

What to WATCH

STAR SPORTS 1

India v Australia
Fifth ODI
Live from 2:00pm
SONY SIX
South Africa v Sri Lanka

Fourth ODI

Live from 5:00pm
TEN 1
UEFA Champions League
Barcelona v Lyon
Live from 2:00am (Thursday)

TEN 2

UEFA Champions League
Bayern Munich v Liverpool
Live from 2:00am (Thursday)

'WHAT IS HAPPINESS?' ASKS PATO

Alexandre Pato's love affair with Chinese football appears over after he posted a cryptic social media message about "lies" and played no part in his team's opening two matches of the season. The 29-year-old Brazilian had re found his passion for the game since signing for Tianjin Quanjian from Spain's Villarreal for about \$21 million two years ago. But the former international forward returned from the winter off-season to find that Chinese Super League (CSL) Quanjian had become Tianjin Tianhai. Tianjin, thrown into disarray after a scandal involving its owner, have lost both games of the new CSL season. Pato failed to make the bench on both occasions. He has also been widely praised by Chinese football fans for appearing to embrace life in the country and he has used Chinese social media to reach a wider audience. But on Tuesday he asked his 753,000 followers on Weibo, China's equivalent of Twitter: "What is happiness?" --AFP



Bangamata Gold Cup calls for girls to break barriers

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh were placed in Group B alongside UAE and Kyrgyzstan in the official draw of the Bangamata U-19 Women's International Gold Cup, which was held through a colourful ceremony at the Sonargaon Hotel in Dhaka. Group A will feature Mongolia, Tajikistan and Laos in the six-nation tournament, which is scheduled to be held at the Bangabandhu National Stadium in Dhaka from April 22 to May 3. This will be the first international football tournament for women organised by the Bangladesh Football Federation. Bangladesh had previously hosted a SAFF Women's Championship and a number of SAFF age-group championships as well as AFC qualifiers for age-group women. The draw ceremony was held along with



Organisers and dignitaries from different organisations and embassies take part in the draw ceremony for the Bangamata U-19 Women's International Gold Cup at a city hotel yesterday.

PHOTO: BFF

Bangabandhu Gold Cup, which takes place between senior men's teams of different countries.

"This tournament is the first of its kind in Bangladesh. As you know in this day and age it is very difficult to hold international invitational tournaments due to busy FIFA schedules. Yet we are continuing with the Bangabandhu Gold Cup, and the Bangamata Gold Cup will be a new addition to our calendar. The Bangamata Gold Cup will be held at the early part of each year and the Bangabandhu Gold Cup will be held at the latter part of each year," Salahuddin said.

Salman F Rahman, advisor to the Prime Minister and chairman of Beximco Group,

the chief sponsors of the tournament, said the tournament was a need of the hour. "Under the leadership of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, women's empowerment has reached an unprecedented height. We know our men's football team is doing well, but the women's team is doing even better. So it was a timely initiative from the BFF to host such a tournament. And naming it after Bangamata Sheikh Fazilatunnesa Mujib is a perfect recognition to her contribution and sacrifice for her family and the country."

Fahad Karim, the MD and CEO of K-Sports, the official partners and organisers of the tournament, said that having the theme of 'Egiye Jawar Nei Mana' (No barrier

to go ahead) focuses on the continued empowerment of women in different sectors of the country.

Jean-Jacques Simon, the chief of communication of Unicef, Bangladesh, stressed on the need to open up spaces and playgrounds in Dhaka for children to take part in sporting activities.

Among other dignitaries present during the programme were Bangladesh Olympic Association's secretary general Syed Shahed Reza, BFF's senior vice-president Abdus Salam Murshedy, FIFA council member Mahfuza Akter Kiron, other high officials of the BFF, business leaders, ambassadors and representatives of different foreign embassies in Dhaka.

GROUPS

GROUP A	GROUP B
Mongolia	UAE
Tajikistan	Bangladesh
Laos	Kyrgyzstan

Schedule: April 22 to May 3;
Venue: Bangabandhu National Stadium, Dhaka

the official logo unveiling and theme song unveiling of this event. BFF president Kazi Salahuddin, during his speech, announced that this tournament will be included in the BFF's regular calendar alongside the

Zidane answers Perez's call

AFP, Madrid



Zinedine Zidane said he never had any doubts about returning to Real Madrid after he replaced the sacked Santiago Solari as coach on Monday.

"When the president called me the first thing I thought was: go," Zidane said at a press conference at the Santiago Bernabeu. "I could not say no, I never had any doubts about going back."

Zidane has been given a contract until June 2022, just nine months after he resigned at the end of last season, having led Madrid to an historic third consecutive Champions League triumph.

Solari's dismissal was expected after three consecutive home defeats - to Barcelona, twice, and Ajax - deemed Madrid's season all-but over before the middle of March.

But Zidane coming back, with only 11 games left in La Liga and almost nothing to play for, is a surprise, particularly after he left on the incredible high of yet another European triumph.

"I left because a change was needed at the end of last season, for the good of everyone, after winning so much," Zidane said.

"I returned because the president called me. I love him and I love this club, so here I am."

Zidane inherits a squad that has evolved even in the short time he has been away, with Cristiano Ronaldo gone and the likes of Thibaut Courtois, Vinicius Junior and Sergio Reguilon all enjoying greater prominence this season.

The challenge will be for Zidane to oversee a period of change in the summer, when older players could be replaced and younger talents brought through.

"I do not want to forget what we won but I also do not forget all the things we did badly last year," Zidane said.

"We lost in the league and cup, we won the Champions League, fine, but I know where I am."

"We will change things, for sure, for the years to come. But now is not about that - the important thing is I am back. We will have time to talk with the president, with the club, about what we can do."

Immensely popular with most of the players, Zidane's appointment will almost certainly lift morale in the dressing room, following a week in which Sergio Ramos has argued with the club's president Florentino Perez and been involved in a spat with Marcelo.

All-or-nothing clash

AFP, Munich

Jürgen Klopp brings Liverpool to Germany to resume their battle against Bayern Munich with the hosts billing Wednesday's Champions League last 16 return leg as an 'all or nothing' showdown.

After a goalless draw at Anfield in the first-leg three weeks ago, there is still everything to play for at Munich's Allianz Arena.

Stuttgart-born Klopp knows what awaits his Reds in the highly-charged arena where Bayern tend to raise their game and away teams face a barrage of whistles whenever they touch the ball.

"The four goals are all well and good," said Klopp after Liverpool's 4-2 win on Sunday at Burnley, with Roberto Firmino and Sadio Mané both scoring twice. "But what does that have to do with Munich?"

"It will not be so easy to score four goals there as well."

The 51-year-old has a modest record of nine wins, five draws and 16 defeats in 30 games against the Bavarians - as coach of either Liverpool or former clubs Mainz and Dortmund - dating back to 2004.

However, in his seven seasons with Dortmund, between 2008-15, Klopp managed an impressive four wins, plus a draw and four defeats, from nine games in Munich.

He tasted victory on his last visit to the Allianz Arena - in April 2015 when Dortmund beat Bayern on penalties in the semifinals of the German Cup.

Klopp knows that the visiting team must walk tall at the Allianz Arena.

"We have no problem with self-confidence, we are in a good mood," he insisted.

However, Liverpool fans hope Reds' striker Mo Salah has a red-letter day in Munich after one goal in his last eight games.

The Liverpool match is seen as a season-defining tie for the German champions.

The five-time winners last failed to get through the last 16 stage in 2011 and confidence is high after resuming top spot in the Bundesliga at the weekend for the first time since September.

"It's a very important game - everything is riding on this," said sporting director Hasan Salihamidzic.

"The boys have put some more self-confidence in the tank," he added after

Saturday's 6-0 mauling of Wolfsburg.

Bayern will be without the suspended Thomas Müller, but James Rodríguez will slot seamlessly into the attacking midfield role.

Like Klopp, the Colombian expects a red-hot atmosphere having proved his form with a stunning goal at the weekend.

"The fans will get right behind us and drive us on, so that we feel good and give our all," Rodríguez told FC Bayern.de.

"We will have to put in the perfect match in order to go through."

"Liverpool have quick players, who feel good when they get a lot of room, but I think we have every chance to go through."

German bookmakers agree and have made Bayern the slight favourites.

The tie needs no added spice, but Boateng and Hummels are still smarting after Germany coach Joachim Löw told them, along with Müller, that their international careers are over.

The centre-backs will have a point to prove against Liverpool.

At the other end, the Reds' Dutch defender Virgil van Dijk will have to subdue Rodríguez and Bayern's record-breaking striker Robert Lewandowski.



Liverpool star Mohamed Salah (C) sees something funny during a training session at Melwood yesterday on the eve of their Champions League Round of 16 second leg match against Bayern Munich.

PHOTO: AFP

SHORT CORNER



Bahrain's Hakeem al-Araibi poses with his Australian citizenship certificate after a ceremony in Melbourne yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

Ranieri off to winning start with Roma Claudio Ranieri got off to a winning start as Roma coach with Stephan El Shaarawy and Patrik Schick's first-half goals enough to squeeze past lowly Empoli 2-1 on Monday to keep in touch with the Champions League places.

Eusebio Di Francesco was sacked after the team's elimination in the Champions League last-16 last week with Ranieri returning to the club he coached for 18 months until February 2011.

The 67-year-old former Roma player was welcomed back to the Stadio Olimpico with a banner reading "Good luck Mister Ranieri".

"I thank the fans, as they gave us a big hand this evening," said Ranieri. --AFP

UAE punished for shoe, bottle barrage The United Arab Emirates were fined \$150,000 and ordered to play a match behind closed doors after home fans pelted Qatar players with shoes and bottles in ugly scenes during an Asian Cup semifinal defeat.

The tournament hosts were punished following January's combustible 4-0 loss in Abu Dhabi, when plastic

water bottles and footwear -- a traditional insult -- were hurled at the Qataris, the eventual Asian Cup champions.

The Asian Football Confederation's disciplinary and ethics committee handed out the sanctions for infringements related to spectator conduct and match organisation.

Along with the fine, the UAE were told to their play next home qualifier for the 2023 Asian Cup "without spectators" in an empty stadium, a statement said late on Monday. --AFP

Silva charged with improper conduct Everton manager Marco Silva was charged with improper conduct by the Football Association on Monday following his rant at referee Lee Mason and his assistants.

Silva stormed onto the pitch to confront Mason and his fellow officials after Everton blew a two-goal lead in their 3-2 defeat at Newcastle on Saturday.

He was strongly critical of the officials when he spoke to the media after the match, insisting that two of Newcastle's goals were clearly offside.

The former Watford boss has been charged with a breach of rule E3 and has been given until Thursday evening to respond to the charge. --AFP

Anjan's peak and a poignant trip

ANISUR RAHMAN from Nepal



"We are now crossing the border at Rajshahi and are about to enter Indian airspace. Passengers sitting on the right can enjoy the sight of Kanchenjunga and the world's tallest mountain, Mount Everest," was the gentle and anticipation-inducing announcement from Enam from the cockpit of the Bangladesh Biman aircraft's PA system 30 minutes after taking off from Dhaka.

I, along with two other journalists travelling from Dhaka to Nepal to cover the SAFF Women's Championships, were lucky enough to sit on the 'right side' in more ways than one. We were excitedly awaiting the treat of gazing upon -- with the unspoken intent of pressing our noses against the window if need be -- the peak of one mountain that I had read about in textbooks and another to which I have become emotionally attached through the song of Indian singer Anjan Datta.

We were cruising amid blue skies 30,000 feet above sea level, and the few wisps of white cloud punctuating the horizon fooled us into thinking that we had finally spotted the main attractions of the flight. Anjan's Kanchenjunga could not be identified but soon some snow-covered

peaks appeared, before the gentle PA broke its silence and informed us that it would take 25 to 30 minutes to land because of heavy air traffic at the Tribhuvan International Airport. That was possibly the only time that a delay was taken as good news as the six laps over the airport gave passengers an extended opportunity to look upon the tremendous beauty of the Himalayas.

The end of a two-hour flight finally arrived as we descended amid green hills -- pretty enough but paling by comparison to the Himalayas left behind -- and a zigzag waterway. The appreciation of the surrounding scenery was however tempered by a real and dark fear as I suddenly remembered the US Bangla crash a day short of a year ago on March 12, 2018 that claimed 51 lives, including three who I knew very well.

However, Enam landed the aircraft very smoothly at Tribhuvan but once inside, Biman's service and general presence was a poor one compared to other airline companies. From unclean trays behind the front chairs, torn chair covers and magazines that paint a poor image of our national flag carrier.

Kathmandu, Nepal's capital, has so far been a mid or low budget tourist attraction for those who generally gather at Thamel, where one can find many European visi-

tors. The most pleasing aspect of the city is that the sky is not interrupted by high-rise buildings as it is in Dhaka. The five- or six-storied buildings do not block the beauty of the small and medium hills that can be seen from the heart of town.

The town however is still bearing the wounds from the wreckage wrought by nature when Nepal was hit by a devastating earthquake in April 2015 as you could still see the ruined state of centuries-old buildings like Darbar Square and Ganesh Temple, although those are taking new shape gradually.

After a night's stay in Kathmandu, we started the journey to Biratnagar -- an Industrial area 600 km away -- on a hired microbus in a bid to save time on what would have been a 14-hour bus journey, which proved to be a picturesque one for nature lovers. The single-lane was flanked by mountains on both sides and dotted with a stunning collection of tiny houses on hills.

Then there were some more nerves as the microbus, at a speed of around 50 kmph, went zigzagging upward through the hills. It felt like it could be the last journey of our lives as it seemed that one miscalculation would cause us to go over the edge. The superb view was scant consolation, and the police stopping us at seven different checkpoints did not help.

Nepal off to a winning start

SPORTS REPORTER

Hosts Nepal made a winning start to the SAFF Women's Championship with a 3-0 win over Bhutan at the Sahid Rangasala Stadium in Biratnagar yesterday.

Manjali Kumari Yonjan scored the first goal for Nepal in 13th minute before Sabitra Bhandari doubled the lead three minutes later. Niru Thapa wrapped up the victory in the 54th minute.

The win puts the hosts in pole position in Group A ahead of the group's next match between Bangladesh and Bhutan tomorrow. Bangladesh will take on Nepal in the group's final match, which may decide the outcome of the group, on March 16.

Nepal had finished runners-up in the championship's first three editions but they lost the position to Bangladesh in the last edition held three years ago. India will take on Maldives in the first match of Group B today.