

TEN 2

UEFA Nations League  
Ireland v Wales  
Live from 7:00pm  
England v Belgium  
Live from 10:00pm  
France v Portugal  
Live from 12:45am (Monday)

SONY SIX

UEFA Nations League  
Croatia v Sweden  
Live from 10:00pm  
Poland v Italy  
Live from 1:15am (Monday)  
**STAR SPORTS SELECT 1**  
Indian Premier League

Hyderabad v Rajasthan  
Live from 4:00pm  
Mumbai v Delhi  
Live from 8:00pm  
**STAR SPORTS SELECT 2**  
French Open  
Live from 3:30pm & 7:00pm

## All eyes on Mirpur as cricket returns to Bangladesh

FIXTURES

October 11: Mahmudullah XI v Najmul XI  
October 13: Mahmudullah XI v Tamim XI  
October 15: Najmul XI v Tamim XI  
October 17: Mahmudullah XI v Najmul XI  
October 19: Mahmudullah XI v Tamim XI  
October 21: Najmul XI v Tamim XI  
October 23: Final

\*\*All the matches will be day-night and will start from 1.30 pm.

\*\*All the games will be played at the Sher-e-Bangla National stadium in Mirpur.

\*\* All matches will be shown live on BCB's official Facebook page while Bangladesh Betar will also provide live commentary.

Obviously, we feel great as we were never out of the field for such a long time. We are excited for the tournament and there are high expectations on the team. Our aim is to become champions and if we can play our natural game, we can achieve that. The positive thing is that we are a young side so our fielding department is expected to be better.

NAJMUL HOSSAIN

I think the team that will play good cricket on the field will have the chance to win. Talking about expectation, we are returning to competitive cricket after a gap of six-seven months and around fifty to sixty cricketers will take part in this tournament. We should not just think about returning to cricket but also about whether we can gain something individually from this tournament. Suppose a batsman plays really well or a bowler impresses everyone, that will help them get into the national team.

TAMIM IQBAL

It feels good to return to cricket as we had been practising for a long time now. At the end of the day, it's our job. The expectation is obviously to be champions but the fact is that all the best players of the country will be playing this tournament, which itself fosters good competition among us. As all of us will be playing after a long time, it will work as an inspiration for everyone. We all are eager to play this tournament.

MAHMUDULLAH RIYAD

SPORTS REPORTER

March 16, 2020 was the last time Bangladeshi cricketers played a competitive game. The backdrop was the first round of the Dhaka Premier League, which was cancelled shortly after following the outbreak of the coronavirus in the country.

After that long seven-month gap, cricketers will once again return to the field through the BCB President's Cup today.

Mahmudullah XI will take on Najmul XI in the opening game of the 50-over tournament at the Sher-e-Bangla National stadium in Mirpur today.

All matches will be day-night affairs and it will mark the Bangladesh Cricket Board actually resuming cricket in an attempt to gradually host international teams.

Cricketers from the national team, high performance team and members of the 2019 ICC Under-19 World Cup-winning side were divided into three teams, with Tamim XI the third team.

Although this three-team tournament may not be as financially beneficial as the DPL or first-class competitions since the sports sector has been hard-struck by the pandemic, the BCB did try to encourage players by announcing Tk 15 lac for the champions.

The runners-up will receive Tk 7.5 lac while there are rewards of



Tk 2 lac for the man of the series and a Tk 1 lac reward for the best batsman, bowler and fielder of the tournament. The player of the final will also receive Tk 1 lac.

However, for cricketers, the monetary remuneration is a secondary thought. They will be more delighted to return to the field in a competitive tournament. Even the selectors have their eyes on the tournament after the tour of Sri Lanka was postponed recently.

"Obviously, we were willing to have a squad for the Sri Lanka series and we were planning to have a look at the players during

the training camp. Unfortunately, the series got postponed in the end but we do have a group of players in mind. This tournament may not fulfil the expectations of the players financially but it has its own significance," member of the national selection panel and former Bangladesh captain Habibul Bashar told The Daily Star.

"I am sure the players will be as serious as they were during the practise matches and how they remain during any competitive tournament. We will keep a close eye on each and every single tournament from now on. But at the

same time, we are also not going to pressure the players. We want to see their attitude and observe whether they give their hundred percent or not," he added.

It will be a battle between experience and youth in the opening game. Mahmudullah's side -- featuring the likes of Liton Das, Mominul Haque, Imrul Kayes, Sabbir Rahman, Rubel Hossain and Mehedi Hasan Miraz -- will take on Najmul's relatively younger side, featuring Afif Hossain, Saif Hasan, Soumya Sarkar, Towhid Hridoy and guided by the experienced hand of Mushfiqur Rahim.



## Who will make history?

AGENCIES



Novak Djokovic and Rafael Nadal have faced each other more than any other players in the Open Era, and they will certainly write a new chapter in their legendary rivalry today in the blockbuster final at Roland Garros with history on the line for both men.

They have met in eight Grand Slam finals, with each great winning four times, but this result will shift the tide in the all-time battle for most major trophies.

World number one Djokovic is seeking an 18th Grand Slam title and a second French Open to become the first man in half a century to win all four Grand Slams twice. Meanwhile, defending champion Nadal is bidding to win a record-extending 13th Roland Garros and 20th major, which would tie the all-time men's record held by Roger Federer. Victory would also give the 34-year-old Spaniard a 100th match win in Paris against just two defeats in 15 years. One of those losses came against 33-year-old Djokovic in the 2015 quarterfinals, the last time the pair clashed on the crushed red brick surface of Court Philippe Chatrier.

But Nadal has a 6-1 advantage at the French Open, including wins in the 2012 and 2014 finals. "This is the house of Rafa," said Djokovic, describing facing him on clay as the sport's "biggest challenge".

The Serb has won 37 matches in 2020 with his one defeat self-inflicted via his infamous default at the US Open. "The only thing I know is to play against Novak, I need to play my best," said Nadal.

UNHAPPY NADAL

Nadal had complained about the cold weather at the rescheduled French Open, which is usually held in May-June, the new balls being used for this edition, and the late finishes. But the unusual conditions have had little impact on his

performances since the Spaniard has not dropped a set in his six victories at this year's edition.

**NOT DJOKOVIC'S BIGGEST MATCH**  
Djokovic insisted that he had played far more significant finals and pointed to his first win over Nadal at a Slam at Wimbledon in 2011. "I don't think this is the biggest match that I have ever played in my life," he said.

DREAM FINAL

"For me, it's the dream final," said Eurosport tennis expert and Spain's twice Roland-Garros finalist Alex Corretja.

Chris Evert, the winner of 18 Grand Slams titles, said, "I look at Nadal and see a warrior, fighting for everything, he's going to leave blood on the court." "I look at Djokovic and I see more of a robot but in a good sense. The mental part of his game is a level ahead of everyone else, it's awesome."

NOVAK DJOKOVIC (SER)

Age: 33  
Ranking: 1  
Career record: 924/188  
Career titles: 81  
Grand Slam titles: 17  
Roland Garros 2020: Dropped three sets so far.

RAFAEL NADAL (ESP)

Age: 34  
Ranking: 2  
Career record: 992/201  
Career titles: 85  
Grand Slam titles: 19  
Roland Garros 2020: Hasn't dropped a set yet.

HEAD-TO-HEAD	DJOKOVIC	NADAL
Overall	29	26
Grand slams	6	9
Roland Garros	1	6

## High-octane match on cards at the Stade de France

AGENCIES

The UEFA Nations League will return to the fold tonight as France take on Portugal in a high-octane fixture at the Stade de France in Saint-Denis. Both European giants have maintained a perfect record so far in the competition and will want to win this fixture.

The first two matchdays of the second edition of the competition went ahead in September. Some of the more notable results saw both France and Portugal thrash Croatia, Italy won away at the Netherlands, Germany drew 1-1 with Spain, and England scraped past Iceland with a last-minute Raheem Sterling penalty.

France have won both their opening fixtures and are behind Portugal only on goal difference. The reigning World Champions thrashed Ukraine by a 7-1 margin earlier this week and will be filled to the brim with confidence going into this game. Portugal are currently on top of Group 3 in League A of the European competition and have one of the most lethal attacking forces on the continent. Fernando Santos oversaw a 0-0 stalemate against Spain this week and will make a few changes to his starting line-up going into this game.

France and Portugal have faced each other a total of 25 times on the international stage. The French have historically been the dominant side in this fixture, winning 18 games against their opponents. Portugal have managed six victories and will want to make a statement with a victory this weekend.

Portugal famously edged France to a victory in the final of Euro 2016 and won their first major trophy on the international stage. The French will be baying for revenge in this game and are likely to field their best eleven.

Italy will be aiming to record their second victory when they continue their campaign away to Poland on Sunday night. Roberto Mancini's side are currently top of Group 1 of League A, having picked

up four points from their opening two matches against Bosnia-Herzegovina and the Netherlands.

The Azzurri will bring a 17-game unbeaten run into this weekend's contest, while they thumped Moldova 6-0 in an international friendly on Wednesday night.

Belgium will be looking to extend their advantage at the top of their group when they travel to Wembley Stadium to face England on Sunday evening.

Roberto Martinez's side have beaten Denmark and Iceland in their two fixtures in Group 2 of League A to sit at the top of



"These boots are beautiful and I cannot wait to wear them for my next @selecaoportugal match to celebrate my career milestone!" Portugal superstar Cristiano Ronaldo wrote as he posed with his new boots ahead of clash against France.

PHOTO: TWITTER

the section, two points clear of England.

The Red Devils will enter the match off the back of a 1-1 draw with the Ivory Coast in an international friendly on Thursday night, but they have won 12 of their last 13 games during an excellent run. Croatia and Switzerland were both winners in their respective friendly clashes during the week and they will each hope to build on their success having lost both of their opening UEFA Nations League matches.



Despite the ongoing pandemic, sports events are slowly returning to life in the country. The Bangabandhu Federation Cup Basketball Tournament, an eight-team five-day event, kicked off at the Dhanmondi Basketball Gymnasium yesterday. Players of Bangladesh under-19 hockey team, meanwhile, started their training camp at the Maulana Bhasani Hockey Stadium for next January's Junior Asia Cup in Dhaka.

PHOTO: STAR

## Siddikur wants to go to USA

SPORTS REPORTER



Ace folder Siddikur Rahman said he wants to go to the United States to pursue a training and take part in tournaments there to try to get himself into reckoning for next year's Olympic Games.

The two-time Asian Tour winner, who has been sitting idle at home since the first week of March due to the pandemic, sees the break in play as an ideal option to train and improve his ranking ahead of next year's Olympics, which will be held from July 23 to August 8, 2021.

"I have been idle since March and I don't think there will be any more event of Asian Tour this season. So I have applied to the Bangladesh Olympic Association for a one-year scholarship worth one lakh 60 thousand dollars so that I can go and train and play in USA," the golfer told media at



a press briefing at the Bangladesh Hockey Federation yesterday.

"Whether or not my appeal gets accepted, I will go to USA, even through my own savings. I want to train there for at least three months and play tournaments which offer ranking points," said Siddikur, who was the first Bangladeshi athlete to earn direct qualification for the Olympics in 2016.

Siddikur is currently ranked 660th in world. The cut-off date for qualification for Tokyo Olympics is middle of June next year, with 60 male golfers entitled to play.



## Confusion prevails on World Squash Day

SPORTS REPORTER

Marking the World Squash Day yesterday, the Bangladesh Squash Rackets Federation (BSRF), at a press conference, laid out an elaborate five-year plan with the immediate target of regaining medals in next South Asian Games and long-term target of getting the game off to good heights, not only in the region but also in world squash.

The crowded press conference, however, was less keen on the extravagant plans and more on the authority of the speaker, Brigadier General (ret'd) GM Kamrul Islam, who introduced himself as the general secretary of the federation.

However, when asked whether there has been any circular from the National Sports Council on his appointment, the former general secretary of the Bangladesh Golf Federation could not provide a satisfactory answer. "We don't want to get into those arguments. Even if there are mistakes, we should see those in a positive light. We need



to look forward and not dwell on legalities, for the sake of the game," said Kamrul, who later claimed to be the acting general secretary of the federation.

An ad-hoc committee was installed in 2015 and that committee is still in place, with the general secretary of that committee, Sohel Hamid, stepping down earlier this year due to ill health. However, his resignation has not yet been ratified by the NSC.

When contacted by media, NSC secretary Masud Karim said they 'did not approve of any such committee' since the ad-hoc committee in 2015.