



**CHANNEL 9**  
SAFF Suzuki Cup  
India v Maldives  
Live from 7:00pm  
**STARSPORTS SELECT 1**  
Asia Cup

**SAFF Suzuki Cup**  
India v Maldives

**Bangladesh v Sri Lanka**  
Live from 5:30pm  
**STARSPORTS SELECT 2**  
English Premier League  
Tottenham v Liverpool  
Live from 5:30pm

**Man City v Fulham**  
Live from 8:00pm  
**Watford v Man United**  
Live from 10:30pm  
**STARSPORTS 2**  
English Premier League

**Newcastle v Arsenal**  
Live from 8:00pm  
**Bundesliga**  
Monchengladbach v Schalke  
Live from 10:30pm

**TEN 1**  
**Serie A**  
Inter Milan v Parma  
Live from 7:00pm  
**Napoli v Fiorentina**  
Live from 10:00pm

Time: 7:00pm  
Venue: Bangabandhu National Stadium

AFC U-16 Women's C'ship Qualifiers  
UAE v Vietnam

Time: 11:30am  
Lebanon v Bahrain

Time: 3:30pm  
Venue: BSSMMK



Maldives (L) and India geared up for today's SAFF Suzuki Cup final with practice sessions at the Sheikh Jamal Dhanmondi Club ground yesterday. While the Islanders will be looking to end their long drought in South Asian football, India would want to continue their dominance of regional football.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

## India's dominance or Maldives' revenge?

ATIQUE ANAM



Maldives' under-fire coach Petar Segrt said it would be eleven versus eleven when his team take on seven-time champions and favourites India in the final of the SAFF Suzuki Cup today.

While addressing media in the pre-final press conference at the BFF House yesterday, the Croatia-born German also said that his team would turn up with a performance similar to that against Nepal and not the group-match performances.

Maldives struggled through the group stages and only made it to the semifinal by dint of coin toss to deny

Sri Lanka after collecting a single point from their two group matches. The coach was lambasted by the Maldives media, who also made claims of a rebellion following such insipid performances. However, the Islanders turned on the style as they dispatched on-form Nepal 3-0 in the semifinals to set up the final clash against the defending champions.

"We have only 300,000 people in Maldives with only 375 registered footballers. India has a population of 1.3 billion or more. But on the pitch tomorrow it will be 11 Maldivians playing against 11 Indians," Segrt said.

Segrt would be looking to rewrite history against India as he was on the losing side, not only during the group stages of this edition, but also in the

We didn't know whether we would be in the final but we knew we would fight for wins. We won the title two years ago and came here to retain it. We have had good preparation and we will play to win tomorrow.

INDIA CAPTAIN SHUBHASHISH BOSE

final of the previous edition when he was in charge of Afghanistan.

"In the semifinal against Nepal we showed a different face from the

group stages and I believe we will show this face again in the final. Tomorrow will be a difficult game, but we hope we can cause some sensation," said the 52-year-old, urging Bangladeshi people to cheer for his side as the 'smaller team' in the final.

India's long-serving coach Stephen Constantine gave the opposition respect, but was confident that his young charges can defend the title that Sunil Chhetri and Co. had regained from Afghanistan two years ago at home.

"I have said before that we didn't come here to lose. We came here only to win the tournament. I think we have played well enough and we deserve to be in the final," said the

We were struggling in the group stage; finally we made it into the final. This is going to be our biggest chance in nine years. Our team is well prepared for the final and we will fight for the country and the people.

MALDIVES CAPTAIN AKRAM ABDUL GHANEE

Englishman while trying to vindicate the decision to field an under-23 team in this competition.

India enjoy a dominance over

Maldives as well as any other team in the South Asian region as far as history is concerned. The blue shirts met the Maldivians three times in the final of the competition, winning twice and losing once. More importantly, the last time the two teams met in the final in Dhaka, India had fielded an under-23 side, yet ran out 3-1 winners in the penalty shootout. The players may not be the same this time, but his young brigade will have the last laugh yet again, hoped Constantine.

"We have a good record against Sri Lanka and Maldives. It's not the same teams. We beat them in the group stage but this is the final and you know anything can happen in the final. They will work hard, we will work hard. Hopefully we win," he said.

## Jose attacks media over Rashford

AFP, Manchester

Manchester United manager Jose Mourinho turned on the media once more on Friday as he launched a detailed defence of his use of England international striker Marcus Rashford.

The 20-year-old forward impressed for the Three Lions over the international break as he started, and scored, against both Spain and Switzerland.

That led to questions over whether Mourinho was making the most of Rashford's abilities as he has struggled to hold down a regular place in the United side where he faces stiff competition from Romelu Lukaku, Alexis Sanchez and Anthony Martial.

Rashford will definitely be missing when Mourinho's men travel to Watford on Saturday, though, as he begins a three-match ban after being sent-off against Burnley before the international break.

"I think I can expect that Sunday I'm going to be highly criticised for not playing him tomorrow because some of the boys are really obsessed with me and, some of them, they have I think a problem with some compulsive lies," said Mourinho.

The Portuguese coach then reeled off a stream of statistics detailing Rashford's 105 appearances in Mourinho's first two seasons in charge before pointedly suggesting other managers should be quizzed for their use of young English players.

"Marcus Rashford is not Dominic Solanke, he's not Ruben Loftus-Cheek, he's not Dominic Calvert-Lewin.

"He's Marcus Rashford, Manchester United player, with an incredible number of appearances and an incredible number of minutes played at the highest level in the best possible competitions."



## Tigers catch the salt virus

SPORTS REPORTER from Dubai

**ASIA CUP UAE 2018** On the tour of Zimbabwe in 2013, then Bangladesh

spin bowling coach and former Pakistan off-spin legend Saqlain Mushtaq bemoaned the team's lack of adventurism. He talked about how the Pakistan teams he played in used to go out and embrace the local culture on tour, while the Bangladesh team he was coaching in 2013 seemed under house arrest inside hotel rooms, the only excursions being to the hotel swimming pool, dining areas or nearby restaurants.

He is no longer associated with Bangladesh cricket but he probably would be happy to know that the Tigers have started to change their stripes in this regard. On Thursday night in Dubai, they not only ventured out of the comfort of their hotel and surrounding attractions in Dubai's Festival City to Jumeira Beach, but dined at a restaurant that has had eager visitors as varied and famous as Cristiano Ronaldo, Diego Maradona, Karim Benzema, Roger Federer, P Diddy, James Corden and Al Pacino.

The meat-lovers' paradise is

called Nusr-Et, named after Nusret Gokce -- or Salt Bae as people familiar with viral sensations may know them. The Turkish butcher shot to fame in January 2017 when a YouTube video of him dramatically sprinkling salt on his culinary creation went viral, spawning countless memes and many more viral videos.

The son of a mine worker, Salt Bae has 12 restaurants around the world -- two in UAE, seven in Turkey, two in the USA and one in Qatar -- and they are widely sought after by ordinary and famous foodies alike.

10 of the Bangladesh squad treated their palates to the tenderest meat imaginable, as can be seen in a YouTube video of Diego Maradona gaping in amazement as Nusret -- in appearance a cross between Antonio Banderas and Arjun Rampal -- pulled out the ribs from a steak without the slightest bit of resistance.

It is also a restaurant full of whimsy. Waiters wander about with dry ice and pour the smoke randomly over diners. Mahmudullah Riyad's Instagram video shows a beaming Mushfiqur Rahim doused in the white smoke, all the while trying to capture the moment on his smartphone. Meat is cooked at the

table not over fire, but on plates bearing scalding hot oil. Other waiters walk through juggling knives that they just used to expertly carve the meat, lending the experience that element of danger that induces exhilaration among the guests.

Diners at the restaurant were probably over the moon when Ronaldo stopped by on August 3 to have a piece of aged beef with his name on it, but the relatively lesser lights of the Bangladesh cricketers also attracted selfie seekers on Thursday.

While Mashrafe and Co did have a blast, they just missed out on Salt Bae in the flesh as he had left the restaurant in the evening. Instead, they had to settle for pretty good imitations of the famed sprinkle.

Regardless, the excursion itself is heartening development because, as Saqlain perhaps meant to say, it is important to have fun while touring in order to lessen the effects of being away from home. The best touring sides -- Steve Waugh's Australia comes to mind -- had this attitude and it translated onto the pitch. It will bode well for the sated Tigers if they can bring some of the salt into their Asia Cup opener against Sri Lanka tomorrow.

## AFC U-16 WOMEN'S CHAMPIONSHIP QUALIFIERS Girls face stern test

SPORTS REPORTER



Two years ago the girls in red and green entered a new era after emerging as champions in one of four qualifier groups to advance into the final round of the AFC U-16 Championships. Now, they will have a new test in the same stage of the qualifying tournament, which gets underway at the Birsreshtha Shaheed Mostafa Kamal Stadium in Kamalapur today.

In the tournament's new format there will be two phases of qualifiers, where 30 nations, split into six groups, will play Round-1. From there, six group champions and the two best runners-up will enter the eight-team Round-2 to be held next year. Finally, four teams from Round-2 will join last edition's champions North Korea, runners-up South Korea, third-finishing Japan and hosts Thailand in the tournament proper.

In 2016, Bangladesh emerged as group champions by defeating Chinese Taipei, Iran, UAE, Kyrgyzstan and Singapore. However, this time the hosts will have to contend with unknown rivals such as Vietnam, Lebanon and Bahrain in a tough Group F. UAE are the only familiar face in their group.

Like their Bangladeshi counterparts, the Vietnam and Lebanon women's teams have also been in round-the-year training. In addition, they have also been regularly playing in their U-16 and U-17 domestic

women's leagues, a platform the Bangladeshi women are deprived of.

Despite knowing that fact and that most coaches of the participating teams believe all the teams are equal in strength, Bangladesh head coach Golam Rabbani Choton wants to take a step towards the final round by finishing as group champions.

His charges have been preparing for nearly a year and have played three tournaments -- the 2017 SAFF U-15 Championship last December, a four-nation tournament in Singapore in March and the 2018 SAFF U-15 Championship last month.

"We have been preparing since December and were champions in two tournaments before finishing second in the last SAFF U-15 Championship. The girls are ready to replicate their feats by displaying even better performances than what we showed in the final round in Thailand," Choton said at a pre-tournament briefing at the BFF House yesterday.

He also informed that the Bangladesh team would feature 12 players who played in the 2016 qualifiers while the rest would be comprised of those who have experience in international matches. Choton added that the current squad is believed to be stronger than the team that played in the 2016 qualifiers.

On the opening day, UAE will play against Vietnam at 11:30am before Lebanon face Bahrain at 3:30pm. Bangladesh will play their first match against Bahrain on Monday at 3:30pm.

## 'Play Usain Bolt in defence'

AFP, Sydney

World Cup-winning coach Vicente del Bosque has some advice for sprint king Usain Bolt's new Australian club -- play him in defence.

Del Bosque, whose eight-year reign as Spain coach ended after their last-16 exit at Euro 2016, said it was possible Bolt could fulfil his dream of becoming a footballer, despite being 32.

"For a team that counter-attacks hard and transitions quickly into open space, sure (he would fit in). It would be possible, of course," de Bosque told the Olympic Channel.

But he suggested the 100m world record holder would be better in defence than up front.

"With space, he could be a very good footballer."

"He could be a full-back that covers a lot of space, but it depends, because it's not just about covering 100, or 60 or 70 metres of the pitch. It's about doing it many times over and that requires stamina which I don't know whether he has or not -- although I'm sure he has prepared."

## Cheryshev cleared of wrongdoing

AFP, Madrid

Spain's anti-doping agency said Thursday it has closed its probe into Valencia's Russian striker Denis Cheryshev, one of the revelations of World Cup, after it found no evidence he used a banned substance.

The investigation stemmed from an interview which the player's father, Dmitri Cheryshev, gave to Russian publication Sport Weekend in June 2017 in which he said his son had received growth hormone injections when he played at Spanish side Villarreal.