

What to WATCH

DAY'S EVENT

TV & MAASRANGA

BBPL

Khulna v Sylhet

Live from 1:30pm

Chattogram v Rangpur

Live from 6:30pm

ESPN

Pakistan v Sri Lanka

Second Test, Day Three

Live from 11:00am

STAR SPORTS SELECT 1

English Premier League

Everton v Arsenal

Live from 6:30pm

Newcastle v Crystal Palace

Live from 9:00pm

Man City v Leicester

Live from 11:30pm

STAR SPORTS SELECT 2

Bundesliga

Bayern Munich v Wolfsburg

Live from 8:30pm

Hertha Berlin v Monchengladbach

Live from 11:30pm

TEN 2

Serie A

Udinese v Cagliari

Live from 8:00pm

Inter Milan v Genoa

Live from 11:00pm

Torino v SPAL

Live from 1:45am (Sunday)

Bangabandhu Bangladesh Premier League

Venue: Sher-e-Bangla National

Stadium, Chattogram

Khulna v Sylhet

Time: 1:30pm

Chattogram v Rangpur

Time: 6:30pm

Federation Cup

Bangladesh Police v Arambagh

Time: 4:00pm

Venue: Bangabandhu National Stadium, Dhaka

Fans fail to lift MSC

Sheikh Russel scrape past Uttar Baridhara

SPORTS REPORTER

Defying chilly weather, approximately 1000 cheerful supporters turned up at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday to back a rejuvenated Mohammedan SC. They played drums and blew whistles from beginning to the end to cheer on Mohammedan, but the 10-time champions had to be content with a 1-1 draw against Muktiyoddha Sangsad in their TVS Federation Cup fixture.

Following casino scandal and the subsequent arrest of director-in-charge Lokman Hossain Bhuiyan, Mohammedan found themselves in trouble before former players and officials came forward and formed a mediocre side. English coach Sean Lane was entrusted with guiding the Black and Whites, who last won the title in 2009, their 10th title of the curtain-raising tournament.

Though there was no shortage of enthusiasm among the supporters, the team failed to fire.

Like the supporters, the Mohammedan players, sporting same design jersey of 1980s, took a third-minute lead when Amir Hakim Bappy headed home after Muktiyoddha Sangsad defenders failed to clear a cross from Habibur Rahman Sohag.

Three-time champions Muktiyoddha Sangsad pressed hard for the equaliser, with Japanese midfielder Uryu Nagata missing the target narrowly form a 20-yard free-kick.

Mohammedan were deprived of a

second goal when Sohanur Rahman rattled the crossbar in the 24th minute before Muktiyoddha Sangsad hit back to level the margin with a grounder from Shah Alamgir Anik in the 34th minute.

After resumption, Mohammedan kept their dominance to create a few good chances but the Black and Whites had to leave the field with a share of the spoils with Muktiyoddha Sangsad, who saw Sumon Ali rattle the post in the second half.

In the day's first match, 2012 Federation Cup champions Sheikh Russel KC survived a scare before registering a 1-0 win over promoted Uttar Baridhara Club, who returned to top-flight football after two seasons.

Uttar Baridhara gave a run for the money to Sheikh Russel KC, who however had the last laugh, thanks to a decisive strike from last premier league's top-scorer Raphael Odoyin. The Nigerian marksman brilliantly fired home from inside the box after controlling a chip from Mohammad Abdullah in the 18th minute of the match.

"We are happy with three points even though the team could not perform according to our expectation," Sheikh Russel's assistant coach Masud Parvez Kaiser said.

Uttar Baridhara Club coach Alfaz Ahmed was happy, too, with his charges for their fighting attitude.

"We have taken Federation Cup as a preparatory tournament for the Bangladesh Premier League because most of our players are playing in top-flight for the first time," the former national team striker said.



Sheikh Russel's Nigerian marksman, Raphael Odoyin (R), celebrates with teammates after scoring the decisive goal in a 1-0 win over Uttar Baridhara Club in a TVS Federation Cup encounter at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

Maradona gets cellar museum

AFP, Naples



For some Diego Maradona is the greatest footballer of the 20th century, for others - mainly English - he is the cheating possessor of the hand of God. In Italy, however, he is and always will be the patron saint of Naples.

And just as saints have their altars so Maradona has his museum, an extraordinary treasure trove of artefacts that includes the left boot with which the Argentine scored twice against Belgium in the semifinals of the 1986 World Cup.

You can also find his first contract with Napoli and even the sofa from his Naples apartment where singer Julio Iglesias once sat. It's all here in the cellar museum.

Maradona arrived at Napoli as a world record \$10.48 million signing from Barcelona in July 1984.

His time in Catalonia had been difficult and Naples was a bolthole. He was to stay seven years, captaining the team to their first-ever Serie A title in 1986-7.

They did it again three years later and during Maradona's stay the Neapolitans also won the Coppa Italia, UEFA Cup and Italian Super Cup.

Massimo Vignati's museum, though, is one of a kind. It does not appear on any map of Naples, nor is it in travel guides, and entry is free. And yet, this basement of a typical building in Secondigliano, a tough neighbourhood in the north of the city, breathes all things Diego.

City take on Foxes today

AFP, Manchester



Leicester may never again scale the heights of shocking the world to win the Premier League four seasons ago, but the Foxes are upsetting the odds once more as the closest challengers to Liverpool at the top of the table.

Brendan Rodgers's men travel to Manchester City today four points ahead of the champions as the side in need of the victory to keep the title race alive.

Liverpool's absence from league duty this weekend to compete in the Club World Cup gives Leicester the chance to cut the gap at the top to seven points.

Win their next two games and Liverpool's advantage will be down to four points as the European champions then visit the King Power on their return from Qatar on Boxing Day.

Back-to-back wins against a side that have won five of the last six domestic trophies in England and a Liverpool team that has lost just once in their last 56 league

games is a massive ask.

But the fact Leicester now believe it is possible is testament to how far the club have come since Rodgers took charge in February.

When the Northern Irishman returned to the Premier League after two-and-a-half successful seasons at Celtic, Leicester were languishing in 12th.

Ten months on, they are well on course for a return to the Champions League next season.

Leicester have a 13-point cushion over fifth-placed Tottenham as they look to become the first club outside Liverpool, City, Tottenham, Chelsea, Manchester United and Arsenal to finish in the top four since they last did it as champions in 2015-16.

Silverware could also be just over two months away as Rodgers's men booked their place in the semi-finals of the League Cup on Wednesday.

"Everyone wants to win trophies of course. We have to fight, we are not entitled to win," said Rodgers.

SHORT CORNER

Arteta takes Arsenal job

Mikel Arteta has been given the job of reviving the fortunes of Arsenal after he was appointed head coach of the English Premier League side yesterday.

The 37-year-old Spaniard, who played more than 100 games for the Gunners between 2011-16, signed a three-and-a-half year contract and ends a three-year stay as Pep Guardiola's assistant at Manchester City.

Arteta replaces compatriot Unai Emery, who was sacked last month.

The former midfielder, who will sit in the stands for Saturday's match against another of his former clubs Everton, faces a massive challenge, with Arsenal having won just once in 12 matches -- beating West Ham under interim manager Freddie Ljungberg.

"This is a huge honour. Arsenal is one of the biggest clubs in the world," Arteta said in a statement. "We need to be competing for the top trophies in the game and that's been made very clear to me in my discussions with Stan and Josh Kroenke (owner and club director, respectively) and the senior people from the club."

—AFP

Sociedad invite entire village

An embarrassing evening for Spanish fourth division side Bescerril, who were thrashed 8-0 in the Copa del Rey by Real Sociedad, ended on a high after the team and the whole village they hail from were invited to watch the La Liga club in action.

Sociedad, who are sixth in La Liga, will pay for tickets, dinner and a three-hour coach ride from Bescerril de Campos in Castille de Leon to San Sebastian for the players, staff and all of the village's 754 inhabitants for a match of their choice.

—REUTERS

Lewandowski set for surgery

Prolific Bayern Munich striker Robert Lewandowski will go under the knife today to fix a groin strain during German football's winter break, coach Hansi Flick has revealed.

The Polish target-man has scored 30 goals in 24 games for Bayern so far this season, and the 31-year-old would likely be fit for the reception of Hertha Berlin January 19.

—AFP

National school hockey from Jan 25

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh Hockey Federation (BHF) has decided to start National School Hockey Championship from January 25 next year after a three-year gap.

Some 84 schools, split into nine zones, are expected to take part in the championship where top two teams from each venue will advance to the 18-team final round, which will be held in Dhaka.

The decision was taken at a meeting of BHF executive committee at the BAF Shaheen Auditorium in Tejgaon yesterday.

The meeting also decided to make Planning Minister MA Mannan head of the organising committee of Junior Asia Cup, which is scheduled to be held in Dhaka in March next year.

The Junior Asia Cup has been named after Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman to mark the 100th birth centenary of the father of the nation.

The meeting also instructed all sub-committees of the BHF to place their budgets, however, there was no agenda regarding when Premier Division Hockey League will take place.

It is a massive opportunity: Klopp

AFP, Doha



Liverpool manager Jurgen Klopp has responded to suggestions the Club World Cup doesn't matter by insisting today's final against Flamengo

represents a "massive opportunity" for the Anfield club.

Klopp's team have taken time out from their Premier League title push to come to Qatar for a competition that is viewed differently in Europe to the rest of the world.

While Flamengo fans have travelled to Doha in large numbers to back their team, few Liverpool supporters would rather see their side lift the Club World Cup than win a first English title in 30

years, or retain the Champions League.

"It is not an advantage or a disadvantage, but the situation is different. Flamengo got sent here with a clear order to win it and to come back as heroes, and we got told to stay at home and play the Carabao Cup," Klopp said at Friday's pre-final press conference at the Khalifa International Stadium.

His comments came after Liverpool sent out a team of academy players for their League Cup quarter-final against Aston Villa on Tuesday, losing 5-0.

"The view in Europe is completely different to the view in the rest of the world, but that view has changed for me since I was here. For us it is really special now. We are here so we want to give it a proper try. Yes we feel the tension in this situation but we feel it's a massive opportunity."



Joya gets FIFA recognition

SPORTS REPORTER



Joya Chakma has officially been recognised as an international referee by FIFA, the world football governing body earlier this month.

With the official FIFA recognition, Joya became country's first female international referee. The Bangladesh Football Federation sent documents to FIFA after she, along with assistant referee Salma Islam Moni, went through fitness test in Dhaka in August this year.

"FIFA informed us about Joya Chakma on December 5 through an e-mail. Now Joya will receive FIFA badge, jersey and other kits within a few days. She is eligible to conduct FIFA and AFC international matches for the year 2020," BFF referees' coordinator and head of competition management Shahidul Islam Limon said yesterday.

Joya conducted 16 international matches at age-level from 2013 to 2016 and she is now eligible to conduct senior level matches.

"However, Salma could not get the recognition because of being underage. With the new rules, a referee requires to be 23-year-old. FIFA also recognised five male referees and seven assistant referees for the year 2020," added Limon.

"I had been waiting for this announcement. It is a recognition of my hard work. I really feel good to become country's first international female referee," Joya said in her instant reaction.