

MASHRAFE RETURNS TO TRAINING

After almost eight months, former Bangladesh skipper Mashrafe Bin Mortaza returned to the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday. The pacer, who is recovering from a hamstring injury sustained during an individual training session in October, went straight to the nets at the Bangladesh Cricket Board's Academy ground. After bowling for around 25 minutes, Mashrafe joined a running session accompanied by trainer Tushar Kanti Howladar. Players from Gazi Group Chattogram and Fortune Barishal were also training at the Academy ground at the time and took the chance to chat with the inspirational cricketer. Mashrafe is not part of the bio-secure bubble that the BCB created for the ongoing Bangabandhu T20 Cup and, realising the situation, he asked his colleagues to maintain social distancing. There were rumours that the 37-year-old might join Chattogram as a replacement for Bangladesh Test skipper Mominul Haque, who was ruled out of the tournament due to a fracture to his right thumb. Mashrafe last played an international game against Zimbabwe in March this year, when he also decided to give up captaincy. The pacer played his last competitive game on March 16 for Sheikh Jamal in the first round of the Dhaka Premier League, which had been suspended due to the pandemic.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED



Batsmen primed to counterattack

SPORTS REPORTER



It was nice to see the way the pace bowlers executed their plans so far in the Bangabandhu T20 Cup at a familiar Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur. Left-arm pacer Mustafizur Rahman got his mojo back, which definitely gave the national team management some relief, while performances like those from young Shoriful Islam have provided hope. But, two thrillers on the opening day notwithstanding, the tournament has yet to conjure real excitement as batsmen have been struggling to come up with big knocks. So, when the action resume today after a day's break with Dhaka taking on Barishal and Chattogram meeting Rajshahi, everybody will be hoping to see some sparkling knocks and high-scoring matches. Performances, especially from senior batsmen like Mahmudullah Riyad, Shakib Al Hasan, Mushfiquir Rahim and Tamim Iqbal, have also been below expectation. Ace all-rounder Shakib continued his poor run of form with the bat while players like Tamim, Riyad and Mushfiquir made headway on a few occasions but failed to cash in and their innings sometimes lacked the spark. However, Chattogram coach

Mohammad Salahuddin said it was not easy for batsmen to go for the kill on the Mirpur surface. "The wicket on the first day was fantastic for batting. But since it has been a bit two-paced so it's really tough to bat as the ball gets older. On the other hand, I think the players are yet to get back to full rhythm after such a long break. I am sure batsmen will get runs very soon." Salahuddin also echoed Tamim's sentiments, saying that he too believed it was a crime for a batsman to give away their wicket after getting set. After his side succumbed to their second defeat, a 10-run loss against Chattogram, the Fortune Barishal captain had told the reporters: "I think getting out for 20-30 runs is a crime, especially in T20. We have played enough deliveries to understand the wicket. As I said, it wasn't the best wicket to bat on but I think either Afif or I should have finished the match. We are the experienced ones and should have taken the responsibility of winning the match." Young batsman Towhid Hridoy warned yesterday that batsmen had already formed an idea of what they need to do on this wicket. "Everyone expects that a batsman will contribute with an innings of 60, 70 or 80 runs. I think we already have an idea of the situations and what we need to do in the day matches and what we need to do in the night matches."

CA changed fixtures to suit BCCI, documents claim

SMH



Cricket Australia caved to the power of India in making a "radical departure" from its summer schedule, according to an extraordinary affidavit filed by Seven West Media to the Federal Court containing a series of text messages and emails from the sport's executives. In a 25-page document, Seven's Melbourne managing director and head of sport, Lewis Martin, also makes the explosive suggestion that CA may have been driven by a commercial agreement with the Tasmanian government in deciding to play eight of the first 12 matches of this summer's Big Bash League in the state against the wishes of the media company. The affidavit was attached to a discovery application in which Seven is seeking correspondence between CA, the Board of Control for Cricket in India, Foxtel and state and territory governments before determining whether to sue the game for a breach of its \$450 million broadcast contract. "It appears to me that CA's scheduling decisions may have been motivated by CA's broader interests in relation to the BCCI, Foxtel and also a positive incentive given to CA by the State of Tasmania," Martin wrote. Seven is particularly aggrieved at the positioning of six limited-overs matches between Australia and India before the Test series, arguing the revised schedule deviated from a plan that had been discussed for a "fast start" to the BBL which would have seen the tournament launched on the same night as the Australia-India Test series began. The BBL will now start on December 10, a week before the first Test and after the Australia-India white-ball games which were exclusive to Foxtel.

Jamie opts for Doha to boost booters for 'tough task'

SPORTS REPORTER



National team head coach Jamie Day was offered a chance to go back to England to spend time with his family after testing negative for Covid-19 on Monday, but he chose to travel to Doha to join his charges ahead of their FIFA World Cup Qualifying tie against Asian champions Qatar. Jamie, who first tested Covid-19 positive on November 15 ahead of the second FIFA friendly against Nepal, is scheduled to fly out this morning, approximately 60 hours before the Friday's match in Doha and 13 days after the national team departed for Qatar on November 19. However, his presence at the final training session on Thursday is not certain as he has to stay in a mandatory 24-hour quarantine, and will also have to test negative in the Covid-19 test upon his arrival at the Doha airport. Jamie, however, expressed his desire to be in the dugout during the match to inspire the players, who were also pleased to hear Jamie tested negative and was going to join the team.



"BFF offered to fly me home instead of going to the game but I felt I wanted to be with the team first. I will be in dugout," Jamie told The Daily Star. "I am alright to travel. I just wanted to be there for the staff and players on Friday." Jamie had planned to take the Covid-19 test a couple of days earlier but an upset stomach kept him waiting. "I have passed the Covid test here after failing four times

previously and on Thursday I felt really good but unfortunately I had food poisoning, so that stopped me going early. I still have slight stomach pains but feel better than before. My lungs are still mildly affected, so I have been advised three-four weeks' rest from any activity so that I can recover correctly," Jamie said. "It has been very difficult for the last three weeks in Bangladesh. It was very tough physically and mentally and it was worrying for

my family but I am pleased that I got the negative result, and I will now focus on the game." As Jamie, 41, needs the rest to recover, he won't conduct the training session but his physical presence at the hotel as well as in the dugout during the match will be a big boost for the team, especially after two defeats in the practice matches against Qatar Army and Lusail Sports Club. Bangladesh will draw from memories of putting up a

spirited performance against Qatar in Dhaka last year but the away match against the strong opposition has become all the more difficult considering the players' non-activity for seven months due to the coronavirus pandemic. "We have prepared them the best we can in the time frame and they have all trained really hard to get as fit as possible. We of course would have liked a few more weeks and games but that wasn't possible," Jamie said. "The last 10 days has gone very well with good training sessions. They had two good warm-up games in which the boys did very well and the results were not bad because they were games to sharpen match fitness. The training had gone according to plan and everyone is now looking forward to the game [against Qatar]. We are going into the match looking forward to enjoying ourselves and gaining experience." Echoing BFF president Kazi Salahuddin's sentiment of limiting damage against Qatar, Jamie also said, "President is correct. It's about trying to keep the score at a respectable level as Qatar beat Afghanistan 6-0. So, it's going to be a tough task."

BUILT TO ROT

STAR SPORT DESK

If not nurtured, eventually it will get lost in time -- a statement that probably holds true for prospective athletes and venues built to facilitate them. Like many talented players have lost their way due to lack of proper care and facilities, there are a number of venues in the country the constructions of which started with much enthusiasm but have been left untended for years, resulting in their depletion over time.

One such venue is the lone



swimming pool in Rajbari district town. The swimming pool that was constructed on three acres of land at a cost of Tk 3.37 crores in 2003, has remained unused for the past one-and-a-half year due to lack of fund. On a recent visit to the venue, The Daily Star found the gate to be locked. Upon contacting, the gate was opened only to give a view of a worn-out structure. All there was left was a broken lamppost, a completely dried up pool with children playing in the pool's floor and some holes made on the boundary wall. "I have tried several times to run the pool after taking charge as secretary but I couldn't do it due to lack of fund. The tube is broken, there is plenty of iron in the water, no water filters, and the building's condition is also vulnerable. As a result, the water became unusable within seven days. Vector cleaner is needed. We needed Tk 10,000 to 12,000 to clean the pool," Shafiqul Islam, general secretary of Rajbari

District Sports Association, said. While the Rajbari swimming pool has remained unused for lack of fund, the only swimming pool in Barishal has been abandoned due to faulty construction work back in 1997. "Its construction work started in 1997 at a projected cost of Tk 3.75 crore with a capacity of 4.32 lakh gallons of water, the project funded by the National Sports Council (NSC). Although it was inaugurated in 2000, it was not possible to preserve water in the swimming pool. Due to lack of water in the pool, it gradually became unusable and has now been abandoned," said Alamgir Hossain Alo, member secretary of Barishal Divisional Sports Association. Instead of having budding swimmers practising, the venue now houses some broken tiles, a pump machine that went out of order long ago with bushes grown all around and plasters falling off the dilapidated walls.

A proposal to restart the venue was sent to the Ministry of Youth and Sports (MYS) in 2018, but has not yet seen the light of day. Meanwhile, the state of the Sheikh Russel Mini Stadium in Tangail, part of an initiative taken by the government and later implemented by the NSC and MYS to construct a mini stadium in each upazila of the country for development and progress of sports at grassroots level, has deteriorated alarmingly in a year. Just a year since its construction, the stadium has taken an abysmal state with erosion of soil at places to broken plasters and cracks appearing in the pavilion building, distorted veranda slopes and damaged cement-made seats for audiences around the arena.

[Reporting and photographs by our correspondents and photographers in Faridpur (Suzit Kumar Das), Tangail (Mirza Shakil) and Barishal (Sushanta Ghosh and Titu Das)]

Cavani fired up for PSG clash

AFP, Manchester



Manchester United manager Ole Gunnar Solskjaer says Edinson Cavani is ready to face his former club Paris St Germain in the Champions League at Old Trafford on Wednesday despite the furore over his social media post. Cavani is the subject of an FA investigation into an Instagram comment he made in response to a message of congratulations he received for his two-goal match-winning performance in Sunday's 3-2 Premier League victory at Southampton. The Uruguayan said he was thanking a friend for the comment when he wrote in Spanish "Gracias negro". He later deleted the comment and apologised. United said there was "no malicious intent" behind the post. After his outstanding display at

Southampton, Cavani is likely to lead the line for United against the French champions for whom he scored 200 goals to become their all-time top scorer before leaving in June. "He is ready to play and of course it's special for him to play against PSG, his old club where he is the top scorer, so that will affect him mentally," Solskjaer told reporters on Tuesday. "But from knowing him, that will give him energy. He is so professional. And he will work on his mindset today to get ready for the game," he said. As to whether Cavani would be impacted by the fall-out from his social media post, Solskjaer said: "He has learned a lesson. It might affect him, but he will have to put that to one side when the game is on. The best players can put those things aside." Solskjaer said he was sure the incident was the result of a misunderstanding.



PHOTO: PSG

Paris Saint Germain star Kylian Mbappe seemingly shocked himself and sent his teammates into raptures as he floored a player with a fancy move in training on the eve of their crunch Champions League clash against Manchester United tonight.