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Grabbers feast on railway hills



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'US visa policy alone cannot ensure fair election'



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Tamim dropped after drama

BCB announces WC squad; Mahmudullah returns

AL AMIN

The Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) announced its ICC World Cup squad last night, excluding Tamim Iqbal following much drama involving the experienced opener.

The BCB dropped Tamim on fitness grounds as the left-handed batter has been carrying a recurring back injury, which saw him missing the Asia Cup earlier this month.

But Tamim, the most successful opener the country has produced, was primed to play his fifth straight World Cup and looked comfortable while opening the innings against New Zealand in the second ODI in Mirpur, where he scored a fluent 44 on Saturday.

Despite playing with some pain, which many top-level and experienced cricketers around the world are known to do, Tamim's place in the squad was likely not a dilemma for the selectors, who were sweating on whether to include Mahmudullah Riyad by sacrificing an all-rounder in the 15-man World Cup squad.

However, the drama over Tamim's selection unfolded since Monday midnight after ODI captain Shakib Al Hasan and coach Chandika Hathurusingha's visit to BCB President Nazmul Hassan Papon's residence.



Traders use the edge of the Turag, along the Mirpur-Ashulia Beribandh road in Deul area of Ashulia, to bring in sand on bulk carriers and load sand on to trucks using diggers. Part of the river, marked by the red-tipped pillars, also gets filled in the process. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

Tigers opt for mix of youth and experience

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh team management went for a mix of youth and experience as they named the World Cup squad yesterday, with the biggest fallout from the announcement being the absence of veteran Tamim Iqbal due to injury concerns.

The other telling selection was the return of Mahmudullah Riyad. Mahmudullah himself had fitness concerns, with particular attention drawn to his declining athletic abilities on the field.

The 37-year-old, who crossed 5,000 ODI runs in the third match against New Zealand yesterday, impressed the selectors enough in his comeback series to be included for what would be his fourth appearance in cricket's biggest event.

However, question after question was posed to chief selector, Minhajul Abedin Nannu, regarding Tamim's exclusion during the squad announcement. The selection panel felt that they took Tamim's achievements into account before excluding him but they felt the risk of carrying an injured player would outweigh the rewards.

With the 34-year-old Tamim, with over 8,000 runs in ODI cricket, out of the picture, the team management went for a young face for the opening slot.

Youngster Tanzid Hasan Tamim, who made 34 runs in five innings so far since getting the opportunity to play in the Asia Cup, had impressed enough with his strokeplay. A number of openers were tried out before the World Cup, with Mohammad Naim featuring heavily but while he got starts at the Asia Cup, he did not capitalise with big knocks. In the end, Tanzid got the nod despite his inexperience.



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NATIONAL ELECTION EC to invite observers from Saarc countries

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

There are many countries in the world other than the ones in the European Union, and they may send observers for Bangladesh's national polls, Election Commissioner Md Alamgir said yesterday.

The Election Commission will invite observers from the Saarc countries next month, he told reporters at his office.

The EU last week informed the EC that it would not send a fully-fledged mission to observe the national election here.

"Based on the recommendations of the exploratory mission -- and taking into consideration the budget for EU Election Observation Missions for 2023/2024 -- High Representative Josep Borrell has decided not to deploy a fully-fledged EU Election Observation Mission," reads a letter EU Ambassador to Bangladesh Charles Whiteley sent to the EC.

"The High Representative's decision reflects the fact that, at the present time, it is not sufficiently clear whether the necessary conditions will be met at the point in time when the elections take place."

Alamgir yesterday said the EU had informed that it would send a small team of observers.

"But it's not the final word. They may later change their mind and send a full mission," he added.

GUIDELINES FOR INTERNATIONAL OBSERVERS

As per the guidelines the EC issued yesterday, individuals or organisations must have work experience in good

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\$27b health budget in the works

The five-year health sector plan yet to be approved

REJAUL KARIM BYRON and MOUDUD AHMED SUJAN

The government is preparing a \$27 billion budget for the upcoming five-year health sector plan, up 52.5 percent from the ongoing programme that ends in June 2024.

The ambitious plan, centred on achieving universal health coverage with a special focus on urban primary health care and mitigating the impact of climate change on health, is slated for implementation in July 2024.

Tangible progress will remain elusive without a clear roadmap and effective coordination among different programmes within the health sector plan, according to experts.

"The upcoming health sector plan is crucial for achieving universal health coverage by 2030, but, like the current one, it lacks coordination among different components and a clear roadmap," said Syed Abdul Hamid, a health economics professor at the University of Dhaka.

The upcoming Health, Population and Nutrition Sector Programme (HPNSP), which would be the fifth of its kind, lacks a clear plan to tackle health emergencies like Covid-19 and the

dengue outbreak or emergencies due to natural calamities.

"Covid-19 and the current dengue outbreak have shown us the necessity of special allocation for health emergencies. There should have been a separate operational plan for this," Hamid added.

All health sector programmes, including the current one, failed to improve access to health care for the lowest quintile of society, said Be-nazir Ahmed, health system expert and former director of disease control at the Directorate General of Health Services.

"This issue primarily stems from systemic gaps in our healthcare management. Consequently, funds are allocated and increased, yet discernible improvements in quality remain elusive."

He warned that without addressing the systematic gaps, the upcoming health sector programme will also fail to deliver any tangible outcome.

The proposal though is not final yet and is awaiting approval from the Executive Committee of the National Economic Council by the first quarter of the following year, The Daily Star has learnt from officials informed.

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Country has been turned into 'Hirak Rajar Desh'

Says Mirza Abbas

STAR REPORT

BNP standing committee member Mirza Abbas said the government has turned the country into "Hirak Rajar Desh", a fictional country run by an oppressive and erratic monarch in a Satyajit Ray film.

"But, my friends, we all know the consequences of Hirak Rajar Desh It is high time to challenge the government. Be united and organised. This regime will sustain no longer," he added.

He made the remarks while inaugurating the Khulna divisional road march at Jhenidah Bus Terminal yesterday.

"Bangladesh has not gained independence to establish the rule of one person. Bangladesh became independent for establishing democracy, sovereignty, freedom of speech, and the right to vote. Not to establish the reign of a king or queen. Not to turn the country into a Hirak Rajar Desh," he said.

The BNP leader said, "The amount of loan defaulted in the country was Tk 21,000 crore. Today, that amount has risen to Tk 1,09,000 crore. People want to know where this money went, who used this money, and who misappropriated it. Those of us who protest are arrested by the police Then, they send us to

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BNP holds a brief rally at Muralimore in Jashore town yesterday while marching from Jhenidah to Khulna via Magura and Jashore. The road march was part of its one-point movement demanding the next election under a non-partisan administration.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

No visa policy, sanctions can stop Hasina

Quader says at AL rally

BSS, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina cannot be stopped by issuing visa policy and sanctions, Awami League General Secretary Obaidul Quader told a rally in Keraniganj yesterday.

"Bangladesh will run in line with the constitution. It does not abide by any country's sanctions. We were not defeated in 1971 and Sheikh Hasina cannot be stopped even today by issuing sanctions. We don't care about anyone's sanctions," Quader said.

The US imposed the restrictions, but BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir made threats over the issue, Quader told a "peace and development" rally, held by Dhaka district AL, at Jinjira, protesting "terrorism, militancy, anarchy and ill politics of BNP-Jamaat".

"Did Mirza Fakhrul get an agency? Washington's sanctions could not stop Israel's killing in Palestine. They [US] failed to prevent the Russian invasion of Ukraine. No one pays heed to sanctions. So, we who have achieved the country's independence in exchange for blood are not afraid of sanctions."

Quader said, "The game will start once

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