

## School cricket begins amid calls for better scheduling

SPORTS REPORTER

The country's most widely contested cricketing competition -- Prime Bank National School Cricket Tournament -- will begin its 11th edition today amidst questions over the timing of the event.

An approximate 8,750 budding cricketers from 350 schools across 64 districts will compete in this edition. The tournament will commence in three phases: District, Divisional and the National Round.

The National Round will begin in the first week of June, at the start of the monsoon, which could potentially affect the tournament, as it had done in the previous season.

In the 2024-25 edition, the final between Modern High School Cumilla and Police Lines School & College Bogura got rained out and the former were declared champions after a coin toss.

National team star Tawhid Hridoy, who along with Test captain Najmul Hossain Shanto spoke at the pre-tournament press conference yesterday, urged the organisers to rethink the tournament's timing.

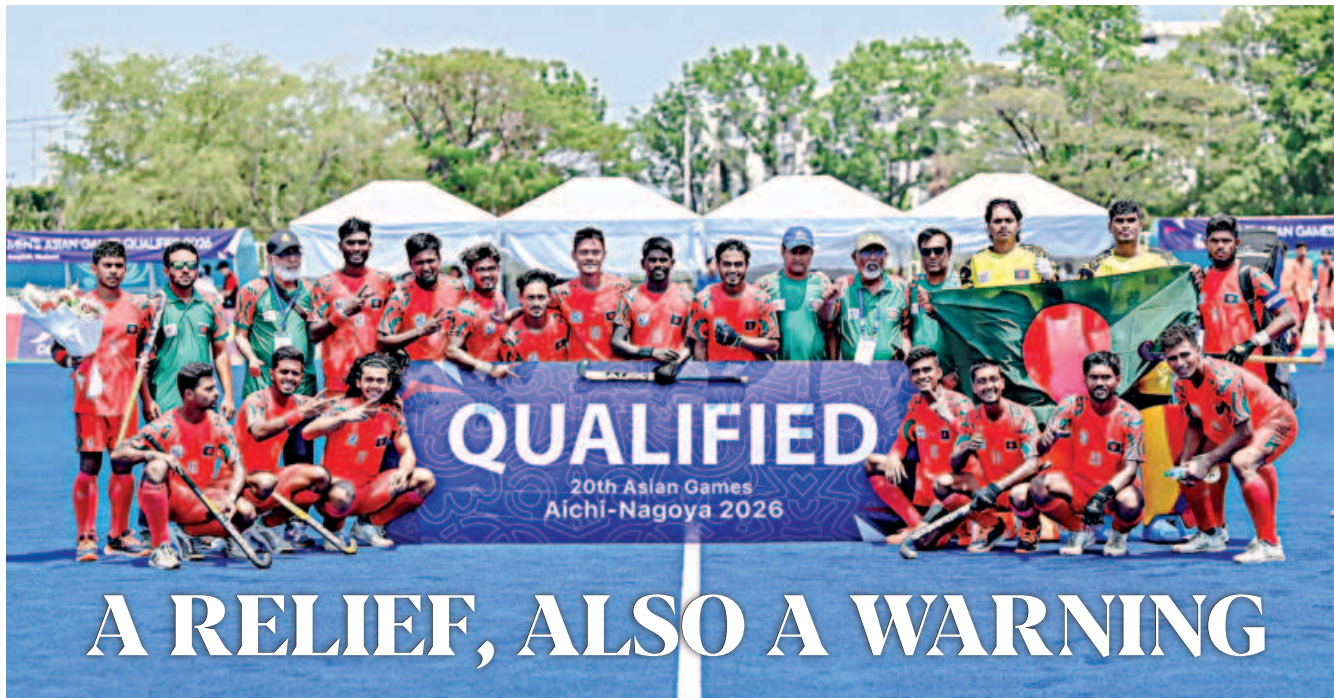
"If I'm not mistaken, last year the championship was decided by toss due to no play because of rain...I want the tournament to not take place during the rainy season. If it's held earlier, the cricketers will be able to play all the matches," he said.

Shanto, who like Hridoy is a product of school cricket, talked about competing in an U-17 school tournament in Kerala as part of a BCB team and hoped for similar opportunities for the next generation.

BCB officials suggested that informal talks have been held with Sri Lanka and Pakistan regarding school cricket. When asked about the issues plaguing the tournament, one Game Development official spoke about the role of the schools.

"If the schools become a little professional, appoint district level coaches even for a week before tournament and take care of the venues, it would be a great venture. In Sri Lanka, the cricket board does not oversee school cricket. The schools take care of the facilities too and in that regard we are behind," he remarked.

The organisers also handed scholarships worth Tk 1,20,000 each to 25 young cricketers yesterday on the basis of last season's performances. While the number of recipients has risen from 15 and the amount has doubled, greater focus on venues, facilities and scheduling remains essential to improve the event's overall relevance.



Bangladesh men's hockey team just about made it to the 2026 Asian Games, edging Hong Kong 3-2 in a tense shootout after a 4-4 draw in the Men's Asian Games Qualifiers in Bangkok yesterday. The men in red and green have never missed the Asian Games, finishing as top two teams in the last three editions of the Qualifiers. Yet this time, the 2014 champions could not reach the semifinals, leaving them in a must-win fixture to land among the top six in the nine-team competition and advance to the main event. "Winning against Hong Kong was like a stone being removed from our chests, because playing in the Asian Games has always been a matter of pride for Bangladesh," forward Rakibul Hossain said. The outcome should serve as a wake-up call more than a celebration. "Missing out would have sunk our hockey, and we would not have been able to show our faces," Rakibul added.

PHOTO: AHF



### The unwanted club

Mexico scored 62 goals across 17 FIFA World Cup editions. But they carry a dubious distinction. With a staggering 101 goals conceded, they share the record for the tournament's worst-ever goal difference (-39) alongside South Korea. In doing so, Mexico joined an unwanted club -- they are one of only four nations to have shipped a century of goals, alongside Brazil, Germany, and Argentina.

\*\* Visit The Daily Star's website to also read: "The butcher of Seville."



Atletico Madrid forward Julian Alvarez (Left) opened the scoring with a powerful long-range freekick before striker Alexander Sorloth added a second, sealing a 2-0 first-leg advantage over 10-man Barcelona -- who had Pau Cubarsi sent off -- in a tense Champions League quarterfinal at Camp Nou yesterday. It was Alvarez's ninth goal of the campaign, the most by an Atletico player in a single Champions League season, surpassing Diego Costa's eight in 2013-14. Meanwhile in Paris, defending champions PSG put one foot in the semis with a dominant 2-0 win over Liverpool, courtesy of goals from Desire Doue and Khvicha Kvaratskhelia (Right). Liverpool, meanwhile, failed to register a shot on target for the first time in the competition since November 2020 against Atalanta.

PHOTOS: FACEBOOK



## U-19s win TT gold

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh clinched the gold medal in the boys' U-19 team category at the South Asian Youth Championship in Himachal, India, yesterday, defeating Sri Lanka 3-1 in the final match.

The win also secured Bangladesh's place in June's ITTF-ATTU Asian Youth Championships in Oman.

In the decisive round-robin game, Abul Hashem lost 3-2 in the first match, but Bangladesh bounced back to seal the victory, with Nafiz Iqbal winning the second and fourth matches 3-0 and 3-1, sandwiched by Joy Islam's 3-0 win.

Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Nepal and Maldives all finished on five points from three games, but Bangladesh topped the group thanks to superior set wins, having earlier lost 3-1 to Nepal and beaten Maldives 4-3.

Bangladesh had previously won this category in 2022, claimed silver in 2023 and 2024 in Arunachal and Kandy, and bronze in the 2025 edition in Nepal.

## BFL resumes with Dhaka derby today



SPORTS REPORTER

After a nearly month-long break due to the Bangladesh national team's international commitments, the Bangladesh Football League (BFL) resumes today with the Dhaka derby between archrivals Abahani Limited and Mohammedan SC at the Shaheed Dhirendranath Datta Stadium in Cumilla.

Elsewhere, Fakirerpool Young Men's Club host Brothers Union in Manikganj, while Rahmatganj MFS face hosts PWD SC in Gazipur.

Out of the title race, defending champions Mohammedan will be playing for pride, while Abahani need a win to stay in contention with leaders Bashundhara Kings (24 points) and second-placed Fortis FC (21). Abahani, on 19 points, will also seek revenge for their 3-2 defeat earlier in the season.

Brothers and Fakirerpool -- both on 10 points from 11 matches, but with the former ahead on goal difference -- will be looking to topple each other in the points table, while third-placed Rahmatganj will be aiming to extend their winning run against relegation-threatened PWD SC.



## 11<sup>th</sup> EDITION OF THE BIGGEST NATIONAL SCHOOL CRICKET TOURNAMENT BEGINS!

Since 2015, Prime Bank and the Bangladesh Cricket Board have been powering the dreams of young cricketers through the National School Cricket Tournament.

For over a decade, this platform has nurtured talent, built resilience, and inspired a new generation to rise with confidence and excellence.

More than just a tournament—it's where passion turns into performance, and future stars begin their journey to the world stage.

Our contribution since 2015

Schools participated	Matches played	Students empowered
3,507	6,195	76,235