



**NZ in semis as Pakistan miss out despite win**

T20 World Cup's most in-form batter Sahibzada Farhan once again delivered for Pakistan in their final Super Eight fixture against already eliminated Sri Lanka, smashing his second T20I hundred while breaking a number of records. Farhan and Fakhar Zaman (84 off 42) stitched a mammoth 176-run opening stand -- the highest ever in a T20 World Cup game -- as Pakistan posted 212 for eight. Farhan, who scored 100 off 60 balls, reached another milestone as well. With 383 runs in seven matches, the right-handed opener amassed the most runs by any batter in a single edition of the World Cup, surpassing India's Virat Kohli, who had scored 319 in six games in 2014. (Inset) Pakistan won the match by five runs despite a late onslaught from Sri Lanka skipper Dasun Shanaka (76 not out off 31), but the victory wasn't enough for them to sneak into the semifinals as New Zealand grabbed the last-four spot.

PHOTO: AFP

**India-Windies 'quarterfinal' today**

AGENCIES

The Super Eight stage of the ICC T20 World Cup reaches a thrilling climax as defending champions India take on the West Indies on Sunday at the Eden Gardens in Kolkata in a virtual quarterfinal. With semifinal qualification on the line, this Group 1 clash promises fireworks for fans.

India entered the Super 8s in imperious form, winning all four of their Group A matches, including a commanding 61-run victory over archrivals Pakistan.

However, a 76-run defeat to South Africa in their opening Super 8 fixture left India's semifinal hopes hanging by a thread. India bounced back strongly after that loss, defeating Zimbabwe to keep their campaign alive.

With 2 points and a net run rate of -0.100, India must beat the Caribbean side to secure a spot in the last four. A win would likely see them finish second in Group 1 and face the top team from Group 2 in the semifinals.

The West Indies, two-time T20 champions, are renowned for their fearless, power-hitting approach. They topped Group C with ease and have consistently entertained with explosive batting and acrobatic fielding.

Despite a nine-wicket loss to South Africa in their second Super Eight match, the Caribbean side remain in contention. Sitting second in the table with 2 points and a net run rate of 1.791, they too need a victory to guarantee a semifinal berth.



Historically, the rivalry is evenly poised. In the last five head-to-head encounters, West Indies have won three, India two, with four of those victories coming while chasing. Both teams have won five of their last six matches, highlighting the balanced nature of this contest.

The Eden Gardens pitch, traditionally a batter's paradise, offers pace and bounce with quick outfields and relatively short boundaries, promising a high-scoring affair. Spinners could play a decisive role in the middle overs as the pitch begins to grip.

Elsewhere in the tournament, South Africa have already secured their semifinal spot as the only unbeaten side in the group, while Zimbabwe, out of contention, have enjoyed their best T20 World Cup finish yet. Both teams meet in Delhi on Sunday in a celebration of their successful campaigns, with no qualification pressure.

**In order to win this tournament, you have to go through India at some point. Tomorrow is that day for us. History could repeat, though it's a different venue and two different teams.**

West Indies coach **Daren Sammy** was recalling his team's semifinal win over India in the 2016 T20 World Cup, where he was captain and went on to lift the trophy.

**Prity ready to give her best if given chance**

AGENCIES

Young winger Sauravi Akanda Prity said Bangladesh are using their remaining training sessions to correct mistakes and settle into unfamiliar surroundings as the team finalises preparations for their historic debut in the AFC Women's Asian Cup in Australia. Bangladesh will start their campaign against China on March 3. Speaking after Saturday's practice session at Jubilee Stadium in Sydney, the youngster revealed that lessons from the team's lone warm-up match -- a 1-1 draw against Western Sydney Wanderers -- had shaped recent training. For the Bangladesh team, the tournament represents their first exposure to Asia's biggest stage.

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



**Australia look to reignite 'Matildas mania'**

AGENCIES

Australia will look to reignite the "Matildas mania" that gripped the nation during their 2023 Women's World Cup run as they begin their bid for a second Women's Asian Cup title on home soil.

The Sam Kerr-captained Matildas open the 21st Asian Cup on Sunday against the Philippines in Perth, seeking a convincing win to set the tone in the 12-nation tournament.

A strong start in front of a big home crowd would go a long way toward restoring the energy that once made them the country's most celebrated team.

During the 2023 FIFA Women's World Cup, co-hosted with New Zealand, Australia surged to the semifinals and captivated the nation.

Sell-out crowds followed them across the country, and they went on to play 16 successive home matches in front of packed stadiums through much of 2024.

That unprecedented support encouraged Australia to bid confidently for the Asian Cup, promising to fill major venues in Perth, Sydney and the Gold Coast.

This time, however, the buildup has been more subdued. Tickets remain available for group matches and the public buzz has been noticeably quieter.

Once dubbed "Australia's favourite team," the Matildas have come back down to earth since the World Cup, when ambitions of becoming a genuine global force seemed



realistic rather than aspirational.

The downturn coincided with the loss of captain Sam Kerr to an ACL injury. Without their talismanic striker, Australia exited in the group stage of the 2024 Paris Olympics and slipped to a record low world ranking of 16th.

Despite outside criticism, new coach Joe Montemurro reinstated Kerr as captain upon her return last October, signalling stability and renewed belief.

Montemurro has set high expectations. Australia's only Women's Asian Cup triumph came in 2010, when they defeated North Korea on penalties in China. Lifting the trophy again at home would represent both redemption and a statement of intent.

The Asian Football Confederation (AFC) believes the tournament can build on the

legacy of 2023. AFC General Secretary Windsor John has said expectations are that this edition will set a new benchmark for quality, professionalism and global visibility, pointing to Australia's World Cup infrastructure and operational experience as a strong foundation.

The governing body views the event as a chance to consolidate recent progress and strengthen the Asian Cup's identity as the continent's premier women's national team competition.

On the field, defending champions China are chasing a 10th title, while Japan, winners in 2014 and 2018, aim to reclaim the crown. With World Cup qualification spots for Brazil 2027 also on offer, the stakes are high across the continent.

**Jishan, Mosaddek guide Central into BCL final**

SPORTS REPORTER

Central Zone rode on Jishan Alam's maiden List A century and Mosaddek Hossain's unbeaten half-century to secure a thrilling two-wicket win over North Zone and reach the final of the Bangladesh Cricket League (BCL) one-day competition at Rajshahi Divisional Stadium on Saturday.

Despite the defeat, North Zone also advanced to the final after winning their first two matches. Their place was confirmed when East Zone edged South Zone by one wicket in the final league match in Bogura.

Central Zone and North Zone both finished on four points and will meet again in the day-night final at the Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium in Mirpur on March 3.

Chasing 323 to qualify for the final, Central Zone were powered by Jishan's superb 127 off 93 balls and Mahfijul Islam

Robin's 54, which guided them to 249 for four after 42 overs.

North Zone fought back strongly as Rishad Hossain took three wickets while Meherob Hasan and Shoriful Islam claimed two wickets each to reduce Central Zone to 278 for eight, leaving 45 runs required from the last four overs.

Mosaddek then turned the match with a decisive unbeaten knock, striking four fours and four sixes in a composed finish. Needing eight runs in the final over, he struck a boundary and a six to seal victory with four balls remaining.

Earlier, North Zone posted 322 for seven after being sent in to bat, built around Tawhid Hridoy's 102 off 113 balls. Tanzid Hasan Tamim made 92 while Sabbir Rahman contributed a rapid 73 off 51 deliveries.

For Central Zone, Abu Hider Rony claimed four wickets and Ripon Mondol took two.



**TENSION IN MIDDLE EAST**

**Mushfiq stranded in Jeddah**



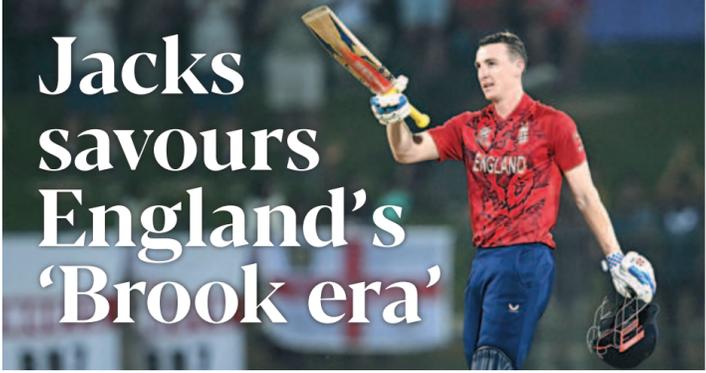
Bangladesh wicketkeeper-batter Mushfiqur Rahim has been stranded at the King Abdulaziz International Airport in Jeddah due to the war between USA-Israel and Iran.

Mushfiqur shared the update on his official Facebook page on Saturday.

**ICC activates contingency plans for stakeholders' safety**

The International Cricket Council (ICC) is closely monitoring the evolving situation in the Middle East and has activated comprehensive contingency plans to safeguard the travel, logistics and well-being of all stakeholders associated with the ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2026, currently underway in India and Sri Lanka, it said in a media release on Saturday. While the crisis in the Middle East has no direct bearing on the conduct of the tournament, the ICC acknowledges that a significant number of personnel -- including players, team management, match officials, broadcast teams, and event staff -- rely on Gulf hub airports, particularly Dubai (DXB), as key transit points for onward travel to their home countries upon concluding their commitments at the event.

\*\*\*Read full stories on The Daily Star's website



**Jacks savours England's 'Brook era'**

REUTERS

Will Jacks hailed Harry Brook's impact as England's white-ball captain after their four-wicket win over New Zealand on Friday secured top spot in the Super Eight stage of the T20 World Cup.

Jacks delivered an all-round performance, taking two wickets in four economical overs before adding a brisk 44-run partnership with Rehan Ahmed in England's chase of 160, which they completed with three balls remaining.

Asked whether England's recent form signalled a return to the "Bazball" style of play popularised by coach Brendon McCullum, Jacks instead pointed to Brook, who struck a 50-ball century against Pakistan in their previous match to seal a semifinal berth and again settled down the innings on Friday after England slipped to

2-2 early in the chase.

"I think this group is the era of Harry Brook. He is our white-ball captain," Jacks told reporters in Colombo.

"And I think that is something that we've been really focusing on. He has got us to play a certain way, and I think that's why we've had some success."

England will face India or West Indies in the semifinals, with the two sides meeting on Sunday. Jacks said England would be ready for either opponent.

"We'll be watching their game Sunday and we'll see the outcome. We'll be prepared and I think we'll go into it with optimism and excitement."