

## Tigers’ den shifts to Chelmsford

SPORTS REPORTER

In less than a month after facing Ireland at home for a full series, Bangladesh team are expected to be in England by tonight as the Irish side await to lock horns with the Tigers in a three-match ODI series, part of the ICC Men’s World Cup Super League.

One-half of the Bangladesh contingent were set to board the first flight at 1.40 am on Sunday midnight, comprising a majority of the team management alongside Yasir Ali and Najmul Hossain Shanto.

The second group, involving a majority of cricketers, the likes of skipper Tamim Iqbal and others, are scheduled to board the morning flight at 10.15 am today.

As far as the ones engaged in the Indian Premier League (IPL) are concerned, Liton Das, who featured for Kolkata Knight Riders but had to return back prematurely due to a family emergency, is expected to join the Tigers on May 2. Mustafizur Rahman, too, is also expected to leave the Delhi Capitals camp on the same day to reunite with his compatriots in England.

Meanwhile, Shakib Al Hasan, who is currently in the United States with his family, is expected to join the Tigers ahead of their only practice game, slated for May 5.

Tamim and his troops will encounter Ireland in the series opener on May 9, while the remaining games are scheduled on May 12 and 14, respectively, and will also be hosted by Chelmsford.

Leading up to the tour, Bangladesh head coach Chandika Hathurusingha conducted a brief three-day training camp in Sylhet.



PHOTO: BFF

Bangladesh contingent celebrate after the girls in red and green earned a 3-0 victory against hosts Singapore and thus guaranteed a spot in the second round of the AFC U-17 Women’s Asia Cup Qualifiers yesterday.

## Prity ensures Bangladesh progress with flying colours

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh sealed their place in the second round of AFC U-17 Women’s Asia Cup Qualifiers as group champions with an emphatic 3-0 win over hosts Singapore in Group D’s last and final match at the Jalan Besar Stadium yesterday.

Sauravi Akanda Prity struck a brace from the spot while Sultana Akter netted another to confirm Bangladesh’s progress in the competition.

Bangladesh, who previously had twice played the finals of the AFC U-16 Women’s Championship, were faced with a must-win game to ensure progress, and the girls in red and green did not disappoint as they passed a tricky Singapore test with flying colours. They were also boosted by a home-like environment as a few thousand expatriate Bangladeshi spectators were seen, on Facebook live, chanting “Bangladesh, Bangladesh!” throughout the match.

Meanwhile, Malaysia, Australia, Vietnam, India and Philippines have already booked their places as group toppers.

Two more teams from Group E and H are left to join the aforementioned group champions. The participating teams in the eight-team second round, split into two groups, will play the round-robin league matches from September 16 to 24. Afterwards, the top two teams from each group will advance further and will be joined by defending champions Japan, DPR Korea, China and hosts Indonesia in the eight-team final round in April, 2024.

## Napoli’s Scudetto party put on hold

AFP, Naples

Napoli will have to wait a bit longer to seal a first Serie A title in 33 years after being held to a 1-1 draw by Salernitana on Sunday.

Runaway league leaders Napoli needed to win to secure their third league crown with six games remaining in the season after Inter Milan beat closest challengers Lazio 3-1 earlier in the day.

And Naples thought a generation of frustration was set to come to an end when Mathias Olivera headed the hosts into the lead just after the hour mark.

But the long-awaited Scudetto party will have to be put on hold for at least a few more days after Boulaye Dia’s stunning strike six minutes from time ensured Salernitana escaped with a point.

However, the coming midweek round of matches could finally end Napoli’s long wait for glory.

Luciano Spalletti’s team are 18 points ahead of Lazio but Juve can close that gap to 17 by winning at Bologna in Sunday’s late match and moving into second place.

Depending how that match and Juve and Lazio’s games on Wednesday go Napoli could be crowned champions before they take the field at Udinese on Thursday night.

Regardless, a win in Udine will ensure Napoli’s current stars emulate Diego Maradona, who led southern Italy’s biggest club to their only previous league titles in 1987 and 1990.

Pushed by a feverish crowd, decked out in blue and white, Napoli started on the front foot and almost went ahead seconds after kick-off when Victor Osimhen headed Hirving Lozano’s cross just wide.

However Serie A’s leading scorer Osimhen was the hosts’ only threat in a what turned out to be a frustrating first half in which Salernitana defended deep and largely kept Napoli at bay.

The crowd was increasingly apprehensive until Olivera headed home the opener, causing an eruption of joy inside and outside the stadium.

Those fans in the stadium had begun queueing outside the stadium nearly five hours before kick-off, but it was all to be in vain as Dia stunned the whole city into silence.

## MSC face Abahani sans Shakib, Miraz



Mohammedan will be depending on veterans Imrul Kayes (L) and Mahmudullah Riyad (2L) for the Super League opener against Abahani in absence of Shakib Al Hasan and Mehedi Hasan Miraz. On the other hand, Abahani possess available stars in Mohammad Naim, Afif Hossain and Anamul Haque Bijoy (R), who continued his rich vein of form in DPL from last season.

PHOTOS: FIROZ AHMED

SPORTS REPORTER

The Dhaka Premier League (DPL) Super League stage is set to begin from today with high-profile domestic matchups Mohammedan Sporting and Abahani Limited facing off on the first day of the Super League phase.

The game will begin at 9 am (BST) at Mirpur’s Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium.

Abahani, on 20 points, are second in the table behind Sheikh Jamal Dhanmondi on virtue of head-to-head differential. Mohammedan, meanwhile, lie in fifth with 13 points.

Abahani skipper Mosaddek Hossain was hoping the match will have a high-voltage feel in the Super League phase, having won the first group phase fixture against

Mohammedan by six wickets.

“We do feel it (excitement). When I began playing Premier League, Abahani-Mohammedan was always a high-voltage fixture. I’ve faced it myself as well and hope we will get a similar feel in the Super League phase,” Mosaddek told the media yesterday.

Mohammedan’s Imrul Kayes had led Sheikh Jamal to the league title last season but this time he is hoping to remain in the top half of the table. The game would lose a bit of its lustre with Shakib Al Hasan and Mehedi Hasan Miraz unavailable for the Super League due to national team duty.

Leg-spinner Jake Lintott has been replaced by Sri Lankan Kamindu Mendis. Abahani will have their key players available

and in form for the game. Along with Imrul, Mohammedan will be hoping experienced Mahmudullah Riyad takes charge of matters.

“Most of the teams will not have national team players available. So that problem doesn’t solely belong to us. We will face problems but other teams will have issues with combinations. I feel that those who are taken as backups are faring well.

“If we can start well, we will try to score big. If we can make a big score they will be under pressure. We want to play good cricket,” skipper Imrul told reporters yesterday.

Elsewhere, Sheikh Jamal will face Gazi Group and Mashrafe Bin Mortaza’s Legends of Rugganj will take on Prime Bank on Monday’s other fixtures in Fatullah and Savar respectively.



### CITY CLAIM TOP SPOT

Manchester City claimed top spot in the Premier League for the first time since February as Erling Haaland reached yet another milestone in a 2-1 victory at Fulham on Sunday. It took Haaland only three minutes to score his record-equalling 34th Premier League goal of an extraordinary debut season in England. With the Norwegian tucking away a penalty, it moved him level with Alan Shearer and Andy Cole’s Premier League season tally. City are now top with 76 points to Arsenal’s 75 and also have one extra game to play.

PHOTO: REUTERS



PHOTOS: REUTERS/TWITTER

## Barca close in on title, Benzema on Lewy

AGENCIES

As predicted, both Real Madrid and Barcelona lived up to their reputation and comprehensively won their respective home matches on Saturday.

Real beat Almeria 4-2 to cut the gap to eight points before Barca thrashed 10-man Real Betis 4-0 to tighten their grip on top spot and moved a step closer to their 27th La Liga title with 11-point advantage.

However, another battle has been heating up after completion of the 32nd round of matches as Karim Benzema climbed to 17 goals in La Liga this season with his treble, now two behind Robert

Lewandowski.

Barca’s Polish striker leads the way for the Pichichi Trophy, a notable personal honour by leading sports newspaper Marca for a leading La Liga goalscorer, but faces stiff competition for the title this year.

With his goal against Real Betis, Lewandowski has now 19 goals after scoring the opening goal against Real Betis. The Pole has scored in two consecutive games, against Rayo and Betis, and has regained some momentum after a poor run of form in front of goal.

Benzema’s goalscoring comeback,

however, has him closing in on Lewandowski, who has been the outright leader for much of the campaign. The Frenchman, who has been hampered by injuries, scored two hat-tricks in recent matches, the first coming against Real Valladolid and the one against Almeria at the Estadio Santiago Bernabeu.

Benzema is set to play the remaining matches against Real Sociedad, Getafe, Valencia, Rayo Vallecano, Sevilla and Athletic Club while Lewandowski have fixtures against Osasuna, Espanyol, Real Sociedad, Valladolid, Mallorca and Celta Vigo.