T Sports and GTV Bangladesh vs England 2nd T20I Live from 3:00 nm India vs Australia

Live from 10:00 am Star Sports Select HD1 **English Premier League** Manchester United vs Southampton Live from 8:00 pm Newcastle United

vs Wolverhampton Wanderers Live from 10:30 pm Star Sports Select HD2 **English Premier League** Fulham vs Arsenal Live from 8:00 pm

T Sports Pakistan Super League Islamabad vs Peshawar Live from 3:00 nm Lahore vs Karachi Live from 8:00 pm

After registering their maiden **T20I** win against England in Chattogram last week,

Bangladesh players had every reason to be in a jovial mood on Saturday ahead of the

three-match series decider in Mirpur today. But so were

the visitors as they too had a lively training session

yesterday, indicating that the

reigning world champions are

not to be bogged down at the possibility of suffering a first-

ever series loss to Bangladesh

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

in the format.

## Momentum in Hasan and Tigers' favour

SPORTS REPORTER

It was a young bunch that usurped England in the first T20I against England and the win in the very first game of the three-match sees Bangladesh go into the final two matches with momentum and hopes of a series win against the world champions. Hasan Mahmud, part of that young crop, had been key in wresting back control in the death overs and that momentum then helped batters assail the England score.

Hasan has been gaining momentum for a while now. Injuries had plagued his early career while playing the 2018 U-19 World Cup in New Zealand. Following return against Zimbabwe in 2020, the tour of New Zealand in 2021 saw him suffer another serious injury which saw him sidelined for another year.

His performances in the Dhaka Premier League saw him return to the side for the tour of Zimbabwe last year. Three wickets against India in the World Cup may have flown under the radar, but his skills in the BPL, where he became the joint-highest wicket-taker, and his final two overs against England at Chattogram could not be ignored.

Having conceded 21 runs in his first two overs in that game, the Tigers counted on him and he returned to concede just five in his last two overs at the death, picking up two wickets. He was enjoying the challenge of putting in a defensive spell.

"I try to bowl ball by ball and all I think of is bowling a dot ball. Even if I am hit for a boundary, I try to stick to my strengths. I like to show my character during that stage. I



want to take that challenge," the pacer said during a press conference yesterday.

Jos Buttler had ruined his first spell with back-toback sixes in the last two deliveries of his second over. He wanted to keep his process. "He hit two successive sixes but I didn't look at it and I was just focusing on what I

Younger players were allowed to express themselves this series; a cultivation of a different culture growing without baggage of fear of failure. Hasan was hopeful.

"The team we have at the moment has one of the best bunch of players," he said of the T20I outfit that had rejigged after the BPL. "They are all very energetic and give a lot of effort. If we can stick with this batch, then we can go forward in any format," he said.

Hasan's impact has been felt from the team management's side as well. Skipper Shakib Al Hasan had praised his cricketing brain before the World Cup and allowed him to take on that pressure against England.

As Hasan put it yesterday, his plans vary 'according to the batters and the shots they like to play'. He read the England batters' intent of going for big shots and produced dot deliveries using that instinct. His impact will be needed once again as Tigers look to thwart the world champions today.

It will be a big game, but Hasan says the fear factor had already been overcome. "After the game against India, the fear factor went away,' he said. "It became easier for me,"

"I am feeling good because I am providing the momentum that allows the team to win. It's a big responsibility for me and I am enjoying it," he said, perhaps aware that his death-bowling will once again be key as Tigers face England in Mirpur today in the second



# Time to step out of the Mirpur bubble?

MAZHAR UDDIN

Following a memorable six-wicket win over England in the first T20I on a sporting wicket in Chattogram last week, there remains a lot of focus on the nature of the Mirpur's surface on which the second T20I is set to be played today.

It will be interesting to see whether it will be a typical Mirpur surface – a low and slow one – or similar to the one used at the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium in the port city.

This is set to be the first-ever T20I at the Sher-

e-Bangla National Stadium for England, the reigning T20I and ODI champions. If history is anything to go by, a typical Mirpur pitch could well be Bangladesh's best bet today as it was the slow and low nature of the Mirpur surfaces that had played the crucial role in the Tigers registering their maiden series victories over Australia and New Zealand in 2021.

With the Tigers aiming the - a first-ever T20I series victory over England -- is walking down the same line the preferred way to go?

However, it must still be fresh in the memory of the Bangladesh

players how gaining a false sense of achievement by beating the Kiwis and the Aussies had panned out for them in the 2021 T20 World Cup -- the Tigers exited that tournament with no wins.

The Chattogram win was courtesy of a collective approach from a rejuvenated T20 side, and the momentum gained from that can only truly be utilised if the Tigers play on a sporting wicket at their favourite hunting ground today.

Earlier in the series, the first of the three-match ODI series on a sluggish Mirpur surface almost went in favour of the Tigers when Bangladesh managed to post a small total of 209 before forcing England to play till

the penultimate over to eek out a three-wicket victory. In T20Is, the average first-innings total in Mirpur is 144. However, in the last five T20Is, the average total

League (BPL) games produced 164 in the first innings a fact reflecting how uncertain the venue can be. However, skipper Shakib had previously talked about how they aim to emerge as a better T20 unit, and

has been 126 while the last five Bangladesh Premier

if that ideology is to be followed, the Bangladesh think tank could as well take the challenge of playing on a sporting Mirpur wicket. "I think, as the game will be played in Mirpur, it

will be a good wicket. Till now we have played well, having beaten England in Chattogram. We will try to beat them here," pacer Hasan Mahmud, who bowled brilliantly in the death overs in the first T20İ, told the reporters ahead of the second game yesterday.

It is not like that Mirpur did not produce better surfaces in the past. Even in the recently concluded BPL, sporting Mirpur surfaces brought out the best in the players as it allowed the local cricketers to express themselves both with bat and ball.

"It was challenging for me and it was difficult to defend during the BPL. But we can learn playing on such wickets because it helps us to learn how to bowl well against good teams. We have a good pace unit and we can defend here as well," Hasan

Slow and low Mirpur surfaces had always been the Tigers' prime weapon to take down visitors -- especially the ones from outside the subcontinent. While there is nothing wrong in taking full advantage of home conditions, as coach Chandika Hathurusingha had also mentioned before the England series, it may be the perfect time for the Tigers to finally step out of the Mirpur bubble if they truly seek to be a transformed



# Bournemouth shock Liverpool

AFP, Bournemouth

Mohamed Salah missed a penalty as Liverpool came back down to earth with a bump in their shock 1-0 defeat at struggling Bournemouth on Saturday.

Jurgen Klopp's side travelled to Dean Court in high spirits after their historic 7-0 thrashing of arch rivals

But Liverpool's hopes of using that remarkable result

Philip Billing punished woeful Liverpool defending to put the struggling hosts ahead early on and Salah blew the chance to equalise when he fired wide from a second

League era when he netted twice against United.

Fifth-placed Liverpool appeared to use up all their goals in the United demolition and their toothless display left them three points behind Tottenham ahead of the north Londoners' game against Nottingham Forest later on Saturday. Apart from the damage done to Liverpool's top four bid, it was hardly ideal preparation for Wednesday's Champions League last 16 second leg at Real Madrid, where the Reds need a miracle in the Spanish capital to overturn a 5-2 deficit.

Manchester United last weekend.

as a springboard to push for a top four finish in the Premier League were given a brutal reality check on the

half spot-kick.

Salah became Liverpool's record scorer in the Premier But the Egypt star's failure to add to his total of 130

condemned Liverpool to a first defeat in their last six

# U-20s meet Iran in 'must-win' game

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh know they cannot afford anything but a victory when they face favourites Iran in the last match of the AFC U-20 Women's Asia Cup today.

A draw in the group-deciding match, which will kick off at 5:00 pm at the Birshreshtha Shaheed Mostafa Kamal Stadium in Kamalapur, will see both Bangladesh and Iran end with six points each but the Iranians will, in that case, grab the direct qualifying spot as Group E champions.

The girls in red and green kicked off their campaign with a 4-0 win against Turkmenistan on Friday, but since Iran beat the same opposition 7-1 in the group opener, Bangladesh will be looking for a victory to seal a maiden appearance in the final round of the competition.

Bangladesh coach Golam Rabbani Choton was less than satisfied with the team's performance in the first match as he felt they could have got more goals. Now trailing Iran due to goal-difference, Choton sees no alternative but to go for a victory.

"We don't have any option but to win this match because the group champions go through. There will be two best runners-up going through but that is a very difficult proposition," Choton told The Daily Star yesterday.

Neither team had any practice session yesterday as Bangladesh were busy recovering with light gym session. There was bad news for the hosts though as regular skipper Shamsunnahar is likely to sit out the second game as well after missing out on the first game due to a ligament injury.

"Shamsunnahar is unlikely to feature. It is our bad luck that we are not getting her services, but we can't do anything about it. Irene Khatun, who played in her position in the first match, will likely play again," Choton informed.

### 'Wonderful day' for Siddikur

SPORTS REPORTER

Siddikur Rahman described yesterday as a 'wonderful day' after shooting one of the lowest rounds of his 18-year professional career, an eightunder-par 64 in the International Series Thailand at the Black Mountain Golf Club in Hua Hin.

The two-time Asian Tour winner took a share of the lead in the two-million-dollar event with an aggregate score of 15-under-par alongside India's S Chikkarangappa, Zach Murray from Australia and Thailand's Jazz Janewattananond.

With 28 players within three shots of the lead, the tournament is wide open and the stage set for a gripping final day, in what is the third International Series event of the season.

Siddikur looked like he was going to shoot an even lower round as six birdies on the front saw him turn in six-under-par 30 and when birdies followed on 12, 13 and 15 the course record of 62, set by American Sihwan Kim last year, looked within reach.

However, the 38-year-old made his only bogey

of the day on 17. "It was a wonderful day, I was so sound," Siddikur said. "My hitting was excellent and at the same time my putting was too good. So, all over it was a wonderful round for me, nine birdies and one bogey, the last two holes a little bit unlucky, but, again, I'm happy for today.'

Siddikur is one of the shortest hitters on Tour, not suited to Black Mountain, which favours the long ball players, but the Bangladeshi countered that with a brilliant short stick display.

He said: "I especially enjoyed my putting today because the first two days I couldn't putt that good. The first day my hitting was excellent, but I couldn't putt honestly. But today, yeah, no complaints on the putting and my hitting was excellent too."



Captains of all the 12 teams participating in the upcoming edition of the Dhaka Premier Division Cricket League, set to begin from March 15, pose for a picture during the trophy unveiling ceremony at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.