

# SPORT

## SUNSHINE PLAYS FOUL IN FATULLAH



Victoria SC and Gazi Group Cricketers were supposed to play their final-round Dhaka Premier League match on this ground in Fatullah yesterday. However, the match was puzzlingly postponed to the reserve day today supposedly because the venue was unfit due to incessant rainfall. This photograph taken at 10am yesterday shows the venue in fine playing condition with clear skies overhead. If the decision seems inexplicable, consider the following: Gazi Group need to win to make it to the Super League and their foreign player faced a flight delay and could only arrive in time for the reserve day.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

## MSC through to Super League

Final spot a toss-up between Gazi Group and Prime Bank

SPORTS REPORTER

Mushfiqur Rahim's Mohammedan sealed their spot in the Super League of the Dhaka Premier League yesterday by comfortably beating Sheikh Jamal Dhanmondi Club by six wickets at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur. Mohammedan needed to win this game in order to avoid a possible five-way tussle in the rankings table. With 14 points from eleven games, they are currently at the top of

the 12-team table. However, their stay at pole position may last for just a day as Legends of Rugganj and Victoria will go past Mohammedan if they win their respective games today. However, Mushfiqur and Co will be happy to have confirmed a position. Batting first, Mahmudullah Riyad's Sheikh Jamal were restricted to 187 for 8 in 42 overs. Eight overs a side had to be chopped off the fixture due to rain in the morning. The problem with Sheikh Jamal was that none of their players managed to make the most of their starts. For instance, six of their batsmen got out

in their 20s with Mahbubul Karim and Zabid Hossain top-scoring with 29 and 28 runs respectively. The key wicket-taker of the day was Mohammedan's foreign slow left-arm bowler, Bipul Sharma. The all-rounder, who did well for Sunrisers Hyderabad alongside Mustafizur Rahman in the Indian Premier League, has excelled in the Dhaka Premier League so far. He scored a century in his first game of the competition and scalped a four-wicket haul in his second yesterday. After the exchange, Mohamedan,

buoyed by Mushfiqur's unbeaten 66 and Naem Islam's 51, reached their target in just 32.2 overs. Sheikh Jamal skipper Mahmudullah tried his best to curtail the run flow with some aggressive captaincy, but at the end of the day, it turned out to be a target too low. Riyad ended up with figures of three for 52, but that just was not enough. Bipul came in towards the end and smacked a 25-ball 34 with two sixes as Mohammedan raced home. The game between Rugganj and Brothers Union, scheduled to take place at the BKSP yesterday could not be played due to rain.

## BFF keen to keep de Kruif

SPORTS REPORTER



The Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) is set to offer Dutch coach Lodewijk de Kruif another partial contract for the national team's Asian Cup qualifying playoff against Bhutan in September and October following the team's 'significant improvement' in the home match against Tajikistan.

BFF president Kazi Salahuddin, vice presidents Mohiuddin Ahmed Mohi and Tabith Awal yesterday had a meeting with de Kruif, who is scheduled to leave for Netherlands this morning. "We have seen a significant improvement of the national team from the away match to the home match. Today was the end of our small contract with our head coach Lodewijk de Kruif.

"We have had discussion with the BFF president for a long-term plan in which we have a plan to play against Bhutan in the playoff of the Asian Cup qualification and hopefully we will qualify for the next round. Once we confirm a plan, based on which we look forward to a new negotiation, according to which de Kruif and a team of coaching staff will be offered a new contract," said Tabith after the meeting.

Bangladesh had suffered a 5-0 defeat against Tajikistan in Dushanbe last week before getting away with a 1-0 defeat at home on Tuesday. The result saw Tajikistan through to the third qualifying round of the Asian Cup, leaving Bangladesh with an elimination playoff against Bhutan.

It has been learnt that de Kruif has been asked to return to Bangladesh by July 13, two days before the start of the professional football league, to take charge and search for new players from the league. However, the Dutchman has not given his final words citing that he has a contract with a local club in the Netherlands and that he might give his consent after returning home.

De Kruif has guided Bangladesh national team and the Bangladesh U-23 in four wins, five draws and 12 defeats in overall 21 matches.



Mohammedan's Mushfiqur Rahim (L) and Bipul Sharma put in crucial performances in Mirpur yesterday against Sheikh Jamal Dhanmondi Club that helped their side book a place in the Dhaka Premier League's six-team Super League round.



PHOTO: STAR

### SCORES IN BRIEF

**SHEIKH JAMAL DHANMONDI CLUB:** 187 for 8 (Mahbubul 29, Zabid 28, Marshall 27; Bipul 4-24, Habibur 1-23)  
**MOHAMMEDAN SC:** 188 for 4 in 32.2 overs (Mushfiqur 66 not out, Naem 51, Bipul 34; Mahmudullah 3-52)  
**Result:** Mohammedan won by six wickets.

Five teams -- Prime Doleshwar, Legends of Rugganj, Abahani, Mohammedan and Victoria -- have so far confirmed their spots in the Super League. Prime Bank Cricket Club and Gazi Group Cricketers are the teams fighting for the remaining spot.

Prime Bank are placed in sixth place with 12 points in eleven games. Gazi Group will play their last game against Victoria at Fatullah today. If Gazi Group win, they will get 12 points and will hop over Prime Bank Cricket Club as per the head-to-head rule. However, if they lose, Prime Bank will go through.

## Fizz in Dhaka to undergo rehab

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh pace sensation Mustafizur Rahman returned to Dhaka last night from his hometown Sathkira. For the next few days the pacer will follow a rehabilitation programme at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur which will be overseen by team physio Bayjedul Islam and look to improve his fitness levels. After his return from India where he played a starring role for Sunrisers Hyderabad in the Indian Premier League, Mustafizur had undergone a number of fitness tests. It was later revealed that while there were no serious problems with the bowler, he had lost plenty of weight. It was an aspect that concerned the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) and as a result the medical team then decided to create a new rehabilitation programme for the player.

Going by BCB president Nazmul Hassan Papon's statement on Sunday, Mustafizur is likely to work on this programme for a minimum of three weeks. After the programme he is expected to go through another fitness test.

Mustafizur had been drafted by English county side Sussex for the ongoing Natwest T20 Blast. He was originally supposed to join the county after his IPL stint, but Sussex granted him leave to recover from his niggles and his IPL exertions. The final decision on whether he will travel to England rests with Mustafizur, and it has been learnt that even if he does make the trip it will only be after the Eid celebrations.

## England eye whitewash

AFP, London

England have a knack of coming unstuck as they chase a Test series whitewash but they will hope to complete the job against Sri Lanka at Lord's this week -- despite clear signs of improvement from the tourists.

England are 2-0 up with one Test to play, but the match starting on Thursday has more riding on it than it might appear for the hosts after recent series victories ended on a low note.

Last year, having won the Ashes, England suffered an innings and 46-run defeat by Australia in the fifth Test at The Oval.

There was a similarly heavy reverse in South Africa in January when, 2-0 up with one to play, England lost the fourth Test at Centurion by 280 runs.

Although they won the second Test against Sri Lanka in Chester-le-Street by nine wickets, there were warning signs for England during that success.

A typically good Lord's pitch could make life harder still for fast bowlers in London, with the most even contest of the series so far in prospect.

## Eight booters 'cleared to play'

SPORTS REPORTER

Eight footballers have been cleared to play the domestic competitions for their respective new clubs, subject to the return of payment they had taken from Sheikh Jamal DC.

Though the Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) has not yet made it public, it has been learnt that the BFF players' status committee has distributed those eight players among three clubs -- Chittagong Abahani, Sheikh Russel KC and Abahani -- on the basis of the players' registration forms as well as instructions from the High Court. The committee has also informed the respective clubs of the decision yesterday.

A high court bench on April 13 disposed a writ petition of Sheikh Jamal DC and instructed the players' status committee to settle it as per FIFA and BFF regulations and the court also instructed the BFF to settle it within two weeks after the copy of judgement reached the BFF. Yesterday was the last day for settlement.

A source inside the BFF said that those eight players will not be allowed to play for their respective clubs until they return the advance payments taken from Sheikh Jamal DC.

Mamunul Islam, Sohel Rana, Nasiruddin Chowdhury, Raihan Hasan and Yeamin Munna signed for Chittagong Abahani; Jamal Bhuiyan and Alamgir Kabir Rana signed for Sheikh Russel KC while Shahidul Alam Sohel signed for Dhaka Abahani.



Sonali Bank skipper Irfanul Haque guides the ball past a host of Sadharan Bima players during their Green Delta Insurance Premier Division Hockey League match at the Maulana Bhasani Hockey Stadium yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

## Bankers keep hopes alive

SPORTS REPORTER

Sonali Bank raised their hopes of qualifying for the Super League stage of the Green Delta Insurance Premier Division Hockey League after a come-from-behind 3-2 win over Sadharan Bima SC at the Maulana Bhasani Hockey Stadium yesterday.

The win took the bankers to seven points from eight matches, two less than sixth-placed Bangladesh SC while Sadharan Bima have six points from the

same number of matches.

Sadharan Bima went for the break with a 2-0 lead, thanks to Farhan Ali's strikes in the seventh and 31st minutes before but Sonali Bank staged a strong comeback in the second half. The bankers reduced the arrears Rabbi Salehin Roki just a minute after the restart before Tousif Ahmed levelled the margin in the 44th minute. Touseef then sealed the victory with his second goal in the 52nd minute.

In the day's other match, Dhaka Wanderers drew 1-1 against Wari Club.