

#### Bangladesh Premier League

Bashundhara Kings v Chattogram Abahani  
Time: 3:15 pm  
Venue: Sheikh Kamal Stadium, Nilphamari  
Abahani v MuktiJoddha  
Time: 6:30 pm

Venue: Bangabandhu National Stadium, Dhaka  
**Dhaka Premier League**  
Abahani v Partex  
Time: 9:00 am  
Venue: Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium, Mirpur  
Legends of Rugponj v Old DOHS

Time: 9:00 am  
Venue: BKSP-4  
Prime Dolleshwar v Brothers Union  
Time: 9:00 am  
Venue: Khan Shaheb Osman  
Ali Stadium, Fatullah

#### 'IT'S NOT JUST ME'

Bruno Fernandes says his stellar form since he arrived at Manchester United in January is not the only reason why the club's fortunes have improved on the pitch. United are unbeaten in the nine games Fernandes has featured in since his £47 million move from Sporting Lisbon. The midfielder has scored three goals and made four assists. "I see the same team from one month ago. I think we are the same and have a lot of hunger to win, to give a lot, to do better and better in every game," Fernandes said. "In the last month, we've had a lot of really good games and I think we can talk about a new start after Bruno, but it's not about Bruno, it's about the team."

-- AFP



## BPL to continue at seven venues

SPORTS REPORTER



The Bangladesh Football Federation yesterday decided to continue hosting the Bangladesh Premier League at seven venues, backtracking from its plan of holding the top-tier professional league at a single venue in the capital in the wake of coronavirus outbreak.

BFF president Kazi Salahuddin had, on Wednesday, told reporters that the game's local governing body was planning to host all the league matches in Dhaka due to the outbreak of coronavirus, a plan which was opposed by a number of clubs of the Bangladesh Premier League subsequently.

After a meeting of the professional football league committee (PFLC) in presence of the club representatives at the BFF House yesterday, BFF's senior vice-president Abdus Salam Murshedy informed that the meeting unanimously approved of going through with the league at seven venues as both the BFF and the clubs felt that 'the overall situation in the country regarding coronavirus is still quite good'.

Bangladesh have so far had three cases of the deadly virus and two of them have already recovered, according to a statement by the Institute of Epidemiology, Disease Control and Research (IEDCR).

"The members of the PFLC have

unanimously decided that the league should go ahead until further notice as per a revised fixture (to be prepared within a couple of days. Unless the situation deteriorates, the matches will be played at all venues. The decision was taken in light of discussions with the clubs," said Murshedy, also the chairman of the PFLC.

Ahead of the meeting, several of the top clubs had voiced their opposition to the plan of holding the league at a single venue following Salahuddin's statement. However, Murshedy said that the BFF boss was only speaking of a probable plan in the face of uncertainty and questions from stakeholders. The BFF's senior vice-president also said that the clubs would try to discourage fan attendance at venues while shunning formalities such as hand-shakes.

Following the last matches of the sixth round today in Dhaka and Nilphamari, the league was scheduled to go into a three-week break due to the national team's proposed camp for World Cup qualifiers. But now that those qualifying fixtures have been postponed as per suggestions from the AFC and FIFA, the BFF wants to reschedule fixtures into this timeslot. The revised fixtures will be revealed, after further discussion with the clubs, within a couple of days and the seventh round of matches are expected to get underway on March 19, the BFF officials informed.



Portugal superstar Cristiano Ronaldo was spotted during his self-quarantine in his hometown of Madeira yesterday. The 35-year-old's Juventus teammate Daniel Rugani was infected by coronavirus recently.

PHOTO: AFP

## Five goals, six assists and one 16kg pig

AGENCIES, Asuncion

Although the outbreak of coronavirus has seen the postponement of most of competitive leagues across the world, Brazilian superstar Ronaldinho could not be denied his passion.

Currently detained in a Paraguayan prison for attempting to cross into the South American country using a fake passport, the 39-year-old wiped the floor with inmates, scoring five goals and racking up six assists in an 11-2 win for his side in a prison tournament.

Although the occasion was far less glamorous than when he turned out for the likes of Barcelona, AC Milan and PSG, there was also far less pressure as he was man-marked by former politician Miguel Cuevas.

The prize was one worthy of champions as well: a 16kg pig to the winner.

Ronaldinho had reportedly struggled

when he first arrived at the Paraguayan jail, but prison warden Blas Vera says his mood has improved, telling Reuters: "In broad terms he is doing very well. I see he is in good spirits, just like you see him on television, always smiling."



## Mohammedan go joint-top

SPORTS REPORTER



Mohammedan Sporting Club moved to the top of the Bangladesh Premier League alongside Sheikh Jamal DC with a 4-1 thrashing of Uttar Baridhara Club at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

The Black and Whites came into the match on the back of a morale-boosting 1-0 win against defending champions Bashundhara Kings following a 4-0 mauling by Abahani. The victory against the champions apparently came as a shot in the arm for Sean Lane's charges, who took a first-half lead and then scored three more goals in the second half after conceding the equaliser.

The Motijheel-based outfit took the lead in the 31st minute when Habibur Rahman Shohag's free-kick was inadvertently turned in by



Mohammedan players celebrate Soleymane Diabate's goal during their 4-1 win against Uttar Baridhara at the BNS yesterday.

PHOTO: BFF

Baridhara defender Sumon Reza. The promoted club took advantage of Mohammedan's lacklustre defending, with an unmarked Maruf Ahmed bundling home Noyon Mia's corner to

equalise eight minutes after restart.

However, Mohammedan restored their lead in the 71st minute, substitute Amir Hakim Bappy heading in Soleymane Diabate's cross before Diabate made it 3-1 five minutes later with a superb curling effort from inside the box.

As the win became inevitable, Obi Moneke rubbed salt into Baridhara's wounds with a solo effort from a counterattack in the stoppage time, dancing his way past a defender and the goalkeeper before finishing the job.

The win, Mohammedan's second in two matches and fourth overall, lifted them to 12 points from six matches. Sheikh Jamal, too, have 12 matches but the Dhanmondi-based outfit have played five matches. Baridhara, on the other hand, slipped to the bottom of the table with a single point from five matches.

## Premier League 'may not finish'

AFP, London



Football Association chairman Greg Clarke has reportedly told the Premier League he does not believe the domestic football season will be completed because of the coronavirus pandemic.

The Premier League suspended all fixtures at an emergency meeting on Friday. Matches in the English Football League, FA Women's Super League and Women's Championship are also on hold.

"It was unanimously decided to suspend the Premier League with the intention of returning on 4 April, subject to medical advice and conditions at the time," the Premier League said in a statement.

Clarke said at the meeting that he did not think it was feasible for the season to be completed, according to a report in the Times.

The virus is not expected to peak in Britain for many weeks, raising doubts over an early April re-start for the Premier League.

The Times said it is understood that Brighton and Hove Albion chief executive Paul Barber also questioned the brevity of the suspension.

Richard Masters, the Premier League chief executive, is reported to have said it would at least allow time to consider the potential consequences and debate the possible solutions.

The decision was taken after Arsenal manager Mikel Arteta and Chelsea winger Callum Hudson-Odoi tested positive for COVID-19.

Arteta welcomed the move to put the season on hold. "Feeling better already," he tweeted. "We're all facing a huge & unprecedented challenge. Everyone's health is all that matters right now."

Liverpool are 25 points clear at the top of the Premier League with nine games remaining, chasing their first English top-flight title for 30 years.

If results had gone their way this weekend they could have wrapped up the title at Everton on Monday but manager Jurgen Klopp said he supported the move to suspend football.

He said in a club statement: "If it's a choice between football and the good of the wider society, it's no contest. Really, it isn't."

Football clubs at all levels face enormous losses if the season is not completed.

One senior figure in broadcasting told the Times: "The commercial reality for the Premier League and (European governing body) UEFA is that if they don't complete their seasons then they are in breach of their broadcasting contracts.

#### SHORT CORNER

#### Postpone all football, says Fifa

FIFA on Friday recommended that all international football matches scheduled for March and April be postponed due to the spread of the new coronavirus.

Falling short of banning matches outright, world football's governing body said that clubs would be allowed to refuse to send their players to national squad gatherings in March and April.

FIFA also said that it was working on rescheduling qualifying matches for the 2022 World Cup in both Asia and South America which have been postponed.

"All international matches previously scheduled to take place in March and April should now be postponed until such time that they can take place in a safe and secure environment," FIFA said.

FIFA added that the "final decision" on any postponements "rests with the respective competition organisers or relevant member association in case of friendlies".

FIFA rules normally oblige clubs to release players for national team matches, but this rule has been temporarily reversed.

"In light of the current situation concerning the Coronavirus, FIFA has decided that general football rules which normally oblige clubs to release players for national team matches will not apply for the upcoming international windows in March/April," the statement said.

-- AFP

#### Armanitola, Keramatia in school hockey final

Armanitola Government High School of Dhaka and Keramatia High School of Rangpur set up a final clash in the Bangabandhu First Security Islami Bank National School Hockey Competition, winning their respective semifinal matches at the Maulana Bhasani Hockey Stadium yesterday.

Keramatia beat Government Jubilee School of Dinajpur 2-0 in the first semifinal, with Al Amin and Rezaul Islam scoring the two goals. In the second semifinal of the day, Armanitola edged Shaheed Mamun Mahmud Police Lines School of Rajshahi 1-0, courtesy of a solitary goal scored by Siam Ahmed. The final will be held at 3:30pm today.

-- SPORTS REPORTER

#### Cutrone, Pezzella add to La Viola's coronavirus crisis

Fiorentina's Italian forward Patrick Cutrone and Argentine defender German Pezzella have both tested positive for coronavirus, along with a club physiotherapist, the Serie A team said Saturday.

"They had some symptoms. All three tested positive. Their health is good and they are at home in Florence," Fiorentina said in a statement. The club's Serbia forward Dusan Vlahovic was also confirmed to contracted the virus on Friday.

It total nine top-flight Italian footballers have now tested positive, including five Sampdoria players, and Juventus defender Daniele Rugani.

Serie A as well as all sport in Italy has been suspended until April 3.

The country recorded its highest one-day death toll yet of 250 on Friday, bringing the total to 1,266, with 17,660 infected.

-- AFP

#### India suspends domestic football and cricket

India suspended domestic soccer until the end of this month while domestic cricket was put on hold indefinitely due to the coronavirus on Saturday.

The All India Football Federation said in a statement that, following Ministry of Health and state government-level advice, "all footballing activities under the aegis of AIFF stay suspended till March 31".

"The AIFF will take a stock of the situation in the last week of March, and take a decision abiding by directives from relevant authorities at that juncture," it added.

All I-League matches have also been suspended but the final of the franchise-based Indian Super League was due to go ahead without spectators in Goa later on Saturday.

The outbreak has already cost India its only European Tour golf event and a shooting World Cup.

-- REUTERS



A shot of the action from the Bangabandhu First Security Islami Bank National School Hockey Competition first semifinal between Keramatia High School of Rangpur and Government Jubilee School of Dinajpur. Keramatia High School won the semifinal 2-0.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

## Lucky it's not a contact sport, says Cummins

AGENCIES, Melbourne

Australian fast bowler Pat Cummins feels "lucky" that cricket is not an out-an-out contact sport at a time when the COVID-19 pandemic has wreaked havoc on the sporting calendar, not even sparing his own game.

Australia and New Zealand played the first ODI of the three-match series in an empty stadium on Friday amid the outbreak which has so far claimed over 5,000 lives.

"We're lucky in cricket that it's not a contact sport, you can try and avoid getting too close to each other so no one really changed too much," Cummins was quoted as saying in cricket. au.com.

"We were pretty clear on making sure nothing really affected the integrity of how we actually played and not changing anything about how we normally go about the game."

Australia beat New Zealand by 71 runs in the opening ODI on Friday before the second and third matches were postponed owing to the affliction that has claimed over 5000 deaths so far while infecting more than 1,30,000 people across the world.

