

What to WATCH

GTV
Tri-nation ODI series
Sri Lanka v Zimbabwe
Live from 12:00pm
STAR SPORTS 1
ICC Under-19 World Cup
Bangladesh v England
Live from 3:30am (Thursday)

TEN 1 & TEN 3
South Africa v India
2nd Test, Day-5
Live from 2:00pm
SONY ESPN
Ligue 1
PSG v Dijon
Live from 2:00am (Thursday)

SONY SIX & TEN 2
Australian Open
Evening Session
2nd Round
Live from 2:00pm
Morning Session
2nd Round
Live from 6:00am

DAY'S EVENT

Tri-Nation ODI Series
Sri Lanka v Zimbabwe
Time: 12:00pm
Venue: SBNCs, Dhaka
Independence Cup
Sheikh Jamal v Mohammedan
Time: 3:30pm
Abahani v Team BJMC
Time: 5:45pm

Venue: BNS, Dhaka
Bangladesh Cricket League
Four-Day Match, Day-3
Time: 9:30am
North Zone v East Zone
Venue: SICs, Sylhet
South Zone v Central Zone
Venue: BKSP, Savar



Roger, Novak cruise

Sharapova wins on Australian Open return

AFP, Melbourne

Flawless Roger Federer and Novak Djokovic stamped their mark on the Australian Open on Tuesday with focused former champion Maria Sharapova also successfully negotiating the first round after her drug ban.

Defending champion Federer, rated as favourite to win his 20th Grand Slam title, made his entrance on Rod Laver Arena with a sizzling 6-3, 6-4, 6-3 lesson for Slovenia's Aljaz Bedene.

The second seeded Swiss, who is coming off an extraordinary 2017, when he won a fifth Australian Open title and a record eighth at Wimbledon, was in total control.

"I was thinking a lot about what happened at the tournament last year because it was my favourite tournament of the whole season," the 36-year-old, who beat Rafael Nadal in the 2017 final, said. "I'm hoping for it to go well again."

Twelve-time Grand Slam winner Djokovic has been out of action for six months with an elbow injury, but he too looked the goods in his 6-1, 6-2, 6-4 demolition of American Donald Young.

Gunning for a seventh Australian Open title, he was glad to be back at the coal face, having missed the competitive edge.

"I wanted to start with the right intensity, which I have," he told the cheering crowd afterwards. "I played perfect tennis in the first couple of sets and Donald came back in the third set."

Former Melbourne champion Stan Wawrinka also successfully returned from

half a year on the sidelines after knee surgery, having only decided he was fit to play at the weekend.

With the temperatures heating up, he was pushed to four sets by Ricardas Berankis before prevailing 6-3, 6-4, 2-6, 7-6 (7/2) in a tough workout he said was "proud" to come through.

World number one Simona Halep booked her place in round two, avoiding the first round exit that befell her in the past two years. But she made a meal of it against local hope Destanee Aiava.

Both the Romanian and her 17-year-old wildcard opponent needed on-court medical attention before the top seed ran out a battling 7-6 (7/5), 6-1 winner.

Third seeded Garbine Muguruza, with heavy strapping on her injured right thigh, made her tournament bow with a laboured 6-3, 6-3 win over wildcard Jessica Ponchet.

Sharapova, still working her way back from a 15-month ban for taking the performance-enhancing substance meldonium in Australia in 2016, showed glimpses of the tennis that made her a five-time major winner as she beat Germany's Tatjana Maria 6-1, 6-4 in her first Australian Open match in two years.

"I cherish these moments. I love it here," said the Russian, who returned from her drugs ban in April last year. "It's been a couple of years and I wanted it to be really meaningful to me."

But Canada's Milos Raonic, who has made at least the last eight over the past three years in Melbourne, was bundled out by 86th-ranked Slovakian Lukas Lacko in four sets. It was his earliest Grand Slam exit in seven years as he fights back from a wrist injury.

TRIUMPHANT RETURNS: Maria Sharapova (L) got a straightforward win on return to the Australian Open after two years following a drug ban, while Novak Djokovic looked close to his best in a straight-sets win after a six-month lay-off due to injury.

PHOTOS: REUTERS

An action-packed stoppage time

2011 champions Farashganj stun Brothers

SPORTS REPORTER



Defending champions Chittagong Abahani got off to a slow start in their Independence Cup campaign as they squandered the lead to play out a 1-1 draw against newcomers Saif SC at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

Substitute Mashuk Mia Jonny put Chittagong Abahani ahead two minutes into the second half added time before Jewel Rana converted from the spot in the very next minute to tie the opening match, which began 25 minutes behind schedule due to late arrival of the chief guest, information minister Hasanul Haq Inu.

The Independence Cup is said to be the stage for local footballers to prove themselves since foreign recruits are restricted from participating, but the players produced quite a frustrating performance as neither side could even string together more than five passes.

"Actually the players could not play their natural game due to fatigue as we have been playing domestic football for nearly one year. The performance could have been better had we been given a week's break before the start of the tournament,"

said Saif defender Ariful Islam.

On the other hand, Chittagong Abahani coach Julfiker Mahmud Mintu blamed the players' abilities for the poor show.

"Neither side could establish possession throughout the match because this group of players don't have such skill," Mahmud opined.

It seemed both teams were playing without a purpose, with the ball mostly confined to the midfield until the three-minute stoppage time.

Chittagong Abahani did, however, play comparatively better than Saif, who defeated the port-city outfit 3-0 in their second encounter of the Bangladesh Premier League, and

created a few scoring opportunities but the forwards failed to cash in.

Aside from the last gasp goals, the sole other notable attack in the game came in the very third minute when Saif winger Mohammad Ibrahim drove a low shot to the near post from outside the box, but only to have it blocked by Chittagong Abahani goalkeeper Ashraf Islam.

Mintu's charges could have taken the lead in regulation time had



Chittagong Abahani and Saif SC players engage in an aerial battle for possession during the opening fixture of the Independence Cup, which ended 1-1, at the BNS yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

midfielders Kawshik Barua and Abdullah, defenders Redwan Bin Rahman Rakin and Sushanta Tripura not wasted their chances either side of the break.

The port-city outfit eventually broke the deadlock two minutes into stoppage time when a weak clearance from a Saif player fell to the feet of Chittagong Jonny, who mustered a volley from the edge of the box to find the back of the net. One minute later though, Saif's Jewel converted a penalty after winger Ibrahim was brought down inside the box by Chittagong Abahani defenders Nurul Nayeem Faisal and Sushanta Tripura.

Meanwhile, former champions Farashganj stunned Brothers Union with a 2-1 defeat to all but confirm a quarterfinal berth in the day's second match. The 2011 champions will need a draw against Muktiyoddha Sangsad tomorrow to seal a last-eight berth.

Farhad Mona put Farashganj ahead in the 22nd minute with a tap-in after drive from Mohammad Alamgir was parried by goalkeeper Sujon Chowdhury. Mona doubled Farashganj's lead in the 84th minute with a powerful drive after being set up by defender Al Amin. Brothers forward Forward Bishal Das reduced the margin in the 89th minute with a header.

Sanchez deal hinges on Mkhi

AFP, London



Manchester United's bid to sign Alexis Sanchez from Arsenal hinges on Henrikh Mkhitaryan moving the other way, the Armenian player's agent said Tuesday as Antonio Conte distanced Chelsea from a potential deal.

United boss Jose Mourinho admitted on Monday that his side "have a chance" to sign Sanchez in the January transfer window, with previous suitors Manchester City understood to have pulled out of the race for the 29-year-old due to the cost involved.

There has been speculation Mkhitaryan will be offered as a makeweight from United to land Sanchez, and Mourinho left the playmaker out of the squad to face Stoke on Monday due to "doubts about his future".

Mkhitaryan's agent Mino Raiola told Britain's Times newspaper that Sanchez's transfer to United was reliant on his client joining Arsenal as part of the deal.

"Manchester United are not going to sign Sanchez unless Mkhi agrees to join Arsenal," Raiola told the newspaper. "Mkhi is going to do what is best for him. He has two-and-a-half years left on his contract so it's his decision. Sanchez is part of the Mkhi deal, not the other way around."

United's hopes of completing the deal without any further complications received a boost as Conte told a press conference he did not think the club were trying to sign Sanchez.

Earlier, Old Trafford boss Mourinho, speaking after second-placed United had reduced Premier League table-toppers City's lead to 12 points on Monday with a 3-0 win against Stoke City, said it would be "great" if Sanchez arrived at Old Trafford though he remained non-committal.

"No news on Alexis Sanchez, he is an Arsenal player," he said. "If he stays it's great for Arsenal, if he comes to us, great for us, if he goes to another club, great for them."

Pele backs Brazil for sixth

AFP, Rio de Janeiro



Footballing legend Pele said on Monday that Brazil are favourites to win the World Cup in Russia, four years on from their humiliation on home soil.

Pele insisted that new coach Tite has formed a team ready to put his country's painful memories to rest.

"Those who are Brazilian and believe in Brazil always point to Brazil as the favourites," the 77-year-old said while attending the opening ceremony of the Rio de Janeiro league.

The Selecao romped to qualification as

winners of the South American group, with Tite building an exciting side.

"One of the good things that happened was the arrival of Tite, he's making a team," Pele added. "In the last World Cup we had the best players in the world but the team was disorganised. It seems that now we'll have a team and a Selecao that gives us confidence."

Pele also claimed that modern football produces fewer great players than in his era, despite the presence of Lionel Messi, Cristiano Ronaldo and Neymar.

"Today, there are only three players who really stand out; Messi, Cristiano Ronaldo and Neymar," he said.

"Before, at the time of Cruyff or Beckenbauer, there were three in each team."

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:

Grandhomme seals Black Caps win over Pakistan

Big-hitting Colin de Grandhomme blasted New Zealand to a five-wicket win over Pakistan in the fourth one-day international in Hamilton. Grandhomme bludgeoned the Pakistan attack with an unbeaten 74 off 40 balls to reinvigorate New Zealand's run chase.

Sanchez 'great' for United: Mourinho

Jose Mourinho said it would be "great" if Arsenal's Alexis Sanchez became a Manchester United player as Manchester City's interest in the Chilean reportedly came to an end. Sanchez, 29, looks to have played his last game for Arsenal.



PHOTO: COLLECTED



Organisers and sponsors officially unveil the title sponsorship of the Dhaka Open 2018, a golf tournament to be sanctioned jointly by BPGA, ADT and PGTI, at the Kurmitola Golf Club yesterday. The three-day event will begin on January 24.

Nurul's ton keeps Razzak waiting

SPORTS REPORTER



Nurul Hasan hit a robust century as Prime Bank South Zone posted an impressive first-innings total of 448 on the second day of their Bangladesh Cricket League game against Walton Central Zone at the BKSP in Savar yesterday.

But experienced left-arm spinner Abdur Razzak was kept waiting in his bid to reach the 500-wicket mark, a feat no other bowler has achieved before in the country's first-class circuit, as he was able to bowl only three overs when Central started their chase and finished the day on 14 without loss in the seven overs they faced.

Razzak, on 499, opened the bowling for South in an attempt to complete the unique feat a day after teammate Tushar Imran became the first cricketer to have reached the 10,000-run milestone. But Razzak had to be content with having another crack at history today, after bad light stopped play ahead of schedule.

Earlier, wicketkeeper-batsman Nurul pulled his side up from an uncomfortable 179-5 with some brilliant strokeplay in his 129-ball 133. The tall right hander hit 15 boundaries and three sixes before



NURUL HASAN... 133

becoming the eighth batsmen out at 406. Al-Amin, who shared 82 runs for the sixth wicket with Nurul, scored a fine 52.

South resumed the day on 108-2. Opener Shahriar Nafees added 27 runs to his overnight score of 53 while milestoneman Tushar got out for 56. Left-arm pace bowler Abu Hider and lanky right-arm fast bowler Ebadat Hossain picked up three wickets each for Central.

Away at the Sylhet International Stadium, East Zone wagged a long tail to take a crucial 24-run first-innings

lead against North Zone.

Resuming the day on 24-4 in reply to North's 187, they slipped to 66-6 before two vital stands, including 60 runs for the last wicket between Mehedi Hasan -- who scored an unbeaten 46 that contained fixes against no boundaries -- and number eleven Khaled Ahmed (26).

Yasir Ali scored 45 and was involved in a 65-run seventh wicket stand with off-spinner Shohag Gazi, who chipped in with 30.

North however wiped out the deficit without any damage as their openers Nazmul Hossain (16) and Mizanur Rahman carefully negotiated the early onslaught to finish the day on 36 for no loss.

SCORES IN BRIEF

PRIME BANK SOUTH ZONE V WALTON CENTRAL ZONE
SOUTH ZONE: 448 all out in 115.4 overs (Nafees 80, Tushar 56, Mosaddek 17, Al-Amin 52, Nurul 133, Ziaur 22, Razzak 23, Al-Amin Hossain 24 not out; Haider 3-100, Ebadat 3-87, Mosharrif 2-128)
CENTRAL ZONE: 14 for no loss in 7 overs (Shadman 10 not out, Robiul 2 not out)
ISLAMI BANK EAST ZONE V BCB NORTH ZONE
NORTH ZONE: 187 and 36 for no loss in 7 overs (Nazmul 16 not out, Mizanur 19 not out)
EAST ZONE: 211 all out in 63.4 overs (Zakir 27, Yasir 45, Shohag 30, Mehedi 46 not out, Khaled 26; Shafiqul 3-68, Farhad 3-47, Ariful 3-44)