

What to WATCH

GTV & MAASRANGA
Bangladesh Premier League
Chattogram v Sylhet
Live from 1:30pm
Cumilla v Rangpur
Live from 7:00pm

STAR SPORTS SELECT 1
India v West Indies
Third T20I
Live from 7:30pm
SONY ESPN
Sri Lanka v Pakistan

First Test, Day One
Live from 10:45am
UEFA Champions League
PSG v Galatasaray
Live from 2:00am (Thursday)

SONY SIX
UEFA Champions League
Club Brugge v Real Madrid
Live from 2:00am (Thursday)

TEN 1
UEFA Champions League
Shakhtar Donetsk v Atalanta
Live from 11:55pm
Leverkusen v Juventus
Live from 2:00am (Thursday)

TEN 2
UEFA Champions League
Dinamo Zagreb v Man City
Live from 11:55pm
Bayern Munich v Tottenham
Live from 2:00am (Thursday)

DAY'S EVENT

Bangladesh Premier League
Venue: Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium, Dhaka
Chattogram v Sylhet

Time: 1:30pm
Cumilla v Rangpur
Time: 7:00pm

The highs and lows for Bangladesh

ATIQUE ANAM from Kathmandu

Gaurika Singh, the Nepal's swimming sensation, was for the second time the headline of almost all the national newspaper front pages on Tuesday as the country wrapped up the 13th South Asian Games with unprecedented success.

The 16-year-old, who lives in Britain, set a new record for the country by winning four gold, two silver and three bronze medals as Nepal finished second in the medals tally behind India with 51 gold, 50 silver and 95 bronze medals. India, despite not sending their best contingent, finished well ahead of the others, scooping 312 medals, 174 of which were gold.

Gaurika had earlier fetched the landlocked country their first gold medal in SA Games history on Day 2 of the swimming competition as Nepal complemented their past successes by widening their medal haul across disciplines.

The Himalayan nation may still be dependent heavily on martial art events for a majority of medals, but the splash in swimming, boxing and athletics undeniably gave their long-term planning and training a grand success.

That is in stark contrast to Bangladesh, who had brought a 462-member team to Kathmandu and Pokhara with only five months' training, and despite finishing with their best-ever haul of 142 medals -- 19 gold, 33 silver and 90 bronze -- the country continued to fall behind in major disciplines of the Games.

Following Mahfuza Khatun Shila's surprising twin gold medals in India three years ago, Bangladeshi officials had started to dream about swimming, which brought Bangladesh a plethora



HIGHS
Archery make a clean sweep
Karatekas stage a coup
Weightlifters give the country a lift
Cricketers win twin gold

LOWS
Shooters off the mark
Athletes tripl, swimmers go cold
Kabaddi's decline continues
Football flatters to deceive



of gold medals in the early years of this regional meet. However, swimmers failed to win a single gold medal for the country.

Bangladesh's most recognisable male swimmer, Mahfuzur Rahman Sagar, who had won seven bronze medals, finished with a single bronze, a result which prompted him to quit international swimming the night swimming events concluded. Bangladesh won only three silver and eight bronze medals from swimming competitions.

Athletics, the most attractive discipline of any multi-sport extravaganza, continued its decline with only one silver and one bronze medal being won from those events.

Also frustrating was the fact that Bangladesh managed only two bronze medals in four other major Olympic events -- football, basketball, handball and volleyball -- while athletes of five disciplines are leaving Nepal empty-handed.

Shooting, the most successful discipline for Bangladesh in SA Games' history, yielded no gold medals for only the second time, while kabaddi, Bangladesh's national sport, yielded just a single bronze.

It was only due to disciplines like archery and karate, the less popular yet better managed ones, that Bangladesh managed to end the regional event with plenty of medals.

Archers created history by sweeping all ten gold medals while martial art events such as karate, judo, taekwondo and wushu contributed 53 medals, including four golds.

Weightlifting, like karate, was one of Bangladesh's face-saving disciplines while the cricket teams met expectations by winning gold in both men's and women's events.

Bangladesh Olympic Association

secretary general Syed Shahed Reza was present at most of the venues in Kathmandu and Pokhara. Although he was pleased with the overall performance, Reza admitted that some disciplines were disappointing while hoping that long-term planning in selective disciplines with promise would help fetch the country more medals.

"I am really very happy. We achieved almost close to what we had hoped for. We missed a few gold medals by small margins. If we can select a few sports and train athletes long-term, we can have a much better haul in future," Reza said.

BD'S MEDALS BY DISCIPLINE

EVENT	G	S	B	TOTAL
Athletics	0	1	1	2
Archery	10	0	1	11
Badminton	0	0	1	1
Basketball	0	0	0	0
Boxing	0	1	6	7
Cricket	2	0	0	2
Cycling	0	0	0	0
Fencing	1	3	7	11
Football	0	0	1	1
Golf	0	4	0	4
Handball	0	0	1	1
Judo	0	0	11	11
Kabaddi	0	0	2	2
Karate	3	3	12	18
Kho kho	0	1	1	2
Shooting	0	6	4	10
Squash	0	0	0	0
Swimming	0	3	8	11
Table tennis	0	0	2	2
Taekwondo	1	0	10	11
Tennis	0	0	0	0
Volleyball	0	0	0	0
Weightlifting	2	6	5	13
Wrestling	0	2	7	9
Wushu	0	3	10	13
Total	19	33	90	142



(Clockwise from Bottom) The curtains fell on the 13th South Asian Games through a festive closing ceremony at the Dasarath Rangasala Stadium in Kathmandu, Nepal yesterday. Throughout the ten-day competition, Bangladesh's archers brought many a laurel to the country. However, the same could not be said for the football team. PHOTO: ATIQUE ANAM

Protest could mar Clasico

AFP, Barcelona

Catalan separatists from Democratic Tsunami yesterday called for a "massive" protest around Camp Nou stadium on December 18 where Barcelona and Real Madrid are set to play their rearranged Clasico.

Spain's most prestigious fixture had been due to take place at the Barcelona stadium on October 26 but was postponed following a wave of violent pro-independence protests in Catalonia.

"In an exceptional situation, we should act in an exceptional way," said a statement from the group, which has called supporters to gather at four points around the stadium from 4:00 pm, just four hours before kickoff.

The rally is the latest in a wave of protests which began two months ago when Spain's top court jailed nine Catalan separatist leaders over their role in a failed 2017 independence bid.

Tough tests await Abahani in play-offs

SPORTS REPORTER



AFC CUP

Last edition's inter-zonal semifinalists Abahani were handed a tough test in the preliminary round of the AFC Cup as the draw was held at the AFC headquarters in Kuala Lumpur yesterday.

Six-time Bangladesh Premier League champions Abahani will feature in the South Asia Zone and first take on Maziya S&RC of Maldives on a home-and-away basis on February 5 and 12.

If they win, Abahani will advance to the play-off ties on February 19 and 26, where they will meet the winner of the game between JSW Bengaluru FC of India and either Paro United of Bhutan or Defenders FC of Sri Lanka. The latter two will play a preliminary match beforehand.

The winners from the play-offs will join Chennai FC/Goa FC of India, Bashundhara Kings of Bangladesh and TC Sports of Maldives in the group stages of Asia's second-tier club competition.

Abahani coach Mario Lemos believes the AFC Cup campaign will be tougher this time around as his side have to overcome the hurdles of the play-off round to reach the group stage, which the Sky Blues played directly last time. They had then reached the zone semifinals ahead of one Nepalese

and two Indian outfits.

"Any game in the AFC Cup is tough but last season we gained confidence and experience. We believe we can repeat what we did. But we need to go game by game," the Portuguese told The Daily Star, adding that the upcoming season's curtain-raising Federation Cup would help them before playing in the preliminary round.

Bangladesh Premier League champions Bashundhara Kings will play directly in the group stages this time as league champions and are looking forward to their debut season.

"Indian outfits are big rivals in the South Asia Zone although Abahani overcame them in previous editions to go past the group stage. Our observation is that they are not so strong that we can't do better against them. Our main target is to go past the group stage," said Bashundhara Kings president Imrul Hasan.

Hasan also expects that Abahani will qualify for the group stage and boost the chances of Bangladeshi outfits.

"If there are two Bangladeshi outfits in the group stage, then Bangladeshi clubs have a good possibility of qualifying for the zonal semifinals. So, the players will get a chance to play against big opponents and get exposure," added Hasan, who believes they have a balanced side with the inclusion of quality foreigners.



SMOKE COVERS THE SCG

Toxic conditions at a smoke-blanketed Sydney Cricket Ground affected vision and breathing of players in the Sheffield Shield game between New South Wales and Queensland yesterday. Queensland skipper Usman Khawaja said it was 'hard to breathe' while his NSW counterpart Peter Nevill agreed the smoke from bushfires 'significantly altered visibility'. Steve O Keefe slammed the conditions, saying: "For someone like me who smokes 40 a day, it's now smoking 80 cigarettes a day."

PHOTO: TWITTER



Deschamps' contract extended to 2022

AFP, Paris

Didier Deschamps' contract as coach of world champions France has been extended through to the 2022 World Cup in Qatar, a source said yesterday.

Deschamps, a former France skipper who led the team to 1998 World Cup glory, has been at the coaching helm of Les Bleus since summer 2012.

The decision to extend his contract will be made official by the French football federation at a press conference later Tuesday, the source told AFP.

Federation president Noel Le Graet had previously said that a contract extension for the 51-year-old Deschamps was dependent on France qualifying for the 2020 European championships.

Spurs face Bayern in final group game

AGENCIES, London



CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

Tottenham coach Jose Mourinho is likely to make changes for the final Champions League group game against Bayern Munich at the Allianz Arena tonight.

Both Bayern and Spurs have already qualified for the knockout stages of this year's competition, with the German side guaranteed top spot in the group and Spurs unable to overtake them.

That means there is nothing riding on the clash at the Allianz Arena.

And Mourinho has already admitted that he would like to see some of his young players in action.

"Because we are going to finish second. It doesn't matter the result, but it's very important for the players. Very important for the players that are going to play," he said. "It's very important for me to know them better. I am going to play for sure some of the players that are not playing with me in these matches we are playing."

"It's a great opportunity for young people. A great opportunity for the development of these young players, the Walker-Peters, the Skippis, the Parrotts, the

Sessegnons, all these young players that we have, it's a great opportunity for them."

And three youngsters from the Tottenham academy are set to be given their chance to shine against Bayern on Wednesday night.

Ahead of the game against the German champions, Mourinho's Spurs players have been in training.

Alongside the main core of first team regulars were a number of young players, including goalkeepers Alfie Whiteman and Brandon Austin, who have regularly been involved in first team training because of injuries to Hugo Lloris and Michel Vorm.

Meanwhile, hailed as one of the "best players of his generation", Bayern Munich's versatile Canadian teenager Alphonso Davies started life in a refugee camp, but will now starring in the Champions League for Bayern Munich.

Davies, who only turned 19 in November, was on the bench in north London when Bayern thrashed Spurs 7-2 in October.

However, serious knee injuries to first-choice centre-backs Niklas Sule and Lucas Hernandez have since catapulted him into the starting line-up.

Putin slams Russia ban

REUTERS, Moscow

The Kremlin is blaming political chicanery, not its own sports officials, after doctored laboratory data resulted in a ban that means Russia will appear on the global sports stage without its flag or anthem for the next four years.

In the latest twist to the country's continuing doping scandal, the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) on Monday handed Russia a four-year ban from top international sporting events. Russia's response, from President Vladimir Putin downwards, has been defiant and lacking in contrition.

"I think there is every grounds to suppose that the basis for such decisions is not a care about the purity of international sport, but political considerations which have nothing to do with the interest of sport or the Olympic movement," Putin said.

YONEX-SUNRISE BANGLADESH INT'L BADMINTON

Alina, Urmu get out of qualifying round

SPORTS REPORTER



INDOOR STADIUM

Alina Sultana and Urmu Akter moved into the final round of the women's singles event in the Yonex-Sunrise Bangladesh International Challenge Badminton tournament on the opening day at Shaheed Tajuddin Ahmed Indoor Stadium in Paltan yesterday.

Alina beat Rashid Maasha of Maldives 21-7 and 21-3 in the qualifying round while Urmu got a walkover against Atitaya Povanon of Thailand, who did not turn up despite confirming her registration.

Apart from Alina and Urmu, local shuttlers Bristi Khatun, Shapla Akter, Rehana Parvin and Dulali Halder suffered defeats and were eliminated from the qualifying round.

Six male shuttlers -- Moazzem Hossain, Rasel Babu, Mohammad Asaduzzaman, SM Sibgat Ullah, Zakaria Islam and Jumar Al Amin -- were also eliminated from the qualifying round after losing their singles matches to Indian opponents.

However, Gourav Singha advanced to the second round of the final phase with a 20-22, 21-13 and 21-11 win over Hussein Zayan Shaheed of Maldives.