



India rewrite record books in final

India wreaked havoc at the Narendra Modi Stadium in Ahmedabad yesterday, smashing a plethora of records in the final of the ICC T20 World Cup against New Zealand. From piling up a record total to raining boundaries, the co-hosts reduced the Black Caps to helpless spectators at the largest capacity cricket stadium in the world.

- India's 255 for five is the highest total in a T20 World Cup final, and the third-highest overall in the tournament's history.
- India raced to 100 in just 7.2 overs, the fastest team hundred in a T20 World Cup knockout match.
- India smashed 37 boundaries in the innings -- the most in a T20 World Cup final. That included 18 sixes, also the highest in a T20 World Cup title decider.
- This was the seventh time India crossed the 250-run mark in T20is -- the most by any team in the format. It was also India's fourth 250-plus total in



- 2026, the most in a calendar year.
- Opener Sanju Samson's 89 off 46 balls is the highest individual score in a T20 World Cup final, surpassing 85 not out by Marlon Samuels in 2016 and 85 by Kane Williamson in 2021.
- The 105-run second-wicket stand between Samson and Ishan Kishan (54 off 25) is the second 100-plus partnership in a T20 World Cup final, behind the 111-run stand between Craig Kieswetter and Kevin Pietersen against Australia in 2010.

A tie with a lot on the line

SPORTS REPORTER

Debutant Bangladesh are set to face Uzbekistan, the side closest to the women in red and green in terms of rankings in their group, in a Group B encounter of the AFC Women's Asian Cup at the Perth Rectangular Stadium today, with a number of achievements in sight.

The first two group games proved to be a 'David and Goliath' affair for Peter Butler's charges. Bangladesh fought hard in a 2-0 defeat against defending champions China before faltering to a 5-0 thrashing against three-time champions DPR Korea.

The 49th-ranked Uzbekistan still pose an uphill challenge for the 112th-ranked Bangladesh. However, Afeida Khandaker and company will feel this is a match they can target to secure their maiden win in the tournament, a result that could see them advance to the quarterfinals -- which would also confirm their place in the qualifiers for the 2028 Summer Olympics.

A victory today would also open a potential pathway for Bangladesh to the 2027 FIFA Women's World Cup. The top six teams in the ongoing Asian Cup qualify directly for the World Cup, while the seventh and eighth-placed teams enter the continental playoffs for the quadrennial event.

However, Bangladesh's chances of progressing as one of the two best third-placed teams across the three groups remain extremely slim. Bangladesh, currently third in Group B with zero



points and a goal difference of -7, are competing with the third-placed teams from the other groups -- the Philippines in Group A and Vietnam in Group C.

Both the Philippines (-2 GD) and Vietnam (0 GD) have three points each, giving them a clear edge. For Bangladesh to advance, they would either need to beat Uzbekistan by at least a six-goal margin or hope that Japan beat Vietnam by a significant margin in their final group game.

However, Butler believes rankings will matter little once the match begins.

"Ranking is one thing, but when you go on that pitch, it's 11 vs 11. They have come through so much. Tomorrow is a milestone for Bangladesh football and we will go there to win and give our best," said the 59-year-old.

Despite the daunting equation, Bangladesh can also draw encouragement from the fact that Uzbekistan themselves struggled during qualification, needing penalties to overcome Nepal after being pushed hard.

"I watched the Nepal game, and I think they played really well. Uzbekistan are very strong, powerful athletes. But I think our technical ability and our ability to keep the ball can cause them problems. We've got to be brave; we've got to be bold," an optimistic Butler said.

Bangladesh will now hope Butler's words translate into action as the girls aim for at least a brave showing today.



USA and the trend of firsts

The 1994 FIFA World Cup in the United States introduced the three-points-for-a-win rule. Previously, a victory earned only two points. This time, the United States will participate as a co-host of the tournament, alongside Mexico and Canada, when the 2026 FIFA World Cup kicks off. The upcoming edition is also set to witness another 'first' in the history of the World Cup. A total of 48 teams will participate, marking the highest number of teams ever to take part in the quadrennial event.

** Visit The Daily Star's website to also read: "The silence of the Maracana"

Fresh guard for a rivalry in pause

ASHFAQ-UL-ALAM

Batters celebrating after reaching a milestone, be it a half-century, century or further increments of fifty, is commonplace in cricket, almost everyone does it.

Some jump up and down in elation, others calmly wave the bat to acknowledge their teammates and fans, a few fall to the ground to thank the Almighty and a handful stare into the heavens in gratitude.

There are, however, some players who follow up the celebration by taking fresh guard as a mental exercise to calm their nerves and to start their innings anew.

In a symbolic way, Pakistan's wicketkeeper-batter Mohammad Rizwan will get to do that with his ODI career, as he is set to play his 101th ODI in the same venue and against the same opponents he had started his journey in the format nearly 11 years ago.

Rizwan had made his ODI debut for Pakistan in April 17, 2015, in the first game of a three-match ODI series against Bangladesh at the Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium in Dhaka.

That series is fondly remembered in the annals of Bangladesh cricket as the Tigers won it 3-0 and it kicked off



the trifecta of home series wins which included triumphs over India and South Africa.

Surprisingly, Bangladesh and Pakistan have not had a 50-overs bilateral series since then, facing off only four times in the last 11 years in the format only in multi-team events.

During the same period, Pakistan have had nine ODI encounters against India -- even with no bilateral cricketing relations between them -- more than double of the matches against Bangladesh.

It's not as if Bangladesh and Pakistan have not had bilateral relations at all. During this period, Bangladesh have toured Pakistan four times and Pakistan have toured Bangladesh twice, but only for Tests and T20is -- which could either be pure co-incidence or a sign of the

declining relevance of the ODI format.

In the 2015 series, Bangladesh were a side on the up, riding the high of their maiden quarterfinal finish in a World Cup earlier that year, with the 'Fab Five' at their peaks while Pakistan were a side in rebuild.

The games were one-sided, with Tamim Iqbal making the series his own with two centuries and a fifty.

As fate would have it, Pakistan are seemingly are in the midst of what appears to be another reset, with six uncapped players getting picked in the 15-member squad and the experienced Babar Azam axed.

However, Bangladesh are no longer the well-oiled machine they once were in the 50-over format. The Mehidy Hasan Miraz-led side have lost their identity as an ODI side and are trying to regain their form in time with a direct entry into next year's ODI World Cup still on the line.

Rizwan, an experienced campaigner now, landed in Dhaka in the early hours of Sunday alongside the other Pakistan cricketers. Most likely, he will take guard for his 101st ODI somewhere along the series and hopefully, he won't have to wait till his 201st ODI to play another 50-over Bangladesh-Pakistan ODI series.

Crisis deepens as 1st div women's clubs seek league delay

ABDULLAH AL MEHDI

Club cricket crisis in Bangladesh further deepened yesterday after nine women's first division clubs sent a letter to the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB), asking for the Dhaka First Division Women's Cricket League to be postponed to next year.

The undated letter addressed to BCB's women's wing chairperson Rubaba Dowla stated that due to the current economic situation in the country, the clubs are in a bad state financially and thus requested the board to postpone the 2025-26 league and arrange it next year.

Begum Anowara Sporting Club's general secretary Moniruzzaman, who, according to many officials of the nine clubs, is "handling" the matter, said that the clubs are willing to play only if there is no relegation or promotion this year, saying a relegation could result in a loss of Tk 20-30 lakh.

"We are facing an economic crisis as many of our sponsors are not in the country due to the current political landscape," he said, adding that it is difficult for them to get sponsors as officials of first division women's clubs don't get BCB councillorship.

However, an official from another



club, despite being a signatory on the letter, said they wanted to play as their financial demands were met.

This year, the BCB has increased the remuneration for participating clubs from Tk 2.5 lakh to Tk 4 lakh. Renumeration for food and transportation per game is set at Tk 7000 and Tk 10,000 respectively while for jerseys, the BCB would provide Tk 50,000 to each team.

The players transfer window was set to close on March 28 and the league was supposed to start on April 2.

Players were left frustrated by the clubs' request to postpone the league.

"All the dates were given and suddenly the clubs are claiming financial constraints. I have checked and the BCB has significantly raised the financial donation this time," a first division cricketer, who resides outside Dhaka, told The Daily Star.

"Already there is a dearth of domestic leagues for women and it's difficult to run a family under these circumstances. We trained the whole year only to hear they don't want to play this year," she added.

Another player, who had signed a Tk 2 lakh contract for this season with a club, said officials have told her that

if the club competes this year, they will treat it more "like a picnic".

"They [club management] told us that they will give us Tk 5-10 thousand each. They won't be able to give the contracted amounts," she said.

One cricketer alleged that the clubs were saying contradicting things to the media and the players as her club had told her that it was BCB who wanted the league to happen without relegation.

Some have alleged that as some clubs have failed to form a team in time, they have manufactured this crisis.

Officials of the women's wing said they are searching for a solution as they want the league to take place. The Daily Star tried to reach women's wings vice-president Abdur Razzak for a comment but he did not respond.

Meanwhile, hundreds of cricketers are planning to stage a protest at the BCB premises on Monday.

National team player Rumana Ahmed, who is suffering from the uncertainty over the Women's Dhaka Premier League, identified with the plight of the first division cricketers.

"The players are very disappointed with what is happening. Almost all the players depend on the earnings from this league... I hope BCB will do something," she told The Daily Star.

Just a goal away from 900

Goals, milestones, and trophies -- these remain a constant for Lionel Messi, and the eight-time Ballon d'Or winner moved to the brink of yet another incredible feat on Saturday. With a deft chipped finish in the first half of Inter Miami's 2-1 victory over D.C. United in Major League Soccer, Messi took his career goal tally to 899, leaving him just one away from reaching the 900-goal milestone. This was Messi's 80th goal for Miami, while he netted 672 goals for Barcelona, 32 at PSG, along with a further 115 international goals for Argentina. The 38-year-old remains only behind Cristiano Ronaldo, who has 965 career goals, on the all-time top goalscorers' list.

PHOTO: AFP

