

# SPORT



Abahani players celebrate their massive 10-0 victory against Bangladesh Police in a Green Delta Insurance Premier Division Hockey League match at Maulana Bhasani Hockey Stadium yesterday.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

## YOUTH OLYMPICS QUALIFIERS Bangladesh beat S Korea

SPORTS REPORTER

After failing to secure a ticket for the Youth Olympic Games, the Bangladesh under-17 hockey team had to be content with a third-place finish in the Asian Youth Olympics Qualifiers with a 5-4 win over South Korea in Bangkok yesterday. Last edition's runners-up Bangladesh, who came into the place-deciding match after losing 2-9 against India in the semifinals, got off to a fine start and took a 3-0 lead in the first 10-minute session, with Abed Uddin, Sarwar Sawon and Mehdi Hasan scoring one goal apiece.

In the second session, Bangladesh strengthened their grip on the match by extending the margin to 4-0 with captain Shohanur Rahman Sabuj netting the fourth goal before Korea pulled one back in the penultimate minute of the second quarter.

Bangladesh however, had to face some challenges from the Koreans in the third and final session as Cheon Min and Choi Inhyeak struck one goal each in the 23rd and 24th minutes to make it 4-3.

Bangladesh came back strongly to make it 5-3 in the 27th minute before South Korea responded in the same minute, but Bangladesh held on to the lead to snatch victory.

Meanwhile, India beat Malaysia 2-1 in shootouts in the final after regulation time had yielded a ended in a 4-4 draw.

Both India and Malaysia qualified for the Youth Olympic Games to be held in October in Buenos Aires.

## SRH, KKR Victorious

AGENCIES, Mumbai

Shakib Al Hasan had an outing to forget for Sunrisers Hyderabad, but powered by an impressive team performance, they defeated the Rajasthan Royals by 11 runs to claim the top spot in the IPL yesterday night.

Hyderabad had posted 151 for seven after electing to bat, building around captain Kane Williamson's 63-run knock. Bangladesh's ace all-rounder Shakib scored just six runs off as many balls before giving away 30 runs from his four overs, but right-armers Sandeep Sharma's brilliant over, which yielded just 15 runs were the crux of Hyderabad's defense.

In the day's later match, opener Chris Lynn anchored his innings to perfection as Kolkata Knight Riders secured a comfortable six-wicket win against Royal Challengers Bangalore.

## Massive win for Sky Blues

SPORTS REPORTER



Club Cup champions Abahani got off to a flying start in the Green Delta Insurance Premier Division Hockey League with a massive 10-0 win over Bangladesh Police at the Maulana Bhasani Hockey Stadium yesterday.

The match, under floodlights, started one hour later than scheduled due to heavy rain. Once the game got underway, the Sky Blues hardly faced any challenge from promoted Bangladesh Police, whom they had handed a 7-1 defeat in the Club Cup opener.

Abahani toyed with their opposition on the blue turf and took a 6-0

lead in the first half before adding four more goals in the second half of the one-sided affair.

The Dhanmondi-based outfit took only five minutes to open the floodgates when Sarwar Hossain converted a penalty corner. Arshad Hossain and Krishna Kumar struck a brace each while Ashraf Islam scored one to give Abahani a 6-0 lead in the first half.

In the second half national midfielder Ruman Sarkar slotted a hattrick while Afsar Uddin wrote his name on the scoresheet to complete the rout.

In the day's other matches, Sonali Bank twice came from behind to post a hard-fought 3-2 win over Wari Club while Bangladesh Sporting Club and Sadharan Bima played out a 2-2 draw

at the same venue.

Wari stunned title aspirants Sonali Bank in the sixth minute when Ashiqur Rahman put them ahead and they held on till the 27th minute when Al Nahian Shuvo brought Sonali Bank back in the match with a field goal.

Wari restored the lead in the 49th minute through a strike from Samir Roy seven minutes before Prosenjit Roy equalised. But Irfanul Haque ensured a winning start for Sonali Bank by scoring in the 64th minute.

In another match, former national striker Iqbal Nadir Prince scored twice for Bangladesh SC while Abdullah Al Mansur and Faisal Hossain netted one goal apiece for Sadharan Bima.

## Abahani looking for a draw in Maldives

SPORTS REPORTER



Bangladesh Premier League champions Abahani will leave for the Maldives today for their AFC Cup match on Wednesday against New Radiant SC with the hope of securing a point against the Group E leaders.

The Sky Blues are in third position with four points from as many matches, five points less than JSW Bengaluru FC and New Radiant SC, who are however ahead of Bengaluru due to a superior goal difference. The first meeting between these two sides in Dhaka ended in a 1-0 win for the Maldivian champions.

Abahani, who wasted a good opportunity to stay in the race by being held to a 1-1 draw against Aizawl FC at home in their previous match, have a slim chance of becoming group champions if they post wins in their next two matches and New Radiant SC and Bengaluru FC suffer defeats in both their fixtures. Abahani will play their sixth and final group match against Bengaluru FC at home on May 16.

The Dhanmondi giants are likely to miss the services of goalkeeper Shahidul Alam Sohel and defender Nasir Chowdhury, who did not practice for the last four days due to ankle and knee injuries respectively.

"Our approach is to secure at least one point against them but we know it will be tough because New Radiant SC, who are also playing domestic league, have been in good form after beating Bengaluru FC in their previous match," Abahani coach Saiful Bari Titu said yesterday.

"New Radiant SC are ahead of Abahani in regards to local players. However, everything depends on how the players take the game mentally on the given day. If they continue to perform like they did against Aizawl, it is not possible to secure points. However, I am looking forward to the performances of foreign players like Sunday [Chizoba] and Emeka [Darlington]," said Titu, adding that they want to end the Maldives tour on a high note.

## Promoting from the shadows

MAZHAR UDDIN



While national and top-level cricketers are enjoying a much-needed break after the Bangladesh Cricket League, there is huge competition among the lower level players in the ongoing First Division Cricket League across the capital.

Rain however played foul yesterday and all the three matches -- Surjo Torun Club-Rapid Foundation, Kalindi Krira Chakra-Victoria Sporting Club and Rugganj Tigers-Axiom Cricketers -- were washed out.

With 14 points from seven games, Uttara Sporting Club are in top spot in Group A while Kakrail Boys Club lead Group B with 11 points from seven games.

The competition to get promoted to the Dhaka Premier League among the first division clubs is intense, but interestingly there are highly sought cricketers at the first division level who are meant to play only at this level and, unlike the teams they represent, do not worry about playing in the top tier. It is in fact part of their self-assigned purpose not to think about participating in the Dhaka Premier League (DPL).

Aslam Hossain, a wicketkeeper-batsman from Magura, has been

playing first division cricket for over eight years now and is known as a specialist at this level for his consistent performances. He is in high demand from clubs seeking promotion to the DPL and he is playing for Rugganj Tigers this year.

Aslam, who played for Bangladesh Under-19 alongside Liton Das and Anamul Haque in 2012, could not make it to the top level and has established himself in the first division league where he remains among the

amount of money each year from the first division, but if I want to play DPL for a season then I have to sacrifice as the clubs won't pay me as much as I am getting in the first division. Along with that it will be difficult to get the desired batting position in the DPL so there will be uncertainty if I am not able to perform in a season," Aslam told The Daily Star yesterday.

The right-hander also informed that it was difficult for him to sacri-



ASLAM HOSSAIN



MOSADDEK IFTEKHAR



ARIFUZZAMAN

highest paid players each season.

"I was part of the championship title for Partex Sporting Club a few years back and also played for Surjo Torun Club which was promoted to the Premier League. To be honest, I also dream of playing for the Premier League but there are a few concerns. The first one is the financial aspect. I am getting a sufficient

amount of money for his desire to play at the top level as he is the sole breadwinner in his family.

Mosaddek Iftekhar Rahi, Aslam's Rugganj teammate, is another prominent first division cricketer in high demand for his reputation as a consistent performer in the league.

Rahi is known as one of the few experienced cricketers in first divi-

## Shakib wants Mash in Tests: Mahmud

SPORTS REPORTER



Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) director Khaled Mahmud has become the latest in a chorus of voices calling for Mashrafe Bin Mortaza's return to Test cricket. However, the former Bangladesh captain's entreaty was a little different as he seemed to be speaking on behalf of the current Bangladesh Test captain Shakib Al Hasan, who is now playing in the Indian Premier League for Sunrisers Hyderabad.

"Shakib thinks that it will be good for the team if Mashrafe returns [to the Test team]," Mahmud told reporters yesterday about a conversation he had with Shakib before the all-rounder left for his IPL stint. "He thinks that Mashrafe can swing the new ball and that is a very rare and valuable thing in our country.

"Shakib is of the opinion that if Mashrafe can bowl 15-20 overs per innings, it will help the team," said Mahmud.

Mashrafe last played a Test in June 2009 on the tour of West Indies and has since been prevented from a serious run in the

longer formats by a series of knee injuries. Since late 2014 however, the 34-year-old has played the ODI and T20I formats -- until he retired from the latter in April 2017 -- relatively injury free and he played the last round of the four-day Bangladesh Cricket League for champions South Zone from April 24 to 26.

On the second day of that match he said in an interview that he wanted to come back to Test cricket and that he had the ability to play in the longer version for two more years. He however qualified that statement by saying that he needed some more time in the longer version to truly know whether he was fit enough to play Tests.

Mashrafe's international cricket is currently restricted to only one format -- he captains the ODI team. BCB president Nazmul Hassan asked him to come back to T20Is during a disastrous home series against Sri Lanka earlier this year, but Mashrafe seemed not to be interested. On Friday, the BCB boss said that if the physio and the player himself thought he was fit for Tests, the BCB would welcome him back. Bangladesh's next Test assignment is on the West Indies tour in July-August.



Bangladesh Test and T20I skipper Shakib Al Hasan (L) has reportedly said that he wants ODI skipper Mashrafe Bin Mortaza's (R) swing expertise back in the Test side. PHOTO: STAR FILE



Skipper Kane Williamson's 63 off 43 balls powered Sunrisers Hyderabad to an 11-run victory against Rajasthan Royals in an IPL match in Jaipur yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

## Maiden futsal stint for women

SPORTS REPORTER



In a quest to gather new experience, the Bangladesh women's football team will leave for Thailand today to take part in the AFC Women's Futsal Championship, to be held from May 2 to 12.

A total of 15 nations including Japan, China and Thailand, split into four groups, will play five-a-side indoor football matches with the top two teams from each group advancing to the quarterfinals.

Bangladesh have been pitted against Malaysia, Vietnam and Chinese Taipei in Group B and they will play their first match against Malaysia on May 2. The second match against Vietnam and the third match against Chinese Taipei are

scheduled to take place on May 3 and May 6 respectively.

"We have never played futsal at any level before. Playing such a type of football will be a new experience for the girls because it is a high intensity 40-minute game where only five players will play and there will be no limitation to substitutions," explained coach Golam Rabbani Choton at a press conference yesterday.

There are usually special futsal teams for each nation, but Bangladesh do not have any such squad and the game's governing body is sending players who are regularly representing the country at football's age-level tournaments and the national team.

Out of the 42 players who have been in training round the year, the BFF picked

14 players with international experience. The only senior player in the side is Sabina Khatun while there are other good age-group players such as Krishna Rani, Sirat Jahan Swapna, Masura Parvin, Sanjida Akter, Sheuli Azim, Maria Manda, Mariza and Akhi Khatun.

"We have been preparing for this tournament since April 7 and I believe the girls will give their best to produce good results. We don't want to earn experience only, we also want to let others know about the rise of Bangladesh women's football," said Choton.

Captain Sabina has experience of playing competitive futsal -- she played in the Maldives league -- but believes that playing a different format of football rather than the regular one is going to be tough for each of the players.