



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, on her return from New York where she received the Champions of the Earth award from the United Nations, is all smiles after being welcomed with a bouquet of flowers by the country's top cricketers and BCB president Nazmul Hasan Papon at the Gono Bhavan yesterday.

PHOTO: PMO

## Batsmen rule Day 1

SPORTS REPORTER



Ten batsmen scored 50-plus on the first day of the second round of the National Cricket League yesterday, but only two converted those into centuries. Chittagong's wicketkeeper-batsman Irfan Sukkur scored a gritty 102 against hosts Rajshahi while Barisal's top-order batsman Fazle Mahmud cashed in on a good batting track in Khulna by scoring 103 off 120 deliveries.

The postponement of the Australia series saw the return of the national players to their respective divisions. All the players from the 14-member squad for the Australia series featured for their respective divisions yesterday, except for Rubel Hossain, Shakib Al Hasan and Mushfiqur Rahim.

Rubel, who had injured himself during Bangladesh A's tour of India, will be out of action for at least three weeks. Shakib and Mushfiqur, on the other hand, are on leave.

Amongst the national players, Mominul Haque shone with a score of 90 for Chittagong. His national teammate Tamim Iqbal however, was sent back to the pavilion for a duck.

Chittagong ended on a strong 346 for 8 at stumps on Day One. Apart from Mominul and Irfan, Yasir Ali contributed with a valuable 91. Left-arm medium pacer Shafaq Al Zahir was the pick of the bowlers for Rajshahi, finishing with figures of 3 for 40.

Fazle's century led Barisal to 295 for 5 at the close of play against Sylhet. Fazle, who smacked three sixes and nine fours, was well supported by openers Shahriar Nafees and Shahin Hossain, who scored 52 and 58 respectively.

Half-centuries from Rony Talukdar and Rakibul Hasan helped Dhaka finish on 265 for 6 against Rangpur at the Shaheed Chandu Stadium in Bogra. The team's score could have been a lot better had Dhaka's players managed to make the most of their starts. Most of them, unfortunately, lost their wickets after crossing the 30-run mark.

Left-arm spinner Suhrawardi Shuvo, with three wickets, was the pick of the bowlers for Rangpur.

The match at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur saw half-centuries from Mohammad Mithun and veteran Tushar Imran lead Khulna to 227 for 5 at the end of Day One. Mithun, who remained unbeaten on 87 yesterday, has a good chance of reaching his century.

### SCORES IN BRIEF

KHULNA V DHAKA METRO	DHAKA V RANGPUR	BARISAL V SYLHET	CHITTAGONG V RAJSHAHI
<b>KHULNA:</b> 227 for 5 (Mithun 87, Tushar 59; Shahid 1-32, Abu Haydar 1-46)	<b>DHAKA:</b> 265 for 6 (Rony 59, Rakibul 52; Suhrawardi 3-70, Tanveer 2-31)	<b>BARISAL:</b> 295 for 5 (Fazle 103, Shahin 58, Shahriar 52; Enamul 2-54, Abul 1-26)	<b>CHITTAGONG:</b> 346 for 8 (Irfan 102, Yasir 91, Mominul 90; Shafaq 3-40, Muktar 2-56, Tajjul 2-89)

## Hosts eye an emphatic display

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh under-19 coach Saiful Bari Titu expects Bhutan to play pressing football when the two sides meet in the AFC U-19 Championship Qualifiers at the Bangabandhu National Stadium today. The hosts began their campaign with a 2-0 victory against Sri Lanka on Friday, but had to wait until the 67th minute of that match to break the deadlock against a side, which was defending deep with five men at the back. The Bangladesh coach wants to exploit the spaces created in the opposition's defence as he expects more urgency in attack from the Bhutanese today.

"Sri Lanka played defensive football against us, but we expect little bit more pressing football from Bhutan," said the coach prior to the team's practice session at the Sheikh Jamal Dhanmondi Club Ground yesterday.

"We have to make sure that we dominate the game, dominate possession and create scoring chances as we want to win by a big margin."

Winning by a big margin could be crucial to Bangladesh's cause as they are targeting one of the five best runners-up spots available for qualification for the 16-team final round. With Uzbekistan considered favourites to top Group A, a belief reinforced by the Uzbeks' 7-0 drubbing of Bhutan on the opening day, Bangladesh will be looking to get maximum points from the first two matches, with a healthy positive goal advantage. Titu, though, feels his forwards would have to be more penetrative in the attacking third and more accurate in front of goal for that target to be achieved.

"We should have scored three or four goals in the last game. We have to

learn how to overcome the pressure and score. This is a problem which dogs not only this team, but also the senior team," said the former national midfielder.

Bangladesh had beaten Bhutan 2-0 in their last meeting in SAFF U-19 Championship in Nepal this August, and the two players who scored in that fixture -- Rohit Sarker and Mannaf Rabbi -- are expected to start in attack alongside Mohammad Ibrahim.

Rabbi, who also scored the opening goal against Sri Lanka on Friday, said they cannot afford to waste chances. "Even though we won 2-0 against Bhutan in SAFF Championship, we had squandered many chances. This is something we should be careful about tomorrow. I believe this team is stronger than the one we had in Nepal," said the striker, who plies his trade with Rahmatganj MFS in the Bangladesh Premier League.

## Siddikur struggles

SPORTS REPORTER

Siddikur Rahman was tied for ninth position after the penultimate round of the Mercuries Taiwan Masters on Saturday. The 30-year-old golfer, who started the day at joint third position and five shots off the pace, struggled to cope with the gusty conditions at the Taiwan Golf and Country Club, as did most of the other golfers, trading two birdies for five bogeys for a three-over-par (75). That took his tally to two-over-par (218) and placed him seven strokes behind new leader Liang Wen Chong of China.

Chong returned with a card of 68, the lowest in the third round, and was one of only five golfers to manage a below-par score on the day. Overnight leader Rashid Khan dropped to third position at three-under-par (213) while Danny Chia was in second position at four-

## Women begin ODIs today

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh women's cricket team will take the field against Pakistan today hoping to turn things around after abysmal performances in the Twenty20 series.

Bangladesh lost both T20Is at the Southend Cricket Club in Karachi, a venue they should now be familiar with since they are staying there.

Only six players managed to score double-digit runs across the two T20Is and a performance like that in an ODI would make for a very lopsided match.

However, with the visitors now having acclimatised to the conditions, they should put up better show in the ODIs.

## A piece of history lost

AGENCIES, Melbourne

Lindsay Kline, the 207th Australian Test player, passed away on Friday, aged 81.

He played 13 Tests between 1957 and 1961 as a slow left-arm chinaman bowler.

The Victorian claimed 34 wickets at an average of 22.82 including a hat-trick against South Africa at Cape Town in just his second Test.

He will be remembered for facing the last ball of the first tied Test match, against the West Indies at Brisbane in the famous 1960-61 series.



Bangladesh under-19 players jog during a training session at the Sheikh Jamal Dhanmondi Club Ground yesterday, ahead of today's AFC U-19 Championship Qualifiers fixture against Bhutan.

PHOTO: STAR

## Akram keeps his chin up

SPORTS REPORTER

BCB director and tournament committee chairman Akram Khan believes that the National Cricket League (NCL) this season could well be a stepping stone for a number of players and help them reach the next level. Speaking to reporters at Mirpur yesterday, Akram said that the return of the national players in the league would make it a lot more competitive and bring out the best in the players.

"Those who want to play for the national team in the near future... this will be a good opportunity for them. They are getting a chance to play with good players. By facing Shakib's [Al

Hasan] spin, or bowling against national batsmen...they can learn a lot," said Akram.

While the former national captain expressed his disappointment over Cricket Australia's decision to postpone the tour, he looked at the brighter side of the decision.

"It's really sad that Australia hasn't come. I know Australia are a much better side than us, but this was a chance for us to perform well in Test cricket. Had we done well in these Tests, we could have gotten more recognition [from the cricketing world]."

"However, even though the series is not taking place right now, it doesn't mean that the players won't have any game-time. The NCL will be followed

by the Bangladesh Premier League and then there's the Zimbabwe series and the Dhaka Premier League. This will be a good time for some of our players to hit form," continued Akram.

Akram also said that the tournament committee was looking into issues related to the domestic wickets more sternly this season.

"Even before the league began, we had separate meetings with the curators and the chief selector and instructions were passed on. We asked them to prepare sporting tracks. As a follow-up we will be sending our chief selector to the venues and will ask him to submit a report regarding the pitches before the next round," concluded Akram.



Khulna's Mohammad Mithun lofts one over mid-wicket on his way to an unbeaten 87 against Dhaka Metro in Mirpur on the first day of the second round of the National Cricket League yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

## Injuries plague booters' camp

SPORTS REPORTER



Bangladesh national football team's residential camp in BKSP has been hit hard by injuries and illnesses to some of the key players as the team prepares for the World Cup Qualifiers' away fixture against Kyrgyzstan on October 13. At least seven players, out of the current 30-member squad, have been hit by injuries, with several of them having already left the camp and unlikely to return.

Striker Zahid Hasan Emily, who has been one of the more regular fixtures for the team over the last decade, did not join the camp after being diagnosed with a tumour in his abdomen and he is set to miss the match against Kyrgyzstan. Young forward Mohammad Ruman left the camp three days ago due to persistent high fever, and he is highly unlikely to make the 23-man final squad even if he gets well in time, said a source inside the team.

Winger Zahid Hossain, who didn't feature in any of the four qualifying matches so far, has also been released from the camp after hurting his ankle in training.

"It is really frustrating to be injured before such a crucial match. I will get to know more about my injury after resting for seven to eight days. I am seriously doubtful about being fit for the Kyrgyzstan clash," said the winger, who is now recovering in Dhaka.

Attacking midfielder Sohail Rana had also left the camp two days ago due to a hamstring injury in his right leg and is likely to have an operation within a week or two, according to the source.

Injuries, though, have not only weakened the attacking options, a couple of key defenders and the first choice goalkeeper are also struggling with injuries. With veteran centre-back Nasiruddin Chowdhury already omitted from the initial squad, a further setback hit the team as centre-back Yeasin Khan has been diagnosed with tonsillitis. Yeasin, who is under the supervision of an Otolaryngologist, has a chance of returning to camp before the Kyrgyzstan tie. Goalkeeper Shahidul Alam Sohel, who put in some sublime performances against Malaysia and Australia recently, is suffering from an ankle injury and is reportedly still recovering.

The national team will play a practice match against a side of comprised of players from the premier league in BKSP tomorrow. The team is scheduled to fly for Bishkek on October 9.

## Zim win in fading light

STAR SPORT DESK

Zimbabwe levelled the three-match one-day series 1-1 in bizarre fashion when they won the second ODI against Pakistan by five runs in D/L method at the Harare Sports Club ground yesterday.

The umpires called the match off with two overs remaining with Pakistan looking to pull off an improbable victory, needing another 21 runs to topple the hosts' impressive 276-6.

When the decision came under fading lights Shoaib Malik was batting on 96 and number ten Yasir Shah provided support with a 22-ball 32.

It was a shame the way the match, which lost seven minutes due to rain, had ended and for Malik it was a devastating blow.

Malik was not only four runs away from becoming the first Pakistani number five batsman to complete an ODI century, the right hander was also responsible for a magnificent turnaround after the visitors were reduced to 76-6.

Malik, who hit eight fours and a six, rebuilt the innings along with Aamer Yamin (62) with a 111-run stand.

The defeat demoted Pakistan down to the ninth position in the ICC ODI rankings behind the West Indies.

**SCORES IN BRIEF**  
**ZIMBABWE:** 276 for 6 in 50 overs (Chibhabha 90, Chigumbura 67; Riaz 4-63)  
**PAKISTAN:** 256 for 8 in 48 overs (Malik 96 not out, Yamin 62, Shah 32 not out)  
**Result:** Zimbabwe won by 5