

# What to WATCH

**BTV & CHANNEL 9**  
SAFF Championship  
Nepal v Bhutan  
Live from 4:00pm  
Bangladesh v Pakistan  
Live from 7:00pm

**STAR SPORTS SELECT 1**  
US Open  
Semifinals  
Live from 4:00am (Friday)

**DAY'S EVENT**  
SAFF Championship  
Nepal v Bhutan  
Live from 4:00pm  
Bangladesh v Pakistan  
Time: 7:00pm  
Venue: Bangabandhu National Stadium

## SATISFACTION FROM ROOT, KOHLI?

Rolling Stones lead singer Mick Jagger will donate 20,000 pounds to charity Chance to Shine for each England or Indian century or five-wicket haul during the fifth and final Test at The Oval starting from Friday. His pledge also includes 10,000 pounds for every half-century or three-wicket haul. "I follow England - the game in general, in fact - from wherever I am in the world and thought this would be a fun way to make some money for Chance to Shine," said Jagger. "It's been an exciting series that has got people talking cricket so let's reflect that; with every inspiring performance comes a new fan and the younger those fans are, the better it is for cricket's future." "No pressure on either Joe Root's guys or Virat Kohli's -- though the bigger they go at The Oval the better." --AGENCIES



Bangladesh's catching practice took a mischievous turn as giggling players were pushing the catcher, presumably to sharpen focus on the descending ball, at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

PHOTO: BCB

# 'No substitute for performance'

SPORTS REPORTER



Will Liton Das be able to seize his opportunity and solve a long-standing problem? The answer was very simple and straightforward to the right-hander -- only good performances will make him Tamim Iqbal's permanent opening partner. The 23-year-old batsman has already provided evidence about his ability and his stroke-making prowess allied with good defence has been cause for optimism. The question now is whether he can learn the craft of transforming good starts to big knocks. "It's actually a good opportunity. I have been out of the one-day team for long, so I will try my best to do well if I get a chance," said Liton, who played his last ODI in South Africa in October last year, while talking to reporters at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday. Liton was well aware of the challenge in front of him, but knew that he would need to grab this opportunity. "Now there is nothing better than the performance. You want runs and I also want runs," said Liton.

"Those who are big cricketers can prolong their innings if they get the start. I still cannot be bracketed with the big cricketers, which is why I could not play the big knocks but I am trying my best to make something big happen," he added. Liton said that he loves his style of batting as an attacking batsman and wants to establish himself with his natural characteristics. "I am now working on perfection in all shots. It will not be enough for you only to stay at the middle; you also have to score runs, but the shot selection is important and I am working on it," he said. He was not thinking about a permanent place but instead focusing on the challenges in the Asia Cup, especially looking forward to the group matches against Sri Lanka and Afghanistan. Liton also opined that the experience of playing the quick bowlers in South Africa and West Indies will make it easier to handle pacers in the Asia Cup and that he was also not worried about the leg-spin of Afghanistan's Rashid Khan because the 50-over format suits the Tigers most.

# Shakib's fitness a contentious issue

SPORTS REPORTER

There has been a lot of drama over Bangladesh Test and T20I skipper Shakib Al Hasan's injury, which he sustained during the tri-nation ODI series in January this year, as the all-rounder said he was still experiencing problems in his left little finger with just 10 days to go for the Asia Cup opener against Sri Lanka on September 15.



"I still have pain in my hand, so honestly I don't know how I would bat or bowl. I am out of practice for some time so I have no idea." **Shakib Al Hasan**



"If Shakib feels need for change, he can inform or the concerned department can inform the selectors and the needful will be done." **Nizamuddin Chowdhury BCB CEO**

than a physical issue and even if he plays with the current situation it's not that it will have a big damage. But if he does not feel comfortable, then it's difficult for a player to play. Overall, the decision is totally up to Shakib," Debashish told The Daily Star yesterday. Meanwhile, chief selector Minhajul Abedin said that he still has not heard the latest about Shakib's injury. "We have no idea about his current injury situation as he played in the West Indies by taking injections to reduce the pain, and was supposed to undergo surgery after the Asia Cup. I don't want to make any comment without knowing the fact. But obviously, it's always challenging for the selectors when a player like Shakib is carrying such an injury," said Minhajul. When asked whether the board is aware of Shakib's current situation, BCB CEO Nizamuddin Chowdhury said: "Chief selector is involved in the selection process and he will be in touch with the concerned authorities and communicate accordingly. When a final squad is given you should consider that it's given after discussions and considering any problems of the player. If there is any need for further change or if Shakib feels, he can inform or the physio or the concerned department can inform the selectors and then the needful will be done."

## Injury scare for Nazmul

SPORTS REPORTER

Young left-hander Nazmul Hossain Shanto suffered an injury on his right index finger during slip catching practice at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday. The 20-year-old, who was named in Bangladesh's 15-member squad for this month's Asia Cup, immediately left the field with the upper part of his index finger dislocated. The physio later put the finger in place and bandaged it. "The upper part of Nazmul's finger was dislocated from its usual position. As there was no fracture witnessed, there is nothing to worry about and he was asked to rest. We will remove the bandage after two days," Bangladesh Cricket Board's chief physician Debashish Chowdhury said. If the injury is more serious than thought and Nazmul is forced to miss the tournament starting on September 15 in the UAE, left-hander Mominul Haque -- who made a return to limited-overs cricket on the recent A team tour of Ireland -- will be one of the possible replacements.

# 'I have to be in the top three'

Griezmann says of Ballon d'Or

AFP, Paris



France star Antoine Griezmann insists he deserves to be on the podium for this year's Ballon d'Or after winning the World Cup and major silverware with Atletico Madrid. Griezmann came third in 2016 in the voting behind Cristiano Ronaldo and Lionel Messi for the most prestigious individual award in football, despite not winning anything. That year was agonising for the forward as he lost the Euro 2016 final with France and the Champions League final with Atletico. But this season fortune has smiled on Griezmann, who starred in France's triumphant World Cup winning campaign in Russia after an impressive year at Atletico, who won the Europa League and UEFA Super Cup. "Comparing 2016 and this year, for me I have to be in the top three," the 27-year-old said. "In 2016, I lost two finals and was in the top three. This time I have won three finals." Asked if not winning it would be unfair, Griezmann replied: "Not unfair, but I would wonder what more I could do. I have won three trophies, stood out at decisive moments, but it is not me who votes." However, there are signs that Griezmann's glorious 2018 on the field might not be enough. UEFA gave their award for the best player of last season to Luka Modric, skipper of the Croatia side that reached the World Cup final and a Champions League winner with Real. And Griezmann was omitted, along with the rest of his France teammates, from the final three nominees for FIFA's player of the year award. Asked about the FIFA snub, Griezmann replied that "it's bizarre, and a shame. It is a trophy given out by FIFA, isn't it?" "And the World Cup is organised by FIFA, right? We win the World Cup, and there is no French player there. That is their choice but it is surprising that there is no world champion."

# Bagelled Nadal survives

REUTERS, New York

Defending champion Rafa Nadal failed to win a single game in the opening set of his US Open quarterfinal against Dominic Thiem on Tuesday but fought back to beat the Austrian 0-6, 6-4, 7-5, 6-7(4), 7-6(5) in a match that ended after 2:00am in New York. Nadal struggled with the high humidity, with Thiem becoming the first to 'bagel' the Spaniard at Flushing Meadows since Andy Roddick 14 years ago. "It's been a great battle," an exhausted Nadal said. "The conditions were tough, very humid for me." "I'm very sorry for Dominic," Nadal added. "He's a close friend on tour, a great guy and I wish him the very best ... He is young and has plenty of time to win tournaments."

In the women's circuit, Serena Williams powered her way to within two victories of a seventh title and while she refused to look ahead there are many willing to do it for her, and what they see is a suddenly open path to a 24th Grand Slam. "I'd been a couple steps away at the last Grand Slam, so I'm definitely not ahead of myself," said Williams. "I still know that no matter whether I'm in the semi-finals or the finals, I have a really long way to go to win that." Meanwhile, Naomi Osaka became the first Japanese woman in 22 years to reach the semifinals of a Grand Slam when she defeated Lesia Tsurenko 6-1, 6-1 in the last-eight. Osaka wasn't born when compatriot Kimiko Date made the Wimbledon semifinals in 1996 but now the 20-year-old has the opportunity to go one better by reaching a maiden Grand Slam final.

Rafael Nadal survived a stern test from Dominic Thiem, who stunned the US Open holder with a perfect first set. However, Nadal eventually triumphed in the four-hour-49-minute battle yesterday.



PHOTO: COLLECTED

## 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:

**Croatia take on Ronaldo-less Portugal**  
Still riding the wave of their historic World Cup run, Croatia are heading for a potential reality check as their new season starts with a friendly against Portugal in Faro on Thursday.

**The daggers are out for Ravi Shastri**  
Many media reports claimed that Anil Kumble and not Shastri was the first choice for India head coach. It seems that after 3-1 Test series defeat against England away from home, the daggers are finally out.

**Barca under pressure after Messi's title talk**  
Barcelona forward Luis Suarez has said that Barcelona are under pressure this season to win after Lionel Messi promised the supporters that the team will win the Champions League back from Real Madrid.



Sporting the newly-acquired second star on their shirt, the French national team recreated their now famous pre-match pose at training in Clairefontaine yesterday. The World Cup champions will take on Germany today in the UEFA Nations League.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

# Pogba welcome at Barca: Suarez

AFP, Barcelona

Luis Suarez believes Paul Pogba should be challenging for more trophies than he is at Manchester United and would always be welcome at Barcelona. Pogba has endured a turbulent two years since returning to Old Trafford for a then world-record fee of 105 million euros and his relationship with coach Jose Mourinho has become strained. The 25-year-old rediscovered his

best form away from his club, for France in the summer, when he inspired Les Bleus to World Cup glory in Russia, beating Uruguay and Suarez on the way. But since Alex Ferguson retired in 2013, United have failed to go close in either the Premier League or Champions League, while Barca have won three La Ligas in that time and the Champions League once. "Pogba is an elite player who has won everything and we always want to have the best," Suarez told RAC1 on Tuesday.

"He is a player that has a lot of quality and who is one of the key players at United, and I think he would like to compete for more than he is competing for now. "But that's how it is, he does not belong to Barcelona but he will always be welcome." One Champions League crown in five years, however, represents a disappointing return for Barca, particularly while rivals Real Madrid have dominated the tournament, winning it three times in a row.