



ABU DHABI: Afghanistan's Mohammad Shahzad (center) greets New Zealand's captain Kane Williamson at the end of the ICC men's Twenty20 World Cup cricket match between New Zealand and Afghanistan at the Sheikh Zayed Cricket Stadium in Abu Dhabi yesterday. — AFP

## New Zealand into T20 World Cup semi-finals, India eliminated

ABU DHABI: New Zealand reached the Twenty20 World Cup semi-finals with a comfortable eight-wicket win over Afghanistan yesterday, a result that eliminated star-studded India from the tournament. Chasing a modest 125, skipper Kane Williamson (40) and Devon Conway (36) put on an unbeaten stand of 68 to drive the team home in 18.1 overs in Abu Dhabi.

The Kiwis join Pakistan as the two teams in the semi-finals from Group 2, leaving India's final match against Namibia on Monday a dead rubber. England and Australia have already made the semi-finals from Group 1.

"It was a strong performance," said Williamson. "We know how dangerous this Afghanistan side is. It was good for us to be able to set the tone with the ball, take wickets early and then keep them to below-par total. 150-155 would have been par."

"There's another strong challenge coming up. England are a very strong side," said Williamson. "For us it is important we keep learning and building." Afghanistan skipper Mohammad Nabi

admitted making only 124 was never likely to be enough.

### 'Not decent total'

"This was not a decent total," said Nabi after his team ended the tournament with two wins and three losses. "Still we tried our best with the ball. We played good cricket in the tournament, and we will take a lot of positives. But we need to correct the mistakes we made with the bat."

Left-arm quick Trent Boult returned figures of 3-17 from his four overs and was ably supported by Tim Southee, who took two wickets, to restrict Afghanistan to 124-8. Najibullah Zadran played a lone hand with his 48-ball 73 to give the Afghanistan total some respectability after they

elected to bat first.

New Zealand's pace bowlers rattled the opposition's top order with quick strikes as Adam Milne sent back Mohammad Shahzad caught behind for four in his first over. Boult got going from the other end to get Hazratullah Zazai out for two and Southee trapped Rahmanullah Gurbaz lbw for six as Afghanistan slipped to 19-3.

Zadran counter-attacked with a handful of boundaries including two off Jimmy Neesham but soon took to defence after losing his partner Gulbadin Naib for 15. Naib dragged a wide delivery from Kiwi leg-spinner Ish Sodhi onto his stumps.

Skipper Mohammad Nabi joined Zadran at the crease as the duo attempted to push the scoring

against the spinners and singled out Mitchell Santner for runs. The left-handed Zadran smashed Santner for two sixes and later got to his 50 in a 33 balls. It was his second fifty in this T20 World Cup and sixth overall.

Southee broke the 59-run partnership, seeing off Nabi for 14. Boult got the key scalp of Zadran with Neesham taking a good diving catch in the deep and the Afghans struggled to get runs in the final overs.

New Zealand remained clinical in their modest chase with Martin Gupthill and Daryl Mitchell mixing their singles and twos with occasional boundaries. Mujeeb Ur Rahman struck with the wicket of Mitchell, caught behind for 17.

Spin king Rashid Khan then sent back Gupthill bowled for 28 to bag his 400th wicket in T20 matches. But Williamson stood firm with Conway who joined his skipper for a smooth partnership that steered the team home. The left-hand Conway smashed four boundaries and the winning runs in his 32-ball knock. — AFP



### Kiwis join Pakistan into semis

### Drab draw with Everton shows task ahead for Conte

LIVERPOOL: Antonio Conte was given an early indication of the huge challenge that lies ahead if he is to take Tottenham back to the Champions League as Spurs labored to a 0-0 draw at Everton yesterday. A game short on clear-cut chances could easily have ended in Tottenham's sixth defeat in eight league games but for a controversial intervention from VAR to overturn the decision to award Everton a second-half penalty.

Giovanni Lo Celso nearly snatched all three points for Spurs when his shot hit the post late on before Everton had to see out stoppage time a man down following Mason Holgate's straight red card. Conte can point to a first clean sheet in the league since August as the first sign of progress since replacing Nuno Espirito Santo earlier this week. However, their struggle to score goals goes on as Harry Kane has still netted just once in the Premier League this season.

Tottenham climb to ninth, four points adrift of the top four, while Everton are a point worse off in 11th. The sackings of Norwich boss Daniel Farke and Aston Villa



LIVERPOOL: Tottenham Hotspur's Italian head coach Antonio Conte reacts during the English Premier League football match between Everton and Tottenham Hotspur at Goodison Park in Liverpool, north west England yesterday. — AFP

manager Dean Smith over the weekend took the total in the English top-flight to five already this season.

Rafael Benitez is another manager under pressure as a bright start has given way to two points from the last 15 on offer in the league. Benitez's appointment was not warmly welcomed by a large proportion of the Everton support due to his Champions League-winning past at rivals Liverpool. But the Spaniard has been hamstrung by injuries to key players and the presence of Abdoulaye Doucoure and Dominic Calvert-Lewin was badly missed by the home side.

Tottenham had the better of a poor first

45 minutes from both sides. Sergio Reguilon blazed over the best chance from Kane's pinpoint cross. The game suddenly sparked into life on the hour mark when Everton thought they had a penalty after Hugo Lloris dived at the feet of Richarlison and clipped the Brazilian.

However, after a VAR review, referee Chris Kavanagh overturned his original decision on the basis Lloris got enough of a touch on the ball. A replay of the incident shown inside Goodison Park sparked outrage among the Everton fans and they used the sense of injustice to fuel their best spell of the game. — AFP

### Aston Villa sack manager Dean Smith

LONDON: Dean Smith has been sacked as manager of Aston Villa after five straight Premier League defeats, the club announced yesterday. Smith guided Villa back to the English top flight in 2019 but has paid the price for their disappointing form this season, with Friday's 1-0 defeat at Southampton proving the last straw for club bosses.

The former European champions were 15th in the Premier League table ahead of Sunday's matches after picking up just 10 points from their opening 11 games. Smith's departure comes the day after bottom club Norwich sacked their manager Daniel Farke.

Villa chief executive Christian Purslow said in a statement on the club's website: "After a good start to last season, this year we have not seen the continuous improvement in results, performances and league position which we have all been looking for. "For this reason

we have decided to make a change now to allow time for a new head coach to make an impact."

Former Brentford manager Smith, 50, took charge of Villa in October 2018 and led them to promotion via the play-offs in his first season. The following campaign he kept them up and they reached the League Cup final, which they lost to Manchester City. They finished 11th last season but lost star player Jack Grealish to City in the transfer window.

The club's statement added: "The board would like to sincerely thank Dean for his many excellent achievements, on and off the pitch, during this time. Everyone knows how much Aston Villa means to Dean and his family. He has represented the club with distinction and dignity."

Grealish tweeted: "No! will ever compare, the real goat (greatest of all time)." Smith is the fifth managerial casualty in the Premier League this season. — AFP