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## Tigers' mental health REFRESHED

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In the new normal, quarantine and isolation taking a toll on players' mental and physical health has proven to be one of the biggest hurdles for cricketers ever since the outbreak of the pandemic in March last year.

Although international cricket has resumed worldwide, cricketers have been asked to follow certain protocols and another term closely associated with sport since has been bio-secure bubble. Players have been confined to certain environments through the creation of bubbles, which have restricted cricketers' movement and at times

proven to be mentally exhausting. Interestingly, the Bangladesh team who are currently in New Zealand have been spending the best possible time as a visiting team since the pandemic. After spending a tough 14-day quarantine period during which they had to isolate in their hotel rooms for the first seven days upon arrival in New Zealand, the visitors were allowed to practise in small groups during the next seven days. However, given that the coronavirus situation in New Zealand is under control, the visitors have been allowed to roam around freely after the 14-day quarantine, which included a series of Covid-19 tests. It is quite rare in the context of the current world cricket that the visiting side were able to go out and enjoy their

time. Yesterday was a fun day for the Bangladesh team as they opted to take a day off from training in Queenstown to enjoy a for a day out just outside the city. Members of the Bangladesh team went to Arthurs Point, a famous tourist attraction in Queenstown, where the Tigers enjoyed adventure sports. Pacer Taskin Ahmed posted a video on social media as he went bungee jumping while another pacer, Rubel Hossain, was seen jet-skiing alongside Mahmudullah Riyad and Mustafizur Rahman. While adjusting to tough New Zealand conditions has always been a huge challenge for visiting teams, the Tigers will start the series with a fresh mindset after being able to enjoy their time before the

## Shooters' twin target in Delhi World Cup

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Bangladesh's top shooters will have dual targets -- Olympics quota places and monetary rewards from the Bangladesh Shooting Sports Federation (BSSF) -- in the upcoming ISSF World Cup in New Delhi. An 11-member team including eight shooters will leave for the Indian capital on March 17 for the World Cup, which will be held from March 18 to 29. Although Bangladesh's shooters have participated in several online tournaments during the pandemic, this will be the first time in 14 months they will set foot outside the country to play a tournament. There will be tremendous incentives for the shooters, specially in 10m air rifle and 10m air pistol events where Olympic quota places will be up for grabs. Bangladeshi shooters have so far failed to secure any quota place for this year's Tokyo Olympics, however, with less participation from top-tier countries due to the pandemic, the

Bangladeshi shooters will have a great opportunity in Delhi. The shooters' incentives were further boosted by BSSF's announcement of monetary rewards yesterday. Gold medal winners will get Tk five lakh each, silver medal winners will get Tk three lakh each while there will be Tk one lakh reward for each bronze medal winner. The Bangladeshi shooters will be allowed to train and participate the day after their arrival in Delhi. Abdullahel Baki, Risalatul Islam and Rabbi Hasan Munna will compete in men's 10m air rifle event. Shooting team's coach Shafiuddin Khan Shiplu sees good chance of winning quota place in this event. "Shooters are doing very good in practice. We are going there with good training and good scores and there is an opportunity to win quota place in Delhi," said the coach. Sharmin Akter Ratna, Syeda Atkia Hasan and Hritika will compete in women's 10m air rifle event. Shakil Ahmed and Armin Asha will compete in men's and women's 10m air pistol events respectively.



**WILLIAMS, TIRIPANO FRUSTRATE AFGHANISTAN**  
[L] Zimbabwe captain Sean Williams celebrates his century while [R] Afghanistan leg-spinner Rashid Khan (5-105) celebrates one of his five wickets with his teammates during the fourth day of the second Test in Abu Dhabi yesterday. Williams scored a pugnacious hundred and all-rounder Donald Tiripano hit a maiden half-century to delay Afghanistan's victory on the day. Williams was 106 not out following his fourth Test hundred -- third as captain and third in successive Tests -- and Tiripano was unbeaten on 63 as Zimbabwe closed the day on 266-7.

PHOTO: TWITTER

## 'We will target the final'

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Bangladesh national football team's full-back Rahmat Mia said that even though the upcoming tri-nation tournament in Nepal will be a platform of preparation for June's World Cup qualifying fixtures, their target will be to play in the final. The Saif SC player thinks fitness or cohesiveness among the players will not be an issue as the first phase of the league just ended recently, with all the squad members involved. "Everyone is fit. Since we have very short time at hand, the training will be mostly tactical," Rahmat told reporters at the FARS Hotel yesterday afternoon as 27 out of 31 members of the squad joined the camp. Goalkeeper Ashrafur Islam Rana, goalkeeper Anisur Rahman Zico and forward Mohammed Abdullah will join the camp today while skipper Jamal Bhuiyan, who is currently with Kolkata Mohammedan playing in the I league, will join the team in Nepal. The tournament starts on March 23 with Bangladesh, Nepal and Kyrgyzstan Olympic team slated to play each other once before the top



two teams play in the final on March 29. While admitting that the hosts are a formidable opponent, Rahmat said they are not afraid of anyone. "We will definitely go with the target of playing in the final," the 21-year-old said. "There is nothing to be afraid of, instead good oppositions always give you more incentive to perform well." With the World Cup qualifiers

deferred to June, Rahmat feels that this tournament will be a good preparation for them. "Since we haven't had matches of the national team for some time, these matches will be helpful. This will be a good preparation for us ahead of the World Cup qualifiers," Rahmat said. On-field training will start tomorrow and the team will leave for Nepal on March 18 after receiving Covid-negative certificates.

## 'Djokovic is capable of catching 400 weeks'

REUTERS



Novak Djokovic is capable of extending his record for holding the men's world No.1 ranking for most weeks to 400, said Russia's Daniil Medvedev who will climb up to a career-best ranking of second on Monday. The 33-year-old Djokovic, who won his 18th Grand Slam at the Australian Open last month, eclipsed Roger Federer's record on March 8 when he moved past the Swiss to hold the top ranking for the 311th week. "First of all, it's an unbelievable achievement," Medvedev said after reaching the semi-finals of the ATP 250

event in Marseille on Friday. The 20-times major winner was still able to win his first match on return. "I would definitely like to play Roger. He's one of the three best in tennis history, it's always great playing him," Medvedev said, adding "every time you step out on the court against the Big Three, it's a special feeling." The "Big Three" refers to Federer, Rafa Nadal and Djokovic. The 25-year-old Medvedev will become the first player outside Djokovic, Federer, Nadal and Andy Murray to be ranked in the top two since Lleyton Hewitt in 2005 when the rankings are updated on Monday. Only 11 of the last 68 Grand Slams have been won by players other than the "Big Three" and ATP Finals champion Medvedev has had two shots at pulling



off the rare feat. "I think in the world of tennis we talk about Grand Slams more than anything else. But this is also a small competition, I'm sure he's really happy about it. The way he's played, he's definitely capable of catching 400 weeks. "We're going to try to not let him do this. I didn't manage to do anything in the Australian Open final, but that is what sport is about. Nobody is going to give him an easy pass, he's going to have to earn it." Federer, who will turn 40 in August, returned to court this week after 13 months due to double knee surgeries and Medvedev found it "amazing" that

off the rare feat. But he fell in the deciding match on both occasions, losing to Nadal in the 2019 U.S. Open and to Djokovic at Melbourne Park last month. "As I've always said about the Big Three, they are unbelievable. The records they have set (are) probably not going to be beaten maybe in 100 years," Medvedev said. "It's very rare that you see this in sports. I don't think you can say that other players were not good enough in this era, it's just that they were unbelievable and there's nothing for others to be ashamed of."

## JFA U-14 women's football starts tomorrow

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The JFA U-14 Women's Football Championship, involving 42 district teams, starts tomorrow across seven zones of the country. Dinajpur, Naogaon, Laxmipur, Madaripur, Mymensingh, Magura and Kushtia will host the seven zonal matches of the seventh edition of the tournament. Powered by Walton and financed by the Japan Football Association, the seventh edition will offer Tk 20,000 to each team as participation money, Tk 50,000 for final round champions and Tk 25,000 for final round runners-up teams. There will also be trophies for champions and runners-up teams as well as best players in each zonal rounds. The matches of the seven zones will be completed by March 21. The seven zonal champions will qualify to participate, along with Ansar & VDP as the eighth team, in the Bangabandhu 9th Bangladesh Games at the end of this month. The final round of the championship, though, will be held in the month of May. All these information were disclosed during a press briefing at the BFF House yesterday, with BFF Women's Wing chairman Mahfuza Akter Kiron and technical director Paul Smalley present among others. The defending champions of the championship are Magura, who beat Rangpur in the final of last edition held last year. Mymensingh have won this championship a record three times.

### HIGHLIGHTS

India captain Virat Kohli set an unwanted record during the first T20I of a five-match series against England on Friday at the Narendra Modi Stadium in Ahmedabad as he registered his 14th duck in international cricket; the most by an India captain. Kohli went past Sourav Ganguly on the list of India captains with most ducks. The incumbent BCCI president Ganguly was dismissed for naught 13 times in his international career. MS Dhoni is third on the list with 11 ducks while Kapil Dev finished his career with 10 ducks.



The Indian team's white-ball stars will be aiming to put up an improved batting effort when they take on England in the second T20 International in Ahmedabad today. England's bowlers did the spadework before opener Jason Roy's explosive 49 helped secure a comprehensive eight-wicket victory in the first match of the five-match series on Friday. India captain Virat Kohli is in the spotlight after failing to score for the third time in five international innings.

PHOTO: REUTERS