

## 'No shortage of effort from us'

SPORTS REPORTER

Pulling the national women's team out of Paris Olympic qualifiers has shocked the country's football supporters, especially after financial constraints was cited as the reason in a period when the Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) staged three international women's age-group tournaments and two FIFA friendlies for the senior men's team on the back of expensive training camp abroad.

Another perspective of not sending the women's football team in Myanmar to play the qualifiers has surfaced: it involves the BFF attempting to make the government perceive its deep financial crisis in the aftermath of the finance ministry's denial to accept BFF's five-year football development proposal, worth Tk 450 crore. The perception initially took form a few days back when BFF president Kazi Salahuddin told the media that financial crisis might force them to shun activities of the Elite Football Academy.

At present, what the BFF do with funds from FIFA, AFC and sponsors has also come under scrutiny. FIFA and AFC together provide more than US dollar 1.5 million per year apart from providing other costs for the national football team's under FIFA Forward programme. Moreover,



sponsors in Dhaka Bank and Bashundhara Group together provide the BFF Tk 2.8 crore per year.

BFF general secretary Abu Nayeem Shohag said, "Yes, we are getting money from FIFA, AFC and sponsors, but there are a lot of expenditures to run football. We also wanted to spend some money behind the women's team under FIFA's national team's assistant but they suggested not doing it, citing most of the time of this year is still left."

Shohag informed that the board has received US dollar 125 thousand from FIFA and AFC till May as they need nearly Tk 30 crore per year to run all activities.

"Look, we had to host three international women's age-group tournaments and arrange two FIFA friendly matches this year and there was also a lot of expense behind it," said Shohag.

Soon after the SAFF Women's Championship triumph, the BFF had promised to arrange the matches against strong sides. Since then, the national women's team players could only play Bangladesh Women's League, which was also trimmed to a one-leg competition instead of a two-leg league, and now they are deprived of assessing their skills against superior opponents.

The BFF general secretary added, "However, there was no shortage of effort from us to send the women's team to Myanmar but we could not manage the required money of approximately Tk 80-90 lakh in three to four weeks after being denied the opportunity to host Bangladesh's Group. If we were awarded as the host nation, then there was almost no expenditure behind the team playing at home," said Shohag, who however did not answer whether they had any alternative plan once they lost the bid to host Olympic qualifiers.

According to the BFF accounts, the game's governing body spends approximately Tk 25 to 30 lakh per month to run the different women's teams camp at BFF dormitory, while approximately Tk 1.5 crore was spent behind the national men's team preparation as well as arranging two FIFA friendlies against Seychelles last month.



The three-match T20I series against Ireland did not end the way Bangladesh had hoped but the Shakib Al Hasan-led side did provide a strong message regarding the Tigers' newfound attacking approach to the format during their 2-1 series triumph over the Irish side. [Bottom] Meanwhile, Ireland's stand-in skipper Paul Stirling's 77 in their seven-wicket win in Chattogram yesterday gave the visitors something to cherish after suffering thumping defeats in the first two matches. PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

## No shying away from NEW-FOUND APPROACH

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh T20I captain Shakib Al Hasan said that there would be no change in the approach from the hosts despite losing the dead rubber third T20I against Ireland by seven wickets.

Bangladesh put up 200-plus scores in the first two T20Is thanks to their aggressive approach, but yesterday the openers did not get the team off to a flying start. After wickets had tumbled, batters did not attempt to slow down. In the end, Shamim Hossain had to hold down one end and his fifty saw the Tigers reach 124 all out.

Both Liton Das and Rony Talukdar holed out at the boundary while Shakib, also looking to take on the bowling in the Powerplay, pulled one aggressively but found the fielder at mid-wicket before Towhid Hridoy top edged one for a dolly.

Yet, Shakib had no doubt his side had the right approach. "We didn't bat well... kept on losing wickets. But that happens. If we have to go with the same [attacking] approach, sometimes it does not come off. We did not want to change our approach. If we want to become a good team, that is how we want to play," he said yesterday.

"We played very well. After the England series, we came back with the same intensity. We have played two good matches, and today it was



### SCORES IN BRIEF

**Bangladesh:** 124 all out in 19.2 overs (Shamim 51, Rony 14, Nasum 13; Adair 3-25, Humphreys 2-10)  
**Ireland:** 126 for three in 14 overs (Stirling 77, Campher 16 not out; Taskin 1-28, Shorful 1-25, Rishad 1-19)  
**Result:** Ireland won by seven wickets, Bangladesh took the series 2-1  
**Player-of-the-match:** Paul Stirling  
**Player-of-the-series:** Taskin Ahmed

Ireland's day," he said.

The Tigers put in a good showing in all three departments this series and Taskin Ahmed, the player of the series, reminded that the two 200-plus totals would not have been possible without the aggression from batters. Taskin cited that the team were ready to accept the risks of their approach.

"If we want to do something good in T20s in the future, we need this intent. The bowlers, batters and everyone will have to go forward with an aggressive mentality. On some days, this intent could lead to a collapse and we accept that. But we won't live in fear. We have to play cricket without fear of failure," Taskin declared.

Bangladesh's T20 batting performances have long been subpar and in big tournaments, when wickets stumble, the batters have often tried to reach middling scores, not at all calibrated towards the current T20I approach globally.

"We will play big sides such as England and Australia on good wickets. We would have to score runs and this intent will help. The management told us to be fearless and that it would help us become a big side in the future," he said.

The young side wants to go in a similar direction and such convergence in what they want to express will go a long way to determining Bangladesh's T20I future.

## SAFF C'ship to invite outsiders

SPORTS REPORTER

The South Asian Football Federation (SAFF) on Friday decided to go beyond the South Asian territory to invite stronger nations to the upcoming SAFF Championship in a bid to develop its regional football teams, making the tournament more competitive as well.

The decision was taken at the executive meeting in presence of all members except the Maldives. The committee decided that the 13th edition of the tournament would start on June 21 in Bengaluru, India.

"We first approved the venue of Bengaluru, which will host the tournament from June 21, and decided to invite teams beyond the South Asian region because we want to make room for the South Asian teams to play more competitive matches and develop our national teams by playing stronger opponents beyond South Asia," SAFF general secretary Anwarul Haque Helal told The Daily Star after the meeting on Friday.

Helal said that the deadline for the aspiring nations to fill in their entries is till April 20 and the draw for the championship is set to be held on May 6.

## Can Dortmund overcome Munich hoodoo?

AFP, Berlin

Borussia Dortmund can gatecrash former boss Thomas Tuchel's unveiling party at Bayern Munich on Saturday and take another step closer to thwarting the Bavarian giants' bid for an 11th consecutive Bundesliga title.

Dortmund sit one point clear of Bayern but face their title rivals at Munich's Allianz Arena, which has been a graveyard for their aspirations in the post-Jürgen Klopp era.

Winning nine of 10 league matches in 2023, Dortmund come into the match in blistering form.

Bayern have won five from 10 in that period, leading to the dismissal last week of manager Julian Nagelsmann for former Dortmund boss Tuchel.

Dortmund's last league win in Munich came in 2014 under Klopp with the title race well and truly decided in Bayern's favour.

Since then, Bayern have chalked up eight 'Der Klassiker' victories in a row, scoring 33 goals and conceding just six.

"It's a huge game for all of us. It's a matter of building confidence and anticipation," said Tuchel.

"There's no bigger challenge than starting my time here with a game against Dortmund. It's the biggest game in German football, and has an added element to it, given the current state of the league table."

Even Tuchel, the most successful Dortmund coach of the post-Klopp era, could not manage a league win in Munich.

He was however in the hot seat the last time Dortmund won at the Allianz, a 3-2 comeback victory in the semis of the 2016-17 German Cup.

While a draw would preserve Dortmund's one-point lead with eight games remaining, midfielder Emre Can said this week "we're going there to win."

## Man City face Liverpool test

AFP, London

Second placed Manchester City cannot afford to stumble in a marquee match-up against Liverpool as leaders Arsenal enter the final furlong of the Premier League title race with a clash against Leeds on Saturday.

Manchester City are refusing to surrender their crown without a fight, winning their past six games in all competitions and scoring a combined 13 goals in their most recent matches against Leipzig and Burnley. But there is little margin for error in City's attempt to clinch a fifth title in six seasons.

Pep Guardiola's men have a slightly easier run-in than Arsenal on paper, yet also have the distractions of a Champions League quarter-final against Bayern Munich and an FA Cup semi-final against Sheffield United.

For City to stay in touch with Arsenal, they must beat sixth-placed Liverpool in the league for the first time in two years -- Jürgen Klopp's men still harbour hopes of salvaging a dismal season by sneaking into the top four.

City may have to face Liverpool without star striker Erling Haaland, who missed Norway's recent internationals with a groin injury.

Meanwhile, with 10 games to play, Arsenal are in pole position to win their first title since 2004 after reeling off six successive victories to build an eight-point lead over Manchester City. Mikel Arteta's side have played a game more than the champions and still have to travel to Manchester to face Pep Guardiola's team on April 26, but they have the destiny of their first title in 19 years firmly in their grasp.

## Fizz leaves for IPL; Shakib, Liton in limbo



Hardik Pandya, captain of defending champions Gujarat Titans, holds the IPL trophy as Mahendra Singh Dhoni, captain of Chennai Super Kings, looks on prior to the kick off of the 16th edition of the world's richest T20 franchise cricket tournament at the Narendra Modi Stadium in Ahmedabad yesterday. PHOTO: IPL

SPORTS REPORTER

Mustafizur Rahman is set to leave the country today to take part in the Indian Premier League (IPL), where he will represent Delhi Capitals. Fizz is not under a central red-ball contract, so he was allowed to leave ahead of the upcoming Test against Ireland, starting from April 4 in Mirpur.

However, the 'cutter master' will miss the Delhi's first game today against Lucknow Super Giants.

Meanwhile, Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) president Nazmul Hassan Papon said that the board was maintaining its stance to not give No Objection Certificates (NOCs) to Test skipper Shakib Al Hasan and vice-captain Liton Das for the IPL.

On Friday, following Bangladesh's defeat against Ireland in the final T20I in Chattogram, Papon was asked to shed light on the truth regarding the rumours that both Shakib and Liton were given NOCs.

"This question again? When the IPL asked regarding the timeframe of players' availability, we informed them when they would be available. They included them based on that and that's how we will release the players," Papon said.

"We haven't informed anything [to media] but now, if you have given him the NOC [through rumours], you can do that but we don't know anything outside of that. We have been saying the same thing over and over again. We have even heard that NOCs have already been given. The only problem is we don't know about it," the BCB boss added.