

What to WATCH

T Sports

PSL
Karachi vs Quetta
Live from 3:30 pm
Lahore vs Peshawar
Live from 8:00 pm

Star Sports Select

HD1, HD2
Premier League
Liverpool vs Crystal Palace
Live from 8:00 pm

Wolves vs Tottenham
Live from 8:00 pm
Arsenal vs Newcastle
Live from 11:30 pm

Tigresses eye SL milestone

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh will be aiming to script history when they face Sri Lanka in the series-deciding third and final WODI at the Rajshahi Divisional Stadium today, with a maiden bilateral series win against the visitors at stake.

The Tigresses made a strong start to the series, securing their first-ever WODI victory over Sri Lanka with a thrilling three-wicket win in the opening match. However, they failed to build on that momentum, slipping to a four-wicket defeat in the second game.

Sri Lanka's resurgence in the second match was largely driven by the return of skipper Chamari Athapaththu, who had missed the opener due to injury. The all-rounder delivered a decisive performance, taking 3-36 to help bowl Bangladesh out for 165 before contributing a brisk 40 off 39 balls to steer her side to a comfortable chase.

The two sides last met in Sri Lanka in 2023, where the hosts won the WODI series 1-0 and the WT20I series 2-1. A victory today would provide a timely confidence boost for Bangladesh ahead of the T20 leg of the tour.

Following today's match, focus shifts to a three-match WT20I series at the Sylhet International Cricket Stadium on April 28, 30 and May 2.



MAIDEN INTERNATIONAL VICTORY

Bangladesh women's hockey team players celebrate a goal during a 3-2 victory against Uzbekistan in the Women's Asian Games Qualifiers in Jakarta yesterday, as the women in red and green registered their first-ever victory at the senior level. Sharika Rimon, Kona Akter and Airin Riya each scored, with the latter adjudged player of the match. The historic result follows an impressive 5-5 draw against Chinese Taipei in their senior debut on Thursday. Bangladesh will play their last Pool A match tomorrow against Hong Kong, where a draw would be enough to see them through to the semifinals, sealing qualification for the tournament proper.

PHOTO: AHF

47 DAYS TO GO



Germany top as Europe dominates WC podiums

Fifteen European teams have collectively occupied the top three positions at the World Cup – as champions, runners-up or third place – a total of 47 times so far. Germany top the list, having finished as champions, runners-up and third place four times each. Italy, in second place, have won the title four times, finished runners-up twice and claimed third place once.

** Visit The Daily Star website to also read "Luis Monti: The only man to play World Cup finals for two nations".

Mithu mistake decides key BFL battle

SPORTS REPORTER

Title contenders Abahani joined leaders Bashundhara Kings at the top of the Bangladesh Football League following a fortunate 1-0 win over Fortis FC in Cumilla yesterday, marking their first victory over Fortis in three years.

The match at the Shaheed Dhirendranath Datta Stadium was decided within the first minute following an uncharacteristic error from 17-year-old defender Mithu Chowdhury, which resulted in an own goal.

The costly blunder occurred when Abahani forward Mirajul Islam delivered a low cross from the right flank, seemingly destined to be dealt with by Fortis goalkeeper Sujon Perera, who had rushed off his line. However, the SAFF U-20 Championship-winning captain attempted to intervene, only for his mistimed chest-down to send the ball rolling into the unguarded net.

Fortis were unlucky to leave empty-handed after creating several opportunities to equalise. Missing Gambian forward Pa Omar Babou, the attack looked blunt; Essa Jallow and Nigerian Onyekachi Okafor squandered two chances each.

The defeat saw Fortis slip from second to third place on 25 points from 14 matches – still holding the best defensive record this season, with only eight goals conceded so far. Conversely, Abahani secured their fifth straight triumph to pull level with Kings on 28 points, though the latter have played one match fewer than the Sky Blues.

At Shaheed Miraj-Tapan Stadium in Manikganj, hosts Arambagh KS upset Rahmatganj MFS 1-0, avenging a 3-0 reverse fixture defeat. Kwame Kizito's 46th-minute goal lifted Arambagh out of the relegation zone to eighth, with 13 points from 14 games, while Rahmatganj stayed fourth on 19 points.

BCB plans key venue upgrades with dormitories

ABDULLAH AL MEHDI from Chattogram

Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) is planning to upgrade existing facilities nationwide, especially at international venues. On Thursday, officials visited Chattogram to oversee the venue and discuss these developments.

While initial plans include upgrading outer ground wickets and indoor facilities, the greater focus is on constructing dormitories to house cricketers from U-14 through to first class levels. The agenda aims to improve player security, comfort, and the logistical efficiency of the various programmes the board runs throughout the year.

BCB ad hoc committee president Tamim Iqbal and board members toured the facilities to discuss proceedings. While discussions initially centred on the Bir Sreshtho Flight Lieutenant Matiur Rahman Stadium in Chattogram, the board intends to roll out these dormitories across major venues in eight divisions.

"We already have one [academy facilities] in Mirpur and in the eight to ten divisional venues in Chattogram, Sylhet, Khulna, Rajshahi, Bogura, Barishal and Cox's Bazar, where many matches take place," a BCB official noted. "We are considering 60-70 seat dormitories at these locations. The project will take five years to execute but will significantly reduce expenditure."

Sources indicate that while the national league has sufficient funding, the budget for U-14 programmes is limited, making hotel accommodation difficult to facilitate.

Previous plans for full-fledged facilities in Cox's Bazar – including wickets, practice nets, gyms and dormitories – were shelved, but the current board is now reviving the initiative. BCB facilities chairman Rafiqul Islam Babu confirmed the push, and sources added that the facilities are designed to endure despite changes in



board leadership.

Unlike the national team, which utilises hotels, junior and women's camps at major venues like Chattogram and Sylhet face ongoing accommodation challenges.

"If you have dormitories, the kids feel safe, as do their parents," said cricket operations in-charge Shahrar Nafees. "It allows us to maintain a proper environment and run educational programmes, which is always a logistical challenge under current circumstances. These programmes, covering etiquette, computing and English literacy, help prepare players for the national team."

Practice facilities remain the immediate priority. The outer grounds at Chattogram, featuring 11 wickets and an adjacent indoor facility, will be cordoned off to ensure ample space for touring teams and Bangladesh Premier League franchises, while ventilation in the indoor centre is also being upgraded.

Alcaraz to miss French Open with wrist injury

AFP, Madrid

Two-time reigning French Open champion Carlos Alcaraz said on Friday he will not play at this year's tournament as he recovers from a wrist injury.

"We have decided that the most prudent thing to do is to be cautious and not participate in Rome or Roland Garros," Alcaraz said on social media.

"It's a complicated moment for me, but I'm sure we'll come out stronger from this," the Spaniard added, saying that he and his team would monitor his recovery before deciding when and where he would return.

Alcaraz sustained the injury during the first round of the Barcelona Open last week, where he beat Otto Virtanen but subsequently pulled out of the tournament.

The 22-year-old announced his withdrawal from the Madrid Masters on April 17, increasing concerns over whether he would be able to appear at the French Open.

Alcaraz became the youngest man to complete the career Grand Slam in January with his triumph at the Australian Open. He holds a 22-3 record this season and also won a title in Doha.

Ranked second in the world, Alcaraz lost top spot following his defeat by Jannik Sinner in the Monte Carlo Masters final on April 12.

The seven-time Grand Slam winner, an expert on clay, triumphed at Roland Garros in 2024 and 2025. He saved three championship points against Sinner in last year's final.



Wounded Arsenal aim to return to top

AGENCIES

Arsenal can reclaim the Premier League summit this weekend when they host Newcastle United as in-form Manchester City focus on the FA Cup.

Mikel Arteta's Gunners have watched their imposing nine-point lead vanish quickly, with City currently top on goals scored.

The Gunners are at risk of losing three straight top-flight games for the first time in four years, a fate that befell Newcastle in last weekend's home horror show against Bournemouth.

City's FA Cup commitments this weekend means that Arsenal only need a point against Newcastle to reclaim first place, but the form book suggests that will be easier said than done for Mikel Arteta.

Coming up short in the highly-anticipated blockbuster with Man City, Arsenal's 2-1 defeat saw the Gunners lose four domestic games in a row for the first time since Arsene Wenger's farewell season in 2017-18, as the inevitable 'bottle' accusations grow louder by the week.

Mikel Arteta's men also have a

Champions League semifinal with Atletico Madrid to look forward to next week.

Arsenal's last chance

City and Arsenal are locked together on 70 points, with five games left. Both teams have a plus-37 goal difference.

Two things separate the teams – the number of goals scored and experience of getting over the line.

City, who have netted three more times than Arsenal, have never failed to go on and win the title having led after 33 games or more in the Premier League.

The Gunners, who lost 2-1 at the Etihad last weekend, can return to the top with a win or a draw at home to Newcastle, with City taking on Southampton in the FA Cup semi-finals.

The following week, Mikel Arteta's men play first, meaning they could be six points clear before City face Everton on May 4.

Perennial runners-up Arsenal, who have the easier run-in on paper, must shrug off their recent collapse and put the pressure back on City.

The Citizens, currently topping the table for the first time since August, are favourites but it is not over yet.



(Clockwise from top left) State Minister for Youth and Sports Aminul Haque, Bangladesh Football Federation president Tabith Awal, Bangladesh Cricket Board ad hoc committee president Tamim Iqbal, and sprinter Shirin Akter attend the opening day's programme of The Daily Star's two-day 35th anniversary celebrations at its Dhaka office yesterday. Shirin, former fastest woman of the country, was also honoured with the 'Grassroots Nation Builder Award' alongside three others during the ceremony.

PHOTO: STAR