



PHOTO: STAR  
 Mohammad Ashraful came out of his pale self after a long time at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium yesterday where he hammered a blistering 73 off 47 balls for Dhaka Gladiators against Rangpur Riders in a BPL T20 match.

## Shapla's treble

Enam's first title

SPORTS REPORTER

Shapla Akther made treble-sweep in the Qubee 32nd National Badminton Championships as the Narayanganj player defeated Shima of Chittagong 21-9, 21-1 the women's singles final at the Shaheed Tajuddin Ahmed Indoor Stadium yesterday.

Shima was forced to retire after sustaining a muscle strain during the second set.

Shapla also teamed up with Nabila to win the women's doubles title beating Shima and Ankhi of Chittagong who did not turn up in the final. Shapla had earlier won the mixed doubles crown with Javed on Friday.

Meanwhile Enam of Sylhet became the champion for the first time as he beat former champion Rais of Railway 20-22, 21-17 and 21-16 in the men's singles final. Rais and Parash won the men's doubles title beating Enam and Dulal 21-23, 21-13, 2-18 in the final.

## Div-I cricket

SPORTS REPORTER

Sakil Haider hit 109 as Surjo Torun Club posted a comfortable 83-run victory against Young Cricketers in the relegation match of the First Division Cricket League at BKSP yesterday.

In the day's other match, Biman secured a three-wicket victory over Kathalbagan Green Crescent Club at the Dhanmondi Cricket Stadium.

**SCORES IN BRIEF**  
**KATHALBAGAN GREEN CRESCENT CLUB:** 160-9 in 50 overs (Ilias Hossain 46, Nirjon 31; Masum 3-19, Proshanto 3-34, Mohiuddin 2-34).  
**BIMAN:** 161-7 in 48.1 overs (Rashedul Islam 44, Moin Khan 30, Sajjad Kadir 27, Proshanto 23; Nirjon 3-29, Minhaj 2-20).  
**Result** : Biman won by 4 runs  
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# Dhaka win big after Ashraful special

SPORTS REPORTER

It was an entertaining evening at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium yesterday as the crowd witnessed two top-class innings. While Mohammad Ashraful's stroke-filled 73 led the Dhaka Gladiators to a convincing 35-run victory over the Rangpur Riders, Nasir Hossain proved his ability to bat under pressure with an aggressive 80, albeit in a losing cause.

Batting first, the Gladiators set a huge total of 202 courtesy of a brilliant innings by Ashraful and some late hitting towards the end of the innings. Dhaka began on an aggressive note as both openers, Luke Wright and Ashraful, attacked a weak-looking Rangpur bowling attack. Ashraful in particular took advantage as he smacked eight fours and three sixes in his entertaining 73, a score that beat his previous best of 53 in the inaugural edition.

He took a special liking to the young Amit Kumar who he smacked for two huge sixes down the ground. The highlight of his innings was a drive through point for four off

Tapash Baisya in the sixth over, a shot that came straight out of the text book.

Ashraful was ably supported by his teammates as he reached his 50 off 30 balls in the eleventh over. He shared a partnership of 57 off just 23 balls for the second wicket with Anamul Haque, the highest of the innings.

Ashraful was eventually stumped off Abdur Razzak in the 16th over while attempting to clear the rope. A

Mohammad Ashraful scores his T20 highest -- a 47-ball 73

Rangpur Riders' Nasir Hossain hits a

few late blows from Owais Shah and Joshua Cobb helped Dhaka cross the 200 mark for the second consecutive time in the tournament.

In reply, Rangpur had the worst possible start as they crumbled to 31 for 3 in the first six overs. What followed was a 118-run partnership between Nasir Hossain and Niall O'Brien, which gave the Riders a glimmer of hope. Nasir, who came to

bat at number 5, hit five fours and six sixes and almost single-handedly brought the Riders back into contention in the second half of the innings. His two sixes off Chris Liddle in the 17th over, both down the ground, in particular described how well he was hitting the ball. He surpassed his previous best of 42 scored in the inaugural edition.

The charge given by Nasir and Niall however, came a little too late in the innings. Nasir was caught in the fine-leg region when he top-edged a slog-sweep off Shakib Al Hasan in the 18th over, with over 50 odd runs still to get. Rangpur eventually finished on 167 for 4.

**SCORES IN BRIEF**  
**DHAKA GLADIATORS:** 202 for 5 in 20 overs (Ashraful 73, Cobb 34 not out, Shah 28, Wright 22, Anamul 19, Shakib 13; Nasir 1-25, Tapash 1-31, Razzak 1-36)  
**RANGPUR RIDERS:** 167 for 4 in 20 overs (Nasir 80, O'Brien 40 not out, Imrul 16, extras 16; Shakib 2-17, Lokuarachchi 1-42)  
**Result:** Dhaka Gladiators won by 35 runs.  
**Player-of-the-match:** Mohammad Ashraful.

# India romp ahead

Cricket

PTI, Ranchi

India bowlers put in an inspired show before Virat Kohli returned to form with a rollicking unbeaten 77 as the hosts thrashed England by seven wickets in the third one-day international to make captain Mahendra Singh Dhoni's first match in his home town a memorable one on Saturday.

India first bundled out the visitors for a paltry 155 in 42.2 overs riding on Ravindra Jadeja's 3-19 and then chased down the target with 21.5 overs to spare to take a 2-1 lead in the five-match match series.

Nearly 40,000 vociferous spectators at the newly built JSCA Stadium cheered Kohli, who rediscovered his form, and other Indian batsmen as they went about the run chase without much fuss in what turned out to be a rather lop-sided contest.

The script unfolded like a dream for home boy Dhoni as he won the toss and his bowlers responded magnificently by skittling out the visitors for a meagre total though it was not a difficult wicket to bat on.

Only Joe Roots (39) could hang around for long while opener Ian Bell (25) and Tim Bresnan (25) were the other contributors as England lost wickets at regular intervals.

Apart from Jadeja, who again excelled with his left-arm spin, R Ashwin and



RAVINDRA JADEJA

Ishant Sharma chipped in with two wickets apiece to maintain the pressure on the hapless Englishmen who never recovered from the early jolts.

India also lost opener Ajinkya Rahane (0) early but Gautam Gambhir (33) and Kohli steadied the innings to some extent by putting on 67 runs for the second wicket.

# Rajshahi clinch last-over thriller

SPORTS REPORTER



Duronto Rajshahi needed three wickets to pull off an unlikely win, while the smart money was on Chittagong Kings taking the three runs off the last over to win. In the end it was Rajshahi, through three eventful deliveries, who ended up winners by two runs much to the delight of the unlikely victors. But most ecstatic was captain Tamim Iqbal who gestured emphatically at his jersey to prove a point against his former team after the controversies of the first season.

The last two overs transformed a low-scoring affair into a thrilling finish in the first match of the second day of the Bangladesh

Premier League (BPL) T20 at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

Chittagong needed nine runs from the last two overs in chase of 100 runs and they almost sealed the fate of the match by taking six runs from the penultimate over courtesy of some misfielding and a dropped catch by Ziaur Rahman. But there was more drama reserved for the last over in front of a sparse crowd. Despite only three runs needed from the last six balls, Zimbabwean gentle medium pacer Sean Ervine set Chittagong hearts aflutter by removing Marshal Ayub, who offered a simple catch to Abul Hasan at cover, off the very first ball. Then in the next ball, captain Tamim Iqbal dislodged the stumps with a direct hit from mid-on to send Enamul Haque back and Ervine finished the job in fantastic fashion, dismissing Arafat Sunny off the third ball. Ervine's last over magic was good enough for him to earn the man-of-the-match award.

Chittagong Kings captain

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PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED  
 Tamim Iqbal has a history of showboating. He showed four fingers to the then BCB president after hitting four consecutive fifties in the Asia Cup at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium last year. And on Saturday he ran towards the Chittagong Kings' dugout after leading Rajshahi Rangers to a thrilling two-run victory against his 'home' side.

# 'No benefit if stands empty'

SPORTS REPORTER



There were no ball-bashing or towering hits, but still there was no shortage of excitement in the low-scoring match between Duronto Rajshahi and Chittagong Kings yesterday. But the almost empty stands at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur was in stark contrast with the proceedings on the field.

Nobody wants to play in front of merely one thousand spectators and the winning captain Tamim Iqbal (Duronto Rajshahi) was no exception, which is why he appealed to the fans to come to the stadium and make the second edition of the Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) memorable.

The dashing batsman was not aware of the high prices of tickets -- which many believe is the main reason behind the poor turnout -- but requested the organisers to look into the matter.

"If my request has any impact, then I must ask the fans to come to the stadium. I am not aware about the price but I think the board should think if the ticket price is high. In the end there is no benefit if the fans don't come to the stadium. We must bring the fans to the stadium because it's always fantastic to play in front of a big crowd," said Tamim after the match.

Tamim looked in high spirits after an expressive celebration but the left-hander denied that he had any special motive because of the fact that the opponents were his former team Chittagong Kings, with whom he has bitter memories from last season.

The national opener, who recently returned after a successful trip in New Zealand, however thanked his young brigade for taking the opportunity after they had suffered through the last minute withdrawal of the Pakistani players.

"I asked the young players in the team

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## Messi donates to hometown

Barcelona superstar Lionel Messi has donated one million pesos (152,000 euros) to finance the refurbishment of a sports centre in a rundown area of his hometown, Rosario.

"Rebuilding the sports centre will benefit thousands of people in the area," town mayor Rolando Dal Lago told AFP.

Messi, the winner of a record four successive Ballon d'Or awards, has a foundation in Rosario.

The player's stellar career started at Rosario club Newell's Old Boys when he

