

# What to WATCH

DAY'S EVENT

**GAZI TV & STAR SPORTS 1**  
 Bangladesh v England  
 First ODI (D/N)  
 Live from 2:30pm  
**SONY ESPN**  
 FIFA World Cup Qualifiers

Belgium v Bosnia & Herzegovina  
 Live from 12:45am (Saturday)  
**SONY SIX**  
 FIFA World Cup Qualifiers  
 Netherlands v Belarus  
 Live from 12:45am (Saturday)

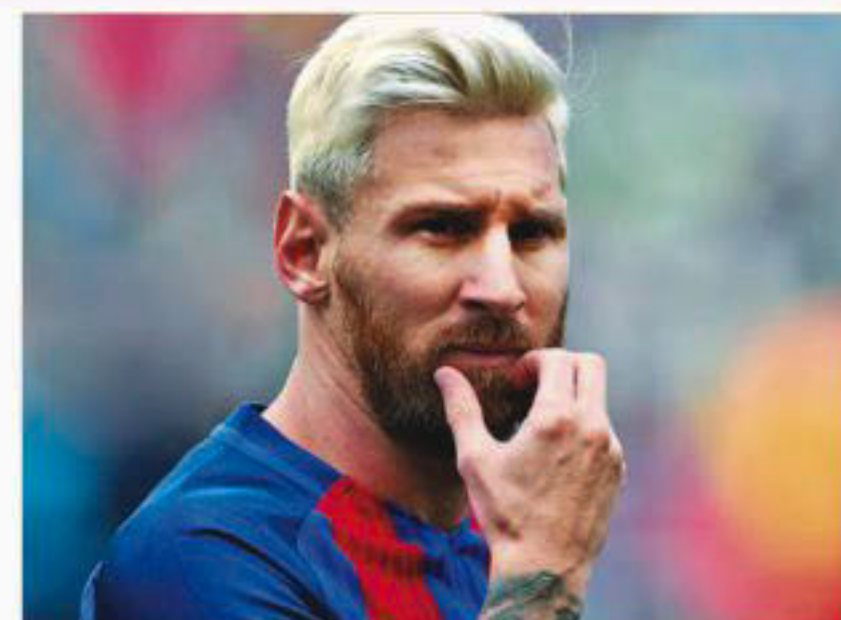
**SONY ESPN HD**  
 FIFA World Cup Qualifiers  
 France v Bulgaria  
 Live from 12:45am (Saturday)

**Bangladesh v England**  
 First ODI (D/N)

Time: 2:30pm  
 Venue: Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium

## MESSI AT THE MOVIES

Lionel Messi has been making the most of recovering from injury by winding down with his family at the cinema. The 29-year-old is unable to play a part in Argentina's World Cup qualifying double header against Peru and Paraguay after picking up a groin problem against Atletico Madrid last month. Instead Messi has been winding down with his family as he edges towards a return for Barcelona after the international break. Messi's partner, Antonella Rocuzzo, snapped a picture of the star forward alongside their eldest son, Thiago, on Instagram.



England all-rounder Chris Woakes (C) has been the go-to man whenever his side has found itself in either a bowling or batting crisis and captain Jos Buttler will hope that he will continue performing consistently as they begin the series against Bangladesh today.

PHOTO: STAR

## 'BD may be favourites'

NAIMUL KARIM



Of the 16 times that the two teams have met, England have won on 13 occasions. They broke the world record for the highest team score in ODIs recently and they have only lost once in their last 10 ODIs.

Bangladesh, on the contrary, are playing just their second ODI series in the last 11 months. And had it not been for the hurriedly arranged Afghanistan series, which saw the hosts only come into their own in the last game to win the series 2-1, the England tour would have been their first.

Despite all these factors England stand-in skipper Jos Buttler named his opponents when asked who the favourites were during the pre-match press conference yesterday at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium.

To that he replied: "Maybe Bangladesh... obviously they are very strong at home in their own conditions and with all their recent successes in the ODIs. We don't mind being the underdogs at all. That's something that probably suits us."

When asked if the visitors were looking for revenge, considering that they lost to Bangladesh in the World Cup in 2015, he said: "Not really. I think if you look through

the current squad there weren't that many guys in Australia. Anyway there is no real motivation for revenge. We are fully focused on the task in hand and it's a fantastic challenge for everyone."

Buttler himself though was a member of the squad that went down to Bangladesh in Adelaide. He had scored a fighting 65.

"I probably just regret that day. I think I got into a position where I could have won the game for England. That's disappointing. But we have moved on. That was a long time in the past and things move fast in cricket. We are looking forward to the current competition," he said while reflecting on the World Cup fixture.

Rather than focusing too much on the opponents, Buttler preferred focusing on his own team.

"I think the run up in the warm-up game was great exercise for us. We fielded in the heat during the day which is a good shock to the system and everyone had a good bat. It was great to come away with a win," he said.

"The big strength of England cricket in all formats is that we look at ourselves, our strengths and see what we can do well," he added.

On another note, Buttler described the security provided to the team as 'fantastic'.

"Travel to and fro [the stadium] might have been unfortunately frustrating for the locals with the traffic, but it has been great for us. The

## Booters off to Bhutan

SPORTS REPORTER



The Bangladesh football team left for Thimphu this morning to play the second leg of the Asian Cup Play-off Qualifier fixture with hopes of a win or at least a scoring draw against Bhutan.

The match will be held on October 10 at the Changlimithang Stadium from 6:00pm (BST).

The away fixture will be a do-or-die tie for Bangladesh after they played out a goalless draw in Dhaka in the first leg. Bangladesh will need either an outright win or a scoring draw to progress to the 24-team Asian Cup Qualifiers.

With the departure of the 33-member squad all the focus turned to striker Shakhawat Hossain Rony, who missed a host of chances in the home match and the Sheikh Russel KC marksman is feeling the heat ahead of the match.

"I feel a bit of pressure as all eyes are on me. However, I have gained some confidence in the past three league matches, where I hit the target twice. Besides that, I have also done well in the practice and I am confident that I can avail any opportunities that come my way during the match against Bhutan," Rony said on the eve of the team's departure.

Meanwhile, head coach Tom Saintfiet is concerned about the high altitude in Thimphu, especially as his team will only have three training sessions to get accustomed to the conditions.

## Syria stun China

AGENCIES, Xian



Syria dented China's bid to reach a second World Cup when they pulled off a stunning 1-0 qualifying upset on Thursday.

Mahmoud Al-Mawas's breakaway goal in the 54th minute settled a gritty game in Xian which left China stranded on one point from their first three games in Group A.

Seventy-eighth ranked China have ambitions of hosting and even winning a World Cup, but Al-Mawas dented their hopes of reaching the tournament for a second time at Russia 2018.

The bustling, bearded forward latched onto a long ball and prodded his first touch past on-rushing goalkeeper Gu Chao before controlling the bouncing ball into the net.

In-form Tottenham Hotspur forward Son Heung-Min grabbed the winner as South Korea came from behind to beat Qatar 3-2 and take a step towards the 2018 Russia World Cup.

After South Korea trailed 2-1 at half-time, the hosts levelled through Ji Dong-Won before Son extended his electric scoring run with the decisive strike on 58 minutes.

Uli Stielike's team saw out the last 24

minutes a man down after Hong Jeong-Ho was sent off, compounding a miserable evening for the defender after he gave away a penalty for Qatar's opener.

While South Korea march on in the final qualifying round, Qatar look unlikely to reach their first World Cup before hosting it in 2022 as they remain pointless and bottom of Group A after three games.

Substitute Hotaru Yamaguchi's 95th-minute winner rescued Japan and their stuttering World Cup qualifying campaign as they escaped with a 2-1 victory over Iraq.

The Blue Samurai were headed for an ignominious draw in Saitama when Yamaguchi smashed a loose ball from a corner through a forest of legs and into the Iraqi goal.

The result gave Japan their second win in three final-round qualifiers and boosted under-fire coach Vahid Halilhodzic, who has endured calls for his resignation and has suffered reported player unrest.

It also lifts Japan's hopes of reaching a sixth straight World Cup at Russia 2018 as they draw temporarily level on points with Group B pace-setters Australia and Saudi Arabia, who face each other later.

## Infantino vows clean 2026 World Cup bid

AFP, Lausanne



FIFA president Gianni Infantino vowed Thursday that the 2026 World Cup bidding process will be free of the controversy that surrounded the selection of Russia as 2018 hosts and Qatar in 2022.

Infantino was responding to a recent claim by US President Barack Obama that decisions on who hosts the Olympics and World Cups are corrupt.

"I can't speak about the past. But what I can promise, is that we need to look very seriously at the application process for 2026 (World Cup) to assure ourselves that the process is transparent and beyond reproach," Infantino told AFP in an interview.

In the wake of corruption scandals involving FIFA since May 2015, there had been calls for re-votes or overall cancellations of the 2018 World Cup in Russia and the 2022 in Qatar.

Infantino said that for 2026 they would have to make sure "that the technical report means something concrete and that it is not only a political vote".

"It's our job to do this, to ensure that the process will be open and transparent, that those who must take responsibility take it and ensure that decisions taken from now or since February 26 (2016) are definitely not faked."

Recalling how Chicago lost the bid to host the 2016 Olympics, Obama said in an interview: "I think we've learned that IOC's decisions are similar to FIFA's decisions: a little bit cooked."

"I was elected on a programme of reforms, I have a lot of belief in these reforms and their implementation" he added, hailing the measures taken in the context of "good governance and transparency in financial movements".

He added: "FIFA needs to do more football and less politics. There is obviously still work to do but I am quite

## Siddikur in 81st place

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladeshi duo of Siddikur Rahman and Jamal Hossain got off to solid but unspectacular starts in the BNI Indonesian Masters which began in Jakarta yesterday.

Siddikur and Jamal both got off to shaky starts, carding bogeys on the first hole at the scenic Royale Jakarta Golf Club. However since that point Siddikur traded three further bogeys against three birdies to finish with a one-over-par which saw him share 81st position.

Jamal remained steady till the last hole, hitting another bogey on the 18th to finish with a two-over-par. He finished the first round at a joint-102nd.

Both golfers remain far off the pace in the US 750,000 dollar event, with India's Gaganjeet Bhullar, Thailand's Gunn Charoenkul and Japan's Masahiro Kawamura sharing first with six-under-par.

The round was suspended due to darkness at 5:55pm local time with 5 golfers

## Mexico to appeal fine

AFP, Mexico City

The Mexican Football Federation has vowed to appeal a new fine imposed by FIFA over a homophobic chant used by fans against opposition goalkeepers.

FIFA announced on Tuesday a set of sanctions against several federations, with Mexico ordered to pay around \$31,000 over the use of the slur at the 2018 World Cup qualifying game against Honduras in September.



Bangladesh players jog during their last training session before leaving for Bhutan at the Bishreshtha Shaheed Mostafa Kamal Stadium in Kamalapur yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

## Wimbledon match in fixing probe

AFP, London

The Tennis Integrity Unit (TIU) revealed on Thursday they are investigating whether a match at this year's Wimbledon was fixed.

The TIU received an alert regarding one match played at the grass-court Grand Slam in London.

Its alerts come from regulators and betting organisations, who can report matches if they notice suspicious betting patterns.

The TIU said it received 96 alerts from July to September, of which two came in Grand Slams, the first at Wimbledon and the second at the US Open.

A TIU statement said: "Historically, grand slams receive very few match alerts and in keeping with that record, only two were received during the period; one at Wimbledon, the other at the US Open."

"Both are the subject of routine, confidential investigation by the TIU." The US Open match under investigation had already been disclosed, with the TIU having announced in September it was looking at the match between Vitalia Diatchenko and Timea Bacsinszky.

It has not given details of the Wimbledon match that is under scrutiny.

The TIU's guidance states: "It is important to appreciate that an alert on its own is not evidence of match-fixing."

## Nazrana at the top

SPORTS REPORTER

WFM Nazrana Khan Eva took the solo lead in the Saif Global Sports 36th National Chess Championship at the close of the fourth round at the Bangladesh Chess Federation hall room yesterday.

Nazrana toppled WIM Rani Hamid and grabbed the lead with the maximum four points as she maintained her hundred per cent win record by defeating her illustrious opponent on the 81st move.

Hamid has now slipped to the second position which she shares with WFM Sharmin Sultana and Smiha Sharmin Shimmi as each of them have three points.

## BFF holding seminar to educate footballers

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF), in association with the Asian Football Confederation (AFC), is all set to hold a seminar for professional footballers in order to educate them about different aspects in the professional arena.

It is the first time that the game's governing body is organising this kind of players' development programme since the introduction of the professional football league in 2006, although the players have regularly been updated about new rules and regulations of the game every year before the start of the season. The seminar will be held on Oct 25 and 26.

The seminar will have three parts -- players' welfare, players' integrity and medicine -- which will aim to educate professional players on various aspects of being a professional footballer and also provide them with a platform to address any

issues or challenges which they face.

AFC development officer Yogesh Desai, AFC integrity officer Hassan Haider Khan, consultant R Sasikumar and Dr Ali Emran will address players on topics ranging from contracts, legal affairs, lifestyle of players and social responsibilities to match fixing, anti-corruption and integrity to the clubs and the national teams, reporting mechanism of the players, fight against doping, football for health and football nutrition.

"We tried to handle a lot of issues related to the players each season as the players don't even maintain their contract papers. The players don't even know that they can avail the cost of treatment for their injuries. So we think the seminar will help players understand what to do and what not to do. We expect to cover all the players of the 12 professional league clubs through this seminar," said BFF general secretary Abu Nayeem Shohag yesterday.

REGISTRATION GOING ON :  
[www.dhakamarathon.org](http://www.dhakamarathon.org)  
 @thebigbanglarun

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