

'Expectations high' as Hamza urges stronger collective mindset

SPORTS REPORTER

Leicester City midfielder Hamza Choudhury believes Bangladesh can secure a home win against Hong Kong, China in their Asian Cup Qualifier on October 9, provided the players show greater self-belief.

The 28-year-old, who arrived in Dhaka on Monday with his family, is set to make his third appearance for Bangladesh after featuring against India and Singapore. Since joining the squad, Hamza has been working closely with coach Javier Cabrera, who has emphasised defensive organisation and quick transitions in attack.

"The coach is the one who take big decisions. He asked me how I can help the team by using my experience," Hamza said yesterday after his second training session at the National Stadium.

"But every game is different, the opponents are different, so we need to have a different mindset... Hong Kong are a different challenge, but we need to stick to the game plan."

Reflecting on the 3-1 defeat to Singapore, he admitted the team "let themselves down" with two sloppy goals and missed chances, including a possible penalty. He also expressed regret for missing a key opportunity but promised to bounce back.

"I felt really bad after missing... but that's football. I'll take my chances next time. In my heart, my expectations are very high, and I think I can deliver."

Still, Hamza remained upbeat. "The last thing we need is to increase our self belief because the boys are hard-workers, talented and aggressive." He added, "The biggest thing for us, especially as a nation, is to stick together."

Asked about comparisons with Lionel Messi as Bangladesh's biggest star, he laughed off the notion. "Even if Messi played for Bangladesh, we'd still have the troubles of trying to get the tactics right and building the team spirit."

"Football is never about one person, especially not me."



RABEYA BLITZ SPARKS HOPE

Pacer Marufa Akter once again led Bangladesh's bowling with her firepower, showcasing a unit capable of troubling any opponent during the ICC Women's World Cup clash against England in Guwahati yesterday. But 20-year-old all-rounder Rabeya Khan, who debuted in T20Is in 2019 and broke into the ODI setup in December 2022, also stole the spotlight with an aggressive unbeaten 43 off 27 balls, smashing six fours and a six. Sobhana Mostary's steady 60, combined with Rabeya's blitz, helped Bangladesh post 178. Regardless of the result, Rabeya's fearless knock gave the team something to defend and a glimpse of the batting aggression the Tigresses urgently need.

PHOTO: AFP

- Bangladesh and Afghanistan have faced each other in 19 ODIs. The Tigers have won 11 of those encounters, while Afghanistan have won 8.
- Afghanistan and Bangladesh are tied 2-2 in bilateral ODI series results.
- Afghanistan have played three ODIs in 2025, winning and losing one, with the other match producing no result.
- Bangladesh have played five ODIs in 2025, winning one and losing four.
- Mohammad Nabi is the only player remaining from the first ODI between Bangladesh and Afghanistan, held in Fatullah in 2014.



Tigers seek ODI reset after T20 surge

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh will look to revive their fortunes in the 50-over format and build on their recent T20 success when they face Afghanistan in the first of three ODIs at the Zayed Cricket Stadium in Abu Dhabi today.

The Tigers have been in fine touch in the 20-over format, winning four consecutive bilateral series against Sri Lanka, Pakistan, the Netherlands and Afghanistan, and reaching the Super Four stage of the Asia Cup; and nearly making it through to the final. Their form ODIs, however, paints a contrasting picture.

Since November last year, Bangladesh have lost three successive ODI series -- to Afghanistan, West Indies and Sri Lanka. Their last series win in this format came in March 2024 at home against Sri Lanka.

The slump has also been reflected in the ICC ODI rankings, where Bangladesh currently sit 10th -- outside the zone for direct qualification to the 2027 World Cup. As per the qualification process, hosts South Africa and Zimbabwe will gain automatic entry, along with the top

eight ranked teams as of March 31, 2027. The remaining four spots will be decided through qualifying tournaments.

For Bangladesh, the goal is clear -- rebuild ODI confidence and climb the rankings. A series win over Afghanistan would do both, but it will require a fresh approach after recent inconsistency in both batting and bowling.

The inclusion of in-form right-hander Saif Hassan, who has earned his maiden ODI call-up after a string of impressive T20 displays, signals the start of that rebuilding phase. Saif is expected to open the innings alongside Tanzid Hasan Tamim, with fellow opener Mohammad Naim yet to join the squad due to visa issues.

The middle order hinges on Towhid Hridoy, Jaker Ali and Shamim Hossain, with skipper Mehidy Miraz adding depth down the order. Spin duties fall to Rishad Hossain and Tanvir Islam, while the pace attack -- Taskin Ahmed, Mustafizur Rahman, Tanzim Sakib, Hasan Mahmud and Nahid Rana -- is set to rotate through the series.

The final two ODIs will also be held at the same venue on October 11 and 14.

NCL T20 Chattogram finish top in league stage

SPORTS REPORTER

Yasir Ali's unbeaten half-century guided Chattogram Division to a five-wicket win over Dhaka Division, helping them finish the league stage of the National Cricket League (NCL) T20 on top of the points table at the Sylhet Outer Stadium on Tuesday.



Chasing 120 in a curtailed 13-over contest, Chattogram slipped to 36-4 before Yasir struck a blistering 27-ball 53. Irfan Shukkur added a 15-ball 30 as Chattogram reached 123-5 in 12.2 overs to complete their fifth win. Dhaka's Mahfuzur Rahman Rabby (3-11) and Ripon Mondol (2-13) shared all five wickets.

Earlier, after being sent to bat, Dhaka managed 119-6 in 13 overs. Mosaddek Hossain remained unbeaten on 31 off 27 balls after quick cameos from Ashkur Rahman Shibli (16 off eight) and Jishan Alam (21 off seven). Left-arm spinner Hasan Murad claimed 3-21 for Chattogram.

With 11 points, Chattogram confirmed their place in the first qualifier against Khulna Division, who finished second with 11 points but with an inferior run rate following yesterday's win over Sylhet. Despite the defeat, Dhaka also made the playoffs and will face Rangpur Division in the Eliminator.

The eliminator and first qualifier will be held on October 9, followed by the second qualifier on October 10, while the final is scheduled for October 12.



Novak Djokovic struggles with soaring temperatures and punishing humidity during his round of 16 match against Jaume Munar at the Shanghai Masters yesterday. "It's the same for every player out on the court, but it's brutal," Djokovic said after he battled to victory. After a string of retirement of several high-profile players, including defending champion Jannik Sinner and Casper Ruud, the governing body of men's tennis could consider a formal heat rule.

PHOTO: AFP

Bulbul's new tenure kicks off with BPL in focus

ABDULLAH AL MEHDI

After a short, four-month tenure where he had to navigate with only a handful of directors, Aminul Islam Bulbul now has a full-fledged Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) following the October 6 elections.

The newly-elected board announced its standing committees, with the Bangladesh Premier League (BPL), country's lone franchise-based T20 tournament, quickly emerging as the main priority in its first meeting yesterday.

Concluding the meeting, Iftekhar Rahman Mithu, who retained his position as chairman of the umpires committee, announced the chairpersons of the standing committees. Bulbul himself will head the BPL Governing Council, with Iftekhar serving as BPL member secretary.

Mithu, joined by new directors Abdur Razzak, Shanian Tanim, Amzad Hossain, and Khaled Masud Pilot, noted that the committees have been formed for an initial two-month period.

"We have formed the committees for two months and anyone can come



forward if they are not comfortable and discuss with the president," Mithu said.

Asked whether the new president has outlined a vision for the board, Mithu immediately highlighted the BPL.

"Yes, a plan outline has been given on when we will provide the EOI, provide media rights, and then receive them," he said.

Pressing further for an overview of

the board's plans, Mithu reiterated the BPL focus.

"I am talking about BPL since it's the burning issue right now. Mahbub [Anam] bhai took it to a certain level wonderfully, but there was a gap which we will have to fill in one to two months," he explained.

Mahbub Anam had served as BPL chairman before the last board's tenure ended. Mithu added that agreements with marketing and

sports management firm IMG are at an advanced stage.

The new board intends to hold the BPL in the December-January window. However, insiders caution that the timeframe may be too short for any company -- even IMG -- to organize a truly polished event.

"It's very difficult and challenging for us. It will happen, inshallah. Those of us here in the committees, our movements have begun and we don't have time to even waste an hour. We had the option to hold the tournament or not hold it at all. The board has taken a courageous step so that everyone together will put in their full effort to hold a beautiful BPL," Mithu said.

Interestingly, former BCB president Faruque Ahmed, who elected vice-president this time, was not included in any of the standing committees. Faruque had been ousted from the top job due to last year's lackluster BPL one of the reasons.

"There is no reason to be surprised [that I am not in any standing committees]. I did not want to be in any of the committees," Faruque told this newspaper.