



**Bangladesh all-rounder Mohammad Saifuddin attempts a scoop shot during practice at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday. The Tigers are gearing up for an upcoming tour of Sri Lanka, where they will certainly hope for some fireworks from the young all-rounder in the death overs.**

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

## BFF wary of Kabul

SPORTS REPORTER



Although the venues for the 2022 World Cup for Asia and Asian Cup Qualifiers have yet to be finalised, the Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) is apparently concerned with the possibility of playing in Ka-bul, the capital city of war-ravaged Afghanistan. Afghanistan have been pitted against Bangladesh, In-dia, Qatar and Oman in Group E. Bangladesh will play their first away match against Afghanistan on September 10 before hosting Qatar on October 10 in Dhaka.

"The deadline to inform FIFA about the home venue is July 31 and we are waiting to see which city Afghanistan will choose as their home venue. If it is Kabul, then we will write to FIFA for a neutral venue due to security concerns," said BFF general secretary Abu Nayeem Shohag after returning from Kuala Lumpur, where he attended the 40-team draw ceremony for the qualifiers in Malaysia.

"However, we have to accept whatever decision FIFA make regarding the venue," continued Shohag.

It could be mentioned here though that Afghanistan had chosen Tehran, the capital of Iran, as their home venue for the 2018 Russia World Cup Qualifiers while their home matches for the Asian Cup Qualifiers were held in Tajikistan.

Asked about the team's preparations ahead of the first match, Shohag informed that they would de-cide the best course of action in that regard within the next few days.

"Let's see what the coaching staff suggests. Besides, we have to keep in mind that Abahani also have two matches in the AFC Cup on August 21 and 28. However, it is certain that there will be a preparation camp for the national booters," said Shohag.

## HOCKEY ASIA CUP BD suffer 3rd defeat

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh suffered a 3-1 defeat to hosts Thailand in their fourth and final pool match of the Indoor Hockey Asia Cup in Chonburi, Thailand yesterday.

Fresh from a 9-0 win over Philippines in their previous match, Bangladesh conceded the lead in the third minute though Boonpea Warun, who scored a field goal before Kampanthong Thanop scored twice in the fourth and 34th minute to all but confirm victory for hosts Thailand.

Moinul Islam Koushik, who struck six goals against Philippines, reduced the margin four minutes ahead of the final whistle.

If Bangladesh can finish fourth in five-team group with three points from four matches, the boys in red and green could face the Pool B fourth-place finisher, Chinese Taipei, in the 7th-8th position-deciding match on July 20.

## 'Will do whatever the team needs'

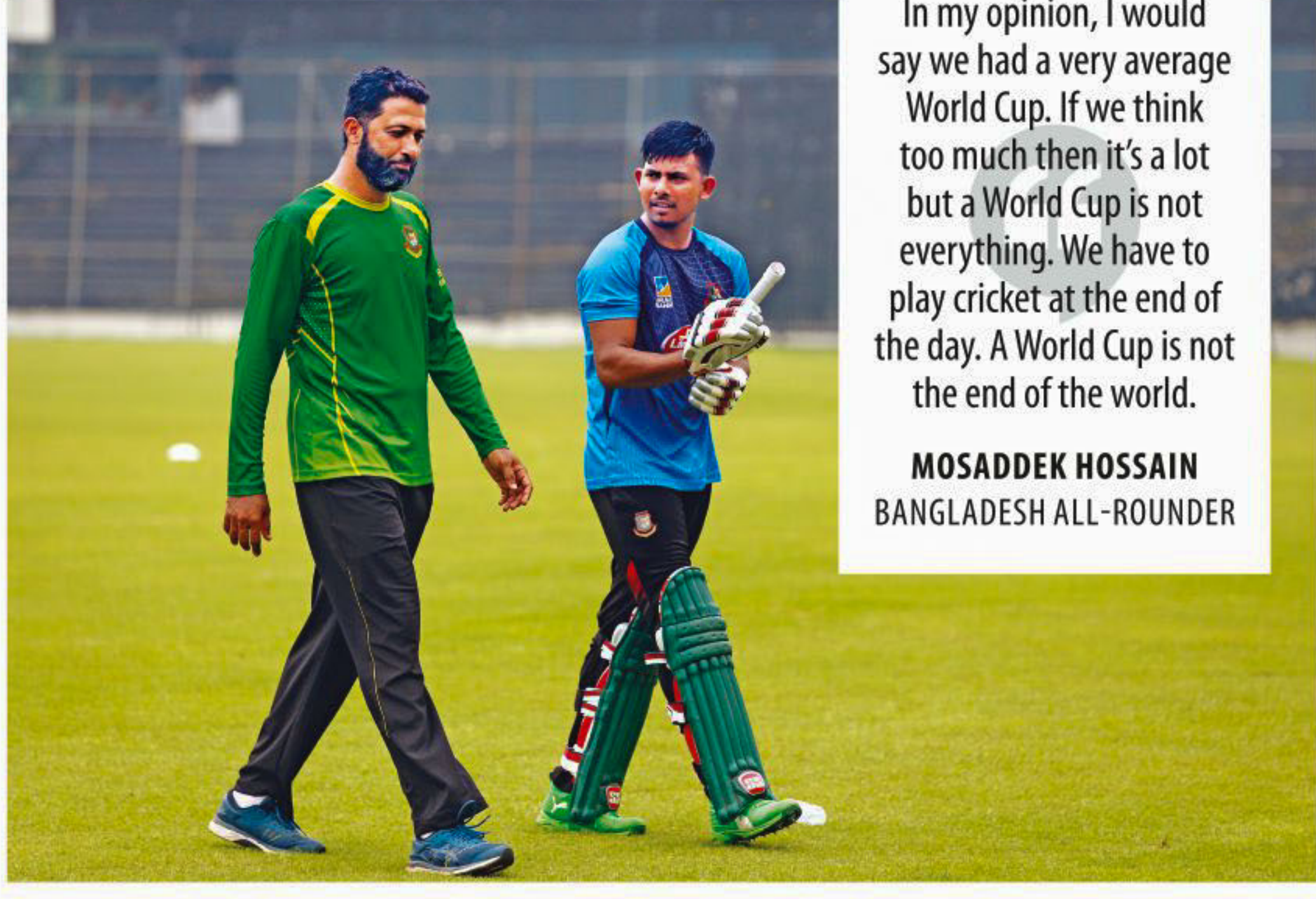
SPORTS REPORTER



Players making promising starts but then suddenly losing momentum or not being able to carry their form is a very common scenario in cricket. Bangladesh all-rounder Mosaddek Hossain displayed glimpses of his ability in the recently concluded World Cup in England, where the Tigers finished in eight position. However, with the Sri Lanka tour -- Bangladesh's first series following a bleak World Cup -- coming up, the question remains, will Mosaddek be able to carry on and flourish or will he just fall by the way side?

With Bangladesh's preparations for the Sri Lanka tour underway in Mirpur, Mosaddek was seen participating in all batting, bowling and fielding drills yesterday, the second day of the camp. Mosaddek later told reporters that he is currently trying to improve certain aspects of his batting.

"I am batting exactly the same way I batted in the World Cup. Strike rate is always a concern for me. I am working on my feet



In my opinion, I would say we had a very average World Cup. If we think too much then it's a lot but a World Cup is not everything. We have to play cricket at the end of the day. A World Cup is not the end of the world.

**MOSADDEK HOSSAIN**  
BANGLADESH ALL-ROUNDER

movement with Wasim Jaffer. I think, if I can improve this side of mine, I can do better Insha Allah," said the 23-year old.

Following a blistering show with the bat in the triangular series in Ireland in May this year, Mosaddek was given the nod

ahead of Sabbir Rahman in the World Cup to play the aggressor's role and score some quick runs at the death. The all-rounder did not

disappoint in that regard but rather added that he would be ready to play anywhere the team want.

"I batted on top of the order in domestic cricket but when I saw I had to bat in the number seven slot in the national side, I tried to practice batting in the number seven position in the domestic league as well. I might have the opportunity to score big runs batting on top of the order but I am ready to do whatever the team requires of me," he said.

With Shakib Al Hasan unavailable for the series while Mahmudullah Riyad was not considered for bowl-ing due to a shoulder injury, Mosaddek might need to put in some extra effort in the series. The youngster did however say he would grab any opportunity that comes his way.

"There will be no Shakib bhai this time so I might get more chances in the bowling department. I might have to come to bowl early and bowl more overs too. If that is the case then, I am prepared. I definitely have a plan if I have to bowl more overs. So, right now, I am focusing on the opportunities that come my way, be it in batting or bowling."

## 'World Cup triumph will inspire England'

AFP, London,



Sam Curran believes England's historic World Cup triumph will inspire the Ashes team as attention turns towards their attempt to regain the urn.

Sunday's dramatic end to the 50-over tournament has overshadowed the build-up to the five-Test showdown against Australia, which gets under way on August 1 at Edgbaston.

Curran feels the Ashes remains the pinnacle of the cricketing calendar but said the Test team would be galvanised by the World Cup, irrespective of whether they featured or not in the one-day triumph.

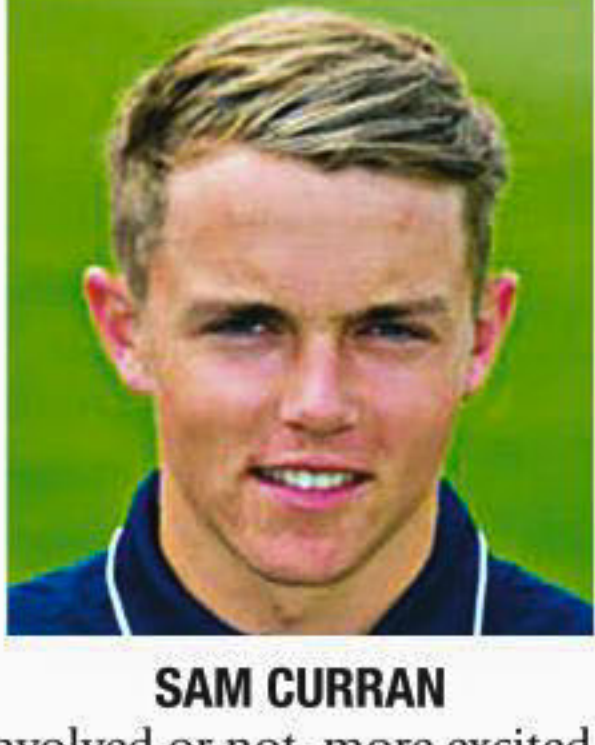
"I don't think I'm alone in saying that it's probably the greatest cricket match ever and for that to be the World Cup final was incredible," said the 21-year-old all-rounder. "That will provide a buzz for eve-ryone across Eng-lish cricket going into the Ashes."

"Days like Sunday get everyone, whether they were involved or not, more excited and desperate to do well so I'm sure it will rub off as we head into the Test part of the summer."

"The Ashes are the biggest thing you can play in as an England cricketer, that's what I've always felt. Hopefully we can be lifting the urn at the Oval in September."

Curran, whose older brother Tom was an unused squad member during the World Cup, has been drafted into England's groups for the one-off Test against Ireland next week and a pre-Ashes training camp.

The left armer was England Lions' standout performer against an Australian XI earlier this week, taking six for 95 and contributing a pair of half-centuries in a drawn first-class match at Canterbury.



**SAM CURRAN**

## Women's A team set to fly to SA

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) yesterday announced the Bangladesh Emerging Women's (A Team) squad that is set to leave for South Africa on July 20 for a three-match one-day and three-match T20 series against their South African counterparts.

Bangladesh will play their first one-dayer against the hosts on July 23 at the Groenkloof Oval in Preto-ria. The team will then play the following two one-dayers on July 25 and July 28 at the same venue.

The three T20 matches will be held on July 31, August 1 and August 4 respectively at the Mandela Oval in Hammanskraal.

Five Bangladesh Women's national team players -- Salma Khatun, Rumana Ahmed, Shamima Sultana, Lata Mandol and Ayesha Rahman -- will accompany the A team for this tour.

## Zimbabwe suspended by ICC

AFP, London

Zimbabwe Cricket was suspended by the International Cricket Council on Thursday over a failure to provide a process for free elections and to ensure there was no government interference.

"As a consequence of suspension, ICC funding to Zimbabwe Cricket will be frozen and representative teams from Zimbabwe will not be allowed to participate in any ICC events," the ICC said in a state-ment.

## 'Sorry we let you down'

AGENCIES, Auckland



Cricket hero Trent Boult has apologised to New Zealand fans for "letting everyone down" as the first group of Black Caps touched down in Auckland following their heartbreaking World Cup final defeat to England.

Boult was one of a handful of players to return to the country after Mon-day's final, during which scores were twice tied and the Black Caps were beaten to a first World Cup triumph on a boundary countback.

Boult bowled both the final over of the 50-over match and the Super Over in which England scored 15 runs, after earlier taking a catch on the bound-ary, only to stand on the boundary cushion.

The left-arm seamer, who was one of the leading wicket-takers in the tour-nament with 17 scalps, admitted it would take some time for the players to get over the final result.

"It's been a long flight home but it [the defeat] probably hasn't sunk in yet. I wish it would, so we can all get over it but it's one of those things that we probably won't get over for a long time."

Boult said the final over - in which the Black Caps conceded a controversial six runs after a throw from Martin Gup-till struck a diving Ben Stokes' bat and sped to the boundary, effectively sending the final into a Super Over - continued to haunt him.

"It's natural to nitpick, to wonder about all those little things and how it could have been a totally different game. I've been living that last over in my mind a lot - somehow I got hit for six along the ground which has never happened before. To see the scores level [after the Super Over] and still lose, yeah, that was a pretty unique situation."

Talking about his catch of Stokes, that ended up going for six runs, Boult revealed that Gup-till (who was running in to his left) tried to warn him that the boundary rope was close.

"The priority in that situation is on the ball itself, so that was all I was wor-ried about. It was silly of me not to know where the rope was. It was simi-lar to the catch against the West Indies earlier in the tournament but they're quite quirky boundaries over there [at Lord's]. They're not circles, they're kind of octagons and squares and all sorts of things."

"You can imagine the feeling when my left shoe hit the cushion and it was too late to throw the ball to Marty. There were probably 27,000 intoxicated Poms in there screaming as the ball went up, so I couldn't hear anything Marty was saying."

The messages of support from the public have been overwhelming, Boult said.

"We've just been on a plane 15 hours and there were a lot of Kiwis saying 'we felt for you'."

"I didn't really know what to say. Obviously, we're all hurting and we're sorry for letting everyone down. I just want to get home, walk my dog along the beach and try to forget about it but it's gonna be a hard one to swallow for the next couple of years."



**New Zealand pacer Trent Boult (R) takes a selfie with a fan after arriving at the Auckland Airport yesterday.**

PHOTO: TWITTER

## Rangpur, Thakurgaon reach finals

SPORTS REPORTER

Thakurgaon and Rangpur set up a final clash in the JFA Cup U-14 National Women's Football Championship by beating their respective semifinal opponents at the Birshreshtha Shaheed Mostafa Kamal Stadium yesterday.

Thakurgaon saw off defending champions Mymensingh with an 3-2 win in tiebreakers after regulation time ended in a 1-1 draw. Interestingly, Thakurgaon lost 3-0 to Mymensingh in the last edition's final in 2017.

Shanti Akter gave Thakurgaon a 33-minute lead but Ranjana equalized the margin in the 44th minute, forcing the match to be decided through a penalty shootout, where the three-time champions ulti-mately came up short.

In the day's other match, Rangpur beat Magura 1-0 with Liza Begum scoring the all-important goal in the ninth minute to set up Friday's final against Thakurgaon.

## Shohidul, Taskin set the pace

SPORTS REPORTER

Two BCB XI pacers -- Taskin Ahmed and Shohidul Islam -- brought the side back into the game with some brilliant bowling after Dr. DY Patil Cricket Academy succumbed to 306 all out in 88 overs on the third day of their four-day match in the ongoing Dr (Capt) K. Thimmappiah Memorial tournament at the M Chinnaswamy Stadium in India yesterday.

BCB XI started the day poorly as, after starting the day on 261 for five, they lost their five remaining wickets for just 45 runs. After that however, Taskin scalped three of their top order batsmen while Shohidul claimed another to leave Dr. DY Patil Cricket Academy reeling on four for 42 in 13 overs.

Taskin's figures of four for 69 alongside Shohidul's economical figures of one for 45 in 16 overs helped restrict their opponents to 274 for eight.