

## Afghanistan series in Dhaka, Ctg

SPORTS REPORTER

Chattogram and Dhaka are set to host Bangladesh's home series against Afghanistan, who are expected to arrive in the country on February 12.

The series, comprising three ODIs and two T20Is, is expected to begin in Chattogram, where three ODIs are scheduled for February 23, 25 and 28. The teams will then travel to Dhaka, where two T20Is will be featured on March 2 and 4.

"We have planned to host the three-match ODI series in Chattogram and then the two-match T20I series will take place in Mirpur," said Jalal Yunus, BCB's cricket operations chairman. "To ease travel complications and maintain the bio-bubble smoothly, we have shifted the T20I series from Sylhet to Dhaka. Also, there were concerns about the Sylhet pitch, which is the other reason for the change."



Shakib Al Hasan scored a 31-ball 50 and took three wickets as Fortune Barishal beat Chattogram Challengers by 14 runs in the second match of BPL at the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium in Chattogram yesterday. (Bottom) Mahmudullah Riyad's unbeaten 70 off 41 deliveries ensured Minister Group Dhaka a 50-run win against Comilla Victorians in the day's first match. PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

## Five Tigers in IPL auction

SPORTS REPORTER

Shakib Al Hasan and Mustafizur Rahman alongside Liton Das, Taskin Ahmed and Shoriful Islam from Bangladesh made the cut into the shortlisted players for the upcoming 2022 Indian Premier League (IPL) auction, according to a press release from the IPL authorities yesterday.

The auction for the most glamorous franchise-based T20 cricket league in the world, scheduled to be held during February 12-13, will see 10 teams fight to recruit their desired players among 590 cricketers, shortlisted from 1024 players, which includes 220 players from outside of India.

Bangladesh's ace performers Shakib and Mustafizur, who have featured in the IPL on a regular basis, are included in the highest base price category of 2 crore rupees while Liton, Taskin and Shoriful find themselves in the category of 50 lac rupees.

# Dhaka coming into view

SPORTS REPORTER FROM CHATTOGRAM

Minister Group Dhaka's BPL did not start the way they would have liked, especially after bagging three big-name national stars in Tamim Iqbal, Mahmudullah Riyad and Mashrafe Bin Mortaza. They began with two defeats and the top-order not scoring fast runs and only skipper Mahmudullah finding consistency. Coming into the Chattogram leg, Tamim Iqbal's stormy hundred in the very first match may just have provided the gust for something more significant from this BPL. Yesterday, coming across another tournament favourite in Comilla Victorians, the key players once again turned up.

Tamim gave the start at the top with a 35-ball 46 before Mahmudullah joined the party with a smashing knock. Hitting some incredible T20 shots during an unbeaten 41-ball 70 -- his highest knock in T20s -- laced with three fours and three sixes, he took his side to a strong total of 181 for six. That ensured a 50-run win and took Dhaka to top of the table alongside Comilla.

Mahmudullah joined the 5,000-run club in T20s and also became the third batter to join the 2000-run club in BPL behind Tamim Iqbal and Mushfiqur Rahim.

However, it was evident that there were problems for Dhaka to sort out, with the likes of Andre Russell not yet having the expected impact. Another curiosity was national opener Mohammad Naim featuring at number seven, having to make way for more aggressive openers in Tamim

and Mohammad Shahzad.

"How they sort out their combination is up to the franchise. We can't intervene. Since he's not playing at the top, it's a matter of concern. The BPL is a big platform for young players. Youngsters can create guidelines by seeing how experienced players perform," national selector Minhajul



Abedin told reporters at Chattogram yesterday.

**ADRS making things even more difficult**  
In the 11th over of the evening match between Fortune Barishal and Chattogram Challengers, Barishal's Nazmul Hossain Shanto tried to cut away an Afif Hossain delivery but as the ball went through to the wicket-keeper, Chattogram went up in appeal with Afif looking certain that Shanto had nicked the delivery. The umpire Masudur Rahman did not respond but Afif immediately asked for the review. The third

umpire instructed that there was definite sound when ball passed the bat and the on-field umpire should overturn his decision. Masudur had an incredulous look at his face while Shanto continued to shake his head as he was given out. Shakib Al Hasan told Shanto to wait while talking with the umpires but the call had already been made. However, given out due to noise seems rather unconvincing in these days of hot spot and Snickometer. A source of sound might have come from another source altogether, but above all, without a real DRS in place, the decision was wholly inconclusive, bringing BPL ADRS reviews back into focus.

**Shakib and Mritunjoy troika**  
Barishal skipper Shakib Al Hasan had been getting into some form with the bat in an earlier match and yesterday struck his first fifty of this edition of the tournament. In the 15th over of the match, Shakib made his presence felt, hitting spinner Nasum Ahmed for three consecutive sixes to push the tempo. However, having reached his 20th T20 fifty, he fell to Mritunjoy after a 31-ball 50. Mritunjoy, who had bagged a hat-trick in the previous game, found the mark again at the death, picking up three wickets in the penultimate over of the innings with his cutters and change of pace. But there was no hat-trick this time around as he bowled a no-ball to Mehedi Hasan Rana after sending back Irfan Sukkur and Mujeeb Ur Rahman in back-to-back deliveries.

## Burkina Faso's added motivation

AFP, Yaounde

Burkina Faso coach Kamou Malo admitted that news of political unrest in the country is spurring his team on at the Africa Cup of Nations as they prepare for Wednesday's semi-final against Senegal.

"These goings-on give us added motivation," said Malo, whose side are through to the last four after edging Tunisia 1-0 in the quarter-finals.

"We dedicated that victory to the people back home who are going through a turbulent time politically and socially."



The west African nation has been battling a jihadist insurgency, while last week President Roch Marc Christian Kaboré was overthrown in a military coup. On Monday Burkina Faso was suspended from the African Union.

"We have been dealing with this terrorism for a number of years now and it continues to plunge our people into mourning, so our objective is to give them something to smile about," Malo said.

"We won't hold back if through our efforts on the field we can offer some hope. People are already asking me to bring back the trophy and that is what we would love to do."

## Nadal feels lucky to be part of 'Big Three'

REUTERS

Rafa Nadal said he was lucky to be part of an era of tennis that included Roger Federer and Novak Djokovic after the Spaniard won a men's record 21st Grand Slam title at the Australian Open to move one ahead of his two great rivals.

Nadal paid tribute to Federer and Djokovic. "At the end of the day, it's just a game and in some way we achieved more than what we ever dreamed of when we were kids," Nadal told reporters. "It doesn't matter that much if one is 21, one is 20, or the other finished 23 and the other with 21."

"I think we did very important things for our sport and we achieved our dreams and we enjoy it. I feel lucky to be part of this era that has been very special for our sport."

The 35-year-old said the satisfaction of winning his second Australian Open crown was impossible to describe.

"It's amazing to have this trophy with me," Nadal said. "I tried hard during my career here in Australia, finally, it was probably the most unexpected year for me to achieve, one more time this beautiful trophy so I'm super happy."

Nadal said he was not thinking about his next tournament.

"I have my schedule planned, but I'm enjoying the moment... I need to see how my body recovers from an amazing month and I'm going to make my decision," Nadal said.

## Busy deadline day in England

AFP, London

Christian Eriksen made a remarkable return to football on Monday by signing for Brentford, while Everton brought in Dele Alli and Donny van de Beek on the day they announced Frank Lampard as the club's new manager.

Eriksen suffered a cardiac arrest on the pitch while playing for Denmark at last year's Euro 2020 and had to have an implantable cardioverter defibrillator (ICD) fitted as a result. The 29-year-old left Inter Milan in December by mutual consent as ICDs are not permitted in Italian football.

However, there are no such limitations in the Premier League, allowing Eriksen to return to England, where he spent nearly seven years with Tottenham.

"At his best, Christian has the ability to dictate games of football. He can find the right passes and is a goal threat," said Brentford boss Thomas Frank, who worked with Eriksen while in charge of Denmark's Under-17s earlier in their careers.

"I expect him to have an impact in the dressing room and at the training ground." Brentford have an eight-point cushion over the bottom three but have played more games than all the sides below them.

Everton, Newcastle and Burnley were all active on Monday as the sides towards the bottom of the table were responsible for most of the business done.

Lampard was unveiled as the Toffees' new boss, bringing to an end a dramatic two-week search for Rafael Benitez's successor.

The former Chelsea boss made two quick signings with Van de Beek joining on loan from Manchester United and Alli opting for

a fresh start away from Tottenham after a disappointing few years.

"It is a huge honour for me to represent and manage a club the size and tradition of Everton Football Club," said Lampard. "I'm very hungry to get started."

Newcastle have been the biggest spenders anywhere in England over the past month in their first transfer window under the ownership of the Saudi sovereign wealth fund.

Brighton defender Dan Burn and Aston Villa left-back Matt Targett made the move to St. James' Park on Monday to join Kieran Trippier, Chris Wood and Bruno Guimaraes.

Burnley have replaced Wood with Dutch international forward Wout Weghorst, who has signed from VfL Wolfsburg for a reported £12 million (\$16 million) fee.

Tottenham boss Antonio Conte has made clear his demand for fresh faces in recent weeks and finally got his wish with the double signings of Swedish international forward Dejan Kulusevski and Uruguayan midfielder Rodrigo Bentancur from Juventus.

Arsenal's forward line is looking threadbare with Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang set to join Barcelona on a free transfer.

Aubameyang had been shut out by manager Mikel Arteta in recent weeks for a breach of discipline and did not travel to Dubai for a warm-weather training camp.

Premier League leaders Manchester City have signed forward Julian Alvarez for a reported £14 million, but the Argentine will remain with River Plate on loan until at least July. The 22-year-old has scored 36 goals in 96 games for River and has five Argentina caps to his name.



Paris Saint-Germain midfielder Xavi Simons (L) passes by as Nice players celebrate winning the penalty shootout against Paris Saint-Germain in French Cup Last 16 at the Parc des Princes in Paris on Monday. Goalkeeper Marcin Bulka, on loan from PSG, emerged with two saves in the shootout as Nice edged the tiebreaker 6-5 following a goalless draw in regulation time. PHOTO: AFP