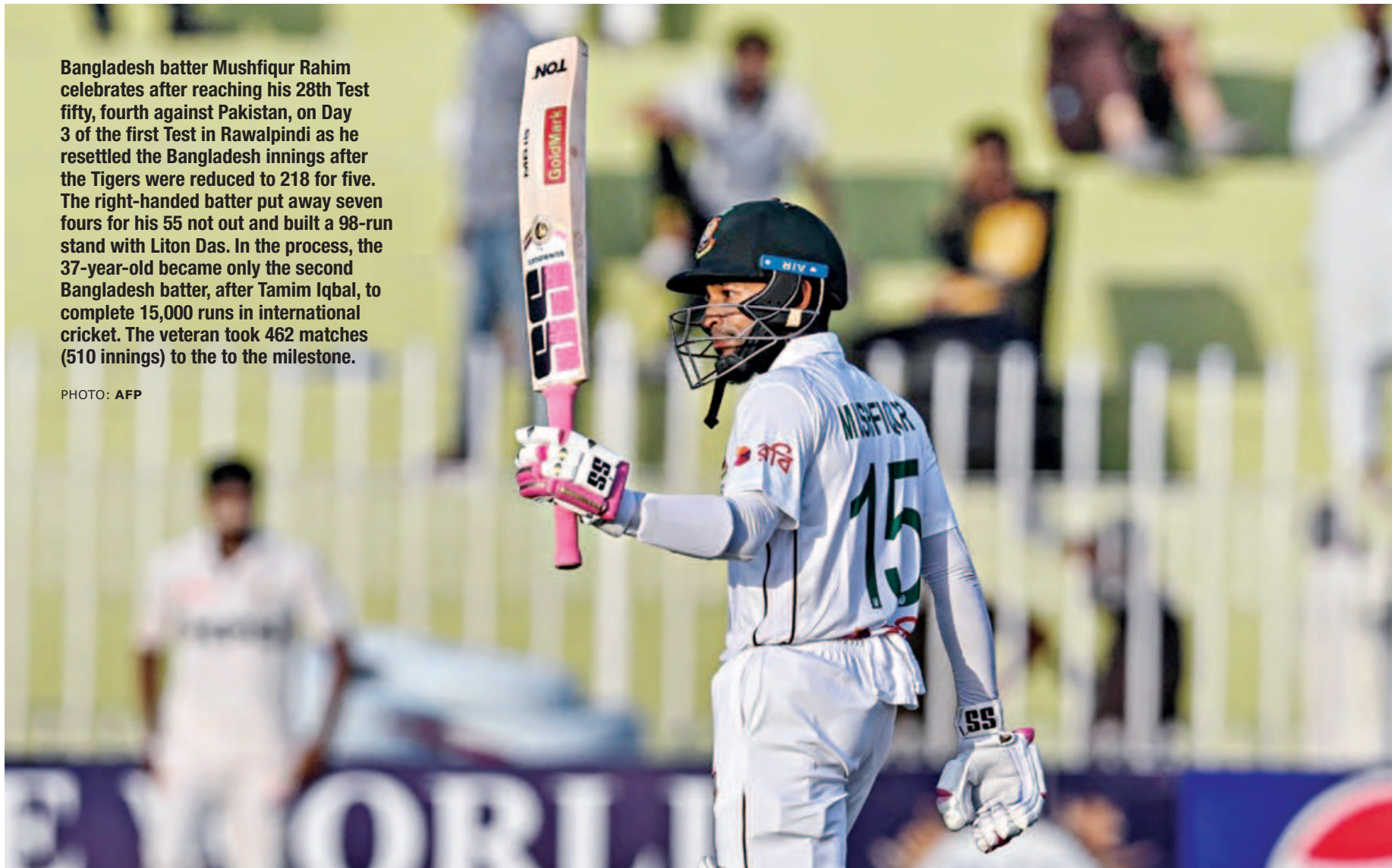


**Bangladeshi-born English footballer Hamza Choudhury has finally received a Bangladesh passport, confirmed Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) general secretary Emran Hossain yesterday. The 26-year-old Leicester City footballer had earlier expressed his desire to represent Bangladesh in international level and had applied for a Bangladesh passport in June.**



Bangladesh batter Mushfiqur Rahim celebrates after reaching his 28th Test fifty, fourth against Pakistan, on Day 3 of the first Test in Rawalpindi as he resettled the Bangladesh innings after the Tigers were reduced to 218 for five. The right-handed batter put away seven fours for his 55 not out and built a 98-run stand with Liton Das. In the process, the 37-year-old became only the second Bangladesh batter, after Tamim Iqbal, to complete 15,000 runs in international cricket. The veteran took 462 matches (510 innings) to the to the milestone.

PHOTO: AFP

## Jamal 'signed a contract', but with which club?

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh football team captain Jamal Bhuiyan said that he had signed a contract with a local club on Friday but the midfielder was among the ones who were excluded from the list of players registered by the clubs for the upcoming Bangladesh Premier League (BPL).

Jamal, midfielder Masuk Mia Jonny and forward Matin Mia were the big names left clubless following the conclusion of the transfer window ahead of the 2023-24 BPL season.

"I have signed a contract with a local club and will let you know within a couple of days what exactly happened," Jamal told The Daily Star yesterday.

However, Jamal's name was not found in the players' list of any of the 10 clubs who completed the players' registration formalities on Thursday night – the deadline day for the transfer window.

Before the window closed, there were talks of Jamal playing for Brothers Union as he played for Abahani in the latter part of last season after coming from Argentina's third-tier Club Sol de Mayo.

Meanwhile, three-time champions Sheikh Jamal DC and treble winner Sheikh Russel DC pulled out of the upcoming 2023-24 season owing to financial constraints. The withdrawal of two outfits from the top-tier league meant at least 60 local players lost the opportunity to play BPL this season.

Also, a good number of footballers who were supposed to play for Sheikh Jamal DC and Sheikh Russel KC have been forced to lower their payments in order to sign contracts with other outfits.

Jonny, who was supposed to play for Sheikh Russel this season, said he did not join any club for family reasons after Sheikh Russel failed to form a squad. "I was supposed to play for Sheikh Russel but they did not form the squad. There was also an offer from Brothers Union but I have decided not to play this season for family reasons," Jonny told The Daily Star.

Jonny also informed that Matin Mia was also offered contracts from different clubs like Sheikh Russel, Abahani and Brothers Union but he too did not accept any offers to stay out of football this season. The Daily Star was unable to reach Matin for confirmation on the matter.

Meanwhile, Chittagong Abahani, who were uncertain about forming a squad, finally completed their players' registrations at the eleventh hour with the help of former national striker Zahid Hasan Emily and former captain Mamunul Islam, who reportedly took permission from the club officials to form the squad.

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Jamie Smith scored his maiden Test hundred before England reduced Sri Lanka to 107-4 at Tea in their second innings as the hosts strengthened their grip on the series opener at Old Trafford on Friday. Surrey wicketkeeper Smith's 111 on the third day was the centrepiece of England's first-innings 358 all out.

PHOTO: AFP

## 'A' team's Pak series ends in stalemate

SPORTS REPORTER

The two-match four-day series between Bangladesh 'A' and Pakistan Shaheens ended in a stalemate after the rain-marred second match concluded in a draw at the Islamabad Club Cricket Oval on Friday.

Resuming on 346-6, Bangladesh 'A' declared their first innings on 404-9 after Jaker Ali made the highest 172.

Pakistan Shaheens leg-spinner Abrar Ahmed took all three Bangladesh wickets that fell on the final day to finish with 4-103.

The hosts, in reply, reached 281-4 before both captains accepted a draw. Shaheens opener Al Zaryab top-scored with 117.

Pacer Taskin Ahmed, who is also in the Bangladesh squad for their second Test against Pakistan, trapped Imam-ul-Haq (0) LBW in the first ball of Shaheens innings but that remained his only success in the 15 overs he bowled on the day. Pacers Tanzim Hasan Sakib and Ruyel Miah also took one wicket each.

The first two days of the match saw no play owing to rain and a wet outfield. The first four-day match had also ended in a draw.

Both teams will now play a three-match one-day series, starting on August 26.

## Mushfiqur's role 'most important' in rare good day

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh batters had one of their better days in Pakistani conditions in the sweltering heat of Rawalpindi yesterday where a number of batters put their hands up to help the side reach 316 for five at stumps, 132 runs behind Pakistan's first innings score.

Opener Shadman Islam batted over five-and-a-half hours during a patient 93 off 183 deliveries, his resistance unwavering in the face of Pakistan's four-pronged pace attack, while Mominul Haque kept the runs ticking in his natural flair to help Shadman's cause.

Liton Das displayed his array of stroke-play in an unbeaten 52 off 58 balls. But according to Mominul, the most important knock of the day came off the bat of the veteran Mushfiqur Rahim, who on his way to an undefeated 55 off 122 balls, forged a number of crucial stands which essentially held together the Tiger's middle-order.

After the loss of Zakir Hassan (12) and skipper Najmul Hossain Shanto (16), Shadman and Mominul put up a solid 94-run stand to steady the ship. Their partnership ended when pacer Khurram Shahzad found a way through Mominul's

defences after a 76-ball 50.

That partnership worked as the backbone of the entire innings and then Mushfiqur along with Shadman and later Liton, ensured Bangladesh ended the day happier of the two sides.

Mushfiqur had opened his account in the 12th delivery he faced, a sweep shot that manifested after a pressure period.

He did not make many noticeable mistakes during his patient vigil bar one inside edge in the 82nd over off Naseem Shah, which almost ricocheted onto his stumps. He dispatched Naseem's final delivery of that very over through extra cover to show that he was in control.

Mushfiqur exemplified his experience of handling pressure in his innings and Mominul, who came to the press conference after the day's play, pointed to the many admirable qualities of the experienced campaigner.

"Mushfiqur bhai is a very dedicated person. Whatever I say about him won't be enough. His playing style is completely different from us. He plays every ball so carefully, you can just tell that he has played a lot of Test matches," Mominul said.

Following a 52-run stand with Shadman, Mushfiqur then partnered with Shakib Al Hasan (15) for a short while before forming a 98-run unbroken stand with Liton.

"Look at the way he played and managed everything when Shadman and I got out. You must have noticed how Shadman accelerated after he [Mushfiqur] came to the crease. So, there must have been some instructions. His role was the most important according to me," Mominul said about Mushfiqur. Liton's late assault against Naseem, where he took 18 runs off one over against the pacer, pushed Bangladesh's total beyond 300 on the day.

Mominul heaped praises on Liton for his late blitz and expressed optimism about his team's chances in the match.

"Spinners might get some turn and I felt pacers might get some help too [in the final two days]. The way Liton attacked in the end, I feel the game is now in our grasp. Mushfiqur bhai handled the situation brilliantly.

"Definitely as an opposition team, I always believe in thinking positively and that we can play better than them [Pakistan]. Liton is a classical batsman and he made the difference in that one over."

## NSC clarifies Faruque, Fahim appointments at BCB

SPORTS REPORTER

The National Sports Council (NSC) on Friday offered an explanation for the appointments of Faruque Ahmed and Nazmul Abedeen Fahim as directors of the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) a day after former NSC nominated director Sajjadul Alam Bobby alleged the sports ministry of 'direct interference' with BCB's functioning.

During BCB's board meeting on Wednesday, held at the sports ministry, the NSC named Faruque and Fahim as its two mandated nominees in the 25-member board of directors at the BCB, replacing Sajjadul and Jalal Yunus. In the same meeting, Faruque was elected as the BCB president, replacing Nazmul Hassan Papon.

While Yunus had resigned from his directorship role on Monday after being asked by the NSC, Sajjadul, who was also asked to step down, had refused.

Sajjadul claimed he was not invited to Wednesday's board meeting and was only sent a notice of the new appointments on that evening.

"I am extremely surprised and disappointed. What the NSC did is akin to direct interference in the board's functioning. It is completely unacceptable," he told The Daily Star on Thursday.

NSC, seemingly in response to Sajjadul's

claim, issued a clarification yesterday regarding the new appointments, two days after they were nominated.

"In accordance with Article 9.3.2 of the Constitution of Bangladesh Cricket Board, Mr. Mohammad Jalal Yunus resigned on August 19, 2024 from among the 05 (five) representatives previously nominated by the National Sports Council in the Councillor category and Mr. Nazmul Abedeen Fahim was appointed for the 01 (one) stated vacant post Nominated by Sports Council," the NSC press release read.

"On the other hand, Mr. Faruque Ahmed and Mr. Nazmul Abedin Fahim have been nominated by the National Sports Council in the director category according to Article 13.2 (kha) 4 of the constitution, which is being widely appreciated.

"Such nominations are made on the basis of Philosophy of Jurisprudence with the utmost careful application of prevailing rules. The government is committed to keeping the activities of all federations/associations, including the Bangladesh Cricket Board fair, efficient, active and uninterrupted," the press release stated further.

Article 13.2 (kha) 4 explains that the NSC can nominate two directors from three councillor categories of the general council. Both Faruque and Fahim are councillors under category 3 of the BCB constitution (Article 9).

## 'Crazy love' for Rashid and Co on home turf

AFP, KABUL

Afghan student Basit Wali Hotak travelled hundreds of kilometres overnight to Kabul on Thursday for the chance to glimpse his cricket hero, Rashid Khan, on a home pitch.

The Shpageeza T20 league kicked off last week, with the usual cricket fever fanned by the promised inclusion of national players, many of whom have not joined domestic tournaments since the Taliban authorities swept to power in 2021.

Thousands of fans turned out at the Kabul International Cricket Stadium to see the famous players.

"I am extremely happy," Hotak told AFP, as he waited in a crowd jostling for tickets and fried snacks before filing past Taliban security guards to enter the stadium.

"I hardly noticed how long the line was out of joy that I would finally get to see Rashid Khan," Hotak said of the ace spinner and captain of the T20 national team.

Hotak left the southern city of Kandahar on Wednesday night to reach Kabul by 6 am (0130 GMT), sleeping only an hour before rushing to the stadium.

In cricket-mad Afghanistan, the national team's strides on the international stage



have provided rare moments of widespread celebration in a country ravaged by four decades of war.

Hotak was one of many who made long journeys over accident-prone and poorly maintained roads and spent their limited cash to buy the 50 Afghani (70-cent) tickets.

"For Rashid Khan, even if the ticket was 1,000 Afghani (\$14), I would still have bought one," said the 21-year-old, who has a picture of the Afghan sensation as his phone background. "This has been my biggest dream."

Much to Hotak's dismay, Khan and other star players expected to join the match

between the Speenghar Tigers and Mis-e-Ainak Knights were not part of the playing eleven.

Still, when the cameras showed the Afghan captain sitting in the dugout, loud cheers erupted in the all-male crowd.

After the match, Khan signed autographs at the edge of the stands, with fans injuring themselves on barbed wire along the barriers as they scrambled to reach the star.

"If you see my room and my social media accounts, they are flooded with photos of King Rashid Khan," said 18-year-old Abid Usmani from Kapisa, who had printed a banner covered with Khan photos.

During the match, a chant of "heroes, long live heroes" periodically boomed from loudspeakers, occasionally drawing jubilant responses from the crowd.

Former captain and allrounder Mohammad Nabi did take to the pitch, facing off against his son, Hassan Eisakhil – both wearing "Number 7" jerseys.

Another fan, Kamil Shah Mashal, travelled hours with his friends to the capital. "It is crazy love that has brought us here to Kabul from Khost," which borders Pakistan, he told AFP.

"It's only cricket left that keeps us happy."