

# SPORT



Bangladesh striker Shakhawat Hossain Rony scored the decisive goal against Nepal in an international friendly which the hosts edged 1-0 at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

## Tests or T20Is against Zim?

SPORTS REPORTER



With the Bangladesh Premier League having come to an end, the focus now returns to the national team.

As per the current schedule, the Tigers are supposed to play two Tests against Zimbabwe in January. The one-day and T20I segments of this tour had taken place in December prior to the BPL. While Bangladesh won the ODI series 3-0, they drew the T20Is 1-1.

However, recent developments suggest that there is a possibility for the two-Test series to be replaced by a T20I series.

According to Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) CEO Nizamuddin Chowdhury, a discussion had taken place between the BCB and Zimbabwe Cricket regarding the same.

"This discussion is at a very premature stage. The management of the two boards did speak about this possibility in the past, however nothing has happened since," Chowdhury told The Daily Star yesterday.

BCB's media wing chairman, Jalal Yunus, echoed Chowdhury's statement and indicated that Bangladesh may play more T20I matches ahead of the Asia Cup and the ICC World Twenty20, which are scheduled to take place in February and March respectively.

"There is a gap for us in January ahead of the Under-19 World Cup which begins on January 27. The BCB is trying to get in touch with different boards to know if they can play a few T20I matches here," Jalal told The Daily Star.

According to sources, the two-match Test series may be replaced by three to five T20Is. While the move is yet to be confirmed, word has already spread across the BCB headquarters with both officials and players aware of the possibility.

"I have heard that the Test series may be replaced by a T20I series but it is not yet confirmed," said chief selector Faruque Ahmed, adding that the selection committee would work on its future planning once a final decision regarding the Zimbabwe series had been reached.

While the decision is yet to be finalised, the mere possibility of the two Tests being cancelled has already led to mixed reactions within the BCB.

While there are many who believe that a T20I series would give the side a good warm-up ahead of the Asia Cup and the ICC World Twenty20, certain members of the team management have spoken against cancelling the Tests.

Some of their most immediate observations pointed out the fact that none of the other nations had decided to compromise their fixed schedules to prepare for the T20 World Cup and that wasn't hampering their preparations. They are also of the opinion that playing Test cricket is the best possible warm-up for any format.

A question was also raised as to whether sacrificing two Tests, a format that Bangladesh rarely features in, to play a number of T20Is against Zimbabwe, a team ranked below Bangladesh in the T20I rankings, would be worth it.

An official even went on to describe the proposed move

### AFC U-14 GIRLS' FOOTBALL

## Nepal to host BD in final

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh girls' football team will leave for Kathmandu today to play in the final of the AFC U-14 Girls' Regional Championship on Saturday against the hosts Nepal.

The girls in red and green will look to clinch the title after they defeated Iran 2-0 in the semifinal, while Nepal defeated India 1-0 in the same stage.

The final was due to be held in late April this year, but was suspended following a devastating earthquake in the Himalayan nation.

Now, nearly eight months since the disaster that took hundreds of lives, the stage is set for Bangladesh and Nepal to showcase their skills and embrace what could be glory.

"We have already achieved our primary target of reaching the final. Now we are going there to win the championship," said Bangladesh girls' U-14 captain Krishna Rani Sarkar.

Recalling the day the earthquake hit Nepal, Krishna said, "We were scared on that day but it is now in the past and we are looking forward to returning home with the trophy."

Though the girls have been training for the past 15 days, they have also played different tournaments such as the JFA Cup U-14 tournament, numerous inter-school tournaments and the Women's Super League.

"We want to resume the championship from where we left a few months ago as the players have been in action in the domestic circuit and I hope the girls will give their best on the field to win the title," said coach Golam Rabbani

## An unimpressive win

SPORTS REPORTER



Maruful Haque made his debut as Bangladesh football team coach last night with a 1-0 win against Nepal in an international friendly at the Bangabandhu National Stadium.

While the game ended a long losing streak for the booters and served as a tonic ahead of their Suzuki SAFF Cup challenge, starting in India next week, there was hardly anything inspiring from a slow burning team against a youthful and more vibrant Nepalese side.

An 18-minute strike by Shakhawat Hossain Rony was the only highlight for the home team in a match where the visitors looked the more aggressive and purposeful of the two.

Frankly speaking, Bangladesh took the lead against the run of play following a build-up down the left flank, where Atiqur Rahman Meshu, Mamunul Islam and Yeasin Munna were involved

in a nice exchange before Munna lobbed a looping cross at the near post. Shakhawat, who timed his run perfectly, headed the ball in past Nepalese goalkeeper Bikesh Kuthu.

Shakhawat, who played as a midfielder under Fabio Lopez, was pushed up as a replacement striker for veteran Zahid Hasan Emily, who is nursing a knee injury. And the tall striker grabbed the opportunity with both hands.

After the goal, it was mostly show-time for the Bangladesh back four of Nasir Chowdhury, Yeasin Khan, Yeamin Munna and Nasirul Islam, who passed the test against the Nepalese attack with some gritty defending. But there was something missing in the midfield and upfront.

Captain Mamunul did return to his usual midfield role, which was earlier changed by former Italian coach Lopez, but the influential midfielder had little impact on the game.

The unimpressive performance by Mamunul and the absence of holding midfielder Jamal Bhuiyan due to fever left a big vacuum in the midfield where the

youthful Nepal dominated most of the time of the game.

Winger Zahid Hossain, playing his first international match for the national side since the Bangabandhu Gold Cup, was only a shadow of the brilliant player he was during the Sheikh Kamal International Gold Cup for Chittagong Abahani. He was eventually replaced by Jewel Rana.

Maruful also appeared reluctant to allow right-back Nasirul Islam and left-back Yeamin Munna to overlap, an option that could have added bite to the attack, fearing that they were not quick enough to recuperate on the break.

Bangladesh initially controlled the game with crisp passing but soon lost control of the midfield against the quick pressing from Nepal.

The visitors pressed hard for the equalizer but haplessly watched two efforts from Heman Gurang and Anil Gurang go in vain by the half-hour mark.

After resumption, Nepal's Belgian coach Patrick Aussems sent five pair of fresh legs on, but after Rahit Chand's shot rattled the crossbar,

## 'Booters failed to please'

SPORTS REPORTER



Bangladesh football team's new coach Maruful Haque had said ahead of the friendly against Nepal that he was least concerned about the result; rather he wanted to take this one opportunity before the SAFF Championship to experiment and see how his squad has come together as a team in the last 18 days of training.

Last night after the 1-0 win, a debut victory for the successful domestic coach, Maruful could hardly hide his frustration over the insipid performance from his charges.

The 46-year-old coach felt that his team could only perform up to 30 per cent of what he had asked from them. "I'm happy that we won the match, but I can't be happy with the performance of the team," Maruful said at the post-match press conference. "The players gave only 30 per cent of what I had planned maybe due to the fact that they are still in the recovery phase. We still have four days before the tournament [SAFF Championship] and if the active recovery and hydrotherapy sessions go according to plan, they will be able to give 60 per cent of my demand by the time they play the first match."

Maruful opted for a 4-3-3 formation and gave goalkeeper Ashraful Islam Rana a cap. While the young goalkeeper repaid

the coach's faith, the midfield struggled to impose itself for the entirety of the match in the absence of injured defensive midfielder Jamal Bhuiyan. There was an apparent lack of fluency among the three starters in the midfield -- Mamunul Islam, Sohel Rana and Atiqur Rahman Meshu -- while winger's Zahid Hossain and substitute Jewel Rana failed to make much of an impression going forward.

"Meshu played in Jamal's position while Sohel played the inside midfield role after a long time. Jewel hasn't been the same player he was after recovering from injury. So there was lack of fluency among the players and the wingers couldn't switch possession according to my plan. However, the most worrisome aspect was the defensive mindset they got into after scoring the goal which they need to root out somehow," said Maruful.

While the scoring chances created by Bangladesh were few and far between, Maruful can take heart from the fact that his first-choice striker, Shakhawat Hossain Rony, made most of the solitary chance that he got by scoring a fantastic goal. And with veteran striker Zahid Hasan Emily fighting against time to be fit, there is every possibility that Bangladesh might take the field against Afghanistan with the same starting eleven, perhaps with one or two minor adjustments.

### SHOKI WOMEN'S FOOTBALL

## Mohakhali lift cup

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh Legal Aid & Services Trust (BLAST) along with the Shokhi consortium organised the final match and prize distribution ceremony for the Shokhi Women's Football Tournament 2015. Durrant Mohakhali, comprised of players from Korail slum, won the final match.

The football tournament organized to commemorate Victory Day saw the participation of over 70 girls and young women from fifteen slum communities of Dhaka, divided into six teams. They played the tournament over the course of one week.

The final took place between Durrant Mohakhali and Aniruddho Mohakhali, representing Korail slum and Nakhapara slum respectively.

Adv ZI Khan Panna, Member, Board of Trustees, BLAST distributed prizes among the winners as chief guest.

## IN A NUTSHELL

### BCCI playing favourites?

The Indian cricket board's (BCCI) decision to award almost half of the ICC World T20 matches next year to only two venues -- Dharamshala and Nagpur -- has raised eyebrows.



Nagpur, home BCCI president Shashank Manohar, is set to host nine games while Dharamshala, home to board secretary Anurag Thakur-run Himachal Pradesh Cricket Association, will stage eight.

The biggest surprise is that the marquee game of the tournament -- India versus Pakistan -- has been awarded to Dharamshala, which has a capacity of 23,000.

### 10KG gold found in 'wicket'

A 10.7 kg gold nugget, about the size of a loaf of bread, has been discovered inside a box used by New South Wales Treasury officials as a wicket for their indoor cricket games. Known as the Maitland Bar gold nugget, it was discovered in 1887 and purchased by the NSW Department of Mines that same year.

"Someone studiously decided they'd place it in a box," NSW Premier Mike Baird said today.

"The problem was they forgot to tell anyone and that box became used for hallway cricket."

When the State Government were trying to figure out what to do with the \$3.7 million gold nugget, it was entrusted to Treasury. Mr Baird said he has since instructed Treasury to "open every box they can find".

The nugget has been transferred to a museum.

### Murray may leave Aussie Open

Andy Murray could leave the Australian Open early in order to be present for the birth of his first child, he revealed in an interview published yesterday.

The Australian Open runs from January 18-31, with Murray's first child not due until February. But the world number two said that he will leave Melbourne and return to Britain if his wife, Kim, goes into labour earlier than expected.

"I'd go home. For sure, yes," Murray told the Daily Mail. "It's obviously important. I want to make sure I am there as much as I can be to try and help out, just be there for whatever is really required of me."

Compiled by Star Sport Desk

## Proposed model skews distribution

The ICC stands to make 2.5 billion dollars over the 2016-2023 cycle and if the proposed revenue distribution model is followed, this change will benefit only a select few. According to the previous model that expires this year, all full members were entitled to an equal share of the pie. However, according to the new model, the money will be shared according to the contribution of respective boards in generating revenue from ICC events. So let's take a closer look at the projected revenue distribution for the next cycle.

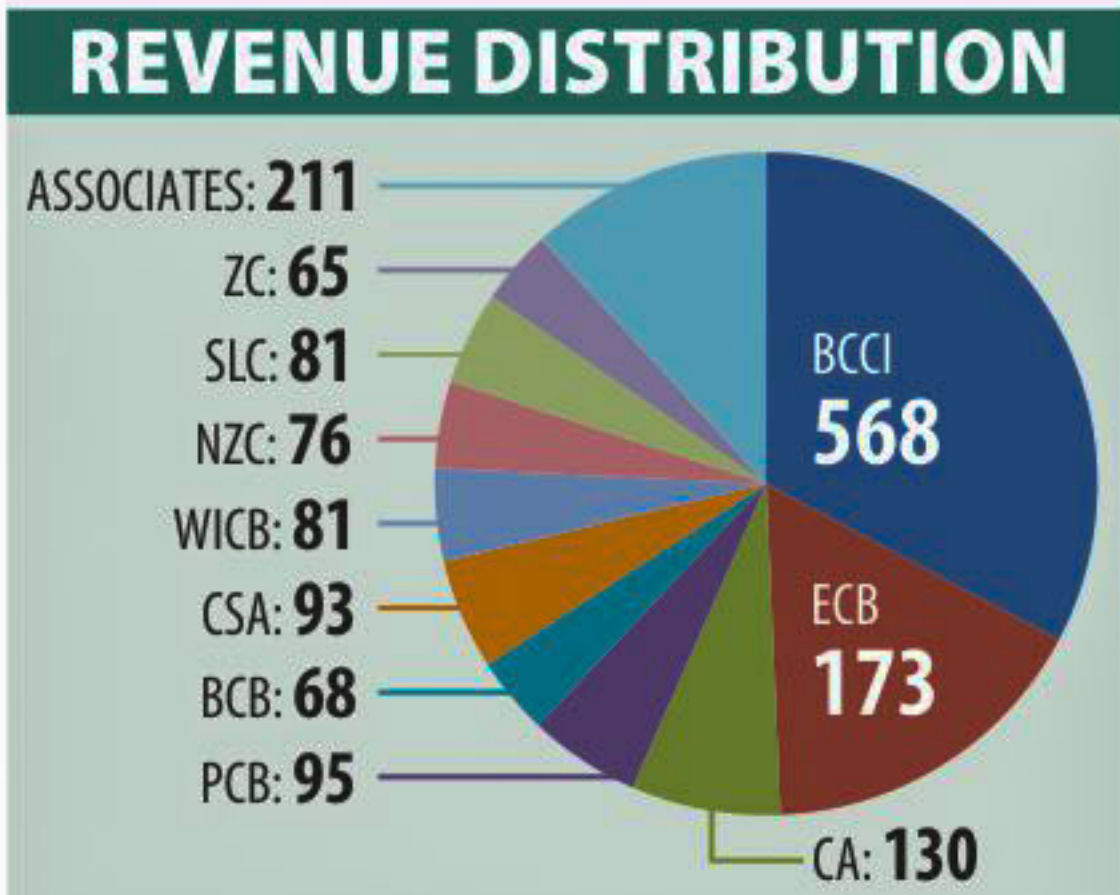


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