



## Lankan Lions arrive at Tigers' den today

SPORTS REPORTER

Sri Lanka cricket team are expected to land in Dhaka's Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport from Colombo around midday today.

The Lankans are set to play two Tests against Bangladesh, with the Test series being part of the 2021 2023 ICC World Test Championship. The first Test is scheduled for May 15 in Chittagong, after which the two teams head to Dhaka for the second and final Test, beginning on May 23.

The Lions have won all of their previous four Test series over the Tigers in Bangladesh. Since Sri

BCB XI FOR TWO-DAY PRACTICE MATCH

Mohammad Mithun (Captain), Shadman Islam, Anamul Haque, Shahadat Hossain, Zakir Hasan, Saif Hassan, Mosaddek Hossain, Rishad Hossain, Md Enamul Haque, Mushfique Hassan, Ripon Mondol, Mukidul Islam Mugdho, Amite Hassan and Abu Jayed Rahi.

FIXTURES

May 10-11: Two-day practice match, BKSP  
May 15-19: 1st Test, Chattogram.  
May 23-27: 2nd Test, Mirpur.

## ‘There is a growing belief in our pace-bowling department’

**Fast bowler Khaled Ahmed has managed to pull off a staggering comeback despite being out of action for seven long months through an injury, which even forced him to go under the knife. And quite suddenly, the 29-year-old is now considered as a vital component in the Bangladesh pace battery and is expected to play a crucial role in the upcoming two-match Test series against Sri Lanka at home. The cricketer from Sylhet, who idolises English pacer Stuart Broad, spoke to The Daily Star's Mazhar Uddin and gave an insight into his game, and more, during an exclusive interview, the excerpts of which are as follows:**

**The Daily Star (DS): You did reasonably well in the Test series in South Africa, picking up eight wickets in two Tests. Khaled Ahmed (KA):** To be honest, I don't think I did that well as I wasn't satisfied with my performance. I've the sort of mentality where I'll be satisfied only if I am able to contribute significantly behind my team's victory; much like Ebadot [Hossain] did in New Zealand. Unfortunately, we lost both the Tests in South Africa, which was disappointing for me as a player.

**DS: What areas have worked for you in South Africa?**

**KA:** I've spoken with many big bowlers and coaches around the world and also had a good chat with [Khaled Mahmud] Sujon sir and all of them told me that I need to be more passionate and patient as a bowler.

Apart from bowling at a specific

area to put pressure on the batters and create chances, I also tried to bowl with a scrambled, wobbly seam. If you had noticed, James Anderson, Pat Cummins and Ben Stokes bowl this with a lot of authority.

When the ball gets old, it's hard to get the movement off the seam. Shaun Pollock told me that batters were finding it difficult to tackle me because I was bowling with a wobbly seam. I realised that they had studied all my moves and deliveries through videos but still, it was hard for the batters to read that one as it creates doubt in batters' mind.

I have been attempting this particular

delivery after the Pakistan series last year. Allan Donald also said my bowling action is unique and hard for the batters to read.

**DS: How important is it to have a good bowling partnership?**

**KA:** During the first Test in South Africa, we spoke among ourselves, where I told Ebadot and Taskin [Ahmed] that if we can bowl well in tandem, it'll lead us in grabbing wickets. We focused on containing runs from both ends and it was putting pressure on batters.

At times, I may not pick a wicket but Taskin or Ebadot may scalp wickets from the other end because of the

pressure created from both ends. So ultimately, it's teamwork, something we are enjoying thoroughly.

**DS: As a fast bowler, what challenges will the upcoming Sri Lanka series present, keeping the home conditions in mind?**

**KA:** The main challenge for any fast bowler is to consistently hit a specific area. Otherwise, it becomes difficult for any captain, irrespective of the conditions at play. Another important thing is, even if we are unable to take wickets, we still need to remain passionate and contain runs, and that would assist the spinners to strike.

You probably have noticed, there is a growing belief in our pace-bowling department. So, if we can continue the trend, the perception towards fast bowlers in Bangladesh will definitely transform in the coming days.



Lanka and Bangladesh first met in the longest format in 2001, it has been a one-way traffic, with Bangladesh winning only one and losing 17 of their 22 meetings in total.

In the build-up to this series, Mominul Haque-led Tigers had toured South Africa to lose both Tests against the hosts. Meanwhile, Dimuth Karunaratne's Sri Lanka also lost their two-Test series against India in March and are yet to win a game in the red-ball format this year.

Currently placed fifth on the World Test Championship standings, Sri Lanka have won and drawn two Tests so far since 2021. During the same period, Bangladesh have won just one Test, beating New Zealand on their soil in January. The Tigers find themselves in eighth position and currently ahead of England.

Starting from May 10, Karunaratne and Co will warm up with a two-day practice match at BKSP against a BCB XI side featuring wicket-keeper-batter Anamul Haque, who got called into the squad following his phenomenal batting blast in the just-concluded Dhaka Premier League after the opener became the first player to reach the 1000-run landmark in the history of List A cricket.

Sri Lanka possess a perfect record against Bangladesh across the first 12 Test meetings, winning every single encounter between September 2001 and March 2013. However, Bangladesh have gradually improved their record against the Lankans ever since, with the Tigers having secured their first win in 2017 and also managed to draw four times in 10 meetings.

Sri Lanka's newly-appointed head coach Chris Silverwood wants his batters to score freely and his fast bowlers to breathe fire early in their spells.

"I want the Sri Lankan flair, I want the boys to express themselves," said Silverwood.

## Kings survive Abdullah scare

**SPORTS REPORTER**

Muktijoddha Sangsad's new Burundian recruit Sudi Abdullah twice gave his side the lead against Bashundhara Kings in their Bangladesh Premier League fixture at the Birshreshtha Flight Lt. Matiur Rahman Stadium in Munshiganj yesterday, but the defending champions found a way to fight back and eventually won the battle 3-2.

The Burundian centre-forward, who was roped in in the midseason transfer window by the struggling All Reds, scored the opener in the 16th minute, beating Anisur Rahman Zico with a header as the Kings keeper had ventured out of the box to clear a long ball from the midfield.

Muktijoddha, who are a point off the bottom of the table but had given title-chaser Abahani and Sheikh Jamal Dhanmondi Club a run for their money in the first two games of the second phase, took the one-goal lead into the break.

The league leaders, though, fought back three minutes after restart, with Robson Robinho placing the ball

home from close range.

But Abdullah showed his pace, guile and composure again as he raced into the box and beat Zico on the hour-mark to restore Muktijoddha's lead.

Sensing a shock defeat, Kings coach Oscar Bruzon made a string of substitutions and that paid off as Eleta Kingsley got his side back into the game with a clever left-footed finish in the 72nd minute before another substitute Sumon Reza took advantage of some slack defending from the opposition with an expert right-footed diagonal shot into the corner of the net eight minutes later.

The win took Bashundhara Kings to 35 points from 14 games, still four points clear of second-placed Abahani, who beat Rahmatganj MFS 2-1 at the Sylhet District Stadium.

Mehedi Hasan Royal gave Abahani 14th-minute lead with a long-range effort before Jewel Rana, who scored two goals in Abahani's previous match, doubled the lead eight minutes later with a placing shot. Abahani's Brazilian forward Raphael Augusto set up both goals for the Bangladeshi

forwards.

Mezbahuddin scored a consolation goal in stoppage time for Rahmatganj, who remained in ninth position with 10 points.

While Bashundhara Kings and Abahani both won their matches, title-chasers Sheikh Jamal Dhanmondi Club lost ground with a 1-0 defeat away to Bangladesh Police at the Rajshahi District Stadium – the first defeat of the campaign for the former champions.

MS Bablu scored the only goal of the game in the 62nd minute – a placing shot past the Sheikh Jamal goalkeeper – lifting Police to 19 points in seventh position while Sheikh Jamal remained in third position with 27 points.

The other gainers of the day are Saif Sporting Club, who earned a 1-0 win against Sheikh Russel KC at the Bashundhara Kings arena.

Current captain Riyadul Hasan Rafi headed in former captain Jamal Bhuiyan's cross in the 61st minute as Saif consolidated fourth position with 24 points, with Sheikh Russel a further 10 points behind in eighth position.



Saif Sporting and Sheikh Russel players jostle for aerial possession during their Bangladesh Premier League fixture at the Bashundhara Kings Arena yesterday. Riyadul Hasan Rafi scored the only goal of the game as Saif Sporting registered a much-needed victory.

PHOTO: STAR