

What to WATCH

T SPORTS
 T20 World Cup
 Sri Lanka vs Pakistan
 Live from 7:30 pm
STAR SPORTS SELECT HD1, HD2
 Premier League
 Bournemouth vs Sunderland

Live from 6:30 pm
 Liverpool vs West Ham
 Live from 9:00 pm
 Newcastle vs Everton
 Live from 9:00 pm
 Leeds vs Man City
 Live from 11:30 pm



With England pulling off a four-wicket win over New Zealand in their final Group 2 Super Eight fixture in Colombo yesterday, Pakistan are still in with a chance of squeezing into the semifinals of this T20 World Cup if they can secure a convincing win over Sri Lanka in Pallekele today. For that, they will need their in-form opener Sahibzada Farhan to deliver once again, as Pakistan must beat Sri Lanka by at least 64 runs or complete the chase within 13.1 overs. However, Sri Lanka head coach Sanath Jayasuriya will be hoping that Maheesh Theekshana and the other spinners can thwart Pakistan and help them end their World Cup campaign on a positive note, having already been eliminated from the tournament.

PHOTO: FACEBOOK

Rinku leaves team after father's death

AFP, Chennai

India batter Rinku Singh has left the team during the T20 World Cup in the middle of the tournament after the death of his long-ailing father, official sources told AFP.

The middle-order batter had rejoined India ahead of Thursday's Super Eights victory against Zimbabwe, but did not feature in the playing XI in Chennai.

India hammered Zimbabwe by 72 runs to move into a winner-takes-all decider against the West Indies in Kolkata on Sunday for a last semi-final berth.

The Press Trust of India news agency said Khanchand Singh had been battling liver cancer and died Friday morning at a hospital on the outskirts of New Delhi.

An attacking left-hander, 28-year-old Singh emerged as a finisher for his Indian Premier League team Kolkata Knight Riders before making his place in the Indian T20 team.

Singh rose from a humble background, with viral videos of his father delivering gas cylinders emerging after he made his India debut in 2023.

Tributes poured in from former cricketers for Rinku's father.

"This must be an especially difficult time for Rinku and his family," former spinner Harbhajan Singh wrote on X.



Opportunity over regret in long-awaited Australia tour

ABDULLAH AL MEHDI

Bangladesh will tour Australia for a two-Test series in August for the first time in 23 years, ending one of the longest gaps in the Tigers' red-ball history.

The last time Bangladesh played a Test series Down Under was in 2003. The enormity of that gap can be gauged from the fact that Mushfiqur Rahim -- one of only three cricketers since the 2000s to enjoy a 20-year-plus Test career alongside England's James Anderson and Zimbabwe's Brendan Taylor -- has never played a Test in Australia.

While the upcoming series has been finalised, the matches are slated for Marrara Stadium in Darwin and Great Barrier Reef Arena in Mackay -- venues not traditionally considered Australia's iconic Test centres.

Mackay is set to debut as a Test venue in the series while Darwin, which had hosted its first Test during Bangladesh's previous Test tour, is set to host a five-day game for the first time since 2004.

Test careers are often measured by appearances at the game's most storied venues and in this regard, most Bangladeshi cricketers may feel a sense of deprivation.

Mushfiqur made his Test debut at Lord's and in 2010, Shakib Al Hasan and Tamim Iqbal also featured alongside him at the Home of Cricket. Yet, Australia's grand amphitheatres -- the Sydney Cricket Ground (SCG) and the Melbourne Cricket Ground (MCG) -- have remained beyond reach.

However, former Test captain Mominul Haque insists the opportunity to face Australia matters more than the venue.

"It felt really good when I heard it as I have never played Tests in Australia and even Mushfiqur bhai hasn't. It's great from many aspects because in the last few Test cycles, we haven't played any big teams except India and South Africa," Mominul told The Daily Star.

"Not exactly thinking about SCG or

not invite us to play for so many years, nor was it included in the FTP [Future Tours Programme]. But yes, I am happy that Bangladesh is playing against Australia in Australia," he told The Daily Star.

"Grounds like Melbourne and Sydney are very prestigious. Not being able to play in such venues may cause some regret. I



MCG. We haven't played Australia in a while so it's a big thing that we are playing there. We are excited to play a big side. So, I don't have much regret," he stated.

Former skipper Khaled Mahmud Sujon, who led Bangladesh in the 2003 series against an Australian side boasting the likes of Steve Waugh, Glenn McGrath and Ricky Ponting, termed the long hiatus unfortunate.

"It was our misfortune that Australia did

don't think they should be upset; they have achieved a lot in their long careers," he opined.

Mahmud also believed the current Bangladesh side is far more mature and feels the warmer conditions in Darwin could work in their favour.

"We managed in New Zealand conditions; Mount Maunganui was similar in that it wasn't that cold -- it was warm. I think that will also help us," he said.

Another episode of the Real-City saga PSG face Chelsea in CWC final rematch

A Real Madrid vs Manchester City clash has become a staple of the Champions League, and fans will see the two giants face off for the second time this season, having already met earlier in the league stage. They have now been drawn together in the Champions League knockout phase for the fifth consecutive season, with City's director of football, Hugo Viana, calling the tie "like a final." The Last 16 draw ceremony in Nyon yesterday threw up a few other heavyweight clashes, with reigning champions PSG set to take on Chelsea in a repeat of last year's ill-tempered Club World Cup final, in which the Premier League side came out on top. Meanwhile, Barcelona will face Newcastle, while Arsenal -- the only side to have stayed perfect in the league stage -- play Bayer Leverkusen.

LAST-16 DRAW

- Real Madrid vs Man City
- Bodo/Glimt vs Sporting
- PSG vs Chelsea
- Newcastle vs Barcelona
- Galatasaray vs Liverpool
- Atletico Madrid vs Tottenham
- Atalanta vs Bayern Munich
- Bayer Leverkusen vs Arsenal

QUARTERFINALS

- QF1: PSG/Chelsea vs Galatasaray/Liverpool
- QF2: Real Madrid/Man City vs Atalanta/Bayern
- QF3: Newcastle/Barcelona vs Atletico/Tottenham
- QF4: Bodo/Sporting vs Leverkusen/Arsenal

SEMIFINALS

- SF 1: QF1 winners v QF2 winners
- SF 2: QF3 winners v QF4 winners

FIRST AND SECOND LEG DATES

- Last 16: March 10-11 and March 17-18
- Quarterfinals: April 7-8 and April 14-15
- Semifinals: April 28-29 and May 5-6
- Final: May 30 in Budapest's Puskas Arena



Manchester City players were in high spirits during training on Thursday ahead of their trip to Elland Road to face Leeds Utd today. The Premier League title race looks to have come down to a straight battle between Arsenal and City. The Gunners hold a five-point lead after a 4-1 win over Tottenham but with Pep Guardiola's men holding a game in hand, the margin for error is slim. Arsenal face another derby test against fifth-placed Chelsea at the Emirates, raising the prospect of yet another twist this weekend. City, meanwhile, arrive in Yorkshire in a positive mood, having won their last five matches in all competitions.

PHOTO: MANCHESTER CITY

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Md. Sharif Hossain
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