

What to WATCH

STAR SPORTS 1
India v Australia
2nd T20
Live from 7:30pm
SONY SIX
Pakistan v Sri Lanka
2nd Test, Day-5

Live from 4:00pm
TEN 1
FIFA World Cup Qualifiers
Netherlands v Sweden
Live from 1:00am (Wednesday)
TEN 2
FIFA World Cup Qualifiers

Israel v Spain
Live from 1:00am (Wednesday)
TEN 3
FIFA World Cup Qualifiers
Ecuador v Argentina
Live from 5:30am (Wednesday)

DAY'S EVENT

Bangladesh Premier League
Sk Russel v Rahmatganj
Time: 4:30pm

Mohammedan v Muktijoddha
Time: 6:45pm
Venue: BNS

'WE'RE GENETICALLY BEHIND'

Gordon Strachan bemoaned Scotland's genetic make-up after his side lost out on a World Cup playoff on goal difference following a 2-2 draw in Slovenia on Sunday. Strachan also refused to discuss his own future after Scotland missed out on second place in Group F to Slovakia, who beat Malta 3-0. The side were up against bigger opponents and Strachan claimed that had taken its toll, at the Stožice Stadium in Ljubljana and elsewhere. "Genetically we are behind," he said. "In the last campaign we were the second smallest, apart from Spain. We had to pick a team to combat the height and strength at set-plays. Genetically we have to work at things, maybe we get big women and men together and see what we can do. But it is a problem for us because we have to fight harder for every ball and jump higher than anyone else," Strachan continued. "Physically we have a problem. We seem to be able to battle it and get through just with sheer determination and skill and work-rate." —AGENCIES



Different goal for each team

SPORTS REPORTER

The stage for the 10th Asia Cup hockey tournament is all set as the eight teams begin their fight for the title of the showcase event of Asian hockey, beginning in Dhaka on Wednesday, being held in Bangladesh for the second time after a gap of 32 years.

South Korea, India and Pakistan have shared all the nine previous trophies among them and each of the nine finals so far have featured no other teams but these three. This time too, these three teams are the major title contenders for this event, which will also offer a place for next year's World Cup to be held in India.

India are confirmed a spot as the World Cup host nation while Malaysia and Pakistan have also got tickets for the 16-team tournament after having finished fifth and seventh in the Hockey World League (HWL) semifinal round in London.

Apart from those three teams, four-time Asia Cup champions South Korea intend to lift the title for a third consecutive time as well as qualify for the World Cup while teams like Japan, China, hosts Bangladesh and Oman want to show their best in the tournament.

All the teams' captains appeared at an official press conference at the Pan Pacific Sonaragon Hotel yesterday to brief the media about their preparations and targets for the tournament.



Captains of the eight sides pose with the Hero Asia Cup trophy during a pre-tournament press conference at the Pan Pacific Sonaragon Hotel yesterday. The showcase event of Asian Hockey gets underway in Dhaka tomorrow.

PHOTO: STAR

"Everyone wants to win the tournament but it is modern hockey and anything can happen as all the teams have come here with good preparation. We can't underestimate any opponent," said India captain Manpreet Singh, whose side last lifted the trophy in 2007 and finished sixth in the recent HWL semifinal round.

India will begin their campaign against Japan and will go on to meet their bitter rivals Pakistan on October 15.

The Pakistan captain Mohammad Irfan is also hopeful about doing well in the tournament even though the three-time champions could not produce good results in the HWL semifinal round.

"There was disappointment regarding our performance in the last competition as our results were poor in the World Cup qualifiers. However, some key players returned to the squad along with 3 to 4 junior players. Everyone is

ready to perform well," said Irfan, who played for Abahani in the Bangladesh Premier League last season.

Though South Korea are the most coveted side in the tournament, they have been going through a bad patch after finishing ninth in the HWL semifinals. However, they are determined to ensure their hat-trick title as well as qualification for the World Cup.

"Korea came here to become champions and qualify for the

Do-or-die for Argentina

AFP, Montevideo

The once unfathomable prospect of a World Cup without Lionel Messi and Argentina could become reality on Tuesday as South America's thrilling 2018 qualification battle reaches its climax.

Two years after Argentina kicked off their troubled campaign with a 2-0 defeat at home to Ecuador, Jorge Sampaoli's side travel to Quito to face La Tri once more with their hopes hanging precariously.

The two-time World Cup winners head into the final round of games in sixth place overall, outside the top four positions which grant automatic qualification and trailing fifth-placed Peru, who occupy the playoff spot, on goal difference.

Yet with only two points separating third-placed Chile (26 points) with seventh-placed Paraguay (24), any number of permutations are possible.

Argentina can simplify the equation for their fans, however, if they manage to take all three points. A victory would guarantee they finish no worse than fifth place, putting them into a two-legged play-off against New Zealand they would be expected to win.

But achieving victory in the thin air of Quito, which is 2,850 metres (9,350 feet) above sea level, may be easier said than done.

The Argentinians have an abysmal record in away games against Ecuador, with their last victory in Quito coming in 2001.

Since then in World Cup qualifying games, they have been beaten twice, in 2005 and 2009, before scraping a 1-1 draw in 2013.

Moreover, Argentina face their moment of truth after a series of uninspiring performances that has left the rest of the footballing world scratching its head at how a squad bristling with so much attacking talent has found scoring so difficult.

Despite being able to call upon Messi, Sergio Aguero, Gonzalo Higuain, Paulo Dybala, Mauro Icardi and Angel Di Maria throughout the campaign, Argentina have only scored 16 times in 17 games.

Hosts lose 2nd warm-up

SPORTS REPORTER

Following a 2-1 win over Japan, Bangladesh yesterday suffered a 0-2 defeat to South Korea in their second practice matches ahead of the 10th Asia Cup, which begins tomorrow.

The 30-minute game was played under the floodlights.

Despite the defeat, Bangladesh coach Mahbub Harun was satisfied as his charges held good possession in this match ahead their opening match against Pakistan.

"We had concentrated on having good possession rather than trying to win the match and I am happy that the boys did it well and they hardly made mistakes in this game," Harun told reporters.

Murshedy helps sailing Monu

SPORTS REPORTER

Abdus Salam Murshedy, senior vice-president of Bangladesh Football Federation and managing director of Envoy Group, came forward to help his once Mohammedan teammate and former national forward Mizanur Rahman Monu, who is suffering from liver complications.

Murshedy yesterday handed over Tk 2 lakh to his former teammate, who has undergone two surgeries already.

Murshedy and Monu played together for Mohammedan to win the Dhaka Premier League in 1986. Monu played the following two seasons for Mohammedan when Murshedy was the manager.

Sk Jamal hold Abahani

SPORTS REPORTER

Holders Abahani conceded a late equaliser in a 1-1 draw against Sheikh Jamal DC in their Bangladesh Premier League encounter at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

Nabib Newas Jibon had provided a deserved lead to Abahani with a header in the 57th minute, but substitute Zahed Parvez Chowdhury scored late three minutes into stoppage time to help Sheikh Jamal earn a share of the spoils.

With third draws in 10 outings, both sides remained in joint second position with 21 points each, five behind league leaders Chittagong Abahani.

Following the demise of Abahani's long-serving assistant coach Amal Sen, the boys in Sky Blues turned out like a determined outfit and they looked good to extend their winning streak to four matches by creating lot of chances before breaking the deadlock. However, they failed to hold the lead due to some shaky performance in the rest of the second half.

Jibon twice came close to giving Abahani the lead but was denied brilliantly on both

occasions by Sheikh Jamal goalkeeper Mitul Hasan before Rubel Mia rattled the Sheikh Jamal crossbar in the stoppage time of the first half.

After resumption, Abahani came out strongly to build up a nice attack from the left flank, with Jibon playing one-two with left-back Wali Faisal before taking the right position inside the box and nodding in Wali's cross home in the 57th minute.

However, the five-time champions played rather ordinary football after taking the lead and chased the ball as Sheikh Jamal launched numerous attacks. Sheikh Jamal's substitute striker Raphael Odoyin squandered two easy chances before Abahani defender Tutul Hossain Badsha made a goalline save.

With the game into the third minute of added time, Sheikh Jamal found a deserved equaliser when Solomon King ran down the left flank to drive a low shot that went to unmarked Zahed Parvez Chowdhury after a deflection of an Abahani defender and the midfielder placed the ball into the net past Abahani goalkeeper Shahidul Alam Sohel.

Egypt erupts in joy

REUTERS, Cairo

Egypt's capital crackled with fireworks and blared with horns as the soccer-crazy country reached the World Cup for the first time in 28 years as rare scenes of joy took hold of city blocks celebrating a 2-1 victory over Congo.

Winger Mohamed Salah scored twice, securing victory with a last-gasp penalty to put Egypt four points clear with one match left in their African group E qualifying campaign.

The win clinched Egypt a long-awaited spot in Russia for the 2018 World Cup finals, where the Arab world's most populous country will compete on football's ultimate stage for the first time since Italy in 1990.

"It's been 28 years and we're finally going to enter the World Cup. Today is a day of celebration for the entire country," said 41-year-old Gaber Fathy. The raucous mood spilling out on the streets marked a respite for Egyptians after years of hardship, from IMF-backed austerity reforms.

Norway starts equal pay

AFP, Oslo

Norway's elite female footballers will now earn as much as their male counterparts when they play for the national team, in a ground-breaking move for gender equality in sports in the Scandinavian country.

The Norwegian women's team was previously allotted 3.1 million kroner (\$387,000) a year, less than half the amount given to the men's team.

But in keeping for Norway, one of the world's most gender equal nations, a new agreement has been brokered between the Norwegian football federation and the players' association (Niso) that sees the former almost double the amount given to the women's team to 6m kroner while the men's 6.55m budget has been trimmed by 550,000 kroner to bring the two teams in line.

"This agreement is probably unique in the world," acknowledged Niso head Joachim Walltin.

"It's very positive that Norway is a pioneering country in this field."

Poland head to Russia

Perfect 10 for Germany; Slovakia deny Scots

AFP, Paris

Robert Lewandowski scored a European qualifying record 16th goal as Poland defeated Montenegro 4-2 on Sunday to reach next year's World Cup, while reigning champions Germany secured a 10th successive win.

Bayern Munich striker Lewandowski struck again in what has been a remarkable qualifying campaign as Poland recovered from throwing away a two-goal lead in Warsaw to secure a first trip to the World Cup finals since 2006.

Krzysztof Maczynski and Kamil Grosicki struck early as Poland made a dream start, but Montenegro hit back through goals from Stefan Mugosa and Zarko Tomasevic to pull level with just seven minutes left.

Lewandowski restored Poland's advantage on 85 minutes before a late own goal from Filip Stojkovic sealed victory, although Denmark's 1-1 draw at home to Romania ultimately rendered the outcome irrelevant.

The Danes needed to win in

Copenhagen while hoping that Montenegro could upset Poland to finish top of Group E, but Ciprian Deac's late equaliser cancelled out a 60th-minute penalty from Christian Eriksen.

However, Denmark are at least assured of a place in next month's play-offs as one of the eight best runners-up from the nine qualifying groups.

Germany made it 10 wins from 10 in Group C after routing Azerbaijan 5-1 in Kaiserslautern to join Spain as the only nations in history to finish a European World Cup qualifying campaign with a perfect record.

Leon Goretzka's opening goal was negated by Ramil Sheydaev on 34 minutes, but Sandro Wagner and Antonio Ruediger scored after half-time before Goretzka notched his second and Emre Can completed the victory.

Germany scored a European qualifying record 43 goals on the road to Russia, emulating Spain who achieved perfection in qualifying ahead of their triumph at the 2010 tournament in South Africa.

Northern Ireland slid to a 1-0 defeat to Norway in Oslo after an own goal by Chris Brunt, but Michael O'Neill's men were already guaranteed a berth in the play-offs after earlier results.

Slovakia face an anxious wait to discover whether they will advance to the two-legged play-offs after finishing second behind England in Group F following a comfortable 3-0 win over Malta.

Adam Nemeč grabbed a brace with Ondrej Duda adding a third in Trnava as Slovakia extended Scotland's 20-year exile from the finals of major tournaments.

Gordon Strachan's team arrived in Slovenia two points clear of Slovakia going into the final round of matches, but dropped to third after being held to a 2-2 draw in Ljubljana.

Leigh Griffiths stroked the visitors into a first-half lead, but Slovenia equalised and then went ahead as Roman Bezjak netted twice after coming on at the break. Robert Snodgrass handed Scotland a lifeline with an 87th-minute equaliser.



PHOTO: AFP

Portugal superstar Cristiano Ronaldo controls the ball during a training session in Oeiras yesterday on the eve of their 2018 World Cup qualifier against Switzerland.

Sarfraz, Shafiq reignite Pak

AFP, DUBAI

Asad Shafiq and Sarfraz Ahmed hit fighting half-centuries yesterday to thwart Sri Lanka and set up an enthralling finish to the second and final day-night Test in Dubai.

Shafiq scored an unbeaten 86 while skipper Ahmed was 57 not out as they lifted Pakistan from a perilous position at 52-5 to 198-5 at close after being set a daunting target of 317.

The pair added 146 for the unbroken sixth-wicket stand to leave Pakistan needing another 119 runs with five wickets in hand to level the series.

Earlier, paceman Wahab Riaz grabbed four for 41 and left-arm spinner Haris Sohail took three wickets in a single over to dismiss Sri Lanka for 96 in their second innings, after they resumed on 34-5. Masood and Azhar Ali (17) added 31 for the second wicket before the batting collapse began. Pakistan's Sohail later struck thrice in his only over to give his team hope of an upset win.

SCORES IN BRIEF
SRI LANKA: First Innings 482
PAKISTAN: First Innings 262
SRI LANKA: Second Innings 96 (Mendis 29; Riaz 4-41, Sohail 3-1)
PAKISTAN: Second Innings 198 for 5 (Shafiq 86 not out, Sarfraz 57 not out; Perera 3-76)



An agreement signing ceremony between Rangs Industries Limited and BPL team Rangpur Riders was held at a local hotel recently.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

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:

Brutal video signals end of Stokes' Ashes?

Video of Ben Stokes brawling at Bristol could signal the end for the cricketer's chances of making England's Ashes squad.

Heynckes's Bayern return divides opinion

Jupp Heynckes has come out of a four-year retirement to take charge of Bayern Munich for a fourth time, but opinions are divided as to whether the treble-winning coach can boost their flagging fortunes.

Only Maradona fans want Messi to miss World Cup

Former Argentina striker Mario Kempes believes that only Maradona fans will be happy if Lionel Messi does not make the World Cup.

