

## Kings-MSK match deferred

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh Football Federation's (BFF) Professional League Management Committee has backtracked on its decision to stage Tuesday's high-profile Federation Cup clash between holders Bashundhara Kings and Mohammedan behind closed doors at the National Stadium.

The heavyweight encounter has now been deferred by one week and will be played on December 23 at the Shaheed Dharendraanath Datta Stadium in Cumilla, while other Federation Cup fixtures have been rescheduled accordingly. Meanwhile, Tuesday's other match between Fortis FC and Arambagh KS will go ahead as planned at the Bashundhara Kings Arena.

The committee had earlier opted for a closed-door fixture at the National Stadium after failing to secure police clearance. The situation arose due to the unavailability of the Cumilla venue, which will host the district administration's Victory Day programme.

However, Mohammedan formally requested the BFF on December 14 to shift the match to another date, stating their refusal to play the crucial fixture without spectators – a stance that ultimately prompted the committee to revise its decision.



Former Bangladesh national women's football team captain Sabina Khatun tries to skip past a teammate during a futsal training session at an indoor facility in Dhaka yesterday. Sabina, along with 17 other football stars who have been ignored for the football team in recent times, were taken through the paces by the national futsal team coach Saied Khodarahmi during the half-hour training session. The team will be taking part in the inaugural SAFF Women's Futsal Championship, scheduled to take place in Bangkok from January 3 to 25 next year.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

## ACC U-19 ASIA CUP

### Junior Tigers seal semifinal spot

STAR SPORTS DESK

Zawad Abrar scored his second half-century in two matches as Bangladesh notched their second victory of the ACC U-19 Asia Cup, sealing a last-four berth, with a seven-wicket win over Nepal in Dubai on Monday.

Zawad remained unbeaten on 70 off 68 deliveries Bangladesh chased down Nepal's 130-run total with seven wickets in hand and 25.1 overs to spare.



The Junior Tigers had beaten Afghanistan by three wickets in their opening game, with Zawad scoring a team-high 96 in that match.

Earlier, Mohammad Sobuj had taken three wickets while Saad Islam, Shahriar Ahmed and Azizul Hakim had chipped in with two wickets each as Bangladesh bowled out Nepal for 130 in 31.1 overs after opting to bowl first.

A two-wicket victory for Sri Lanka against Afghanistan later in the day meant both Bangladesh and Sri Lanka went through to the semifinals. The two sides will meet on Wednesday in the last Group B fixture, a match that will decide who claim the top spot in the group. Sri Lanka are ahead of Bangladesh on net run-rate.

## A new setting, honest reflection and a comeback plan

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh's Test captain Najmul Hossain Shanto and ODI skipper Mehidy Hasan Miraz faced the media in Mirpur on Monday morning, something they have done countless times, and yet, it was a brand-new experience for both of them.

Usually, the media follow the Tigers in Mirpur, hovering around the ground and stadium premises for a byte or two, or firing questions at them at the press conference room.

But on Monday, it was the captains who made their way into the press box of the Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium for the very first time, and faced the media together.

The reason behind this unique meet-up was the Bangladesh All-Stars match, set to place today in Mirpur at 5:30pm. The match has been arranged by the Cricketers Welfare Association of Bangladesh (CWAB) and will feature two teams – 'Oparajeyo' and 'Odommyo' – which will be led by Shanto and Miraz respectively.

Several national team stars and some up-and-coming cricketers will feature in this exhibition match commemorating Bangladesh's Victory Day and funds from the game will be used for the welfare of cricketers.

The session started in a jovial mood but in between the friendly fire of the All Stars match, questions gradually shifted to more serious topics concerning the national team and the captains.

Since taking over the ODI captaincy from Shanto, Miraz has had a torrid time in



the hot seat, winning three of nine matches as skipper.

A number of issues are plaguing the ODI side at the moment, one of which is finding a fixed spot for Miraz in the batting order.

"I am a player who has batted in every position – from one to nine – for Bangladesh," the all-rounder said on Monday. As captain in 2025, he has batted five times at No. 5, thrice at No. 6 and once at No. 9.

Going by his career average in different positions, the top order is the best place for him as he averages over 43 at No. 1-3, while batting lower down he averages in the 20s.

Still, the ODI skipper claimed he was keen on batting lower down the order in the future due to the impact he has helped create.

"I feel I played more impactful knocks when I batted at No.8 for Bangladesh, when I batted with bowlers," he said.

"I have realised that if I bat at No.6, I would be batting with at least two batters and can also support the tail. I would be able

to win more matches for the team... When I bat at the top, I can score runs but I can't guarantee we will win since I already scored runs at No.4 but we didn't win. At the end of the day, winning is the most important as captain," he added.

Meanwhile, Test skipper Shanto, who is currently not a part of the T20I setup, was asked if he was planning to script a comeback into the shortest format with runs in the upcoming Bangladesh Premier League (BPL).

Shanto, who will play for Rajshahi Warriors, is hoping to make it happen through impactful knocks.

"I feel this BPL is very important for me... If the opportunity comes, I will try to do well so that I can get a chance [in T20Is] again," Shanto said.

"It's very important to leave an impact in T20s. Even if I score big runs [in BPL], the main thing is what kind of impact I am making. That would be my goal in every match," he said.

## IPL mini-auction today

SPORTS REPORTER

Seven Bangladeshi cricketers will go under the hammer as the mini-auction for the 19th edition of the Indian Premier League (IPL) takes place today in Abu Dhabi.

They are – Mustafizur Rahman, Rishad Hossain, Shoriful Islam, Rakibul Hasan, and Taskin Ahmed, Nahid Rana, and Tanzim Hasan Sakib.

Mustafizur is placed in the highest base-price bracket of INR 2 crore. Uncapped Rakibul is listed in INR 30 lakh category and the remaining five are in the INR 75 lakh category.

As per reports, the IPL is likely to be held between March 15 and May 31. As Bangladesh have series lined up against Pakistan and New Zealand during that period, their full availability seems uncertain.

However, Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) cricket operations in-charge Shahriar Nafees said the board will give "maximum consideration" to IPL-bound players, adding the home series against Pakistan is likely to be rescheduled.

A total of 1,390 players registered for the auction and 350 players were shortlisted in the final list. A maximum of 77 players can be bought, with franchises allowed to fill up to 31 overseas slots.

## SHORT CORNER

### FIDE reinstates Russian and Belarusian teams in official contests

The International Chess Federation (FIDE) has voted to allow teams from Russia and Belarus to return to official competitions and fully restored the rights of youth players from both countries, while postponing a final decision on the use of national flags and anthems in adult team events.

### Women's BCL gets underway

Central Zone and East Zone picked up wins on the opening day of the Women's Bangladesh Cricket League (WBCL) at Rajshahi Divisional Stadium today in Rajshahi.

### Shoaib Akhtar backs Bangladesh to go deep in T20 World Cup

Pakistan's legendary fast bowler Shoaib Akhtar believes Bangladesh have the potential to go deep in the upcoming ICC T20 World Cup, scheduled to be held in India and Sri Lanka from February 7, citing the steady improvement of their pace unit in recent years.

### Four more first division clubs relegated after no-show

Four more clubs in the ongoing Dhaka First Division Cricket League 2025-26 were relegated on Monday after failing to show up for their respective first-round matches at four different venues.

\*\* Read full stories on The Daily Star's website

## Lyon ready to roar again in third Ashes Test

AFP, Adelaide

Nathan Lyon made clear his disappointment at being dropped for a home Test for the first time in 14 years in Brisbane two weeks ago, but the Australian spinner is only looking forward before the third Test at a ground he knows very well.

The 38-year-old and skipper Pat Cummins are expected to come back into the home side on Wednesday at Adelaide Oval, where Lyon was part of the ground staff before becoming Australia's most successful Test off-spinner.

"Every opportunity that there's a Test match on, I want to be a part of, I love playing cricket," Lyon told reporters after being added to the stadium's "Avenue of Honour" on Monday.

"So there was a lot of disappointment, but there's no point looking back now, we're looking forward and moving on, and looking at what my role looks like this week."

Australia are 2-0 up in the series, but Lyon has only bowled two overs so far.

"I haven't really had the opportunity to get my teeth into this Test series yet, but that opportunity will hopefully come soon, and we'll put it into play," he added



His old boss on the tractors at Adelaide Oval, head groundsman Damian Hough, suggested the pitch he has prepared for the match will offer something for Lyon.

"Spin needs to play a part here. It always has. Even last year when (Nathan) didn't bowl a lot of overs, I felt that the pitch would have spun," Hough said on Monday.

"Spin needs to play a part in pitches around Australia, and we want it to play a part."

Lyon's lack of recent action has left him stalled on 562 wickets, one shy of Glenn McGrath's tally in the list of most prolific Australian Test wicket-takers.

Despite his age, Lyon has long made it clear that he has no intention of retiring any time soon and believes his record speaks for itself.

"I've played 140 Test matches. I feel like I don't have a point to prove to anyone," Lyon said.

"I'm very clear on my role within this Australian cricket team. I love playing with everyone in that change room and love representing Australia."

"If I get that opportunity again, I'll keep doing that. My dream is to continue to play cricket for Australia."



Members of the Bangladesh men's U-21 hockey team and their coaching staff are felicitated during a reception programme at Shaheen Dwp Resort in the Dhaka Cantonment yesterday, as a Tk 60 lakh cash award is announced for their Challenger Trophy triumph courtesy of a 17th-place finish at the recently concluded FIH Hockey Junior World Cup in India. The Bangladesh women's U-18 side, too, received a cash award, Tk 10 lakh, following their bronze-winning campaign at the AHF Junior Women's Asia Cup.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED