



PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

In the face of the coronavirus outbreak, the BCB Academy Ground in Mirpur was one of the few venues in the country to see sporting activities yesterday with cricketers undergoing training to prepare for the upcoming Dhaka Premier League (DPL), slated to commence from tomorrow.

## Fully behind Tamim: Mushy

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh star Mushfiqur Rahim attended a reunion lunch as part of BKSP's 20th batch at the BKSP campus in Savar yesterday and, while talking to reporters, backed the idea of Tamim Iqbal being appointed captain of the ODI side while also reiterating that the plans to produce a pipeline for the senior team were bearing fruit as was evidenced by the good performances against Zimbabwe.

Mushfiqur, who has captained Bangladesh in all three formats previously, said that the team was behind Tamim and affirmed that familiarity had bred confidence in their new captain.

"We have played under him [Tamim] before and the fact is that whoever becomes the captain, the main thing is that we have played together for 15 years. We all know how he is and what his abilities are. So, we are all fully supporting him after he got the responsibility," Mushfiqur said.

He expected Tamim to lead well since his performances over the years have been crucial to Bangladesh. "He has been playing really well for the past few years and we hope he will lead the side forward in the very same manner. Leadership is a challenging thing," Mushfiqur reminded.

Bangladesh pulled off a remarkable feat, defeating Zimbabwe with a commendable clean sweep in all three formats in the recently-concluded series at home. Mushfiqur reiterated



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**MUSHFIQUR RAHIM**  
BANGLADESH CRICKETER

that winning was a responsibility and the national team's pipeline was doing the trick for them.

"Those who are playing have been consistent. The BCB has invested in these players over

last five to six years. There was a lot of talk before Zimbabwe series regarding how long these players would last since they were not consistent. It's a matter of time though. Some take one year while others take five years. But the BCB invested and it is bearing fruit. Playing Zimbabwe is not easy because there is no praise when you win but you will be criticized if the team loses.

"In that regard, it is a milestone. Many of the players are doing well on a consistent basis. As [Mahmudullah] Riyad bhai said 'this is the standard we have to establish'," he said.

The national team's players are gearing up for the start of the Dhaka Premier League, slated to begin on March 15th, even as the coronavirus crisis has already dampened sporting activities around the country and worldwide.

Mushfiqur, who will be leading Abahani this term, said that everybody has to come together to overcome the crisis. "It has spread very quickly around the world and some have contracted the disease in our country. But it has not spread much yet and it's better to be as careful as we can be.

However, he cited that players also need to play cricket for their earnings. "We are players and we have to earn our living through sport. Talking about administrators, not just about the virus but if everyone carries out their duty then they will not only be helping themselves but others too. Maybe matches will take place in empty galleries all over the world. If we can work together then there will be progress," he said.

## Reset time for Tigresses

SPORTS REPORTER



The Bangladesh women's team made a quiet return to the country on March 4 after their unremarkable campaign at the ICC Women's T20 World Cup in Australia. The Salma Khatun-led side failed to register a single win in the mega event, losing all four of their group encounters.

Usually, after the end of big events like a World Cup, cricket boards think about bringing in some changes and start a new cycle. The Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) may also be bringing in some changes for in women's side, whose next assignment is the 2021 Women's Cricket World Cup Qualifier to be held in Sri Lanka in July this year. The Tigresses will be one of the 10 teams fighting for a spot in the top three to ensure their ticket for the World Cup to be held in New Zealand.

To start with, the BCB may be thinking of creating a coaching staff that has a mix of foreign and local coaches.

"We are thinking of forming a coaching staff that has a blend of foreign and local coaches," BCB Director and Chairman of the women's wing Shafiqur Alam Chowdhury Nadel told The Daily Star yesterday.

Nadel also said the BCB has made plans

sides regularly after their T20 World Cup campaign ended bleakly.

That may still take some time to come true, but as Nadel said, the BCB will not be waiting around for the likes of Australia, England and New Zealand and will instead be trying to arrange series against sub-continent teams.

While the BCB are mulling a few changes, Salma and Co, who are now in their respective hometowns, have already started practising on their own before the upcoming women's NCL in Cox's Bazar from March 26.

"Everyone is practising individually. We came from Australia and took rest for two or three days and then we started practising," said Salma yesterday.

Meanwhile, when asked about their failure in the T20 World Cup, especially the narrow loss against New Zealand, Salma mentioned that it had something to do with the difference in approach.

"They are a very experienced side. I think how they approached the game was very important. We also had a good approach and that is why we could restrict them to a low total. We also did not bat well and it was mainly because of the approach they had due to the experience. They have players who already played 90 or even 100 matches but we don't have any players with



to increase the pay-scale of the women's side by a considerable amount.

"There is one good news for the women's side. In the last board meeting, there was a decision on increasing facilities for the girls. We had already increased their TA and DA (travel allowance and daily allowance) last time but it was nothing noteworthy. However, now we are trying to make significant increments in their international match fees. We are also considering improving their hotel arrangements, their food and nutrition and increasing little amounts in every department that has financial matters involved," said Nadel.

One other concern for the women's side has been their lack of international matches against top-tier teams like Australia, New Zealand and England. Even Salma stressed on playing against top-ranked

that much experience," explained Salma. Team manager Javed Omar said the mental set-up and lack of planning during matches made the difference.

"It was the mental set-up -- a belief that we can win -- that was lacking. Another thing is the lack of a plan. I think there were no plans in batting, like we will have to make this many runs in the first six overs, we will bat like this in the middle and then we will have to make this many runs in the last four overs. I think this is what was lacking," said Javed.

It is clear that there are a lot of areas that the Tigresses need to improve, but with the right plan from team management and the right back-up from the BCB, a more improved side could be seen in the upcoming challenges.

## Australia crush NZ

AFP, Sydney



Australia crushed New Zealand by 71 runs in the first one-day international at an empty Sydney Cricket Ground on Friday.

After New Zealand earlier kept the home side to 258 for seven, the Australian bowling attack dominated the Kiwi batsmen to dismiss the visitors for 187 in the 41st over.

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Australian skipper Aaron Finch won the toss and chose to bat, with the home side at one stage looking at a score in excess of 300 following a superb opening partnership from Finch and David Warner. But once Warner (67) and Finch (60) were dismissed, the Australian innings lost momentum and New Zealand clawed their way back into the game, despite a late flourish from Marnus Labuschagne, who made 56 from just 52 deliveries.

New Zealand must have given themselves a good chance of taking a 1-0 lead in the three-match series, but some superb Australian bowling in the first 10 overs meant the visitors were always behind in the run chase.

None of the New Zealand batsmen was able to dominate -- Martin Guptill top scored with 40 -- and wickets fell at regular intervals as Australia took control.

The victory will come as a welcome boost to the Australians, who had lost their last five ODIs in series losses to South Africa and India.

### SCORES IN BRIEF

**AUSTRALIA:** 258 for 7 in 50 overs (Warner 67, Finch 60, Labuschagne 56, Marsh 27; Ferguson 2-60, Santner 2-34, Sodhi 3-51)

**NEW ZEALAND:** 187 all out in 41 overs (Guptill 40, Latham 38, De Grandhomme 25; Hazlewood 2-37, Cummins 2-25, Marsh 3-29, Zampa 2-50)

**Result:** Australia won by 71 runs.  
**Player-of-the-match:** Mitchell Marsh.



Australia paceman Pat Cummins (R) bumps his fist after the dismissal of New Zealand's Trent Boult during the first ODI in Sydney yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

## CORONAVIRUS FALLOUT

### Champions League, Premier League swept aside

The collapse of sports events worldwide over the rapidly spreading new coronavirus gathered pace Friday with the English Premier League and European football's showpiece Champions League swept aside by the pandemic.

Suspension of the Premier League until April 4 came shortly after the French Football League announced that all Ligue 1 and Ligue 2 games would be on hold until further notice.

Football's Premier League, with a worldwide audience of billions, was put on hold after Arsenal manager Mikel Arteta and Chelsea winger Callum Hudson-Odoi were confirmed to have the disease.

"Following a meeting of shareholders today, it was unanimously decided to suspend the Premier League with the intention of returning on 4 April, subject to medical advice and conditions at the time," the Premier League said in a statement.

European football's governing body UEFA took a similar step in announcing that all UEFA Champions League and Europa League matches scheduled to be played next week had been postponed.

### Four Serie A players infected

Four footballers from Sampdoria and one at Fiorentina have tested positive for coronavirus, the Italian clubs said on Friday.

Gambia defender Omar Colley, Sweden midfielder Albin Ekdal, Norway playmaker Morten Thorsby and former Italy Under-21 forward Antonio La Gumina as well as teammate Manolo Gabbiadini are suffering from

### COVID-19.

"The state of their health is good and they are at home in Genoa," a statement said.

Former Southampton striker Gabbiadini's case was confirmed by the outfit on Thursday for the virus.

Club doctor Amedeo Baldari has also tested positive. Fiorentina's Serbia forward Dusan Vlahovic was the fifth player case to be confirmed on Friday.

### India-SA ODIs called off

India on Friday called off two remaining one-day internationals against South Africa because of the coronavirus pandemic, the cricket board said.

The first of the three-match series in Dharamsala on Thursday was washed out without a ball being bowled.

The next game was scheduled for Lucknow on Sunday followed by the last one in Kolkata on Wednesday.

"Cricket South Africa will visit India at a later date to play three one-day internationals," the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) said in a statement, adding that a revised schedule would be worked out soon.

### IPL deferred until April 15

The start of the Indian Premier League, the world's most lucrative cricket competition, has been postponed from March 29 until April 15 over the coronavirus, the Indian cricket board said Friday.

"The Board of Control for Cricket in India has decided to suspend IPL 2020 till 15th April 2020, as a precautionary measure against the ongoing Novel Corona Virus (COVID-19) situation," the BCCI said in a statement.



England captain Joe Root walks to the bus after the Test series against Sri Lanka was postponed yesterday. England pulled out of the tour abruptly on the second day of a tour match in Colombo.

PHOTO: AFP

The two-month Twenty20 competition is estimated to generate more than \$11 billion for the Indian economy.

### Tokyo Olympics in doubt

Formula One's Australian Grand Prix and The Players Championship, one of golf's most prestigious events, were among other events scrapped as the virus laid waste to the sporting calendar, with the future of the 2020 Tokyo Olympics, which is set to start on July 24, looking increasingly in doubt.

Tokyo Olympics organisers, Japan's government and the International Olympic Committee have been adamant the Games will go ahead as planned despite the global panic.

But US President Donald Trump became the first foreign leader to break ranks and raise the prospect of delaying the Olympics until 2021.

--AFP