

BCB POLLS AT A GLANCE

Total Voters: 156 (Dhaka Division: 17; Rajshahi Division: 9; Rangpur Division: 9; Category 2: 76; Category 3: 45)
Votes cast: 115 (73.71%) (Dhaka Division: 15; Rajshahi Division: 7; Rangpur Division: 8; Category 2: 42; Category 3: 43)
Didn't cast vote: 41 (Dhaka Division: 2; Rajshahi Division: 2; Rangpur Division: 1; Category 2: 34; Category 3: 2)
Cancelled vote: 1 (Category: 3)
First-time directors: 20
Ex-directors in new board: 5 (Aminul Islam, Nazmul Abedeen Fahim, Faruque Ahmed, Manzur Alam, Eftekhar Rahman Mithu)

LIST OF DIRECTORS (CATEGORY-WISE)

Total: 25
Category 1: 10 -- Aminul Islam Bulbul, Nazmul Abedeen Fahim, Mukhlesur Rahman, Hasanuzzaman, Ahsan Iqbal Chowdhury, Asif Akbar, Abdur Razzak, Zulfikar Ali Khan, Rahat Shams and Shakawat Hossain
Category 2: 12 -- Ishtiaque Sadeque, Adnan Rahman Dipon, Fayazur Rahman, Abul Bashar, Amzad Hossain, Shahnian Taneem, Mokhsedul Kamal, M Nazmul Islam, Faruque Ahmed, Manzur Alam, Mehrob Alam Chowdhury and Iftekhar Rahman Mithu
Category 3: 1 -- Khaled Mashud Pilot
NSC nominated directors: Ishfaq Ahsan, Yasir Mohammad Faysal

‘FELL IN LOVE WITH DEVELOPMENT OF BANGLADESH CRICKET’

“This is part of a journey I’ve embraced. I’ve fallen in love with the development of Bangladesh cricket. I came for a short term, and that short term was my plan. But when I started doing small tasks through a fruitful programme and saw success, I didn’t think of anything else. I have stayed with the goal of serving my country... This board’s term is for four years. We have already started working towards where we want to see Bangladesh cricket after these four years with today’s board meeting.”

AMINUL ISLAM BULBUL said after being re-elected as BCB president



Tigresses to stick to ‘natural game’

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh pacer Marufa Akter, who starred in the team’s opening win against Pakistan at the ICC Women’s World Cup, has shown she can handle the hype surrounding her performances. Skipper Nigar Sultana Joty said the team remains focused on playing their natural game against title contenders England in Guwahati today.

“We try to keep her to a simple gameplan,” Joty explained in yesterday’s pre-match press conference. “We don’t burden her whether she succeeds or not.

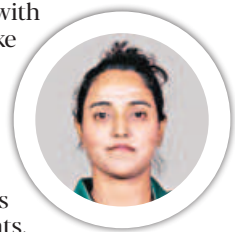
“We all know about her struggles from an early age so she’s very hardworking and now she’s getting the result. There was a lot of hype after the first game but from what I have seen, she doesn’t bother with those things because of the child-like nature that she has,” she added.

With conditions in India differing from Colombo, Joty stressed relying on instincts developed during the Pakistan win. “The first match was important; a good start boosts team mentality. In these tournaments, spinners usually dominate, but Marufa gave us a brilliant start, and the spinners combined to pick eight wickets. Bowling-wise, we are in rhythm.”

On batting, she added, “Our batters looked confident against Pakistan. We want to carry those positives into the next game.”

Joty acknowledged England’s line-up, last faced at the 2022 T20 World Cup, may prompt changes. “We want to play our natural game, but there will be adjustments because of many right-hand batters. If needed, we’ll add a spinner or seamer; Fariha Trisna could be considered if conditions suit.”

England all-rounder Charlie Dean, meanwhile, suggested negating Marufa’s swing early would be the way to go for the four time champions. “I guess looking to negate the swinging ball early with Marufa. And then, I guess, settling in against the spin and batting really long, I think, is how we’re going to approach the game,” she said.



Saif the improved one

SHABAB CHOWDHURY

Bangladesh batter Saif Hassan has done what many of his peers could not. He stepped away from the national fold, returned stronger, and finally proved himself ready for the demands of international cricket.

After registering binary digits in his first two T20Is against Pakistan in 2021, just months after an underwhelming Test debut, it seemed the international arena was too daunting for the then 21-year-old. Fast forward to 2025, and Saif has undergone a metamorphosis to evolve into arguably the poster boy of the current national setup.

Since his unexpected recall to the T20I side in late August for the home series against the Netherlands, Saif has amassed three half-centuries in 10 innings, beginning with an unbeaten 20-ball 36 in the opener. A crucial 30 against Afghanistan in the Asia Cup group stage, followed by a match-winning 61 against Sri Lanka that sealed Super Four qualification, and then a commanding 69 against India -- all showed how a batter once lost in the fray became the pillar of the lineup.

After a couple of misfires in the subsequent Afghanistan series, Saif capped things off with an unbeaten 64 off 38 balls. In doing so, he silenced his doubters. Admirers warmed not just because everyone loves a comeback story but because Bangladesh cricket has long been starved of genuine examples of players remodelling their game to thrive at higher levels.

It is almost poetic that a batter

once dismissed as technically flawed now embodies the batsmanship so absent elsewhere in Bangladesh’s order.

Saif’s journey is not one of inflated redemption but of pragmatic evolution -- not by relying on the flattery of talent that so often leads young players astray.

Too often, youngsters lean on domestic form without addressing technical flaws exposed at international level.



His transformation has almost erased the image of the lanky opener with a tentative, soft grip and a peculiar low backlift betrayed by hesitant footwork.

His transformation has almost erased the image of the lanky opener with a tentative, soft grip and a peculiar low backlift betrayed by hesitant footwork. Those days are gone. Now, a mature mind works in cohesion with a stronger frame. Assuredness defines his game: a minimal shuffle, a strong base, the alignment of head and front foot -- all combine to set him up for commanding options. A tighter grip, a higher backlift, and better balance between the hands now give him control and power -- a far cry from the tentative version of 2020.

Equally telling is his approach to scoring. Saif favours the straight boundary, opting for low-risk, high-reward strokes in the Powerplay. His flicks remain a strength; he rarely misses a chance to punish anything on his pads. But what sets him apart now is batsmanship. His clarity of thought, arising without premeditation, and the patience to play on the merit of the ball and the game situation were evident in his latest knock when he chose to see off Rashid Khan’s over without bothering for a run.

This awareness, coupled with his leadership as a batter, has become even more evident in the absence of long-serving middle-order mainstays and in contrast to the hit-and-miss style of many contemporaries. Saif’s presence offers a cushion to a side transitioning from a generational gap.

Equally important, by setting a benchmark for the next in line, Saif has shown what a meaningful comeback truly looks like.

The silence of Shams-ul-Huda Stadium

MOHSIN MILON, Benapol

Jashore’s Shams-ul-Huda Stadium opened more than six decades ago with pride and promise. For years it staged football, cricket, hockey and national tournaments, while also serving as a cultural stage for the south-western district. At present, however, the once-vibrant ground lies abandoned, its turf buried under knee-high weeds and stagnant water.

Even around a decade ago, it hosted international football contests, drawing packed crowds -- on March 24, 2014, the 12,000-capacity stadium saw more than 30,000 spectators during Bangladesh’s friendly against Sri Lanka, with the hosts winning 1-0. It also staged international fixtures during the 2016 Bangabandhu Cup.

For the past three years, footballers and athletes have been forced to leave the stadium behind. More than two-thirds of the field is overrun by invasive grass, while the rest remains waterlogged even in the dry season. “It looks more like a grazing field for cattle than a stadium,” one spectator remarked bitterly.

The neglect runs deeper than the turf. Cracked galleries, broken seating and the lack of a proper drainage system have rendered the stadium unusable. For two years no football matches have been held here, leaving the ground eerily silent by day and a gathering spot for miscreants by night,



spreading fear among locals.

What was once the district’s sporting hub has scattered its athletes to borrowed corners. Jashore’s district football team now trains at the Hamidpur Orphanage Shams-ul-Huda Academy ground. Cricketers have shifted to the Municipal Preparatory School field, while handball players practice at the Muslim Academy ground. Volleyball, hockey and other athletes are left to make do with temporary arrangements at different institutions.

Sports organisers blame years of neglect by the authorities. District Sports Association officials acknowledge the crisis, estimating that repairing the drainage and restoring the stadium would require around Tk 1 crore. Yet repeated appeals for funding have gone unanswered.

The decline feels even more tragic given the stadium’s rich history. Originally known as Rai Bahadur Manmathonath’s field pre-1959 and officially inaugurated as a stadium in 1959 -- with the foundation stone laid by then East Pakistan governor Mohammad Zakir Hossain -- it became the district stadium in 1978 and was renamed in honour of philanthropist Shams-ul-Huda.

“Unless urgent steps are taken, this historic venue will be permanently lost to weeds and neglect,” organisers warn.

Jashore Deputy Commissioner Azharul Islam said, “We have written to the Council of Ministers and the Ministry of Youth. A delegation visited recently. The ground will be repaired as soon as possible and turned into a modern stadium.”

For the people of Jashore, though, the question remains: how much longer must their stadium, once a symbol of pride, remain a symbol of decay?

Hong Kong ready for Bangladesh challenge

SPORTS REPORTER

Mahama Awal, a Cameroonian-born naturalised forward for Hong Kong, China, is expecting a tough challenge from Bangladesh in front of a packed National Stadium in Dhaka on October 9. However, he insists that Hong Kong are strong, focused, and ready to claim all three points in their crucial away fixture of the Asian Cup Qualifiers.

“We’ve heard Bangladesh is a very difficult place to go, but we’re strong and ready. We’ll go there full of energy and positivity, and give everything to win... we need the points to qualify,” Awal told the South China Morning Post.

The winger, who missed last month’s King’s Cup matches against Iraq and Fiji due to injury, has been recalled for the Bangladesh tie. His comments come amid a surge in local interest, with 19,000 tickets for the 22,200-capacity National Stadium selling out in just 24 minutes.

“I’m so happy to come back

and I’m ready to perform,” said Awal, who has 14 international appearances for Hong Kong. He was one of the standout performers in the second half against India, a match Hong Kong won 1-0.



Hong Kong currently sit joint top of their group alongside Singapore with four points each, and are aiming to secure back-to-back qualifications for the Asian Cup in China. A pair of victories over Bangladesh would significantly strengthen their chances.

Brazilian-born striker Juninho echoed Awal’s confidence, backing Hong Kong to handle the pressure in the two potentially decisive qualifiers.

“Every game we play for Hong Kong is important, but if we beat Bangladesh twice it will be

a big step in the group for us,” Juninho told the South China Morning Post.

“We know how big this competition is for everybody. We will fight and give our all to qualify,” said the 34-year-old striker, looking ahead to the return leg at the sold-out 50,000-capacity Kai Tak Stadium on 14 October.

Meanwhile, Leicester City midfielder Hamza Choudhury joined the Bangladesh camp yesterday, just hours after arriving in Dhaka following a long journey from England.

Choudhury appeared cheerful during his first training session at the National Stadium, sharing smiles with teammates during the 15 minutes of practice that were open to the media. However, head coach Javier Cabrera did not allow any players to speak to the press.

The tie against Hong Kong is a do-or-die match for Bangladesh. A defeat to Hong Kong -- a team Bangladesh have never beaten -- would all but end their hopes of progressing to the final round of qualification.



Leicester City midfielder Hamza Choudhury (L) walks into the National Stadium in Dhaka alongside Bangladesh captain Jamal Bhuyan for a practice session with the team yesterday afternoon, hours after landing in Dhaka. The Bangladesh team will host Hong Kong for an Asian Cup Qualifiers fixture in Dhaka on October 9 before playing away to Hong Kong five days later.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED