

WC prep in focus as BPL Dhaka leg begins

SPORTS REPORTER

The Dhaka leg of the Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) begins today at a time when all focus is on the uncertainty regarding Bangladesh's participation in the upcoming ICC T20 World Cup set to begin in India and Sri Lanka on February 7.

Communications are ongoing between the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) and the International Cricket Council (ICC) regarding the board's request to relocate Bangladesh's matches outside India.

Amid such uncertainty, the national team players are carrying on with their World Cup prep in the BPL, which includes Bangladesh and Rajshahi Warriors opener Tanzid Hasan Tamim.

Najmul Hossain Shanto -- captain of Rajshahi -- had earlier said that players "act" unfazed when faced with an uncertain situation before a global event, but actually are affected. Tanzid, however, claimed he is unaffected by the recent developments and is only focused on his World Cup preparation.

"No, it's not disturbing [regarding uncertainty over World Cup venue]... As we won't get much time after the BPL, we have to complete our

preparation within the BPL," he said.

"The BCB and the ICC are in communication so that we can go to the World Cup and play in a suitable and safe place. I believe they're working on this properly," he added.

Many of the national team batters struggled to make an impact for most of the Sylhet phase, but by the end, some good performances emerged.

Tanzid himself struggled to notch big runs, but seemingly turned a corner when he managed a 76 off 43 balls in the last game against Dhaka, helping Rajshahi to a seven-wicket win which also sealed their playoff qualification.

The left-hander said most of the players are now overcoming a bad run.

"The first few matches were a bit poor for most of us, but everyone is trying to overcome that and perform consistently. I can see that most players are now doing that, which should give us some confidence for the World Cup," he said.

With only six matches left in the league phase, table-toppers Rajshahi, Chattogram Royals and Sylhet Titans have already ensured playoff berth while Rangpur Riders, Dhaka Capitals and Noakhali Express vie for the one remaining spot.



BANGLADESH WELCOMES FOOTBALL'S ULTIMATE PRIZE

Bangladesh national team captain Jamal Bhuiyan and Gilberto Silva -- a member of Brazil's World Cup-winning squad in 2002 -- pose with the FIFA World Cup trophy as it arrived in Bangladesh on Wednesday morning as part of the "FIFA World Cup Trophy Tour by Coca-Cola" ahead of the 2026 FIFA World Cup in the USA, Mexico, and Canada. On his first visit to Bangladesh, the Brazil legend thanked fans "for the warm welcome" and hoped the trophy tour would mark an occasion that "inspires the young generation to play sports, especially football." The trophy was received at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport in Dhaka by Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) president Tabith Awal, joined by BIDA chairman Ashik Chowdhury and NBR chairman Abdur Rahman Khan. Under tight security, the trophy was then escorted from the airport to the Radisson Blu Hotel, where fans had the opportunity to view and take pictures with the iconic prize. This time, the World Cup trophy is being showcased at 75 locations across 30 countries, including Bangladesh, which was also part of the trophy tour ahead of the 2022 FIFA World Cup. PHOTO: COCA-COLA



Manchester City's latest signing Antoine Semenyo has enjoyed a flying start to life at the club. The winger celebrates after scoring City's second goal in a 2-0 win over holders Newcastle United at St James' Park yesterday in the first-leg semifinal of the English League Cup. Semenyo opened his City account in a 10-1 thrashing of Exeter City in the FA Cup on Saturday and followed it up with another strike in only his second game for the club, before Rayan Cherki added a stoppage-time goal to double City's advantage. "I am just taking the confidence I had from Bournemouth here and playing with a smile on my face. I am enjoying every moment," the Ghanaian said. PHOTO: FACEBOOK



'Good start': Bangladesh open with a draw against India

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh began their campaign in the inaugural SAFF Futsal Championship with a dramatic 4-4 draw against India in Bangkok yesterday, with captain Rahbar Wahed Khan expressing satisfaction over his side's performance.

Bangladesh twice surrendered the lead in a pulsating contest, with Rahbar and Monir Khan netting a brace each.

"We took the lead a few times and tried to keep it. But I am very happy with the boys, as we put in a very good performance. It is a good start to the tournament," Rahbar said after the match.

Under the guidance of Iranian coach Saeid Khodarahmi, Bangladesh repeatedly asked questions of a strong Indian side and looked the better team for long spells in the first half, which ended 2-2.

Moin opened the scoring for Bangladesh before Anmol Adhikari equalised for India. Rahbar then restored Bangladesh's lead, but Lasawmpuia brought India back on level terms before the break.

After resumption, Roluahpuia put India ahead, only for Moin to equalise once again. India reclaimed the lead through Roluahpuia's second of the match, before Rahbar struck late to salvage a point for the men in red and green.

The captain had reasons to be pleased as Bangladesh displayed impressive control, endurance, and skill in a new format played on a hard surface with a smaller ball -- a demanding test that hinted at a tough regional tournament involving seven nations. Sri Lanka and Bhutan also drew 3-3 earlier in the day in the tournament opener at the same venue.

Future stars on show



- The 16th ICC Under-19 Cricket World Cup will be held in Zimbabwe and Namibia from January 15 to February 6, with India facing the USA in the opening match in Bulawayo.
- Australia enter as defending champions with four titles, just behind record holders India with five, while Pakistan have two, and West Indies, South Africa, Bangladesh, and England have one each.
- 2020 champions Bangladesh, pitted in Group B alongside India, New Zealand and USA, begin their campaign against India on January 17.
- Sixteen teams are split into four groups, with the top three from each advancing to the Super Six, then the best two progressing to the semifinals on February 3 and 4 at Queens Sports Club and Harare Sports Club. The final will be played on February 6 in Harare.

AGENCIES

The U19 Men's Cricket World Cup 2026 isn't just a tournament -- it's a launchpad for the next generation of cricketing stars. Legends once began their journeys here; now a new class steps forward, ready to leave their mark on the international stage.

Among them, Bangladesh arrive with quiet determination and thorough preparation. They haven't just trained; they have lived cricket these past months -- touring England and Zimbabwe, testing themselves against Afghanistan and sharpening every department.

Their hopes rest strongly on fast bowler Iqbal Hossain Emon, a returning spearhead whose senior domestic experience has added maturity to his pace and precision. Alongside him, Al Fahad stands as a reliable partner, ensuring Bangladesh always carry threat with the new ball.

With the bat, consistency will define their campaign. Zawad Abrar has already shown resilience with important runs in pressure situations, while Azizul Hakim looks comfortable adapting to conditions away from home.

Lower down the order, Rizan

Hossain offers valuable depth and the ability to change tight matches. The exciting young talents Kalam Siddiki, Rifat Beg, and Shahriar Ahmed could also play crucial roles as Bangladesh push not just to compete -- but to truly contend and challenge for something special.

Around them, the tournament buzzes with anticipation.

Afghanistan arrive battle-hardened after qualifying heroics, led by prolific batter Khalid Ahmadzai, quick Nooristani Ormazi, and spinners Ziauddin Shaheen and Hafieezullah Zadran.

Australia return with leadership from Oliver Peake, supported by quick Charles Lachmund, stroke-maker Jayden Draper, and run-machine Nitesh Samuel.

England blend promise and pedigree through Thomas Rew, spinner Farhan Ahmed, and dependable Ben Dawkins.

India carry massive expectations once again, built around prodigy Vaibhav Sooryavanshi, captain Ayush Mhatre, prolific batter Vedant Trivedi, double-centurion Abhigyan Kundu, and consistent seamer Deepesh Devendran.

Ireland believe this may be their strongest ever group, featuring

Sebastian Dijkstra, Adam Leckey, and experienced campaigner Reuben Wilson.

Japan arrive fearless with Charlie Hara-Hinze, Nihar Parmar, and captain Kazuma Kato-Stafford.

Pakistan carry momentum thanks to Farhan Yousaf, incredible run-getter Sameer Minhas, seamer Abdul Subhan, and all-rounder Huzaiifa Ahsan.

New Zealand rely on Tom Jones and Mason Clarke, while Scotland look to Manu Saraswat and Finlay Jones.

Sri Lanka boast bowling threats Sethmika Seneviratne and Vigneshwaran Akash, and South Africa are highlighted by Jorich Van Schalkwyk, Muhammad Bulbulia, and Bayanda Majola.

Associate challengers like Tanzania's Laksh Bakrania and USA's Amrinder Singh Gill are also eager to upset bigger names.

Hosts Zimbabwe proudly back Kian and Michael Blignaut, Simbarashe Mudzengerere, and Shelton Mazyitorera.

Every squad has a player people are already talking about. Every team has someone dreaming of becoming the name the world remembers.

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