

**SONY SIX**  
England vs New Zealand  
First Test (Day 1)  
Live from 4:00 pm  
**STAR SPORTS SELECT 1 & 2**  
French Open 2021  
Live from 2:50 pm

**TEN 1**  
Pakistan Super League  
Karachi Kings vs Multan Sultans  
Live from 9:00 pm  
International Friendly  
France vs Wales  
Live from 1:05 am (Thursday)

**TEN 2**  
International Friendly  
Bosnia and Herzegovina  
vs Montenegro  
Live from 10:00 pm  
England vs Austria  
Live from 1:00 am (Thursday)



An aerial view of one of the cricket grounds at BKSP shows the entire playing surface, except for the pitches which were under cover, inundated from the heavy rain on Tuesday morning. The rain forced all the Bangabandhu Dhaka Premier Division T20 League matches scheduled for the day postponed. (Bottom) Players of the Sheikh Jamal Dhanmondi Club, who won their first match on Monday, enjoy the unexpected day-off at the team hotel.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

## FIFA and 'addas' brighten gloomy day

SPORTS REPORTER

Yesterday was supposed to be a busy day on the field for cricketers taking part in the Dhaka Premier League T20, but rain forced them to spend a rather lazy day in their hotel rooms yesterday. Six matches were scheduled, but heavy rains since early in the day forced their postponement. According to the new schedule, the second round of matches will be held from today.

According to the revised schedule, there will be three games in a day from June 2 to June 5. All matches will be held at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur, with the third game of the day starting from 6:00pm under lights. However, it will return to the previous schedule with two games in three different venues each day after June 5.

In the meantime, players and support staff at the twelve clubs, staying at four different hotels across the capital, enjoyed their day off. Among the most popular



activities yesterday proved to be the Playstation, which today's cricketers enjoy most during leisure time.

Prime Doleshwar SC cricketers spent the entire day battling against each other on FIFA.

"It was supposed to be a matchday and we were prepared for the game, but since early morning we saw the rain, which eventually forced all the matches to be postponed. Obviously, there was a sense of disappointment among all the players since the

match was postponed. But because we don't get enough breaks during a tournament like the DPL, we tried to utilise the day off and spent time on the Playstation," said batsman and former national cricket Marshal Ayub.

Young Afif Hossain is rated as the best gamer among the Tigers, although the likes of Saif Hasan and the younger brigade of cricketers look like they could challenge the status quo with outstanding skills on the virtual stage.

While the juniors were busy

on consoles, elder statesmen such as Mohammad Ashraful, Nasir Hossain and others opted for the more traditional 'addas' in their hotel rooms.

"We haven't had the opportunity to stay in the same hotel during the Dhaka Premier League previously. Due to the coronavirus, we had to maintain a bio-secure bubble and staying together helped us gel really well. As there was no cricket due to rain, we opted for 'addas'. Normally, we spend time together in my room and chat about various issues and it's fun. You need to relax your mind because staying in a bio-bubble can be mentally challenging at times," Sheikh Jamal Dhanmondi Club captain and wicketkeeper-batsman Nurul Hasan said.

The Cricket Committee of Dhaka Metropolis has also allowed the families of players from the national team to stay together in hotel during the DPL. Mushfiqur Rahim is among the few players who decided to bring his family and stay together in the hotel, also making them part of the bubble.

## 'We had an immensely intensive training upfront'

SPORTS REPORTER

The goal scoring inefficiency of the national team has been a prominent recurring theme and remains the bone in their throat, ahead of the World Cup and Asian Cup Qualifiers, set to begin tomorrow in Qatar.

Despite possessing the experienced forwards earlier-- the likes of Nabib Newaj Jibon, Rabiul Hasan, Mahbubur Rahman Sufil, Saad Uddin and Mohammad Ibrahim-- Jamie Day was denied of having the last laugh in the previous matches, where they suffered a narrow 0-1 defeat and surrendered a lead to play out in a 1-1 draw, against Afghanistan and India respectively.

Besides, the cumulative statistics of goal scoring conversion rate upfront paints a gloomy picture for the boys in red and green. This time, none of aforementioned forwards, except the newly Covid-19 recovered Ibrahim, is at Jamie's disposal, making the task upfront more daunting than ever before. Thus, the 43-year-old coach is left with no option but to pin hopes on the inexperienced Suman Reza, Mehedi Hasan Royal and Mohammad Jewel, where the trio have not yet featured in World Cup Qualifying matches.

Suman is likely to play as the lone striker in front of Jamie's five-man backline against Afghanistan and India and he seems geared up to make the decisive impact.

"Our forward lineup is no match to our backline, which comprises of experienced defenders like Tapu bhai, Rahmat and an in-form Tariq Raihan," Suman told The Daily Star last Tuesday before leaving home for Qatar.

"But we know that everyone in the team is relying on us, so we are motivated and ready to seize the opportunities in the matches,"

said the determined 25-year-old.

Jamie so far, utilized most of the training time with the sole objective of making the attackers sharper and smooth on the offensive transition.

"It is evident that we are usually more defensive in international matches and create lesser chances that forwards hope for. The training has emphasised on the counter attack and made sure four to five players join after ensuring the stability of backline," opined Suman.

Suman had struck an impressive six goals in the league marches, his tally matched by winger Rakib Hossain and midfielder Mohammad Abdullah.

"We may not have much experience in international stages but we are banking on transforming our league form into success," said Suman adding that his confidence level and finishing ability have tremendously increased after playing a few international matches for the national team.

As backup firepower, Mehedi Hasan Royal, who made his debut at Tri-Nation Cup in Nepal in April, is considered to be Suman's alternative, as he happened to strike one of two goals in a 2-2 practice match against Sheikh Jamal DC.

"After playing matches in Nepal, my confidence is on another level and I can assure you that I will give my all, if given the chance to represent Bangladesh," the Muktiyoddha Sangsad striker Royal told The Daily Star while reinforcing the fact that in training, Jamie worked extra on all forwards.

"We had an immensely intensive training upfront. Jamie worked separately with seven forwards, who mustered numerous shots on target from different positions and was impressed with the conversion rate of those shots. If we can carry out gaffer's plans well on the ground, we can hope something good."



## No more IPL for Shakib, Fizz?

SPORTS REPORTER

With a densely packed schedule of international cricket ahead of the Tigers in the upcoming months, the Bangladesh Cricket Board is against allowing the No Objection Certificate (NOC) to Shakib Al Hasan and Mustafizur Rahman, to prevent the duo from skipping the national team's assignments in favor of the remaining part of the postponed Indian Premier League (IPL).

Shakib played for Kolkata Knight Riders in the IPL where he got to play three matches. Mustafizur, on the other hand, played all seven matches for Rajasthan Royals before the tournament was postponed with 31 games remaining. There are talks that the BCCI top officials are willing to shift the tournament to the UAE in September-October.

Bangladesh is scheduled to tour Zimbabwe followed by the home series against England, New Zealand and Australia before the T20 World Cup and according to the BCB president Nazmul Hassan's interview on a local satellite channel on Sunday, he expressed that it is impossible to provide NOC to the two cricketers considering the upcoming fixtures.

"Given our schedule, there is no scope to grant NOC now or later. Besides, the World Cup is approaching fast, which makes every game vital for us," said Hassan.

It appears that the UAE leg of the league may fail to feature several other star foreign players. England has effectively ruled out further participation of their players when the tournament resumes but the BCCI appears unfazed.

"Our main focus is on completing this edition of the IPL. So whichever foreign players are available is fine. Certain players' unavailability is not going to stop us from hosting the tournament," BCCI vice-president Rajeev Shukla told Khaleej Times on Monday.

Other boards would be wary of releasing players and exposing them to possible injuries on the brink of the Twenty20 World Cup in October-November.

"Once we get back together as a group that is something we'll obviously need to discuss," CA chief executive Nick Hockley said on Monday.

## New-look England brace for Kiwi test

AGENCIES

The first of the two-match Test series between England and New Zealand will begin today at the iconic Lord's Cricket Ground in London.

New Zealand and England are two of the most well-equipped teams to play on English soil and this series between the two sides should be a cracking one.

With both teams having some exciting young players and different agendas but a keen eye for a win, expect some top-quality Test cricket over the next five days.

England would want to take a step towards reinstating their dominance in the longest version of the game whereas it will be about getting well-prepared for New Zealand ahead of the World Test Championship finale against India later this month.



The two sides last faced off in a Test series in 2019 in New Zealand, where the home side emerged as 1-0 victors.

One can't look past how dominant the Black Caps have been in conditions favoring quicker bowlers. Kane Williamson's side have improved remarkably since enduring a 3-0 whitewash against Australia in early 2020.

Although New Zealand has been denying taking this series as a preparation for the bigger picture, they will be looking to make the most of these two games ahead of World Test Championship challenge.

On the opposite, England will look to kick off their 2021 summer season with a win while checking their bench strength and giving

some game time to their young talents through their rotation policy. Joss Buttler, Jonny Bairstow, Chris Woakes, Moeen Ali have been rested for this series and a couple of young names have been called up. The hosts will also look for the perfect team combination for the Ashes later this year.

Meanwhile, James Anderson has become used to rewriting the history books but even he accepts there is something "mind-blowing" about the next landmarks on his horizon.

If the 38-year-old takes the field against New Zealand, he will equal Alastair Cook's England record of 161 Test caps, a quite remarkable feat for a fast bowler. "For a bowler to play this amount of games, I don't know what the word is, but it's a bit mind-blowing to me," Anderson said.

The match however could be interrupted by rain, with showers forecast on Days 3, 4 and 5.

## 'Take a good, long break'

AFP, Tokyo

Japanese fans and public figures rallied in support of tennis star Naomi Osaka on Tuesday, offering sympathy after she withdrew from the French Open and opened up about her battles with depression.

The four-time Grand Slam winner's career is followed closely in Japan and the controversy in Paris, which followed her refusal to attend press conferences, led news bulletins on Tuesday.



Reaction in Japan was largely sympathetic, with one Twitter user urging Osaka to "take a good, long break". "I hope she gets to eat what she wants, watch what she wants and listen to what she wants. I hope she wraps herself up in a fluffy blanket and takes it easy until she feels content." "Osaka revealed that she has "suffered long bouts of depression" after pulling out of the French Open on Monday, and will "take some time away from the court".

Her withdrawal follows the fall-out from her decision to boycott press conferences at the tournament, which she said were like "kicking people when they are down".

## 'Everybody will suffer from too much football'

AGENCIES

Euro 2020, which had been scheduled to take place last summer, begins on June 11 with 24 teams set to vie for the trophy.

The European Championship will be played across 11 major cities across Europe -- a first of its kind in the 60-year history of the tournament.

Bayern Munich striker Robert Lewandowski, who will carry Poland's hopes at this summer's European Championship, said the packed soccer schedule over the next few years is a major problem as players will struggle to deliver



Robert Lewandowski was given a guard of honor on his return to the Poland national team after breaking Gerd Muller's record in Bundesliga.

PHOTO: TWITTER

their best when there is little time for recovery.

The Pole played 60 matches for club and country since soccer

restarted last May following the Covid-19 stoppage.

"So many people forget we're humans, we're not machines,

we cannot play every day at the highest level of performance," Lewandowski told The Times in an interview.

"For football and for young players, that will be the big problem, to stay at the top for many years, because now and maybe the next two years, that will be extreme: so many big games."

"Even for the fans, I think so many games will be more boring because if you wait for the games longer, there's more expectation, that feeling that you've been waiting for this," he added.

"The quality of games will go down. It's not possible to stay with this quality on the top with so many games."