



**Prime Bank captain Anamul Haque (L) struck his third successive ton of the ongoing edition of the DPL and was almost apologetic for having helped inflict the season's first defeat on Abahani -- whose biggest star is the respected Mashrafe Bin Mortaza (R) -- in Fatullah yesterday. (Inset from L-R) At the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium, Legends of Rugganj's Mehedi Maruf and wicketkeeper Jaker Ali each hit unbeaten tons in an eight-wicket win over Gazi Group Cricketers.**

PHOTO: STAR/ COLLECTED

## Anamul's 3rd in a row and a last-ball six

SPORTS REPORTER

Prime Bank Cricket Club captain Anamul Haque completed a hatrick of centuries in the Dhaka Premier League to set up a 16-run win over Abahani Limited, the defending champions' first defeat of the season, at the Khan Shaheb Osman Ali Stadium in Fatullah yesterday.

Meanwhile, the last team that bore the brunt of Anamul's purple patch, Sheikh Jamal Dhanmondi Club, won a last-ball thriller by two wickets against Mohammedan Sporting Club at the BKSP, with Enamul Haque striking a six off the last ball when five were needed to win. The day's other match between Legends of Rugganj and Gazi Group Cricketers was not as exciting, with the former acing what could have been a tricky chase -- thanks to opener Mehedi Maruf's unbeaten run-a-ball 137 and Jaker Ali's 107 not out -- at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur by eight wickets with 27 balls remaining.

It was Anamul's magnificent 128-ball 102 alongside Abhimanyu Easwaran's 85 runs from 96 balls, followed by all-rounder Ariful Haque's quickfire unbeaten 27-ball 51 that helped Prime Bank post a an above-par 302 for five. Anamul -- unaware that his achievement of scoring three successive tons in DPL was last matched by Mohammad Ashraf in the previous edition -- said he felt very good after having helped his team.

"There was a time when I used to think the game is all about hitting sixes and fours. But as I gained experience I realised that the game is also about singles. So I tried to improve in that regard," said Anamul, who scored only 32 runs from boundaries (five fours and two sixes).

In chase of 303, despite valiant efforts from Wasim Jaffer (94 off 91), Najmul Hossain (73 off 82) and skipper Mosaddek Hossain (52 off 47), the star-studded Abahani -- without all-rounder Mohammad Saifuddin, who is yet to feature after his back injury -- could not avoid their first defeat of the tournament, managing 286 all out in 48.5 overs.

At BKSP, Mohammedan posted a challenging 240 all out in 49.1 overs riding on opener Abdul Mazid's 52 and Chaturanga De Silva's 49. However, after opener Intiaz Hossain's 102-ball 74, Sheikh Jamal could thank Enamul Haque (28 off 17) for holding his nerve and hitting Alauddin Babu for a maximum to seal the game.

In the other game, Rugganj restricted Gazi Group to 250 for nine before picking up an easy victory, with Mehedi and Jaker both scoring unbeaten centuries to help chase the total in 45.3 overs.

### SCORES IN BRIEF

**PRIME BANK V ABAHANI**  
Prime Bank: 302 for five in 50 overs (Anamul 102, Easwaran 85, Ariful 51; Nazmul 1-50)  
Abahani: 286 all out in 48.5 overs (Wasim 94, Najmul 73, Mosaddek 52; Nahidul 3-56)  
**Result:** Prime Bank won by 16 runs.

**MOHAMMEDAN V SHEIKH JAMAL**  
Mohammedan: 240 all out in 49.1 overs (Mazid 52, Silva 49, Ashraf 44; Gunaratne 2-52)

**Sheikh Jamal:** 242 for eight in 50 overs (Intiaz 74, Tanbir 39, Nurul 32; Gazi 3-43)  
**Result:** Sheikh Jamal won by 2 wickets.

**GAZI GROUP V RUGGANJ**  
Gazi Group: 250 for nine in 50 overs (Rasool 86, Imrul 48; Muktar 2-54)  
Rugganj: 253 for two in 45.3 overs (Mehedi 137 not out, Jaker 107; Ruyel 1-46)  
**Result:** Rugganj won by 8 wickets.

## 'Hope Tigers feel safe to return'

SPORTS REPORTER

New Zealand's sports minister Grant Robertson hoped that Bangladesh's cricketers will feel safe to return to New Zealand after the team narrowly survived a mosque shooting on March 15 in Christchurch.

"During an award ceremony evening organised by New Zealand Cricket, the sports minister informed that he had written to the Zahid Ahsan Russel, the youth and sports minister of Bangladesh, expressing relief at the cricketers' safe return.

The Bangladesh team are scheduled to visit New Zealand again for a T20 series in 2020.

"Violence and hatred shown by one individual must not be allowed to destroy the friendship and respect that the New Zealand and Bangladesh cricket teams and our nations have long shared," he was quoted as saying by Stuff.co.nz. Hope that in time the players and supporters will feel safe enough to return and I know that they will be welcomed with open arms."

Kiwi captain Kane Williamson reiterated that cricket had become insignificant following the events of last Friday, when 50 people were killed.

"There was an opposition team we'd spent time with on the park who have pretty much witnessed what went on and felt threatened in a place you want anybody to feel comfortable."

## Finch ton puts Aus 1-0 up

AFP, Sharjah



Aaron Finch's fine century drove Australia to a convincing eight-wicket win over a new-look Pakistan in the first one-day international on Friday.

The Australian skipper scored 116 off 135 balls for his 12th one-day international century that helped his team overhaul the 281-run target in 49 overs on a flat Sharjah stadium pitch.

The win gives Australia the lead in the five-match series and has come on the back of their 3-2 series win in India earlier this month.

Finch's match-winning knock overshadowed Haris Sohail's maiden one-day hundred which helped Pakistan to 280-5 in their 50 overs. The 32-year-old smashed Shoab Malik for a huge six towards deep mid-wicket to complete his century off 120 balls.

Finch, who knocked four sixes and

eight boundaries, added an innings-building 172 runs for the second wicket with Shaun Marsh, who scored an unbeaten 91 off 102 balls with four boundaries and two sixes. With 46 needed Finch became debutant



Mohammad Abbas's maiden wicket but Peter Handscomb hit 30 not out to help Marsh cross the line.

Finch and Marsh came together after opener Usman Khawaja fell for 24 to medium pacer Faheem Ashraf.

Pakistan rested six of their key players including regular skipper Sarfraz Ahmed in order to keep them fresh for the World Cup starting in UK from May 30. Left-hander Sohail anchored Pakistan's innings, adding 98 for the third wicket with Umar Akmal who made a 50-ball 48 in his first international match for two years. Sohail took a single to complete his hundred in the last over, finishing with six boundaries and a six.

### SCORES IN BRIEF

**PAKISTAN:** 280 for 5 in 50 overs (Sohail 101 not out, Akmal 48, Masood 40; Coulter-Nile 2-61, Lyon 1-38)  
**AUSTRALIA:** 281 for 2 in 49 overs (Finch 116, Marsh 91 not out, Stoinis 30 not out; Abbas 1-44)  
**Result:** Australia won by 8 wickets  
Player-of-the-match: Aaron Finch

## An academic lesson from our neighbours

SPORTS REPORTER from Nepal

Nepal football has not reached a level where they can be considered a force to be reckoned with at the international level, but going by recent statistics the Himalayan nation has certainly surpassed Bangladesh football and the All Nepal Football Associations (ANFA) academy has played a great role behind that upturn.

Although grooming footballers at academies of clubs is a staple of European football, that practice is all but absent in the sub-continent. As a result, a few national football associations in South Asia have taken the initiative to establish their own academies to take on the responsibility of grooming footballers.

South Asian giants India, fast-improving Nepal and Bhutan all have their own academies -- being run either through financial assistance from FIFA or their own funds -- but Bangladesh are lagging far behind. Although an academy was opened in Sylhet in 2015 with funding from FIFA, it functioned for only nine months. For the past four months the game's local governing body has repeatedly said they will start an academy, but that too seems to be in limbo.

Meanwhile, the Nepal football team now comprises of mostly academy-grown players and ANFA, who opened their academy in 2000, has taken the bold step of expanding the activities of its academy to different regions as well as to the grassroots level with boys aged 8-13.

"Apart from the ANFA academy in Kathmandu, we have established some technical centres in different regions, with each having accommodation facilities for 30 players. We are spending more than 50 lakh Nepalese rupees per year behind each of the centres with the help of FIFA, AFC and the government," said ANFA spokesman Kiran



PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

**A few of the academy students enjoying their time watching a football match at the ANFA Academy ground in Kathmandu.**

Roy, adding that they were also going to start an academy for girls.

"Two groups of footballers -- U-14 and U-16 -- train at the ANFA Academy round the year while other age-group teams come here to train for two to three months before any international tournament," said ANFA U-18 head coach Narayan Shrestha -- who once played football in Dhaka -- at the premises of academy at Lalitpur in Kathmandu.

Suman Shrestha, who is assistant coach of the Nepal U-23 team, informed that at least two coaches of ANFA work at its 45 affiliated districts and scout promising players for regional training centres before talented footballers finally make their way to the ANFA academy.

"Three tournaments are being held for the U-14s each year aside from the school football tournament, so it is not a tough task for the coaches to unearth real talents," said AFC A-licensed coach Suman, adding that Nepal has adopted a new

concept of hunting talents from the grassroots level, which ANFA defines as boys between the ages of 8 and 13.

"Nepal is stuck to a certain level although the footballers have been performing well at the regional level. We think they have problems with their basics and technique, so there is no alternative but to train them from the grassroots level," said Suman, also coach of Nepal's top club Manang Marshyangdi.

"We couldn't use [a certain] coaching philosophy at any level of competition, so we couldn't go further. The country's top coaches are trying to establish a style of play," Suman said, adding that they now have 31 AFC A-licensed coaches and 77 AFC B-licensed coaches.

While Nepal are attempting to introduce a footballing philosophy across all their teams with the aim of bringing international successes in the future, Bangladesh are still undecided about whether to start an academy.

## India make it 5 out of 5

### Beat high-flying Nepal 3-1 in final

SPORTS REPORTER from Nepal



India continued their supremacy in the South Asian region winning the title of the SAFF Women's Championship with a comfortable 3-1 win over hosts Nepal in the final at the Sahid Rangala in Biratnagar yesterday.

The fifth title in five editions shows how far India are ahead of the others in the region. The win extended India's unbeaten streak in the competition to 23 matches as they have won 22 of those matches, drawing only once.

This time, hosts Nepal dreamt of winning the maiden title following some good performances in recent times. The Nepalese women had in fact beaten India 1-0 in a four-nation tournament last month, but the youthful India proved that

defeat was an anomaly by beating the hosts comfortably in front of a full-house crowd in Biratnagar.

Dalima Chhibber, who was adjudged the best player of the tournament, gave India the lead in the 26th minute with a 25-yard free-kick which sailed over the head of the opposition goalkeeper. The Nepalese, who had brushed aside Bangladesh 3-0 in semifinals, hit back seven minutes later, courtesy of a clever header from star striker Sabitra Bhandari.

But Grace Dangmei, availing a defence-splitting through-pass from Sandhiya Ranganathan, darted into the box to place home in the 63rd minute as India regained the lead. Anju Tamang wrapped up victory, firing home Jabamani Tudu header in the 78th minute.



**The India team celebrate with the SAFF Women's Championship trophy after defeating hosts Nepal 3-1 in the final at the Sahid Rangala in Biratnagar yesterday.**

PHOTO: AIFF TWITTER

## ASIAN ZONAL CHESS Razib, Shirin close to titles

SPORTS REPORTER

Grandmaster Enamul Hossain Razib moved a step closer to winning the title of the open section of Asian Zonal Chess Championships following his win over IM Minhazuddin Ahmed Sagor in the penultimate round at the Engineers' Institute in Dhaka yesterday.

The win took Razib to 6.5 points as he leads GM Reefat Bin Sattar and FIDE Master Fahad Rahman by 0.5 points going into today's final round. Fahad beat last edition's champion GM Abdullah Al Rakib while Reefat beat country's highest-rated GM Ziaur Rahman to stay within contention of the title.

Razib will square off against Reefat while Fahad will play against FM Mehedi Hasan Parag in the final round today.

In the women's section, WFM Sharmin Sultana Shirin was leading solely with 6.5 points following her victory over WCM Noshin. WFM Syeda Shabana Parveen, who beat Jannatul, was in second position with six points.

Shirin will play against last edition's champion WIM Rani Hamid while Shabana will take on Sri Lankan WIM SD Ranasinghe in the final round today.

The winner in open section will qualify for this year's World Cup while the winner in women section will play in Women's World Championship next year.