

What to WATCH

DAY'S EVENT

GTV & MAASRANGA

BBPL

Khulna v Rajshahi

Live from 1:30pm

Chattogram v Sylhet

Live from 6:30pm

Bangabandhu Bangladesh Premier League

Venue: Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium, Ctg

Khulna v Rajshahi

Time: 1:30pm

Chattogram v Sylhet

Time: 6:30pm

STAR SPORTS SELECT 2

Bundesliga

Werder Bremen v Mainz

Live from 11:30pm

Dortmund v Leipzig

Live from 1:30am (Wednesday)

OZIL 'DECEIVED BY FAKE NEWS'

China accused Mesut Ozil Monday of being "deceived by fake news" and said he should visit Xinjiang to see for himself after the Arsenal footballer decried the treatment of the region's Uighur minority. Ozil, a German national of Turkish origin, condemned China's crackdown on Muslim minorities in the western region in a tweet Friday and criticised Muslim countries for failing to speak up about the alleged abuses. Arsenal have distanced themselves from his comments, but the English Premier League club's 3-0 home defeat to Manchester City on Sunday was pulled from Chinese TV by state broadcaster CCTV. "I don't know if Mr. Ozil has been to Xinjiang himself. But it seems he has been deceived by fake news, and that his judgment was influenced by untruthful remarks," foreign ministry spokesman Geng Shuang said. "If Mr. Ozil has the opportunity, we will be pleased to see him going to Xinjiang and having a look."

--AFP





PSG forward Kylian Mbappe (2nd from L) celebrates with teammates after scoring their fourth goal, and his second, in a Ligue 1 encounter with AS Saint-Etienne at the Stade Geoffroy-Guichard on Sunday. Leandro Paredes and Mauro Icardi added one apiece to ensure a 4-0 win. PHOTO: AFP

Football’s new rules to debut with Fed Cup

SPORTS REPORTER

Waste of time during change of players and injuries, irrational interference before free-kicks, positioning a man on the defensive wall during free-kicks by the free-kick taking teams, goalkeepers distracting penalty-takers, arguing with referees from the dugout and some other issues which hinder the flow of the game used to be commonplace in football.

To mitigate these issues, a set of changes in the rules prepared by the International Football Association Board (IFAB) has already come into effect from June 1, 2019. The new rules are set to be introduced in Bangladesh through the season's curtain-raising Federation Cup, which starts tomorrow.

The IFAB, which sets the laws of association football, made changes in some basic rules regarding dropped ball, free-kick, goal-kick, kick-off, penalty-kick, quick free-kick, yellow and red card, handball, goal celebration, substitution, players' equipment and team officials for 2019 and 2020.

From now on, the ball will be dropped for one player of the team that last touched the ball and the opponent players must be at least

4-metres/4.5-yards away if play was stopped outside the penalty area. However, the ball will be dropped for the goalkeeper if play was stopped inside the penalty area. Earlier, the rule was to drop the ball in front of the opposition player, who had sent the ball far or outside the pitch.

According to the new rules, when there is a wall of three or more defenders, attackers will be allowed within one metre of the wall while when the defending team takes free-kick inside their own penalty area, play is on and the ball does not need to leave the penalty area which remain same in goal-kick too.

The team that wins the toss can choose to take kick-off or which goal to attack instead of having only the choice of which goal to attack while players being substituted must leave the field by the nearest point of the touchline/goalline. The referee can show red and yellow card later in case of team attacking team taking a quick free-kick and creating a goal-scoring opportunity.

During penalty-kicks, goalkeeper must have at least part of one foot on/in the line with the goalline when the kick is taken; he cannot stand behind the line. Goalkeeper even cannot touch the goalpost/crossbar/net, and must not move when the opponent player takes the spot-kick.

The referee can also show yellow and red card to the head coach in technical area if he cannot identify the offenders due to misconduct during play.

"FIFA has brought these changes to bring more pace in the game because some 20 to 25 minutes were earlier used to be wasted due to different issues on the field. I think the changes in laws will make the game more attractive," said BFF referees' committee's co-chairman Ibrahim Nesar.

Nesar informed that they have already held seminar at 10 out of 13 clubs and are about to conduct seminars at three more clubs – Bashundhara Kings, Bangladesh Police and Uttar Baridhara Club – regarding educating players on the rule changes.

"We already held two seminars in June-September to inform referees of the changes and we are going to hold a third tomorrow [Tuesday] with referees and match commissioners," Nesar said. "Rules are being changed continuously and referees will be used to the new rules with time."

"I think it helps the game; the new rules which allow players to receive the ball inside the box will give an incentive to play from the back," said Abahani's Portuguese coach Mario Lemos, who believes his players are aware of the new rules as they watch European football regularly.

135 players implicated in betting

AFP, Berlin

More than 135 tennis players, including one ranked in the ATP top 30, are implicated in an international betting scandal, German media reported yesterday.

According to a joint report by daily newspaper Die Welt and broadcaster ZDF, the players are subject to a cross-border investigation involving both the FBI and European authorities.

Among the individuals allegedly involved is a male player in the top 30 who has won three ATP tour titles, the report said.

"We are talking about an Armenian betting mafia network which is spread across seven countries in Europe and has manipulated on a large scale," Belgian state prosecutor Eric Bisschop told ZDF.

He added the scandal involved hundreds of small bets on fixed games, wracking up profits of tens of thousands of euros in each case.

ZDF and Die Welt also spoke to Argentinian former player Marco Trungelli, a whistleblower who claims to have been contacted by match-fixers.


"There are pros in the world top 50 who have fixed games. It happens at all levels," Trungelli said.



Players of Shaheed Mushtaque XI and Shaheed Jewel XI pose for a photograph after facing each other in a Victory Day exhibition match in Mirpur yesterday. Former national team player Mohammad Rafique struck a whirlwind 81 to help his side eclipse Shaheed Jewel XI's total with three wickets to spare. PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Benzema salvages draw

AFP, Madrid

Real Madrid missed the chance to replace Barcelona at the top of La Liga ahead of Wednesday's Clasico but salvaged a 1-1 draw against Valencia as Karim Benzema scored a dramatic injury-time equaliser on Sunday.

Madrid goalkeeper Thibaut Courtois ventured up for a final corner at Mestalla and it was his header that caused panic in the Valencia box, before the ball fell perfectly for Benzema to strike in the 95th minute.

"Opponents can get a little nervous if I go up," said Courtois. "Toni (Kroos) hit the corner to the near post and I just saw the ball was at my height and I caught it well."

Valencia looked set for an impressive victory after Carlos Soler had put them

ahead in the second half but both sides had to settle for a point at the end of a compelling contest between two of the league's form teams.

It means Barcelona remain top of the table but in front of Madrid only on goal difference, after they were also held to a 2-2 draw away at Real Sociedad on Saturday.

Madrid were celebrating at the final whistle but the result completes a strong week for Valencia, who won away at Ajax on Tuesday to go through as group winners to the Champions League last 16.

They stay eighth, now three points adrift of the top four.

Real Madrid have been on a good run too, now 10 matches unbeaten to crank up the pressure on Barca and leave behind their early-season stumbles that had put Zidane's future in doubt.

Spanish FA backs Zozulya

REUTERS, Madrid

The Spanish Footballers' Association (AFE) has expressed support for Albacete forward Roman Zozulya after his side's game against Rayo Vallecano was abandoned on Sunday due to offensive chanting by the home fans, who accused the Ukrainian of being a Nazi.

Spanish radio station Cadena Ser reported that Rayo fans sang "Zozulya you are a Nazi" and used offensive language towards the striker who had a short-lived spell at the club in 2017.

CL draw pits L'pool against Atletico

AFP, Nyon



Holders Liverpool will return to the scene of last season's Champions League triumph after they were drawn against Atletico Madrid in the last 16 of the competition yesterday and Manchester City face 13-time winners Real Madrid.

Jurgen Klopp's side will travel to the Wanda Metropolitano, where Liverpool lifted the trophy in June, for the first leg of their tie against three-time runners-up Atletico.

Pep Guardiola's City, who are trying to win a first Champions League crown, face a tough task against Real, the record winners of Europe's top club prize, for a place in the quarter-finals.

The two clubs met in the 2015-16 semi-finals, the furthest City have progressed in the tournament. That tie was won 1-0 on aggregate by Real.

Chelsea face German giants Bayern Munich in a repeat of the 2012 final won by the Blues.

However, Bayern goalkeeper Manuel Neuer has fond memories of London, where the Bavarians beat Borussia Dortmund in the 2013 final at Wembley.

Paris Saint-Germain, who impressed in

the group stage and will be trying to avoid a fourth successive last-16 exit, will take on 1997 champions Dortmund.

Barcelona will play Napoli for the first time as the Catalan giants, five-time European champions, attempt to move on from last season's painful semi-final loss to Liverpool.

Italian champions Juventus and Cristiano Ronaldo will fancy their chances of overcoming French side Lyon, who lost captain Memphis Depay to a season-ending injury Sunday.

Tottenham Hotspur, beaten 2-0 by Liverpool in last season's final in Spain, will lock horns with Bundesliga leaders RB Leipzig, who are through to the knockout stages for the first time.

This is the first time since the current Champions League format was introduced in 2003 that every club through to the last 16 has come from Europe's biggest five domestic leagues.

The first legs will be played over February 18-19 and February 25-26 with the return fixtures scheduled for March 10, 11, 17 and 18.

The final is on May 30 at the Ataturk Stadium in Istanbul, where Liverpool won a thrilling 2005 final on penalties against AC Milan.



Former Portugal international Luis Figo poses with the Champions League trophy during the last 16 draw ceremony for the tournament in Nyon yesterday. PHOTO: AFP

FIFA goes after Blatter, Platini

REUTERS, Zurich

World soccer body FIFA yesterday filed claims in Swiss court seeking to recover 2 million Swiss francs (\$2.01 million) that it said were paid inappropriately by ex-FIFA President Joseph "Sepp" Blatter to former French football star Michel Platini.

"FIFA has today filed claims in the relevant Swiss courts against former FIFA President Joseph Blatter and former FIFA Vice-President Michel Platini, seeking restitution of the 2 million francs unduly paid to Mr. Platini back in February 2011," FIFA said, adding it was "duty-bound to try to recover the funds illicitly paid by one former official to another."

Blatter and Platini, who could not immediately be reached for comment, have maintained they did nothing wrong amid what became part of the biggest corruption scandal to shake the world soccer body, resulting in numerous prosecutions and convictions in the United States.

Blatter and Platini were both banned from soccer in late 2015 over a payment of 2 million Swiss francs made to the Frenchman by FIFA with Blatter's approval in 2011 for work he had done a decade earlier.

Platini, the head of European soccer body UEFA from 2007 to 2015, was originally banned from all soccer-related activities for eight years, though the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS) later reduced the suspension to four years. His ban ended this year.

Blatter's ban was reduced from eight years to six, a period later upheld by CAS in a decision that concluded the now-83-year-old had "breached the FIFA Code of Ethics since the payment amounted to an undue gift as it had no contractual basis."

Premier League Chess Police need a draw to win title

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Police maintained their lead with maximum 20 points at the end of the 10th and penultimate round of the Walton Premier Division Chess League at the NSC Tower Auditorium yesterday.

Bangladesh Police, who beat Bangladesh Navy by 2.5-1.5 points in the 10th round, need only a draw in the last round to win the title.

IM Fahad Rahman of Police lost against CM Subrota Biswas of Navy while GM Niaz Murshed of Police drew against FM Sheikh Nasir Ahmed of Navy, however, GM Jobava Baadu and GM Mikheil Mehedlishvili won their respective matches to confirm Police's victory.

Saif Sporting Club were in second position with 18 points while Uttara Central Chess Club were in third position with 16 points.



In a recent turn of events, FIFA has filed claims against former FIFA President Joseph Blatter and former FIFA Vice-President Michel Platini, seeking restitution for the 2 million francs 'unduly paid to Platini' back in February 2011. PHOTO: FILE