

# SPORT



## TIGERS DOWN UNDER

# Taskin wants centre-stage

BISHWAJIT ROY

Taskin Ahmed's arrival to the national team was predicted because of his height and pace. He was considered as a complete package. However, injury issues delayed the arrival but when the well-built paceman emerged on the scene, he came in style by taking five wickets against India at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur in June last year.

A side strain had again sidelined the promising fast bowler during the home series against Zimbabwe but he brought a sigh of relief to the Bangladesh camp by returning to action in the Dhaka Premier League.

Hope is there that the young pacer will make his mark in the World Cup because of the conditions down under.

The player himself also has high hopes, saying that he has a dream of entering the list of ten top bowlers in the mega event and wants to be someone the world will know after the World Cup.

Unfortunately, like Mashrafe Bin Mortaza, doubts are always there when it comes to the availability of the 19-year-old paceman for selection, due to his constant injuries.

And there was no exception when he gave an official press conference. "I am now fit. The DPL was my test and thankfully I could play all the matches and there was no problem."

"For any player the World Cup is a dream and I will try to give my hundred per cent, if

given the chance to play. I want to take the centre-stage. People should at least say that this Bangladeshi fast bowler is very impressive," he continued.

Everybody will be eager to see him bowling fast to draw attention, but this young man is well aware of the fact that pace is not enough for success.

"As a fast bowler I have to bowl really fast, but in this era you cannot be successful with sheer pace. To succeed I have to maintain my line and length, while displaying good variation. My target is to execute it during the World Cup," was the smart answer, when asked about his impressive pace.

Playing in Australia is always encouragement for any fast bowler, so it is expected that Taskin will be excited to bowl there.

"As a fast bowler, I am excited as I am going to bowl in Australia. But I have a small experience of bowling there when I played in the Under-19 World Cup three years back."

Taskin has a natural in-swing in his bowling attack and he believes that now he has to rely on his strength. "On a good wicket the in-swinging comes naturally to me. I am also working with on my out-swinging, but as the World Cup is drawing nearer I have to put emphasis on my own strength. Gradually I can learn everything," said Taskin.

Only time will tell whether the young man will be able to prove his true class, but everybody's hopes appear to be pinned on him.



Opener Tamim Iqbal joined the national team's training camp at Mirpur for the first time yesterday after returning from Australia where he underwent a surgery on his left knee. He batted in the nets for a brief period and went through a few fitness sessions.

PHOTO: STAR

# Fed Cup from Feb 15

## Premier League to start March 10

SPORTS REPORTER



The Federation Cup will kick off on February 15, a week after the end of the Bangabandhu Gold Cup international

football tournament, decided Bangladesh Professional League Committee (PFLC) at a meeting yesterday.

The season's curtain-raising tournament, which was initially scheduled to start in the third week of December 2014 but was later postponed twice due to the deferral of the Bangabandhu

Gold Cup and the players' transfer window, will end by the first week of March, according to the PFLC decision. Eleven clubs of the Premier League will be joined by Bangladesh Championship League outfit Uttar Baridhara Club in the season-opening tournament.

The decision to allow a 7-day window after the end of the Bangabandhu Gold Cup has been made to facilitate Sheikh Russel KC's participation in the play-off stages of the AFC Cup, informed PFLC chairman Abdus Salam Murshedy. The former Bangladesh Premier League champions will play away to Tajikistan outfit

FC Khayr on February 10 and will also be away to Lebanese side Salam Zgharta on February 17, subject to their victory over the Tajik side.

The meeting also decided to start the Bangladesh Premier League from March 15. The eighth edition will of the top-tier professional league be held on home and away basis in two legs, informed Murshedy. The Bangabandhu National Stadium in Dhaka, the MA Aziz Stadium in Chittagong and the Gopalganj Sheikh Moni Stadium have been confirmed as three venues while three other venues are under consideration for approval, added Murshedy.

## World Cup inspiration

### Pak players visit Peshawar survivors

AFP, Peshawar

Pakistan cricketers on Saturday met survivors of last month's horrific Taliban school massacre, with captain Misbahul Haq saying the brave youngsters had inspired his team to win the World Cup.

Along with Misbah, popular all-rounder Shahid Afridi, Umar Akmal, Ahmed Shehzad, Ehsan Adil, Yasir Shah and Mohammad Irfan visited the army-run school in Peshawar where 150 people, most of them children, lost their lives on December 16.

Misbah said meeting with students who survived the attack -- the deadliest in Pakistan's history -- had given the cricketers enormous courage ahead of next month's World Cup in Australia and New Zealand. "It was a great feeling," Misbah told AFP. "The kids gave us tremendous courage and wished the best for us in the coming World Cup."

He added: "The best part is that these kids have rejoined the school and their spirit is an encouraging sign for the players, which is to never give up, whatever you do. And with this motivation, we will try to win the World Cup."

Misbah said the children had promised to watch the World Cup, which starts on February 14, and to pray for a Pakistani victory.

Afridi said the students had taught the players that "the one who saves is greater than those who tries to kill". "We are hugely motivated by these kids," Afridi told AFP. "I asked one kid how he survived after being shot in the chest and he replied that his chest is not weak."

# HOCKEY WORLD LEAGUE

## Bangladesh lose against Japan

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh suffered a 1-5 goal defeat against Japan in their opening match of the Hockey World League (Round-2) in Singapore yesterday.

Bangladesh, the 30th ranked side in the world, conceded the first goal inside two minutes of the match. A penalty corner in the 11th minute made it 2-0 before the Japanese team scored a field goal in the 18th minute and another penalty corner in the 22nd minute. The 10th ranked Japanese side, which had thrashed Bangladesh by 8-0 goals in the Asian Games in September last year, were leading by 5-0 by the 31st minute of the match.

Veteran defender Mamunur Rahman Chayan, who came in as a first-quarter substitute, scored a consolation goal from a

penalty corner for Bangladesh in the 44th minute of the match.

Rafiqul Islam Kamal, the assistant coach of the Bangladesh team, blamed the lack of concentration in the first two quarters for the big defeat.

"We failed to restrict Japan in the first two quarters," said Kamal when contacted over phone.

"Had we played better in the first two quarters, the result could have been different. In the last two quarters we played better and controlled possession but the Japanese goalkeeper produced some good saves," added Kamal.

Bangladesh will take on 35th ranked Mexico, who suffered a 0-6 defeat against Poland later in the other Pool B match yesterday, in their second match today. The match will begin at 1:00pm Bangladesh time.

## Jummon still on life support

SPORTS REPORTER

Legendary hockey player Jummon Lusai is still fighting for his life after suffering a brain haemorrhage at the Abahani Club premises on Friday.

The long-time national team player is being kept on life support at the intensive care unit of the Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University after being transferred from the Bangladesh Medical College Hospital, where he was admitted on Friday following the haemorrhage.

According to the doctors, the kidneys, liver and brain of the iconic sportsman have been seriously affected. Officials of Abahani and Lusai had been living at the club tent for a long time while his wife and children reside in Mizoram, India.

# Tears for fears!

SPORTS REPORTER



Many may and will travel to Australia and New Zealand from the country this February and March to be a part of history as well as support their beloved Tigers in the ICC World Cup, but thousands of cricket fans at home and abroad, even the cricketers, will for sure search for one special face in the stands.

The man behind the painted stripes is none other than Shoyab Ali. For ardent Bangladeshi cricket fans there is no need to give any description about who he is. It is almost expected that there will be a black-and-yellow striped body in the stands leading chants of 'Bangladesh! Bangladesh! Shabash Shakib; Shabash Mushy or Shabash Mashrafe' during Bangladesh's matches.

But whether the Tigers and the viewers will find this familiar face in the World Cup is a question. Shoyab loves to say, "I don't think too much, everything will work out itself" when asked about how he overcomes all the odds to keep the passion up.

The 24-year-old man from Faridpur endured many difficulties to follow the Tigers, but he has no complaints because he is ready to sacrifice anything for the game and the Tigers. But travelling to Australia and New Zealand posed as big a challenge for Shoyab because of the money required for the trip.

"I went to many doors but did not get any response to make my dream come true. Through media I want to draw the attention of our honourable prime minister," said the emotion-choked Shoyab during a press conference arranged by Bangladesh Cricket Supporters' Association yesterday.

"I never like to share my personal struggles that I face for my love for cricket. I had a piece of land as my personal asset and had it not been devoured by Padma I would definitely have sold that to earn some money for the trip," he continued.

Shoyab cried throughout the press conference but perhaps his tears can be stopped if his dream to cheer the Tigers from the stands in the World Cup comes true.



Mashrafe Bin Mortaza with Shoyab Ali at Mirpur in 2012. PHOTO: STAR FILE

## BFF's jersey design contest

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) is organising a 'jersey design contest' ahead of the Bangabandhu Gold Cup. According to a press release from the BFF, designs for two sets of jerseys -- home and away -- of the Bangladesh national team should be submitted through email by January 20.

The home jersey should contain green as the major colour with a combination of red or any other colour while the away jersey should contain red as the major colour with a combination of green or any other colour. For both shorts, the design should contain white as the major colour.

The designs for both sets of jerseys, along with detailed personal information of the designer, should be sent to the following email address: bangabandhugc15.volunteer@gmail.com.

The winners of the chosen designs will receive, among other prizes, two return air tickets of Dhaka-Kathmandu route along with VIP tickets to the Bangabandhu Gold Cup matches, a dinner with the national team and a brazuca ball.

## Easy win for Proteas

AFP, Durban

Dale Steyn ended a short but brutal rampage by Chris Gayle to open the way for South Africa to beat the West Indies in a rain-affected first one-day international at Kingsmead on Friday.

The hosts won by 61 runs according to the Duckworth/Lewis method when the tourists were bowled out for 164. South Africa made 279 for eight before their innings was cut short by rain after 48.2 overs.

Chasing a reduced target, which eventually became 225 runs off 32 overs after another brief interruption, Gayle led the West Indies to a storming start as he and Dwayne Smith put on 51 for the first wicket inside the first six overs.

Gayle, who played match-winning innings in both Twenty20 internationals he played in ahead of the one-day series, swung at almost everything as he made 41 off 24 balls, with two sixes and five fours.

He hit two fours in Steyn's first over -- one a top edge over wicketkeeper AB de Villiers -- but swung once too often and edged a catch to De Villiers.

## Third ODI rained off

AFP, Auckland

The third one-day international between New Zealand and Sri Lanka was abandoned Saturday after frequent interruptions because of rain.

The players were forced from the field for the third and final time with New Zealand, batting first, 145-3 after 28.5 overs.

More than three hours later, the umpires ruled there was no likelihood of the weather clearing enough for play to resume and the match was abandoned.

For New Zealand Martin Guptill was not out 66, while for Sri Lanka Angelo Mathews had three for 21.

New Zealand were rocked early when batting mainstay Brendon McCullum was removed by Mathews for 28, putting pressure on Guptill to repay the faith the selectors had in him after he failed in the first two games.

# Continuation of the Tests?

## Australia, India meet in tri-series today

AFP, Melbourne



Left-arm pacer Mitchell Starc said he expects Australia's tri-series one-dayer with India in Melbourne on Sunday to continue

where the recent niggling Test series left off.

Starc was the chief destroyer in the opening game of the series against England on Friday, finishing with figures of 4-42 in Australia's bonus point three-wicket victory at the Sydney Cricket Ground.

He ripped through the tourists' top order with two wickets in the opening over of the match on his way to being named player-of-the-match.

The 24-year-old left-arm quick was reprimanded by the ICC during the

fourth Test in Sydney for his exaggerated send-off in the face of Murali Vijay after dismissing the opener.

It was one of several flashpoints from both sides in a highly-competitive series won 2-0 by Australia, and Starc on Saturday predicted another tough battle between the number one and two ranked sides in the world one-day standings.

"It's been a pretty intense Test series," Starc told reporters.

"Two great teams going hard at it and it will be much the same on Sunday."

"There will be two sets of guys doing their best to play their best and trying their hardest for their countries."

"It was a fantastic Test series to watch and to be a part of and it will be no different on Sunday."

Starc's four wickets against England

took him past the 50 mark in his 29th one-day international and he is averaging an impressive 21.58 with the white ball.

He was publicly criticised by Test spin great and now television commentator Shane Warne during the India Test series and he admits he needs to transfer his one-day form to Test matches more consistently.

"I think in recent times I know my one-day and Twenty20 game and know what I need to do for the team," he said.

"I guess it comes back to that confidence thing and I showed against England why I like to be taking the new ball."

"But I want to play as often as I can for Australia and if I keep bowling fast I know I can take wickets in all forms of the game."