

What to WATCH

STAR SPORTS 1
India v Sri Lanka
2nd T20
Live from 7:30pm
STAR SPORTS SELECT 2
New Zealand v West Indies

2nd ODI
Live from 4:00am (Saturday)
STAR SPORTS SELECT 1
English Premier League
Arsenal v Liverpool
Live from 1:45am (Saturday)

TEN 2
La Liga
Real Betis v Athletic Bilbao
Live from 12:30am (Saturday)
Espanyol v Atletico Madrid
Live from 2:30am (Saturday)

DAY'S EVENT

National Cricket League
Day-3
Time: 9:30am
Khulna v Dhaka

Venue: BKSP
Barisal v Rangpur
Venue: SKS, Rajshahi
Dhaka Metro v Rajshahi

Venue: ZACS, Chittagong
Sylhet v Chittagong
Venue: SICS, Sylhet



The Bangladesh girls celebrate one of their three goals against their Indian counterparts in the final group match of the SAFF U-15 Women's Championship at the Bishreshtha Shaheed Mostafa Kamal Stadium in Kamalapur yesterday.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Birthday boy Mbappe blows Caen away

AFP, Paris



Kylian Mbappe celebrated his 19th birthday on Wednesday with a goal and an assist as Paris Saint-Germain cruised to a 3-1 victory over Caen in Ligue 1.

The French teenager has enjoyed a stratospheric rise in 2017 and rounded out a memorable year in style by setting up Edinson Cavani to fire PSG ahead on 21 minutes, before adding a goal of his own on the hour.

Spanish left-back Yuri Berchiche netted his first goal for the club since arriving from Real Sociedad as PSG strolled to a 10th straight home league win despite conceding a late Ivan Santini penalty.

Unai Emery's team head into the winter break nine points clear of defending champions Monaco and Lyon, with both of those sides claiming 2-1 wins over Rennes and Toulouse respectively.

"It's a good win to finish with 50 points, but the goal we conceded is something we want to work on after the holidays," Emery said.

"I think the team has had a very good first

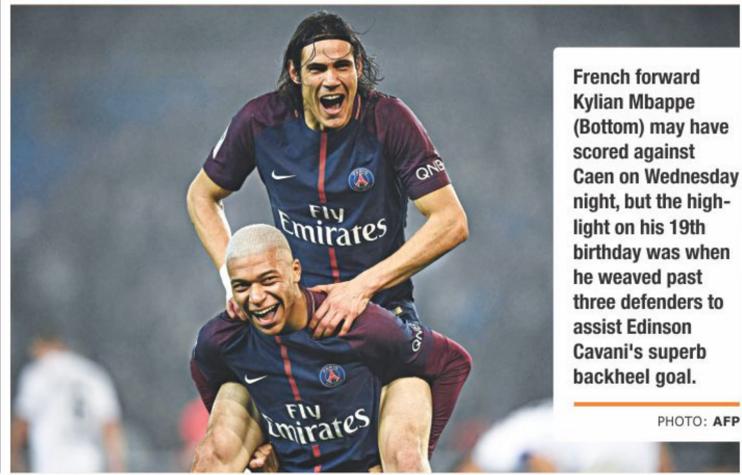
half of the season," he added. "We've accomplished our goals of being first in our Champions League group and being top of the league with a sizeable cushion."

Mbappe, sporting dyed white hair for his birthday, was instrumental as PSG surged in front midway through the first half, bursting down the right wing before crossing for Cavani to flick majestically beyond Remy Veroutre.

It was the Uruguayan's league-leading 19th goal of the season and drew him to within one of Zlatan Ibrahimovic's club record of 156 -- achieved in just four prolific seasons in the French capital.

Giovani Lo Celso, filling in for the banned Marco Verratti in central midfield, created the hosts' second goal on 57 minutes, getting to the byline and delivering a cross for Mbappe to confidently sweep home.

And Berchiche put the game beyond reach on 81 minutes after collecting a pass from Neymar and hammering low into the far corner, although Croatia striker Santini pulled a goal back from the spot late on after Silva was penalised for a handball.



French forward Kylian Mbappe (Bottom) may have scored against Caen on Wednesday night, but the highlight on his 19th birthday was when he weaved past three defenders to assist Edinson Cavani's superb backheel goal.

PHOTO: AFP

Hosts' dominant dress rehearsal

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh girls thrashed their Indian counterparts 3-0 in the final group-stage game of the SAFF U-15 Women's Championship at the Bishreshtha Shaheed Mostafa Kamal Stadium in Kamalapur yesterday.

Had it been in any other discipline of sport, it would have been treated as a big achievement for Bangladesh against their big neighbours. But this generation of girls, who have taken their game to new heights since their meteoric rise over the last few years, have actually made it a habit of winning against any team from this region.

The game was a dress rehearsal for Sunday's final and the home side gave a little demo of their superiority over India in the age-group level competition. It was

Bangladesh's third straight win against India after their 3-1 and 4-0 results in the AFC U-14 Regional (South and Central) Girls Championship in Tajikistan in 2016.

However, more than the victory it was the free-flowing attacking approach of the Bangladesh girls that entertained a few hundred home fans.

Both Bangladesh and India came into the match after two consecutive wins. India's 10-0 drubbing of Nepal against Bangladesh's six raised an apprehension but the hosts buried fears as they dominated from the outset.

Coach Golam Rabbani Choton decided against starting three key players -- striker Anuching Mogini, midfielder Marzia and striker Sara Ban Tahura. But he was forced to send on Anuching in place of Sajeda Khatun after

the forward picked up a strain on her right leg.

Anuching broke the deadlock in the 32nd minute after Bangladesh wasted two good opportunities in the first 12 minutes when she headed a Monica Chakma corner home. Anuching got two more chances to widen the margin but fired her first shot straight at Indian goalkeeper Monika Devi and then hammered a grounder that inched past the mark.

Bangladesh doubled the margin in stoppage time of the first half with Shamsunahar (Sr) converting a penalty after forward Shamsunahar (Jr) was pushed down inside the box by Indian defender Pakpi Devi.

Bangladesh spent the majority of time after resumption in India's half and the midfielders applied a lot of plays that broke the offside trap, but the forwards looked a bit

slow to react and muffed those chances. It was also encouraging to see the new players -- Shamsunahar (Jr) and Ritu Poma Chakma -- showcasing their skills.

Bangladesh wrapped up the win in the 53rd minute when Monika Chakma beat the offside trap and danced past one player to enter the box before burying a left-footed low shot into the far post.

"Our target was to enthral spectators, play attacking football and win the match and I think the girls did all those things on the ground today [Thursday]," said coach Choton. "The girls proved that they are better than the Indian girls."

Three straight wins from as many matches meant that Bangladesh finished top of the four-team table with a maximum nine points. However, this win only counts if they can repeat the feat against the same opposition come Sunday.

FIFA RANKINGS

Bangladesh hit new low

SPORTS REPORTER

After having reached the lowest ranking in their history in September this year when they were placed 196 in the FIFA Rankings, the Bangladesh football team went one further and slipped down to 197 in the latest rankings released yesterday.

The men in red and green had risen four places to 192 in November, but unfortunately slipped down a further five to hit the nadir in their footballing history.

Bangladesh's fall was not down to results; in fact they have not played a single match under the consideration of FIFA in 2017. It is the other teams who have improved their standards.

There are only eight active teams below Bangladesh, but they may take solace from the fact that they are above sub-continental rivals Sri Lanka (200th) and Pakistan (201st). Turks and Caicos Islands, Cayman Islands, San Marino and the British Virgin Islands are the other illustrious active teams below Bangladesh.

On the international front, Germany, Brazil and Portugal retained the top three places.

'I'm wiser now'

AGENCIES, London



Neymar has been a revelation for French giants Paris Saint-Germain since his world record switch from Barcelona and is now aiming to fire Brazil to a record sixth title when the tournament gets underway in Russia on June 14.

In 2014 on home soil Neymar helped the hosts overcome Chile and Colombia before a devastating injury prevented him taking the field in the 7-1 semi-final defeat by eventual winners Germany.

His four goals in the tournament still saw him finish third in the Golden Boot, but with 53 goals now to his name, hot on the heels of Pele's national record of 77, he believes he can make his mark once again.

Asked what the biggest difference was between the Neymar from 2014 World Cup and the one we will see in the 2018 edition, the Brazilian said he was wiser.

"The difference is hard to explain, but I think I'm more experienced, more wise, more 'casquedo', as we say in Brazil," he began. "This is because I had many experiences, I participated in a World Cup where we lost and I think I'll be more prepared for the next one, because I know what it's like to be in a World Cup, I can be better prepared. So the Neymar in 2018 is better than the Neymar in 2014."

Like his coach Tite, Neymar also picked Belgium as one of the sides to look out for in the upcoming World Cup, while picking Egypt as his dark horses for the tournament.

"I think the best-known teams are the favourites, as always. Among them are Brazil, Germany, France, Spain and Argentina. These teams will be the highlights in any championship. And for the surprise, I think Belgium has an excellent team and can be a surprise in this Cup. Salah [from Egypt] is a great player who can make a difference in the World Cup."



NEYMAR

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:

Chandika plans to invade his former employer's den

With the Bangladesh Cricket Board still working on striking a balance in its coaching staff following the sudden departure of head coach Chandika Hathurusingha, the Sri Lankan has already warned of invading the Tigers' den after taking over the job for his home country.



Bristol stun Manchester United

English Championship side Bristol City dumped Manchester United out of the League Cup, scoring with seconds remaining to beat the holders 2-1 as Chelsea also progressed to the semi-finals after late drama of their own.



Tennis saved me during illness: Bartoli

Former Wimbledon champion Marion Bartoli said that she first considered making a professional comeback while suffering from a mystery illness last year.



Birmingham to host 2022 C'wealth Games

AFP, London

The English city of Birmingham was on Thursday confirmed as the host of the 2022 Commonwealth Games after a troubled bidding process.

The Games were originally awarded to Durban in 2015, but the South African city had the event taken away earlier this year for financial reasons.

The last quadrennial multisport event took place in Glasgow in 2014. Next year's Games will be staged on Australia's Gold Coast.



PHOTO: COLLECTED

Representatives of the Professional Golf Tour of India, Bangladesh Professional Golf Association and event organisers Riz Events pose for a photograph yesterday during an MOU signing for the upcoming City Bank American Express Dhaka Open 2018.

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