

What to WATCH

SONY SIX
Pakistan v Sri Lanka
2nd Test, Day-4
Live from 4:00pm

TEN 1
FIFA World Cup Qualifiers
Wales v Republic of Ireland
Live from 1:00am (Tuesday)

TEN 2
FIFA World Cup Qualifiers
Israel v Spain
Live from 1:00am (Tuesday)

DAY'S EVENT

National Cricket League
5-Day Match
Day-4
Time: 9:30am

Khulna v Rangpur
Venue: SKS, Rajshahi
Dhaka v Barisal
Venue: SANS, Khulna

Dhaka Metro v Chittagong
Venue: ZACS, Chittagong
Rajshahi v Sylhet
Venue: SCS, Bogra

Bangladesh Premier League
Sheikh Jamal v Abahani
Time: 6:45pm
Venue: BNS



Bangladesh skipper Rasel Mahmud Jimmy manoeuvres the ball past a Japan defender as the other players look on during a warm-up match ahead of the Asia Cup at the Maulana Bhasani Hockey Stadium yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

DICK EATS HIS WORDS

Netherlands manager Dick Advocaat was left with egg on his face in the aftermath of Sweden's 8-0 win over Luxembourg on Saturday. The Dutch manager, whose side won 3-1 against Belarus but are virtually out of the running for qualification, had been asked by a prophetic reporter what he would have done had Sweden won 'like 8-0 or something'. That question visibly perturbed the Dutchman, who responded by saying: "They won't win 8-0. What a stupid question! 8-0? No, I don't believe that." Now, with Sweden's massive result, the Dutch will need to score at least seven goals, without conceding any in their last group match against the Swedes, to have a chance of progressing as one of the best runners-up. --AGENCIES



No hope left, says dejected Robben

AGENCIES, Paris

The Netherlands' hopes of qualifying for the World Cup are hanging by a thread despite a 3-1 win in Belarus, as group-mates Sweden racked up an incredible 8-0 win over Luxembourg to take firm grip of the second spot.

The Dutch needed a victory to keep alive any hopes of a top-two finish, but despite a third goal in two games from Brighton and Hove Albion midfielder Davy Propper, Belarus equalised through Maksim Volodjko.

Captain Arjen Robben came to his side's rescue by netting a penalty with only six minutes remaining, before Memphis Depay added some gloss in injury-time.

The Netherlands are looking to avoid failing to qualify for successive major tournaments for the first time since 1986, having also missed out on Euro 2016.

But they now face a near impossible task, as Sweden's win, with forward Marcus Berg scoring four goals, extended their advantage over Dick Advocaat's men on goal difference to 12.

Trailing the Scandinavians by three points, only a massive victory (at least 7-0) over Sweden in Amsterdam next week will save the three-time World Cup runners-up.

And Robben minced no words after the game, admitting that his side's chances of progression were over because the necessary result 'isn't going to happen'.

"This hurts. It is unfortunately part of the sport," Robben told ONS. "After Sweden's result you can't do anything else other than play with your chest out, but an 8-0 win in Belarus [was not going to] happen. And a 7-0 win at home to Sweden isn't going to happen."

Meanwhile Blaise Matuidi's early goal saw off Bulgaria 1-0 and kept France top of European World Cup qualifying Group A, putting them on the brink of qualification.

France took the lead in the third minute as Matuidi curled home a from a tight angle.

Bulgaria held their own though, as they looked to repeat the famous win over France that sent them to the 1994 World Cup, but Didier Deschamps's side closed out the vital win, and three points at home to Belarus on



Netherlands captain Arjen Robben leads his dejected troops off the field after their World Cup qualifier against Belarus, which the Dutch won 3-1. However, Sweden's 8-0 win left the Oranje with slim prospects of advancing to football's showcase event. PHOTO: REUTERS

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:

Man Utd's Fellaini suffers knee injury ahead of Liverpool clash

Manchester United's midfielder injury concerns deepened when in-form Belgian Marouane Fellaini picked up a knee injury on international duty which will keep him away from the field for a couple of weeks.

Pirlo announces retirement
Legendary Italian midfielder Andrea Pirlo has announced that he will retire once his contract with New York City FC runs out in December.

Hosts warm up well

SPORTS REPORTER

Hosts Bangladesh should enter the Hero Asia Cup hockey tournament with a bit of self-belief after notching up a 2-1 win over Japan in a warm-up match at the Maulana Bhasani Hockey Stadium yesterday.

Milon Hossain and Ashraful Islam struck one goal apiece before a youthful Japan pulled one goal back in the 50-minute practice match where the Japanese looked relaxed yet dominated the game after having arrived here in the early hours of Sunday.

Interestingly, Japan, after conceding the second goal, played the last 20 minutes without their goalkeeper, yet managed to pull one goal back by converting a penalty corner. Bangladesh never beat Japan in competitive matches in the recent past even though they had held Japan to a draw in the 1985 Asia Cup in Dhaka.

Beating Japan in the practice match is something Bangladesh can take

inspiration from to show their worth in the eight-team tournament starting from Wednesday.

Though Japan dominated the game with better ball possession, Bangladesh also showed their fighting spirit and went on attacks collectively and came down together to defend. However, there was an apparent lack of cohesion in the midfield, thanks to the absence of veteran Kamruzzaman Rana, who is ill.

"Even though we won the match, we could not play according to our plan. Our strategy was to have better ball possession but the boys failed to do it. Technically, Japan shuffle their players upfront that leaves defenders in a puzzle and the boys could not mark them properly," coach Mahbub Harun said analysing the performance.

"Positive things were that the boys showed their mental strength not to lose the match before the start. I think the boys overcame the fear and showed their fighting attitude throughout the two halves," said

Mahbub.

"We will be facing Pakistan in the first match. If we could have had better ball possession in the practice match, we could have played the first match confidently. However, we will work on this for the next two days," continued the former national player.

Harun's counterpart Siegfried Aikman was not bothered about the result and believed his charges would be different in competitive matches. "We had eight days of preparation. We have selected a young team keeping an eye on the 2020 Tokyo Olympics. Few players are 28 years old, but most of the players are 20 to 21 who just finished university. Some of the players have no experience," said Aikman, who took charge of the team in March for the second time.

"We want to dominate with possession and we also want to get results. Today we dominated the game but did not get the result which is something we have to work on," Aikman opined.

'Do BD want to do well away?' Chittagong Abahani held again

South Africa's highest Test wicket-taker and a former Test captain, Shaun Pollock has watched Bangladesh's dismal performance from up in the commentary box. On the third and what turned out to be the final day, he was generous enough to give time to a group of journalists to give some valuable and thought-provoking insights on Bangladesh cricket after a tough series.

Q: How would you evaluate Bangladesh's performance in this series?

Shaun Pollock (SP): It was disappointing. These are not normal South African wickets. Potchefstroom or here are probably the two flattest and easiest wickets to bat on. If we go to Bangladesh or India and play wickets that don't turn, we would find that easy. These don't really bounce and don't really have pace. I just feel they need to take it to the next level when they tour. As I said, at home they are very good, but when they tour -- in ODIs or T20s they are good and competitive -- but in the Test arena I was expecting them to be a stronger unit away.

Q: You were one of the great bowlers on Test cricket? How would you judge the Bangladesh bowlers on these wickets?

SP: I think it's challenging for them. They don't get a chance to bowl much. If you watch the Test matches in Bangladesh, they bowl five overs with the new ball and if it's reversing they'll bowl. And they bowl a lot of cutters. In South Africa, it's more about consistently hitting line and length. I like the Fizz [Mustafizur Rahman]. I have always enjoyed his bowling. He has got a lot of skills. I think they need to do some work on getting his seam position right, to shape it back in to the right-handers. Rubel Hossain, he is a skiddy customer. They have a lot to learn but they don't often get relied on.

Q: Have you seen a lack of awareness in longer-

cricket they play. The sustained build-up of pressure like your coach, Courtney Walsh, used to do, those aren't things the young guys like to buy into anymore. Maybe they are a touch impatient.

Q: You were also a good batsman. How you rate the Bangladesh batsmen in this series? Disappointed the way they batted on these pitches?

SP: I don't know what preparation went on. They played one practice match, probably they needed to play two or three. When we went to face West Indies for example, against [Curtly] Ambrose and Walsh, we used to practice against a lot of tennis ball serving and learned how to duck and weave. I think your guys, they are not so tall like us, so they end up trying to play a lot of deliveries and that is what causes them trouble. You see a lot of shots balloons up. You have to learn the art of dropping the hands, and leaving the ball.

played nicely one innings. The problem is you need four guys performing like that. And that must be a frustration for Bangladesh. Do they want to play great cricket away from home? I am not sure. Maybe that's not an objective for them. Maybe they want to play well at home compete in ODIs away.

Q: Do you see a lack of hunger from Bangladesh about Test cricket?

SP: I won't say that, I'm saying about the objective. You come and play in South Africa or Australia once every four or five years. In general, there are lots of

subcontinent tours or you go to the West Indies. All those are similar surfaces. Is it worthwhile putting time and effort into developing players able to play in these conditions? Or just come here and see what happens and try your best and focus on performing well at home.

Q: Your take on Mushfiqur Rahim's decision to field in both Tests?

SP: I would have batted first. But if he can bowl first in Potch, then he'll definitely bowl first in Bloem (smiles).



[Liton] D a s played well on Saturday. Mominul [Haque] and Mah m u d u l l a h

version bowling?

SP: It's not a problem that only Bangladesh have. It's a problem for a lot of teams because of the amount of one-day

SPORTS REPORTER



Chittagong Abahani dropped points for the second time but kept their lead in the Bangladesh Premier League after playing out a goalless draw against Saif Sporting Club at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

Despite two draws, last edition's runners-up Chittagong Abahani sit atop the 12-team table with 26 points from 10 matches while Saif SC remain fourth with five draws -- four in a row -- having 19 points from 10 outings.

The port city side came into the match on a strong position with three successive wins over Sheikh Jamal, Brothers Union and Mukitjoddha Sangsad but they put on a below-par performance against Saif SC, a team which is sponsored by Chittagong Abahani's football committee chairman.

However, it was Chittagong Abahani

who created the first chance of the match in the 18th minute when Zahid Hossain released the ball for striking duo Towhidul Alam Sabuj and Afeez Oladipo, but both of them tried to capitalise on the opportunity and the chance went wobbling, much to the relief of Saif SC goalkeeper Pappu Hossain.

Saif SC later controlled the midfield and Matin Mia darted into the box from the right with goalkeeper Ashraful Islam to beat, but the U-19 team player floated the ball over the crosspiece in the 38th minute.

One minute from the break, Chittagong Abahani all but broke the deadlock when Zahid curled in a corner-kick but Pappu thwarted it coming out of his line.

After resumption, Saif established their control on the game and created at least three chances to score but they either squandered those or Abahani goalkeeper Ashraful foiled the

attempts to keep his sheet clean for the fifth successive time.

Saif SC winger Jewel Rana and Chittagong Abahani midfielder Masuk Mia collided inside the box over the control of the ball which went to unmarked Colombian striker Valencia Olaya, who let loose a powerful shot but was incredibly denied by Chittagong Abahani goalkeeper Ashraful in the 76th minute.

It was again Saif SC who saw a header from Valencia go narrowly wide in the 85th minute and three minutes later, the Colombian raced into the box to muster a curling shot to the far post but he was again denied by Ashraful.

Saif SC coach Ryan Northmore and team leader Kim Tyrone Grant were sent off in the dying moments by referee Jalaluddin, who later booked two more players of Saif SC following arguments with him after the final whistle.

Ghana appeal for rematch

AFP, Accra

Ghana have filed a protest with FIFA after their goalless draw with Uganda saw them crash out of the race to qualify for next year's World Cup finals.

The Black Stars -- third in Group E going into the match -- needed a win to keep their hopes alive of making the finals in Russia. But they had a stoppage-time goal disallowed just before the final whistle.

The Ghana Football Association said it had written to FIFA about the performance of the referee and his assistants.

"Mr Bennett and assistants denied Ghana a perfect goal in the 93rd minute with television replays showing that it was a perfect goal."

95th minute miracle for Costa Rica

AFP, San Jose



Kendall Watson's header deep into injury time gave Costa Rica a 1-1 draw with Honduras on Saturday and a berth in the 2018 World Cup in Russia.

Eddie Hernandez had headed Honduras ahead in the 66th minute, and it appeared that Costa Rica would have to put their Russia plans on hold.

But five minutes into stoppage time, Watson rose in the center of the area to head in Bryan Ruiz's cross and spark joyful celebrations at the National Stadium in San Jose, where the match was postponed from Friday due to the effects of Hurricane Nate.

Costa Rica had a golden chance to take the lead in the 60th minute. Honduran goalkeeper Donis Escobar had pushed a shot back into the middle of the area only for Marcos Urena to fire over the empty net. Six minutes later, Romell Quioto sprinted

down the wing and crossed into the box where Hernandez connected with a thundering header to put the visitors in front.

Costa Rica, with 16 points, joined Mexico (21) in advancing from the North and Central America and Caribbean (CONCACAF) region with three final matches to play on Tuesday.

Three CONCACAF teams advance directly to the finals in Russia with a fourth to play off against either Syria or Australia for a berth.

The United States moved into third place on 12 points on Friday with a 4-0 romp over Panama. Panama are on 10 points in fourth and have the advantage on goal difference over Honduras, also on 10.

CONCACAF's six-nation final round of qualifying concludes on Tuesday. Costa Rica will be playing in their fifth World Cup finals. They were quarter-finalists in Brazil in 2014 and reached the knockout stage in Italy in 1990. The Ticos also played in 2002 and 2006.