

**CHANNEL 9 AND TEN 3**  
Sri Lanka v Bangladesh  
Second T20I  
Live From 7:30pm  
**SONY ESPN**  
Indian Premier League  
Pune v Mumbai  
Live from 8:30pm

**SONY SIX**  
La Liga  
Valencia v Celta Vigo  
Live from 1:00am (Friday)

## BHF in a quandary over national championship

SPORTS REPORTER

Holding the National Hockey Championship with participation of district and services teams hangs in the balance as the Bangladesh Hockey Federation (BHF) is still undecided whether to allow some top national players to take part in a foreign league by halting the championship which is supposed to start on April 27.

Even though the national team had quite a few international engagements in recent times, most of the players of the team virtually sat idle at domestic circuit for nearly a year since the completion of the Dhaka Premier League last year.

The players were expected to get an opportunity to play in this event after the BHF executive committee last month decided to hold the championship in a new format which will allow each team to play more matches than before. However, whether those national players will eventually have that opportunity hangs in the balance, especially after Tuesday's meeting among the BHF selection committee, head coach Oliver Kurtz and the BHF president.

It has been learnt that Kurtz wants the players to play in German leagues instead of the national championship while most of the BHF members who attended the meeting want to stick to the decision of holding the

league from this month.

"We sat with the BHF president to discuss about the preparation of the national team for the Asia Cup. Coach Kurtz is interested to take the players to Germany in a bid to improve their standard," BHF general secretary Abdus Sadeque said after the meeting. "Now holding the national championship depends on the decision of the BHF president even though the executive committee had earlier decided to hold it from April 27."

Sadeque is clearly against the idea of sending the players to Germany by halting the championship and he is waiting for a final decision from the BHF president.

"FIH high profile coach Tahir Zaman, who recently conducted a coaching course in Bangladesh, told us that playing in second and third divisions in Germany would not help the Bangladesh players. We think the national players should play the national championship in which some 400 to 500 players will get the opportunity to show their worth."

Asked whether it is impossible to hold the national championship without the players interested to play in Germany, Sadeque said, "If we hold the national championship starting this month, then the services teams will not permit their players [nearly 14 players of Bangladesh Navy team are supposed to play in German leagues] to go aboard, which means Kurtz's plan has to be scrapped."



Sunrisers Hyderabad batsman Yuvraj Singh guides one to the third man during his 62-run knock in the opening match of the Indian Premier League against Royal Challengers Bangalore at the Rajiv Gandhi International Cricket Stadium yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

### 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:

#### Sri Lanka fined for slow over-rate against Bangladesh

Sri Lanka has been fined for maintaining a slow over-rate against Bangladesh during the first Twenty20 International in Colombo on Tuesday.



#### Mercedes' Wolff backs Hamilton revenge at Chinese Grand Prix

Mercedes team boss Toto Wolff has backed Lewis Hamilton to exact swift revenge at Sunday's Chinese Grand Prix after a chastening defeat in Formula One's season opener in Australia.



#### Chape take Supercup lead as fans remember air crash

Chapeoense beat Atletico Nacional 2-1 in the first leg of their South American Supercup final on Tuesday as the game was marked by memorials to those killed in an air crash before the teams' scheduled Copa Sudamericana final last November.



#### 'Money does not rule', Ceferin tells UEFA

UEFA president Aleksander Ceferin reiterated to Europe's top clubs on Wednesday that he would never allow the creation of a closed Super League, telling them in a speech that "money does not rule."



#### Missing Miami title defence was refreshing

Sitting out last week's Miami Open was rejuvenating for Novak Djokovic although it meant missing the chance to win a record seventh title in the tournament, Serbia's world number two said on Tuesday.



## I don't care about criticism: Messi

AGENCIES, Madrid



Breaking his silence on his international suspension for the first time, Lionel Messi claimed that he does not care about what critics have to say about him.

The Barcelona ace helped his side to a victory over Chile in a World Cup qualifier but a tirade against officials in that game saw him hit with a four-game suspension and miss their defeat to Bolivia.

That resulted in him being singled out for criticism by some in his homeland but Messi was not fazed by it and reiterated his commitment to his country.

"I understand the people who always want us to win and demand that we deliver a trophy and those of us who play for the national team want to win a title too," Messi told Esquire magazine. "The criticism I receive isn't something I care about because I know about the things that happened."

In supporting his argument, Messi also revealed that the success he enjoyed with his country at the Beijing Olympic Games in 2008 is the title he most treasures.

"That [2008 Olympic] is the win that I value the most because it is a tournament that you may only play in once in your life and involves many athletes from different disciplines," he added.

Messi also paid tribute to Pep Guardiola for the impact he had upon his career during his time at the Camp Nou and revealed the most important things in his life in conclusion.

"For myself and my teammates, it is a source of great pride that we were part of that Barcelona team who won everything," he said. "Guardiola found the balance, while also managing to get the best of each of us and our qualities."

"The most essential things for me in my life are my children and my family. Being with them is something I love."



## Hyderabad trump Bangalore

STAR SPORT DESK

Yuvraj Singh scored a rollicking 62 as defending champions Sunrisers Hyderabad trumped Royal Challengers Bangalore by 35 runs in the opening match of the Indian Premier League (IPL) in Hyderabad yesterday.

The veteran Indian batsman smashed seven fours and three massive sixes in his 27-ball stay to power the champions to an imposing total of 207.

The Bangalore reply got off to a brisk start with Chris Gayle (32) and Mandeep Singh (24) forging a 50-run partnership within six overs, but the fall of both openers in quick succession derailed the chase.

Sunrisers, who were missing paceman Mustafizur Rahman due to his international commitments, saw new recruit Rashid Khan stepping up to the task. The Afghanistan leg-spinner took two crucial wickets as Bangalore were bowled out for 172 in 19.4 overs.

**SCORES IN BRIEF**  
**SUNRISERS HYDERABAD:** 207 for 4 (Yuvraj 62, Henriques 52; Chahal 1-22)

**ROYAL CHALLENGERS BANGALORE:** 172 all out in 19.4 overs (Gayle 32, Jadhav 31; Rashid 2-36)

**Result:** Hyderabad won by 35 runs.

## Ibra rescues MU

AFP, London



Zlatan Ibrahimovic marked his return from suspension with a 94th-minute penalty to earn Manchester United a 1-1 draw against Everton at Old Trafford on Tuesday.

A deliberate handball by Ashley Williams, who was sent off, allowed Ibrahimovic to cancel out Phil Jagielka's opener and extend United's unbeaten run in the Premier League to 20 matches.

But it remained an unwelcome result for Jose Mourinho's side, who have now drawn nine games at home this season and trail fourth-place Manchester City by four points.

"The performance from a football point of view was not good, but I am very pleased with the effort," said Mourinho, whose team had drawn 0-0 at home to West Bromwich Albion on Saturday.

"It is an amazing run of 20 matches unbeaten, but too many draws at home. "We don't kill off enough opponents and at the end of this season I think we will be punished by that."

Elsewhere, Leicester City's resurgence under Craig Shakespeare continued as they beat bottom club Sunderland 2-0 to record a sixth successive win since the dismissal of manager Claudio Ranieri.

Ibrahimovic's last-gasp spot-kick -- his 27th goal of the season -- meant United held on to fifth place, three points above Arsenal and Everton having played a game more than the former.

But the Europa League looks increasingly like their best hope of securing a return to the Champions League next season.

They face Belgian side Anderlecht in a two-legged quarterfinal later this month, with the winners of the competition assured of a place at Europe's top table.

United manager Mourinho welcomed top scorer Ibrahimovic and Ander Herrera back

from suspension, while Paul Pogba returned to the bench following a hamstring injury.

His side fell behind in the 22nd minute when Williams flicked on Kevin Mirallas's right-wing corner and centre-back Jagielka held off Marcos Rojo to poke a volley between David de Gea's legs.

Everton goalkeeper Joel Robles, much criticised after his side's 3-1 derby loss at Liverpool, produced flying saves to repel a Daley Blind free-kick and a rasping Herrera drive.

Pogba came on at half-time and headed against the bar from an Ashley Young free-kick, while Ibrahimovic had a 71st-minute header chalked off for a marginal offside.

"With the VAR (video assistant referee), we win this game 2-1 because it's not an offside," Mourinho told BT Sport.

But in the fourth minute of injury time, Williams was penalised for parrying a shot from substitute Luke Shaw -- brought in from the cold by Mourinho -- and Ibrahimovic dispatched the penalty.

"It was really disappointing not to get the win," Everton manager Ronald Koeman told BBC Sport.

"The penalty was the right decision, but it was really hard to take."

Champions Leicester are now 10th, a healthy nine points above the bottom three, after sinking Sunderland to record a fifth league win in a row.

Substitute Islam Slimani opened the scoring with a 69th-minute header before the revitalised Jamie Vardy smashed in his sixth goal in seven games from Marc Albrighton's pass.

Defeat completed a miserable few days for Sunderland manager David Moyes, who had to apologise after being caught on camera threatening to "slap" a female television reporter.

"I'm just grateful for the club's support," Moyes said. "As far as I'm concerned the matter's finished."

## Table tennis can't find sponsors

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Table Tennis Federation (BTTF) is having trouble roping in a sponsor for the national team which is scheduled to leave tomorrow for China to take part in the Asian Table Tennis Championship starting from April 9.

"We talked to a couple of sponsors who all had but agreed to sponsor the national team, but they eventually pulled back even though I don't know the reason. As a general secretary I have taken the responsibility to send the team to China," said BTTF general secretary Hasun Munir yesterday adding that he would personally bear all the expenses of the team if he fails to manage any sponsor.

The national table team comprises of three male and three female players as well as three officials.

It is the second successive time that the national team is taking part in the Asian Championship after failing to participate in the 2011 and 2013 editions.

The BTTF did not arrange any training camp for the team ahead of the championship and Munir explained that the selected players' engagement with their respective club sides was one of the reasons behind not holding the camp.

## Atletico edge Sociedad

AFP, Madrid



Atletico Madrid's fine form continued as Filipe Luis scored the winner in a 1-0 win over Real Sociedad to close to within seven points of La Liga leaders Real Madrid on Tuesday.

Luis had scored his first goal of the season in Saturday's 2-0 win at Malaga and netted for the second consecutive game for the first time in his career by rounding off a fine team move on 28 minutes.

Fernando Torres, Yannick Carrasco and Angel Correa all passed up chances to add to Atletico's advantage, but they held on to move three points clear of Sevilla in the battle for third.

Real Madrid still have two games in hand on Atletico, but the two face each other in the Madrid derby on Saturday.

Atletico will travel to the Santiago Bernabeu brimming with confidence after a fifth straight La Liga win.

"Other than the opening 15 minutes when they dominated the ball, we imposed our tempo, pressed well high up the pitch and created chances," said Atletico boss Diego Simeone.



Atletico Madrid defender Filipe Luis celebrates his all-important goal against Real Sociedad during their La Liga match at the Vicente Calderon Stadium on Tuesday.

PHOTO: AFP

"It is a very important win."

Antoine Griezmann came close twice in quick succession against his former club as his first effort was deflected behind before Ceronimo Rulli got down well to save low to his right.

The French international was also involved in the only goal as Luis exchanged passes with he and Torres before slotting home.

Torres then somehow failed to double Atletico's lead as he turned Carrasco's low cross onto the post with the goal gaping an then fired the rebound into the side-netting.

Carrasco was also then wasteful as he shot too close to Rulli after an unselfish cutback by Griezmann.

Griezmann was replaced by Angel Correa with 19 minutes remaining.

## Lazio reach Italian Cup final

AFP, Rome

Lazio reached the Italian Cup final on Tuesday despite losing 3-2 in the second leg to bitter city rivals Roma, advancing 4-2 on aggregate.

A double from Egyptian Mohamed Salah on 66 and 90 minutes added to Stephan El Shaarawy's goal two minutes before the break to give Roma victory on the night.

But Lazio scored in either half through Serbian midfielder Sergej Milinkovic-Savic (37) and Italian forward Ciro Immobile (56) to book a third final in five years after beating Roma in 2013 for the title and losing to Juventus two years ago.

The six-time winners will meet either Napoli or Juventus in the final with the Turin giants leading 3-1 after the first leg.

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