



Milk for Good



(L-R) Defenders Yeasin Khan, Rahmat Mia and midfielder Mamunul Islam train on their return to action after a two-week rest at the BFF artificial turf yesterday. Bangladesh will face Qatar and India next month in Joint Qualifiers for 2022 World Cup and 2023 Asian Cup. Head coach Jamie Day [R] expressed his happiness with the fitness level of the players saying, "No problems with fitness, everyone looks sharp; now we are looking forward to playing well."

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

## BD look for final berth

SPORTS REPORTER



The Bangladesh team will look to secure a place in the SAFF U-18 Championship final when they take on Bhutan in a semifinal encounter at the Armed Police Force ground in Kathmandu, Nepal today.

The match is set to get underway at 11:15am Bangladesh time before India and Maldives play the second semifinal later at the same ground.

Although Bangladesh became runners-up in the in 2017 edition of the tournament, held in a round-robin format, the boys in red and green never qualified for the final of the regional youth championship, which is now being held in tournament format, just as it had been in the 2015 inaugural edition.

Bangladesh made their exit from the semifinal stage during the inaugural edition following a 3-4 defeat in tiebreakers to India. They also had to be satisfied with a second-place finish in the round-robin formatted second edition after losing 2-1 to Nepal in the group stages.

The boys in red and green are now up against Bhutan, a side who have never beaten their Bangladeshi counterparts in the previous two editions. Bangladesh did however beat Bhutan 2-0 and 3-0 on both occasions.

"We are going to play a very positive game. It's nice to know who we are going to play because over the past few days we didn't know whether it was going to be Bhutan or Maldives," head coach Andrew Peter Turner said yesterday. "We watched them a couple of times. We know what they are exactly like. They are a decent team and we prepared and trained well today [Thursday] and got a plan in place to hopefully go through to the final."

## 'Not a matter of standards'

SPORTS REPORTER



Bangladesh Under-23 might not even get to play against their Indian counterparts in the final match of their ongoing five-match one day series as there is a heavy chance of rain in Lucknow today. But even if the weather permits, a win for the visitors would not make much of a difference as Bangladesh have already lost the series 3-1 with the last match to be played today.

Bangladesh's batsmen struggled throughout the series. However, Bangladesh Cricket Board selector Habibul Bashar, who is currently with the team, explained the reason behind the team's batting debacle.

"Obviously India Under-23 team is very strong. We actually had to leave four batsmen from the squad at the last moment when we came here. Afif [Hossain], Nazmul [Hossain Shanto], Naim Sheikh and [Aminul Islam] Biplob were left behind as they were supposed to play for the national team. So for that reason, our batting unit became a bit weak," explained Bashar to The Daily Star yesterday.

There has been a question mark over the standard of Bangladesh's domestic cricket. Bashar however thought that it is not the difference in local cricket standards that caused such result.

"It is nothing like that [on the standards of Indian domestic cricket being better than Bangladesh's]. As I said, we left out four batsmen who would usually play for the under-23 side. That was a factor. Also, one other thing is that it has been raining here and it made the playing conditions a bit difficult. Batting became difficult because of the conditions here. As you see, some of the matches could only be played for 20 or 22 overs. There is forecast for rain tomorrow [today] as well. The chances of the match taking place is very slim."

Whether the standard has been an issue or not, Bashar seemed confident that Bangladesh could get some future prospects from this squad as he mentioned that players like Sheikh Mahedi, Tanvir Islam and Shafiqul Islam has shown great potential.

## 11-mark fitness bar a concern

SPORTS REPORTER



With the National Cricket League (NCL) set to begin from the next month, the players, even those out of the national team's periphery, have already started their preparation for the first-class tournament.

A number of cricketers, past their prime and have been away from the national side for a considerable amount of time, have a dark cloud hovering over them regarding their participation in the upcoming NCL. Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) has raised the fitness requirement which has created concerns for a number of players.

In the previous edition of NCL, BCB allowed players with a minimum beep test score of nine to participate. But this time around the BCB announced that the players need to score at least 11 in order to be considered for the domestic tournament. The beep test is supposed to take place on October 1 in Mirpur.

There has been question over the standard of the domestic cricket for a while now as the tournament does not afford competition anywhere close to the standards of international matches. According to BCB, the decision of raising the bar was taken to make the tournament more competitive.

However, according to Mohammad Ashraful, players outside the national team do not get much opportunity to maintain their fitness.

"The beep test mark has now increased from nine to 11. This has been an issue among those of us who play in the domestic league. If all the players who play in the first-

class cricket get the facilities then scoring 11 in the beep test would not be an issue. Last year I scored 11.5. It actually becomes tough for the players who are not involved in the HP or even under-23 side to practice all by them-selves," said Ashraful in Mirpur yesterday.

Ashraful also talked about the need for a place to practice during off seasons.

"During rainy seasons we need indoor facilities to practice. We rarely get these opportunities," concluded the 35-year old.

Shuvagata Hom, another player who regularly plays in the domestic leagues, sounded uncertain about how much the brief training period before the league would help him to prepare.

"It is really tough [to score 11 in beep test]. It is even tougher for us who are out of the national side. We are not able to participate in any camps. A five to seven days of fitness training will be held just before the league starts. I don't know how much it will help us to improve."



The National Cricket League (NCL) is set to begin next month and the likes of Suhrawordi Shuvo (L), Tamim Iqbal and Mohammad Ashraful (R) have already started their preparations for the competition.

PHOTO: BCB



It would be good if there was a conditioning camp for us that lasts 15 days or a month, even though there is no time now. It will be very difficult. My chemotherapy [for brain tumour] is still going on but doctors have said that I can play. Except the few days I have to undergo chemotherapy, I will be able to take the field. I have started training. I have to fight. Fight for my life, fight in the field. It's a fight on two fronts. I am trying as much as I can to fight it out and to persevere. Please pray for me.

MOSHARRAF HOSSAIN RUBEL

## NoFel thru' to final

SPORTS REPORTER

NoFel Sporting Club stunned Bashundhara Kings with a 4-3 win in tiebreakers to move into the final of Walton U-18 Football Tournament at Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

Shahin put Bashundhara Kings ahead in the 20th minute but only to have his goal cancelled out by Abir, who brought NoFel SC back into the match in the 28th minute.

The match rolled into extra time after regulation time ended in a 1-1 draw. However, neither side could find the back of their opponent's net, forcing the match into tiebreakers. NoFel SC goalkeeper Abu Hurira performed tremendously to stop two shots and take their side to the final, where they will face the winners of the second semifinal, either Abahani or Saif SC.

Moving into the final of the youth competition on the back of short-term training is a big achievement for NoFel SC, who were relegated this season from top-flight football. Meanwhile, it was frustrating to see Bashundhara fail to make the final even though they provided long-term training for their youth side.

## Karachi approaches new dawn

AFP, Karachi



Karachi hosts a one-day international for the first time in 10 years when Pakistan take on a depleted Sri Lanka on Friday, furthering the country's revival in international cricket.

"History will be made on Friday when Karachi will host the first ODI," said Pakistan captain Sarfaraz Ahmed.

"We must thank the Sri Lankan team for touring us."

Teams have been reluctant to visit the cricket-mad country since a militant attack on the Sri Lankan team bus in Lahore in 2009.

Although no players were killed in the attack, several were injured and eight people died.

The attack forced Pakistan to play all their "home" Tests and most of its short-form games in the United Arab Emirates with Zimbabwe becoming the first team to return to Pakistan in 2015.

That tour was followed by a Twenty20 series by a World XI in 2017, a one-off T20 match against Sri Lanka that same year, and the West Indies for a Twenty20 series in Karachi in 2018.

The current tour -- comprising of three one-day internationals and as many Twenty20s -- was tainted by the withdrawal of 10 Sri Lankan players who cited security fears.

Sri Lanka then stalled the tour after receiving information of a possible militant attack on the team, before the all clear was finally given last week.



Pakistan captain Sarfaraz Ahmed (L) and his Sri Lankan counterpart Lahiru Thirimanne pose with the ODI trophy during a ceremony in Karachi yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

## BD A fixtures rescheduled

SPORTS REPORTER

Sri Lanka Cricket (SLC) has rescheduled the four-day matches between Bangladesh A and Sri Lanka A after the first four-day match, originally slated to begin on Sep 23rd was washed out on the second day following heavy rain at Katunayake.

The first four-day game will now be played on September 28th with the venue also being changed to Hambantota. The second four-day encounter will be played in the same stadium from 4th to 7th October.

The Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) had selected a strong lineup for the tour of Sri Lanka with players like Soumya Sarkar, Mominul Haque, Mehdi Hasan Miraz, pacer Abu Jayed, Mohammad Mithun, Shadman Islam, Jahurul Islam and Anamul Haque featuring in the squad.

The three-match one-day series will now be played on 9th, 10th and 12 October with the first two slated to be played at Hambantota and the last one on October 12 at Colombo.

## SHORT CORNER

### MS most admired after Modi

Former Indian skipper MS Dhoni has defeated the likes of Virat Kohli and Sachin Tendulkar in the list of most admired men in India. According to a survey conducted by YouGov, Dhoni is the second most admired man in India, next only to Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

The sample size of the survey was 42,000 people from across 41 countries to create the list of most admired people in the world, with two separate categories for men and women.

While Modi emerged as the most admired man in India in 2019, ace boxer Mary Kom was rated as the most admired woman in the country.

According to the survey, Modi has an admiration rating of 15.66 per cent, followed by Dhoni with 8.58 per cent.

--- AGENCIES

### CA on hunt for new selector

Australia are on the hunt for a new national selector after Greg Chappell announced his retirement from the game on Thursday.

The former Australian skipper, who played 87 Tests and 74 one-day internationals, had been Cricket Australia's national talent manager for the past nine years as well as a selector.

Former Test wicketkeeper Graham Manou will take over an expanded role of national talent and pathway manager, with a replacement selector to be named at a later date.

The current panel consists of Chappell, chairman Trevor Hohns and coach Justin Langer.

Cricketer Australia chief Kevin Roberts paid tribute to the 71-year-old for his

"exemplary service" to the game. "Greg has had a profound and positive impact on cricket for generations," he said.

"His passion and commitment to the game are clear to anyone who has interacted with him and Australian cricket is all the stronger for his involvement."

Roberts had suggested earlier this month that any new appointee would need to have particular experience of Twenty20 cricket with Australia hosting the World Cup next year.

--- AFP

### FB wins ICC's digital content rights till 2023

Facebook will have exclusive digital content rights for International Cricket Council (ICC) events in the Indian subcontinent till 2023, the world governing body of the sport said on Thursday.

The deal will include the next two men's World Twenty20 events in 2020 and 2022, the 50-over World Cup in 2023 and the World Test Championship final in 2023.

The social media giant will carry a range of digital content across four years including match recaps, in-play key moments and other match and feature content on its various platform.

"We are delighted to welcome Facebook to the global cricket family for this multi-year, multi-market partnership which is a first for our sport," ICC CEO Manu Sawhney said in a statement.

"The combination of one of the world's most watched sports with one of the world's largest platforms is exciting for the future of our game." --- AGENCIES