



Records galore as Tigresses thrash Thailand

Bangladesh women's cricket team got off to a flying start in their ICC Women's World Cup Qualifiers campaign, crushing Thailand by a staggering 178 runs in their opening match in Lahore on Thursday after skipper Nigar Sultana Joty scored the fastest century by a Bangladeshi.

- Joty struck 101 off 80 balls, reaching her century in just 78 deliveries at the Lahore City Cricket Association Ground. This was Joty's maiden ton and also the fastest ever by a Bangladeshi in Women's ODI, breaking the previous record held by Fargana Hoque, who had scored a 156-ball ton against India in Mirpur in 2023.
- Bangladesh bundled out Thailand for just 93 runs in 28.5 overs, recording their biggest margin win in the format. The Tigresses' previous best in this regard was a 154-run win over Ireland in Mirpur last year.
- The 152-run third-wicket stand between Joty, who struck 15 fours and one maximum, and Sharmin Akhter, unbeaten on 94 off 126 deliveries, is the highest partnership for any wicket for Bangladesh in the format.
- Bangladesh legspinner Fahima Khatun (5-21) and off-spinner Jannatul Ferdus (5-7) bagged five wickets each -- the first instance of two bowlers claiming fifers in WODIs. These were also the career-best figures for both the bowlers.



SCORES IN BRIEF

Bangladesh: 271-3 in 50 overs (Joty 101, Sharmin 94 not out, Fargana 53; Maya 1-28)

Thailand: 93 all out in 28.5 overs (Sutthiruang 22; Jannatul 5-7, Fahima 5-21)

Result: Bangladesh won by 178 runs.

Player-of-the-match: Nigar Sultana Joty

Barca, PSG put one foot into semis

It was a night of one-sided affairs as Barcelona and PSG dominated their Champions League first-leg quarterfinal fixtures against Borussia Dortmund and Aston Villa on Thursday, respectively. Robert Lewandowski put his former club to the sword as he scored a brace to help Barcelona romp to a 4-0 win at home. Raphinha found the net, equalling an elusive club record held by Lionel Messi, and young sensation Lamine Yamal also got his name on the scoresheet to finish off a night of dominance for the Catalans. It was also a one-way traffic in Paris as PSG flaunted their youthful exuberance to cruise to a 3-1 win over Aston Villa. Khvicha Kvaratskhelia, Desire Doue, and Nuno Mendes buried Villa after the visitors clinched a surprise lead, courtesy of Morgan Rogers.

- Raphinha has now been directly involved in 19 Champions League goals this season (12 goals, 7 assists), the joint-most ever by a Barcelona player in a single edition of the competition (level with Lionel Messi in 2011-12).
- Striker Robert Lewandowski's brace took his tally to 29 goals in 28 matches against Dortmund in all competitions, two strikes more than he's managed against any other club in his career.
- Barcelona have not lost any of their 23 games across all competitions so far in 2025 (W19 D4), the best unbeaten start to a calendar year in their history (2016 -- P22 W19 D3).
- Borussia Dortmund suffered their joint-heaviest defeat in a European Cup/Champions League match, alongside a 4-0 loss to Ajax in the 2021-22 group stage.

● Barcelona recorded their biggest win in a Champions League knockout stage match since beating Lyon 5-1 in the 2018-19 round of 16.

● At 24 years and 93 days, PSG named the youngest starting XI for a Champions League quarterfinal match since Arsenal's 3-0 win over Villarreal in 2008-09 (24y 47d).

● Ousmane Dembele created nine chances in this match. It's the most on record (since 2003-04) in a Champions League match for PSG, and the most by a player overall since Joshua Kimmich for Bayern Munich against PSG in April 2021 (10).



Stumped by the system

NABID YEASIN

Every year, the Dhaka Premier League (DPL) begins with unwavering commitments from authorities to make it even more competitive than the previous years.

The same is the case for the franchise-based Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) or any other domestic tournaments -- it is as if Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) officials read out lines from the same script, merely swapping out the tournament names.

And almost every year, the charade put on by BCB high-ups is exposed -- either through the quality of cricket displayed, the blatant mismanagement, or something as bizarre as what happened on Wednesday.

Shinepukur Cricket Club batter Minhajul Abedin Sabbir's manner of dismissal in a DPL game against Gulshan Cricket Club in Mirpur portrayed the exact state of Bangladesh cricket. It was symbolic of a system where those in charge appear to be intentionally holding back progress, allowing everything but cricket to soar.

Minhajul dragged his bat back, never apparently intending to ground it, despite having it over the crease. It was as if he allowed the wicketkeeper to take the bails off in his second attempt at having the batter stumped.

Bangladesh cricket's future, in every way, is in the hands of board president Faruque Ahmed. Questions are naturally raised about whether the Faruque-led BCB has been holding back, or even making attempts to obstruct, to place Bangladesh cricket where it should be -- much like Minhajul's puzzling behaviour at the crease.

Faruque's return to BCB -- now in a much more powerful role than when he previously served as chief selector -- followed a nationwide movement that promised significant change to various sectors.



Yet at BCB, the only noticeable change has been the signature at the bottom of approved documents.

Since Faruque's arrival, the country's cricket has seen no meaningful progress. BPL's most recent edition was Faruque's opportunity to finally deliver on the big promises of "increased competitiveness", "quality cricket", and "strict regulations". But like in the years before him, those promises fell flat as BCB offered one of the most chaotic editions in history, marred by widespread complaints from players and officials regarding non-payment, starting from the very first day.

Under the Faruque-led administration, DPL has presented an even bleaker picture. Issues from BPL -- like non-payment and protests over irregularities -- spilled over, further compounded by the latest addition of a sombre chapter that reeks of foul play on the field, described as "shameful" by several former cricketers.

Arranging and safeguarding the integrity and quality of both BPL and DPL should be routine tasks for the governing body of cricket in Bangladesh. That the board has failed to oversee even one smooth, controversy-free domestic tournament since the leadership change is perhaps unsurprising. BCB's

primary focus remains on the national men's and women's teams. But, even in such a small domain, Faruque and company have failed to bring any visible change in structure or the way things are operated in and around the national teams.

The board may consider itself unlucky that Minhajul's suspicious act did not go unnoticed -- unlike the many misdeeds that go unreported in lower-tier tournaments. It is nothing new that allegations of corruption, to the extent of paying off umpires, are rampant in the lower-tier cricket, which, unlike DPL or BPL, do not get televised, helping the wrongdoings fly under the radar.

For now, BCB has initiated an investigation into the alleged irregularities in the said DPL game, with the board reminding through a press release yesterday that it had taken "notes of the concerns surrounding the game".

Will the investigation bear any fruit? Fortunately for BCB, the focus will soon shift. In a few days, Bangladesh men's national team will host Zimbabwe for a two-Test series. As is customary in Bangladesh cricket, media and fan attention will move towards international fixtures, and scrutiny over DPL and other domestic cricket issues will recede -- eventually to be swept under the rug.

However, if and when the national team fail to perform, questions about the overall quality of cricket will re-emerge, the dearth in the pipeline will be brought to the fore, and replacements for the retired stars will be sought with more gusto than ever.

The irony, as it has long been the case, will be in the way everyone would no longer talk about the main devil and the root cause of agony in Bangladesh cricket -- that is the corruption at the core that never gets properly investigated, regardless of who holds the reins at the board.

LA 2028: Historic stride for gender equality

STAR SPORTS DESK

The Los Angeles 2028 Olympics will make history with equal numbers of women's and men's teams in all sports, the International Olympic Committee (IOC) announced yesterday.

Of 10,500 athletes, 5,333 will be women and 5,167 men. The event lineup includes 161 women's events, 165 men's events, and 25 mixed events -- reflecting the rising popularity of women's sports and the IOC's commitment to gender balance across all competitions.

Among the notable changes, the women's football tournament will feature 16 women's teams from 12, while the men's competition will be downsized from 16 to a dozen teams.

In boxing, a new women's weight category brings gender parity across all events.

Moreover, six new 50m events added (backstroke, butterfly, breaststroke for both genders), raising total swimming medals to 41.

Furthermore, men's and women's T20 tournaments will include six teams each, reintroducing cricket to the Olympics after 128 years.

Dhaka's Rising Stars 2025 kicks off today

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) is set to introduce a brand new inter-school football tournament, Dhaka's Rising Stars 2025, which will commence at the Fortis Jalshiri ground in Purbachal today.

A total of eight English-medium schools -- International School of Dhaka, Scholastica Mirpur, Scholastica Uttara, Aga Khan Academy, Sir John Wilson School, Springdale International School, Alfred International School and Aurora International School -- from the capital compete in two separate age groups -- Under-12 and Under-14.

The competing schools are The matches will take place on every Friday and Saturday and both finals will take place on May 9.

BCB begins DPL investigation, two summoned

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Cricket Board's (BCB's) Anti-Corruption Unit (ACU) launched an investigation on allegations of irregularities in the Dhaka Premier League (DPL) match between Gulshan Cricket Club and Shinepukur Cricket Club, held on Wednesday, and summoned the two Shinepukur batters -- Minhajul Abedin and Rahim Ahmed -- whose manner of dismissals caused the furor yesterday.

**Read the full story on The Daily Star website*

BPL fixing probe far from over

SPORTS REPORTER

A Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) official yesterday said the independent inquiry body, which was formed to support the board and the BCB Anti-Corruption Unit (ACU) with integrity issues and investigations regarding the last edition of the Bangladesh Premier League T20 (BPL), has completed nearly half of its work.

"Before Eid, I last spoke with them, and they said they've completed 40 to 50 percent of the work," BCB media committee chairman Iftekhar Rahman Mithu told The Daily Star.

"They've interviewed numerous cricketers, team officials, and others, with more interviews planned. The judge is abroad, but they've continued holding online meetings," he added.

Earlier, on February 3, BCB formed a 3-member committee with former justice of the appellate division Justice Mirza Hussain Haider named as the convenor, while former cricketer Shakil Kasem and international lawyer Dr Khaled H. Chowdhury were named as other members, after several unethical issues came to light.

There were reports that suggested the ACU identified eight matches for suspicion of spot-fixing and match-fixing, based on anonymous tips and media reports, while they monitored 10 players and four franchises.

BCB acted swiftly by forming the independent inquiry committee, but more than two months on, it is still waiting for a conclusive report. With the investigation progressing slowly, doubts remain over whether the findings will lead to meaningful accountability -- or simply become another case of concerns fading away with time.