DHAKA TUESDAY NOVEMBER 10, 2026, KARTIK 25, 1433 BS

SPORT



Bangladesh's biggest football star, Hamza Choudhury, arrived yesterday morning and joined the team's training session, kicking the ball as Fahamedul Islam looks on, at Bashundhara Kings Arena. The Sheffield United player is expected to strengthen Bangladesh's midfield when they face Sri Lanka in their final group match, having already secured a place in the SAFF Championship semifinals. PHOTO: BFF

'Everything seems to revolve around Hamza'

Bishwanath Ghosh has become an unlikely option up front for Bangladesh, with head coach Thomas Dooley turning to the central defender in search of a solution to the team's striking problems. After playing as a forward against Bhutan in the opening match of the SAFF Championship, the experienced defender is ready to shoulder the responsibility again. In an interview with The Daily Star's Anisur Rahman, Bishwanath discusses his new role, Bangladesh's SAFF title ambitions and more. Excerpts are as follows:

The Daily Star (DS): How is the overall condition of the national team after Bangladesh secured a semifinal berth with a match to spare?

Bishwanath Ghosh (BG): Everyone is in good spirits and shape. Our only target is to win the SAFF Championship on home soil. We are happy to have secured points against Bhutan, but one victory is not enough. We have to go all the way to the final, and the players and team management are following a planned approach towards that goal.

DS: Did you watch the Sri Lanka-Bhutan match? How do you assess your next opponents?

BG: Yes, we watched it together at the hotel. Sri Lanka did not look as strong as we had expected, but we are taking them seriously. We will give our best to get the desired result. Bhutan, meanwhile, surprised us with their fighting spirit.

DS: A draw would be enough for Bangladesh to finish as group champions. Will you conserve energy or go for all three points?

BG: Our target is always to get the best possible result. Sometimes we play well, sometimes we don't, but we always try our best. I cannot predict the outcome, but we want to leave the field with all three points.

DS: Since Bangladesh will play the final group match, do you have any preference for your semifinal opponents, particularly between India and Pakistan?

BG: No. Whoever comes our way is an equal opponent. We have to overcome the semifinal hurdle, whether it is India or Pakistan. Our priority is to stay in the title race and keep the trophy at home.

DS: How ready are you to play as a number nine against Sri Lanka, having been deployed as a striker against Bhutan?

BG: Honestly, I don't know whether I will play as a striker or defender in



the next match. I am ready to play wherever the team and coach need me. I may not be able to do everything that a natural forward can do, but there will never be any shortage of effort from my side.

Had I scored in the last match, perhaps the criticism would have been different. People might have said that the forwards could not score, but a defender playing up front had found the net. I created a few chances and tried my best, but could not convert them. Perhaps I was unlucky, but there was no lack of effort. If the coach needs me up front again, I will give everything I have.

DS: How did the coach explain his decision to use you as a striker against Bhutan?

BG: The coach said he was considering me as a striker because he was not getting the instincts he wanted from the regular forwards. I told him he could play me anywhere on the pitch, but I would not be as effective as I am in my natural defensive position.

He then asked me to disrupt the opposition's backline, keep their defenders under pressure and try to score. He believed I could do the job, and I accepted the responsibility.

DS: Hamza Choudhury joined the squad on Monday. How much difference does his presence make?

BG: I have shared the dressing room with him in only two matches so far, but his presence gives us the feeling of being a complete team. Everything seems to revolve around Hamza. His experience and presence motivate the players and change the overall atmosphere within the team.

WHAT TO WATCH

T Sports
Pakistan vs Sri Lanka
1st Test, Day 2
Live from
10:30 am

Sony Sports 1, 2, 5
U-19 Asia Cup
India vs UAE
Nepal vs Pakistan
Live from 11:00 am

Sony Sports 1
New Zealand vs India
3rd ODI
Live from
8:00 am



"We came here with the idea of winning two Test matches, but will take [the series win]....I thought we had a good year and we had our plans. We had three series and we didn't lose any this year.

West Indies captain **Roston Chase**

WTC dreams sacrificed at altar of poor planning

ABDULLAH AL MEHDI FROM SYLHET

Bangladesh have sacrificed their World Test Championship (WTC) dreams at the altar of chaos and mismanagement. As the team prepares to depart for South Africa on Wednesday afternoon after a 1-0 home series defeat to West Indies, skipper Najmul Hossain Shanto has little time to reflect on the planning failures that plagued the series.

The first two Tests of a crucial four-match stretch, which also includes two away Tests against South Africa, have exposed some of the worst planning failures in recent memory, leaving Bangladesh's WTC ambitions on shaky foundations.

It remains unclear who will take responsibility for the calamitous decisions. The team management wanted spin-friendly wickets, but the Mirpur and Sylhet surfaces turned out to be sporting tracks, despite the grass being trimmed to prepare them for spinners.

After the Mirpur debacle, where the spinners failed to deliver, there were warnings that the Sylhet wicket would offer little assistance even on the fourth or fifth day. Yet the hosts persisted with three spinners.

What went wrong in the communication between curator Tony Hemming and the team management is difficult to ascertain. And who was responsible for having the 4mm grass cut on the day of the Sylhet Test, if not the team management?

The skipper, however, was more direct about the team's preference for spin-friendly conditions.

Asked about the warning that the Sylhet wicket might not offer the required assistance to spinners on the fourth and fifth days, Shanto said: "These things were planned from before on what wickets we want when we play at home. So we have to take that advantage and that's what we should have gotten. Unfortunately we got less of that even though I don't want to make excuses since our batters and bowlers didn't do well."

"The responsibility is ours. At home, when opportunities come, we have to think hard before preparing the conditions," he added.

Not only did the wickets fail to match the plans, but the plans themselves failed to suit the situation. The team management, and head coach Phil Simmons in particular, may also be culpable for how things unfolded.

Why did the plans fail to suit the situation?

"We focused more on the opponents' weaknesses rather than our own strengths. The wicket should have been like the Pakistan series where our pacers can dominate. Batting against spin was our weak point but the series played out to wrong plans," came the reply of a member of the team management.

Yet Shanto and Simmons had strongly backed the spin-focused approach.

"We just thought that [spin] to be the better option going into this game," Simmons had said after day three.

The build-up to the series was also poorly planned, with Bangladesh playing a one-off Test in Abu Dhabi followed by a tri-nation series. Lead pacer Hasan Mahmud and spinner Taijul Islam could have been rested ahead of more important WTC assignments. Instead, the planning appeared muddled.

Hasan has now had a run of games, while Shanto admitted that preparation for the South Africa tour would be difficult.

"Honestly, there is no opportunity for preparation in South Africa," Shanto said.

Bangladesh's batting on a Sylhet track, one of the flattest at home, looked unsettled. If the team and the board had been serious about the WTC, it was difficult to see that reflected in their planning.

"I think it's disappointing. We should have won this Test match. We didn't bat well in the first innings, which cost us this Test match. Overall, it's also disappointing. We're not consistent with the bat, not enough collective play. We have been planning for a few months, but we didn't execute the plans. The spin bowlers didn't bowl well."

Najmul Hossain Shanto

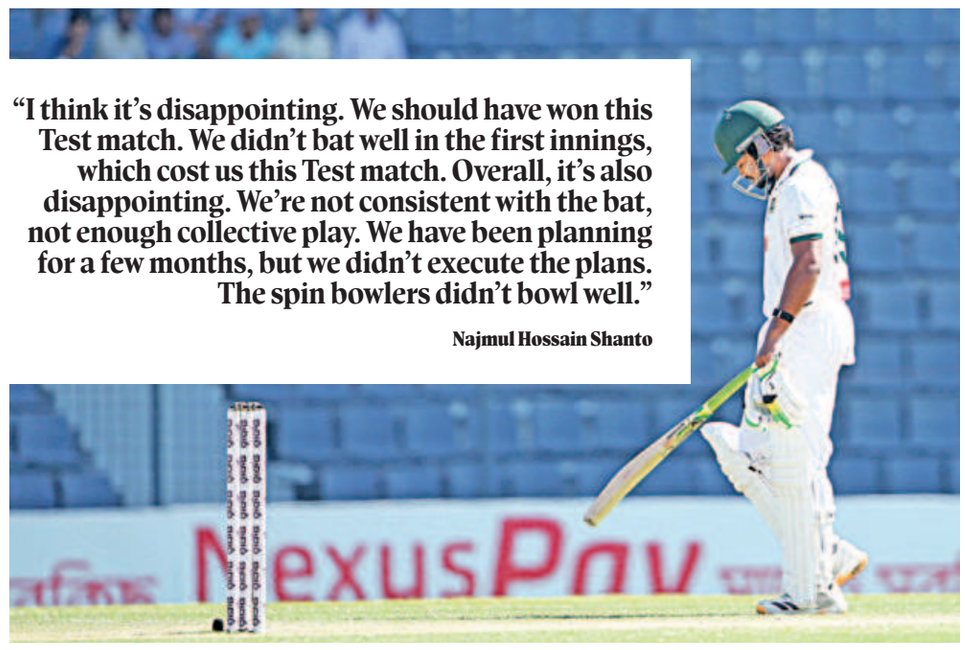


PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

- **Tawhid Hridoy became Bangladesh's highest run-scorer in a Test match with 324 runs (242 not out and 82), surpassing Mominul Haque's 281 (176 and 105) against Sri Lanka in Chattogram in 2018.**
- **Mushfiqur Rahim became the first Bangladesh batter to score 7,000 Test runs, reaching the milestone with nine runs in the second innings before making 49 in Monday's drawn Sylhet Test. Mominul Haque is second with 5,293 runs.**
- **Jomel Warrican topped the series with 16 wickets and reached 100 Test wickets, becoming the West Indies' 27th bowler to achieve the milestone.**
- **Since their 2-0 home series victory in 2018, Bangladesh have gone four successive home Tests without beating West Indies. The visitors won the previous three.**
- **World Test Championship: Bangladesh remains fifth in the 2025-27 cycle with 45.83 percentage of points despite drawing the second Test. West Indies finished their campaign with 27.38 percentage of points from 14 Tests.**

Mumin, Tanim records take U-19s into semis



Record-breakers Ahsan Al Mumin and Tafiul Alam Tamim powered Bangladesh U-19 into the ACC U-19 Asia Cup semifinals following a crushing 205-run victory over Malaysia in Oman yesterday. Mumin smashed an unbeaten 152 to rescue Bangladesh from a precarious 144 for six to a commanding 303-8. The right-hander's 133-ball knock is the highest individual score by a Bangladeshi in Youth ODIs, eclipsing Sharear Sakib's previous record of 134. Right-arm pacer Tamim then dismantled Malaysia with a devastating spell of 7 for 18 in 7.5 overs -- registering the best-ever bowling figures by a Bangladeshi at this level -- as Bangladesh bundled out Malaysia for 98 in 30.5 overs.

PHOTO: ACC



Bangladesh look to Robin to end leftie overload

SPORTS REPORTER FROM SYLHET

The Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) yesterday announced its squad for the upcoming South Africa series, beginning on November 15. While there were a few notable changes, the spotlight fell on the inclusion of 22-year-old right-handed opener Mahfijul Islam Robin, who earned his maiden Test call-up.

Opener Naim Sheikh returned after last playing a Test against New Zealand in 2022, replacing the injured Shadman Islam, while wicketkeeper-batter Amite Hasan was dropped. Spinner Nayeem Hasan made way for pacer Khaled Ahmed.

More significantly, right-handed opener Mahmudul Hasan Joy was ruled out at the last moment due to injury, making Robin's inclusion a necessity.

Robin has been consistent as a first-class opener, but just as important was his right-handedness.

Bangladesh have developed a peculiar imbalance at the top of the order, with their top four in Shadman Islam, Tanzid Hasan Tamim, Najmul Hossain Shanto and Mominul Haque all being left-handers.

That presents a potential tactical problem, as right-arm pacers have increasingly found ways to trouble left-handed batters, particularly with deliveries angled across them from around the wicket.

SQUAD

Shanto (C), Tamim, Naim, Mominul, Mushfiqur, Litton, Hridoy, Jaker, Miraz (VC), Taijul, Taskin, Mahmud, Shoriful, Ebadot, Khaled, Robin.



Mahfizul Islam Robin

The use of the Decision Review System (DRS) has also brought more dismissals into play, particularly when right-arm quicks operate from around the wicket against left-handers. Stuart Broad and Kemar Roach have been among the more successful exponents of this approach, with others following suit.

Asitha Fernando, Jayden Seales and Alzarri Joseph have been the leading pace wicket-takers against Bangladesh over the past five years, and all three are right-arm quicks. Having several left-handers in succession can also allow opposition bowlers to settle into similar lines and lengths, making it easier to execute their plans.

Mahmudul Hasan Joy had offered Bangladesh a right-handed option at the top, but his injury has deprived them of that balance ahead of the South Africa series. "We brought Robin in, we were thinking about it from the beginning because we felt it was very necessary to produce a right-handed opener. So basically, we didn't have anyone ready at hand. We actually wanted to give Robin a little more time to get ready," Bashar said, indicating that Robin's call-up had come earlier than originally intended.

Robin's inclusion follows an impressive run in the ongoing National Cricket League (NCL), where he has scored three centuries and two half-centuries for Mymensingh, including a double century against Chattogram Division.

"We saw him in first-class, we saw him play for the A team, where he looked very promising. So since we have too many left-handers in the top order, we need a right-handed batsman. That's why we chose Robin," Bashar said.

Being a right-hander has its merits!