



Bangladesh pacer Taskin Ahmed waves to fans before boarding a Sri Lanka-bound flight at the Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport yesterday. [R] Bangladesh team reached Colombo and checked in at the quarantine facility at Negombo following Covid-19 tests.

## Ruman determined to get back to rhythm

ANISUR RAHMAN

Internationally successful archer Ruman Sana's failure in the Bangabandhu 9th Bangladesh Games is one of the talking points in sports arena, especially as he gets prepared for July's Tokyo Olympics. Although the recently-concluded Games saw the emergence of a host of new talents, it is the poor form of Ruman that is becoming a cause for concern for everyone.

The 24-year-old had become a centre of attention since qualifying for Tokyo Olympics and then winning three gold medals in the South Asian Games.

However, he has hit a bad patch of form of late, following the coronavirus-induced break, failing to finish top in last three competitions -- Victory Day Archery Competition, National Archery Championship and the Bangladesh Games. National team's coach Martin Frederick, though, is still not losing hope with Ruman.

Frederick will conduct a three-day selection competition starting from today to pick the squad for two international tournaments -- Archery World Cup in Switzerland from May 16-22 and Olympic Qualifying tournament in France from June 20-26, with some 23 players -- 12 in recurve events and 11 in compound events.

Ruman is gearing up for the selection competition to regain his supremacy and he believes he would get back his rhythm match by match.

"Apart from my shoulder injuries which I sustained soon after returning to the national camp after the lockdown in the latter part of last year, I also lacked confidence in domestic competitions because I was afraid of losing to junior players," Ruman told The Daily Star.

"A player may go through a bad time, but it doesn't mean he has lost everything. I have

taken a lesson from those mistakes and am looking forward to coming back strongly.

"I have been shooting well in practice and also getting back confidence gradually. I think this problem will be solved as I play in more competitions," said Ruman, who finished top in qualification round of Bangladesh Games but was eliminated from the pre-quarterfinals.

Ruman was also beaten in the elimination round in two more tournaments as a group of young players like Abdur Rahman Alif, Abdul Hakim Rubel, Ram Krishna Saha and Tamimul Islam have consistently been challenging Ruman in domestic circuit.

"The competition among the local players have increased more than any other time in the past because all the players have been training under Frederick, so they have also improved in technique, confidence and temperament," admitted Ruman, adding that the recurve team is now more stronger than before.

Frederick still wants to bank on Sana ahead of the Olympics, but he believes competition in domestic circuit has increased.

"It is a positive aspect that nobody is guaranteed to win a match and everyone has to fight in every elimination round. That is really good for Bangladeshi archery," said Martin.

"The elimination round [Bangladesh Games] was extremely high level and then he [Ruman] was eliminated from the second match of the elimination round which was really bad for him. Thing is that he is going through ups and downs and he needs more consistency in results and ability, which is what we are working on. His qualification round is alright. He is number one. He shows good signs of scores but sometime moment to moment, he can't find the right shot but still he is my best man and there is no doubt," added Frederick.



## 'Everyone has equal responsibility'

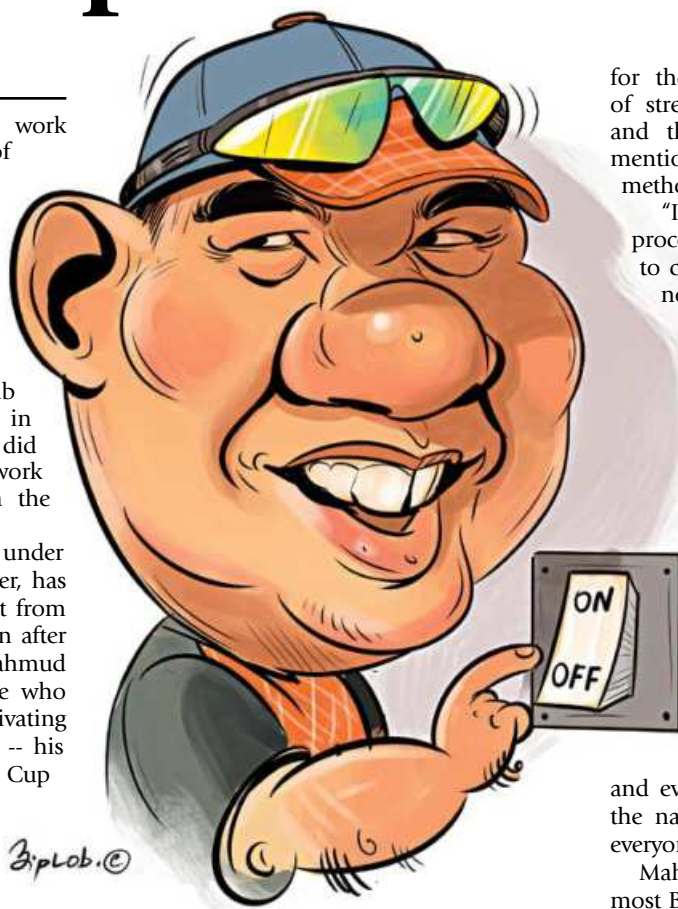
NABID YEASIN

With praises for his work pouring in from two of the colossal figures of Bangladesh cricket in Mashrafe Bin Mortaza and Shakib Al Hasan, former national skipper and Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) director Khaled Mahmud has recently been enjoying a joyous period in his professional career.

Even though both Mashrafe and Shakib pointed fingers at many BCB officials in recent interviews to the media, the duo did not forget to sing praise of Mahmud's work with the Under-19 squad which won the World Cup last year.

From his playing days to working under different roles at BCB, Mahmud, however, has often been subjected to unfair treatment from fans on social media platforms. But even after such unfair belittling from the public, Mahmud is known among cricketers as someone who silently puts in the hardest of work in motivating and building the team from the inside -- his work behind the Under-19 side's World Cup triumph being the best of examples in that regard.

And this time, as the senior team go through a precarious situation following a string of series losses, Mahmud accompanied the 21-member preliminary squad to Sri Lanka for their two-Test series later this month. Bangladesh go on the tough tour on the back of some bleak performances -- losing 2-0 in Tests against West Indies at home before being whitewashed in



for the tour, vested with the responsibility of strengthening the bridge between players and the team management. And Mahmud mentioned he would trust and employ his own method in achieving that.

"I have my own ideas and my own thought process. I will think in that line. I know how to communicate with the players. There are no new faces to me as I know all of them [players] from working with them at different levels. I will try to follow my own ways and I think I can do that," said Mahmud yesterday before leaving for Colombo.

Bangladesh have recently been accused of having hierarchy within the team and for unequal treatment of players in the team. But according to Mahmud, everyone's responsibility remains equal when they don the red and green on the field.

"I don't want to say young (or old); they are all same to me. Although Tamim [Iqbal], Mushfiqur [Rahim], and Mominul [Haque] are experienced, the responsibility of each and every player is the same. When you don the national team shirt, the responsibility of everyone is equal," said Mahmud.

Mahmud also walked in the same line as most Bangladesh captains or coaches do before leaving for a tour saying that the team have the 'ability to perform' and would just need to 'play as a team' and 'execute their plans'. More often than not, such statements remain just that -- a statement. But can Mahmud turn these statements around to reality this time?

both ODIs and T20s away to New Zealand. With such humiliating losses creating a stir among the players and the team management, Mahmud has been appointed as the team leader

## Title race hots up as Atletico drop points

AGENCIES

Atletico Madrid returned to the top of La Liga with a 1-1 draw away to Real Betis on Sunday but did so at the expense of losing yet more players to injury, leaving their title hopes hanging by a thread.

This result means Atletico have now picked up just one win in their last four league matches as the season enters its final stage with their advantage at the summit down to a single point.

Diego Simeone's Atletico -- who were 10 points clear at the end of January -- have only won three of their past 11 games in all competitions and look to be running out of steam. Upcoming in the 35th gameweek, they play against FC Barcelona, which

TEAM	M	W	D	L	GF	GA	PTS
Atletico Madrid	30	20	7	3	52	20	67
Real Madrid	30	20	6	4	53	24	66
Barcelona	30	20	5	5	69	26	65
Sevilla	29	18	4	7	40	21	58
Real Sociedad	30	12	11	7	47	31	47

would be a title decider.

With 8 games to go, this is going to be a popcorn worthy battle to the top.

"We made an excellent start but when there was little danger they managed to score. We kept trying and we've dropped two points but we're still top and our fate is in our own hands," said Atletico captain Koke.



Atletico Madrid's record signing Joao Felix sustained an injury during a 1-1 draw to Real Betis on Sunday. Right-back Kieran Trippier also suffered injury in the second half, adding to an absentee list also containing Luis Suarez, Thomas Lemar and latest signing Moussa Dembele.

PHOTO: REUTERS

### CHAMPIONS LEAGUE QUARTERFINALS

## Another Mbappe magic or instance of Bayern's resilience?

Porto face a daunting task against Chelsea

AGENCIES



Holders Bayern Munich will endeavour to overturn a 3-2 deficit from the first leg of their quarter-final with

Paris Saint-Germain when they do battle in the French capital tonight.

An enthralling five-goal encounter at the Allianz Arena ended with Mauricio Pochettino's side claiming a slender lead at half time in the tie, and the two continental giants head into the game following differing fortunes in their domestic title defences.



### BAYERN AN AWAY FORCE

The reigning European champions recently set a new Champions League record with their 4-1 win against Lazio in Rome, making it 17 away games in the competition without defeat (W13, D4). What's even more promising is that FCB have earned a result in five of the last eight away matches which saw them progressing.

### PARIS FORTRESS FALLS IN 2020-21

PSG have already suffered six defeats at home in all competitions this season. That's already twice as many as they had at the Parc des Princes in the whole of the previous campaign (three).

PSG's weakened team cruised past Strasbourg 4-1 on Saturday, whereas a much-changed Bayern side could only muster a point from their clash with Union Berlin in a 1-1 draw.

With Bayern hotshot Robert Lewandowski helplessly watching on from the infirmary, his adversary Kylian Mbappe did what he does best at the Allianz Arena, as the Frenchman was once again unfazed by the magnitude of the occasion and the venue in Europe's elite competition.

"Serve chilled" was the classy headline in French sports paper L'Equipe after Paris's 3-2 first-leg win at Bayern, over a picture of Kylian Mbappe celebrating one of his two strikes in snowy Munich. It was a supremely composed performance from the striker, who is hoping to continue an exceptional goalscoring run in the return: eight goals in his last four UEFA Champions League matches.

Mauricio Pochettino, Paris coach

said: "We need to congratulate the players on their sacrifice and we want to repeat this kind of performance. But we still have another match to play. We know the second leg will be difficult."

Thomas Muller, Bayern forward said: "We have to score a lot more. You can always talk about the goals you concede but I think nobody could have had any complaints had we won 5-3 or 6-3. Somehow we shot ourselves in the foot. Now we have to come from behind."

Meanwhile, with one foot firmly in the semi-finals, Chelsea once again travel to Seville for the 'home' leg of their Champions League quarter-final showdown with Porto tonight.

Goals from Mason Mount and Ben Chilwell propelled the Blues to a comfortable 2-0 win in the first meeting, and once again, the Portuguese champions have been left with a mountain to climb to salvage their European season.

## 'Think Fresh'

STAR DESK

7UP, the refreshing clear drink is all set to increase the 'freshness' quotient of Bangladesh this summer with its new campaign. The brand, which recently announced ace cricketer Shakib Al Hasan as brand ambassador, unveiled its first ever campaign featuring him.

The new TVC shows the all-rounder tackling a tricky life situation with some quick thinking, inspired by 7UP's witty, curly-haired mascot, Fido Dido. The campaign reiterates the brand's 'Think Fresh' philosophy, which encourages today's youth to look at everyday tough situations through the lens of fun and



lightheartedness.

Commenting on the TVC Shakib Al Hasan said, "I'm very excited to unveil my first TVC after coming on board as 7UP's brand ambassador. The TVC is very relatable because it is a situation I have often been faced with. At the same time, it is the perfect representation of 7UP's 'Think Fresh' philosophy. I am confident that consumers will enjoy the TVC and be inspired to look at tough situations in life through the lens of optimism and humor."