

SPORT

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“Lifting the trophy for the first time in Australia was crazy. A dream come true. I dreamt about getting an Australian Open and completing the career Grand Slam.”

CARLOS ALCARAZ



- This was Alcaraz's first Australian Open title.
- At 22, Alcaraz became the youngest man in the Open era to win all four majors, adding to his two titles each from Wimbledon and the French and US Opens. He surpassed legendary countryman Rafael Nadal, who was two years older when he did the same.
- Alcaraz is also just the sixth player to complete the career Grand Slam.
- Alcaraz moved into joint seventh on the all-time list of

Grand Slam men's singles titles won in the Open Era. The Spaniard moved clear of his fellow ATP No. 1 Club members Boris Becker and Stefan Edberg (six titles each) to level with John McEnroe and Mats Wilander.

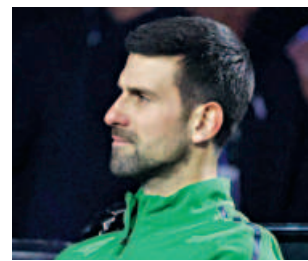
• Meanwhile, it was a first defeat for Djokovic in a Melbourne final, having won all 10 previously.

• That also leaves Djokovic still searching for a landmark 25th major to better Australia's Margaret Court, who won 24 women's Grand Slam titles.

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“God knows what happens tomorrow, let alone in six months or 12 months. So it has been a great ride. I love you guys.”

NOVAK DJOKOVIC



Bangladesh Olympic Association (BOA) president and Chief of Army Staff General Waker-Uz-Zaman inaugurates the plaque of the proposed Bangladesh Olympic Complex at Trishal in Mymensingh on Sunday in presence of BOA and Army high-ups. The foundation ceremony marked the formal launch of the country's first planned Olympic-standard multi-sports complex, envisioned as a long-term training and competition hub for national athletes. Spread over 173.2 acres, the complex will feature indoor and outdoor venues for more than 30 disciplines, along with athletes' accommodation, training facilities, a media centre and supporting infrastructure. (Inset) The masterplan of the project.

PHOTO: ISPR/COLLECTED



Imranur to compete at Asian Indoors

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh's fastest man Imranur Rahman arrived in Dhaka on Sunday ahead of his participation in the Asian Indoor Athletics Championships, scheduled to be held in Tianjin, China from February 6 to 8.

The Bangladesh Navy sprinter is set to leave for China in the early hours of Wednesday. Imranur had a brief training session at the National Stadium on Sunday and is scheduled to train again at the same venue on Monday morning.

Bangladesh Navy official Al Amin, a former national jumper, told The Daily Star that Imranur is fully fit for the competition.

The England-born sprinter won gold in the 60-metre event at the 2023 Asian Indoor Championships and finished fourth in the 2024 edition. He will compete in Tianjin on February 6.

Imranur was overlooked for the 2025 Asian Indoor Championships due to a knee injury, with 400-metre runner Zahir Raihan representing Bangladesh instead.

“Imranur has been selected based on his current form and past success,” Bangladesh Athletics Federation general secretary Shah Alam said.

‘Job finished, four out of four complete’

AGENCIES

Carlos Alcaraz's smile may come easily, but history never does.

On Sunday night at a floodlit Rod Laver Arena, the 22-year-old Spaniard carved his name into tennis immortality, rallying past Novak Djokovic 2-6, 6-2, 6-3, 7-5 to win his maiden Australian Open title and complete a career Grand Slam at a younger age than anyone before him.

With the victory, Alcaraz became the youngest man to win all four major titles, surpassing the mark set by his compatriot Rafael Nadal, who was watching from the front row in Melbourne. Nadal was 24 when he achieved the feat; Alcaraz has done it at 22, underlining his rapid rise from prodigy to standard-bearer of the sport's next era.

The triumph was built on the same traits that have defined Alcaraz's journey from the small town of El Palmar to the summit of the game: tactical flexibility, fearless shot-making and a refusal to wilt under pressure. After losing the opening set, he steadily wrested control from the 38-year-old Djokovic, matching power with patience and aggression with clarity in the biggest moments.

At the trophy ceremony, Alcaraz reflected on the significance of his achievement and his bond with Melbourne, saying it was “an honour” to return to the city each year. Moments later, he leaned into the camera lens and scribbled a simple message that summed up his night and his journey: “Job finished. Four out of four complete.”

Alcaraz also made clear that his

breakthrough had been shaped by the giants he is now challenging. Addressing Djokovic, he described the Serb as an inspiration not just for tennis players, but for athletes everywhere, adding that it had been an honour to share the locker room with him and to watch him compete.

He then turned his attention to Nadal, calling it a special and unfamiliar feeling to have his idol watching from the stands.

“It's a bit weird seeing Rafa in the stands. I think it's the first time as a professional because I know you watched me when I was 14 or 15 years old. It's such an honour playing in front of you, we had great battles on the court and it was a honour sharing the court with you. Thank you for being here,” Alcaraz said. Djokovic, gracious in defeat, reflected

on an uncertain future after another chapter in a storied rivalry with the young Spaniard. The loss left him on 24 Grand Slam titles, still one short of the outright all-time record. He admitted he had not expected to reach another major final and told the Melbourne crowd that the support he received over the past two weeks was unlike anything he had previously experienced in Australia, describing his journey as “a great ride”.

For Alcaraz, however, the road is clearly still rising. Already the youngest champion across clay, grass and hard courts, and now the youngest to complete the full set of majors, he stands not merely as Nadal's heir, but as a player intent on redrawing the limits of what is possible — with his best tennis seemingly still ahead of him.

Not preparing for a World Cup but smiles return

SPORTS REPORTER

“Nothing much, just preparing for the football World Cup.”

That was Bangladesh middle-order batter Tawhid Hridoy's playful post on his official Facebook page yesterday, posted alongside a picture of national cricketers taking part in a football session at the Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium in Mirpur.

The light-hearted post came at a time when the national team was originally expected to be preparing for the upcoming T20 World Cup, scheduled to be held in Sri Lanka and India from February 7. Instead, the players have returned to Mirpur for a fitness camp ahead of a domestic three-team competition — the ODOMMO Bangladesh T20 Cup 2026 — which will run from February 5 to 9.

The shift followed the Bangladesh Cricket Board's (BCB) decision not to



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send the team to the T20 World Cup in India due to security concerns. After the International Cricket Council (ICC) rejected Bangladesh's request to relocate their fixtures outside India, the Tigers were replaced by Scotland for the marquee event — an outcome that left players disappointed.

While Hridoy's post was clearly meant in jest — reinforced by the emojis that accompanied it — it also subtly captured the reality of missing out on a global tournament. Still, the resumption of training appeared to lift spirits, with players smiling as they reunited at the home of cricket.

Veteran Mushfiqur Rahim, who was not part of the World Cup setup, was seen fully engaged in fitness drills and timed runs. The mood lightened further during the football session, with friendly tussles and laughter adding energy. The scenes marked the players' return to Mirpur following the conclusion of the Bangladesh Premier League last month.

However, questions remain over how much a short, three-team, five-day T20 tournament can compensate for the void left by missing the World Cup. Although Bangladesh's next international assignment is an ODI series at home against Pakistan in March, BCB vice-president Faruque Ahmed made it clear

that the tournament was arranged largely in response to the World Cup snub.

“The national election is on 12th [February], and we also didn't go to the World Cup, which was in T20 format. We did talk about the format, but we opted for T20 since we didn't go to play the T20 World Cup, which is possibly how the decision came,” Faruque told The Daily Star.

Bangladesh face a busy 2026, with home series scheduled against Pakistan, New Zealand, Australia, India and the West Indies. A BCB media committee official also confirmed that direct qualification for the 2028 T20 World Cup — which could have been ensured by reaching the Super Eight stage of the upcoming edition — also remains a key consideration for the board.

For now, however, the focus is simply on getting back into action. With cricket returning to the calendar, the players appear content to be training again, even if it is not for the World Cup.

Joty wants better preparation before T20 WC

STAR SPORTS DESK

Bangladesh captain Nigar Sultana Joty welcomed the Tigresses' tournament-winning qualifiers campaign but warned that sustained and competitive preparation will be crucial if the team are to make a meaningful impact at the ICC Women's T20 World Cup in June.

Bangladesh capped off their Women's T20 World Cup Qualifier 2026 campaign with another commanding performance, registering a seven-wicket win over the Netherlands yesterday in Mulpani.

The victory ensured the Tigresses finished top of the Super Six stage and maintained a flawless record throughout the tournament, winning all seven of their matches — the only team to remain unbeaten.

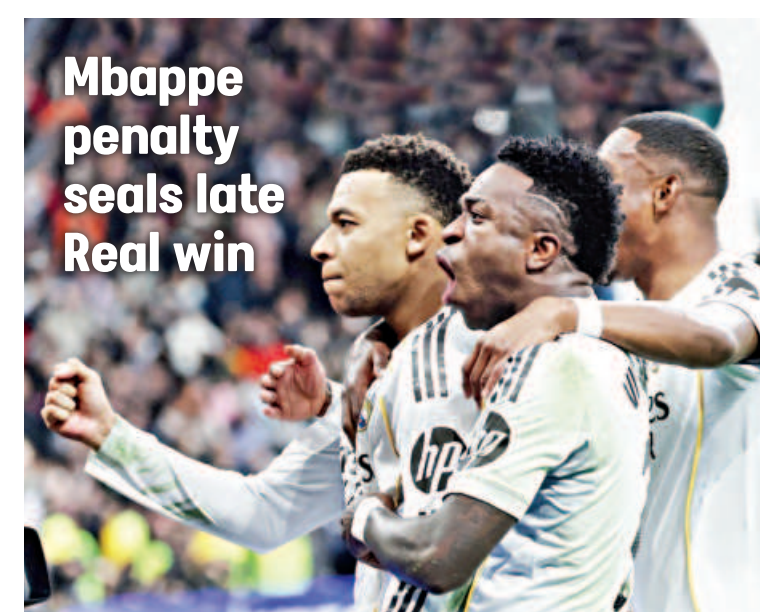
While pleased with the outcome, Joty stressed that the focus must now shift quickly to preparations for the main event, which will be held in June in England and Wales. “Preparation will be extremely important. We would like to play some international matches before the World Cup because in previous tournaments we were not able to prepare properly,” Joty said in a video message released after Sunday's match. “If we can play a good, competitive T20 tournament



before the World Cup, whether it is a franchise league or any other event, it will boost the team a lot and help our preparation,” she added.

The call for better preparation comes against the backdrop of last year's ICC Women's World Cup, where Bangladesh endured a long gap without competitive cricket. After playing their final qualifier match on April 19, the Tigresses did not return to competitive action until October 2 — a hiatus of nearly six months.

The lack of match readiness was reflected in the World Cup results, as Bangladesh managed just one win from seven matches and finished second-last in the eight-team tournament, ahead of only Pakistan.



Mbappe penalty seals late Real win

Kylian Mbappe calmly converted a 100th-minute penalty to give Real Madrid a dramatic 2-1 victory over nine-man Rayo Vallecano in a fiery La Liga derby on Sunday. The win cut Barcelona's lead at the top to one point after their Saturday victory over Elche. Vinicius Junior opened the scoring after Jude Bellingham went off injured, but Jorge de Frutos equalised early in the second half. After red cards for Pathe Ciss and Pep Chavarria, Mbappe struck late to secure the win.

PHOTO: AFP