



## Kiwis set to land today

SPORTS REPORTER



The New Zealand team is all set to arrive today at the Hazrat Shahjalal International airport in Dhaka at 12 pm to take part in the bilateral five-match T20I series against Bangladesh starting from September 1.

The Black Caps will then spend three days at the Intercontinental hotel for the mandatory room quarantine before hitting the field. The Tigers too, along with their batting consultant Ashwell Prince, will begin training on August 27.

As the visitors are coming on a commercial flight the Kiwis will have to undergo the immigration process at the airport, unlike the Australian team last month who were spared the immigration formality as part of their health protocol.

However, the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) has ensured that the New Zealand team will also receive similar hospitality as Australia did, in terms of providing health safety.

The New Zealand Cricket had earlier announced the squad for the tour of Bangladesh where none of the members from their World Cup squad were named for the tour. Tom Latham will lead an inexperienced New Zealand side this time around and it will be a huge challenge for the visitors against the high-flying hosts at home who registered a thrashing 4-1 series win over the Aussies.

The BCB had earlier offered the visitors to play a warm-up game in BKSP ahead of the five-match T20I series which the New Zealand team had declined to maintain a rather strict health protocol from their part.

Earlier Finn Allen and Colin de Grandhomme, after participating in The Hundred, arrived in Dhaka from England on August 20, four days ahead of the scheduled arrival of the Kiwis and both are already in room quarantine.

This will be New Zealand's first tour to Bangladesh since 2013 where the Tigers whitewashed the visitors in the three-match ODI series. However, Bangladesh are yet to register a win against the Kiwis on their ten T20I outings and will look to rewrite history this time.

Meanwhile, after a brief window of family time following the series against the Aussies, members of the Bangladesh team will also check into the hotel today where some of them have already checked in while a few are expected to join by tomorrow.

Star all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan, who returned to the United States to spend time with his family after the Australia series, is also expected to join the team today.

All the matches will take place at the home of cricket in Mirpur and the games are scheduled to start from 4 pm.

# Kings' toughest test yet

## Face ATK Mohun Bagan in do-or-die clash today

SPORTS REPORTER



Bashundhara Kings have won it all in domestic football. The new powerhouse of Bangladesh football have two Bangladesh Premier League titles, one Bangladesh Championship League title, two Federation Cup titles and one Independence Cup title in their bag in four years' journey. With a star-studded cast, they have hardly been tested on domestic front, however, today they are up against ISL runners-up ATK Mohun Bagan in what has turned out to be a winner-takes-all clash in Group D of the AFC Cup.

The penultimate match of the South Zone will kick off at 5:00pm (Bangladesh time) at the Male National Stadium in Maldives.

The Bangladesh champions started the campaign with a 2-0 win over Maziya S&RC but a goalless draw against Bengaluru FC has seen them drop to second position in the group with four points, giving the Kolkata-based outfit, who have won both their matches in the group, a definite edge going into the crucial fixture. Only a win will hand Kings the lone qualifying spot into the Inter-Zone semifinals, a stage only one Bangladeshi club - Dhaka Abahani in 2019 - managed to reach previously.

Kings' coach Oscar Bruzon, who previously coached Indian sides and knows his compatriot Mohun Bagan coach Antonio Lopez Habas very well, conceded



that his opposite number has the advantage in today's match during a pre-match press conference.

"ATK Mohun Bagan, apart from being a historical club, have a very well-defined game model. They are a team that are very confident when they need to defend a result. Tomorrow is completely opposite to the game against Bengaluru. In that game we were the team that needed to hold a result and tomorrow this condition has changed. Mohun Bagan are starting the

game with slight advantage. So tomorrow we need to push a little bit more if we want to win," the Spaniard said.

Bruzon would be relieved with the fact that Mohun Bagan's inspirational attacking midfielder Hugo Boumous will be unavailable due to suspension, but they will be better served not to be complacent with the likes of Roy Krishna, Liston Colaco, David Williams and Lenny Rodrigues.

While Bashundhara's defence has been rock-solid so far helping the team keep a

clean sheet in both matches, it will be a test for them to prize out a goal as the others except for Robson Robinho have been less than impressive. The centre-forward Raul Becerra has been carrying an injury while there are not many options up front in absence of Martin Miah, Towhidul Alam Sabuz and Eleta Kingsley - all of whom missing out for various reasons.

Bruzon admitted that he would make changes in his starting eleven and change his strategy from the previous matches.

"As a coach I feel that I am more comfortable making changes when we need to attack. So the attacking substitutions are more fruitful than when you need to hold a result. Making a substitution when holding a result like last game has the risk of destabilising the team. But tomorrow we will have our plan for 90 minutes. There are going to be changes in the first 11 and the last stages of the game. We have a very well-defined plan and I hope it clicks," the Spaniard said, alluding to just one substitution he made during the match against Bengaluru FC.

Kings' captain Topu Barman said they were confident of overcoming the Mohun Bagan test and that they had specific plans for their opponents.

"Coach will tell us how to stop Roy Krishna. We will try our best to stop him," Barman said. "Mohun Bagan are very strong from set-pieces. The coach told us not to concede fouls and throw-ins near the danger zone."

## Sk Russel thrash Baridhara

SPORTS REPORTER

Sheikh Russel KC consolidated the seventh spot in the Bangladesh Premier League table with a 5-1 thrashing of Uttar Baridhara Club at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

Nigerian striker Obi Moneke and Kyrgyz midfielder Bakhtiyar Duyshobekov bagged a brace each while local midfielder Rumon Hossain scored the other for Saiful Bari Titu's charges.

Sheikh Russel raced to a 4-0 lead in the first half before Moneke netted the fifth goal 12 minutes after the break. National team's striker Sumon Reza reduced the margin for Uttar Baridhara with a spot-kick in the 80th minute.

The win, which snapped a two-match losing streak for Sheikh Russel, lifted them to 33 points from 22 matches. Baridhara, meanwhile, remained in 11th position with 19 points from 23 matches.

The 25th round of matches will conclude today with four matches taking place at three different venues of Dhaka.



## 'Try everyday with sports'

AFP, Tokyo

The first female member of the Paralympic refugee team said Monday it was an "honour" to be at the Tokyo Games, urging other women with disabilities to get involved in sport.

Alia Issa will be one of two flagbearers for the six-person refugee team at Tuesday's opening ceremony for the Paralympics, which were delayed a year by the pandemic.

The 20-year-old, who was born in Greece and whose family are from Syria, will compete in the club throw event in Tokyo -- and she hopes others will follow her lead. "I want to say to other women who have disabilities not to stay at home, try everyday with sports, to be outside in the world. I hope I'm the first example to follow," she

said at a press conference. "I never believed I would be in the Paralympic Games once in my life, and that I would be the first woman refugee in Paralympic Games here in Tokyo. It's a big honour for me."

When she was four, Issa caught smallpox, which damaged her nervous system. She now uses a wheelchair and has some difficulty speaking.

She started para sports three years ago, and has been training in club throw for the past two years.

She will carry the flag for the refugee team on Tuesday with swimmer Abbas Karimi, who grew up in Afghanistan.

It is just the second time a refugee team has competed in the Paralympics, after Rio in 2016. On Tuesday, the team's chef de mission Ileana Rodriguez said the

six Paralympians represent "82 million people who are displaced around the world" and want to send a message of hope. "We're very grateful for the countries that home refugees and we encourage countries that can support refugees to do it," Rodriguez said.

"We hope that that's a strong message that we can leave to the people of Japan as well. "Japan, the world's third largest economy, granted refugee status to 47 people in 2020, a little over one percent of asylum requests received that year, according to official data.

Rodriguez added that "our hearts go to all the people in Afghanistan".

Afghans trying to flee the Taliban have overwhelmed the US-led military operation at Kabul airport, leading to tragic scenes in which at least seven people have died.

## NEWS IN BRIEF

### 'Motivated by dad'

Fawad Alam struck a century before Pakistan declared on 302 for nine in their first innings and had West Indies struggling at 39-3 in reply before bad light brought a premature end to the third day of the second Test at Sabina Park on Sunday. The 35-year-old left-hander stayed focused



during his unbeaten 124. "You always feel proud when you score a century for your country so I am very happy right now. My dad has always been my motivation. He told me to keep on trying and my time will come and now it has and I am trying to make the most of it."

### England's Wood misses Headingley Test

England fast bowler Mark Wood has been ruled out of the third Test against India with a shoulder injury, the home side said on Monday. Wood took five wickets in the second Test at Lord's but jarred his right shoulder as India went on to win by 151 runs to go 1-0 up in the five-Test series.

### Barty enjoys 'awesome' U.S. Open tune-up

World number one Ash Barty will head to the U.S. Open in peak form after ending Swiss wildcard Jil Teichmann's brave run with a 6-3, 6-1 defeat to claim the Western and Southern Open title in Cincinnati on Sunday. Wimbledon champion Barty will now bid for her third Grand Slam crown and first on hardcourt at New York. "It's been an awesome week. I think we're just excited that we've got matches under our belt in tough conditions here in Cincy, and that's put us in really good stead going into New York."



Vinicius Jr came on as a substitute on the hour mark and stole the show, levelling the score twice for Real Madrid, as Carlo Ancelotti's side managed to grab a 3-3 draw at Levante in a game that was full of suspense.

PHOTO: REUTERS

## Lukaku hails 'best of the lot'

AGENCIES

Chelsea striker Romelu Lukaku said his goal in Sunday's 2-0 win at Arsenal, the Belgium international's first match back with the European champions, was his favourite of the 114 he has scored in the Premier League.

An almost unstoppable Lukaku needed only 15 minutes to get off the mark for Chelsea following his reported 97.5 million pound (\$133.08 million) transfer from Inter Milan, tapping in a cross played into his path by Reece James, who bagged the second goal.

The goal was Lukaku's first for Chelsea, with the 28-year-old having failed to find the net during his first period at the club that ended seven years ago.

"That was the best one for me, the best of the lot," said Lukaku.



## RONALDO'S FUTILE CELEBRATION

With just seconds left, Cristiano Ronaldo, who came on as a substitute on the hour mark, wheeled away after meeting Federico Chiesa's pinpoint cross with a trademark header, celebrating in a typical fashion with his jubilant teammates who thought he had saved their skins against Udinese. However, Ronaldo could only watch on in desperation as his winner was chalked off by VAR while the referee showed him a yellow for removing his shirt as the game ended in a 2-2 draw. Ronaldo started on the bench at the Dacia Arena in Udine amid rumours he is looking for a way out of the Italian giants. After the match returning coach Massimiliano Allegri played down the controversy, saying that he was always planning to bring on Ronaldo.

PHOTO: REUTERS