

BTV & CHANNEL 9
New Zealand v Bangladesh
First Test, Day-5
Live from 3:30am
SONY ESPN
Serie A

Torino v AC Milan
Live from 2:00am (Tuesday)
SONY SIX
Australian Open
First Round
Live from 6:00am

Primera Liga
Malaga v Real Sociedad
Live from 2:00am (Tuesday)

Bangladesh Women v South Africa Women
Third ODI

Time: 9:30am
Venue: Sheikh Kamal Int'l Cricket Stadium, Cox's Bazar

CONTE EATS REPORTER'S CAKE

After his side's 3-0 win over Leicester City yesterday, you could not fault Chelsea boss Antonio Conte for being in good spirits. The Blues manager was preparing to begin his post-match press conference when he spotted a journalist eating a slice of cake in the corner of the room. He promptly asked if he could have a bit, and proceeded to tuck into the spongy treat. Conte's reasoning? He was hungry because he hadn't eaten. It was the act of a confident manager, who had just seen his team win for the 14th time in their last 15 matches.

—AGENCIES



Kottan to be coach again

SPORTS REPORTER



Austrian coach George Kottan is all set to take charge of the national team after the Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) president Kazi Salahuddin gave his green signal to the National Teams Committee (NTC).

"Yes, they [NTC] have proposed the name of George Kottan and I told them that I have no objection about it," the BFF boss told reporters yesterday. "He will be appointed for a tenure up to the SAFF Championship [to be held in Dhaka in December]."

Even though the 70-year-old coach supposedly wants to sit with the BFF president before finalising the contract, it is expected that he will be available early next month after finishing a FIFA grassroots programme from January 20-28 in Scotland.

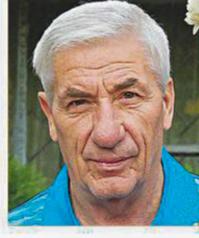
During Saturday's meeting of the NTC, a

few names of local and foreign coaches came up, but the committee emphasised on a coach who has a good idea about Bangladesh's football and is familiar with the players. Kottan fitted the bill perfectly and was preferred over former national coaches Lodewijk de Kruij and Maruful Haque.

The NTC is scheduled to sit again today to finalise the details of the contract with Kottan, the appointment of an assistant coach and the starting date of a training camp.

As Kottan, who has already been informed about his possible appointment, may arrive in the capital in early February, the training camp is likely to be deferred further.

Kottan had guided Bangladesh to the SAFF Championship title in 2003. He was with Abahani club for the last two seasons and guided the Sky Blues to Federation Cup and Bangladesh Premier League titles apart from leading them to a runners-up finish in the Independence Cup.



Manchester United striker Zlatan Ibrahimovic (C) leapt to his side's rescue, awkwardly steering in a headed equaliser from close range against Liverpool during their Premier League clash at Old Trafford yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Ibra rescues a point

Man City hammered at Goodison Park

AFP, Manchester

Zlatan Ibrahimovic scored an 84th-minute header as Manchester United prevented Liverpool from recapturing second place in the Premier League table in a 1-1 draw on Sunday.

Paul Pogba stood to be United's fall guy at Old Trafford after conceding a soft first-half penalty for handball, which James Milner converted, only for Ibrahimovic to save his blushes.

Ibrahimovic's 19th goal of the season extended United's unbeaten league run to seven games, but after winning the previous six, momentum has been lost.

Jose Mourinho's side remain sixth, four points off the Champions League places, while Liverpool rose one place to third, seven points below leaders Chelsea and beneath Tottenham Hotspur on goal difference.

After draws against Sunderland and Plymouth Argyle and a defeat at Southampton, Liverpool have gone four games without victory at the start of a calendar year for the first time since 1993.

But with United five points below them, Jurgen Klopp's men remain the more likely champions.

An abdominal injury to Nathaniel Clyne saw Liverpool's 18-year-old right-back Trent

Alexander-Arnold given a full league debut and he had the onerous task of handling the livewire Anthony Martial.

Martial scored a memorable goal against Liverpool on his United debut last season and he fashioned the first opening with a deep cross for the leaping Ibrahimovic, who could only volley wide.

Ibrahimovic gave the visiting fans a heart-in-mouth moment when he chased down Dejan Lovren's weak back-pass, with Simon Mignolet's clearance striking him and looping onto the roof of the net.

United appeared to be taking control and in the 19th minute Henrikh Mkhitaryan bisected the Liverpool defence with a neatly judged pass for Pogba, only for the Frenchman to scuff wide with his left foot.

During a Liverpool corner soon after, Pogba inexplicably leapt with his hands above his head as he defended Milner's set-piece and the Liverpool number seven tucked the ensuing spot-kick past David de Gea.

It was left to Ibrahimovic to ride to United's rescue, the Swede steering a fine header over Mignolet from Antonio Valencia's cross after Marouane Fellaini's header came back off the post.

The noise that Mourinho had called for after United's mid-week League Cup semifinal first-leg win over Hull City duly arrived, but Liverpool withstood the crescendo.

Murray, Djokovic resume rivalry

Serena eyes 23rd title as Australian Open begins today

AFP, Melbourne



Andy Murray sets out Monday to end a record run of Australian Open final defeats as his great rival Novak Djokovic vies to become the tournament's greatest champion of all-time.

World number one Murray is looking to avoid becoming the first man in the post-1968 Open era to lose six Grand Slam finals at the same major.

His coach Ivan Lendl lost five finals at the US Open before he broke through in New York in 1985.

Murray, who opens his campaign with against Ukraine's Illya Marchenko, says he's in a better position this time to finally break through for his maiden Australian Open.

"I obviously feel pretty confident after the way the last season finished," Murray said. "I do love it here. I love the conditions. I have played really well here over the years, and I just haven't managed to get over the final hurdle."

"But I think I'm in a decent position to do it. I think I have a chance to win here."

Murray is coming off a magnifi-



British World Number One Andy Murray trains under the watchful eye of coach Ivan Lendl in Melbourne yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

cent 2016 which included a second Wimbledon crown, a successful Olympic title defence and knocking Djokovic off the top spot to become world number one for the first time.

He is drawn to meet Japanese fifth seed Nishikori or Swiss legend Roger Federer in the quarters and 2014 winner Wawrinka in the semis.

Murray knows that Djokovic will be gunning for him in the year's first Grand Slam where he has a fantastic record of six finals and six victories

going back to 2008.

The 12-time Grand Slam champion can take outright ownership of the record for Australian titles if he wins for a seventh time in Melbourne.

The Serb is currently tied with Australia's Roy Emerson on six Australian titles.

"One of the reasons I'm here is to try to win every match that I play, and eventually the title," Djokovic said.

Djokovic faces a potential banana-skin in the first round

against experienced Spaniard Fernando Verdasco. Verdasco, ranked 40, has beaten Djokovic four times in their 13 encounters.

Grand Slam warriors Federer and Nadal should also be in the mix, but they lack match time and their rankings have slipped.

Meanwhile, Serena Williams has vowed to make life difficult for top seed Angelique Kerber and a host of dangerous players out to derail her at the Australian Open, warning she is in Melbourne to win.

The American gets her quest for an Open-era record 23rd Grand Slam title underway in a difficult first-round clash against Switzerland's Belinda Bencic on Tuesday.

It will be one of the few matches she has played after a four-month lay-off.

But the 35-year-old, seeded two, is in fighting mood despite being bundled out in the second round of her only warm-up tournament, the Auckland Classic.

"I didn't come here to lose in the first round, or the second round, or at all," she said on Saturday. "If I can play the way I've been practising, it will be fine."

The Brazilian clique on Bangladesh's paddy fields

EAM ASADUZZAMAN, Nilphamari

At first sight they seem like regular land workers toiling to make their living. Upon closer inspection however, this group of 15 men, hailing from villages such as Laxmanpur, Koranipara and Dolua villages under Bangalipur union of Saidpur upazila, have something special about them.

Cloaked in the unmistakable yellow and green of the *Canarinho*, these men are die-hard fans of the Brazilian national football team who wear those yellow and green t-shirts as they work on *boro* paddy fields from dawn to dusk, a sight to behold in their relatively desolate locality.

The group are enthusiastic football fans and as their beloved country is a long distance off from playing in the biggest tournaments of the world, they have turned to the South American nation to satiate their love of football.

Around noon on Sunday, this correspondent found the group at work on the paddy fields and had the chance to speak to their leader, Moksedul Islam.

The 28-year-old said that after wrapping up their work by the evening, the group usually enjoyed sports programmes on television while sitting at the local tea stalls or youth club.

He also provided some insight as to how this group's love for Brazil developed.



Moksedul added that they had bought the yellow and green t-shirts to display their support for Brazil at Tk 120 each from the Saidpur Railway Market and wore them to work everyday.

"It is mandatory for all of our group members to wear the t-shirts. If anybody fails to do it, he will be excluded from the group for the day," he added.

Not only are they fans of the team, but this correspondent found that they could fluently pronounce the names of stars such as Neymar and Coutinho.

One of the labourers, Abdul Kader, said that the dress code gave them extra energy and they could do additional work on 7-8 bighas of land and earn a total of six-eight thousand taka daily.

The money is shared equally and an amount is deposited to bear common expenses in the group, such as paying the bill at the tea stalls or lending money to members in times of need.

Even farm owners are keen to employ the group as they work in a jubilant mood, sometimes singing songs, and complete the work efficiently while creating a striking view for passers-by.

"We are poor and like to hide our sorrows by creating a cheerful and exciting situation," added Moksedul.

Chairman of Bangalipur union parishad Pronobesh Chandra Roy said that the Brazil-supporting day labourers were honest, hard working and sporting and had gained love and respect from everyone around them.

NATIONAL YOUTH SHOOTING Stiff competition on opening day

SPORTS REPORTER



In quest of finding new shooters for long-term training to materialise 'vision 2020', the Hamidur Rahman 2nd National Youth Shooting Championship got underway at the National Shooting Complex in Gulshan, with the participants competing neck-and-neck in all three events decided yesterday.

There were intense competition among gold and silver winners in all three events – 10m air pistol (boys), 10m air pistol (girls) and 10m air rifle (girls) before eventually the students of BKSP emerged on top in all three events.

Pias Hossain of BKSP faced stiff challenge from Rahim Mia of Army Shooting Association before winning the 10m air pistol gold with a score of 181 points, just one more than Rahim while Kawsar Ali of Pabna Rifles Club won the bronze with 159 points.

In the girls' 10m air pistol, Nilufa Yasmin of BKSP put behind her teammate Turing Dewang scoring 179 points, one more than Turing while Marzan Akter of Army Shooting Association had to be content with a bronze medal with 155 points.

In the girl's 10m air rifle event, Jui Chakma of BKSP won the gold with a score of 196.9 points while Amira Hamid of Gulshan Shooting Club and Mayeda Momtahina of Army grabbed silver and bronze medals with 195.6 and 177 points respectively.

"We have been trying to revive the pistol events as we haven't had good results at international level for some time. We have brought a foreign coach for pistol events in a bid to make the events popular among the shooters and we need time to revive it," Bangladesh Shooting Sports Federation's general secretary Intekhabul Hamid told reporters.

"We will start a training camp after the completion of youth championship as we have kept our sights on Tokyo Olympics. We have already selected two youth shooters for the long-term training and we will also pick eight shooters – four girls and as many boys – from this championship and train them to keep the pipeline active for the senior team," added Hamid.

BKSP make flying start

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Krira Shikkha Protisthan made a flying start in the Agrani Bank 26th National Youth Hockey Championship with a massive 8-0 win over Barisal at the Maulana Bhasani Hockey Stadium yesterday.

In the day's other matches, Chittagong Division thrashed Thakurgaon 5-1 while Tangail blanked Meherpur 4-0 in the knock-out tournament where some 38 districts, divisions and sports institutions are taking part.

Bayern sign Sule, Rudy

AFP, Berlin

Bayern Munich confirmed on Sunday they have signed Germany pair Niklas Sule and Sebastian Rudy from Hoffenheim for the 2017/18 season.

Rudy will join on a free transfer while Bayern's chairman Karl-Heinz Rummenigge said they paid a 'fair and serious' price for Sule.

AUSTRALIAN EDUCATION EXPO
LAKESHORE HOTEL, Gul-2
19th JANUARY | 10am-5pm
Register today
www.globalreach.in/bangladeshexpo