

# SPORT



Mohammedan skipper Mushfiqur Rahim times his favourite shot, the slog-sweep, to perfection during his unbeaten 51 against the Legends of Rugganj at Fatullah yesterday. It was his third consecutive 50-plus score in the Dhaka Premier League.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

## ICC TEST RANKINGS

# Tigers close gap with West Indies

SPORTS REPORTER



With discussions regarding Bangladesh's ODI rankings dominating the cricketing fraternity of the country over the last few days, courtesy of the confusion created as a result of a few statements made by the Bangladesh Cricket Board president Nazmul Hassan Papon following the ICC meeting in Dubai, not many actually focused on Bangladesh's Test rankings.

The International Cricket Council (ICC) updates its ranking system every year around this period and according to an ICC official, Bangladesh's ODI ranking is not likely to change. However, a press release from the ICC yesterday provided some comparatively positive news for the Tigers as far as the Test circuit is concerned.

As a result of the annual update of the Test rankings, the gap between Bangladesh and the West Indies has been slashed from 29 points to just eight at the bottom of the table.

The reason behind that is that the ICC forms its rankings on a three-season basis. Therefore, every year, the points gained from the matches played more than three seasons before are not included in the calculations. In addition, the importance given

to matches of past seasons also changes.

In this case, the results from the 2012-13 season are no longer included in the calculations. Also the outcomes from the 2014-15 season, which was earlier weighted at 100 per cent has been weighted at 50 per cent for the latest rankings update. Similarly, next year the results from the 2013-14 season will not be included, while matches from 2014-15, 2015-16 will be weighted at 50 per cent and 2016-17 shall be weighted at 100 per cent.

The annual update has affected the West Indies, which has retained its eighth position but has dropped from 76 points to 65 points. This is because its victories over New Zealand, Bangladesh and Zimbabwe in 2012-13 have all been dropped from calculations.

On the other hand, Bangladesh have gained 10 points. Therefore, at the moment the Tigers are ranked nine with 57 points while the West Indies are ranked eighth with 65 points.

Meanwhile, Australia have opened up a six-point gap over India at the top. India now lead third-placed Pakistan by just one point. Pakistan have benefitted from the annual update as defeat against South Africa by 3-0 in 2012-13 no longer counts, while the 2-0 loss to Sri Lanka in 2014-15 has its weighting reduced to 50 per cent.

# Mushy & Upul script easy win

SPORTS REPORTER

Upul Tharanga and Mushfiqur Rahim scored half-centuries while spinner Naeem Islam Jr scalped a four-wicket haul to help Mohammedan Sporting Club ease past Legends of Rugganj by seven wickets at Fatullah yesterday.

It was a game that was originally scheduled to take place on Monday. However, the ground could not recover in time from the sudden burst of rainfall on Sunday and as a result the game was shifted to the reserve day yesterday.

The shift in dates certainly did not seem to affect Mushfiqur's confidence, as he went on to score his third consecutive 50-plus score of the tournament to lead his side home while chasing Rugganj's 212 all out.

## SCORES IN BRIEF

**LEGENDS OF RUGGANJ:** 212 all out in 49.3 overs (Mizanur 63, Junaid 39; Naeem jnr 4-48, Habibur 3-26)

**MOHAMMEDAN SC:** 215 for 3 (Tharanga 71, Mushfiqur 51 not out; Abu 1-28, Asif 1-26)

**Result:** Mohammedan won by seven wickets.

**Player of the match:** Naeem Islam Jr (Mohammedan)

Mushfiqur hit two sixes and three fours during his unbeaten 51, scored off 64 balls.

While Mushfiqur held the chase towards the end, it was their foreign recruit Tharanga who gave them the base. He scored a cautious 71 off 99 balls and hit seven fours and a six.

Mohammedan eventually reached home with four overs and seven wickets remaining.

Earlier, Rugganj failed to make the most of a brilliant start given to them by openers Mizanur Rahman and Junaid Siddique. They put in a 107-run stand in 23.3 overs. However, once that partnership broke, they collapsed for just another 105 runs.

Mizanur scored an 85-ball 63 with seven fours and two sixes while Junaid hit 39. Many expected Soumya Sarkar, who batted at three, to take the responsibility after the fall of the openers, but his aggressive approach led to failure yet again. He scored 20 off 26 balls with one six and two fours before being caught off Naeem Islam.

Slow left-arm Naeem Islam Junior, who scalped four wickets, was adjudged the player of the match. The same bowler was reported for his bowling action by umpires in their previous game.

# Celebrating success

SPORTS REPORTER



Tohura Khatun would not let go of the top goal-scorer's trophy. The prolific midfielder, who scored 10 goals as Bangladesh retained the AFC Girls' U-14 Regional Championship crown in Tajikistan on Sunday, has been keeping the prized possession in her custody, it has been told, ever since the team landed in Dhaka on Sunday night.

The 13-year-old was the star attraction yesterday, just as she was in Tajikistan over the last week, as the newly elected executive committee of the Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) staged a generous reception for the team at its headquarters in the afternoon.

"In Tajikistan, whenever we sang the national anthem, something special overwhelmed us," Tohura spoke with confidence as the overgregation admired in unison. A tiny little structure barely discernible in the crowd yet highly prolific with the ball at her feet, spoke of the instructions the team were passed on during the two months of training and the one week spent in Dushanbe.

"We worked hard two sessions a day for two months. And after those sessions, Sir [Coach Golam Rabbani Choton] would show us video footage on his laptop. He always said one thing, 'no matter how good a player you are, if you don't show discipline, you will be of no use'. So we remained very disciplined and we are happy to have won the title," the girl from the famed Kalshindur High School added.

While Tohura was the unmistakable star, all the 18 players and officials had their fair share of appreciation which they

richly deserved. Coach Choton, who has overseen this evolving side win back-to-back titles -- the recent one being more comprehensive considering the all-win record and bigger margin of victories -- said he was a bit sceptical in the beginning but eventually was vindicated for the effort that was put in.

"The tournament was held only five months after we won the first title in Nepal. We had to include 10 new players. So I was a bit sceptical about our chances. But we trained hard in BKSP over the last two months, in which time the girls were not allowed to communicate much with their families, so that we could prepare them mentally for the trip to Tajikistan. The hard work and dedication has eventually paid off," said Choton.

While the newly-elected BFF executive committee members were happy to toast the rare success, the federation's president Kazi Salahuddin aptly reminded everyone that the moment only belonged to the girls and the team officials, and that the imperative is to not let the success go in vain.

"This success is something we all are proud of. The focus should be on these girls because only they have the right to speak while we should all listen," Salahuddin said. "I would hope the women's football committee keeps coming up with new proposals and we would approve those proposals in our executive committee."

Mahfuz Akter Kiron, the deputy-chairman of the last women's football committee, said the good work at age-level needs to be carried forward since the target is to qualify for the Under-17 and Under-20 Women's World Cups.

Later, all the 26 players and officials were handed over crests and monetary awards, courtesy of the programme's sponsors Saif Power Tec Ltd, as the celebration of success was wrapped up amid fanfare.

# 4-star Sunday powers Abahani into final

SPORTS REPORTER



An outrageous quadruple from Kingsley Chizoba following a brace from Lee Tuck -- all in the space of 36 second-half minutes -- gave Abahani a thumping 6-0 victory over neighbours Sheikh Jamal Dhanmondi Club in the first semifinal of the KFC Independence Cup yesterday.

Chizoba, who had only two goals to his name before yesterday's match, took the baton from his English teammate early in the second half and raised the rafters at the Bangabandhu National Stadium with a display of power and skill as last edition's beaten semifinalists entered their first tournament final in five years. The four-time professional football league champions will face the winners of today's second semifinal between Sheikh Russel and Chittagong Abahani in the final on Saturday.

The first half of the match, staged 10 days after the end of the group stages, failed to kick into gear. But it burst into life two minutes after the restart thanks to a spot-kick awarded to Abahani after striker Camara Sarba was brought down inside the box by Sheikh Jamal defender Kesto Kumar Bose.

Tuck stepped up and sent Sheikh Jamal goalie Mazharul Islam the wrong way. And the Englishman found

the back of the net just three minutes later, this time with an exquisite finish after turning on his heel to sidestep a host of Sheikh Jamal defenders on a cleverly manipulated cross from Chizoba.

While Sheikh Jamal's terrific foreign trio, who had slalomed the side into the semifinal with an unbeaten record and played key roles in their AFC Cup victory over Tampines Rovers just a week earlier, failed to have any impact on the game Abahani's foreign recruits kept dominating the proceedings.

Tuck, having scored two goals in three minutes, paved the way for the Chizoba show to start on the hour mark by releasing a brilliant through-ball for the Nigerian, who raced into the box before placing the ball past Sheikh Jamal goalie. If that was a routine finish for a striker, Chizoba showed his prowess in scoring the fourth, beating Mazharul with a powerful strike from the edge of the box just four minutes later.

The Nigerian wrapped up his hat-trick in the 81st minutes with a point-blank header on a cross from Jewel Rana before completing the rout with an outrageous Eden Hazard-esque strike from 30 yards out. The four goals took Chizoba to the top of the goal-scorers' chart, alongside Eleta Kingsley of Team BMC while condemning Sheikh Jamal to their biggest defeat since their introduction to top-flight football.



Abahani striker Sunday Chizoba (C) scored four goals in his side's 6-0 blanking of Sheikh Jamal in their KFC Independence Cup semifinal at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

# Pant guides Delhi to thrash Gujarat

PTI, Rajkot

Young Rishabh Pant struck a brilliant half century as Delhi Daredevils thrashed table toppers Gujarat Lions by eight wickets in a lop-sided IPL match to jump to second spot on Tuesday.

18-year-old Pant, playing in only his third IPL match, stole the limelight as he hit a 40-ball 69 with the help of nine fours and two sixes as the Daredevils chased down the target of 150 with 16 balls to spare.

Uttarakhand boy Pant, who hit some exquisite shots including a six each off James Faulkner and Suresh Raina, stitched 115 runs for the opening wicket with Quinton de Kock (46) and that took the game away from the Lions who lost their second consecutive match and third in nine games.

With Tuesday's win, their fifth in seven matches, the Daredevils now have 10 points to occupy the second spot behind the Lions who have 12 points from nine matches.

The Daredevils made a flying start with de Kock and Pant finding the boundaries with ease.

## SCORES IN BRIEF

**GUJARAT LIONS:** 149 for 7 in 29 overs (Smith 15, Raina 24, Karthik 53, Jadeja 36 not out; Nadeem 2-23)

**DELHI DAREDEVILS:** 150 for 2 17.2 overs (De Kock 46, Pant 69, Samson 19 not out, Duminy 13 not out; Kaushik 1-29, Jadeja 1-21)

**Result:** Delhi Daredevils won by 8 wickets.

**Player-of-the-match:** Rishabh Pant.



The victorious Bangladesh U-14 girls' football team -- who defended their AFC U-14 Regional Championship title emphatically in Tajikistan on Saturday -- are given a hero's reception at the BFF House yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

# Fizz a revelation for BD and SRH: Murali

AGENCIES, Mumbai



Sri Lankan legendary off-spinner Muttiah Muralidaran who is currently the mentor and bowling coach of Sunrisers Hyderabad has praised Tigers' sensational pacer Mustafizur Rahman for his outstanding bowling performance throughout the lucrative IPL tournament.

The lanky pacer is playing for Sunrisers Hyderabad in this season and bagged eight wickets in seven matches with an amazing economy rate of 6.53.

In an interview with one of India's leading newspapers, Murali was asked about SRH's bowling attack in IPL 9 and said,

"Absolutely. We have the likes of Ashish Nehra, Mustafizur Rahman, Bhuvneshwar Kumar doing the job for us.

"I think we have been able to bowl at good areas in crunch situations which has helped us to do well in the competition so far and we hope to continue with this momentum and make the knockouts this season."

The legendary spinner was totally impressed with Tigers' ace pacer Mustafizur Rahman and said. "Mustafizur is one bowler who has shown immense potential to turn things around for SRH. He has been a revelation not only for Bangladesh but also for SRH this season. I feel if he is nurtured -- Mustafizur can certainly have a long career ahead of him."

# Kohli gets Khel Ratna nod

PTI, New Delhi

The Board of Control for Cricket in India has recommended Test captain Virat Kohli for the Rajiv Gandhi Khel Ratna, the country's highest sporting honour, and Ajinkya Rahane for the Arjuna award this year.

If Kohli wins, he would become only the third cricketer after the iconic Sachin Tendulkar and the country's most successful captain Mahendra Singh Dhoni to win India's highest sporting honour.

BCCI sources confirmed the development.