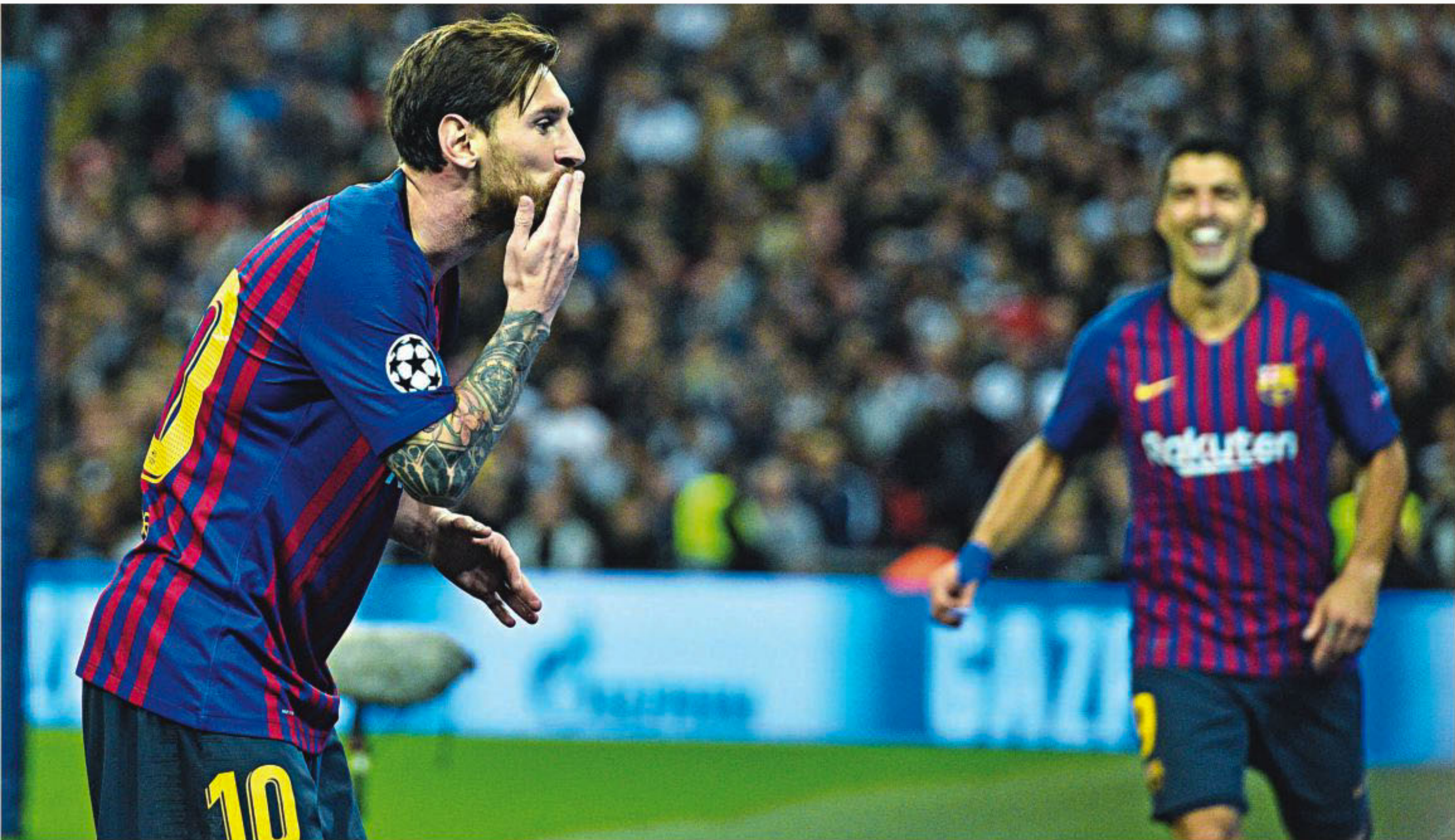


<div> <div>What to WATCH</div> <div>DAY'S EVENT</div> </div>		<div> <div>NAGORIK & MAASRANGA</div> <div>Philippines v Bangladesh</div> <div>Live from 6:30pm</div> <div>STAR SPORTS 1</div> <div>India v West Indies</div> </div>	<div> <div>First Test, Day Two</div> <div>Live from 10:00am</div> <div>STAR SPORTS SELECT 1</div> <div>English Premier League</div> <div>Brighton v West Ham</div> </div>	<div> <div>Live from 1:00am (Saturday)</div> <div>STAR SPORTS SELECT 2</div> <div>Bundesliga</div> <div>Werder Bremen v Wolfsburg</div> <div>Live from 12:30am (Saturday)</div> </div>
<div> <div>U-19 Asia Cup</div> <div>Semifinal</div> <div>Afghanistan v Sri Lanka</div> <div>Time: 9:00am</div> </div>		<div> <div>Venue: SBNS, Dhaka</div> <div>Bangabandhu Gold Cup</div> <div>Philippines v Bangladesh</div> <div>Time: 6:30pm</div> </div>	<div> <div>Venue: Sylhet Distric Stadium</div> <div>Bangladesh v Pakistan</div> <div>Third Women's T20I</div> <div>Time: 2:00pm</div> </div>	<div> <div>Venue: Sheikh Kamal Int. Stadium</div> </div>



Barcelona superstar Lionel Messi unveiled a peculiar celebration -- reportedly aimed at his children -- which began with him slapping his own head and ended with a kiss to the cameras after the magical Argentine's clinical brace in a 4-2 win against Tottenham Hotspur in a Champions League clash at Wembley on Wednesday.

PHOTO: AFP

'The Champions League is dessert'

Messi says after punishing sloppy Spurs

AGENCIES, London



Mauricio Pochettino admitted Tottenham had only themselves to blame for Lionel Messi's mesmerising masterclass in Barcelona's 4-2 Champions League win at Wembley. Pochettino's side found it impossible to subdue Messi as Barcelona ended their three-match winless streak in emphatic style.

The Spanish champions punished a howler from Tottenham goalkeeper Hugo Lloris to take a second minute lead through Philippe Coutinho. Ivan Rakitic volleyed a stunning second goal for Barcelona before Harry Kane reduced the deficit after the break.

That set the stage for Messi to seize the spotlight once again as he netted twice either side of Erik Lamela's deflected effort for Tottenham.

Messi, who has netted five times in the competition this season, is hungry for a fifth Champions League crown -- but he wants even more than that.

"The Champions League is the dessert for everyone, but to get it you have to be good in the league and cup," he told Movistar.

"You have to be good in the league to be well in the Champions League. We will not leave aside any competition. The Champions League is special but we will fight for the league and cup."

Messi hailed his team's display, particularly in the first half, saying: "We were aware that with the results we had brought, there were doubts. It's never easy to play as a visitor in the Champions League and less against a team like Tottenham."

Messi's brace was just reward for an irresistible display from the Argentina legend.

"Messi doesn't surprise me. He's a fantastic player. The most important (thing) is Messi shows in every game why he is Messi," said Pochettino. "His average performance is this type of game. He's always above everything."

"We conceded the first goal and it is very difficult because that sets the game. We paid for that," Pochettino said. "We had to give spaces when we were looking for a result. What happens is players like him can finish you off."

"After 45 minutes we didn't concede one

chance to Messi. Of course in the second half

when it's 2-0 and you give more space, it's so

difficult to stop this type of player.

"He is the best in the world. With a lot of space it is unbelievable how he runs and dribbles. In the second half he was decisive. He's got that capacity and hunger for scoring."

Tottenham's hopes of qualifying for the last

16 from Group B are now in grave danger after two successive defeats. Meanwhile, the win came as welcome relief for Barcelona manager Ernesto Valverde after three La Liga games without a win, including a shock loss to lowly Leganes.

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Live from 1:00am (Saturday)

STAR SPORTS SELECT 2

Bundesliga

Werder Bremen v Wolfsburg

Live from 12:30am (Saturday)

MILIK ROBBED AFTER LIVERPOOL WIN

Napoli's Polish striker Arkadiusz Milik was robbed at gunpoint on his way home after his team's Champions League win over Liverpool, Italian police said on Thursday. The 24-year-old was in his car heading towards his home at Varcaturu on the Domitiano Coast 20km west of Naples at around 2:00am when his car was stopped by a high-powered motorcycle blocking the road. The two assailants -- whose faces were entirely covered by helmets -- approached the footballer's car and pointed a gun at him, ordering him to hand over his Rolex Daytona watch worth 7,000 euros. The robbers then sped into the countryside towards Licola, police said according to the AGI news agency. As soon as he recovered from the shock, Milik went to the nearest police station to report the crime.

—AFP



Rest day for hosts?

SPORTS REPORTER from Sylhet



Both Bangladesh and the Philippines will apparently look to conserve their strength for the semifinals when the sides face off in the final Group B fixture of the Bangabandhu Gold Cup at the Sylhet District Stadium today.

The match will get underway at 6:30pm with Maasranga TV and Nagorik TV telecasting the game live from the venue.

Bangladesh progressed into the semifinals with a match remaining by handing Laos a 1-0 loss in the tournament opener before Philippines sent the Southeast Asian Nation packing with a 3-1 defeat. This is the third time in a row that Bangladesh have qualified for the semifinal stage.

Therefore, the match at hand is of less importance to both teams with their semifinal battle in Cox's Bazar in sight. And although both sides might deem it prudent to rest some of their key players, neither have forgotten their target of finishing on the top of the group with an outright victory, indicating that today's encounter should be an entertaining one.

There may be a big gap between the two in terms of FIFA Rankings -- Philippines are 114th while Bangladesh are 193rd -- but they seem equal in quality as Bangladesh beat Philippines 3-2 in the 1984 Asian Nations Cup while the latter came out 3-0 winners in an invitational tournament encounter in Myanmar in 2011.

Since then, the sides have not met at any competition but Philippines were busy climbing up the FIFA ladder while Bangladesh were climbing down. To make things bleaker, Philippines qualified for the 2019 Asian Cup while Bangladesh were eliminated from the 2019 Asian Games

Qualifiers play-off.

And although Philippines brought their second-string team, they seem stronger than the hosts, especially with the way they beat Laos even though five of their players joined the team on the match day.

"Philippines are a good side. They have very good players that showed yesterday [Wednesday]. They have a good game going forward, so it going to be a tough game for us. We will go there for victory but I think we need a little a bit of luck tomorrow [Friday]," said Bangladesh's English coach Jamie Day after practice at the Sylhet BKSP ground yesterday.

Qualifying for the semifinals may have been Bangladesh's pre-tournament target, but Jamie is now thinking about the final.

"We are confident and everyone is happy with we achieved to be in the semifinals, that was the target. So now for us is to go to this game and play well and take that performance hopefully into the semifinals where we obviously want to win and go through," said the 38-year-old coach while hinting that players ranging from the backline to the forward lineup could be rested.

Sushanta Tripura, Rahmat Mia, Mamunul Islam, Emon Babu and Towhidul Alam Sabuz are likely to be in the first eleven alongside goalkeeper Ashraful Islam Rana, Tutul Hossain Badsha, Tapu Barman, Rabiul Hasan, Biplu Ahmed and Nabib Newaj Jibon.

"We will strike a balanced and performing side as we are looking to win the match. At the same time, we will rest some players to prepare for semis but we will definitely go for win against Bangladesh," said Philippines interim coach Andres Crisanto Gonzales, adding that everyone in his team have had international exposure.



No longer an automatic choice under new coach Jamie Day, Mamunul Islam will likely be given the reins to midfield against the Philippines with regular captain Jamal Bhuiyan set to be rested.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Injury scare in Palestine win

SPORTS REPORTER from Sylhet



Favourites Palestine got a winning start to their Bangabandhu Gold Cup campaign with a 2-0 win over Tajikistan in a Group A encounter at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

Jonathan EC Zorrila put Palestine ahead in the very first minute before captain Abdallatif MS Albahdari headed one home in the 75th minute of the keenly contested affair. Tajikistan defender Qalandarov Bakhtiyor was forced out of the match due to a supposed neck injury following a tussle in the air with Abdallatif in the 85th minute. Bakhtiyor was then taken to a hospital directly from the field, leaving Tajikistan with 10 men for the rest of the match as they had already availed all three substitutions.

With this triumph Palestine brightened their hopes for a spot in the semifinals, needing only a draw against Nepal who lost to Tajikistan in the group opener, to progress. If Nepal drop points against Palestine in their last group game then both Tajikistan and Palestine will advance to the semifinals from Group A.

Palestine went ahead early on before Tajikistan managed to settle down. Oday IM Dabbagh ran down the right flank and released a low cross from inside the box to Jonathan EC Zorrila, who made no mistake as he drove the shot home and stunned Tajikistan. Tajikistan came into the match on the back of a 2-0 win over Nepal.

However, Tajikistan regrouped and fought neck-to-neck throughout the first half. Jonathan came close to doubling the lead eight minutes into the second half but goalkeeper Rizoov Rustom frustrated the marksman.

Tajikistan launched a number of attacks from either flank but they failed to break Palestine's backline until Muhammad Jon Rahimov provided a nice cross in the 65th minute, however, the unmarked Ergsheve Jahongir and Juradoev Amirdek could not beat the goalkeeper.

Ten minutes later, Palestine wrapped up the victory as Abdallatif headed in a Shadi SM Shaban corner. Tajikistan had two more good opportunities to score in the dying minutes but Palestine goalkeeper Rami KA Hamada thwarted those efforts from Rahimov and Nazzarov Akhtam.

Fahad gets first IM norm

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh's youngest FIDE Master, Mohammad Fahad Rahman, earned his first International Master norm at the 43rd World Chess Olympiad despite losing his ninth round game against Spain's GM Vazquez Igarza Renier in Georgia on Wednesday.

Fahad has been in brilliant form in the ongoing Olympiad, securing 5.5 points from nine matches.

This was Fahad's first IM norm and so, he still needs two more to become an IM. The youngster received an FIDE Master title in 2013.

Although Fahad had stunned GM Vajda Levente in the eighth round to help Bangladesh best Romania, he could not put up a similar performance in the ninth round against Spain. The 24th-seeded Spaniards defeated Bangladesh 3.5-0.5 in the men's open section as all the players aside from GM Ziaur Rahman, lost their boards.

Ziaur drew with GM Perez Candelario Manuel while GM Abdullah Al Rakib and GM Enamul Hossain Razib lost. Bangladesh are currently in 56th position with 11 points from nine matches.

The Bangladesh women beat Chile 2.5-1.5 in their ninth round match. The women's team are in the 41st place with 11 points from nine games.

We weren't good enough: Klopp

AFP, Naples



Liverpool manager Jurgen Klopp said his side could only blame themselves after the last year's Champions League runners-up were overrun by Napoli before Lorenzo Insigne's late winner gave the Italians a 1-0 win to go top of Group C on Wednesday.

"We were not good enough and if you are not good enough, you'll lose and that happened to us tonight. That's it," said Klopp. "Napoli made a really good game, we didn't, and that's why they deserve the three points."

It's always a bad sign if you have to say your goalkeeper was your best player, but that was obvious tonight.

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'The great Neymar'

AGENCIES, Paris



Neymar described Paris Saint-Germain's 6-1 Champions League victory over Red Star Belgrade on Wednesday as the best

of the season. The Brazil forward scored twice in quick succession and, after further goals from Edinson Cavani, Angel Di Maria and Kylian Mbappe, Neymar completed his hatrick in the 81st minute with a stunning free-kick.

"We have played [the] better football," he said. "We showed desire to win and played

our football to win the game. We knew it would be tough but we played at a higher tempo with a high desire to win, and finally we won the game."

Asked whether the performance was the best of the season, Neymar said: "Yeah, it was. Not just my best game but also from our team. It's not important whether I score or not. I just want my team to win."

Defender Thomas Meunier took a cue from his coach, who heaped praise on the Brazilian and added: "Neymar was excellent. It was 'the great Neymar', as he has already proved in the past. We all know his qualities. We can be proud to have a player like that in our team."

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With a hattrick in PSG's 6-1 win over Red Star Belgrade on Wednesday, PSG superstar Neymar matched Kaka's tally of 30 goals, the joint-highest goals by a Brazilian in the Champions League.

PHOTO: REUTERS