

## Lanka sweep

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left-arm spinner Nazmul Islam and in the Sri Lanka dugout Chandika Hathurusingha was framed at his most radiant.

The victory capped off a remarkable turnaround for Sri Lanka after a listless 2017 as they completed a clean sweep of series against Bangladesh under coach Hathurusingha, who is leading the Lankans for the first time since deserting Bangladesh following the South Africa tour late last year. It is as if Hathurusingha has taken the magic wand with him after leading Bangladesh to so many wins in his three-year tenure with the Tigers.

Yesterday's win sealed a 2-0 T20I series sweep for Sri Lanka. They also won the ODI tri-series final against Bangladesh and clinched the two-match Test series 1-0 in the month-long tour.

Bangladesh came out in the final game to salvage some pride at a venue which was hosting the Tigers for the first time. But they disappointed the packed audience who had little to cheer after Sri Lanka posted a massive 210 for four with opener Kusal Mendis hitting a sublime 42-ball 70. His 98-run opening stand with Gunathilaka not only mocked Bangladesh's decision to bowl first but also set the platform for a huge total. Gunathilaka, who was dropped twice, scored a 37-ball 42. The big-hitting Thisara Perera came up in the batting order and made sure the momentum was maintained with a 17-ball 37 while Shanaka provided the perfect finish with an 11-ball 30.

Bangladesh, with a history of successful chases not exceeding 165, were never in the hunt after losing three wickets for 22 runs in three overs. Soumya Sarkar, who hit a half-century in the first game in Dhaka, scored a four-ball duck. Mushfiqur Rahim scored six and Mohammed Mithun, who came in place of Zakir Hasan, departed for five. Tamim Iqbal scored 26 and skipper Mahmudullah scored the team-highest 41. But those efforts were not enough to scale a mountain.

Bangladesh made four changes from the first game. Tamim returned after sitting out the first game in Dhaka due to a stiff left arm. Local boy Jayed made his international debut, wicketkeeper-batsman Mohammed Mithun, a surprise entrant, and young off-spinning all-rounder Mahedi Hasan also made his international debut. Sabbir Rahman was dropped along with Afif Hossain, Zakir Hasan and Rubel Hossain.

The selectors kept faith in young pace bowling all-rounder Mohammad Saifuddin, but he disappointed with the ball again, conceding 46 runs in his four overs. Even an otherwise dependable Mustafizur Rahman was expensive, conceding 39 runs in his four overs. His last over produced four boundaries, three on the trot, and yielded 17 runs.

Only left-arm spinner Nazmul Islam earned some respect from the Sri Lankans. He gave away 28 runs in his four overs.

Bangladesh will embark on a more challenging tri-nation T20 tournament in Sri Lanka next month which will feature India as the other team. The Bangladesh Cricket Board resorted to a makeshift arrangement after the sudden departure of Hathurusingha. The board president publicly preached that senior players are good enough to mentor the team in the interim. But after the first major home disappointment post-Hathurusingha, the BCB boss will certainly sing a different song. We do not need to wait long for the BCB boss to come out with something different sooner or later.



## Ravens, fly away

Pictures of a banner, sporting a raven and saying "Want to see Mohammadpur Thana Awami League free of dar kaua (ravens)", have been shared many times on social media. Awami League General Secretary Obaidul Quader branded infiltrators as dar Kaua during a rally in Sylhet last year. Insiders said a number of AL activists, who have been hoping to get posts in the thana unit committee of AL, had put up the banner. After Dhaka City unit AL (North) on December 27 approved committees of 26 thana units, there had been criticisms that infiltrators were named in the committees depriving devoted activists. On January 2, frustrated AL activists met AL President Sheikh Hasina over the matter, prompting her to suspend the committees. The banner reiterates the party activists' demands ahead of the formation of new committees.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

## Japan eyes big projects

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Under the new arrangement, Japanese companies will invest under the government-to-government system without participating in any bidding.

At the first meeting of the Japan-Bangladesh Joint PPP Platform on December 6 last year, Bangladesh's PPPA sought multi-billion dollar support from Japan for implementing 18 infrastructure projects.

The Joint PPP platform was formed following the signing of a memorandum of understanding between the two countries in Tokyo in June last year.

Early this year, Japan's land, infrastructure, transport and tourism ministry talked to Japanese companies and over a dozen firms showed interest in the eight projects, according to PPPA officials.

The companies include Kajima Corporation, Shimizu Corporation, Nippon Koei Co Ltd, Marubeni Corporation, Oriental Consultants Global Co Ltd, Mitsui and Co Ltd, and Mitsubishi Corporation.

The projects involve construction of a second Padma Multipurpose Bridge at Paturia-Goaland, an inland container depot near Dhirasram Railway Station in Gazipur,

multimodal hubs at Kamalapur Railway Station and Dhaka Biman Bandar Railway Station, circular railway line around Dhaka city, Outer Ring Road along with six transportation hubs, and Dhaka Mass Rapid Transit Development Project (MRT Line-2), and improvement of Chittagong-Cox's Bazar Highway.

The PPPA on February 7 held a meeting with officials of Bangladesh Railway, Roads and Highways Department, Bangladesh Bridge Authority and Dhaka Transport Coordination Authority (DTCA), and asked them to give it documents, including maps of project areas and reports on feasibility studies.

The railway is involved in four projects -- container depot, multimodal hubs and circular railway line -- and the DTCA in two projects -- the Outer Ring Road and the MRT Line-2.

The Bridge Authority is involved in the second Padma bridge, and the RHD in the Chittagong-Cox's Bazar Highway project.

Talking to this newspaper, DTCA Executive Director Syed Ahmed said, "We will submit all the documents related to our projects within the stipulated time."

"These two projects [a second metro rail and the Outer Ring Road] are in the revised Strategic Transport Plan," he told The Daily Star on February 14.

**SECOND METRO RAIL**  
The MRT Line-2 is dubbed the second metro rail project. Its proposed route is Ashulia-Savar-Gabtolli-Azimpur-Buet-Kamalapur covering around 40 kilometres.

"The MRT Line-2 has been conceptualised to meet the huge demand of over 1.1 million passengers on the proposed route every day," says the project's concept paper.

The DTCA recently submitted a proposal involving Tk 13 crore to the road transport and bridges ministry for conducting a pre-feasibility study on the MRT Line-2, officials said.

**OUTER RING ROAD**  
As per the revised STP, three types of ring roads have been proposed for Dhaka city.

The Inner Ring Road is along the Balu and the Buriganga rivers, while the Middle Ring Road is in alignment with the Dhaka Bypass Road.

The route of the Outer Ring Road will be Hemayetpur-Kalakandi-Madanpur-Danga-Bypile-Gazipur, and

its estimated cost will be \$2,875 million.

The length of the Inner Ring Road will be 73.2 km, the Middle Ring Road 108 km and the Outer Ring Road 129 km, as per the revised STP.

The DTCA also requested the Local Government Engineering Department (LGED) to conduct a pre-feasibility study on Outer Link Road project, and the LGED agreed to do that, officials said.

Ahmed said he is visiting the project areas to select places for six transportation hubs.

**SECOND PADMA BRIDGE**  
The 6.1km-long second Padma Bridge will link Paturia to Goalondo, connecting Dhaka directly with the western and south-western districts.

It will also connect the capital with Benapole and Darshana land ports, according to the project's concept paper.

The estimated cost of the project is \$3 billion which includes land acquisition and resettlement costs.

**MULTIMODAL HUBS**  
Two multimodal hubs will be built at Kamalapur Railway Station and Dhaka Biman Bandar Railway Station at a cost of \$700 million.

Officials said the hubs will have road and rail connectivity as well as flyovers for facilitating easy movement of commuters.

However, both the projects are now at an initial stage as no pre-feasibility study has been conducted yet, they said.

**CIRCULAR RAILWAY LINE**  
The estimated cost of Circular Railway Line around Dhaka City is \$1,000 million.

The government has already done a pre-feasibility study.

Railway Secretary Mofazzel Hossain said they have already launched a feasibility study on the project.

**DEPOT NEAR DHIRASRAM**  
Construction of an inland container depot near Dhirasram Railway Station involves \$146 million.

A feasibility study on the project has already been done.

**CTG-COX'S BAZAR HIGHWAY**  
The estimated cost of the project is \$1,462 million.

The two-lane highway will be turned into a four-lane one under the project, said PPPA officials.

## For uplifting the women

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northern district of Kurigram that has become a synonym for change and shelter.

Coming into existence in 1999 as a voluntary organisation, seven women swore to empower destitute and neglected women and to ensure equal rights and opportunities. It was one founding member, Rubina Yeasmin, who donated 20 decimals of land to form its first office in the Khalilganj area of Kurigram town.

The office has been developed over the years and now it is a tin roofed building that has five large rooms.

She took charge of AFAD that is registered by the Directorate of Women Affairs in 1999. Keeping in true to AFAD's vision of shaping a society that is habitable for both men and women, it is run by a 10 member staff -- 6 women and 4 men.

Currently, AFAD's focus is divided

threefold -- the ongoing development of handicapped persons and training women between the ages of 18 and 35 years under the South Asian Young Women's Leadership Initiative and its humanities and gender equality programme that will begin work soon.

AFAD accomplishes its goals through three branch offices -- at Buraburi and Thetroy union in Ulipur upazila and Punchgachhi union in Kurigram Sadar Upazila, she said.

Between 2007 and 2011, AFAD trained 750 teenagers, both girls and boys, on adolescence issues through its branch at Buraburi. The trainings were conducted by a supervisor and 15 facilitators, all of whom were women. The Adolescence Resource Centre still runs in that union to continue its efforts, said the executive director.

At Thetroy, AFAD ran a course from 2012 to 2015, where two female train-

ees coached 47 women on midwifery. These women now meet weekly and continue their works to develop the wellbeing of women during gestation and beyond, she added.

AFAD's Punchgachhi office is currently running a programme since 2007 that focuses on curbing early marriage, eve teasing, and dowry, and gives support for victims of rape and divorce. Till now, it has trained 370 girls, while there is a current enrolment of 283 girls. The girls are educated in groups by one female facilitator.

From 2013 till 2017, AFAD also ran a carpet (shatranji) making course at its head office for 75 women; 25 women are currently employed in the profession.

All the beneficiaries of AFAD have become Sayda's army of vigilantes who keep an eye out on any injustice in society and early marriage detec-

tion. She has directly halted 15 teen marriages at four unions in the district through her network.

"My own mobile number acts like a helpline to get tip offs in these cases."

Sayda's stories of heartfelt support and dedication spread far and wide. She has been giving legal support since 2006, bringing justice in 40 cases so far involving 60 women, including children.

"I am able to work as a member of different committees of upazila and district administration that allows me to have an impact."

For upholding women's rights, Sayda was awarded by RDRS Bangladesh in 2012, and received an Honour Crest as Women Promoter by For The Women By The Women and Women Collective in 2014, Top Joyeeta Award in Rangpur division by the Department of Women Affairs in 2015 and Manobadhikar Santee Padok

(peace award on human rights) by United Movement Human Rights in 2016.

"I have overcome setbacks both professionally and in my personal life in the past 25 years. Professionally, I had to give evidence of my abilities as normally, no one accepts female leadership. And personally, I have to hear negative comments on my work as I am a single woman, never married," said Sayda.

Research findings have made AFAD believe that establishing women rights and empowerment can only be achieved through social revolution.

"I have learnt that women face harassment and suffer as they are economically weak. I am working to progress women to be self-reliant. I am committed to bringing them to mainstream economic development."

## Iran plane crash kills 66

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saying the news had "left our hearts overwhelmed with sadness and sorrow", according to state television.

**AGEING FLEETS**  
Families of the passengers gathered at a mosque near Mehrabad airport.

"I can't bring myself to believe it," said a woman whose husband was on board.

A man who missed the doomed flight told reporters of his mixed emotions.

"God has been really kind to me but I am so sad from the bottom of my heart for all those dear ones who lost their lives," the unnamed man told the Tabnak news website, which showed a picture of his unused ticket.

Decades of diplomatic isolation have left Iran's airlines with ageing fleets of passenger planes which they have struggled to maintain and modernise.

Aseman's fleet includes at least three ATR-72s that date back to the early 1990s, according to the IRNA news agency.

owned by Europe's Airbus, told AFP "the circumstances of the accident remain unknown" and that international investigators were ready to assist Iran "if needed".

President Hassan Rouhani ordered the transport ministry to set up a crisis group to investigate the crash and coordinate rescue efforts, ISNA reported.

Aseman's three Boeing 727-200s are almost as old as the country's 1979 Islamic revolution, having made their first flights the following year.

Iran has suffered multiple aviation disasters, most recently in 2014 when 39 people were killed when a Sepahan Airlines plane crashed just after take-off from Tehran, narrowly avoiding many more deaths when it plummeted near a busy market.

Lifting sanctions on aviation purchases was a key clause in the nuclear deal Iran signed with world powers in 2015.

Following the deal, Aseman Airlines finalised an agreement to buy 30

Boeing 737 MAX jets for \$3 billion (2.4 billion euros) last June, with an option to buy 30 more.

However, the sale could be scuppered if US President Donald Trump chooses to re-impose sanctions in the coming months, as he has threatened to do.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu offered his condolences over yesterday's crash, just moments after he launched a blistering attack on Tehran's government.

"I take this opportunity to send condolences to the families of the 66 civilians that lost their lives," Netanyahu said at the Munich Security Conference.

"We have no quarrel with the people of Iran, only with the regime that torments them," he added.

The US Treasury Department, which must approve aviation sales to Iran, has done so for 80 Boeing jets and 100 Airbus planes for national carrier Iran Air.

The first few Airbus jets have already arrived in Tehran.

## UK for three joint assessments a year

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an independent auditor would work from today to this end and it might take 15 to 20 days to get the certificate.

"I am delighted to confirm that the temporary suspension on direct air cargo between Bangladesh and the UK has been lifted, following significant progress made in meeting a number of important security conditions," Blake said in a statement.

Replying to a question at the press conference, she said the ban, placed in March 2016, was not a political decision, rather a technical one.

"We will keep monitoring the security system of HISA as it is a continued work to keep aviation safe so that our people and the cargo continue to flow," Blake said.

The civil aviation minister said he expected Germany, Australia and the EU would also lift the ban, following the UK's decision.

Germany's Lufthansa, which had direct flight from Dhaka to Germany, imposed the ban on direct cargo in June 2016. Australia was the first country to impose the ban in December

2015, while the European Union did so in June last year.

Exporters have hailed the decision as it would save them money and time.

Nurul Amin, director of Bangladesh Freight Forwarders Association, said, "We welcome the decision. We hope that the civil aviation authorities and Biman will maintain the standards so that no country can impose such a ban."

Every year, more than 1,200 tonnes of cargo, mainly garments, vegetables and fruits, are carried by air from Bangladesh to the UK, he said.

"During the ban, airlines charged an additional 10 cents on an average for carrying each kilogram of goods in rescreening cost in a third country. It also required an additional three days to export goods to the UK," he added.

The decision to lift the ban will definitely bring good results as the UK is the third largest garment export destination for Bangladesh, said Siddiqur Rahman, president of Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA).

Biman has four flights from Dhaka

to London every week, each carrying 20 tonnes of cargo, he said, adding that more than 70 percent of the total volume is garment items.

Other airlines also carry goods to London, but he could not give any figure.

Biman lost \$30,000 in each flight due to the ban, said Kazi Wahidul Alam, an aviation expert.

Following the decision by the UK, other countries such as Germany and Australia may also lift the ban, he added.

Following the UK's ban, Bangladesh recruited British company Redline for screening of the export goods and training the manpower in the airport safety and security.

Bangladesh installed the required number of Explosive Detection System and Explosive Detection Dog for cargo scanning to improve the safety and security.

Before the lifting of the ban, an independent team from the EU assessed the safety and security measures, and Bangladesh passed the validation test in November last year.