DHAKA WEDNESDAY NOVEMBER 11, 2026, KARTIK 26, 1433 BS

SPORT



"I don't know what will happen in January. I just want to play, to be happy, to score goals, to provide assists, as I was able to do at Lyon, which was one of the best things that happened in my life.

ENDRICK, Real Madrid forward

No time to breathe for South Africa-bound Tigers

SAMSUL AREFIN KHAN

Just a day after drawing the Sylhet Test, a group of national cricketers left for Johannesburg yesterday, while the rest will depart Dhaka on Wednesday. With the two-match series beginning on November 15, the full squad will have just two days to prepare for the opener, raising questions about Bangladesh's planning for overseas assignments.

The rushed build-up echoes the recent West Indies series. After their one-off Test against Afghanistan in Abu Dhabi, seven members of the Test squad featured in a UAE tri-series before joining the rest of the team. The full squad consequently had only two days to train together before the Mirpur opener, which Bangladesh lost by eight wickets inside four days.

The demanding schedule has also left little room for recovery, with players travelling from the UAE to Dhaka, then Sylhet for the Test before heading to South Africa.

After the Sylhet Test, skipper Najmul Hossain Shanto admitted there was little scope for specific preparation for



South Africa, urging his teammates to get mentally ready for the challenge. Bangladesh's last Test success came in Darwin, where they beat Australia by nine wickets. However, they had travelled to Australia nearly two weeks before the opener and played a three-day warm-up match against Cricket Australia XI.

Former national skipper Rajin Saleh, who served as assistant coach of the Bangladesh A team during their recent South Africa tour, believes the national side should have travelled earlier for a practice match, although he acknowledged that the tight schedule may have made such arrangements difficult.

"My view is that if they had gone earlier and played a practice match on those wickets, there would have been an adjustment period. They could have adjusted faster," Rajin told The Daily Star on Tuesday.

"There's no point talking about two days of practice now. They are all professional players. The faster they can adjust, the better it will be for us."

Although Bangladesh last toured South Africa in 2022, Mahfijul Islam Robin, Tawhid Hridoy, Jaker Ali and Mohammad Naim have more recent experience in the country, having toured with Bangladesh A or Emerging teams in August and September

If they had gone earlier and played a practice match on those wickets, they could have adjusted faster.

RAJIN SALEH, former Bangladesh captain

this year. Rajin also questioned Bangladesh's decision to prepare spin-friendly wickets at home ahead of a tour where pace and bounce are expected to pose significant challenges.

"Since we were going to play in South Africa, why did we prepare spin-friendly wickets here for the Test series? Why didn't we prepare pace-friendly wickets? If true wickets were made, with a bit of grass or bounce, then our preparation here would have automatically been better," Rajin added.

Bangladesh's record in South Africa makes the challenge particularly daunting. Across eight Tests between 2002 and 2022, the Tigers have lost all eight, including five by an innings. They will begin their campaign at the Wanderers Stadium in Johannesburg, where they are yet to play a Test.

With South Africa considering a six-man pace attack, Bangladesh's lack of preparation could prove an even greater concern.



PHOTO: **FIROZ AHMED**

Hamza boost as hosts eye top spot against Sri Lanka

SPORTS REPORTER

Boosted by the arrival of Sheffield United's Hamza Choudhury, hosts Bangladesh will look to maintain their winning momentum when they take on Sri Lanka in their final Group A match of the SAFF Championship at the National Stadium today.

The match kicks off at 8:00pm. Earlier in the day, two former champions, India and Maldives, will face off at 3:30pm to decide their Group B fate, with Pakistan already having secured a semifinal berth.

Bangladesh have also booked their place in the last four with a match to spare, following the outcome of the Sri Lanka-Bhutan match. The hosts need just a point to finish top of Group A, while Sri Lanka also need a draw to advance to the semifinals.

However, both sides will have more than qualification at stake. Bangladesh will be keen to carry their winning form into the semifinals, while Sri Lanka cannot afford defeat, which could send them out of the competition.

Sri Lanka failed to reproduce the form they showed in the Asian Cup Qualifiers during their 2-2 draw against Bhutan on Sunday. But Bangladesh are not taking their opponents lightly, given Sri Lanka's record of beating Chinese Taipei twice and drawing 2-2 with Turkmenistan in last year's qualifiers.

FIFA RANKING
Bangladesh: 182
Sri Lanka: 184

HEAD-TO-HEAD
Bangladesh: 14
Sri Lanka: 5
Draw: 1



By the way, if we win tomorrow, I can do an Akshay Kumar-style dance. Be careful!

ABDULLAH AL MUTAIRI, Sri Lanka coach

"Sri Lanka are a very strong team. I think they have improved a lot over the last 12 months. But we have also improved. They had a difficult match against Bhutan, a team we beat.

"So we have confidence. The pressure is on them because they need to avoid defeat. We are looking forward to the match and are confident of winning," Hamza told reporters prior to a training session at the Bashundhara Sports Complex yesterday.

Bangladesh will also be strengthened by the availability of England-based winger Farhaan Ali Wahid. Midfielder Sheikh Morsalin and defender Topu Barman are also in contention to return. Topu was ruled out of the Bhutan match at the last moment after picking up an injury despite being named in the starting XI.

However, makeshift striker Bishwanath Ghosh could miss out after sitting out Tuesday's training session with an injury.

Sri Lanka coach Abdullah Al Mutairi had described the Bangladesh-Sri Lanka encounter as potentially the best match in SAFF Championship history after his side's draw against Bhutan. Hamza, however, said Bangladesh would focus on their own performance rather than the opposition's assessment.

"I have watched both matches, Bangladesh against Bhutan and Sri Lanka against Bhutan. Our own team performance was really good, but we missed chances. We just need to put the final pieces together. We don't have to worry about other teams. We have to focus on ourselves and take each game as it comes," he said.

Mosaddeak's third ton rescues Rangpur

SPORTS REPORTER

Rangpur batter Mim Mosaddeak continued his prolific run in the National Cricket League (NCL), scoring his third century of the season to help his side secure an unlikely draw against Chattogram in their sixth-round match in Khulna on Tuesday.

Mosaddeak struck 145 off 317 balls, while Shihab James and Sams M Niloy added 52 apiece as Rangpur reached 310 for nine in their second innings, setting Chattogram a 69-run target. However, bad light ended play after just 65 overs on the final day, following a delayed start due to a wet outfield. Rangpur had resumed at 130 for two.

Mosaddeak has now scored at least a half-century in each of his six matches this season. His latest hundred, also the third of his first-class career, took him to the top of the run-scoring charts with 727 runs at an average of 60.58.

The match also featured an unusual dismissal, with Rangpur batter Abdullah Al Mamun given out for obstructing the field off Hasan Murad's bowling.

After defending a delivery from Murad, Al Mamun picked up the ball, seemingly intending to return it to the bowler. However, he dropped it after noticing the appeal. Following a brief discussion, the umpires ruled him out. Al Mamun remained at the crease for a while before eventually walking off.

Chattogram were keen to close the gap on leaders Khulna in their bid for the NCL title. The draw left them second in the standings on 23 points, eight behind Khulna, who also drew their sixth-round match against Dhaka in a run-fest in Rajshahi.

Meanwhile, Sylhet Division secured a 234-run victory over Rajshahi in Bogura, with Nasum Ahmed taking 5-72 in the second innings to bowl their opponents out for 228.



WHAT TO WATCH

T SPORTS
Pakistan vs Sri Lanka
1st Test, Day 3
Live from 10:30 am
SAFF Championship
India vs Maldives
Live from 3:30 pm
Bangladesh vs Sri Lanka
Live from 8:00 pm



France coach Zinedine Zidane and forward Kylian Mbappe train in Clairefontaine yesterday ahead of Friday's away Nations League clash against Italy. Back after missing France's last three matches through injury, Mbappe returns amid Ballon d'Or disappointment and a social media storm over a Mao Zedong joke. France host Turkiye on Monday. PHOTO: **AFP**

A legendary sports organiser, an irreplaceable loss

SPORTS REPORTER

The rivalry between Abahani and their traditional rivals Mohammedan was once the heartbeat of the country's football. At the heart of Abahani's rise was Harunur Rashid, the club's founding general secretary, whose involvement spanned its formative years from 1972, the turbulent transition a few years later and the decades that followed.



Harunur, an esteemed sports organiser known for his experience, expertise and reputation for integrity, breathed his last in the early hours of yesterday at the age of 77.

Tributes to Harunur poured in, with former colleagues and associates remembering a "bold, legendary organiser" who was "incredibly dedicated" to Abahani. For many, he was "one of a kind", and his death an "irreparable loss".

Harunur's name became virtually synonymous with Abahani. Beyond his work at the club, the former member of parliament served as the elected general secretary of the Bangladesh Football Federation before becoming an executive member of the Asian Football Confederation.

He was laid to rest in Raipur Upazila of Lakshmipur district after his Namaz-e-Janaza was held at the premises of his beloved club in Dhanmondi yesterday afternoon.

Former footballers, cricketers, hockey players and organisers from different clubs gathered at the Abahani premises to pay their last respects to Harunur, who began his career as a sports organiser in his early twenties.

Cricketer-turned-organiser Jalal Younus, who joined Abahani as a player in 1977, recalled the breadth of Harunur's responsibilities. "It is impossible to put his contribution to the club into words. I have known him for 50 years. He was a capable organiser who looked after every discipline, from football and cricket to hockey and table tennis," he said.

Former Abahani team manager Satyajit Das Rupu also felt that his loss would be difficult to fill. "His contribution extended beyond Abahani; he played a very important role in the development of sports in the country," he said.