

**CHANNEL 9 & STAR SPORTS SELECT 1**  
**Indian Premier League**  
 Kolkata v Punjab  
 Live from 4:30pm  
 Bangalore v Delhi  
 Live from 8:30pm  
**STAR SPORTS SELECT 2**  
**English Premier League**

**West Brom v Liverpool**  
 Live from 5:30pm  
**Watford v Crystal Palace**  
 Live from 8:00pm  
**TEN 1**  
**FA Cup**  
 Tottenham v Man United  
 Live from 10:15pm

**TEN 2**  
**La Liga**  
 Eibar v Getafe  
 Live from 5:00pm  
 Celta Vigo v Espanyol  
 Live from 8:15pm



The Bangladesh players warm down on the court after a training session under the supervision of coach Alipour Aroji yesterday, ahead of today's opening match of the Bangabandhu Asian Senior Men's Central Zone International Volleyball Championship at the Shaheed Suhrawardi Indoor Stadium in Mirpur.

PHOTO: STAR

## No room for error

AFP, Madrid



Barcelona and Sevilla will know the success of their respective seasons is on the line when they go head to head in the Copa del Rey final on Saturday.

The Cup would certainly have been third on Barca's list of priorities only a month ago, but the shattering Champions League defeat to Roma has altered perceptions of what might have otherwise been a stellar campaign.

Unbeaten in La Liga and virtually certain to win the title, a domestic double may not be enough to remove the lingering disappointment from Rome, particularly if arch rivals Real Madrid clinch their third consecutive European crown.

Another surprise loss this weekend would certainly settle the argument, even if it seems strange to declare a team under pressure six days after they marked the longest unbeaten run in La Liga history.

In moulding his team around organisation, hard work and the irreplaceable Lionel Messi, Barcelona coach Ernesto Valverde has steered this team away from the club's more free-flowing, attacking traditions. He has proven a master of extraction, drawing the very best from a squad that unexpectedly lost one of its star strikers in Neymar last summer, and owns far less talent than its predecessors.

Sevilla has fewer questions to answer in terms of entertainment. Since Vincenzo Montella took charge in December, they have beaten Atletico Madrid, twice, Manchester United and drawn with Bayern Munich and Barcelona.

While Barca, the defending champions, are chasing their 30th Copa del Rey triumph in the Wanda Metropolitan stadium's first tournament final, Sevilla are bidding to win their sixth, and first since 2010.

## Hosts eye winning start

SPORTS REPORTER

Hosts Bangladesh are looking forward to making a winning start in the Bangabandhu Asian Senior Men's Central Zone International Volleyball Championship when they take on Nepal in the opening match at the Shaheed Suhrawardi Indoor Stadium in Mirpur today.

Bangladesh beat Nepal in group stages on way to clinching the title in the second edition of the championship at home in 2016, but they lost against the same opposition in Kathmandu in two friendly matches last year.

The hosts, who skipped the third edition of the championship in Maldives last year, have set their sights on regaining the title by taking home advantage and implementing new techniques that they have been trying to adopt under Iranian coach

Alipour Aroji.

The absence of injured Al Zahir is a blow for the home side, even though Mohammed Kaiser Hamid looks like an able replacement for him.

"Zahir played well last time but this time he is not in the squad due to illness. It would have been better had he been in the squad. But we are confident we can play well even without him," Kaiser said. "I am ready to take the role of Zahir because I have been playing volleyball since 2009."

"Our strategy in the championship overall will be to play defensive but we will play all-out against Nepal. If we can make a good start, our confidence will be boosted and we can carry the momentum till the end," continued Kaiser, who missed the 2016 edition due to a shoulder injury.

Explaining the reasons behind the defensive strategy, Kaiser said, "It is easy to collect points from a defensive strategy because you can earn points

straight by blocking opponents while you need three steps to get points from an attacking strategy. Besides, the height of the Central Asian players is more than ours, so it will be wiser for us to block them instead of going on the offensive."

Nepal, who finished third in the last edition, are also confident about making a winning start. They have had a good preparation in Denmark ahead of this tournament.

"Last year, we won a bronze medal in Maldives and this time we want to win a gold medal because all the teams are equal in terms of strength," Nepal coach Jagadish Prasad said. "We have been playing against Bangladesh over the last 10 years. Bangladesh and Nepal are on the same level."

Prasad informed that they have played against Denmark, Hong Kong, Macau and Bangladesh as part of their preparations, winning all of those matches.

## Rausis to coach again

SPORTS REPORTER

Latvian Grand Master Igor Rausis is all set to take charge of the Bangladesh chess team for the fifth time ahead of the 43rd Chess Olympiad, which will be held in Georgia from September 23 to October 6.

Rausis, who is now representing the Czech Republic, is scheduled to arrive next month to start his three-month contract effective from June. The 57-year-old GM, who had earlier coached Bangladesh in 2000, 2002, 2007 and 2008, will conduct training for both men's and women's teams as well as promising young players.

Bangladesh Chess Federation took the decision to rope in Rausis after getting a promise of Tk one crore from Bangladesh Cricket Board.

## Juanmi brace dents Atletico hopes

AFP, Madrid



A brace from late substitute Juanmi sealed a precious 3-0 win for Real Sociedad on Thursday to virtually end Atletico Madrid's fading hopes of challenging for the Spanish league title.

With a 12-point deficit to Barcelona, Atletico were already facing an uphill task to overhaul the runaway La Liga leaders.

Now with only five games remaining, Diego Simeone's men would be forgiven for focusing their remaining efforts on making sure they finish second ahead of Real Madrid -- now just three points adrift -- and their bid to win the Europa League.

Atletico face Arsenal in the semifinals of Europe's second tier competition next week.

Simeone warned on Tuesday his side would have to start improving if they were to stop star striker Antoine Griezmann from being lured to a rival club. Barcelona and England's Premier League are, according to

reports, his favoured destinations.

And after this performance, the Argentine should have even more reason for concern.

Although well clear of the relegation zone, this match was a matter of pride for Sociedad -- and the hosts made it show on their way to handing Atletico only their fourth league defeat of the campaign.

Livelier from the outset, Sociedad took a 27th minute lead when William Jose pounced on a delivery from Belgian Adnan Januzaj to beat Jan Oblak down low.

Two minutes later Griezmann produced his first real threat, but the French forward's left-footed effort from inside the area sailed high and wide.

The hosts responded well, Aritz Elustondo, and Sergio Canales, twice, testing Oblak's reflexes before the half-time interval.

Simeone replaced Angel Correa with veteran Fernando Torres for the second half, but the former Liverpool striker failed to conjure up the magic.

## WHAT THEY SAID

"It is great testament to his talent, professionalism and determination that he has been able to dedicate 22 years of his life to a job that he loves. He is, without doubt, one of the greatest Premier League managers and I am proud to have been a rival, a colleague and a friend to such a great man."

--Sir Alex Ferguson

"Arsene Wenger has all my respect. The Premier League is the Premier League because of him and what he has done."

--Pep Guardiola

"I always say for some the memory is short but the real football people don't have short memories. If he is happy with the decision I am really happy and I hope he doesn't retire from football."

--Jose Mourinho

"I will never forget his guidance and support, his tutelage and mentorship. He had faith in me from day one and I owe him a lot, he was like a father figure to me who always pushed me to be the best. Arsene, you deserve all the respect and happiness in the world. #classact"

--Cesc Fabregas

"He used to make you believe you were the best player in the world. The team has to win the Europa League, it would be an amazing achievement and Arsene has never won in Europe before, so it would be a great way to give him a good exit."

--Thierry Henry

# Wenger's legacy soured by slide

AFP, London



Arsene Wenger announced his arrival as a revolutionary force in England by overhauling a culture of booze and bad diets but the Frenchman's inability to maintain his own high standards prompted a parting of the ways.

Arguably the most significant agent of change in the Premier League era, the 68-year-old's achievements in revitalising both Arsenal and English football will be celebrated in his final few weeks in charge.

But for many Arsenal fans his exit is not before time after 14 years without winning the Premier League and facing the real possibility the Gunners could miss out on Champions League football for a second consecutive season.

### ARSENAL WHO?

Few overseas stars plied their trade in England at the time when Wenger left Japan's Nagoya Grampus Eight to join Arsenal in 1996. Tabloid headlines sneered "Arsene who?" while Wenger's professional looks were easy fodder for doubting fans and some cynical members of an old-school squad.

Given Wenger had no Premier League experience and first came to Arsenal vice-chairman David Dein's attention not for his managerial acumen but for his skill at charades during a dinner party, it was a significant gamble by both parties to let the Frenchman loose on English football.

It proved a masterstroke and, after coming third in the Premier League in Wenger's first season, Arsenal never finished outside the top two for the next eight years.

Overhauling Arsenal's dietary and fitness regimes and introducing sports science and data analysis with remarkable results, Wenger was feted as the most innovative manager of his generation.

"Nutrition was a big deal for Arsene," said former Arsenal defender Martin Keown. "We started feeling superhuman during games, fitter and stronger than ever."

## FACTFILE

### CLUBS

Nancy (1984-87/FRA), Monaco (1987-94/FRA), Nagoya Grampus Eight (1995-96/JPN), Arsenal (1996-2018/ENG)

### HONOURS

Ligue 1: 1987-88  
 French Cup: 1990-91  
 Emperor's Cup: 1995  
 J-League Super Cup: 1996  
 Premier League (3): 1997-98, 2001-02, 2003-04  
 FA Cup (7): 1997-98, 2001-02, 2002-03, 2004-05, 2013-14, 2014-15, 2016-17  
 Community Shield (7): 1998, 1998, 2002, 2004, 2014, 2015, 2017

### INDIVIDUAL AWARDS

J-League Manager of the Year: 1995  
 Premier League Manager of the Year: 1998, 2002, 2004  
 League Managers' Association (LMA) Manager of the Year: 2002, 2004

In his early days in charge, Wenger also had the right recipe in the cut-throat world of the transfer market.

His knowledge of the French market saw Patrick Vieira, Nicolas Anelka and Emmanuel Petit arrive as unknowns and leave as superstars, while he rescued Dutch forward Dennis Bergkamp and Arsenal's all-time leading scorer Thierry Henry from difficult spells in Italy to form the most fearsome strike partnership in the club's history.

During that golden period, Arsenal won three Premier League titles and four FA Cups with a smooth-passing style that raised



standards in a league previously more enamoured of a physical game.

The high point of Wenger's era came in 2003-04 when Arsenal's "Invincibles" became only the second side ever to go undefeated in the English top-flight.

Two years later they came as close as Wenger ever did to European glory in losing the Champions League final 2-1 to Barcelona.

### EMIRATES A FALSE DAWN

That season was also Arsenal's last at Highbury and proved to be the turning point in Wenger's reign as the promise that

moving to the 60,000-capacity Emirates Stadium would allow the club to compete financially with the biggest spenders in England and the continent failed to materialise.

Henry left to fulfil his dream of winning the Champions League at Barcelona, paving the way for a succession of stars developed by Wenger such as Cesc Fabregas and Robin van Persie to also turn their back on their mentor to go and win trophies elsewhere.

Confronted by the new-found wealth of Chelsea and Manchester City, Arsenal never finished higher than third between 2005-06 and 2014-15.

### 'WENGER OUT'

Qualification for the Champions League for 19 straight seasons kept Wenger in a job, as did a run of three FA Cup wins in the past four years to end a nine-year trophy drought.

However, Arsenal fans' frustrations at their failure to go toe-to-toe with their main rivals in the Premier League and Champions League continued to simmer, with "Wenger Out" banners becoming commonplace.

That run of Champions League qualification came to an end last season and Arsenal are on course for their worst-ever Premier League finish under Wenger as they sit in sixth, 33 points behind champions Manchester City and 14 off north London rivals Tottenham.

The fans have spoken with their feet in recent weeks with swathes of empty seats for home games against City, Watford, Stoke and Southampton.

Wenger does though have one last shot at a happy ending. Winning the Europa League would end his wait for a European trophy and qualify Arsenal for next season's Champions League in the process.

By announcing his departure now, he will hope to have united the fanbase for the first leg of their semi-final against Spanish giants Atletico Madrid next week.

"I urge our fans to stand behind the team to finish on a high," said Wenger.

## 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:

### Liverpool goal ace Salah in no mood to slacken off

Mohamed Salah has made clear to Jurgen Klopp he wants as many games as possible to try to create Liverpool goalscoring history as they prepare to travel to bottom of the Premier League table West Bromwich Albion.

### European lawmakers demand Russia World Cup boycott

A group of EU lawmakers on Friday urged the bloc's leaders to boycott this year's football World Cup in Russia to protest over Moscow's "mockery of European values". The 60 MEPs said all European Union countries should follow the lead of Britain and non-EU member Iceland.

### Half a billion pounds: Report reveals record Premier League club profits

English Premier League clubs enjoyed record profits last season, according to a report published Friday by financial consultants Deloitte. The report said the Premier League made a collective pre-tax profit of £0.5 billion.