



The sports-savvy Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina is in the mix of the golden girls, who won the inaugural SAFF Women's Under-15 Championship by defeating India in December, at her Gonobhaban office yesterday. The PM awarded one lakh taka each to the victorious members of the team.

Soumya's time to be practice perfect

SPORTS REPORTER



Opener Soumya Sarkar will be desperate to get back among the runs at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium during a practice match between BCB Red and BCB Green tomorrow.

It will basically be a 50-over match, where the players will practice in a match scenario ahead of the tri-series involving Zimbabwe and Sri Lanka. However, the selectors will still keep an eye on a few players, including Soumya.

The mercurial left-hander, who many believe received preferential treatment from former coach Chandika Hathurusingha, scored 0, 28, 3, 3, 0 and 8 in his last six ODI matches after making an unbeaten 87 against Ireland in Dublin in May 2017.

"Yes, Soumya's form is a cause for concern for us and we would love to see him make some runs in the practice match," said chief selector Minhajul Abedin yesterday. However rather than his scores, the selectors are more concerned with the way the batsman has batted recently.

Minhajul added that they had not yet decided on the team as the final ODI squad

for the tri-series will be announced on January 12 after the Bangladesh Cricket League (BCL), which begins on January 9.

"We will keep our eyes on a few players but we are yet to decide anything. We want to make the decisions as per the strategy of the team management. We also have to consider the weather conditions because they will all be day-night matches so dew will be a big factor," he added.

The tri-series will kick off on January 15 with a match between Bangladesh and Zimbabwe at Mirpur.

However, the national team players will get the chance for some match practice in the four-day BCL although Shakib Al Hasan, Tamim Iqbal and Mushfiqur Rahim are unlikely to feature in the league.

BCB RED: Tamim Iqbal, Anamul Haque, Shakib Al Hasan (captain), Mushfiqur Rahim, Mahmudullah Riyad, Sabbir Rahman, Sunzamul Islam, Ariful Haque, Taskin Ahmed, Abu Hider, Rubel Hossain and Abul Hasan.

BCB GREEN: Imrul Kayes, Soumya Sarkar, Liton Das, Mohammad Mithun, Nazmul Hossain, Nasir Hossain, Mehedi Hasan Miraz, Mashrafe Bin Mortaza (captain), Mohammad Saifuddin, Abu Jayed, Mustafizur Rahman and Nazmul Islam.

Perera loses captaincy

AFP, Colombo

Sri Lanka on Thursday ousted Thisara Perera as one-day captain and said it would announce a replacement next week.

Perera took on the job in late November, succeeding Upul Tharanga, who was sacked after a series of losses.

Sri Lanka Cricket said it would name a successor after consulting new coach Chandika Hathurusingha, who has pledged to get tough with the under-performing national team. "During the discussion, the chairman of selectors informed me that they are considering appointing either Angelo Mathews or Dinesh Chandimal to fill the role," the SLC quoted its President Thilanga Sumathipala as saying.

Sri Lanka, who tour Bangladesh later this month, are under pressure after a series of defeats, most recently to India.

Another defeat in Dunedin tune-up

SPORTS REPORTER



The Bangladesh Under-19 team's 10-day camp in Dunedin ended with a 24-run defeat to Otago A in the third and final practice match at the University of Otago Oval yesterday.

The U-19s will now play two lead-up games against Pakistan and Afghanistan in Christchurch before taking the field for the ICC Under-19 World Cup against Namibia in their first group match on January 14. The remaining two group matches against Canada and England will be held on January 15 and 18 respectively.

The first practice match in Dunedin was washed out while Bangladesh lost the second match by six wickets.

In yesterday's match, Otago A piled on 278 for three in 50 overs thanks to unbeaten centuries from Hawkins and Visabadiya. Hasan Mahmud bagged two wickets for 37 runs.

In reply, skipper Saif Hassan and Aminul Islam's half centuries were not enough to salvage the defeat as Bangladesh Under-19s were eventually bowled out for 254 in 49.1 overs.

SCORES IN BRIEF

OTAGO A: 278-3 in 50 overs (Hawkins 137 not out, Visabadiya 112 not out; Hasan Mahmud 2-37, Nayeem 1-36)

BANGLADESH U-19S: 254-10 in 49.1 overs (Saif 54, Aminul 52, Mahidul 52; Duffy 4-70)

Result: Otago A won by 24 runs.

New year, new Shakib

SPORTS REPORTER



Ahead of any series Shakib Al Hasan provides a statement that goes against the conventional ones spouted by most of the other players. However, rather than hitting the nail on the head as he usually does, the star all-rounder seemed more reserved and diplomatic while speaking to reporters about Bangladesh's chances in the upcoming tri-series, which will kick-off in Mirpur on January 15.

"Yes, of course," was the response when asked whether Bangladesh were favourites in the tri-series, which also features Sri Lanka and Zimbabwe. However, Shakib quickly restored the balance as he went on to say: "We think we have good opportunity but the other two teams are good; nobody is bad. Both teams are well-aware of our players and conditions so there will be good competition. But as we have become a mature side, we have a good chance."

The Test and T20I skipper also believes that success will come if everyone can play their role effectively. He was not interested in putting emphasis on the pitch or weather conditions, instead demanding the best from the players.

"Whatever the pitch and conditions, they will remain the same for all the teams, so the important thing is to play good cricket and it will be difficult for any team to beat us if we can play our best," he added.

However, Shakib is not busy only with preparations for the upcoming home challenges. He also has some homework to do, namely preparing for



FOLLOW HIS LEAD: Mashrafe Bin Mortaza (C) is in his usual chirpy mood as he shows something to premier all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan (L) while an out of form Soumya Sarkar tries to be an attentive listener.

PHOTO: STAR

the first meeting of the new MCC World Cricket Committee to be held in Sydney on January 9 and 10 because he is not willing to be a mere spectator.

"I will take make some preparations. I know the agendas but I have to study about them because I need to know and understand all those things. It would be unwise to go there without preparation," said the 30-year-old, who will fly on January 7 to attend the meeting.

"I am thrilled no doubt because to me it's a big

honour [becoming a member of the MCC World Cricket Committee], but it's also a responsibility. There was no one from Bangladesh earlier I can share what advantages we enjoy and what difficulties we face."

In response to a question about Indian Premier League franchise Kolkata Knight Riders' decision to release him, Shakib said: "If someone picks me in the auction then Alhamdulillah and if not then it doesn't matter."

A championship with a purpose

ANISUR RAHMAN

For any sport to thrive, the root-level organizations like clubs, services teams and districts generally play the vital roles. These are the pillars on which a sport body is built. And for a young Bangladesh Archery Federation (BAF), which started its humble journey in 2002, these organs are playing their parts in that steady growth.

And this was quite evident during the two-day Teer 9th National Archery Championship where 32 teams – 21 clubs, 6 services teams, three districts, a foundation and a sports directorate – fought for glory at a place far away from Dhaka, but an ideal home for the archers to train and compete uninterrupted round the year.

Interestingly, they are not like the big clubs we are associated with for any other sport like football, hockey or cricket. Those clubs are unique and solely focus on archery. A national championship means maximum number of districts, which is more to do with filling up the numbers instead of any serious concern. In archery only three districts – Narail, Chittagong and Dhaka – took part with purpose at the Shaheed Ahsan Ullah Master Stadium, a relatively lesser known venue at Tongi on the Dhaka-Mymensingh highway.

As the two-day meet concluded yesterday, some younger archers came out with flying colours, outshining the more established players, which will certainly serve the federation that has recently inked a deal with City Group – a partnership that set a lofty target of



They are close to the bull's eye but not as close as the Dhaka Army Archery Club archers (inset) who established their dominance in the Teer 9th National Archery Championships yesterday.

PHOTOS: RASHED SUMON

winning at least a medal in 2020 Tokyo Olympics under the vision of 'Teer Go for Gold.'

Ashikuzzamam Anay, Ratan Miah and Ashim Kumar Das outshone the recognized national archers in men's individual compound bow event to win gold, silver and bronze while Ety Khatun emerged from nowhere to win a bronze medal in women's individual recurve event in her first national appearance.

Ety represented Teerondaj Sangsad, a top archery club relatively solvent for providing archers their necessary equipment and training. The services teams Army, Air Force, Boarder Guard Bangladesh, Ansar and Police also

do not have any financial constraint to run their archery outfits.

Quantum Sputum Club is another committed entity in archery. A BKSP-like institution based in Lama under Bandarban district, they groom some 50 archers, mostly indigenous, along with athletes of 11 other disciplines.

But those solvent organizations need technical support to grow in a sport where actually the first batch of national archers are acting as coaches. First gold medallist Sajjad Hossain is now the coach of Bangladesh Army, former national archer Ziaur Rahman is involved with Bangladesh Ansar, former archer Noor Alam and current

archer Sheikh Sajib are also working with students of BKSP.

"We just need the technical support from the federation, which can provide us high-profile coaches to groom players, who are mostly indigenous people" said Quantum coach Shihabur Rahman. "I believe those indigenous archers can outshine others if they get high-performance training."

However, there is still a big portion of the clubs and districts, who are really struggling to provide archers those expensive instruments.

"I have bought 11 beginner bows for recurve archers with own cost," said Md Saifuddin, manager

of Rajshahi ST archery club. "I know there is no return of this investment but the satisfaction is that I feel really good when the boys and girls get chances in the national team as well as get jobs in different services teams."

Rajshahi ST archery club president Azizur Rahman Bachchu said that they run the archery camp round the year with the participation of 60 archers but the lack of instruments hinders their training.

Abul Kashem Mamun, the national archer who qualified for the compound semifinal in November's Asian Archery Championships, conducts training in his own district, Narail, with the help of BAF general secretary Kazi Rajib Uddin Ahmed Chapol. Narail is the biggest provider of archers in the national pipeline.

"It would not have been possible to produce archers in Narail had the BAF general secretary not extended his helping hand. There are some 60 budding archers in Narail but they can't practice regularly due to the lack of instruments and coaches. I train those boys when I'm in Narail. I study in Jessore and spend most of my time in national camp," said Mamun, who believes if each national player has his own instruments, their performance could increase significantly.

However, there was a positive vibe during the championship.

"Archery is in good state now as some good archers from Narail, Faridpur, Chittagong and Rajshahi came into the limelight through the NSC talent hunt program. Ety Khatun is really a good find. Her score and playing style are really good. She has all the qualities to become a good archer," said Sajjaj.

Army win big Ety shines on last day

SPORTS REPORTER



Though national recurve arches managed to avoid huge upsets in the Teer 9th National Archery Championships, the national compound archers failed to even reach the bronze medal deciding matches on the concluding day of the meet at the Shaheed Ahsan Ullah Master Stadium in Tongi yesterday.

In the individual men's recurve bow event, top archer Ruman Sana beat Sheikh Sojib by 7-3 points to grab the gold medal while Tamimul defeated Ibrahim Rezwon 7-1 to conform a bronze medal. Only Hakim Ahmed Rubel, who was part of the national team in the Asian Archery Championship, did not reach the medal deciding matches.

On the other hand, in the individual men's compound bow event Ashikuzzaman Anay, Ratan Mia and Ashim Kumar Das won gold, silver and bronze medals respectively while national players Abu Kashem Mamun, Millon Molla, Ehsan Ahmed and Najmul Ahmed were ousted before the medal deciding matches.

Bangladesh Army became the champions with five gold and four silver medals. Teerondaj Sangsad, who won two gold, three silver and five bronze medals, followed in second place while BKSP finished on third with two gold, two silver and one bronze medal.

Among the winners, Ety Khatun was a surprise finding as she was discovered through the National Sports Committee talent hunt programme. The girl from Chuadanga drew everyone's attention by overcoming national archer Rabeya Khatun in the bronze medal deciding match.

Ety, now an eighth grade student, left playing handball to pick up archery and attended the talent hunt alongside a friend. As luck would have it, the 19-year-old then got selected for the training programme in Dhaka last year and played for Teerondaj Sangsad in the just concluded competition for her debut appearance at the national level.

Apart from Ety, Bangladesh Army's Roksana Akter also stole the limelight as she won three gold medals -- the individual women's compound, women's team compound and mixed event.

"It is my best performance since I started to play in 2014. I am confident to do better this time," said Roksana, who won a gold medal in the women's team event in the national championship and grabbed a silver medal in the women's team event in World Cup Stage-1 in Thailand.