

We won against them [India] in an ODI series in Bangladesh when they visited last time. We were very close to a Test win against them in Bangladesh. In Test cricket, we haven't got the success that we have been looking for. Tomorrow we will have another opportunity.

SHAKIB AL HASAN,
Bangladesh all rounder



Shakib wrapping up career with 'no regrets'

In a surprising move, Bangladesh's all-time greatest cricketer, Shakib Al Hasan, revealed his retirement plans during a 21-minute press conference held in Kanpur yesterday, ahead of the series-deciding second Test against hosts India. While it is customary for captains to attend the pre-match press conference on the eve of the fixture, Shakib's appearance -- after a long absence, particularly since the T20 World Cup -- sparked curiosity among the Bangladeshi journalists covering the series. In the first half, Shakib responded to questions from Indian journalists, who mainly focused on the Test series, but once the first Bangladeshi journalist posed a question, the atmosphere in the room shifted, becoming noticeably more animated. Following are the excerpts from the second half of the presser:

Question: How does it feel to come before the journalists after such a long time?

Shakib Al Hasan (SAH): It feels really good.

Q: In past years, no one doubted your commitment to Bangladesh. But such questions have arisen recently. How do you see that?

SAH: Obviously, if a cricketer doesn't perform as expected, such discussions naturally arise. It's not unrealistic. People expect more from me, and because of that, they think this way. When you perform at such a [high] level and then your performance declines, people will have doubts and raise questions.

Q: Are you playing in the South Africa series?

SAH: As of now, I'm available. There are many issues in the country, and not everything depends on me. I've discussed the matter with BCB [Bangladesh Cricket Board]. I've told them my plan, especially regarding Test cricket -- this Test and the home series against South Africa, which I feel will be my last Test series. I've spoken to [board president] Faruque [Ahmed] bhai and the selectors. If I can go to the country, the Mirpur Test will be my last. The board officials know about this, and they will be trying to arrange the match in a befitting manner, ensuring it happens safely. Moreover, when it is necessary to go abroad, I should have no problem leaving the country. Those involved will take care of things, and I believe they will make the right decisions so I can go, play, and say goodbye to Test cricket.

Q: Controversy has been a part of your career, and it used to fuel you. But recently, there have been issues like a murder case and a fine. How are you staying focused on cricket?

SAH: It's tough, very tough. Only Allah knows how I manage it. Honestly, I don't know either. Everyone has a right, and yes, there's been a case, and you all know the details -- where I was, what I was doing at that time. I don't want to say more. I've never traded in my life. If anyone can provide proof that I've ever been involved in trading, I'll accept it. False allegations aren't good for our country, especially when foreign people discuss these matters. It's disappointing. Like I

said, I've never traded, and the words used in relation to me were really disheartening for me.

Q: Have you made this decision to retire from Tests out of anger or frustration?

SAH: No, there's no anger or frustration behind my decision. I feel this is the right time to move on and give new players a chance to arrive. I've had the same realisation about T20Is. It might seem irrelevant, but I've discussed my T20I future with the board president and selectors. I think it's the right time to step aside from T20Is too, and let new players take over in the upcoming series. If I perform well in franchise tournaments and, after six months or a year, BCB thinks I can contribute, we might reassess. But for now, I don't see myself in T20Is.

I want the South Africa Test series to be my

last. Basically, you can say I'm seeing the end in at least two formats -- Tests and T20Is.

Q: Will this India series be your last T20I series?

SAH: I don't see any reason to continue playing these [kinds of] T20I series. New players should get a chance. After this series, there's a series in the West Indies and others. If BCB focuses on the 2026 T20 World Cup, it'll be good for Bangladesh cricket. We've all agreed on this decision.

Q: So, you won't play against India?

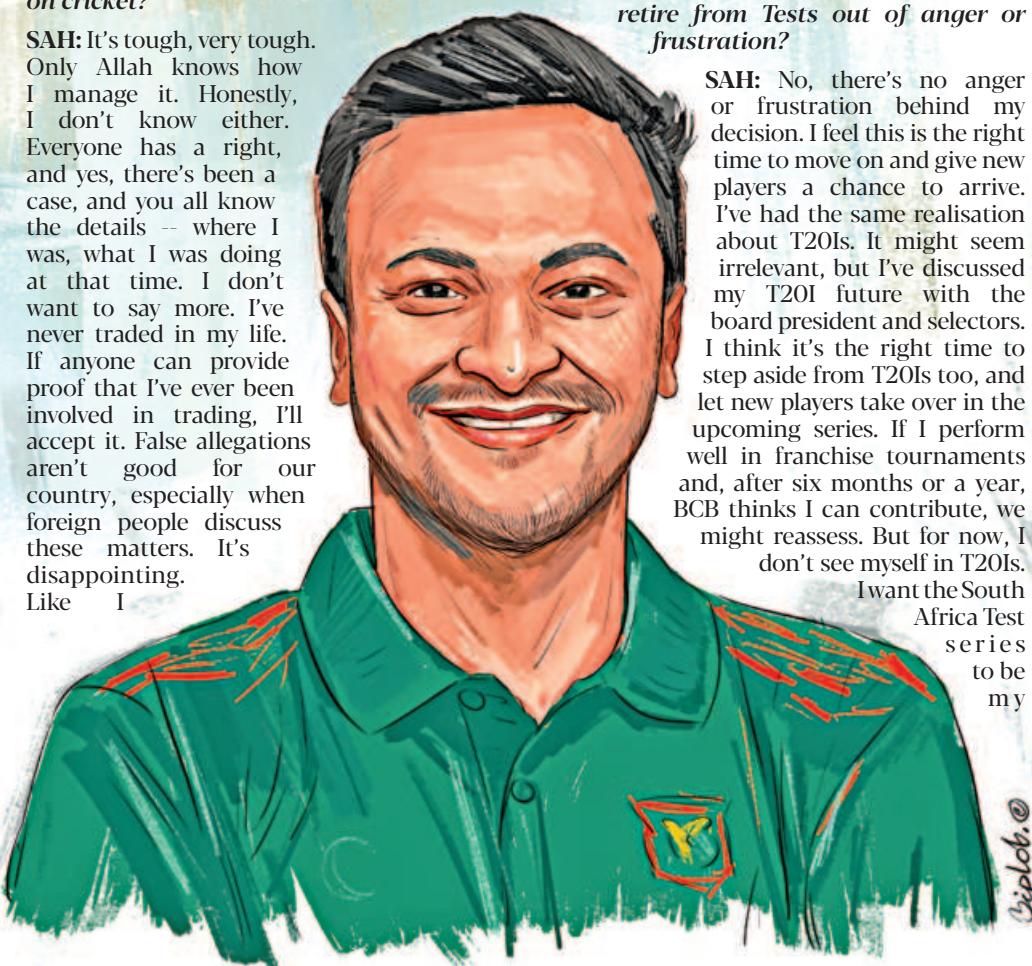
SAH: I think I've already played my last [T20I] match in the World Cup [against Afghanistan].

Q: How do you sum up your career?

SAH: I think I've done reasonably well. I'm happy, no regrets. I've never had regrets, and I still don't. I played cricket until I enjoyed it. It's the right time for both Bangladesh cricket and me. These decisions were made after discussions with the board, selectors, coach, captain -- everyone. They understood my situation and agreed it was the right thing to do.

Q: Do you have any concerns about returning to Bangladesh?

SAH: As a Bangladeshi citizen, I don't have any issues returning. But once I'm back, my concern starts. Going back to Bangladesh isn't a problem but leaving Bangladesh and my safety and security while I'm there, that's the issue -- especially based on what I'm hearing from close friends and family. I hope things are improving, and a solution is found.



An all-rounder like no other in T20Is

ASHFAQ UL-ALAM

Zimbabwe. His 129th and final match for the Tigers in the shortest format was their Super Eights match of the ICC T20 World Cup against Afghanistan in Kingstown on June 24 earlier this year, which they lost by eight runs.

His T20I career, easily the greatest among all Bangladeshi cricketers, ended in a whimper considering the last thing he did in the format was to give a simple return catch to Naveen-Haq to depart for a first-ball duck.

But that does not take away anything from his incredible career, one that certainly puts him in contention of being called the greatest all rounder in T20Is till now.

Now, the debate on who is the greatest all rounder of all time in cricket has been raging on for decades, with many candidates for

SHAKIB AL HASAN IN T20Is

BATTING	Matches	129
Runs	2551	
Average	23.19	
Strike-rate	121.18	
50s	13	
WICKETS		
BOWLING		
Wickets	149	
Economy	6.81	
Average	20.91	
Strike-rate	18.4	

the top-most spot but none being the clear choice.

The evolution of the game from its primitive days to the modern era, the changes in laws and playing conditions, and the introduction of a brand new format in the 2000s have only added to the complexities of the debate with no clear consensus on who is the best ever.

But instead of trying to find the greatest all rounder in all of cricket, if one goes format by format, he/she would be hard-pressed to find an all rounder with a better career in T20Is than Shakib.

Shakib's T20I career spanned 17 years and 209 days, longer than any other player in the world.

The 37-year-old is both Bangladesh's highest run-getter and wicket-taker in the format and was either the top-ranked all rounder or at least thereabouts for the majority of this period.

Shakib also has five player-of-the-series awards, the joint second-highest in the world. With 2551 runs, he ranks 13th in the list of highest run-getters in the format and the only all rounder who is ahead of him is Australia's Glenn Maxwell at 10th with 2600 runs.

He is also third in the wicket-taker's list with 149 wickets, whereas Maxwell has only 43 to his name.

Shakib's detractors, over the years, have pointed to the lack of quality opponents he has faced. But the pressure Shakib had to endure to carry a team devoid of stars in the shortest format should not be forgotten.

Through his performances in T20Is, Shakib made his way into T20 leagues across the world and was the first to show that a player from Bangladesh can become a highly sought after commodity in world cricket. More than anything, that will be the lasting legacy of Shakib's T20I career.

'If his farewell happened properly, I would've been happier'



SAMSUL AREFIN KHAN

The news of premier all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan's retirement plans came as a bolt from the blue for his childhood coach Mohammad Salahuddin, who had no prior knowledge of his best student's decision before the Bangladeshi cricketer himself officially announced during a press meet in Kanpur yesterday.

Two days before Shakib made the announcement, Salahuddin had spoken with him, as he often did, about cricket-related matters. As usual, Shakib discussed his new batting stance with his mentor, without hinting at his impending retirement.

"I suddenly heard about his retirement. I spoke to him two days ago, but he didn't give any indication of it. I honestly didn't realise such a decision was coming during our conversation," Salahuddin told The Daily Star yesterday.

"We only discussed his batting. He personally explained to me how and why he the [helmet] strap [to maintain his head position] while batting. He believes he considered everything before making this decision. If he isn't enjoying the game fully, then the decision is the right one," Salahuddin added, adding that recent on- and off-field issues may have influenced Shakib's decision.

Shakib, undoubtedly Bangladesh's greatest cricketer, has scored more than 14,000 runs and taken over 700 wickets in a career spanning 18 years, having made his national debut in 2006 during an ODI against Zimbabwe in Harare.

In addition to being Bangladesh's top performer, the 37-year-old has dominated world cricket with his all-round capabilities and has become a

global icon for Bangladesh beyond the sport.

Despite his consistency throughout his career, whenever Shakib needed guidance to refine his game or resolve issues, Salahuddin has been one of two mentors, alongside Nazmul Abedeen Fahim, whom Shakib trusted blindly.

The most notable instance of their partnership occurred when Shakib flew Salahuddin to India during his Indian Premier League stint with Sunrisers Hyderabad. Shakib wasn't getting enough playing time, and ahead of the ICC World Cup 2019, Salahuddin's guidance led to a fairytale outcome -- Shakib scored 606 runs and took 11 wickets for Bangladesh during the tournament.

"I think Shakib has a good understanding of himself and what he should or shouldn't do. He knows his capabilities, and I believe he considered everything before making this decision. If he isn't enjoying the game fully, then the decision is the right one," Salahuddin said, adding that recent on- and off-field issues may have influenced Shakib's decision.

"It's difficult to say if a cricketer of his stature will come to coaching, but Shakib has a great cricketing sense. I don't know how others see him, but he has huge acceptance among his teammates. He always fights for the players."

"Given his concern for the players, I think he could take on a role as an administrator or in the cricket board. It might not be the right time to think about that now, but the future will tell where he wants to go. If we can utilise his cricketing knowledge, it will benefit our country's cricket," Salahuddin concluded.



"Shakib is different from eight or 10 other cricketers.

If you look at his performance, he's delivered in 80 out of the 100

matches he's played for Bangladesh.

"Normally, it's very rare for a player to contribute to the team nearly every day. It's hard to find such a player. Whether through batting or bowling, he always contributes. In the last 17 years, he has been the top performer. It's a massive achievement."

"I feel he could have become an even better player, but he still contributed immensely to the nation. That's why he always wanted to keep playing. I feel, as a player, if his farewell happened properly, I would've been happier."

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Shakib Al Hasan is the only cricketer in world cricket to score more than 2500 runs and take 100-plus wickets.

With a tally of 149, Shakib sits third in the list of most wickets taken in T20Is. Only New Zealand's Tim Southee (164) and Afghanistan's Rashid Khan (152) are ahead of him. He is also the highest wicket-taker in T20I for Bangladesh.

The star all-rounder holds the record for most wickets taken at a

single venue, boasting 45 scalps at an economy of 6.47 at the Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium in Mirpur.

Shakib, with 2551 runs, is the highest run-getter in T20Is for Bangladesh and the 13th highest overall in the format.

The 37-year-old has received most player of the match awards in T20Is for Bangladesh with 12 in total. This places him joint-seventh on the all-time list in that regard.

