

## Akbar bails out BD in HK encounter

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh A skipper Akbar Ali played a quickfire 24-ball 45 to bail out his side in a five-wicket victory over Hong Kong in their opening Group A fixture of the ACC Men's T20 Emerging Teams Asia Cup at the Al Amerat Cricket Ground in Oman yesterday.

Akbar's match-winning knock featured four boundaries and three maximums and the right-handed batter was also involved in a 54-run stand with Towhid Hridoy (29 off 22 balls) to take his side to the brink of victory while chasing a 151-run target. Shamim Hossain finished proceedings with a 15-ball 19.

The Akbar-led side were in a spot of bother after losing three wickets for 55 runs inside the eight overs but Akbar and Hridoy steadied the Bangladesh ship.

Earlier, Bangladesh pacer Ripon Mondol's four wickets for 24 runs helped restrict Hong Kong to 150 for eight.

Middle-order batter Babar Hayat starred with a 61-ball 85, laced with seven sixes and two fours, while skipper Nizakat Khan played a vigilant hand with a 20-ball 25 for Hong Kong.



With Shakib Al Hasan no longer in the scene for Bangladesh's upcoming South Africa Tests, all-rounder Mehedi Hasan Miraz will have to step up and play the crucial role of providing a balance to the team with both bat and ball when the Tigers take to the field for the first of the two-match series on October 21 in Mirpur.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

## NCL gets sponsors after two years

SPORTS REPORTER

The 26th National Cricket League (NCL), which will have a title sponsor after a two-year gap, is set to get underway across four different venues in the country today.

In today's opening round matches of the eight-team league, defending champions Dhaka Division will face Sylhet Division in Khulna while Rangpur Division will take on Chattogram Division in Bogura.

In the other two matches of the day, Dhaka Metro will play Barishal Division at the Sylhet International Cricket Stadium Ground-2 while Khulna Division will face Rajshahi Division at the main Sylhet stadium.

This year's competition is different from previous editions as there will be no tier system, with every team playing against each other once. The top-ranked side will be crowned champions.

Meanwhile, after two previous editions took place without any sponsor, Modhumoti Bank PLC acquired the title sponsorship and ground branding rights of the first-class competition for Tk 2 crore for this season. They will also be the sponsor of the NCL T20 tournament, scheduled to start in December following the four-day league.

# Shakib-less home Tests A not so new reality

ASHFAQ-UL-ALAM

When it comes to Shakib Al Hasan, nothing is ever that straightforward.

The all-rounder was supposed to call time on his Test career with the first Test against South Africa set to begin on October 21 at his favourite hunting ground — the Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium in Mirpur.

But Shakib took a U-turn on his plans and chose not to return to Bangladesh, seemingly under the advice of the youth and sports ministry adviser Asif Mahmud, meaning his wish for a farewell Test on home soil will most likely remain unfulfilled.

However, whether this means the Kanpur Test against India will remain as Shakib's final match in the format is not yet 100 percent certain as the all-rounder himself has yet to make it clear.

After the two Tests against the Proteas at home, the Tigers are set to tour the West Indies next month for a three-format series which includes a couple of Tests. So, there remains a possibility that Shakib could hang up his boots over there.

However, there is no doubt that the 37-year-old will not feature in the Mirpur Test as yesterday the selectors dropped him from the 15-man squad for the match, replacing him with left-arm spinner Hasan Murad.

From the second Test against South Africa, Bangladesh were set to enter an era in home Tests where their ace all-rounder would no longer be available. Shakib's absence in the Mirpur Test has preponed that reality by just one game.



Losing Shakib means the Tigers will be without their highest wicket-taker (163) and second-highest run scorer (2979) in home Tests moving forward.

However, life without Shakib in home Tests is not that new for the Tigers, it has not been for at least six years or so.

Shakib's Test career at home, which began in 2007, could broadly be divided into two halves: pre 2018 and post 2018. From 2007 to 2017, Shakib was a

constant figure in home Tests, featuring in all 34 Tests the Tigers played at home, scoring 2307 runs at an average of 40.47 and picking up 128 wickets, averaging 32.24.

But from 2018, Shakib became a more sporadic figure in home Tests as he started skipping series, missed games due to injuries, and was unavailable to play one Test against Zimbabwe in February 2020 due to serving an ICC ban.

In this period, Shakib took part in 11 of the 22 home Tests for Bangladesh, scoring 672 runs and claiming 35 wickets. His batting average dipped to 37.33 while his bowling average improved to 26.11.

Since 2018, Bangladesh won three, drew one, and lost seven of the 11 Tests in which Shakib featured. Two of the three wins were against the West Indies in 2018 and the other was against Ireland last year.

Bangladesh, in fact, performed a tad better in the 11 Tests without Shakib, winning four, which included two wins over Zimbabwe, one over Afghanistan, and a historic maiden triumph over New Zealand last year. They drew four and lost six during this period.

Shakib's sporadic presence in home Tests in the last few years has inadvertently prepared the Tigers for a future without him, hence, the all-rounder's absence in the Mirpur Test should not be that big of a factor in the outcome.

## Hathurusingha questions motive behind his sacking

SPORTS REPORTER



Former Bangladesh head coach Chandika Hathurusingha on Friday issued a statement, raising questions regarding the Bangladesh Cricket Board's (BCB) motive behind his sacking from his position.

Hathurusingha, who was served a show-cause notice and suspended from his role last Tuesday, left the country on October 16 for Australia where his family lives. The Sri Lankan's post did not stay vacant for even 18 hours as Phil Simmons, who was announced as Hathurusingha's successor immediately after the sacking, took charge of the Tigers the very next day.

Hathurusingha was sacked based on two major disciplinary grounds — the first being misconduct centering around the alleged assault on a player during the 2023 ODI World Cup, while the second is his exceeding of the allotted period of leave.

"These allegations appear to me to be premeditated," Hathurusingha's statement read.

"On the first day of the new [BCB] president's [Faruque Ahmed] term, he made a public statement expressing his desire to remove the head coach, which he acknowledged might involve financial repercussions for the BCB. Additionally, I was shocked to receive a 'show cause notice' just four hours before the appointment of another head coach, despite the notice stating that I had 48 hours to prove my innocence. This sequence of events raises serious questions about the motives behind these actions.

"Given the circumstances, I was advised to leave Bangladesh on security grounds. The combination of these allegations, the swift appointment of a new head coach, and the apparent lack of due process raises significant concerns about the motivation of the new management and the treatment of employees within the BCB."

Read Hathurusingha's full statement on [The Daily Star's website](#)



India hit back with a batting blitz after New Zealand's Rachin Ravindra struck 134 to guide the visitors to a lead of 356 on day three of the rain-hit opening Test on Friday. The hosts were 231-3 at stumps and still trailed the Black Caps by 125 runs after Glenn Phillips got Virat Kohli caught behind for 70 on the last ball of the day in Bengaluru.

PHOTO: AFP



Bangladesh midfielder Ritu Porna Chakma trains with teammates at the ANFA Ground in Nepal yesterday ahead of their first match of the ongoing SAFF Women's Championship against Pakistan at the Dashath Stadium tomorrow. In Group B encounters yesterday, Sri Lanka clinched a 1-0 victory over Maldives, while the match between hosts Nepal and Bhutan ended in a goalless draw.

PHOTO: BFF

## England win a 'relief' for Pakistan

Pakistan's 152-run win in the second Test against England in Multan was their first home win after 11 Tests.

Noman Ali took 11 wickets for 147 while Sajid Khan finished with figures of 9-204, becoming only the second pair of Pakistani bowlers to take all 20 wickets in a Test after Fazal Mahmood and Khan Mohammad in a Test against Australia in Karachi in 1956.

The match figures of Noman and Sajid are now ranked the top two figures by any bowler in a Test in Multan.

It was also the first time since 1987, and the seventh instance overall for Pakistan, that two Pakistani spinners have taken a five-wicket haul in the same match.

Noman's 11/147 is also the third-best match figure in a Pakistan-England Test.



AFP, Multan

Captain Shan Masood hailed Pakistan's second Test win over England in Multan on Friday as a "relief" but warned his team's dire recent record would take a long time to turn around.

Pakistan spinner Noman Ali grabbed 8-46 and Sajid Khan took 2-93 as the pair wrapped up England's second innings for 144 after the visitors were set a daunting target of 297.

The 152-run victory was

Pakistan's first home win since February 2021 and came after they were thumped by an innings and 47 runs in the first Test on the same Multan pitch.

"This was a very important win for Pakistan cricket. The recent results were unacceptable. There is relief, whether you ask cricketers or fans," said Masood.

"We were hurt after recent results and wanted a positive result, which has come here," he said. "We need to carry this

forward because things will not change overnight."

Noman finished with a match haul of 11-147 while Sajid had figures of 9-204, only the second time in Pakistan's history that two bowlers took all 20 wickets in a Test.

Friday's victory is the first for Masood in his six Tests since being appointed captain last year. "This win is special for the team and for me as well," he said.

Pakistan dropped ace batter Babar Azam in one of four changes after their defeat in the first Test, with Kamran Ghulam smashing a magnificent maiden Test ton after assuming the number three batting position of Babar.

"Since I've come in we've had no issue taking risks. We've tried to play cricket that brings results, and we've lost a lot of matches doing that too," said Masood.

"But we want to become a team that can produce results anywhere. This is a long process and journey."