Star SPORT
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ICC MEN'S CRICKET WORLD CUP INDIA 2023

What to WATCH

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ICC Cricket World Cup
India vs Bangladesh
Live from 2:30 pm

Ronaldinho's brief Dhaka trip

SPORTS REPORTER

Brazilian legend Ronaldinho Gaucho spent a hectic 12 hours in Dhaka yesterday on way to Dubai from Kolkata, where he had spent the previous two days and attended a number of events.

The World Cup winning Brazilian arrived in Dhaka at around 3:45pm and left the Bangladesh capital in the early hours of Thursday, amid a lot of media frenzy but little to no opportunity for the media to interact with the 43-year-old retired footballer.

Ronaldinho, who won almost all individual and team accolades during his 17-year professional career including the World Cup, Confederations Cup, Copa America, UEFA Champions League and Ballon d'Or, was whisked to the Radisson Blu Hotel on his arrival from Kolkata.

The highlight of Ronaldinho's visit was a trip to the Prime Minister's Office in the afternoon where the former PSG, Milan and Barcelona man paid a courtesy call on Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and took pictures with the PM and her sister, Sheikh Rehana.

Later in the night, the Brazilian attended a meet-and-greet event titled 'Magical night with Ronaldinho' at the hotel. It was a private event where selected guests were invited, and the invitees included Bangladesh men's football team captain Jamal Bhuiyan and women's team captain Sabina Khatun.

Jamal, prior to meeting Ronaldinho, expressed his excitement at the opportunity to media. "I'm feeling very proud because I'll meet my idol. My family is with me to meet him and greet him. It's a big moment for me because I supported Ronaldinho since 2002."

However, the event was marred by a fracas between the organisers and media personnel, who were asked to leave the venue ahead of the start of the event.

Ronaldinho's short Dhaka stopover was organised by an advertising firm in association with Kolkata-based sports promoter Satadru Dutta, who brought Argentina's World Cup winning goalkeeper to Kolkata and Dhaka in July this year.

A young pitch invader rushes near Argentina superstar Lionel Messi, who scored two beautiful goals against Peru in the 2026 FIFA World Cup qualifiers yesterday (Bangladesh time).

PHOTO: AFP

Believed something good was waiting for me: Fahim

ANISUR RAHMAN

Two years ago, Faisal Ahmed Fahim came off the bench to make his international debut against Maldives during the Mahinda Rajapaksa International Tournament in Sri Lanka. The young forward chose the same opposition to score his first international goal yesterday, a goal which helped Bangladesh clinch a spot in the World Cup Qualifiers.

Fahim, who has taken 15 matches to get his name on the scoresheet, had scored many for age-group national teams. The youngster was heavily criticised for squandering a couple of chances in the away match in Male where Bangladesh had played out a 1-1 draw against Maldives last week.

Apart from Rakib Hossain, the focus was on Fahim in Tuesday's home match and the 22-year-old forward responded with a spritely performance. The lad from Sirajganj provided a brilliant cut-back for Rakib for an 11th-minute lead and then saw his miscued header leading to the equaliser for Maldives in 36th minute. The youngster then took matters into his own hands and scored the decisive goal in the first minute of the second half.

"My confidence went down after missing chances in the away match against Maldives.

However, the teammates, the coach and my family members kept inspiring me to look forward and get ready for the home match for goals," Fahim told The Daily Star over phone after reaching Sirajganj last evening following an overnight victory celebration at the team hotel.

"I usually don't miss such opportunities. I had the belief that something good was waiting for me. Before the match, Rakib inspired me by saying that I would get a goal today. I also inspired him. My confidence grew when I assisted Rakib for the first goal. Everyone worked really hard for this victory," said the former Saif SC forward, who started in four of the 15 matches he has played so far.

Fahim had previously started against Lebanon and Maldives during the SAFF Championship earlier this year and squandered a couple of chances there too, losing his position to Sheikh Morsalin. The suspension of Morsalin by Bashundhara Kings, though, allowed Fahim another chance in the starting eleven.

"I lacked confidence after missing the chances against Lebanon but the coach kept his faith on me during the Asian Games as well as the matches against Maldives. Now my confidence level is high and I am determined to seal my place," said Fahim.

"My strong point is running with the ball, but I have to do better in finishing and assisting other forwards," Fahim said. "I have a good understanding with Rakib as we discuss a lot before each match. I believe Rakib and I can be a good striking pair to eradicate the goal-scoring problem for our team."

Fahim also urged fans to keep faith on the team so that they get more motivation to do better in future.

Kane double sinks Italy

AGENCIES

England booked their place at Euro 2024 as Harry Kane's double inspired an impressive fightback to beat holders Italy 3-1 at Wembley on Tuesday.

Luciano Spalletti said Italy must learn from their latest defeat as he battles to secure qualification for the Euro 2024 finals in Germany.

Gianluca Scamacca finished off a well-worked move to give the Azzurri the lead but Harry Kane scored either side of a Marcus Rashford goal as England came from behind.

The victory guarantees top spot in Group C for England, leaving Italy, the defending European champions, and Ukraine to battle it out for second place.

Spalletti's men are in third spot, three points behind Ukraine with a game in hand.

Whatever happens, they are already assured of at least a play-off spot due to their UEFA Nations League ranking.

Meanwhile, needing a point to be certain of qualifying for next year's tournament in Germany, Gareth Southgate's side fell behind to Gianluca Scamacca's early goal.

But, fuelled by a superb display from Real Madrid midfielder Jude Bellingham, England hit back to equalise before the breakthrough Kane's penalty.

England striker Harry Kane celebrates after scoring his side's third goal and his second to seal a 3-1 win against Italy in a Euro 2024 qualifying Group C match at the Wembley Stadium yesterday. The goals took Kane's tally at Wembley to 24, one more than Sir Bobby Charlton, making him England's all-time top scorer at the stadium.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Argentina stay perfect, all goes wrong for Brazil

AGENCIES

Lionel Messi scored two goals as Argentina extended their perfect start to South American qualifiers for the 2026 World Cup on Tuesday with a 2-0 victory over Peru.

While Argentina continued their serene progress through qualifying, arch-rivals Brazil suffered a nightmare 2-0 defeat in Montevideo, crashing to a first loss against Uruguay in 22 years.

The defeat was compounded by the sight of veteran forward Neymar being stretchered off just before half-time with what appeared to be a knee injury.

Messi, who was denied a hat-trick in the second half when he had a goal disallowed for offside following a VAR review, became CONMEBOL's leading scorer in World Cup qualifiers with his double taking his tally to 31, breaking a tie with Uruguay's Luis Suarez.

The Inter Miami star took his international goal tally to 106 with strikes in the 32nd and 42nd minutes at Lima's Estadio Nacional.

Messi's first-half brace left reigning world champions Argentina on top of the South American qualifying table with 12 points from four games, five points clear of Uruguay, Brazil and Venezuela, who all have seven points.

Pakistan 'under extra pressure' in India

AFP, *Bengaluru*

Pakistan paid a heavy price for being "under extra pressure" in their World Cup defeat by arch-rivals India, said batsman Saud Shakeel, who Wednesday lamented the absence of the team's passionate supporters from the tournament.

Pakistan were thrashed by seven wickets on Saturday at Ahmedabad's 132,000-capacity stadium where there was only a handful of Pakistani supporters.

Babar Azam's team slumped from a solid 155-2 in the 30th over to be dismissed for a paltry 191. "I think we were under extra pressure so we tried to get out of that and wanted to play shots," Shakeel told AFP on Wednesday.

The smattering of Pakistani fans at the game were expatriates from the United Kingdom and the United States.

Supporters from across the border are effectively banned after a failure to gain visas.The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) on Wednesday lodged an official complaint with the world governing body over the visa delays which have also kept many members of the country's media at home.

The PCB also complained over what they described as the "inappropriate behaviour" of Indian fans towards the Pakistan squad at the Ahmedabad game.

"When you have your crowd then you get the support. We did not get that and it was not in our hands," added Shakeel.

Despite an eighth loss in eight World Cup meetings with their arch-rivals, Pakistan are still well-placed in the tournament after wins over the Netherlands and Sri Lanka.

Next up for Pakistan is another high-profile duel, this time with five-time champions Australia in Bengaluru on Friday. "The mistakes we committed in the last game, we must overcome them. That match is gone. If we win against Australia then our position will get better," added Shakeel.

"Australia are always good in the World Cup. They are a very good side. We know our strong areas and we must play good cricket."

"We had a good start to the tournament with two wins. We want to go match by match and not commit the mistakes we did against India."

On Wednesday, all the Pakistan players with the exception of Mohammad Haris trained in Bengaluru. Haris is still suffering from a fever which laid low many of the squad when they arrived from Ahmedabad.

Star fast bowler Shaheen Shah Afridi and opener Abdullah Shafique were the worst hit but were present in the nets at the Chinnaswamy Stadium.