

“Thank you, dear Saudis, for buying Mr Neymar, who has been one of the most sneaky footballers in recent years on this planet. One of the greatest footballers who only acts, who only dives. Lousy! A very sneaky character. I have to say: thank you very much, we don’t need to stand him anymore.”

– Bayern Munich legend Paul Breitner sarcastically thanked Al-Hilal for taking Neymar to Saudi Arabia



Biman back at cricket’s runway!

SPORTS REPORTER

Biman Bangladesh used to be a big name in the country’s domestic cricket circuit. Players such as Habibul Bashar, the current national team selector, have played for Biman almost for the entirety of his career. Current national team stars like Shakib Al Hasan and Mushfiquir Rahim have also featured for the side.

Due to cost-cutting ventures, Biman, who won the National Cricket League (NCL) in their inaugural season in 2000-01, slowly ebbed away from cricket. Bashar and former national team captain Akram Khan on Tuesday met Biman’s Managing Director Shafiqul Azim to propose a return for Biman to cricket.

Following the meeting, Biman has decided to return to cricket. Biman will have a franchise team featuring in the Bangladesh Cricket League [BCL] in the 2023-24 season.

“If Biman returns, it will be good for the sports and also the players. Since they don’t have a team anymore, they would have to start from scratch. We wanted them to be involved. They want to start with the BCL and then they will get involved with sports step by step since at the moment they aren’t involved with any sports. They are interested to start with BCL,” Bashar told The Daily Star on Wednesday.



Former Bangladesh ODI skipper Tamim Iqbal sweats it out in the gym at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium indoor facilities yesterday as he tries to regain his fitness and recover from a recurring back injury to be back in time for the New Zealand series following the Asia Cup in September.

PHOTO: BCB

Backups’ training in sync with Tigers’ needs

SPORTS REPORTER

A backup is never just a backup. The training of the nine cricketers at Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium, who have been kept as backup options with the upcoming World Cup in mind, is well-integrated to the needs of the national team, as per head coach Chandika Hathurusingha’s instructions.

There have been plenty of talk regarding Mahmudullah Riyad’s exclusion from the Asia Cup squad but Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) are ensuring that whenever the experience of someone like Riyad or the ability to clear the in-field much like what Soumya Sarkar does, is required, they get such players well-tuned to the team management’s needs.

Tamim Iqbal is part of the group but his individual recuperation would have to be completed before he can start doing the high-intensity training prescribed for the nine players, a BCB source informed. If his recuperation goes well and he can start taking on more intensity, he will return for the New Zealand series at home.

“The practice sessions have been designed in a way so that the intensity and volume of practice is like the national team’s. So that they can be ready and if picked, cope with the national team very quickly,” coach Sohel Islam, in charge of the group’s training sessions, told reporters yesterday.

The initial phase of the camp would go on

till September 3 but Sohel also informed that the camp may continue till the World Cup. The training sessions are curated according to the national team’s demands.

The focus of the training sessions on skill and training for particular roles. “We are preparing in two ways. One is skill, technical issues so that they can take challenges in specific areas in case they get into the team. The other is preparation based, such as who will play the new ball and how they will play,” Sohel further informed.

Riyad was hitting some big ones yesterday against net bowlers, as he looked to find his rhythm after sitting out the special camp due to a family emergency over the last few days. The veteran also was seen fielding with the rest of the group in the morning.

“The way that instructions came from the top on what the roles are and who will practice what, that is how it was communicated with Riyad and we set up his practice routine. He is in good shape and this preparation routine will go on for a while, and with a few more sessions he will get into a good rhythm,” Sohel said regarding Riyad’s return to the backup options’ camp.

Meanwhile Soumya, who is also among the backups, was looking to overcome his batting issues in order to be ready in case he is needed. Sohel added that Soumya has recognised what areas to work on. With time to prepare, the plans given from the national team management could be crucial.



Pragg takes final against Carlsen to tiebreaker

AGENCIES

In an anti-climax of sorts, the second game of the FIDE World Cup final between India’s Rameshbabu Pragganandhaa and World No 1 Magnus Carlsen of Norway ended in a quick draw in just over an hour.

Both players made 30 moves each before they agreed to a draw. They will return on Thursday to play in the shorter time control games.

Game 1 on Tuesday had also ended in a draw after 35 moves, but it lasted much longer as Carlsen tried to chase a win with black pieces. In Game 2, Pragganandhaa, playing with white pieces, was ahead on time at the start of the contest, but was unable to press on his advantage and came under time trouble himself by the end.

Thanks to making it to the final, Pragganandhaa became the third youngest player after the legendary Bobby Fischer and Carlsen to qualify for the Candidates tournament.

WARM-UP FIXTURES

September 29: Bangladesh v Sri Lanka, Guwahati
South Africa v Afghanistan, Thiruvananthapuram
New Zealand v Pakistan, Hyderabad

September 30: India v England, Guwahati
Australia v Netherlands, Thiruvananthapuram

October 2: England v Bangladesh, Guwahati
New Zealand v South Africa, Thiruvananthapuram

October 3: Afghanistan v Sri Lanka, Guwahati
India v Netherlands, Thiruvananthapuram
Pakistan v Australia, Hyderabad

Tigers to face SL and England in WC warm-ups

SPORTS DESK

Bangladesh will play two official warm-up games in Guwahati before starting their ICC World Cup campaign against Afghanistan on October 7.

The official warm-up fixtures for the cricket’s showpiece event in India was announced yesterday.

The Tigers will take on Sri Lanka in the first warm up game on September 29 at the Barsapara Cricket Stadium in Guwahati and play the second match against England at the same venue on October 2.

The 10 teams will each play two official 50-over contests during the week leading up to the start of the World Cup on October 5, with matches to be held in three different cities across India.

Premier hockey in October?

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Hockey Federation (BHF) is planning to hold the Dhaka Premier Division Hockey League in October after a two-year gap, but it all depends on the willingness on the clubs.

The premier league was held only once in the last four years as the clubs were not interested in taking part due to the ‘financial constraints’. The last league was held in 2021 only after the Prime Minister allocated one crore taka for the sport.

“I am hoping to form a league committee by this month [the last date of sending names of club representative is August 25] and declare the date of players’ transfers in the first meeting of the league committee,” said re-elected general secretary AKM Mominul Haque Sayeed.

“I prefer the transfers to take place in September and start the premier league in October,” Sayeed said. “I have already spoken to big clubs, which have assured me about taking part in the transfers. They have sought time for the transfers but I had told them that we can’t keep any schedule in December and January due to state affairs (national elections).”

Abahani hockey committee secretary Zaki Ahmed Ripon said that they have no problem in playing and taking part in the transfers.

Usha KC general secretary Abdur Rashid Shikdar, too, said they will respond positively to the federation’s plea and would try to form a strong squad in their return to top-flight hockey after missing out the last season due to demotion.

Rashid, also a BHF vice president, believes the small clubs may face trouble in the transfers ahead of the national elections. However, he believes it is possible to hold the league, which is the lone income sources of the players.

Sayeed promised to come forward personally to help the clubs if they need financial assistance.

“The federation is not capable of providing allocation for the clubs but personally I will try to help the clubs if they seek any kind of help,” said Sayeed.



As India’s Moon mission Chandrayaan-3 touched down on the lunar south pole on Wednesday, Indian cricketers, who are presently away from home to play a three-match T20I series against Ireland, were seen watching the historic event unfold. In a video shared by the BCCI, the cricketers led by captain Jasprit Bumrah were glued in front of a screen while watching the event and burst out in cheers as Chandrayaan-3 landed safely.

PHOTO: BCCI

STREAK ‘DEMISE’ a lesson for all

STAR SPORT DESK

Zimbabwe’s legendary cricketer Heath Streak made a trip to “the other side” and back on Wednesday, thanks to the powerful tool that is social media.

The world of cricket mourned the news of Streak’s “demise”, and was then left bewildered when such a sensitive issue turned out to be a hoax – all in a span of just a few hours.

News of the demise of Streak, 49, spread like wildfire on Wednesday morning with many renowned media houses around the globe running the news by referencing social media posts of Streak’s close associates.

Although the first official source that made the announcement of Streak’s demise remains unknown, a post by his former national teammate Henry Olonga is what seemingly triggered the hoax as even Reuters referenced Olonga in this matter.

“Sad news coming through that Heath Streak has crossed to the other side. RIP Zimbabwe cricket legend. The greatest all-rounder we produced. It was a pleasure playing with you,” wrote on messaging platform X, formerly known as Twitter.

Olonga was soon joined by former current Zimbabwe

skipper Sean Williams in paying his tributes to Streak.

“Streaky! No words can explain what you and your family have done for mine and many others. Our hearts are broken you leave behind a beautiful family and a legacy for us to live up to! You will be missed we love you dearly. Rest in peace, Streaky,” read Williams’ message on X.

The posts by Williams and Olonga are no longer available on X.

About two hours after his initial post, Olonga clarified in his next post that Streak, in fact, is “very much alive” but the damage had already been done by that time.

Understandably, Streak, undergoing treatment for liver cancer, and his family were taken aback by what they heard and saw, demanding an apology from the source for the unverified news.

“It is a total rumour and a lie. I’m alive and well. I am very upset to learn that something as big as someone apparently passing can be spread unverified especially in our day and age of social media, I believe the source should apologise. I am hurt by the news,” Streak told Mid-Day in his first official reaction to the news.

Streak may not get the “apology” for what transpired yesterday but it surely is time for the world to take note and wield the powerful tool in a more responsible way.



Gold medalist Gianmarco Tamperi of Italy celebrates with his wife Chiara Bontempi and bronze medalist Mutaz Essa Barshim of Qatar following the men’s high jump final at the World Athletics Championship in Budapest yesterday. “I feel like a human being who beats superheroes,” said an elated Tamperi, who famously shared the high jump gold medal with the three-time world champion Barshim at the Tokyo Olympics last year.

PHOTO: REUTERS