

What to WATCH

STAR SPORTS SELECT 1
New Zealand v West Indies
1st ODI
Live from 4:00am (Wednesday)

TEN 2
La Liga
Levante v Leganes
Live from 2:30am (Wednesday)

DAY'S EVENT

Bangladesh Premier League
Arambagh v Abahani
Time: 4:30pm
Ctg Abahani v Muktijoddha
Time: 6:45pm
Venue: BNS, Dhaka

SAFF U-15 Women's Championship
Bhutan v Bangladesh
Time: 11:30am
Nepal v India
Time: 2:30pm
Venue: BSMMS, Dhaka

VAN GAAL WOULD RETURN FOR REVENGE

Louis van Gaal has opened the door to a possible Premier League return, saying he would be motivated by a desire to exact revenge on his former club Manchester United. The Dutchman has been out of work since being sacked by United in 2016, who promptly replaced him with his former Barcelona assistant Jose Mourinho. Van Gaal was angered by the manner of his departure from Old Trafford, accusing executive vice chairman Ed Woodward of not being honest enough with him about his situation at the club. The 66-year-old was quoted in The Daily Mirror as saying: "I will probably not manage a club anymore. I would make one exception — if a big English club comes for me, then I would do it. Because then I can get the chance to get one over on Manchester United." —AGENCIES



Bangladesh players do keepee-uppy during a practice session at the BFF astro-turf yesterday, ahead of today's SAFF U-15 Women's Championship fixture against Bhutan.

PHOTO: STAR

Final berth up for grabs

SPORTS REPORTER



Title favourites Bangladesh will look to confirm their place in the SAFF U-15 Women's Championship final when they take on Bhutan at the Birshreshtha Shaheed Mostafa Kamal Stadium in Dhaka today.

The fixture begins at 11:30 am while the day's second match between India and Nepal will kick off at 2:30pm.

The hosts made a flying start to their campaign by handing an emphatic 6-0 defeat to Nepal on Sunday, a team who were once a tough hurdle to cross for Bangladesh.

However, an outright win in today's game is already expected even though

Bhutan showed some character during the second half of their encounter against India after conceding three goals in the first.

The girls in red and green looked to be in a chipper mood during the light practice session at the astro-turf adjacent to the Bangladesh Football Federation Bhaban yesterday. Coach Choton also opted to rest three key players — captain Maria Manda, midfielder Monica Chakma and forward Sara Ban Tahura, who scored a hatrick against Nepal.

"We said it before that we will not only want to win the title, but also enthrall spectators and we are still stuck to those two points," Choton said. "The match against Bhutan is a crucial one and we want to secure all three points and confirm our final berth."

"It was amazing to see the girls play a full 90 minutes at the same tempo and I want the girls to resume their show from where they left," said Choton, adding that he urged the forwards not to waste goal scoring opportunities.

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:

Griezmann apologises for painting himself black

Atletico Madrid forward Antoine Griezmann apologised after receiving criticism on social media for posting a picture of himself dressed as a Harlem Globetrotter, covered in black paint and wearing a wig.

Juventus go second, Milan's troubles continue

Juventus moved to second in the Serie A after a trademark Miralem Pjanic free-kick led the reigning champions to a comfortable 3-0 win at Bologna while AC Milan were plunged further into crisis by a heavy loss at lowly Verona.

You don't go crazy when you win: Mourinho

United manager Jose Mourinho suggested that he no longer wants to celebrate most of his team's goals after he was asked about the lack of celebration from striker Romelu Lukaku.

Barca go 11 points clear of Real

AFP, Madrid



Barcelona opened up an 11-point La Liga lead over Real Madrid ahead of next weekend's Clasico between the Spanish giants as Luis Suarez and Paulinho each scored twice in a 4-0 thrashing of Deportivo la Coruna on Sunday.

Lionel Messi also saw a penalty saved and hit the woodwork three times as Barca regained their six-point lead over Atletico Madrid in second place.

Real remain down in fourth, but do have a game in hand on their rivals as they missed out on domestic action this weekend to win the Club World Cup in Abu Dhabi on Saturday.

"I know people fixate on the difference between us and Real Madrid, but Atletico are just six points behind," said Barca boss Ernesto Valverde.

"No matter what happens on Saturday, there is still a world of way to go in La Liga."

The only drawback for Barca as they extended their unbeaten run in all competitions to 24 games since they were beaten by Real on their last visit to the Santiago Bernabeu in the Spanish Super Cup back in August, was a muscle injury to Paco Alcacer that will keep the forward out for three weeks.

Messi paraded his fourth golden boot award — after being the leading scorer in Europe last season — before kick-off and could barely believe his luck as he failed to add to his 18 goals already this term.

The Argentine has now hit the woodwork 14 times this season, but still had a huge role to play in three of Barca's four goals.

Only a series of saves from Ruben

Martinez to deny Messi and Aleix Vidal delayed Barca until the 29th minute from going in front when Messi presented Suarez with an early Christmas present to tap in from close range.

Messi then smashed against the bar, but the woodwork wasn't so forgiving for Deportivo when Messi's next attempt came off the post and into Paulinho's path to make it 2-0 before half-time.

Suarez thought he had his second of the night moments later when the ball looked to have crossed the line.

However, for the second time in less than a month Barca were foiled by La Liga's lack of goal-line technology as the goal wasn't awarded.

"I could see clearly from my position after shooting because I was right by the goal line," Suarez told BeIN Sports Spain.

The Uruguayan, though, had to wait just two minutes into the second half to net his fourth goal in three games by sweeping home Sergi Roberto's cross.

Messi hit the woodwork for a third time and then saw Martinez brilliantly save his effort from the spot after Suarez was upended inside the area.

But Martinez was helpless as Paulinho profited from a repeat of his first goal when he rolled into an empty net on the rebound after Jordi Alba also hit the frame of the goal.

Earlier, Villarreal bounced back from three straight defeats as Pablo Fornals grabbed the only goal in a 1-0 win at Celta Vigo.

Victory allowed Villarreal to leapfrog back above Girona into sixth after the Catalans had edged the battle of the high-flying newly-promoted sides over Getafe 1-0 thanks to Cristhian Stuani's early goal.

City look to tie Pep down

AFP, London

Manchester City are planning talks with manager Pep Guardiola at the end of the season as the Premier League leaders seek to tie him to a long-term deal, reports said yesterday.

City are 11 points clear of nearest challengers Manchester United and are on a record run of 16 consecutive wins in England's top flight and through to the Champions League knockout phase after comfortably winning their group.

Guardiola, 46, is halfway through his three-year deal at City but the club hierarchy are reportedly confident the former Barcelona and Bayern Munich boss can be persuaded to stay longer.

Guardiola said last month that he was happy at City and his contract, which expires in 2019, was "not a big issue".

The Times newspaper said there was an acceptance that when Guardiola arrived in Manchester last year he might not stay beyond his three-year deal but there is optimism he will make a longer-term commitment.

Kaka retires but hints at backroom role

AFP, Rio de Janeiro



Former Brazilian World Cup champion Kaka announced his retirement as a player on Sunday, suggesting that a management career at his old club AC Milan could be on the cards.

"I am preparing to continue in football and to have a different role, but I will no longer be a professional player, an athlete," the 2007 Ballon d'Or winner told Globo television.

Kaka, 35, said AC Milan "recently made this proposal".

On his Twitter feed Kaka wrote: "Father, It was much more than I could ever have imagined. Thank you! I'm now ready for the next journey. In Jesus' name. Amen."

He started his storied career with Sao Paulo in Brazil, where his performances attracted the attention of Europe's leading clubs and prompted a move to Milan in 2003.

It was while at Milan that Kaka picked up the Ballon d'Or, awarded annually to the world's best player. He was the last player other than Cristiano Ronaldo or Lionel Messi to receive the prize.

He also helped the Italian side to a Serie A title in 2003-04 and propelled Milan to 2007 Champions League glory, scoring a competition-best 10 goals as the club were crowned kings of Europe for the seventh time.

The talented attacking midfielder joined



CLUB CAREER HIGHLIGHTS

Team	Goals	Trophies
Sao Paulo 2001-03/2014	50	--
AC Milan 2005-09/2013-14	104	5
Real Madrid 2009-13	29	2
Orlando City 2015-17	25	--
Total goals:	208	
Team trophies:	7	
Individual awards:	9	

Real Madrid in 2009 for a then world record transfer worth 68 million euros but Kaka struggled to consistently reproduce his top form in the Spanish capital.

Kaka was unveiled as the face of Major League Soccer's expansion franchise Orlando City in 2014 after heading home for a brief reunion with Sao Paulo ahead of the US club's debut season in 2015.



Barcelona superstar Lionel Messi poses with the Alfredo Di Stefano (best player) and the Pichichi (top scorer) awards for the 2016-17 La Liga season in Barcelona yesterday.

Sterling racist attack under probe

AFP, London

British police are investigating an alleged racially aggravated assault on Manchester City forward Raheem Sterling before the Premier League leaders' victory against Tottenham Hotspur on Saturday.

"On Sunday 17 December 2017, police were made aware that a 23-year-old man had been subject to a racially aggravated assault," a police spokesman said.

The Sunday Telegraph newspaper reported that Sterling was apparently kicked and racially abused as he arrived at City's Etihad Campus on Saturday morning before their 4-1 win over Tottenham, during which the attacker scored twice.

The report said a man appeared to be waiting for the 23-year-old England international as he arrived at the training ground to prepare for the game.

The newspaper said it is understood that Sterling got out of his car to ask what the problem was but was then kicked in the leg.

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