

## 'Chance for others to make statement'

SPORTS REPORTER

The national selectors will now shift their focus to upcoming home series against Afghanistan after completion of the three-match ODI series against Ireland in Chelmsford.

Bangladesh Test and T20I captain Shakib Al Hasan would likely miss out on the one-off Test against Afghanistan, starting from June 14, as the all-rounder suffered a fracture at the base of index finger while attempting a catch during the second ODI against Ireland on Friday. Such injuries usually take around six weeks to heal.

"We are hopeful that he [Shakib] will be back for the limited-over series. It's always difficult to replace someone like Shakib but it's a chance for others to make a statement," said selector Habibul Bashar yesterday.

The Afghanistan series will be played in two phases. Following the lone Test, the visitors will head to India for a white ball series before returning to Bangladesh to play the three-match ODI and two-match T20I series.

Bashar further informed they will take time before announcing squad for the Afghanistan series as they will be assessing performers of Bangladesh A who are set to take on West Indies A series in Sylhet, with the first of the three four-day "Tests" scheduled to begin on May 16.



Bangladesh ODI skipper Tamim Iqbal raises his bat after having ended a nine-match half-century drought during the third and final ODI against Ireland in Chelmsford yesterday, but his 82-ball 69 left a lot to be desired.

PHOTO: IRELAND CRICKET

## Diya excluded over poor performance

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh's premier female archer Diya Siddique, who won a gold medal in recurved mixed events of Asia Cup World Ranking tournament in Chinese Taipei in March, has been left out of the World Cup Stage-2 team over poor performance.

Her poor finishing in the recently-concluded World Cup Stage-1 in Turkey played a pivotal role in her exclusion as she scored 620 to finish 76th out of 105 competitors in the recurve individual qualification event.

Her effort also saw Bangladesh recurve mixed team fail to qualify for the elimination round.

"Diya did not perform well at international level and she needs to make some changes to better her score. With some changes, she will become stable to perform.

So, it is better for her to not participate in the upcoming World Cup, instead she should focus on training," coach Martin Frederick told The Daily Star prior to the departure of the team, which features five archers including one recurve archer, for China last night.



## Bangladesh in handball finals

SPORTS REPORTER

Hosts Bangladesh confirmed final berths in both youth and junior sections of Bangabandhu IHF Challenge Women's Trophy after notching up back-to-back victories at Shaheed M Mansur Ali National Handball Stadium yesterday.

Bangladesh's preliminary target was to play in the final of the U-17 youth section, but the U-19 junior women's team did not disappoint either despite being a depleted side due to the unavailability of four key players, who are busy with HSC examinations.

Pre-tournament favourites India also booked final berths and they would square off against the hosts in dress rehearsal for the finals during today's last group matches.

Coming from a comprehensive 48-10 win over Maldives in the opening match in the youth section, Bangladesh dominated over Nepal and handed them a massive 50-4 goals defeat while the junior side, who beat Maldives 38-21, thrashed their Nepalese counterparts 23-09 to ensure the final berth.

Despite notching up comfortable victory over Nepal, Bangladesh youth team's coach Dalia Akter expressed her dissatisfaction about the quality of the opposition.

"Though we got a big win, it would have been better to have strong opponents ahead of the match against India, who are a strong side with world-class players," Dalia told reporters after the match.

Bangladesh junior team's coach Amjad Hossain said, "We tested some of our bench players and I'm happy to have seen them in the match. India are an experienced side and it is a good opportunity for us to meet them in group stage before the final. India youth and junior teams beat their Maldivian counterparts 42-14 and 55-09 respectively to confirm the finals.

## Tamim among runs but Tigers lose steam

SPORTS REPORTER

Tamim Iqbal was back among runs, which was a positive for Bangladesh after Ireland sent them to bat in Chelmsford yesterday.

The Bangladesh captain had last scored an international ODI fifty in August last year, against Zimbabwe, and went nine innings without scoring a fifty during a slightly rough patch.

The Tigers' batters, including Tamim, got starts but could not capitalise. Mushfiqur Rahim's contributions, especially during a valuable partnership with Mehedi Hasan Miraz, set them up for a score of "par score" of 274. Having been unable to play out the fifty over, the batting performance leaves room for improvement.

Bangladesh had Shakib Al Hasan injured and out of the series but he was there to hand out ODI caps to debutants Rony Talukdar and Mrittunjoy Chowdhury before game's start. Meanwhile, Mustafizur Rahman returned to the playing eleven as well after sitting out the first two ODIs. Shoriful Islam and Tajjul Islam both were rested.

Early on, Josh Little was struggling with his wrist position, getting in a few wides and byes. When he did get it right, shaping one into Tamim, the resultant dolly of a catch was dropped by Irish skipper Andy Balbirnie.

Rony, sent in to open, however, looked unconvincing, getting off the mark after 12 deliveries following a few instances of hitting air before he departed nicking Mark Adair following a wild swipe.

Najmul Hossain Shanto, who hit his maiden ODI ton in the second ODI, appeared to be carrying his form from the last game. He moved from 23 to 35, dealing in boundaries while the partnership between him and

Tamim moved to 49. At the end of Powerplay, Bangladesh were looking good but Shanto nudged one from Craig Young, who bowled excellently, to depart for a 32-ball 35.

Liton came to the crease and quickly found his feet. He, too, had struggled to bat to his potential this series but despite getting some testing deliveries outside the off stump, he held up his end with some classy shots. Another crucial partnership was developing as Tamim was allowed to find his rhythm during a 70-run stand. The Irish spinners, however, managed to put the breaks in.



Andy McBrine darted one in but Liton picked the wrong shot and fell after a 39-ball 35. Other spinner George Dockrell, who had proven to be handy against Bangladesh batters in the previous game, here he got the better of Towhid Hridoy.

Tamim did not accompany the incoming Mushfiqur for long, having not quite found his tempo and holding out to short third man off Dockrell as well after a patient 69. The foiled platform meant Mushfiqur and Miraz had to keep things ticking without many big shots, and they did considerably well.

However, when the time for acceleration came, Mushfiqur fell to McBrine after a 54-ball 45, and the last five Bangladesh wickets fell for 14 runs.

Craig Young had been fantastic without reward but Mark Adair produced a four-fer as appeared to be pleased with how things unfolded. The early movement apart, the wickets in Essex has produced runs.

"274 is a par score, tough place to defend as we found out the other day. Few good partnerships with the bat should see us home," Adair added at the end of the first innings as Bangladesh now look to put in a commendable performance with the ball and secure a series win.



Extending his single-season Premier League scoring record to 36 goals, Manchester City striker Erling Haaland leaps and thumps a header to score the game's final goal following a brace from Ilkay Gundogan as City maintains their lead ahead of Arsenal with a 3-0 win at Everton yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

## Messi unfazed amid 'whistles'

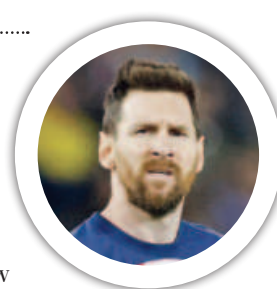
STAR SPORTS DESK

Kylian Mbappe struck twice and Paris Saint-Germain resumed normality with their 5-0 demolition of Ajaccio in a Ligue 1 fixture on Saturday but Lionel Messi predictably drew a mixed reception from own fans at home.

PSG coach Christophe Galtier said the Argentine, however, "stayed focused to liven up the game" and is familiar with handling "difficult situations" after Messi's unsanctioned trip to Saudi Arabia amplified the growing tension between him and the Parisian club. "There were whistles but very quickly a large part of the stadium made sure to drown them out to support Leo," said Galtier after match.

Despite Messi's apology following Saudi visit, rumours of his possible move to the Middle Eastern nation had likely fueled fire among a section of PSG fans.

PSG midfielder Renato Sanches termed the situation as "weird" and "hard for Messi, for the team, and for the club" as they need a win in three remaining matches to secure title defense.



## Nadal turns down claycourt event wildcard

REUTERS



Rafa Nadal has turned down a wildcard offer for next week's Challenger tournament in Bordeaux as the Spaniard's participation in the French Open hangs in the balance, the claycourt event director said on Sunday.

Nadal has been struggling with a hip injury he suffered at the Australian Open in January, and fears the Spaniard may miss the Paris Grand Slam event after he pulled out of this week's Italian Open.

"I offered him (Nadal's agent Carlos Costa) one of the wildcards. He very kindly told me that Nadal was continuing his preparation at home in Manacor, that he was not ready and was in a race against time to be ready for the French Open," Jean Baptiste Perlant told French sports daily L'Equipe.

Nadal skipped last week's Madrid Open and missed tournaments at Indian Wells, Miami, Monte Carlo and Barcelona.

The French Open, which Nadal has won a record 14 times including last year, starts on May 28.



## Inter-bank football tourney kicks off

SPORTS REPORTER

City Bank beat Islami Bank 3-0 as the first ever Sheikh Hasina Inter Bank Football Tournament got underway on Saturday at the Army Stadium in Dhaka.

A total of 34 bank teams are taking part in the meet, organised by Bangladesh Association of Banks. Chief of Army Staff General SM Shafiuddin Ahmed inaugurated the event, which was presided over by BAB chairman Nazrul Islam Mazumder.

Ex-FBCCI president Kazi Akram Uddin Ahmed was also present alongside senior officials of Bangladesh Army, chairman, director, managing director and senior executives of BAB member banks.

## ITF U-12 tennis from Tuesday

SPORTS REPORTER

ITF Asia Under-12 team competition - South Asia Regional Qualifying Event will be held at the Sheikh Jamal National Tennis Complex in Ramna from May 16 to 20.

Hosts Bangladesh will compete against India, Nepal, Bhutan, Maldives and Sri Lanka with a total of 17 boys and 11 girls taking part in the competition, revealed organisers at a press conference yesterday.

Bangladesh will field two teams - a three-member boys' team and a three-member girls' team, with Amol Roy and Rajnita Chowdhury the captains of the two teams. One boys' team and one girls' team from this meet will qualify for the ITF Asia Under-12 competition final round in Kazakhstan later this year.