

# SPORT



Bangladesh's ace golfer Siddikur Rahman, seen here smiling at the Kurmitola Golf Club after news of his direct qualification to the Olympic Games on Tuesday, has more to be happy about as he will be carrying the country's flag in Rio next month.

## Siddikur to wave the red and green in Rio

**SPORTS REPORTER**

In the land of cricket and football, the Olympic Games have generally not stirred much passion among sports fans, but a golfer is set to change all that. A country starved of facilities that can enable its athletes to rub shoulders with their elite global counterparts has relied on wild cards to ensure participation in the world's greatest sporting showpiece. It is therefore fitting that the Bangladesh flag in next month's Rio Olympic Games will be carried by golfer Siddikur Rahman, who rose from humble beginnings to reach the top of an elite sport and become Bangladesh's first direct qualifier to the Olympics.

"Siddikur will be the flag carrier of the Bangladesh contingent," Bangladesh Olympic Association (BOA) secretary general Syed Shahed Reza announced yesterday.

Siddikur, the 31-year-old winner of two Asian Tour titles, will take over flag-carrying duties from swimmer Mahfizur Rahman, who carried the flag in the London 2012 opening ceremony.

"Honestly, I am so proud to be given this great honour," Siddikur told 'The Daily Star' over phone yesterday. "This will inspire me, and I am very grateful for this honour. I will try my best to repay it with my performance."

Earlier this week on Monday, Siddikur was

placed in 56th position in the final eligibility list for the Rio 2016 Games, therefore becoming the first Bangladeshi athlete to attain direct qualification to the Games. All the other athletes to have participated so far have done so through wild cards provided to each national Olympic association by the International Olympic Committee to encourage participation for all countries.

"The BOA president [and army chief General Abu Belal Mohammad Shafiqul Haque] exchanged views with the athletes who are going to participate in the Olympics and instructed all to uphold the image of the country in Rio," said Shahed Reza adding that the athletes were asked to be disciplined and try to acclimatise to the new environment in Brazil during the briefing at the Kurmitola Golf Club yesterday.

Swimmers Mahfizur and Sonia Akter, shooter Abdullah Hel Baki and archer Shaymoli Roy, who are going to participate with wild cards, will accompany Siddikur while sprinters Mezbah Ahmed and Shirin Akter still have a good chance to participate as the IOC was supposed to ensure wild cards to Bangladesh sprinters yesterday night.

A 21-member contingent, led by chef-de-mission Bangladesh Fencing Association president Lt General (Rtd) Abu Tayeb Mohammad Johirul Alam will depart for Rio from July 28 in instalments, informed the BOA secretary general.

PHOTO: STAR

## Pace uncompromised on Taskin's way back

**SPORTS REPORTER**

The Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) is hopeful that pacer Taskin Ahmed will return to international cricket with his formidable pace undiminished in the upcoming home series against England. The right-arm paceman has been going through a rehabilitation programme to modify his action for a particular delivery without compromising his pace.

The programme has been designed keeping in mind that his main strength, which is his high pace, should not be slowed down. His progress in rehab was a little delayed due to his participation in the Dhaka Premier League but the BCB was hopeful that the pacer will be available for the next international engagement against England.

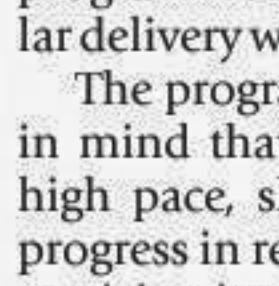
"We are yet to take any decision regarding when we will send our two bowlers [Taskin Ahmed and Arafat Sunny] for re-assessment or where we will send them. Our head coach [Chandika Hathurusingha] will re-assess their progress and everything once the national camp starts next week and then we will take the final decision. But we are hopeful that everything will be in place before the England series," said BCB's cricket operations committee chairman Akram Khan yesterday.

Former pace bowler Zakir Hossain, who is now looking after the rehab programme after Zimbabwean bowling coach Heath Streak departed the BCB job, was also optimistic about Taskin's return well before the England series.

"The rehab programme was held back for a while as he played the league matches. But he has so far made good progress. He has problem with one particular delivery which is his bouncer but now he is in good shape with this delivery. His pace is his main asset and we saw how he can terrorise the batsmen with his pace so his rehab programme was designed in such a way that his natural strength is intact," said Zakir.

Taskin, along with left-arm spinner Arafat Sunny, was suspended from bowling in international cricket during the last World Twenty20 in India in March this year after an independent assessment found their bowling actions to be illegal after being reported for suspect actions during the World T20 first-round match against the Netherlands.

The BCB was hopeful about both bowlers' return during the England series. England are expected to arrive in Bangladesh on September 30. If everything goes according to plan, they will begin with three ODIs in October and then play two Tests.



## Misbah's fabulous debut

**AFP, London**

Pakistan captain Misbahul Haq became the oldest player to score a Test century for 82 years when he reached three figures against England at Lord's on Thursday and celebrated by performing an impressive series of press-ups.

He was 110 not out in a Pakistan total of 282 for six at stumps on the first day of this four-match series. The 42-year-old's achievement was all the more impressive as this was also his first Test at the 'home of cricket'.

Not since England's Patsy Hendren made a century against Australia aged 45 at Manchester's Old Trafford ground back in 1934 had an older player scored a Test hundred.

Remarkably, this was also Misbah's first Test anywhere in England, with selection decisions having kept him out of previous tours.

It looked as if Misbah was about to celebrate his achievement by prostrating himself on the Lord's turf in prayer.

But instead he performed a series of press-ups in what appeared to be a joke aimed at critics who questioned whether he is now too old for international cricket.

The gesture also looked to be a wry reference to the pre-tour 'army-style' training camp the squad were put through at the Pakistan Military Academy in the northwest-

ern town of Kakul.

He was dropped on 16 by Joe Root, who grassed a tough slip chance off fast bowler Steven Finn.

And he would have been run out for 58 after a mix-up with Asad Shafiq if Gary Ballance had hit the stumps.

Misbah was severe on off-spinner Moeen Ali, reverse and conventionally sweeping him for four fours in an over.

Another reverse sweep off Ali took him to 99.

He then nearly fell to England's leg trap when he popped up a chance just in front of forward square off Finn.

Misbah came to the crease with Pakistan in trouble at 77 for three after he had won the toss.

But together with Asad Shafiq (73), he put on 148 for the fifth wicket.

England all-rounder Chris Woakes, however, twice took two wickets in quick succession at both ends of the day.

The Warwickshire paceman bowled nightwatchman Rahat Ali for a duck off what became Thursday's last ball to finish with figures of four for 45 in 18 overs.

Pakistan's openers got through the new ball before first-change Woakes removed them both with a burst of two wickets for five runs in 16 balls.

Shan Masood was caught behind by Jonny Bairstow.

Woakes and Bairstow combined again to have Mohammad Hafeez (40) caught off a skyer.

SCOREBOARD				
Scoreboard at stumps on the first day of the first Test between England and Pakistan at Lord's on Thursday:				
<b>Pakistan: First Innings</b>				
Hafeez c Bairstow b Woakes	40			
Masood c Bairstow b Woakes	7			
Azhar lbw b Ball	7			
Younis c Ali b Broad	33			
Misbah not out	110			
Asad c Bairstow b Woakes	73			
Rahat b Woakes	0			
Extras: (lb-9, w-2, nb-1)	12			
Total: (For 6 wickets in 87 overs)	282			
To bat: Sarfraz Ahmed, Wahab Riaz, Mohammad Amir, Yasir Shah				
Fall of wickets: 1-38, 2-51, 3-77, 4-134, 5-282, 6-282				
<b>BOWLER</b>	<b>O</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>R</b>	<b>W</b>
Broad	21	9	44	1
Ball	19	5	51	1
Woakes	18	6	45	4
Finn	21	2	86	0
Ali	7	0	46	0
Vince	1	0	1	0
<b>Toss: Pakistan</b>				
<b>Umpires: Kumar Dharmasena and Joel Wilson</b>				

## Mo faces tough Rio tune-up

**AFP, Monaco**

Mo Farah and Dafne Schippers, arguably Europe's two biggest track stars, will hone their Olympic preparations with what promises to be two testing outings at Friday's Monaco Diamond League.

Farah, reigning Olympic gold medallist in the 5000m and 10,000m and defending two-time world champion in both events, will warm up for Rio, just three weeks away, with some speed work over 1500m.

It is an event he has run before, famously setting a European record of 3:28.81 in 2013.

Farah clocked 3:28.93 to finish fourth in the event at last year's meeting and another fast time looks a certainty as he goes up against the top Kenyan trio of three-time world 1500m champion Asbel Kiprop, world silver medallist Elijah Manangoi and Ronald Kwemoi.

## Sk Jamal seek league hat-trick

**SPORTS REPORTER**

With the JB Bangladesh Premier League knocking on the door, the 12 participating teams are gearing up for a new journey in their season after completing the first two campaigns in the KFC Independence Cup and Walton Federation Cup. Yesterday the Bangladesh Football Federation introduced the officials, coaches and captains of four teams before the media and they outlined their goals for the prestigious professional football league, which will begin from July 24.

**SHEIKH JAMAL DC**

Despite being a depleted side following the mass exodus of local players and uncertainty hanging over the fate of their foreign players, Sheikh Jamal will be fighting for a hat-trick of titles.

The departure of the country's top players this season has had an evident

impact on Sheikh Jamal, who could not make it to the final of either the Independence Cup or Federation Cup. They were knocked out in the semifinals of the former, while succumbing in the quarters of the latter. The deadly foreign trio of Wedson Anselme, Emeka Darlington and Landing Darboe were behind Sheikh Jamal's run to the knockout stages of both tournaments and they will be vital yet again. However, with Wedson's availability in doubt, the road ahead will be even trickier.

"We could not produce the desired results in the last two tournaments but we believe the failure in both tournaments will inspire the players to do something better," said coach Shafiqul Islam Manik. "However, this time the teams will have to travel to different venues and alter their diets, so the team which will come out successful will be the team who can adapt the best."

**MUKTIJODDHA SANGSAD KS**

The All Reds are always dark horses, posing a hurdle to any title-contenders. That much was evident when they sent

big-spenders Chittagong Abahani -- champions of the Independence Cup -- packing in the group stages of the Federation Cup before reaching the quarterfinals. Though the freedom fighters' side don't set very lofty targets, they will want to garner as high a finish as possible in the 12-team table.

"We are satisfied with how we have performed in the past two tournaments and want to transfer those performances to the league. On paper, we are slated for fifth or sixth position, but we want to improve our position in the league," said coach Abdul Kayum Sentu.

**BROTHERS UNION**

The falling giants have never come close to winning the professional football league since its introduction in 2007, but this time the ambitious side are aiming to capture the coveted title, although the team management is a bit worried about the new format which forces teams to travel from venue to venue.

"I am happy with the performances of the players in Federation Cup. Nothing is impossible and I will try my best to achieve the target though it will be tough for the players and coaches to maintain the standard due to the burden of travelling," said Nepalese coach Balgopal Maharjan.

**ARAMBAGH KS**

The season's surprise package so far have been Arambagh, who have outshined big names like Sheikh Jamal and Muktijoddha Sangsad to reach the Federation Cup final before losing to Abahani and the youthful Arambagh have earned a lot of respect from other title contenders.

"Our target is to put up consistent performances like the ones we showed in the Independence Cup and Federation Cup and thus produce good results in the league," said assistant coach Jahidur Rahman Milon.



Pakistan captain Misbahul Haq marks his hundred on Lord's debut with a set of push-ups on the opening day of the first Test against England yesterday.

## Murali joins rivals for Aus-SL series

**REUTERS, Colombo**

Keen to beat Sri Lanka in their own spin game, Australia have roped in local spin great Muttiah Muralidaran to help their slow bowlers ahead of the three-Test series beginning at Pallekele later this month.

The 44-year-old former off-spinner, still the highest wicket-taker in Test cricket with 800 scalps, had a similar short-term consulting stint with Australia in 2014.

"Murali's got a lot of experience in Sri Lanka," Australia captain Steve Smith said. "He took a truckload of wickets."

"It's great to have someone like that helping our spinners in this series - to give us that insight. He's been really

good around the group so far, and he's enjoying his time with us."

Muralidaran said he was looking for such short-term jobs and had no problems helping the visitors plot against his own country.

"I'm not involved in Sri Lankan cricket at all because there are (other) people who are involved," Muralidaran, a perennial thorn in Australia's flesh during his playing days, told Cricket Australia website.

"Then, on and off, Australia offered me twice so I said 'why not' because you are passing on the knowledge to other people. It doesn't matter whether it's your country or other people."

"I think giving quality time to my family is most important, that's why I take smaller jobs -- two weeks, three

weeks... those sorts of jobs are not available in Sri Lanka."

Australia were confident opener David Warner, recovering from a broken left index finger, will be fit for the series opener at Pallekele.

"His recovery is going really well and we expect him to be fine for that first Test match," Smith said of his deputy who batted one-handed against Lyon in the Colombo nets.

Cricketer Australia also appointed Victorian David Saker as the new full-time assistant coach on Thursday.

Saker succeeds Craig McDermott who quit the post earlier this year.

Beginning on July 26, Australia will play three Tests, five one-dayers and two Twenty20 Internationals during their two-month-long tour.



THE CAPTAINS: (L-R) Sheikh Jamal's Yeasin Khan, Arambagh's Mithul Hasan, Muktijoddha Sangsad's Saidul Haque and Brothers Union's Yabayed Hossain stand together at the BFF house yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR