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# Taijul's sights on THE EXTRAORDINARY

Left-arm spinner Taijul Islam has been a revelation for Bangladesh, especially in the red-ball format, but the rather humble 30-year-old prefers to shun the limelight and do his job silently. Arguably the most overshadowed cricketer in the Bangladesh team, Taijul spoke candidly about his game, life and many other topics in an interview with The Daily Star's Mazhar Uddin before travelling to the West Indies yesterday. The excerpts of the interview are below:

**The Daily Star (DS): Another away tour is approaching. How's your preparation for the West Indies series?**  
**Taijul Islam (TI):** It's always difficult to move from one condition to another. Preparation means knowing what the conditions demand. When we played in West Indies before, the pitch helped both spinners and seamers. Shakib (Al Hasan) bhai picked up five wickets and (Mehedi Hasan) Miraz and I also got a few wickets. It's not easy to comment about a pitch without assessing it. It's not like we haven't seen spin-friendly tracks in the past, but spinners generally tend to get more purchase in the Caribbean. It is difficult if you have a set plan. Instead, you have to be flexible. My initial goal is to help the seamers by bowling tight. If the spinners get purchase, it's a different ball game.  
**DS: How do you prepare yourself before every series?**  
**TI:** Training is one part of preparation, which includes working on skills and trying to bowl in the right areas consistently. But I think it is equally

important to prepare off the field. Preparation in your room is key, whether that is mental set-up or something else and I try to work on that both on and off the field.  
**DS: How do you tweak your bowling on tours abroad compared to what you do at home?**  
**TI:** The most important thing you have to realise is what the conditions are and how can I get help using them. For example, wind plays a very big role. You won't get much purchase in the first few days away from home. The line and length you choose to bowl is crucial as is how much drift you can get from bowling at a particular angle. So it's important to adjust quickly, especially abroad. Initially, I found it difficult bowling abroad but I was able to cope as time went by. Another aspect is variations, which I think is very important in the longest version of the game.  
**DS: You were the fastest to 150 Test wickets for Bangladesh and have been a consistent performer over the years. Do you feel overshadowed**

**at times due to the fact that there is someone like Shakib Al Hasan playing at the same time?**  
**TI:** I don't feel that. When I do well and perform for my country, it feels good. Nothing other than that.  
**DS: Do you feel you should have got more exposure and been highlighted more compared to other stars in the team?**  
**TI:** I think you need to follow certain things to be highlighted which I deliberately keep myself away from. I am not active on social media. I am not saying it's bad or that I don't want to be highlighted. One day, maybe I can do something extraordinary so that the people of the country will remember me. I also try to stay away from the media because I think it's better for me to stay focused.  
**DS: Don't you think you have already achieved something?**  
**TI:** Yes, I have. But I think I am yet to do something extraordinary that helps my country win. Suppose I single-handedly destroy a top-ranked side and snatch victory for Bangladesh or win a trophy.

I haven't done that yet.  
**DS: Which part of your game do you think you could improve more?**  
**TI:** There is no end to improvement. I learn every day. Despite playing for so many years, I think there is still more to learn. But I feel that if I could contribute more than I am with the bat then it would have been great. If I could score 30-40 runs consistently, then I could have helped my team immensely. I am working on my batting. Let's see.  
**DS: Despite picking up a hat-trick on your ODI debut, you were unable to lock down a spot as a regular in limited-overs sides. Do you feel unlucky at times?**  
**TI:** I don't think that way. I feel like I need to play better to play in the shorter formats. Maybe what I have done is not enough. Picking up a wicket while giving away 30 runs is not enough. I need to do something extraordinary. Apart from Shakib Bhai, Nasum Ahmed is also doing well. I am not thinking about it and waiting for my opportunity.

# Tamim distraction ahead of WI Tests

**SPORTS REPORTER**  
The fracas in the media over Tamim Iqbal's recent comments and those of the Bangladesh Cricket Board has exposed a pretty dismal picture of the national team environment ahead of the West Indies tour. As the team leaves for the Caribbean for the month-long tour starting with the first Test in Antigua on June 16, it is not the longest format or the players of the format that are hogging the limelight, instead it is ODI captain Tamim Iqbal's T20I future that is the talk of the town.  
The issue surfaced during an event on Sunday when Tamim reacted regarding a question that was posed to Jamie Siddons the day before. The batting coach was asked whether Tamim would do well coming down the order. While Siddons replied that "Tamim would love that but we need to find another opening batter first," the batter felt that the question itself was 'stupid'.  
Things further rolled on during that event when Tamim was asked about his T20I future. He said he was not being able to talk about his decision as 'either you (media) say it or someone else says it.'  
This newspaper had reported back in April that according to BCB sources, an announcement from Tamim on his T20I future was imminent. That announcement did not come and BCB sources had said Tamim would state his decision to the media himself.  
With one-and-a-half months left of his self-imposed hiatus from T20Is, Tamim felt the announcement should be left up to him. In a statement yesterday on Facebook, he wrote that his words had been misconstrued and he did not, in any way, mean that the board had not communicated with him regarding his T20I future.  
However, apart from the media, who that 'someone else' is was not clarified. What Tamim said on Sunday, may easily be conceived as BCB higher-ups talking ahead of time.  
BCB president Nazmul Hassan Papon, speaking to a national English daily on Monday, said that Tamim had already sent a letter to the board saying he was not going to play T20Is. He also said that BCB had urged Tamim to clarify his stance. Meanwhile, Tamim, in his statement yesterday, said he has been communicated by the board and the board knows his decision and he never said that the board did not ask him about his T20I future.  
However, while the BCB president did not shy away from saying what he felt, the discussion ahead of a key Test series has once again turned to the T20I availability of a player who last played in the format in March of 2020. The fracas between the board and the players, which had caused an uproar during the T20 World Cup in UAE, is once again at play.



# FIFA WC trophy arrives today

**SPORTS REPORTER**  
The original trophy of FIFA World Cup will arrive in Dhaka this morning for a 36-hour tour accompanied by a seven-member FIFA delegation including former French World Cup winner Christian Karembeu.  
"Bangladesh Football Federation president Kazi Salahuddin, along with BFF and Coca Cola officials, will receive the trophy at the airport after a chartered flight is scheduled to land at 10:45am," BFF general secretary Abu Nayeem Shohag said yesterday.  
Shohag also informed that the trophy will be taken to the President's official residence, Bangabhaban, in the afternoon before being taken to Prime Minister's residence, Gono Bhaban, in the evening.  
"The trophy will be displayed for all at the Bangladesh Army Stadium in Banani on Friday afternoon. Some invited guests and winners of Coca Cola draws will get opportunity to take pictures with the trophy," Shohag said. "We believe the trophy tour will be the talk of town and strengthen our football."

# Jamal hopeful ahead of Bahrain tie

**SPORTS REPORTER**  
Bangladesh are set to return to the qualification round of the Asian Cup after a lengthy 16-year gap when they take on mighty Bahrain in one of the Group E openers at the Bukit Jalil National Stadium in Kuala Lumpur today.  
The match will kick off at 3:15pm (Bangladesh Standard Time).  
Bangladesh had a dream campaign in their first-ever Asian Cup qualifiers, in which they secured a spot in the 10-team final round after finishing as one of four group runners up in 1979. But they had a harder time in the final round despite showing potential in two of their four matches in Qatar in 1980.  
Since then, Bangladesh were part of the Asian Cup qualifying round until 2006, barring 1996 when Bangladesh withdrew from the competition. Bangladesh would not make it to the final round in their next six attempts.  
Instead, Bangladesh were demoted to compete in the newly-introduced AFC Challenge Cup, a tournament that rewarded the winners with tickets to the Asian Cup Qualifiers until it was suspended in 2015.  
The AFC then made massive changes to the Asian Cup and World

**89th in the FIFA Rankings, Bahrain are Group E favourites. They are 99 places ahead of 188th-ranked Bangladesh, who suffered a 0-2 defeat to Bahrain in the only match between two sides, during the President's Cup in Seoul in 1979. Bahrain appear to be in peak form, registering six wins in seven matches this year against Uganda, Congo, India, Burundi, Myanmar and Thailand. Their lone defeat came against Belarus. Bangladesh have played only three matches this year, losing to Maldives before drawing against Mongolia and Indonesia.**

Cup Qualifiers but Bangladesh failed to make it to the qualifiers, losing 3-1 on aggregate to Bhutan in the 2016 playoffs.  
This time around, they beat Laos 1-0

on aggregate to enter the Asian Cup Qualifiers and end their 16-year exile but have been derailed by injuries.  
But ahead of their tough group encounters, Bangladesh captain Jamal Bhuiyan was upbeat of springing a surprise on Bahrain, who are 99 places ahead of Bangladesh in the FIFA Rankings.  
"I think the other team may think Bangladesh will be an easy target but I think the players have other things on their mind and we can spring some surprises," Jamal said at the pre-match conference yesterday.  
"Tomorrow is a big match. We know that we have done everything to prepare well," Jamal said. "Of course, we lack in some areas but we have discussed that with the coach. Overall, if the game plan goes well, we can get something from this match."  
Bangladesh coach Javier Cabrera knows his team face an uphill task against Bahrain and is expected to adopt a counter-attacking strategy.  
"It is going to be a similar approach [as it was in a recently friendly against Indonesia] tomorrow [Wednesday]," said Cabrera, who played a four-man defence and two defensive midfielders in a five-man midfield in that goalless draw.

