

T SPORTS & STAR SPORTS SELECT 1

English Premier League
Burnley vs Leicester city
Live from 12:00 am (Thursday)
Crystal Palace vs Manchester United
Live from 2:15 am (Thursday)
STAR SPORTS SELECT 2
English Premier League

Sheffield United vs Aston Villa
Live from 12:00 am (Thursday)

TEN 2

Serie A
Sassuolo vs Napoli
Live from 11:30 pm



The Bangladesh Under-19 cricketers were seen taking some wicket-keeping tips from Nurul Hasan, considered as one of the finest glovemen in the country, at the BCB Academy Ground in Mirpur yesterday. The successors of the World Cup-winning Under-19 squad of Akbar Ali and Co. are currently undergoing a camp ahead of their series against Afghanistan later this month. The Under-19 cricketers are scheduled to leave for Greater Noida, India, on March 10 to play one four-dayer and four 50-over matches against Afghanistan. PHOTO: BCB

Mohammedan extend unbeaten run to six

SPORTS REPORTER

Falling giants Mohammedan extended their unbeaten run in the Bangladesh Premier League to six matches as they handed a 2-0 defeat to visiting Muktiyoddha Sangsad at the Shaheed Dhirendranath Datta Stadium in Cumilla yesterday.

Malian striker Souleymane Diabate and Burkina Faso defender Mounziridiati Couliadiati struck a goal each to deliver a fifth victory for Mohammedan, who have been unbeaten since a 0-4 drubbing against Bashundhara Kings in Cumilla.

English coach Sean Lane's charges dominated Muktiyoddha Sangsad from the onset and created some good chances before Diabate broke the deadlock in the 35th minute with a free-kick that embraced the back of the net after slipping past the gloves of Muktiyoddha goalkeeper Mahfuz Hasan.

Mohammedan's dominance did not waver after the change of sides although they fielded only two foreign players and their opposition could not cope up with the pace. They doubled their lead in the 61st minute when Mounziridiati headed a Habibur Rahman Shohag corner home.

A fifth triumph in 11 games also helped the Motijheel-based outfit jump to fourth position in the 13-team table with 19 points, 15 behind than leaders Kings and four points short of archrivals Abahani.

Muktijoddha Sangsad, on the other hand, are a place above the red zone with six defeats from 11 matches and nine points to their name.

At the Bangabandhu National Stadium in Dhaka, Sheikh Jamal again stumbled when they surrendered a lead within two minutes and played out a 1-1 draw against Rahmatganj.

Sheikh Jamal, boosted by the presence of three Gambian and one Uzbek player, pressed from the onset and almost took a lead in the sixth minute but Rahmatganj keeper Rasel Mahmud Liton cleared a suicidal goal-bound header from defender Mohammad Tarek. Although the ball appeared to have crossed the line, assistant referee Robin Khan was away from the corner flag and did not signal for a goal.

After the barren first half, Uzbek midfielder Jonov Otobek gave Sheikh Jamal the lead in the 49th minute by scoring directly from a corner, probably inspired by Brothers Union's winger Faisal Mahmud, who struck two goals directly from corners against Arambagh on Monday.

However, the lead lasted only two minutes as Crist Remi, availing a long ball from Shahedul Alam, nicely controlled the ball inside the box before sending it over advancing goalkeeper Ziaur Rahman to level the margin.

Gambian striker Omar Jobe rattled the post in the 71st minute as Sheikh Jamal were deprived a seventh victory. A fifth draw in 11 games left them in second place with 23 points from 11 matches, one ahead of third-placed Abahani. Meanwhile, Rahmatganj climbed to ninth position with nine points.



PHOTO: BFF/STAR

(Top) Mohammedan players celebrate a goal during their 2-0 win over Muktiyoddha in Cumilla while (Inset) Sheikh Jamal forward Suleyman Sillah sees red card during their 1-1 draw against Rahmatganj in Dhaka.

Neglected local cricketers blazing their own path

SPORTS REPORTER

For many, life returned to the way it was in the pre-pandemic era over the past few months as they returned to their usual lives in their relative fields. But although the national cricketers resumed their duties and are currently in New Zealand, things have not returned to normal for a majority of local cricketers, whose livelihood relies mainly on domestic cricket.

It has been almost a year that local cricketers have been waiting for the Dhaka Premier League to resume after it was halted in mid-March last year after the first round due to the Covid-19 outbreak.

The Bangladesh Cricket Board did arrange smaller scale tournaments with the players' safety in mind last year, organising the BCB President's Cup, a 50-over domestic tournament, and following that up by holding the Bangabandhu T20 Cup.

However, frustration among a



majority of local players who are still waiting their turn to return to the field has been exasperated. With no solution in sight, cricketers began to unite and arrange local cricket tournaments in various parts of the country.

Apart from domestic cricketers, national stars like Test skipper Mominul Haque and others cricketers were seen playing for hire across the country. Locally-arranged leagues were staged in Mymensingh, Magura, Rajshahi and the latest in Sylhet as cricketers

seized the initiative.

"Honestly, the situation was not good for us as we mainly rely on the Dhaka league for our livelihood. We went to Nadel Bhai (BCB director Shafiqul Alam Chowdhury Nadel) for help and he extended his full support towards us to arrange a tournament. We first started the academy cup to engage young cricketers and then arranged a five-team franchise tournament," national left-arm spinner Enamul Haque Jr told The Daily Star.

According to the Sylhet native, they went to local businessmen and groups seeking sponsorship and urged them to buy franchises so that they could get enough financial support to arrange the entire tournament.

"I think coronavirus came as a blessing in disguise as organisers will now be on their toes with regards to arranging local leagues, which have remained irregular over the years," Enamul added.

According to national cricketer Ariful Haque, the pandemic has taught all cricketers a big lesson.

"It was very tough and it's

not over for us yet. We mainly rely on the Dhaka league and other domestic leagues across the year and are looking forward to returning to our workplace soon," Ariful said.

BCB boss Nazmul Hassan previously announced that the board would resume domestic cricket once they ensured vaccinations for all the local cricketers.

There were also talks about whether the BCB would resume the domestic league with the National Cricket League -- the first-class four-day competition. However, according to many cricketers, they are willing to resume cricket with the Dhaka Premier League which got halted after the first round.

"At the moment, we can't say exactly which league we are going to start first as we are working on the calendar and we will sit regarding the issue today (Tuesday). We have already done the homework from the management level and are now awaiting directions from the board level," BCB CEO Nizamuddin Chowdhury said.

Gayle targets third Twenty20 World Cup title

REUTERS

Opening batsman Chris Gayle has set his sights on a third Twenty20 World Cup with West Indies as he prepares to return to international cricket after an absence of two years ahead of their T20 series against Sri Lanka starting on Wednesday.

Former captain Gayle last played for West Indies in a one-day international against India in 2019 in what he then described as his last international appearance.

The 41-year-old, who was part of the 2012 and 2016 T20 World Cup-winning teams, said he was focussed on clinching the three-match home series but the bigger target is to defend their T20 title in this year's World Cup beginning in October.

"The bigger picture is actually to get three T20 titles under my belt. That's actually the goal I'm setting," Gayle said.

"The World Cup is still a long way off but by the time you blink it's World Cup time. So we have to try and keep the energy, keep fit, be ready and show the region what we are capable of.

"We have quite a few series coming up and we have a lot of cricket leading up to that. We'll try and take as much as possible out of these series."



Ruman's poor form continues

SPORTS REPORTER



SA Games triple gold medallist Ruman Sana continues to struggle to get back to form as the Bangladesh Ansar's archer finished sixth in recurve qualification round of Bangabandhu 12th National Archery Championships at the Sheikh Kamal International Cricket Stadium in Cox's Bazar yesterday.

Ruman, whose best score is 686 points set in 2019 SA Games in Nepal, yesterday scored only 644 points. The top place finisher Ram Krishna Saha, who had beaten Sana

in the semifinals of the last edition of national archery championship in December, 2019, scored 657 points. Sakib Molla finished second with 654 points.

Following a long break due to the pandemic, world's 15th-ranked recurve archer Ruman had failed to shine in December's Victory Day competition as he had managed only a bronze medal. His team also struggled to be among the top three teams in the BAF Archery League last month.

Not only Ruman, national archers such as Tamimul Islam and Hakim

Ahmed Rubel also frustrated by finishing third and seventh among 68 competitors at the seaside city.

In women's compound qualification round, Rokana Akter of Bangladesh Army scored an impressive 690 points, surpassing her previous best by 14 points while her teammate Susmita Banik and Tania Rima scored 671 and 666 points to finish second and third respectively.

SA Games gold medallist Suma Biswas finished fifth in qualification round with a score of 662 points.

The elimination round will get underway today.

'England need to find a way'

AFP, AHMEDABAD



India and England return to the scene of last week's hotly debated two-day Test on Thursday with the hosts

looking to secure a place in the World Test Championship final. The first Test held at the Narendra Modi Stadium, the world's biggest cricket venue, turned out to be one of the shortest in history as England were thrashed inside two days.

The result, which left India 2-1 up in the four-Test series and ruled England out of the world championship final, prompted accusations that the uber spin-friendly pitch was not up to standard.

The England team have largely stayed quiet during the controversy, and bowling coach Jeetan Patel said the tourists were looking for ways to repel India's spin attack. "I expect this Test to be on a spinning wicket," he told reporters. "We need to find a way, if we won the toss particularly, to put on a decent total first up."

Spinner Jack Leach said there was more talk about the pitch in the media than in the England dressing room. "Still a hell of a lot for us to play for," said Leach, who

AUSTRALIA RIGHT BEHIND ASHES FOES ENGLAND

Cheering on England is generally a low priority for Australia's cricketers but Joe Root's team can count on warm support from their Ashes foes during the fourth and final Test against India this week. An England win in Ahmedabad would put Australia in the final of the inaugural World Test Championship (WTC) against New Zealand, knocking India out of the running. "Bit of self-interest there, isn't it, for us following England for the first time in a long time. We'll be hoping that they can do the job there," Australia coach Andrew McDonald told reporters in Wellington on Tuesday.

has 16 wickets in the first three Tests. "Obviously if we win this game we draw the series. I think that will be a massive effort over here and we should be really motivated to make that happen. In the dressing we are just trying to get better and be prepared for this next match," added Leach.

Zim take lead against Afghanistan

AFP, Abu Dhabi

Paceman Blessing Muzarabani took four wickets while skipper Sean Williams hit an unbeaten half-century to help Zimbabwe take lead on the opening day of the first Test against Afghanistan in Abu Dhabi on Tuesday. Muzarabani finished with 4-48 and his new ball partner Victor Nyauchi took 3-34 as Afghanistan -- who won the toss and batted on a seamer-friendly pitch -- were dismissed for just 131.

At close, Zimbabwe were 133-5 with Williams not out on 54 and Ryan Burl on eight not out. They lead by two runs with five wickets intact on a day that saw 15 wickets fall.

'Real need to be patient'

REUTERS, Madrid



Real Madrid coach Zinedine Zidane said his side

did not view Monday's 1-1 draw at home to Real Sociedad as a missed opportunity to get back into the title race and called for calm ahead of next Sunday's clash at leaders Atletico Madrid.

Real Madrid would have gone into the derby with the chance to move level on points with Atletico had they beaten Sociedad but in the end only managed a draw after Vinicius Jr snatched a late equaliser to cancel out Porto's opening goal.

"We have to stay calm. We played well and created three or four clear chances but were up against a side that also created chances. Now we need to be patient, keep our cool and rest," the Frenchman told reporters.



Real Madrid's Vinicius Jr celebrates his late strike during their 1-1 draw against Real Sociedad on Monday. PHOTO: TWITTER

"We deserved much more when you look at all the opportunities we created. We dominated the game, but then there have been games where we won but didn't deserve to. That's football."

The draw interrupted a five-game winning streak in all competitions but Zidane said the result would not affect preparations for visit to Atletico, who hold a five-point lead over Real and second-placed Barca with a game in hand.

"This doesn't condition the way we're feeling about the derby at all. We'll still go there with the aim of playing a great game," the Frenchman said.