

What to WATCH

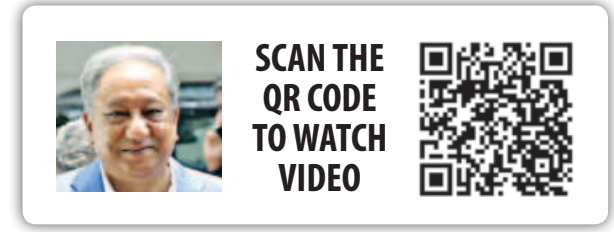
SONY SPORTS 2
Australian Open
First Round
Live from 6:00 am
SONY SPORTS 1
Zimbabwe vs Sri Lanka

1st T20I
Live from 7:30 pm
T SPORTS AND STAR SPORTS 1
India vs Afghanistan
2nd T20I

Live from 7:30 pm
STAR SPORTS SELECT HD1
English Premier League
Manchester Utd vs Tottenham
Live from 10:30 pm

When can Papon step down?

Following Bangladesh Cricket Board president Nazmul Hassan Papon's swearing in as Minister for Youth and Sports in the new government on Thursday, questions have been flying around whether the incumbent BCB boss can resign now and a new president gets nominated, or does he need to wait till the end of his tenure to do that, which is in October 2025?



There seems to have been a lot of curiosity, and confusion too, in this regard among the general people. Papon himself spoke to the media on consecutive days regarding the issue, but his statements have hardly helped clarifying things. One thing he said categorically, though, was that the fact that whoever takes charge after him will have to be a director of the board. What does the BCB constitution say regarding the standing down of an incumbent president and the instalment of a new one? And are those in line with ICC guidelines?

As people continue to speculate regarding Papon's tenure and the next president of the country's most followed sporting federation, Non-Striker's End, The Daily Star's digital cricket show, attempts to answer all these questions.



Mushfiqur Rahim's penchant for innovative shots is well known, and the Bangladesh wicketkeeper-batter was seen mastering his scoop shot during a practice session at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday as cricketers gear up for the upcoming Bangladesh Premier League. Mushfiqur will be representing Fortune Barishal in this edition of the BPL.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Police return to winning ways

SPORTS REPORTER

A brilliant second-half strike from Edward Enrique helped Bangladesh Police FC return to winning ways in the Bangladesh Premier League with a 1-0 win over Sheikh Russel KC at the Bashundhara Kings Arena yesterday.

With their second win in third match, Police moved to third position with six points, three less than leaders Bashundhara Kings while Sheikh Russel slipped to fourth place with four points following their first defeat of the campaign.

A youthful Sheikh Russel came into the match on the back of a creditable 1-1 draw against Mohammedan, but they faced tough challenge from a stubborn Police side, who had lost 1-0 to Sheikh Jamal in their previous match.

Both sides produced a couple of good chances but Police forwards failed to cash in while their goalkeeper Ahsan Habib brilliantly thwarted a left-footer from Japanese Kodai Lida to keep the side in the match.

Edward then scored the decisive goal for Police in the 64th minute with an eye-catching side-volley off a back-header from Rashed Hossain following a long throw-in from Manas Karipov.



'Ambitious' Alcaraz wants Djokovic final

REUTERS, Melbourne

Carlos Alcaraz would like nothing better than to take the title away from Novak Djokovic in the final of the Australian Open in two weeks' time, the Spaniard said on the eve of the start of the year's first Grand Slam.

The 20-year-old said Djokovic's record of 10 wins from 10 Melbourne Park finals made the prospect of landing his first Australian Open title by beating the Serb on Rod Laver Arena all the more appealing.

"It's an extra motivation for me. I'm an ambitious guy. I

Djokovic and Alcaraz's head-to-head currently stands at two wins apiece. This includes two matches on clay and one each on grass and hard court. They both have one match win on clay against the other. While Alcaraz won the only encounter on grass, Djokovic won the meeting on hard court. In grand slams, Djokovic and Alcaraz have met twice and won one match each.

always want to play against the best players in the world to see what is my level," Alcaraz told reporters on Saturday.

"Obviously it's a good test, playing against him in the tournament where he's almost unbeaten. I'm looking to reach the final and hopefully playing a final against him. But, yeah, knowing those stats, it's an extra motivation, for sure."

As first and second seed, Djokovic and Alcaraz would meet in the final on January 28 if neither was knocked out in an earlier round. As tempting as that prospect would be for tennis fans, it would require a marked improvement for Alcaraz, who has never made it past the third round.

Lack of infrastructure stymying BPL's growth

SPORTS REPORTER

One of the major prerequisites for organising a franchise-based cricket tournament is having adequate infrastructure and training facilities in place so that the franchisees can perform at an optimum level while the country's cricketing culture improves.

However, when it comes to the Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) – the lone franchise-based cricket tournament of Bangladesh – these are the very aspects which have remained ignored, dating back to its inception in 2012.

Cricketers from various franchises crammed for space in training at the National Academy ground in Mirpur is a common sight whenever a new edition of the BPL comes around.

The scenario is slightly different this time around as only Durdanto Dhaka and Fortune Barishal are training at the Mirpur Academy ground while four-time champions Comilla Victorians have chosen the Masco Shakib Cricket Academy, Chattogram Challengers and Sylhet Strikers are training at the Pubergaon Kriira Shikkha Protishthan (PKSP) and Khulna Tigers are training at the BKSP in the outskirts of Dhaka.

This may seem like a positive change in the culture of the BPL, but the reality is entirely different. The main reason why the four aforementioned teams

are training in privately-owned grounds is because the academy ground in Mirpur is undergoing constructional work for a new indoor complex.

While teams like Kolkata Knight Riders or Chennai Super Kings in the Indian Premier League are known for their state-of-the-art training facilities for round-the-year training, six out of seven franchises currently active in the BPL have no training ground of

There is no clarity from the organisers as we don't know whether we will participate in the next edition or not.

A BPL franchise owner

their own.

The only exception in this regard are Rangpur Riders, a Bashundhara Group-owned franchise since 2017, which have been training at their own very Bashundhara Sports Complex where all the modern training facilities are available.

Maybe, Rangpur Riders are different in this regard as they are owned by a group that already has stakes in the country's sporting landscape – they own the Bashundhara Kings, one of the most successful and the first football club in the country with a

venue of their own.

Some do have plans to develop infrastructure, but there are plenty of hurdles towards doing so. Chattogram Challengers, who will participate for a fourth time in the BPL, are still in planning stage of developing infrastructure.

"We do have grand plans to have infrastructure of our own, which will include grounds and other facilities. But these things require time and opportunities which is why we are yet to develop these facilities," Imran Hasan, the operations in charge of Chattogram Challengers, told The Daily Star.

"However, if we get a suitable place, we will definitely look to develop such facilities in the coming days," Hasan hoped.

However, according to another franchise owner who requested not to be named, a lack of clarity from the authorities is one of the biggest reasons why teams are not willing to invest heavily on infrastructure.

"There is no clarity from the organisers as we don't know whether we will participate in the next edition or not. Apart from that, we also need to find a way to get something in return for our investment as it requires a huge amount of money to develop infrastructures such as purchasing land and build a stadium or even a training facility. If we get long-term assurance from the board, we are interested in investing in such areas too," he said.

SHORT CORNER



Naqvi breaks Zim's batting record

Antum Naqvi bludgeoned 300 not out from 295 balls on Friday to break Zimbabwe's domestic first-class record for the highest individual score by a batter.

The 24-year-old all-rounder breezed past the previous record 265 set by Cephas Zhuwao in 2017, hammering 30 fours and 10 sixes for his Mid West Rhinos against the Matabeleland Tuskers in a four-day Logan Cup fixture.

Aus women seek pre-WC intel in Bangladesh

Australia women's team are eyeing their maiden bilateral series in Bangladesh in March as an important tour ahead of the ICC Women's Twenty20 World Cup later this year which will be hosted in the same country.

The Aussies will play an ODI and T20 series against the Nigar Sultana Joty-led team which their national selector Shawn Fledger views as a valuable opportunity to gather information about the playing surfaces in Bangladesh ahead of the T20 World Cup.

Sri Lanka focused on fielding

Sri Lanka needs to lift its game on fielding to have a shot at this year's T20 World Cup title, newly installed short-format captain Wanindu Hasaranga said Saturday.

Poor fielding has been a running problem for the Sri Lankans in white-ball cricket, with 16 dropped catches at last year's one-day World Cup in India



Australia's Jackson Irvine pounced on a mistake from India goalkeeper Gurpreet Singh, helping the Socceroos take the lead in a 2-0 win over India in their Asian Cup Group B opener in front of a crowd largely made up of Indian fans at the Ahmad bin Ali Stadium on Saturday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Riyadh ready for 'a great spectacle'

REUTERS

The Real Madrid and Barcelona managers see the Spanish Super Cup final as an occasion that stands out both for the trophy on the line and the sporting spectacle it creates, as they prepare for Sunday's match to be played in Riyadh for the second year.

Super Cup's second El Clasico final in a row will see the LaLiga giants face off on foreign soil for the third time in a year, after Barcelona won last January's final 3-1, also in Riyadh, and beat Madrid 3-0 in a friendly in the United States in July.

"It's always exciting to prepare for



stronger when Barca is stronger. Since I've been on the (Barcelona) bench, to win a title we've had to go above Madrid. It's all very even," he said.

"We will try to dominate the game, impose our personality, our way of playing, and dominate the ball... we have the example of last year and this is the ideal scenario to show it again."

While Xavi drew inspiration from last year's final, Ancelotti played down its relevance.

"Real Madrid don't go out for revenge, they go out to the limit because that's the requirement of this shirt and this club," he said.

"We're one step away from the first

Defending champions Barcelona are record 14-time winners of the Spanish Super Cup. Real Madrid won it 12 times.

Since the four-team format introduced in 2020, Real Madrid won it twice in four editions. Barcelona and Athletic Bilbao won it once each.

This is the fourth time that the Super Cup final is being held in Saudi Arabia.

Coach Carlo Ancelotti is set to lead Real Madrid for the 264th time, surpassing Zinedine Zidane to become the coach in charge of Los Blancos the second-most times behind Miguel Munoz (605 games in charge between 1960-1974).

If Real Madrid win the title, Ancelotti will also equal Zidane's tally of 11 trophies as a manager.

this type of match... it's going to be a great spectacle," Madrid manager Carlo Ancelotti told reporters on Saturday.

Though Madrid have had the upper hand in the rivalry this season,

beating Barca 2-1 in October and building a seven-point lead at the top of the league, Barcelona manager Xavi Hernandez said no one had an advantage going into the final.

"I have the feeling that Madrid is

trophy of the season. We're going to try to do what we have to do, which is to try to win the final.

"If we play better than Barcelona we'll win in most cases, but I'd also be happy to win if we don't deserve it so much."