



With so much hype surrounding the quality of foreign stars in the Rangpur Riders dressing room, (From L-R) AB de Villiers, Alex Hales and Chris Gayle showed how dangerous they could be if they fire all at once as they scripted telling contributions during a steep chase against Khulna Titans in their BPL encounter in Mirpur yesterday. PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

## TALK ON

I have never been in such a situation so far while playing franchise cricket in my career and I can definitely learn from this. I hope that I will keep this experience in mind and look to do better in future. For me as well as my team it is definitely a tough time and people will say a lot of things over our performance. As we are no longer in the contention for the top four stage, our main aim will be to do better for ourselves and also play for the franchise.



MAHMUDULLAH RIYAD  
KHULNA TITANS CAPTAIN

**WHACK-O-METER**

TOTAL 6s HIT **301** | TOTAL 4s HIT **550**

Most 6s hit by a player: 18, Nicholas Pooran, Sylhet Sixers  
Most 4s hit by a player: 32, Rilee Rossouw, Rangpur Riders

# Star trio fire for Rangpur

SPORTS REPORTER



Nothing seems to be going right for Khulna Titans in the Bangladesh Premier League as Mahmudullah Riyad's side faced their seventh defeat in eight games, this time by six wickets against Rangpur Riders at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday. Khulna are now virtually out of contention for a playoff place while Mashrafe Bin Mortaza's Rangpur, with four wins in eight games, moved to the fourth position in the points table.

Despite posting a big total of 181 for six Khulna were completely undone by Rangpur's star-studded batting line up. Alex Hales, who struck a quickfire 50, was followed by AB de Villiers's 41. The triangle was completed by Chris Gayle, finally found some runs and guided Rangpur to the cusp of win with ease with a half-century.

### WIESE'S LATE SURGE AND FARHAD'S FOUR-FOR

It was yet another shaky start for Khulna after being sent in to bat as they were struggling on 29 for two after four overs. Nazmul Hossain Shanto was the top-scorer with 48 runs from 35 balls, which included three sixes

### SCORES IN BRIEF

**KHULNA TITANS v RANGPUR RIDERS**  
**KHULNA:** 181 for 6 in 20 overs (Nazmul 48, Wiese 35 not out, Taylor 32; Farhad 4-32, Mashrafe 1-17)  
**RANGPUR:** 183 for 4 in 19.3 overs (Hales 55, Gayle 55, de Villiers 41; Yasir 2-47, Mahmudullah 1-28)  
**Result:** Rangpur won by 6 wickets.  
**Player-of-the-match:** Farhad Reza.

and two fours. Khulna were approaching yet another modest total on 151 for five after 18 overs until David Wiese took charge. The right-hander went struck two sixes and three fours in the last two overs and added 30 runs to help post the challenging total. With the ball it was Rangpur's medium pacer Farhad Reza who bagged the wickets of Al Amin, Nazmul, Mahmudullah Riyad and Ariful Haque and ended up with four for 32 from four overs.

### HALES STORM AND GAYLE'S RESILIENCE

Chasing the big total, Rangpur made a flying start when English batsman Hales played the role of aggressor while Gayle was cautious at the other end. Hales opened up in the third over, striking pacer Subhansh Roy for four boundaries, and followed that with two sixes and a four off Junaid Khan in the

next over. The right-hander reached his fifty in just 26 balls while, astonishingly, 'Universe Boss' Gayle was batting on just four runs. The 78-run opening stand finally came to an end after Hales was dismissed for a 29-ball 55, which included eight fours and three sixes. South African star batsman de Villiers then continued the tempo during a 43-run second-wicket stand with Gayle, during which the left-hander's contribution was just two runs. De Villiers was eventually dismissed for 41 off 25 balls, which was studied with four sixes and three fours.

### RESPONSIBLE GAYLE

It was a disappointing start for West Indies six machine Gayle in the ongoing BPL, and the Jamaican was cautious at the start of the innings. Gayle was a mere spectator during his stands with Hales and de Villiers. After they left, however, he made sure that he guided his side past the winning line, opening up with three sixes off Mahmudullah in the 17th over to simplify the matter. Despite the slow start Gayle went on to register his first fifty of the edition off 34 balls. He was eventually dismissed in the 19th over for a 40-ball 55, having hit five sixes and two fours. But the damage had been done and, requiring just six off the last over, Rilee Rossouw ended the match with a maximum off the third ball.

# Chances for a select few

## Tigers' ODI squad for NZ to be named today

SPORTS REPORTER



The ongoing sixth edition of the Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) is a crucial one for a few cricketers currently out of favour with the national team selectors, who are set to announce Bangladesh's ODI squad today for the three-match series in New Zealand in February.

The likes of pacers Taskin Ahmed, Shafiqul Islam and batsman Sabbir Rahman would be hoping for a comeback to the national team through their performances in the BPL. Taskin played his last ODI back in 2017, after which he lost his place due to poor performances as well injury issues. The tall pacer has however been in good shape for Sylhet Sixers as the right-arm seamer bagged 14 wickets in seven games.

Shafiqul, who last played an ODI for Bangladesh in October 2016 against England, has been performing consistently for Rangpur Riders with 13 wickets from eight games. Sabbir is the odd one out as he did not lose his place in the national side because of poor performances, but due to a six-month ban from international cricket for threatening a fan on social media. His ban will end at the beginning of March, after which he will be eligible for selection.

"I think Taskin is doing well along with Shafiqul. But if you look overall, there are unlikely to be huge changes in the side. If they can continue performing, there are some spots, so if they do well there is a chance. But there is still a long way to go in the tournament," Bangladesh ODI skipper Mashrafe Bin Mortaza told reporters in Mirpur yesterday.

### THE SABBIR CONUNDRUM

In a more or less settled side, the number seven spot is still uncertain and the team management are supposedly eager to have the hard-hitting Sabbir back in the squad

in order to prepare him for the World Cup in England in the summer. His ban had started on September 1, which means he will be unavailable for national selection until March 1. Since the three ODIs against New Zealand will take place on February 13, 16 and 20, that would mean that if the terms of his ban are intact, he would not make the squad. However, there are rumours that the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) is mulling reducing Sabbir's ban so that he could play the New Zealand ODIs.

After missing out with the bat for Sylhet Sixers in the first five games, Sabbir

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MAHRAFE BIN MORTAZA  
BANGLADESH ODI CAPTAIN

finally managed to score 85 against Rangpur in the previous game. Mashrafe informed that it will be important for the hard-hitting batsman to continue his performance in the coming days.

"I won't say that he [Sabbir] has done exceptionally but he did play well against us in the last game. When he was included in the national team it was because of the ability he showed in the previous game. There are high hopes from him and I hope he will be able to continue that."

NAT'L SCHOOL CRICKET

# Raihan, Maidul down Ideal

SPORTS REPORTER

Edward School registered a whopping 95-run victory over Premier Ideal School courtesy of a 99-run third-wicket stand between Raihan and Maidul in a Prime Bank Young Tigers National School Cricket tournament match at the Gymnasium Ground in Mymensingh yesterday.

Electing to bat first, Edward got a good start as openers Rubaet and Arman strung together a 53-run partnership before the latter was dismissed on a patiently built innings of 14 runs off 40 deliveries. Rubaet followed soon after for 32 and the next batsmen in - Raihan and Maidul - made sure that their side posted a decent 250 for eight in 47 overs on the back of a solid partnership. Raihan hit 44 off 73 balls while Maidul scored a 56-ball 52 that featured eight fours and a six.

In chase of the challenging total, Ideal School suffered a batting collapse in the middle and lower orders, losing their last seven wickets for just 38 runs. Sabbir Ahmed top-scored for Ideal School with a 55-ball 40 while Edward School's Swajib was the pick of their bowlers, scalping four wickets for 24 runs.



Comilla Victorians' Thisara Perera put in an all-round performance with a quickfire 26 before scalping three wickets for 14 runs in a seven-run win over table-toppers Dhaka Dynamites in Mirpur yesterday. The match also witnessed a bit of history as Dhaka skipper Shakib Al Hasan became the first player to take 100 wickets in the BPL.

### SCORES IN BRIEF

**COMILLA VICTORIANS v DHAKA DYNAMITES**  
**COMILLA:** 153 for 8 in 20 overs (Shamsur 48, Tamim 34, Perera 26; Shakib 3-24, Rubel 2-26, Russell 2-27)  
**DHAKA:** 146 for 9 in 20 overs (Russell 46, Narine 20, Shakib 20; Perera 3-14, Afridi 2-18, Wahab 1-24)  
**Result:** Comilla won by 7 runs.  
**Player-of-the-match:** Thisara Perera.

# Battle for supremacy

## New Zealand-India first ODI today

AFP, Wellington



Virat Kohli and Ross Taylor will vie to prove they are the world's best one-day international batsman as India and New Zealand clash in the first of five ODIs in Napier Wednesday.

For both sides, the series is an opportunity to fine-tune planning ahead of the World Cup. But for Kohli and Taylor -- currently

ranked first and third in the world respectively -- it's a more personal battle, with both in electric form and looking to gain a psychological edge.

The McLean Park wicket promises to be a belter, with New Zealand's Tom Latham showing just how ripe the pitch is by smashing 110 off just 60 deliveries, including 10 fours and six sixes, in a domestic Twenty20 match last week.

"I think it's going to be a high-scoring affair," declared New Zealand coach David Stead Tuesday. Since the start of last year Taylor has

averaged a stunning 92 from 13 innings and became the first New Zealander to score 20 ODI hundreds.

However, his performance has been shaded by an even more phenomenal average of 113 in 17 innings by Kohli, who has 39 ODI hundreds to his name in total.

They go into this series with Taylor fresh from scoring 54, 90 and 137 in the 3-0 whitewash of Sri Lanka, while Kohli produced innings of three, 104 and 46 in the 2-1 series win against Australia.



Bangladesh ODI skipper Mashrafe Bin Mortaza, Mahmudullah Riyad and Tamim Iqbal share a joke amid the BPL excitement. (Inset) BCB president Nazmul Hassan shows Shakib Al Hasan a sheet, presumably the ODI squad for the New Zealand tour that will be named today. PHOTO: STAR