

When will BCB clear stance on Shakib?

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Just as the ICC Champions Trophy is facing uncertainty due to the dispute between the cricket boards of India and Pakistan, there remains an ambiguity over Shakib Al Hasan's participation in the event – something the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) has failed to clear up thus far.

Yesterday, during the logo unveiling event of the Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) 2024-25, board president Faruque Ahmed was asked by the media about the BCB's stance on Shakib.

Faruque relayed that the all-rounder is still in the plans for the Champions Trophy, saying, "Right now, he [Shakib] is still in the list. We hope that the issues get solved in the way he wants. Definitely, he still possesses the capability to play for the national team," suggesting Shakib may be looking for certain assurances.

But almost in the same breath, the BCB honcho pointed to Shakib's lack of preparation to play for the Tigers and revealed that they have left the decision up to the player.

"Playing for a franchise and playing for the country is not the same thing. You need preparation and also you really need to gel with the team. Since he can't do those things, I don't think he is in a mental state to play for the country. Because of that, we have left this thing up to him."

Leaving things up to the player was something the former BCB president



Nazmul Hassan Papon often did and it almost never worked in favour of the team.

Under Papon, Shakib's availability would be a talking point ahead of every other series. It did not help the team's cause since the board's policy to leave things to players' whims hampered the

team's continuity.

The BCB selectors too have not made any clear statements regarding Shakib's availability although whether the matter is truly in their hands remains under suspicion.

Shakib's availability had been put into doubt ever since the fall of the Awami

League government, of which he was a part as a member of the parliament.

The all-rounder's wish to retire from Tests with the Mirpur Test against South Africa in October remained unfulfilled as he was advised not to come to the country by sports adviser Asif Mahmud via the BCB due to security concerns.

However, such concerns are not holding him back from playing away series, like he did in the Test series in Pakistan in August and then in India in September.

Shakib's recent performances too have not exactly been excellent. Captaining the Bangla Tigers in a T10 tournament in Abu Dhabi, he bagged five wickets and scored 63 runs as his team crashed out of the tournament.

In the BCB's last board meeting, the discussion of the incumbent members centered on the need for Shakib in the national team. But with a big tournament like the Champions Trophy coming up, the BCB are yet to come to a decision relating to the outstanding situation at hand.

The board thus far has not outright said they want to move ahead without Shakib nor have they said they want him in the Champions Trophy next year and ensured his participation in last month's ODI series against Afghanistan in the UAE or in the upcoming ODIs in West Indies, both key series in the buildup to the event.

This lack of decisiveness from the board could rear its ugly head in the tournament and cause yet another forgettable ICC event for the Tigers.

NCL Rony hits ton, Bijoy misses out

SPORTS REPORTER

Dhaka Division opener Rony Talukdar hit his first hundred in this season's National Cricket League yesterday, keeping his side in contention for a second-place finish after Sylhet Division already clinched the title with a win in the previous round.

Rony helped construct the innings with a 202-ball 112 against Barishal at Bogura's Shahid Chandu Stadium on day two of the seventh and final round. The right-handed opener, who struck 16 fours and a maximum, was the last batter to depart on the day as Dhaka ended on 303 for eight at close in reply to Barishal's 289 all out on day one.

Unlike Rony, Anamul Haque Bijoy missed out on a ton, out on 90, while Mohammad Mithun remained unbeaten on 89 as Khulna posted 240 for seven in a rain-affected game at Sheikh Abu Naser Stadium in Khulna.

Meanwhile, Nihaduzzaman bagged a four-wicket haul for Rajshahi Division at the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium in Chattogram to help bowl Sylhet out for 212. With Sylhet's frontline pace attack rested, Rajshahi ended the day at 70 for three with an 84-run lead.

Chattogram Division's 19-year-old left-arm spinner Ashraful Hasan bagged four for 84 to help bowl out Dhaka Metro for 268 at the Shahid Kamruzzaman Stadium in Rajshahi. Abu Haider Rony bagged four for 41 for Dhaka Metro as Chattogram ended day two at 173 for 6.



PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

'Change the country, change the world'

The logo unveiling ceremony of Youth Festival and the unmasking of the mascot for Bangladesh Premier League T20 2025 took place at the Hotel InterContinental in Dhaka on Sunday. The theme of the Youth Festival-2025 has been set as 'Let's change the country, let's change the world'.

The Youth Festival will be held across the country, starting with the BPL inauguration on December 30 and concluding on February 19 with the final of the SAFF U-20 Women's Championship.

Sporting events, cultural shows and concerts across the country will mark the festival, with the theme: 'Change the country, change the world'.

The 'Dana 36' mascot designed for BPL 2025 -- a 'white dove' with wings spread out wide, with 36 colourful feathers representing the memory of July Uprising.

Three concerts will be organised under in the three BPL venues of Dhaka, Chattogram and Sylhet. During the BPL, eight boys' and eight girls' football matches will be organised every Friday and Saturday.

In addition, the 'Under-15 National Cup' will be organized.

Plans are afoot to organise debate competitions, quiz competitions, inter-school and college competitions, essay competitions, skill competitions and a 'July 36' painting competition to explore talent from the grassroots level.

Chelsea move joint second in PL

REUTERS, London

Expertly taken goals from Nicolas Jackson, captain Enzo Fernandez and Cole Palmer earned Chelsea a 3-0 home win over Aston Villa on Sunday, lifting them to joint second in the Premier League table.

Senegal striker Jackson neatly side-footed a Marc Cucurella cross from the left, knocking it in off the post in the seventh minute.

Chelsea took advantage of questionable defending in the 36th minute when Fernandez was fed by Palmer before steadying himself and firing home between Matty Cash and Ezri Konsa.

Palmer outdid both his team mates, however, lofting an exquisite left-foot shot into the top corner of substitute goalkeeper Robin Olsen's net in the 83rd minute.

Enzo Maresca's Chelsea moved joint second, level on points and goal difference with Arsenal, before the late kickoff between table-toppers Liverpool and fifth-placed Manchester City. Villa dropped to 11th.



BANGLADESH INTO SEMIS

Defending champions Bangladesh cemented their spot in the semifinals of the ACC Men's U-19 Asia Cup with a five-wicket win over Nepal at the Dubai International Cricket Stadium yesterday. After a comprehensive effort with the ball which bundled out Nepal for 141, Bangladesh opener Zawad Abrar and skipper Azizul Hakim Tamim hit half-centuries to chase down the target in 28.4 overs. Zawad scored a 65-ball 59 and put together a 90-run stand with Tamim, who followed up his century in the previous match with an unbeaten 72-ball 52. Bangladesh play Sri Lanka in their last Group B fixture on Tuesday which will determine the group winner.

PHOTO: FACEBOOK

Bangladesh a win away from Hockey Junior World Cup

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh moved closer to their dream of qualifying for the FIH Hockey Junior World Cup for the first time following a 1-1 draw against China in their last pool match at the Al Amerat Hockey Stadium in Muscat yesterday.

With two draws and a win alongside a defeat, Bangladesh finished third in Pool B with four points, behind Pakistan and Malaysia and ahead of China and Oman.

The third position finish set Bangladesh up for a place-deciding match against Thailand, fourth placed finishers from Pool A, on Tuesday.

A win against the inferior-ranked Thailand will take Moududur Rahman Shuvo's charges to next year's Junior World Cup, to be staged in India.

After playing a creditable 2-2 draw against Malaysia in the previous match, Bangladesh



needed a draw to finish third so as to avoid South Korea in the place-deciding match. However, the men in red and green could not put on a spirited display like the previous match, instead their game was full of erratic passing, loose ball control and lack of organisation in attacks.

Goalkeeper Mohammad Noyon, though, stood tall and made a string of saves to deny a spirited China and kept Bangladesh in the match until the umpires cancelled out a last-minute strike from China.

Bangladesh took the lead against the run of play with

Mohammad Ali finding the back of China net with a reverse hit in the 41st minute following an attack from the right flank. China, however, came back strongly after converting one of four successive penalty corners in the 45th minute to level the score.

China kept pressing in the final quarter but were denied time and again by keeper Noyon before defender Amirul Islam wasted a penalty stroke in the 54th minute to make things harder for Bangladesh.

With only 30 seconds left to the final whistle, Bangladesh launched an attack with a scoop shot, only to be caught in possession and China earned their ninth penalty corner from the resulting counterattack with only 4.5 seconds left of the game.

China converted the penalty corner and the umpire signalled for a goal before changing his decision, allowing Bangladesh to have a massive sigh of relief.



Manchester United forward Marcus Rashford celebrates scoring one of his two goals in their 4-0 thrashing of Everton in a Premier League game in front of their home crowd at Old Trafford on Sunday. Joshua Zirkzee scored the other two for United, who have now won two consecutive games in all competitions under new boss Ruben Amorim after the Portuguese started with a 1-1 draw away to Ipswich Town.

PHOTO: REUTERS