

SONY SIX
Australia v England
4th Test, Day-5
Live from 5:30am (Saturday)

TEN 1
Serie A
Crotone v Napoli
Live from 1:45am (Saturday)

INFANTINO GIVES VAR THUMBS UP

FIFA president Gianni Infantino has given his whole hearted backing to the controversial video assistant referee technology. VAR, as it is known, has been trialled since the start of this season in Serie A and the Bundesliga, and will be introduced to Spanish La Liga next season. "The results so far have been very encouraging, very positive. Decisions which were taken wrongly have been altered to take the right decisions. Sometimes it takes a few seconds too long....but we are very positive and I am very positive that VAR will be a great investment into modern football. (It) can be used all over the world in order to help and assist the referees", Infantino told reporters in Dubai on Thursday. However, FIFA have yet to confirm whether the VAR will be used at next year's World Cup in Russia.

—AFP



Reds land record £75m Van Dijk

AFF, London



Liverpool signed Southampton's Virgil van Dijk on Wednesday for a reported £75 million in a deal that makes him the world's most expensive defender.

Van Dijk has been linked with a move to Liverpool for several months and the Anfield club were forced to issue an apology after an alleged illegal approach for the Netherlands international earlier this year.

Reds boss Jurgen Klopp has remained determined to sign Van Dijk as he tries to shore up a leaky defence that has fatally damaged Liverpool's Premier League title ambitions.

"Delighted and honoured to have agreed to become a Liverpool FC player," Van Dijk wrote on Twitter, alongside a photo of him with a Liverpool shirt. "Today is a proud day for me and my family as I join one of the biggest clubs in world football.

"I can't wait to pull on the famous red shirt for the first time in front of the Kop and will give everything I have to try and help this great club achieve something special in the years to come."

Although Chelsea and Manchester City were said to be interested, Klopp finally got his man on weekly wages of £180,000.

The previous world record transfer for a

defender was the £54 million Manchester City paid Tottenham for England right-back Kyle Walker in the close season.

Saints confirmed that Liverpool's offer had shattered the record, but didn't reveal the exact fee.

"Southampton have agreed a fee that will set a new world-record for a defender. The club wishes Virgil well in his future when the deal is completed on January 1st 2018,"

MOST EXPENSIVE DEFENDERS

PLAYER	CLUBS	PRICE
Virgil van Dijk	Southampton to Liverpool	£75 m
Kyle Walker	Tottenham to Man City	£53 m
Benjamin Mendy	Monaco to Man City	£52 m
David Luiz	Chelsea to PSG	£50 m
John Stones	Everton to Man City	£47.5 m

a statement read.

A fee of £75 million would also be level with Romelu Lukaku as the second most expensive transfer in Premier League history, behind only Manchester United's £90 million purchase of Paul Pogba.

Van Dijk, who moved to Southampton from Celtic in 2015, was left out at the start of the season by new Saints manager Mauricio Pellegrino after having a transfer request rejected.



Ahead of starting his Australian Open defence when the new tennis season kicks off in mid-January, Swiss maestro Roger Federer gave a few children a tennis lesson and took in the sights at Rottnest Island in Western Australia yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

Mohammedan halt winless streak

SPORTS REPORTER



Falling giants Mohammedan SC returned to winning ways in the Bangladesh Premier League after two matches as they notched up a narrow 2-1 win over bottom-of-the-table Rahmatganj MFS at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

With an eighth win from 19 games, Mohammedan remain fifth with 28 points, while Rahmatganj slid further into the red with only 13 points from 19 matches.

After having played out two consecutive draws against Sheikh Russel KC and Team BJMC, the Black and Whites were under pressure from the get-go and Rahmatganj twice came close to taking the lead within the first four minutes. However both efforts, from Naimur Rahman Shahed and Dawda Ceasay, went narrowly wide.

Mohammedan then found a goal against the run of play in the fifth minute as Haitian forward Augustin Walsen released an inch-perfect cross from the left for Kingsley Chigozie, who beat goalkeeper Omar Faruk with a left-footed side-

volley from inside the box.

However, that lead lasted all of five minutes due to the lacklustre skills of MSC goalkeeper Mamun Khan and defender Asaduzzaman Bablu. Mamun failed to stop a square ball from Dawda and Bablu miscued his clearance, which fell straight to unmarked midfielder Mohammad Sohel, who made no mistake in tapping home from inside the six-yard box to bring Rahmatganj level.

RAHMATGANJ 1 - 2 MOHAMMEDAN (SOHEL 10)	(KINGSLEY 5, NASIRUL 31)
SK RUSSEL 2 - 2 TEAM BJMC (ZAKI 27, FRANCOIS 79)	(OSHIOKHA 6, PASBAN 88)

However, Mohammedan restored their one-goal advantage in the 31st minute when right-back Nasirul Islam's pass into the danger zone found the back of the net after taking a deflection off Rahmatganj defender Nazimuddin Mithu.

Mohammedan had an opportunity to extend their lead in the 64th minute but, after availing a

cutback from Augustin, Biplu Ahmed fired wide from the edge of the box.

Rahmatganj found two opportunities as they pressed hard for the equaliser. First, Dawda's free-kick rattled back off the bar in the 67th minute, before Mohammedan goalkeeper Mamun redeemed himself by brilliantly diving to his left to thwart a shot from Rashedul Islam Shuvo in the 73rd minute.

In the day's second match between mid-table sides Sheikh Russel KC and Team BJMC the points were shared in a 2-2 draw.

The stalemate left both teams glued to their previous positions, Sheikh Russel are in sixth with 25 points from 19 matches while BJMC are just behind on 18 points from 19 matches.

Kingsley Oshiocha put BJMC ahead by converting a penalty in the sixth minute before Sheikh Russel's Egyptian Zaki Sharhan equalised the score from close range in the 27th minute.

Haitian forward Francois gave Sheikh Russel the lead in the 79th minute, but BJMC once again equalised two minutes from time, courtesy of a glancing header from Pasban Molla.

Flanagan charged for assault

AFF, London

Liverpool defender Jon Flanagan has been charged with common assault, British police said on Wednesday.

The 24-year-old was charged following an incident in Liverpool city centre on Friday.

"Merseyside Police can confirm that Jonathan Flanagan, aged 24, from Liverpool has been charged with Section 39 common assault following an incident on Duke Street in Liverpool city centre at around 3.20am on Friday December 22," a spokesman said.

"He has been released on conditional police bail and will appear before Liverpool City Magistrates' Court on January 2 2018."

Four Rio Ave players in fixing storm

AFF, Lisbon

Four players with Portuguese top-flight club Rio Ave have been reportedly charged in a 500,000 euro match-fixing scam, local media revealed on Thursday.

According to SIC television station and Correio da Manha newspaper, four unnamed players are suspected of taking bribes to fix a defeat for their team in a first division game against Feirense on February 6, 2017.

Rio Ave lost the match 2-1 on the way to finishing seventh in the table.

Betting on the fixture had been suspended before kick-off due to "the unusual volume of bets".



Manchester City recorded a record-extending 18th consecutive Premier League win with Raheem Sterling's (C) goal making the difference in their Premier League encounter against Newcastle on Wednesday.

PHOTO: AFP

Pep salutes gritty City

AFF, Newcastle



Pep Guardiola praised Manchester City's resilience after the runaway

Premier League leaders made it 18 successive wins with a 1-0 victory at Newcastle on Wednesday.

Guardiola's side moved 15 points clear of second placed Manchester United thanks to Raheem Sterling's first half strike.

City completely dominated possession after a Newcastle side seemingly intent solely on keeping the scoring down.

That stubborn approach almost earned Newcastle an undesired point when Dwight Gayle headed just wide

in the final moments.

City boss Guardiola ripped Newcastle's defensive approach, but was impressed with the way his players kept plugging away.

"We did absolutely everything but it is difficult to play when the other team doesn't want to play," he said. "We created enough chances to win 2-0, 3-0, 4-0. But in the last minutes we played in their rhythm and then it was not easy because it is not over at 1-0."

"Always you have to expect this kind of situation and it is not always easy to maintain that level.

"Any manager can decide what he wants. I prefer to try to play but I respect a lot what opponents do and we have to try to discover how to attack against them."

Sterling's latest match-winning contribution underlined the England winger's revival this season.

"Raheem Sterling is scoring a lot and is playing good - so we are happy with that," Guardiola said. "We are now 15 points in front and we can now focus on our next game (at Crystal Palace)."

City look certain to lift the title, but midfielder Bernardo Silva isn't getting carried away just yet.

"We have to keep working the same way since the start of the season and that's what we'll be doing," he said.

"It isn't won. We're still in December. We have to play with the same spirit and hunger to win the games."

Nadal out of Brisbane

Casts cloud on participation in Australian Open

AFF, Brisbane



World No.1 Rafael Nadal has withdrawn from the Brisbane International with a knee injury, but said he still intends to play in

next month's Australian Open.

The Spaniard, who hasn't played since losing to David Goffin at the World Tour Finals in London, was scheduled to start his season in Brisbane this weekend, but said he would now not be coming.

"I am sorry to announce I won't be coming to Brisbane this year," Nadal said on Twitter on Thursday. "My intention was to play but I am still not ready after last year's long season and the late start of my preparation."

But Nadal said he still planned to play in the year's opening Grand Slam

tournament, starting in Melbourne on January 15.

"I will be seeing my Aussie fans when I land on the 4th (of January) in Melbourne and start there my preparation for the Australian Open," he added.

Reports casting doubt over Nadal's recovery from an injury to his right knee surfaced last week when he pulled out of an exhibition in Abu Dhabi this week and took at least four days off from practice.

Nadal, 31, has had a stellar 2017, claiming a 10th French Open, a third US Open crown and the year-ending world number one spot.

Nadal added two Masters titles at Monte Carlo and Madrid to his triumphs at Roland Garros and Flushing Meadows, finishing the campaign with six trophies.

The 16-time Grand Slam champion also secured the year-ending top ranking for a fourth time.

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:

Guardiola refuses to start fresh war of words

Pep Guardiola refused to be drawn into a war of words with Jose Mourinho after Manchester City maintained their impressive progress towards the Premier League title.

C'mon! You gotta win man: Neymar to Messi
Barcelona defender Gerard Pique did an interview for the first time in his life and his guest was none other than the flamboyant Brazilian star Neymar.

Record breaker Kane fuelled by doubters
Tottenham striker Harry Kane says his record-breaking year was fuelled by a desire to silence the doubters by earning his place alongside Lionel Messi and Cristiano Ronaldo.

Brazil's road to redemption faces Euro resistance

A rejuvenated Brazil looking to heal the wounds of home soil humiliation four years ago will lead the South American charge for the World Cup in 2018, but a slew of European powerhouses stand in the way of redemption in Russia.



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Panel members

- Dr. Mohammad Nasir Uddin
- Dr. Norman Kenneth Swazo
- Dr. Anwer Islam
- Prof. Md. Jakariya
- Dr. M. Aminul Islam
- Dr. Mohammad Delwer Hossain Hawlader
- Ms. Khadija Leena
- Dr. Nizam Uddin Ahmed
- Dr. Ahmed Hossain

HANDS ON TRAINING: GRANT PROPOSAL WRITING

Panel Chair:
Dr. Mohammad Nasir Uddin
TEXAS A & M, USA &
Visiting Professor, Dept of Public Health, NSU

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