

## Joy, Arman era ends



### Football

#### SPORTS REPORTER

There has been no football in the domestic scene for one year but still, Bangladesh football looks set to enter a new era as the national team go into their next mission without two midfield stalwarts.

Arman Mian and Arif Khan Joy will not be a part of the side, which take on Uzbekistan on October 11 in a home match of the 2007 Asian Cup qualifiers.

"I think Arman is the best player of his generation. Joy is also one of the best defensive midfielders we've had in the last decade. We will miss them but we have honoured their decision to retire from international football," told national team coach Hasanuzzaman Babloo yesterday, explaining why the two medias were not included in the 22-member squad for the qualifier.

Veteran defender Abu Faisal Ahmed was also dropped from the squad which was named yesterday. They will start training on Saturday at the Brothers Union ground.

"Both Joy and Arman had announced their retirement after the AFC Challenge Cup but we requested them to continue for a while because the team needed them. With the second string foot-

ballers busy for the South Asian Games, we could hardly make a team without the two. As a coach, I am grateful to them because they played both our matches against Qatar with hundred percent effort," said the former national winger.

"We have nothing to lose in the Asian Cup qualifiers and we'd better prepare for the Asian Games and the Olympic qualifier (against Hong Kong). Both the tournaments are under-23 and we need to groom



ARMAN MIAN

young players to fill in their shoes.

"Arman and Joy have served their purpose for the national team for a long time and I think they will leave the scene with heads high.

"It's time to prepare the new generation for the future and we are

concentrating on building a young team with touch of experience."

Babloo, however, rued the decision of the Bangladesh Olympic Association to exclude the football team from the Asian Games contingent.

"A team that fight in south Asia for pride, will naturally struggle against top teams. But we hardly get a chance to play against big Asian names. This time, we are drawn against the likes of South Korea and



ARIF KHAN JOY

Bahrain. We might lose big but the thought of it alone should not be the criteria for not sending the football team.

"I played for the national team which conceded nine goals in three matches. We have learned a lot

from those humiliating defeats. That's why we know how to prepare the young generation. I will hail my boys for conceding just three goals (earlier this month) away in Qatar, who are a not only among the top teams in the continent but have a strong infrastructure," he added.

Meanwhile, the Bangladesh Football Federation officials were still sweating over a new crisis about the October 11 match. Bangladesh hosted Qatar in Chittagong last month but the MA Aziz Stadium, like the Bangabandhu National Stadium in Dhaka, is also under construction and will not be available.

The only alternative is the Army Stadium in Banani but it will need the approval of the Asian Football Confederation (AFC). Although the venue lacks standard dressing rooms and media facilities, it had hosted its only international match during the AFC Challenge Cup last April.

### SQUAD

**Goalkeepers:** Aminul, Biplab, Shakil; **defenders:** Rajani, Nazrul, Titu, Parvez Babu, Ariful, Siraji, Mahmudul Hassan, Waly Faisal; **midfielders:** Matur Munna, Abul, Arman Aziz, Faisal Mahmud, Zahid Hossain, Ujjal; **forwards:** Alfaz, Farhad, Moni, Emily and Robin.



Action from yesterday's semifinal between Rajshahi and Khagrachhari in the first inter-district women's football tournament at the Women's Sports Complex in Dhanmondi.

PHOTO: STAR



## Did U Know?

The first tennis tournament was held in Australia in January 1880, after 25 years later (1905) what was to become today's Australian Open.



### Ronaldo

(Brazilian football super star)

"My future in the team will always depend on the coach. If I deserve to be there, I'm sure he will pick me and I will play with pride and pleasure."

On his future in the national side.

### What to WATCH

**ZEE Sports**  
India v West Indies  
Tri-Series, Fifth ODI  
Live at 11:30 am

**ESPN**  
English Premier League  
Liverpool v Newcastle United  
Live at 12:55 am (Thursday)

**STAR Sports**  
South Africa v Zimbabwe  
Third ODI  
Live at 6:30 pm

**TEN Sports**  
UEFA Champions League  
Hamburg v Arsenal  
Live at 12:00 pm

## School kabaddi

UNB, Dhaka

Bir Shreshtha Munshi Abdur Rouf Rifles School easily beat Ansar-VDP High School 71-49 in the 14th NZ Textile Mills School kabaddi tournament at the Outer Stadium yesterday.

The same school went past Alhaj Jafar Bepari High School in a closer contest by 42-38 points.

Dolairpar High School, Ansar-VDP High School and JB Memorial Academy also won their respective matches on the day.

## Club Cup hockey now from Friday

#### SPORTS REPORTER

The start of the Shah Sports Club Cup Hockey Tournament would be delayed by a couple of days due to the political programmes.

The season's curtain raiser, due to begin today, will now kick off on Friday with defending champion Abahani taking on Bangladesh Sporting Club in Group A in the opening match at the Maulana Bhasani National Hockey Stadium.

Eight Premier League clubs, split into two groups, will participate in the tournament which was last held in 2004.

Two-time champions Usha Krira Chakra face Sonali Bank in another group A match on the opening day.

Local giants and another two-time winners Mohammedan Sporting Club are pitted against Dhaka Mariners, Ajax and Sadharan Bima in Group B.

The top two teams will qualify for the October 2 semifinals. The third-place play-off and the final are slated for October 4.

Addressing a press conference at the Bangladesh Hockey Federation (BHF) yesterday, BHF's acting general secretary Khwaja Rahmatullah informed that sponsor Shah Sports will provide Tk 1.25,000 out of the Tk 1,50,000 budget.

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## BFF, clubs unite at last



### Football

#### SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) and the top clubs of the country have decided to give a last shot at launching the inaugural Professional Football League within this year.

Both the parties put their differences behind in yesterday's meeting and formed an 11-member committee in a bid to decide the fate of the much talked about competition.

"What happened in the past was forgotten and we now want to see if there is a realistic chance to start the Pro League. The committee will be responsible for finding out when the Bangabandhu Stadium would be ready for football," said BFF general secretary Anwarul Hoque Helal.

"It will inspect the ground and will talk with the persons in charge of renovation of the venue before submitting a report to us by September 27," said Helal, who will be the convenor of the committee.

The names of the remaining members would be announced soon.

"After having a clear idea about the availability of the ground, it will also recommend dates for the transfer and the start of the league to the federation. I am still hopeful the league can be started before the year ends if all things go accordingly," he said adding that the BFF is interested to start the Pro League, not the Premiership according to many press reports.

The committee will comprise with four BFF members, four from the clubs, the president of the Football Players Welfare Association, the general secretary of the Referees' Association and the director planning of the National Sports Council or its representative.

The club representatives also sounded positive about the latest step.

"We will give our full assistance to the BFF regarding the Professional League. We hope football will roll into the ground this year," said the club representatives.

## WOMEN'S SOCCER Dhaka-Rajshahi final today

UNB, Dhaka

Sainu Kru Marma of Dhaka wrecked havoc as she struck five goals, enabling them to reach the final of the inaugural Inter-district Women's Football Tournament with a thrashing 8-0 win over Rangamati in the semifinal at the Women Sports Complex in Dhanmondi yesterday.

Player-of-the-match Marma scored all her goals in the first half while Khushi chipped in with a hat-trick.

Earlier in the day's first semifinal, Rajshahi defeated Khagrachhari 3-1. Chameli, who was adjudged player of the match, struck twice while Hashi scored the other goal for the winners in the 31st minute.

Ching Bai Marma netted the lone goal for Khagrachhari early in the second half.

The final will be held at the same venue today.

## 26 athletes to go to Asiad

#### SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh Olympic Association (BOA) expectedly kept the number of athletes below 30 for the Asian Games in Doha this December.

The BOA, which surprisingly excluded hockey and football from its list, announced yesterday that it will send 26 athletes in seven disciplines for the 15th edition of the Games.

The largest team would be kabaddi with 12 members, followed by swimming (4), shooting (4), chess (3), athletics (1), taekwondo (1) and gold (1).

Although two silver medallist swimmers at the 10th South Asian Games in Colombo were considered for the Qatar trip, fellow members of the athletics team were not so lucky as only 110m hurdles gold medallist Mahfuzur Rahman Mithu was chosen.

The BOA has also decided to trim the number of officials to seven including the Chief-de-Mission, a physician and five coaches.

## Double delight for Sunnydale

#### SPORTS REPORTER

Sunnydale emerged as the new champions of the Bexi Fabrics 3rd Girls' Mini Handball tournament when they crushed Scholastica 7-1 in the final at the Dhanmondi Women's Sports Complex yesterday.

The clash of the two reputed English medium schools turned into a surprisingly lop-sided affair as the Dhanmondi-based school led 3-1 at the breather.

Sunnydale also won the boys' event earlier this week. Bangladesh International School finished third when they blanked Play Pen 5-0 in the afternoon.

Chairman of Nannu Textile Mills Ltd Haji Nannu Miah distributed the prizes as chief guest.

## BCB hell-bent on Harun



### Cricket

#### SPORTS REPORTER

After the 2003 World Cup debacle, a two-member inquiry committee of the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) had a strong recommendation about the appointment of a manager for the national team.

"We strongly feel that the selection of managers should not be an issue of patronage, but that of capability," suggested the probe body of Commodore (ret'd) Mujibur Rahman and Syed Shamim Ahsan.

But following the recent controversy over the appointment of Flight Lieutenant (ret'd) Mohammed Harun Rashid Bhuiyan as the team operations manager for next month's ICC Champions Trophy in India, it seems that the Ali Asghar-led board paid no heed to this advice and moreover, shelved it.

Last Thursday, the BCB in a press release confirmed Harun's appointment where they also stated some of his good qualities but soon after the announcement, newspapers raised allegations against the ex-armed forces man.

At one stage, BCB's chief executive officer (CEO) Mahmudur Rahman quoted in the media that

'board will try to find out the truth' but the general secretary Mahbubul Anam, who returned from Pakistan on Monday, dismissed any investigation regarding the issue yesterday.

"When we issued the press release confirming his (Harunor Rashid Bhuiyan) appointment, it was our final decision," said the bearded organiser who was even reluctant to talk about the allegations raised against the newly-appointed manager.

But the question repeatedly asked is how a man, whose background is doubtful and allegedly indisposed, can hold a very sensitive post, especially in a very big cricket event, where maintaining discipline is the most important issue.

Just think about the scale of the allegations as some newspapers reported that Harunor Rashid, an assistant director of the BKSP, had to face the ignominy of court martial after tampering with a certificate during his stint with the Bangladesh Air Force and in 1996 was forced into retirement for another wrongdoing.

There was also controversy about his exploitation as Chief-de-Mission of the Bangladesh contingent in the 2004 Paralympics in Greece while the national cricketers

also had a run-in with him in BKSP during the national team's camp.

When such serious allegations have been raised, it would be wise for BCB to clear everything before finalising his appointment, but unfortunately, they were not ready to hear anything for mysterious reasons.

So, one can't blame if anyone smells a rat behind the appointment. There was a whispering that the appointment was out of the cricket board's reaches, coming from much higher levels.

The board has actually made post of the manager a 'musical chair' as they have never set any criteria about this important position for the national team.

For the last three series, former Bangladesh skipper Shafiqul Haque Hira served as the manager and before him, another ex-armed forces man -- MA Latif -- held the hot post. Interestingly, the board never explained their removal.

The ICC Champions Trophy is the second biggest tournament after the World Cup, so it is wise to give the job to a man who will not only be capable to perform the managerial activities successfully but also be able to uphold the image of Bangladesh cricket.

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## Asia still untapped: Huq



### Cricket

AFP, Kuala Lumpur

Asia remains a vast area of untapped commercial possibility for cricketing authorities but all the elements are in place for this to change.

That's the way Asian Cricket Council (ACC) chief executive Syed Ashraf Huq sees the future for a sport he believes is on the cusp of being accepted like football in the region.

While cricket is nearly a religion in India, Sri Lanka, Pakistan and Bangladesh, other parts of Asia are still coming to grips with why anyone would want to play a game for five days before getting a result.

But the mindset is changing, and countries like Afghanistan, Nepal, Thailand, and Kuwait and Oman in the Far East, are leading the way.

"We are at a very interesting stage in cricket in Asia," Huq told AFP.

"The vast majority of the commercial values of the game are generated by Asia, predominantly India and its global diaspora, yet there are still vast areas of untapped resources."

An indication of how much money there is in the game is that the Indian cricket board, one of the richest sporting associations in the world, has almost entirely funded the ongoing DLF Cup tri-series in Malaysia.

They are reportedly paying appearance fees of one million dollars each to Australia and the

West Indies to play, and shelled out 500,000 dollars to erect new floodlights at the Kinrara Oval, a neutral venue in Kuala Lumpur.

A Delhi construction company is sponsoring the tournament with the entire event broadcast live by Zee TV.

It has primarily been arranged to cater to the public in India, which grinds to a halt when its superstars play, but the ACC and Indian authorities also want to bring the sport to developing cricketing countries.

Like India, China has a huge



SYED ASHRAFUL HUQ

population and is seen as the next big frontier, both in cricketing terms and for commercial opportunities.

ICC chief executive Malcolm Speed is accompanying Huq to Beijing and Shanghai this week to assess where China is at and where it can go.

"The potential benefits and commercial revenues from its presence in the cricket world are

enormous," said Huq.

"As soon as China breaks through, I foresee the total global revenues for cricket increasing by up to 30 to 40 percent."

Other Asian nations also offer possibilities.

"Countries like Afghanistan, Nepal and Thailand have emerged with strong, indigenous cricketers," said Huq, pointing out that an Afghan side toured England earlier this year.

"If they continue their current rate of progress they could provide stiff opposition to the world's professional cricketers inside five years in the case of Afghanistan, a bit longer in the case of Nepal and a bit longer in the case of Thailand.

"These are countries where thanks to the ICC and the ACC Development Program, cricket has caught on in a big way."

He also sees growth opportunities for the Twenty/20 version of the game, which has attracted sell-out crowds in other parts of the world and whose fast and furious action could be the hook to getting fans on board in Asia.

"Its in an evolving stage still and I think one can have too much of it, but its strength is not just that its a more convenient package of highlights, but that its a great equaliser," he said.

"The gap between a top team and one below it is narrowed in this format to the extent that some major upsets could occur if Davids were put up against Goliaths."

"A result like that, in all its photogenic glory, and cricket wins new converts instantly."