

STAR SPORTS SELECT 1
New Zealand v Pakistan
2nd ODI
Live from 4:00am (Tuesday)
TEN 1 & TEN 3
South Africa v India
1st Test, Day-4
Live from 2:30pm

TEN 2
La Liga
Malaga v Espanyol
Live from 2:00am (Tuesday)

DAY'S EVENT
Bangladesh Premier League
Arambagh v Team BJMC
Time: 4:30pm
Rahmatganj v Sheikh Russel
Time: 6:45pm
Venue: BNS, Dhaka

VILLAS-BOAS 46TH AFTER FIRST STAGE OF DAKAR RALLY

Former Chelsea boss Andre Villas-Boas got his first taste of the Dakar Rally as he finished 46th in Saturday's opening stage. Self-proclaimed petrol head Villas-Boas, whose uncle competed in the race between 1982 and 1984, is participating in his first rally and finished an opening day 11 minutes behind Qatar's two-time winner Nasser al-Attiyah. Al-Attiyah, driving a Toyota Hilux, ended the day with a 25-second lead over Dutch team-mate Bernhard ten Brinke after the 35km special stage through the sand dunes around Pisco, down the coast from Lima. 'Motor racing is in my blood and has been my passion since I was a little boy,' Villas-Boas explained ahead of the event on Thursday, having also admitted he rented an altitude training tent 13,000 feet above sea level to aid his preparations for the race. The endurance event, originally staged between Paris and Senegalese city Dakar until 2008 before being relocated due to security concerns, is famed for its treacherous terrains and dangerous courses having claimed the lives of 70 racers since its inception in 1978. —AGENCIES



Divisional phase starts today

SPORTS REPORTER

The standard of athletes in the inaugural Bangladesh Youth Games will be judged from today when the divisional phase gets underway at different divisional headquarters with the participation of all 64 districts.

The first phase of the inaugural U-17 Youth Games started last month at district level with nearly 23,500 athletes from around 500 upazilas taking part in 20 different disciplines. The number has been reduced to nearly 3,500 athletes, who will be competing for their respective districts to qualify for the final and national phase to be held in March in Dhaka.

Dhaka, Chittagong and Sylhet will hold all disciplines at their respective divisional headquarters while Rajshahi, Khulna, Barisal, Rangpur and Mymensingh will include a few other districts to complete the divisional phase of the games.

"We could not judge the actual standard of the athletes properly during the district phase due to some limitations. We will now provide them

with logistical support and strengthen the monitoring system at the divisional phase to record their performance because we want to hunt talents from different disciplines for further training," Bangladesh Olympic Association (BOA) secretary general Syed Shahed Reza said at a press conference yesterday.

"We believe there are a lot of things to learn as we have taken a big initiative to hold the games across the country. After the completion of the games, we will form a committee to find out the loopholes so that we can take proper steps in future," said Reza.

Though the divisional phase was supposed to feature all 20 disciplines, the BOA has excluded seven disciplines -- basketball, hockey, archery, judo, shooting, wushu and taekwondo -- due to the shortage of participating teams at the divisional level.

"As those seven disciplines are played on only regional basis and we did not get enough teams, we have dropped those disciplines at divisional phase but the athletes of those disciplines will have the opportunity to take part in the final phase," said BOA deputy secretary general Ashikur

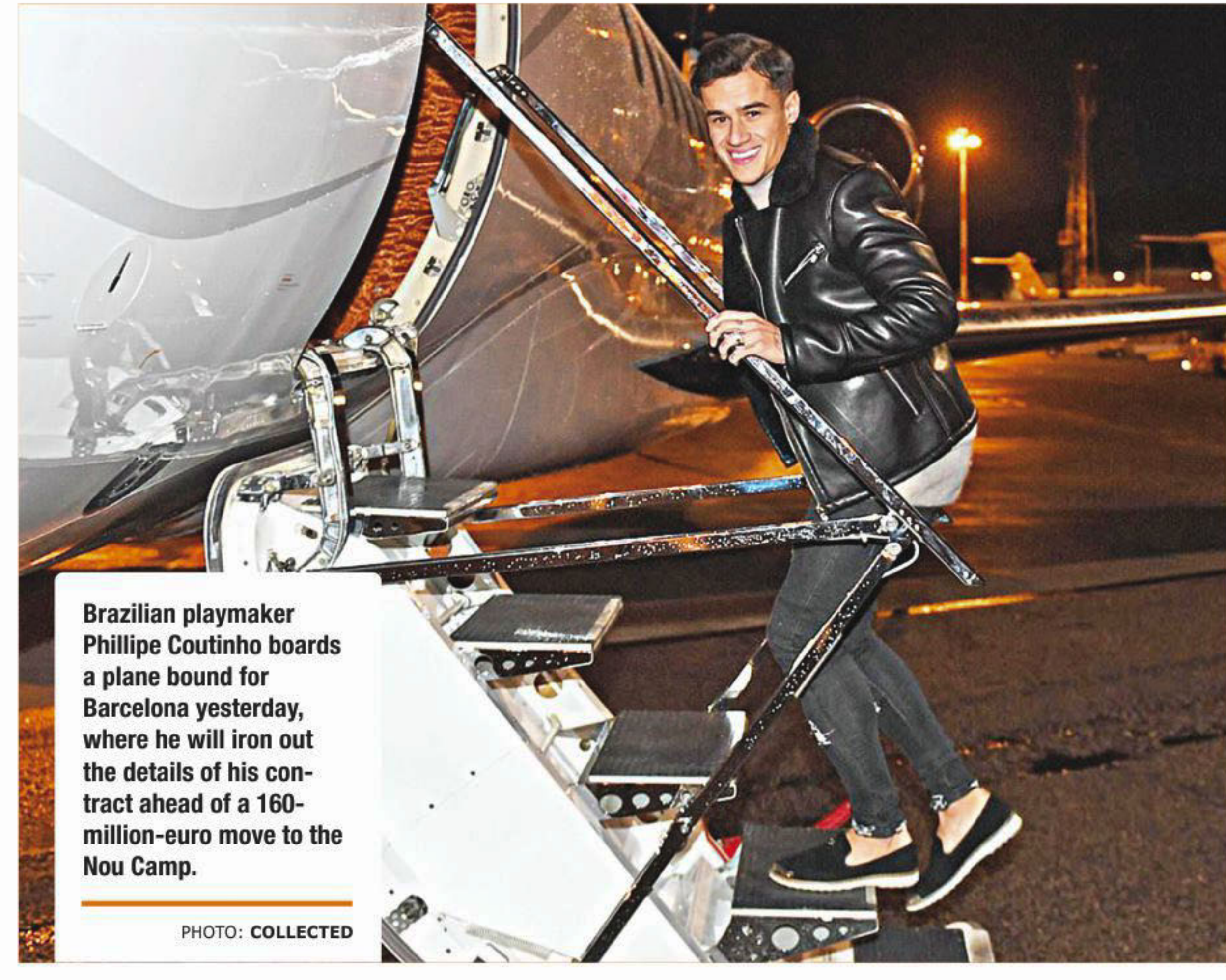
Rahman Miku, who is also member secretary of the games' steering committee.

Football will have the highest participation with 54 districts, followed by athletics (53 districts), kabaddi (48 districts), badminton (43 districts) and volleyball (40 districts) while swimming, handball, boxing, chess, karate and table tennis will be participated by more than 20 districts.

Replying to a query, Miku said, "There are enough infrastructures to hold the disciplines at divisional headquarters of Dhaka, Chittagong and Sylhet but Khulna, Rajshahi, Rangpur, Barisal and Mymensingh will hold their disciplines in different districts as well as divisional headquarters."

Meanwhile, some 20 sports ambassadors will visit the divisional venues to inspire the budding athletes.

"Mashrafe [Bin Mortaza] will not be able to visit any venue due to his engagement in cricket, but the other sports ambassadors including former and current players will visit their respective divisional venues to inspire the athletes," informed BOA vice president and media committee chairman Bashir Ahmed.



Brazilian playmaker Phillippe Coutinho boards a plane bound for Barcelona yesterday, where he will iron out the details of his contract ahead of a 160-million-euro move to the Nou Camp.

PHOTO: COLLECTED



Saif Sporting Club forward Charlie Sheringham celebrates one of his two goals against Chittagong Abahani during their Bangladesh Premier League fixture at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

Saif SC punish Ctg Abahani

SPORTS REPORTER

The misery of Chittagong Abahani in the Bangladesh Premier League continued as they suffered a 3-0 defeat against newcomers Saif SC in their penultimate round encounter at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

The second consecutive defeat means the last season's runners-up team wasted an opportunity to finish behind champions Abahani, and they might not even make it to a third-place finish if they lose to Abahani while Saif SC beat Rahmatganj MFS in the final round of fixtures.

The port city side, who dropped 11 points in the last four matches, have 43 points from 21 matches, four less than second-placed Sheikh Jamal DC while Saif SC raised their tally to 41 points to stay in fourth position on the table.

Chittagong Abahani, who formed a strong team with the aim of winning all the titles this season, had to be content with a runners-up trophy in the season's curtain-raising Federation Cup, but they made a strong start to the league and led the way till the 17th round.

However, a sudden dip in form saw the side slip out of the title race as they lost against Muktijoddha Sangsad and Sheikh Jamal DC while the encounter with Brothers Union ended in a draw.

They now have this month's Independence Cup left to justify their hefty expenditures.

"As soon as we lost against Sheikh Jamal, we realised we wouldn't probably be able to finish second as they have the possibility of raising their tally to 50 with a win over Farashganj SC," said makeshift head coach Julfiker Mahmud Mintu, who

was given charge after the sacking of Saiful Bari Titu on Wednesday.

Mintu blamed the players' mentality for the latest defeat as well as for losing their way from the title race.

"I am trying to rebuild the team and motivate the players as much as I can," Mintu said. "We are not thinking of anything big in the Independence Cup, rather we are thinking about the future."

Meanwhile, yesterday's match was decided by a sublime performance from winger Mohammad Ibrahim, who scored one and set up Charlie Sheringham for the other two.

The Englishman nodded home Ibrahim's free-kick from right side in the 26th minute to break the deadlock before doubling the lead eight minutes later when a clearance from defender Nurul Nayeem

Faisal on an Ibrahim free-kick came to him at an unmarked position at the far post.

Ibrahim then wrapped up the victory with a goal from the right side in the 32nd minute to break the deadlock before doubling the lead eight minutes later when a clearance from defender Nurul Nayeem

simple drive which hit the back of Chittagong Abahani midfielder Shariful Islam on its way to the goal deep into stoppage time of the first half.

Meanwhile, Mohammedan SC overcame Muktijoddha Sangsad 3-2 in an exciting encounter in the day's second match to raise their tally to 32 points. The defeat kept Muktijoddha Sangsad on 17 points, just three ahead of joint-bottom Rahmatganj MFS and Farashganj SC.

Magalan Awala scored a brace in the second half to bring Muktijoddha Sangsad back in the match after Mohammedan had taken a two-goal lead through Augustine

Mahrez going to Liverpool?

AFP, Liverpool

French media group beIN Sports reported late Saturday that Liverpool will immediately spend 55 million euros of their windfall from the Phillip Coutinho sale on Leicester striker Riyad Mahrez.

They claimed Mahrez will have a medical at Liverpool on Sunday before penning a four-year contract.

Reports in England though said the Reds' main target is Monaco forward Thomas Lemar.

Liverpool legend John Aldridge urged the club to move quickly to replace Coutinho, saying Mahrez must be considered.

"If you look at the way Coutinho plays, he [Mahrez] is very similar," Aldridge said. "He is older, he has played in the Premier League for some years and everybody has seen the ability he has got, so he ticks a lot of boxes."

Dybala out for a month

AFP, Rome

Juventus attacker Paulo Dybala could be out for over a month after picking up a thigh injury in his side's 1-0 win at Cagliari on Saturday, putting his chances of facing Tottenham in the Champions League at risk.

The Old Lady revealed Sunday that the Argentine suffered a "light-medium" injury to his right thigh but did not give a definitive timeline for his recovery.

Corriere dello Sport wrote that he would miss up to 40 days, while Gazzetta dello Sport wrote he was hoping for "no more than a month".

Juve host Tottenham for the first leg of their last 16 Champions League tie on February 13.

Kyrgios wins Brisbane title

REUTERS, Melbourne

Nick Kyrgios beat Ryan Harrison 6-4, 6-2 in the Brisbane International final on Sunday to clinch his maiden tour title on home soil and gain a big confidence boost ahead of the Australian Open.

Carrying a niggling knee injury, the mercurial Australian made a slow start and was forced to save five break points before he managed to carve out own his first break in the seventh game.

The triumph lifts him four spots to 17th in the world rankings ahead of this month's Australian Open.

Coutinho's curious case

STAR SPORT DESK

Brazilian superstar Phillippe Coutinho arrived in Barcelona yesterday to finalise his 160-million-euro move to the Blaugrana, which would make him far and away the most expensive and high-profile transfer in any winter transfer window.

"Bem-vindo! Welcome! Benvingut! ¡Bienvenido!" Barca tweeted to Coutinho along with a waving hand sign and a video showing a shirt bearing his name in a locker.

But although the swoop for the 25-year-old attacking midfielder -- which contains a 400-million-euro release clause -- is the third biggest transfer in football, questions have been raised about the timing of the move.

Coutinho's transfer in the middle of the season means that he will be cup-tied for the Champions League. This means he will miss out on the chance to showcase his skills on Europe's biggest stage, a feeling that is exacerbated at a time when Liverpool are genuine dark horses. The only

other time he had played in Europe's elite competition with the Reds was in the 2014/15 edition, when the Merseyside club were eliminated in the group stages.

With that in mind, many Liverpool fans felt a hint of betrayal and many Barcelona fans questioned why the move -- and such a high fee -- was deemed necessary by the board. La

MOST EXPENSIVE TRANSFERS

PLAYER	FROM	TO	PRICE
Neymar	Barcelona	PSG	€222
Phillippe Coutinho	Liverpool	Barcelona	€160
Ousmane Dembele	Dortmund	Barcelona	€105
Paul Pogba	Juventus	Man United	€105
Gareth Bale	Tottenham	Real Madrid	€100

Liga is almost wrapped up with Barcelona nine points ahead of their nearest challengers, Atletico Madrid in second. So, ostensibly, Coutinho can only make significant contributions in the Copa del Rey, where Barcelona are already in the Round of 16.

However, Barcelona's motivations for the move are quite simple.

Having the 25-year-old in their arsenal means that they can rest

Andres Iniesta and ensure that their most experienced midfielder remains fresh for the Champions League -- a competition that is surely the top priority at this stage. The versatility that he brings could also see him provide respite to Lionel Messi or Ousmane Dembele if the need arises.

As for the fee, it is clear that the Barcelona board have taken a bit of a gamble. The Brazilian's price has remained the same as in the past summer, but there were fears at the Nou Camp that it would only increase come the end of the season, especially with there being a World Cup, an event that can exponentially raise the price of any given player.

From Coutinho's point of view as well, the move could not have come at a better time. He can enjoy the remaining months of the season without the weight of expectations on his shoulders as Barca cruise towards La Liga.

That six-month period will also give him the chance to settle into the team and, perhaps most crucially, get a trophy -- something he failed to do during his five-year stay at Liverpool.

Messi fires on 400th

AFP, Madrid

Lionel Messi marked his 400th appearance in La Liga with the opening goal as Barcelona eased to a 3-0 win over Levante at the Camp Nou on Sunday.

Messi's 365th goal in Spain's top flight came inside 12 minutes, with Luis Suarez adding the second before the interval and Paulinho completing the victory late on as Barcelona stretched their lead at the top of the table back to nine points over Atletico Madrid.

The Catalans are still unbeaten in La Liga this season and have Philippe Coutinho to come in, with the Brazilian expected to be officially unveiled as a Barcelona player on Monday following the announcement of his 160 million-euro move from Liverpool.

The 25-year-old Brazilian was not in attendance at the Camp Nou as the club's previous record recruit Ousmane Dembele started.

The Frenchman was included in the line-up for the first time since tearing his hamstring nearly four months ago. He came close to scoring on a couple of occasions, but it was

Messi who broke the deadlock from a Jordi Alba assist, a combination that has proved fruitful on so many occasions this season.

The Argentine's flighted pass found Alba, and the left-back headed the ball down for Messi, arriving in the area, to finish first-time in off the far post for his 16th league goal of the campaign.

The second goal arrived seven minutes before the interval, as Suarez controlled Sergi Roberto's fine ball into the box before firing home. It was the Uruguayan's 400th professional goal, his 131st for Barca putting him seventh on the club's all-time list of leading scorers.

Levante, who have now won just once in 13 La Liga games and are hovering just above the drop zone, did not threaten a comeback in the second half.

A little over half-full Camp Nou did afford Dembele an ovation as he came off in the 67th minute to be replaced by Nelson Semedo.

And Barca rounded out the victory in the third minute of added time as Messi's low ball across goal at the end of a jinking run was turned in by Paulinho.



12 minutes into his 400th La Liga match for Barcelona yesterday, superstar Lionel Messi (R) fires home a sublime volley against Levante. It was the Argentine's 365th goal in Spain's top-flight.

PHOTO: AFP

FA CUP Forest KO Arsenal

REUTERS, London

FA Cup holders Arsenal were stunned 4-2 by second-tier Nottingham Forest in the third round on Sunday.

Eric Lichaj scored twice for the hosts either side of a Per Mertesacker equaliser to give Forest a 2-1 halftime lead.

Ben Brereton made it 3-1 from the spot in the 64th minute before Danny Welbeck pulled a goal back with 12 minutes left but Forest were awarded another penalty which Kieran Dowell converted.

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:

Jose is a "little man", says Conte
Chelsea manager Antonio Conte continued his ongoing feud with Jose Mourinho on Saturday by calling the Manchester United manager "a little man".
Guardiola apologises to Dyche
Pep Guardiola apologised to Burnley manager Sean Dyche for his behaviour after Manchester City equalised in their 4-1 FA Cup third round victory.