



PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

# Soumya, Liton hog the limelight

SPORTS REPORTER



On the final day of the Bangabandhu T20 Cup's group stage yesterday, Minister Rajshahi and Gazi Group Chattogram were in stark contrast when it came to standard of cricket. Chattogram, riding on the classical opening pair of Soumya Sarkar and Liton Das, were focused on staying as clinical as they had been throughout the tournament and ended the group stage with seven wins from eight games. On the other hand, Rajshahi failed to secure a top-four berth due

to their below-par display in a do-or-die scenario, losing by 36 runs after Chattogram posted 175 for four. But once again it was Soumya and Liton who caught the eye. The pair were on top of their game after Chattogram were asked to bat first in overcast conditions. Although Soumya had some fortune early on when he was dropped twice, the left-hander looked solid thereafter. At the other end, Liton had come into the match after being rested for the previous game but picked up right where he left off. From Soumya's elegant flick off

the legs to pacer Rejaur Rahman to Liton's sweet stroke for a boundary towards backward point, it seemed to be a walk in the park for the pair. There were never questions about the talent of either batsman, but consistency has been the biggest concern for Liton and Soumya over the years. And both finally showed some in the tournament so far. Soumya reached his second fifty of the tournament off forty balls in the 13th over and Liton followed suit, registering his third fifty off 38 deliveries, in the next over. Courtesy of the two batters, Chattogram reached 100 without loss in twelve overs and at one stage

were eying a total over 200. However, Soumya departed for a 48-ball 63 featuring four sixes and three fours as the opening stand was broken for 122. Liton departed soon after, bowled by Rejaur Rahman as he attempted a lap shot. He made 55 off 43, hitting five fours and a six. The elegant right-hander was at the top of the run-getters list before the second match of the list with 306 runs from seven games. Not only have the pair's performances been a welcome sight for the Bangabandhu T20 Cup, the national team will also be excited by their form ahead of the West Indies series.

## Barishal clinch last spot

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Naim Sheikh's magnificent hundred went in vain as Fortune Barishal registered a nail-biting two-run win over Beximco Dhaka to clinch the final qualification spot for the playoff stages of the Bangabandhu T20 Cup yesterday. The equation was simple for Barishal, who knew they had to win their last game against Dhaka and posted 193 for three after being asked to bat. However, even if Barishal lost, they would have qualified had Dhaka failed to reach the target in 18.3 overs. However, Dhaka fought till the end as a win would see them reach second place and play the qualifiers against Gazi Group Chattogram. It was Naim who kept Dhaka's hopes alive till the end by smashing his third century of the tournament. Tamim Iqbal's but after his departure for a 64-ball 105 including seven sixes and eight fours, Dhaka could only reach 191 for six in their allotted overs. Chasing the huge target, Dhaka lost three early wickets before Naim and Yasir

Ali added 110 for the fourth wicket. Yasir then departed for 41 as Barishal's bowlers began to make inroads. Left-arm spinner Sohrawardi Shuvo, playing his first game for Barishal, was the pick of the bowlers and bagged three wickets, including the crucial scalp of Dhaka skipper Mushfiquur Rahim, and ended with figures of three for 13. Earlier, Barishal once again got a steady start from openers Tamim Iqbal and Saif Hasan. The duo added 59 runs before Tamim was dismissed for 19. Saif added 50 but after both openers were dismissed, Dhaka's bowlers started to apply the pressure. Afif Hossain and Towhid Hridoy came together and added a quickfire, unbeaten 91-run fourth-wicket stand that helped them post a huge total. Aff remained not out on a 25-ball 50 while Hridoy struck the fastest fifty of the tournament off just 22 balls. Both played some powerful strokes in the latter stage of the innings. After this defeat, Dhaka slipped to third place and they will face Barishal in an eliminator while Chattogram will face Khulna in the first qualifier.

POINTS TABLE				
TEAM	MATCH	WIN	LOSS	POINTS
CHATTOTGRAM	8	7	1	14
KHULNA	8	4	4	8
DHAKA	8	4	4	8
BARISHAL	8	3	5	6
RAJSHAHI	8	2	6	4



Beximco Dhaka opener Mohammad Naim hit a 64-ball 105, smashing eight fours and seven sixes, but his side fell two runs short of the 193 posted by Fortune Barishal yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

## Jamieson swings NZ to the top

AGENCIES



Kyle Jamieson bagged five wickets in a masterclass of swing bowling as New Zealand struck hard and fast to have the West Indies on the ropes on day two of the second Test in Wellington on Saturday. The tourists ended the day on the brink of another follow on as they struggled to 124 for eight, still 336 behind New Zealand's 460. The Basin Reserve strip continued to provide all the ingredients on a fast bowler's wish list -- pace, bounce and movement -- and New Zealand exploited this perfectly. The New Zealand quick quartet -- Southee, Trent Boult, Neil Wagner and Williamson -- immediately extracted life from the wicket. "It's cool to be part of a four-pronged attack but I [consider] myself very much the fourth prong," Jamieson



Kyle Jamieson celebrates the wicket of Jason Holder during the second day of the second Test in Wellington yesterday.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

said. "You look at Tim, Trent and Wags and the way they've gone about their business in the last [decade] and it's been nothing short of world class. "To firstly be in the environment around those guys you learn so much and to come on and bowl off the back of what those guys are doing, it makes my job a little bit easier. I just find myself very fortunate to play in the same team as those guys." Jamieson closed the day with the wickets of Jason Holder for nine and Alzarri Joseph without scoring to have figures of five for 34. Southee has taken three for 29. Only Jermaine Blackwood provided any serious resistance but he fell late in the day for 69 as Jamieson and Tim Southee wreaked havoc.



## PEACE IN CRICKET

Old, traditional children's games like kanamacchi, daria-bandha, gollachhut, kite flying and ha-du-du have lost their popularity and cricket has now become the main focus in char areas of Brahmaputra, Dudhkumar, Teesta and Dharla rivers in Kurigram and Lalmonirhat. Although there are no playgrounds in those areas, people of all ages rush with bats, balls and stumps to the sandy shores to play the game in which one local said they "find great peace". But with the increasing popularity of the international game, elderly locals now fear that their traditional games will go extinct in time.

PHOTO: S DILIP ROY



## THOUSANDS ATTEND ROSSI'S FUNERAL

Thousands of mourners gathered in the Italian city of Vicenza on Saturday for the funeral of World Cup-winning Italy forward Paolo Rossi. The coffin was carried to a cathedral, where a newspaper front page after the 1982 World Cup final was displayed, by his World Cup-winning teammates. Before the funeral, Rossi's coffin was placed at the Stadio Romeo Menti, where supporters could lay flowers and pay their respects. "Paolo belonged to the people, to everyone, and it is right that he should be remembered for his greatness," said Rossi's wife Federica Cappelletti.

PHOTO: REUTERS

## Neymar's veiled dig at FIFA

AGENCIES

The three finalists for FIFA's 'The Best' awards were named with Robert Lewandowski, Lionel Messi and Cristiano Ronaldo topping the men's list. Shortly after the list of the three finalists became official, Neymar posted a couple of enigmatic tweets, that could be considered as indirect criticism towards FIFA. "Since the tennis didn't work, I am moving to basketball," was Neymar's first tweet. Six minutes later, the Paris Saint-Germain forward published another ironic post on Twitter. "I already quit basketball, now I'm a gamer," he wrote. Neymar already joked with his former teammate Thiago Silva when the IFFHS best XI of the year was announced, without the Brazilian forward among the players in the line-up. "Ney was in the NBA bubble," wrote Thiago Silva. "They recruited me," Neymar replied.

## Jamal's I-League stint under Covid cloud

SPORTS REPORTER



Bangladesh skipper Jamal Bhuiyan has tested positive for coronavirus in Doha, leaving his much-anticipated debut in I-League for Kolkata Mohammedan in doubt. The 30-year-old midfielder had stayed back in Qatar for personal reasons following Bangladesh's World Cup qualifying fixture on December 4 and has since contacted the virus. Jamal is asymptomatic, according to Bangladesh Football Federation, and is currently in isolation. "Jamal had stayed back in Doha and subsequently tested positive for coronavirus. He is now in isolation at a hotel there, being looked after by the Qatar FA," informed Abu Nayeem Shohag, the general secretary of BFF.



Although the circumstances under which Jamal contacted Covid are unclear -- the Bangladesh captain could not be reached for a comment on this -- it has been learnt that Jamal tested positive on Thursday as he was scheduled to fly back to Dhaka, ahead of his scheduled move to Kolkata Mohammedan for the I-League. But due to him testing positive, Jamal's appearance in I-League has become uncertain. Kolkata Mohammedan, who are currently playing in the IFA Shield, are scheduled to start training soon for the league, which will begin on January 9. The club's general secretary Wasim Akram, while talking to media in Kolkata, said they are already looking for a replacement for the Bangladesh captain. "It will be very unfortunate if Jamal cannot play for us this season. We have nothing to do here as we cannot go against the will of nature," Akram said. "But even if he doesn't play this year, he can play for us next season. With the relationship that we have built, I don't think he will refuse us." He added that the club would come to a decision in this regard within a couple of days. "We haven't yet decided who will be his replacement. We will come to a decision by Monday or Tuesday. We have three to four players in consideration," Akram said.