

SONY ESPN
FA Cup
Man City v Huddersfield
Live from 1:45am (Thursday)
SONY ESPN HD
La Liga
Celta Vigo v Espanyol
Live from 2:30am (Thursday)

SONY SIX
La Liga
Barcelona v Sporting Gijon
Live from 12:30am (Thursday)
Real Madrid v Las Palmas
Live from 2:30am (Thursday)

DAY'S EVENT
BANGLADESH CRICKET LEAGUE
(Four-Day Match, Day-4)
Time: 9:30am

BCB North Zone v Walton Central Zone
 Venue: Sylhet Int'l Cricket Stadium

Venue: Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium, Chittagong

Prime Bank South Zone v Islami Bank East Zone

SERENA SURPRISES STRANGERS

"The moral of the story? You never know when I could be coming to a tennis court near you!" That was how Serena Williams reflected upon a random encounter as she crashed a tennis match between two strangers while out on a walk. The world number one and arguably the greatest player of all time was taking a stroll around Dolores Park in San Francisco's Mission District when she thought of "asking these guys" if she could have a hit with them, "just to see their reaction". Well, it's fair to say that they were pretty stunned and delighted. The 23-time Grand Slam champion did not have trainers on, but proceeded to lace up her boots regardless, telling fans on the social-media platform snapchat, "don't do this at home". Her fiancé, Alexis Ohanian, filmed one of the men playing a very short rally with the Australian Open winner heard saying "Don't get tight!" to her bewildered opponent. —AGENCIES



QUICK SINGLES

The following are a few samples of stories that did not make the print edition. However, if they pique your interest, you can always read them online on The Daily Star website by simply scanning the QR codes listed below:

Wawrinka dumped out of Dubai

Holder Stan Wawrinka is sensationally dumped out of the Dubai Tennis Championships as his form collapsed following an early 4-1 lead.

Hamilton even faster in new Mercedes

Three-time Formula One world champion Lewis Hamilton continues his ominous form on day two of pre-season testing as he set the fastest time and most laps in the new Mercedes W08.

Federer fires in Dubai on return

Roger Federer shows few signs of rust after a month off following his Australian Open heroics in sending Benoit Paire packing at the Dubai Tennis Championships.

Kohli will be back 'bigger and stronger'

Mitchell Starc may have won the opening duel against Indian skipper Virat Kohli but the Australian fast bowler insists the battle has just begun.

Phelps frustrated by Rio doping fears

US swimming legend Michael Phelps has speaks of his frustration at the possibility rivals were using drugs at last year's Rio de Janeiro Olympics.

'Lion' Ibrahimovic basks in cup glory

Manchester United striker Zlatan Ibrahimovic has likens himself to a lion after his brace in the 3-1 League Cup final win over Southampton took his goal tally to 26.

I'm ready for Leicester job: Shakespeare

Leicester City caretaker manager Craig Shakespeare says he is ready to take on the role full-time after overseeing an impressive 3-1 win against Liverpool in his first game.

Mane in charge

SPORTS REPORTER



Udayan Mane played a five-under (67) yesterday to grab the solo lead of the BTL Open as the 40-lakh-rupee event moved into the final two rounds.

The 26-year-old from Bangalore exchanged six birdies for a single bogey to take the clubhouse lead by one stroke over compatriot Khalin Joshi while overnight leader Mohammad Sanju slipped to joint fifth position at four-under-par (140).

The top ten positions were occupied by Indian golfers, with Mithun Perera of Sri Lanka squeezing in, while the local golfers continued to falter at their home course of the Kurmitola Golf Club. Robin Miah was the best among the locals at 13th position, followed by Shakhawat Hossain Sohel, Badal Hossain and Sajib Ali at 19th position.

A total of 51 golfers -- 31 Indians, 19 Bangladeshis and Sri Lanka's Perera -- made the cut at five-over-par (149) for the final two rounds of the event.

The 26-year-old Udayan, playing his third season as a professional, had it all going for him on day two as he sank three birdie putts from a range of 10 to 15 feet and also made a couple of chip-putt birdies. The only blemish on his card was a bogey on the second where he missed an up and down.

Mane, the 2015 PGTI Emerging Player of the Year, said, "After a terrific rookie season in 2015 where I won two events, I think I expected a bit too much from myself in the following season. I did have a decent 2016 but not as per my expectations.

"I feel I'm carrying forward the good form from the last event in Hyderabad where I finished tied 11th despite being unwell on the last two days," added Udayan, who finished tied 10th at the Asian Tour's Bangladesh Open played at the same venue earlier this month.

Sohel of Bangladesh said the title race is still very much open as there are a number of golfers in contention after a



SELECTED SCORES		
1	Udayan Mane (IND)	-7 (137)
2	Khalin Joshi (IND)	-6 (138)
T3	Feroz Garewal (IND)	-5 (139)
T3	Harendra Gupta (IND)	-5 (139)
T5	Mohammad Sanju (IND)	-4 (140)
T5	Naman Dawar (IND)	-4 (140)
T5	Rashid Khan (IND)	-4 (140)
T13	Rabin Miah (BAN)	-1 (143)
T19	Sajib Ali (BAN)	Par (144)
T19	Shakhawat Sohel (BAN)	Par (144)

low-scoring second day. "It's hard to say at the moment who will win the title. I played par in both rounds because after missing cut in the Asian Tour earlier this month, I was very cautious with my game. I will play aggressive in the following rounds and hopefully will mount a title challenge," the 32-year-old golfer said.

China transfers hit new record

AFP, Beijing



Chinese clubs splashed a record 388 million euros (\$411 million) on footballers in the January-February transfer window despite an official crackdown on spending, with Oscar's heavyweight move to Shanghai SIPG leading the way.

In spite of moves to curb "irrational" expenditure, China's top tier beat last year's record of 345 million euros and outstripped the English Premier League's winter spending (259 million euros) for the second year in a row, according to industry website transfermarkt.com.

Chelsea midfielder Oscar's Asian-record, 60-million-euro move to Shanghai SIPG reportedly made him the world's second highest paid player -- behind Carlos Tevez, who joined city rivals Shanghai Shenhua.

Rumoured moves for Cristiano Ronaldo and Wayne Rooney failed to materialise but Axel Witsel and Alexandre Pato were among other big names to join the Chinese Super League, while Zhang Chengdong became China's most expensive player.

One of the biggest surprises was out-of-favour Watford striker Odion Ighalo's 23.3m euro move to Changchun Yatai, which made him the sixth biggest transfer in Super League history.

Oscar and Tevez moved before the Chinese Football Association announced a raft of cooling measures, including caps on transfer fees and wages and restricting match-day squads to three foreign players instead of four.

It seems to have stopped some mega-deals in their tracks, with Tianjin Quanjian's chairman saying the club had dropped bids for Diego Costa, Edinson Cavani, Radamel Falcao and Raul Jimenez as a result.

However, the new curbs didn't dry up spending completely with players continuing to cash in on China's football boom.

"We're still going to see high levels of spending even with the change in regulations, and this will continue," said Tom Elsdon of the Mailman Group, a sports marketing company.

"China is and will still pull big names, purely because of the salary on offer," he added.

Shanghai SIPG got the ball rolling in December when they broke the Asian transfer record by plucking Oscar from Chelsea, where he had been sidelined from the first team.

When Argentina's ex-Manchester United forward Tevez joined Shanghai Shenhua on a reported world-record salary of 38 million euros a season, it sparked speculation that four-time Ballon d'Or winner Ronaldo and record England goalscorer Rooney could follow. Newly promoted Tianjin Quanjian, coached by Fabio Cannavaro, splurged 20 million euros on midfielder Witsel from Zenit St Petersburg and 18 million euros on former Brazil forward Pato from Villareal.

Clubs such as Hebei China Fortune went for home-grown talent, making winger Zhang China's most expensive player -- and the seventh priciest in the Super League -- when he moved from Beijing Guoan for 20.4 million euros.

Hebei also spent 18 million euros on picking up midfielder Zhao Yuhao from Hangzhou Greentown.

China rocketed up to become the fifth biggest global spenders in football last year, according to a report last month from FIFA, up from 20th the year before.

Though only spending a third of the English Premier League's 1.3 billion euros in 2016, it is now comfortably outstripping footballing superpowers such as France and current European champions Portugal.

Shooters continue to frustrate

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladeshi shooters continued their sorry performance in the ISSF Shooting World Cup in New Delhi yesterday.

Bangladesh's Mohamad Ahmed and Anowar Hossain finished in 26th and 32nd positions respectively in the men's qualification round for 10m air pistol event. Ahmed scored a total of 569 points while Anowar's score was four points less. There were 35 participants in this event.

In the 50m rifle prone qualification, Shovon Chowdhury of Bangladesh finished last among 34 starters with an aggregate score of 588.4 points.

Hernandez given 31-day community service

AGENCIES, Madrid

Atletico Madrid defender Lucas Hernandez has been given 31 days of community service after being found guilty of a domestic violence offence -- with his former partner also given the same sentence for her role in the incident.

Lucas, 20, was arrested when police were called to his home at 2 a.m. on Feb. 3, and prosecutors asked the judge hearing the case to give him a seven-month jail sentence for assaulting his ex-partner Amelia de la Ossa Lorente. They also called for Lorente to be given a six-month sentence for having also used violence and damaging the footballer's sports car during the incident.

However judge Borja Vargues considered that both parties had equal guilt in the incident, and that no serious injuries were suffered by either. France under-21 international Hernandez was found guilty of a domestic violence offence, and Lorente was deemed guilty of an offence of violence within the family, and also fined €180 for the damage to the Nissan 300 ZX.

Both Hernandez and Lorente gave evidence in front of judge Vargues on Feb. 21, with reporters saying that the two versions of the events of the night in question differed considerably.

'Win was a reaction to bad press'

AFP, Leicester



Leicester City striker Jamie Vardy said his side's 3-1 victory over Liverpool on Monday had been a reaction to negative media reports over the dismissal of manager Claudio Ranieri.

Ranieri was sacked on Thursday, less than 10 months on from Leicester's 5,000-1 title triumph, after a run of five straight defeats plunged the club into a relegation battle.

Reports suggested Ranieri had lost the confidence of Leicester's players, but Vardy, who scored twice, said the criticism had been unjustified.

"We've come in for a lot of unfair stick with things that have been in the press, but you've seen that the lads wanted to react," Vardy told Sky Sports at the King Power Stadium.

"The performance did that and we want to do it consistently. I couldn't put my finger on why we haven't been doing that regularly.

"We've been working hard and it's just not been happening."

Vardy struck either side of a glorious Danny Drinkwater effort as Leicester ended a run of five straight league defeats to climb to 15th place in the table, two points above the bottom three.

"You can call it a reaction," Drinkwater said. "We've come in for a bit of stick."

Leicester's fans held banners and wore masks in support of Ranieri prior to the game and illuminated their smartphones during a standing ovation in the 65-year-old's honour in the 65th minute.

"I thought it was a lovely touch," said Leicester's caretaker manager Craig Shakespeare, Ranieri's former assistant.

"I thought they got the balance right. They got behind their own team from the word go, but it was a lovely touch in the 65th minute. The players commented about it after the game."

Many fans wore Ranieri face masks and several banners expressed thanks to the popular Italian, with one reading: "Thank you Ranieri for making our dreams come true!"

"Dilly ding, dilly dong/We're sad Claudio's gone," read one banner, a nod to the Ranieri catchphrase that became the slogan of last season's fairytale title tilt.

Another banner held up by a female fan laid the blame for Ranieri's departure partly at the players' door: "RANIERI!!! YOUR PLAYERS AND OWNERS LET YOU DOWN!!!"

Shakespeare wrote in the match programme that press reports of a player rebellion against Ranieri were "unfair" and "unfounded".

Vice-chairman Aiyawatt Srivaddhanaprabha wrote that the players had "supported Claudio fiercely", but accepted some supporters had been left "angry" by the club's decision to sack him.



Jamie Vardy (L) jumps for joy after scoring Leicester City's first Premier League goal of 2017 as he opened the scoring against Liverpool at the King Power Stadium on Monday.

PHOTO: AFP

Goetze sidelined indefinitely

AFP, Berlin



Borussia Dortmund will be without Mario Goetze for the foreseeable future after a medical check revealed a metabolism disorder, the latest set-back for Germany's World Cup hero.

"I am in the process of getting treatment and I will do everything I can to get back into training as quickly as possible to help my team achieve our common goals," Goetze told the club website on Monday.

The 24-year-old scored in extra-time of the 2014 World Cup final to seal a 1-0 win over Argentina.

But this season he has endured a difficult return to Dortmund, struggling with form and injuries, following three unhappy years at Bayern Munich spent mainly on the bench.

It cost Dortmund 22 million euros (\$23m) to buy Goetze back from Bayern, having been forced to sell him in 2013 for 37 million euros when the Bavarians triggered a release clause in his contract.

He has not played at all this month after picking up a leg injury and was dropped for Dortmund's home Bundesliga win over second-placed RB Leipzig at the start of February because of poor form.

Zidane backs Rodriguez

AFP, Madrid

Real Madrid boss Zinedine Zidane hopes Jese Rodriguez rediscovers the form that once made him the star of Madrid's academy, but only after his return to the Santiago Bernabeu with Las Palmas on Wednesday.

Jese left Madrid for French champions Paris Saint-Germain on a five-year deal in August for a reported 25 million euros (\$26.8 million).

However, he scored just twice in 14 appearances and quickly fell down the pecking order for PSG's Spanish coach Unai Emery before joining home town club Las Palmas on loan in January.

"I like him a lot as a player and a person, and I hope that from Thursday it goes well for him at Las Palmas," Zidane said on Tuesday.

When the Canary Islanders pushed the boat out to bring the 24-year-old forward back to La Liga at the end of January, qualifying for Europe was the aim.



BGMEA president Siddiqur Rahman speaks during a press conference at the organisation's headquarters in Dhaka yesterday regarding the BGMEA Cup 2017 football tournament. The seven-a-side football tournament, featuring teams from 16 garments companies of the country, will kick off at the International Turkish Hope School tomorrow and will be held on weekends, up to March 24 when the final will be held at the Army Stadium. PHOTO: COLLECTED