

● Bangladesh are still searching for their first home Test win against Pakistan after eight matches. Their best result came in Khulna in 2015, when a 312-run opening stand between Tamim Iqbal and Imrul Kayes helped secure a draw. Bangladesh lost the other seven home Tests against Pakistan.

**“We have brought a well-rounded 16-man squad that can play in most conditions.... and now it is about playing ten days of good cricket.”**

**Shan Masood**  
Pakistan skipper

- Bangladesh's only two wins in 15 Tests against Pakistan came in Rawalpindi in 2024, where they sealed victories by 10 wickets and six wickets, respectively.
- Mominul Haque is nearing a major milestone, needing 141 more runs to become only the third Bangladesh batter after Mushfiqur Rahim and Tamim Iqbal to reach 5,000 Test runs.
- Pakistan spinner Noman Ali is also closing in on a landmark, requiring three more wickets to complete 100 Test wickets.



Bangladesh Test captain Najmul Hossain Shanto and his Pakistan counterpart Shan Masood pose with the trophy in Mirpur on Thursday ahead of their two-match Test series. Part of the current World Test Championship (WTC) cycle, Shanto and Co will take on the visitors in the first match, beginning today at the Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium. Focus will be on the pacers of the two sides, as it was the fast bowlers who starred during the Tigers' historic 2-0 series win in Rawalpindi when they played at the home of the opponents in 2024.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

## IOC lifts ban on Belarus but Russia still barred

AFP, Lausanne

The International Olympic Committee (IOC) on Thursday lifted restrictions on Belarusian athletes competing in the Olympics, while Russian athletes remain barred.

Following Russia's 2022 invasion of Ukraine, both countries' athletes had been banned from international competition, though some competed as neutrals. Russians can still participate only individually, under a neutral flag, and if they have not actively supported the conflict.

The IOC also emphasised that athletes should not be penalised for their governments' actions, including war involvement. The decision allows independent federations to implement the change and paves the way for a Belarusian delegation to compete at the 2028 Los Angeles Olympics with full representation in the opening ceremony and medal table.

Belarusians previously competed as "Individual Neutral Athletes" in Paris 2024 and Milan-Cortina 2026, alongside Russians, stripped of national symbols. The IOC noted that Russia's situation differs due to ROC's suspension since 2023 over control of Ukrainian regions and ongoing doping concerns.

## Shanto calls for better first-innings output

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Test captain Najmul Hossain Shanto stressed the need for stronger first-innings totals ahead of the Pakistan Test series starting on Friday in Mirpur, as the Tigers look for their first win of the current Test cycle after two matches.

The hosts have laid out a grassy track, and the wicket is expected to be sporting in nature. Shanto believes such wickets suit his side, and that the batting unit is settled. Bangladesh have a mix of youth and experience, with players like Mushfiqur Rahim and Mominul Haque bolstering the middle order.

"I hope it will be a good wicket. If you look at our team now, the bowling attack is experienced, and we have quite a few batsmen playing this format for a long time," he said, adding that the batters and bowlers are capable of adjusting to changing conditions in Mirpur.

"In Test cricket especially, I think the batsmen are settled; we have played several series together. So, in terms of experience, I would say it's a good team. Whatever the wicket is like, we have good pacers and good spinners on both ends. I think having a proper sporting wicket is good for our team."

In Tests, first-innings scores are often indicative of how a match will unfold. With batting becoming increasingly

**“In the last [WTC] cycle, we finished seventh, which was a good achievement. This time, our target will be to finish fourth or fifth. We have challenging away tours ahead, like Australia and South Africa, so the home series will be very important for us.”**

**Najmul Hossain Shanto**  
Bangladesh skipper

difficult in the third and fourth innings on wearing pitches, strong first-innings totals remain a key metric for success. Despite their experience, Bangladesh have often struggled in home conditions. After two tremendous wins in Rawalpindi in August 2024, they produced first-innings scores of 106 and 159 against South Africa in Dhaka and Chattogram respectively in October.

Bangladesh's average first-innings

score at home over the last two years under Shanto stands at 327.2, though that figure was boosted by totals above 400 and 500 against Zimbabwe and Ireland. The Tigers, in fact, fared better away from home in the last Test cycle, with three of their four wins coming overseas. Shanto believes better first-innings performances can improve their home record as Bangladesh now tailor conditions according to opponents' strengths.

"Certainly, the pace bowlers will help me as an extra asset because they have improved significantly in terms of skill and are bowling well in any conditions now... Personally, as a batsman, what I want from the team is that we always play good cricket in the first innings. If we can take up this challenge properly, I think this cycle will go even better," the Test skipper added.

Bangladesh's Test players, however, continue to face the challenge of returning to red-ball cricket after long gaps between matches. "It is difficult, absolutely... But it is very good that they at least got the chance to play one four-day match," said Shanto.

The onus will now be on the batters to deliver after the long break. "I would say they have prepared well for that specific role, and I firmly believe they will be able to play their best cricket."

## BCB probes BPL corruption links, suspends five

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) yesterday suspended five individuals, including a player, team official, franchise owner and participant, for breaching various provisions of the ICC Anti-Corruption Code for Participants linked to the last edition of the Bangladesh Premier League (BPL).

The charges stem from investigations conducted by the BCB Integrity Unit into alleged corrupt conduct, betting activities, failures to cooperate with anti-corruption investigations, and obstruction of investigations.

Those charged are Md Labur Rahman (team manager of Chattogram Royals), Towhidul Haque Towhid (franchise co-owner), Amit Mojumder (domestic cricketer) and Rezwana Kabir Siddique (team manager).

Labur and Towhidul have been accused under Article 2.4.6 for allegedly failing or refusing to cooperate with an investigation, including non-compliance with a Demand Notice issued under the Code.

They have also been charged under Article 2.4.7 for allegedly obstructing or delaying an anti-corruption investigation through the concealment, deletion or destruction of relevant communications and information.

Meanwhile, cricketer Amit Mojumder and team manager Rezwana have both been charged under Article 2.2.1, which relates to placing, accepting or entering into bets connected to cricket matches.

"The charged individuals have been provisionally suspended and given 14 days from receipt of the Notices of Charge to respond to the allegations," the board said in a statement.

"BCB will not make any further comment in respect of these matters at this stage," it added.

Meanwhile, the board also issued an Exclusion Order against Saminur Rahman under the BCB Excluded Person Policy following an investigation into alleged corrupt activities linked to the ninth, 10th and 11th editions of the BPL.

The investigation reportedly uncovered alleged betting-related activities, corrupt approaches to players and agents, communications with individuals associated with domestic and international betting and corruption networks, and alleged involvement in facilitating corrupt conduct in cricket matches.

BCB stated that after receiving a Notice of Intended Exclusion Order, Saminur waived his right to respond under the policy and accepted the imposition of the order.

Although Amit was provisionally suspended on Thursday, he featured in a Dhaka Premier Division Cricket League match for Rugganj Tigers against Gazi Group on the same day at BKSP-4.



## No BPL better than a poor one: Tamim

STAR SPORTS DESK

Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) ad hoc committee president Tamim Iqbal has issued a stern critique of the Bangladesh Premier League (BPL), labeling the deliberate circumvention of tournament regulations as a "crime". Tamim, alongside current BPL governing council chairman Fahim Sinha, addressed the media on Thursday following revelations over the mismanagement of last season's tournament. Prioritizing national and institutional integrity over a "patchwork" tournament, Tamim demanded strict accountability for financial irregularities and mismanagement.

\*\* Tamim prefers cancelling the BPL over hosting poorly organised editions that damage the BCB and Bangladesh's international image.

\*\* He categorised the intentional violation of board rules – such as accepting insufficient bank guarantees – as a "crime" rather than a simple mistake.

\*\* Fahim, meanwhile, revealed two franchises – Sylhet Titans and Noakhali Express – participated without formal agreements or meeting BCB's Letter of Intent criteria.

\*\* Fahim also mentioned BCB incurred losses of Tk 14-16 crore in the previous edition of BPL due to mismanagement.

\*\* Tamim insists that both the defaulting franchises and the board officials who approved their participation must be held responsible for the resulting financial strain on the BCB.

34 DAYS TO GO



## Egypt's historic World Cup debut

Egypt became the first African team to participate in a FIFA World Cup. After overcoming the qualifiers, they earned a ticket to the 1934 tournament in Italy. In that knockout-only World Cup, they played just one match, losing 4-2 to Hungary in the round of 16.

\*\* Visit The Daily Star's website to also read: 'In the ranks of legends: Forlan, the Jabulani ball magician'



## PSG march into final again

PSG turned the site of their maiden Champions League triumph into a launchpad for yet another final, as the holders sealed a 6-5 aggregate semifinal win over Bayern Munich following a 1-1 second-leg draw at Allianz Arena on Wednesday. Luis Enrique's side will face Arsenal in the final in Budapest on May 30.

● PSG are the first French side to reach three different European Cup/Champions League finals (2020, 2025, and 2026).

● PSG's 44 goals in 2025-26 are second most by a team in a single Champions League campaign, behind Barcelona's 45 in 1999-00.

● Khvicha Kvaratskhelia's assist for Ousmane Dembele made him the first player in Champions League history to score or assist in seven straight knockout-stage games in a single campaign. The only players to do so in six consecutive games are Kaka (2006-07), Edin Dzeko (2017-

18), and Dembele (2024-25).

● Harry Kane's 94th-minute equaliser came too late for Bayern, but made him only the second player to score in six consecutive Champions League knockout appearances after Cristiano Ronaldo (April 2012-April 2013).