



**Bangladesh forward Maraz Hossain celebrates scoring the third goal for the side in their 4-0 thrashing of Bhutan in the semifinal of the ongoing SAFF U-18 Championship at the Armed Police Force ground in Kathmandu, Nepal yesterday.**

PHOTO: BFF

## U-18s shoot to final with 4-0 win

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh stormed into the final of the SAFF U-18 Championship with a comprehensive 4-0 win over Bhutan in the first semifinal at Armed Police Force ground in Kathmandu, Nepal yesterday.

The boys in red and green will play tomorrow's final against India, who thrashed Maldives by an identical 4-0 margin in the second semifinal.

Last edition's runners-up Bangladesh put in a commanding performance against their Bhutanese counterparts, who have never beaten Bangladesh at age-group level, although the Himalayan nation did impress through crisp passing and quick movement in the attacking third on their path to the semifinals.

With Bhutan's playing style in mind, coach Andrew Peter Turner deployed a counter-attacking strategy, keeping the backline solid on

the heavy pitch. The game plan worked well in the first half as the result was virtually beyond doubt when the boys in red and green netted three in the first 32 minutes.

Defender Tanbir Hossain gave Bangladesh the lead in the 16th minute by heading a long throw-in home from inside the danger zone. The lead was doubled in the 27th minute when Faisal Ahmed Fahim, availing a Fahim Morshed forward pass, darted into the box to drive a low left-footer to the near post past goalkeeper Tenzin Dorji.

Maraz Hossain made it 3-0 with a solo effort as the midfielder, capitalising on a fumble by a Bhutanese player in the centre area, ran through the midfield to unleash a powerful left-footer from 25 yards into the back of the Bhutanese net.

Bhutan tried to come back in the second half but were not able to break the Bangladesh backline as they completed their third straight match with a clean sheet. Substitute Dipok Roy then put the cherry on top with a left-footer

from outside the danger zone in stoppage time.

"The boys played well and finished well, though Bhutan were a very good side. We were disciplined, we were great in attack and counter-attack and scored four great goals. We are now looking forward to the final, which could be a very tough game," said Turner after the match.

"We knew Bhutan play with small passes and with good combinations and the coach made a proper game plan to make it to the final on a wet ground. The plan was to go on counter-attack when they came forward with crisp passing and the boys executed the plan well and scored three goals in the first half," said manager Amer Khan.

"We followed the instructions of the coach and implemented the game plan well. The backline played really well and kept the sheet clean for the third consecutive match. We are now hoping to repeat this performance in the final to win the championship," said captain Yeasin Arafat.

## 'Lokman never told me about the casino'

SPORTS REPORTER



Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) President Nazmul Hassan said that while the board was not embarrassed, he was not willing to comment on the Rapid Action Battalion arresting Lokman Hossain Bhuiyan -- a BCB director and also Mohammedan Sporting Club director-in-charge -- at his residence on Wednesday night with four bottles of liquor.

Rab-2 Commanding Officer Lt Col Ashique Billah on Thursday told reporters that Lokman deposited around Tk 41 crore in two banks in Australia while the National Board of Revenue asked all banks to freeze the bank accounts of Lokman and his wife.

The BCB boss added that there whoever breaks the law will have to face the consequences and that the board will take appropriate decisions if Lokman is found guilty.

"There are no steps for us to take at the moment and the board will definitely take decisions after it is proved. But it's too early to say anything. Look, there is nothing to be embarrassed about as the basic thing that I know is that if someone has committed any wrongdoing, he will have to face the punishment and there shouldn't be any disagreement on that matter. As far as I know, there is no

way you can't admit that the steps from the Prime Minister [Sheikh Hasina] is praiseworthy as only she and no one else has the courage to take such steps.

One other board director, BCB vice-president Mahbul Anam, was also asked to submit his wealth statement by the Anti-Corruption Unit.

"There are also examples where the Anti-Corruption Unit can ask for anyone's wealth statement, which is a normal process. It does not mean that the person is a culprit before it [guilt] is proved. If there is any evidence of him [Lokman] being involved in renting the club to a casino, he will get the punishment," Hassan told reporters yesterday.

Hassan, who claimed that Lokman is a friend, was surprised to know that there was a casino in Mohammedan club premises and informed that he was totally unaware of the matter.

"The truth is Lokman the person I know has never had alcohol in his entire life and has never gambled and this is also true that he has rented the club out to a casino. So, there is nothing to deny.

"To be honest, I have no idea when card games turned into a casino. Lokman has never told me that there is a casino in the club, which is surprising. He is actually my friend but even I didn't know it, he never told me. Let's see now... everything will come to the fore," he said.



**A file photo shows BCB president Nazmul Hassan (L) and BCB director and Mohammedan director-in-charge Lokman Hossain Bhuiyan.**

PHOTO: COLLECTED

## Not long before we perform like we used to: Shakib

STAR SPORT DESK

Speaking at a UNICEF ceremony in New York on Thursday, ace Bangladesh all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan said that the Tigers are going through a transition period and would soon revive their flagging fortunes in order to live up to expectations.

The Bangladesh Test and T20I skipper was speaking in his capacity as UNICEF Bangladesh Goodwill Ambassador in a ceremony where Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina received an award titled 'Champion of Skill Development for Youth' for Bangladesh's success in youth skill development.

Shakib at first spoke of how the nation placed youth at the centre of its policies, and how the premier had done excellent work to further the cause. The Prime Minister then urged him to say a few words on cricket.

Bangladesh have not had the best of times on the field of play of late,



finishing eighth in the recent World Cup and then losing an ODI series in Sri Lanka 3-0. The woes continued at home as they lost the one-off Test against newcomers Afghanistan in Chattogram, before losing to the same opponents in their first league-stage match of the T20I tri-series. The Tigers then turned things around by beating Afghanistan in their second match and went on to share the trophy after the final was washed out in Mirpur last Tuesday.

Shakib believed that the Tigers could bounce back from the string of undesirable results.

"We believe we are a good team. Every team goes through a transition period and currently we are in that position," he said.

The Tigers had sporadic success in the last few years with the high point being their win in the tri-nation series in Ireland before the 2019 World Cup. They are still a struggling side in Tests, although memories of home Test wins against the likes of England, Australia and West Indies can give them a boost with their Test Championship campaign to begin in India in November.

"It won't take long before we can start to perform like we did before."

The 2020 World Twenty20 in Australia is firmly in Bangladesh's focus and while it is a format that the team has generally struggled in, Shakib was of the opinion that his team was capable enough to battle it out and achieve objectives.

"We have two World Cups [2023 World Cup in India being the other] in front of us, starting with the T20 World Cup. I firmly believe that we will make our country proud there."

## Domingo appalled by fitness levels: Hassan

SPORTS REPORTER

According to Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) president Nazmul Hassan, Bangladesh head coach Russell Domingo is not impressed by the fitness levels of the national players.

"Now the main problem that we have noticed in the national team is that of players' fitness. The fitness of the players are very poor. The coach asked 'what sort of fitness is this? I

have never seen such [poor] fitness of players at the international level and also back in South Africa," Hassan told reporters yesterday.

The BCB has recently taken a decision that the players need to score at least 11 in the beep test in order to be considered for the upcoming National Cricket League, scheduled to start from next month. Nazmul said that this decision was taken for the betterment of the fitness levels of players in the national side.

"We cannot suddenly increase

the fitness level requirements. We cannot reach the mark of 13 points [in the beep test] or even go above that. So there has been a decision regarding this that if we keep the fitness acceptance levels so low in the domestic or lower tier competitions from where the players get into the national side, then naturally the players in the national side will only score nine or 10 in the beep test. Now let's see. We have taken the decision after considering everything. I think we have to improve the fitness."

### SHORT CORNER

#### Klusener appointed as Afghan head coach

Lance Klusener, the former South Africa all-rounder, has been appointed as Afghanistan's new head coach on Friday. The Afghanistan Cricket Board had invited applications for the post after the completion of former head coach Phil Simmons's tenure.

From over 50 applicants, Klusener, who is a Level 4 certified coach, was picked. His first assignment will be Afghanistan's series against West Indies in November.

-- Agencies

#### Another Slinga Malinga!

Lasith Malinga has been one of the greatest fast bowlers in the history of cricket. He has been instrumental in Sri Lankan cricket's resurgence in limited-overs cricket recently while being an integral part of their rise in the early 2010s. His ability to bowl deadly yorkers and lethal slower deliveries has made him a legend in T20 cricket.

However, it looks like Sri Lankan cricket has unearthed another Malinga in the form of Matheesha Pathirana. The 17-year-old pacer has an identical slinging action and is also lethal with his yorkers. A video of his deadly spell for Trinity College has been going viral on social media where it can be seen that Pathirana is proving a tough nut to crack for the opposing batsmen.

In his debut match for Trinity College itself, the young Sri Lankan pacer rattled the opposition while picking up six wickets for seven runs.

-- Agencies

#### Karachi's first ODI in 10 years rained off

The opening day-night international between Pakistan and Sri Lanka was washed out without a ball being bowled due to heavy rain on Friday, depriving Karachi of hosting its first ODI in 10 years.

Umpires called off the match as there were pools of water around the outfield with the pitch and adjoining area covered.

The remaining two ODIs will be played in Karachi on Sunday and Wednesday.

-- Afp

## Young Tigers start with big win

SPORTS REPORTER

Opener Tanzid Hasan's magnificent century helped Bangladesh Under-19 start their New Zealand tour with a clinical 146-run victory (via DLS method) against Canterbury Invitational XI in their only warm-up match at the Bert Sutcliffe Oval in Lincoln yesterday, ahead of their five-match one-day series against New Zealand Under-19s set to start from tomorrow.

The young Tigers posted a mammoth 388-run total in 50 overs. However, the hosts' chase was reduced to a target of 344 from 45 overs because of rainfall, and Canterbury Invitation XI could only manage 197 for seven.

Electing to bat, the young Tigers got off to a flying start as Tanzid smashed a quick fire 73-ball 102, featuring 13 fours and two maximums. His knock was supported by fifties from Towhid Hridoy and Shahadat Hossain as Bangladesh posted the mammoth total.

After the exchange, a team high of an unbeaten 58-ball 48 came from T Dunlop as the home side managed a paltry 197. For Bangladesh, Shoriful Islam was the pick of the bowlers, returning economical figures of two for 20 in 8.2 overs.

## Damp end to U-23s' damp tour

SPORTS REPORTER

The last match of the five-match one-day series between Bangladesh Under-23 and their Indian counterparts was abandoned without a ball bowled due to heavy rain at the Ekana Cricket Stadium in Lucknow yesterday.

Having already lost the series 3-1 to India, the visitors could only have hoped for a consolation win to end their tour on a bright note. Bangladesh's top order failed miserably in the series.

All the top three players in the leading run scorer's list are from India while skipper Saif Hassan remained the highest scorer for Bangladesh, having scored a total of 110 runs in the four matches.



**Sri Lanka skipper Lahiru Thirimanne looks towards the field, perhaps waiting for the covers to come off at the National Cricket Stadium in Karachi yesterday. However, the covers did stay on as rain washed out the opening match between Sri Lanka and Pakistan without a ball being bowled.**

PHOTO: AFP