v Tottenham
Live from 9:00pm

Bundesliga
Borussia M'gladbach v Dortmund
Live from 11:30pm

DAY'S EVENT
BD U-19s v Zim U-19s
Practice Match
Time: 9:00am
Venue: ZACS, Chittagong

Neymar's dad bins Real rumours

AGENCIES, Barcelona

The father of Neymar has rubbished the "invention" that the Barcelona forward was recently the subject of a meeting with Real Madrid.

Onda Cero reported on Wednesday that Neymar, his father and Barca's South American delegate Andre Cury met with Brazilian agent Wagner Ribeiro, also a friend of Madrid President Florentino Perez, at the FIFA Ballon d'Or gala in Zurich 10 days ago.

The front-page of Friday's Marca then bore the claim Los Blancos were willing to meet the attacker's €190m release clause, but Neymar Sr has made it clear that his son will be extending his contract with the Catalans at the end of the season.

"The meeting with Madrid is an invention, it's silly," he told Mundo Deportivo.

"We were all together in the same hotel and greeted one another, but talk of a meeting is an invention."

"The sole representative of Neymar and the only one who can negotiate on his behalf is me, no-one else."

"[Neymar] has a contract [at Barca] until 2019, he is happy there and is to renew the contract at the end of season."

Solid start for SA

AFP, Centurion

Debutant Stephen Cook and Hashim Amla shared a double century partnership for South Africa before England fought back on the first day of the fourth and final Test at SuperSport Park on Friday.

Cook made 115 and Amla hit 109 in a South Africa total of 329 for five at the close of play. The pair put on 202 for the second wicket before Amla's dismissal sparked a collapse in which four wickets, including that of Cook, fell for 36 runs.

Cook, called up at the age of 33 when the South African selectors finally opted for a specialist opening batsman to partner Dean Elgar, was calm and organised from the start of his 218-ball innings during which he hit 14 boundaries.

SCORES IN BRIEF
SOUTH AFRICA: First innings 329 for 5 (Cook 115, Amla 109, Bavuma 32 not out, De Kock 25 not out; Moeen 2-53)



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, ministers, dignitaries and Bangladesh Football Federation officials pose with the triumphant Nepal team after the awards ceremony of the Bangabandhu Gold Cup at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday. PHOTO: STAR

Nepal clinch it in style

SPORTS REPORTER



Nepal broke their 23-year title drought by clinching the Bangabandhu Gold Cup with an emphatic 3-0 win over Bahrain in the final at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

Bimal Gharti Magar, Bishal Rai and Nawayug Shrestha struck one goal apiece to deliver the first international title for Nepal since the 1993 South Asian Games in Dhaka, which had come nine years their first international title at home soil.

Coming into the final for the first time in 17 years, Nepal were the clear favourites against a youthful Bahrain, featuring players born between 1995 and 1996. And the Himalayan nation notched up the win by displaying some entertaining football in front of some 15,000 holiday crowd.

The Gorkhals got off to a fine start as the eventual man-of-the-final Bimal headed from close range in the fifth minute after Bahrain goalkeeper Mahboob Al Doseri had failed to catch a header from Anjan Bista.

Bahrain, who looked comparatively better than they were against Bangladesh in the semifinal, found an opportunity to equalise halfway through the first half, but Abdul Rahman Abdulla saw his reverse-attempt thwarted by Nepal goalkeeper Bikesh Kuthu.

The second half of the game was more entertaining as both teams played attacking football and both goalkeepers produced some brilliant saves but the Bahrain goalkeeper had to concede two goals -- one for a defensive mistake and the other due to his own mistake.

Players from both sides lost their temper and the Indian referee gave marching order to a player each from the two sides on the hour-mark before Nepal doubled the lead three minutes from time, with Bishal driving home a cutback from Anjan. Tournament's top-scorer Nawayug then nodded a well-judged cross from Bimal into the open net in the 90th minute to complete the rout before Bahrain had a second man sent off on the stroke of final whistle.

"The players were asked to make history and they were told not to go back home empty-handed. They kept my words. I want to dedicate this trophy to football-loving Nepalese people and the victims of last year's earthquake," said Nepal coach Bal Gopal Maharjan, who was given the national team's charge for the first time after successfully guiding the under-19 team to SAFF U-19 Championship title and qualification for the final round of the AFC U-19 Championship.

Bahrain's assistant coach Al Nasr was happy despite seeing his side finish runners-up.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina witnessed the final match as chief guest and later distributed the awards among the two teams.

Champions Nepal received a prize-purse of 50,000 dollars while runner-up Bahrain bagged half the amount.

SA GAMES 2016

Hoping for gold, expecting less

SPORTS REPORTER

Winning a medal in the 100m sprint in track and field is now a distant dream for Bangladesh. There was a time, however, when Bangladeshi sprinters had been the main contenders of the coveted event of the South Asian (SA) Games.

Biman Chandra Tarafdar was the last Bangladeshi sprinter to win the 100m sprint gold in Colombo SA Games in 1993, though he did go on to win silver and bronze medals in the Madras SA Games in 1995 and Kathmandu SA Games in 1999 respectively.

Bangladesh have since not won a medal in the 100m sprint, a period that included the Dhaka SA Games in 2010. In the intervening 17 years, there have obviously not been any promising sprinters to scale those heights. This time too there is no exception; there are no big sprint hopes to win in the upcoming 12th SA Games, scheduled for Feb 5-16 in Guwahati and Shillong, India, though Bangladesh's four-time fastest man Mezbah Uddin will run for glory in Guwahati.

Mezbah produced his best to win a gold in the 2013 Bangladesh Games with a timing of 10:75, which is 0.12 seconds more than Pakistani Liaquat Ali, who won the bronze medal in 100m sprint in Dhaka SA Games in 2010.

According to coach Abdullah Hel Kafi, there is seemingly no hope on the sprinter from Bagerhat, who has been clocking 10.32 to 10.40 seconds (hand timing) in the practice in BKSP and the timing will be increased by 0.35-0.40 seconds if it is measured by the elec-

tronic device.

"Every athlete takes to the track to win the gold and I am no exception," said the 23-year-old Mezbah yesterday. "If I can make a good start, then something good can be expected. Apart from the scheduled training, I have personally been practising how to start quickly off the starting block."

However, coach Kafi -- the former fastest man of Bangladesh -- could not provide any medal hope in the 100m sprint but has pinned his hopes on long-jumpers Al Amin and Mohammad Ismail to put an end to



Long-jumper Al Amin is one of Bangladesh's medal hopes in the South Asian Games. PHOTO: STAR

the decade-long drought of gold, which was last won by hurdler Mahfizur Rahman Mithu in the Colombo SA Games in 2006.

Al Amin grabbed the bronze medal in Dhaka SA Games after clearing 7.19 meters, having broken a 16-year-old national record the previous year after clearing 7.61 meters. If the 27-year-old long jumper can repeat his personal best next month, he can expect some glory. In the last edition, Indian Mohammedan Ibrar cleared 7.44 meters to win the gold medal.

"I had played with injury in the Dhaka SA Games but this time I am fully fit to fight for the gold. I am usually not good at training but always better at competition. This time I have been doing well in training after clearing 7.38 meters. Out of six jumps, I need only one jump to produce my best," said Al Amin yesterday, adding that Ismail is doing even better than him in training.

Coach Kafi hopes to win a few silver and bronze medals from the relay in both the men's and women's events as gold-hopeful Sumita Rani, who had to be content with a 100m hurdle silver medal in a photo finish last time, was ruled out of the Games for her injury at the last moment.

"To be honest, there are no outstanding performers in the squad, so we can't pin hopes on anyone to win the gold. But we are hoping for some surprising results as anything can happen in athletics on the day," said Kafi.

Out of the 36 events, Bangladesh will compete in 16 events -- 10 to be competed by the men and the rest by the women.

Goal-line tech for Euro 2016

AFP, Nyon

UEFA has approved the use of goal-line technology in its competitions, starting with the Euro 2016 tournament in France, the acting head of European football Gianni Infantino said Friday.

"We looked at it seriously...and finally we decided to start with Euro (2016) and then move on to the Champions League," Infantino said following a UEFA executive meeting. "Now we are going to look at how to implement it."



The winners of the 6th Summit Open and the 20th Summit Cup Golf Tournament pose for a photograph with the sponsors and organisers of the events at the Kurmitola Golf Club yesterday evening. Dulal Hossain won the title in the Summit Open and Shahdab Iqbal Siddique won the title in the Summit Cup. PHOTO: STAR

Serena, Novak march on

AFP, Melbourne

Novak Djokovic underlined his supremacy in men's tennis on Friday as he marched unstopably into the Australian Open fourth round -- along with Serena Williams, who raced through in just 44 minutes.

As Roger Federer reached a landmark 300th Grand Slam win, Djokovic still looked like the man to beat as he weathered a strong challenge from Andreas Seppi to reach the first weekend without dropping a set.

The top seed and defending champion saved two third-set points against Seppi before reeling off the next four points to clinch it 6-1, 7-5, 7-6 (8/6), his 33rd straight victory over Italian opposition.

Federer earlier went through 6-4, 3-6, 6-1, 6-4 against Grigor "Baby Fed" Dimitrov, a man whose game is so similar to his own that he admitted it was like playing a mirror.

It wasn't all plain-sailing for Federer, but with the win he became the first man to reach 300 Grand Slam victories and lies six away from Martina Navratilova's record of 306.

Maria Sharapova also weathered a fightback when she beat pint-sized American Lauren Davis 6-1, 6-7 (5/7), 6-0, helped by a strategic break and change of dress, for her 600th career win.

Williams had no such problems as she crushed overawed Russian teenager Daria Kasatkina 6-1, 6-1 in 44 minutes, the shortest match of the tournament so far.

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