



Despite the roadblock that Bangladesh's scheduled tour of Sri Lanka has come up against, the national players yesterday continued their training at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur under the supervision of foreign coaching staff.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

BCB boss's words offer hope

NABID YEASIN



On Monday, when Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) President Nazmul Hassan said that it would not be possible to tour Sri Lanka under the strict and unique health protocols set by Sri Lanka Cricket (SLC), it would have come as a disappointment for those who were eagerly waiting to see the Bangladesh national side back in action after a long hiatus.

But his words also carried potential relief for domestic cricketers, whose hopes of returning to the field were raised when the BCB boss mentioned about starting domestic cricket "soon".

Crickets in Bangladesh has been halted since mid-March when the Dhaka Premier League (DPL) had to be suspended after completion of the first round due to the coronavirus pandemic. The coronavirus situation has only deteriorated since, casting doubts on resumption plans. However, normalcy has returned in daily life now, with people around the country gradually resuming regular activities.

Ever since cricket was halted, there was always talk of bringing it back, preferably with domestic leagues. And with the BCB boss now confidently talking about it,



The long absence of cricket – both domestic and international – has had an impact on the home of cricket, with shoots springing up from beneath the seating arrangements at the gallery.

PHOTO: STAR

it seems that the conditions in the country are now favourable to get at least domestic cricket back on the ground.

The BCB president's words came as a ray of hope for domestic cricketers as they have been waiting for this moment for the past six months.

"We were waiting for this [domestic cricket to return]. If the Sri Lanka tour is cancelled, it would be beneficial for us if the board then ensures the return of the DPL," said Tushar Imran, Bangladesh's highest first-class run-scorer.

For a board that has been stressing on the importance of players' safety and putting their health issues above all since the start of the pandemic, it now will be a challenge for them to decide how to ensure safety for players playing in the domestic tournaments when they resume. The BCB also needs to decide which domestic tournament to bring back first.

However, when domestic players were asked about their preference regarding the matter, the choice seemed to be obvious.

"There is an issue of our

payment and also the matter of completing matches this calendar year. So, it is our request that whenever domestic cricket starts, it should start with the DPL," opined Tushar.

Hassan on Monday hinted that the BCB may not be able to manage all the DPL clubs and may prefer starting the domestic league on a limited scale with the involvement of 50-60 players. But according to Enamul Haque Jnr, another regular figure at the domestic level, such a decision would not benefit them much.

"We always wanted to resume with the DPL. Now we hope that the BCB considers involving and playing all the players whenever they decide to resume. Because if they start with just 50-60 players then at the end of the day, most of the players will be sitting out. So, we hope that BCB considers everything before making any decision," said Enamul.

When Tushar was asked the same question, all the 36-year-old had to say was, "BCB has the capability to manage all the clubs. If the BCB says clubs will have to play, then they can do it. It will be a request to [Nazmul Hassan] Papon bhai to communicate with the clubs about this. Domestic leagues in different countries have already started. Even as big a tournament as IPL is also set to begin. So, I think it is possible for the BCB."

'Want to take my mom for a ride in my own car'

While male cricketers have returned to training with a set target in mind, the same cannot be said about women cricketers as the Bangladesh Cricket Board is yet to schedule a series for the Tigresses in the pandemic era. Since the halt in cricketing activities, The Daily Star has been talking to women cricketers to learn stories of their early days. In today's instalment, we talk to Salma Khatun, the current Bangladesh T20I captain who topped the ICC T20 all-rounders ranking in 2015.

MOSTAFA SHABUI



From an outsider's point of view, cricket in Bangladesh may always seem glamorous. It is however not the case always, especially not for women cricketers. Even Salma Khatun, who has been leading the country since 2008, still can only dream about buying a car. Owning a car would probably not be 'a dream' for most male cricketers -- even the ones outside the national team -- but it certainly is for the likes of Salma.

"Many dreams have come true in my life. But I still could not buy a car due to financial limitations. I want to buy a car and drive around with my mother alongside -- that's my dream now. Since I became captain, I have been trying to do something for my family members. My

and I could think about studying further after eighth grade."

"I don't feel ashamed to say that due to extreme poverty none of our four siblings could study after passing eighth grade.

"In 2007, BCB arranged a camp in Dhanmondi to form national women's team and I was selected for the team. Few months later, we went to Malaysia but I felt very bad there as I could not talk to my mother for three days. I had started crying. Later I spoke to my mother with my coach's phone. I had no money and my family was unable to send me money. I had borrowed Tk 5,000 from one of my brothers-in-law and bought luggage and necessary clothes for the tour," she continued to tell her stories of those struggling days.

But despite all odds, Salma kept playing cricket and eventually became a part of the first batch of women cricketers in the



mother faced a lot of hardship. It's time to give her a little comfort. Sometimes it hurts that I am not much educated. That's why I am always trying to encourage kids of my brothers and sisters in their studies," said Salma.

"To be a cricketer, two things are very important for a girl in our country. One is family support and the other is discipline," said Salma. While the former of the two was hard to come by for Salma -- a girl who encountered a lot of hardship in her early days -- the latter was something that the all-rounder was able to achieve through persistence and determination.

Salma comes from a family that had endured extreme poverty for most of their life. And the all-rounder never hesitates in admitting that.

"My father used to do a petty job at the Khulna shipyard. He suffered a stroke in 1992 and was bed-ridden till the day he breathed his last in 2002. We could not afford good treatment for my father. There would also be times when we could not even afford three meals. My mother plunged into debts soon after my father died. And hence, none of my three siblings

country. Salma probably had the captain-like characteristics instilled in her since her early cricketing days as she was referred to as 'captain' by the local boys who she grew up playing with.

However, she still was petrified the day she was introduced to the world as the captain of the Bangladesh team.

"In 2008, Jafrul Eshan sir took me to BCB and I was announced as the captain all of a sudden. I was terrified as I was not that educated and also the fact that I had never faced journalists," recalled Salma.

After being announced as the captain, it became clear for Salma what she wanted.

"Since that day, a kind of stubbornness gripped me. I felt I have to play well. I remembered about all the struggles my family and my mother went through and I realised I had to play well to help my family recover from that position," said Salma.

The 29-year-old did justice to the promise she made to herself since day one of her captaincy. It was under her leadership that Bangladesh won the Asia Cup in 2018 -- the first major cricketing trophy won by the country. And Salma too acknowledges it as her 'greatest achievement' till date.

Shaeed's expulsion stayed for now

Harun to coach national team

SPORTS REPORTER



Despite being discharged from his duties in line with the constitution of the Bangladesh Hockey Federation (BHF) a month ago, the removal of elected general secretary AKM Mominul Haque Shaeed was not approved at a BHF executive committee yesterday.

The executive committee was supposed to approve the decision to remove Shaeed, who has been absent for the past 11 months following his alleged involvement in the casino scandal. BHF president and Air Chief Marshal Masihuzzaman Serniabat along with four vice-president and acting general secretaries removed Shaeed in line with the constitution in the middle of August but yesterday's meeting did not approve the issue due to a 'stay order' against the decision last week.

"The meeting was informed that two members of the executive body filed a writ petition against the decision of the removal of Shaeed and a high court bench issued a stay order, which the BHF is yet to receive. Considering new circumstances, the meeting did not take any decision regarding Shaeed. The BHF will take steps after getting the court order officially," said vice-president Zaki Ahmed Ripon after the meeting, adding that the BHF was likely to sit in another meeting later this month.

It was also decided at the meeting that Mahbub Harun would be appointed as head coach of the national hockey team, who are scheduled to play the Asian Champions Trophy in Dhaka next March. Alamgir Alam of BKSP will act as Harun's assistant while Badrul Islam Dipu was named manager.

Mamunur Rashid has been retained as the head coach of the U-21 national team which will take part in the Junior U-21 Asia Cup in late January in Dhaka, with Jahirul Islam Mitul and Tareq A Adel acting as the assistant coach and the manager respectively.

Ripon informed that the residential camp of the U-21 national hockey team would get underway by mid-September as the Junior Asia Cup is scheduled to take place at Maulana Bhasani Hockey Stadium from January 21.

All to play for in third ODI

ICC

With the series level at 1-1, the winner of the third ODI will take the series in addition to 10 vital points on the ICC Men's Cricket World Cup Super League.

After suffering a collapse in the second ODI to concede a game from an advantageous position for the second time on the tour, Australia will look to get their act right for the today's third and deciding match.

Towards that end, they will hope to be able to include Steve Smith after the star batsman missed the first couple of games over concussion concerns, having taken a blow to the head in training prior to the first ODI.

"He is definitely tracking in the right direction and we are hopeful he will be right for (Wednesday)," Langer told reporters in a video call. "He did all his running (on Monday), some high speed running, worked hard as part of the protocols. He has ticked every box at the moment."

England, while they should be delighted about their ability to bounce back from seemingly hopeless situations time and time again, will be keen to identify issues landing them in tough spots in the first place.



Messi pips Ronaldo in rich list

REUTERS, London



Lionel Messi was denied a potentially money-spinning move away from Barcelona this month after a contract-dispute but the Argentine remains the world's richest football player.

According to a list compiled by Forbes, Messi's total earnings this year are \$126 million -- \$92 million from his salary and \$34 million in endorsements. Not surprisingly Cristiano Ronaldo comes in second although earnings of \$117 million will soften the blow for the Juventus forward.

Neymar comes in third on the Forbes list (\$96 million) with PSG teammate Kylian Mbappe fourth (\$42 million).

The Premier League remains the world's richest domestic soccer league but only two of its outfield players feature in the top 10 of the wealth table -- Liverpool's title-winning striker Mohamed Salah in fifth spot (\$37 million) and Manchester United's midfielder Paul Pogba (\$34 million) in sixth.

Barcelona's Antoine Griezmann was seventh and Real Madrid's Gareth Bale eighth. Bayern Munich striker Robert Lewandowski, the only Bundesliga player, in ninth.

Messi, 33, is in the final year of his contract so could leave for free next summer. By staying with the Catalan club, Messi is in line for an \$83 million loyalty bonus so it is likely he will continue to top the money charts.

'We definitely want to close the gap'

REUTERS



Chelsea manager Frank Lampard heaped praise on defender Reece James and said he was happy with the debuts of Germany forwards Timo Werner and Kai Havertz after a 3-1 win at Brighton & Hove Albion on Monday.

Chelsea looked shaky at times in their opening Premier League match of the season but a superb goal by 20-year old James to make the score 2-1 soon after the break swung the contest and had Lampard purring with delight.

"If you analyse the fact that we've been together as a team for four days, to expect everything to click on day one is difficult. We showed determination and that is a game we might have dropped points in last year."

Lampard pointed out that despite the wealth of their attacking talent, Chelsea were still a work in progress and unlikely to challenge champions Liverpool for the title.

"We definitely want to close that gap to Liverpool, we have to have intentions to be up there even though it is a big ask to win it. We are behind, it's step-by-step. Hopefully we can make big strides."



PHOTO: REUTERS

Chelsea full-back Reece James scored a long-range stunner to reclaim the lead 100 seconds after Brighton had scored in their Premier League encounter on Monday.