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A momentous win for Tigers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

For more reasons than one, the 150-run victory over New Zealand yesterday is bound to be classified as one of the finest triumphs for Bangladesh in the longest format.

The achievement of their first home Test win over the Kiwis is glorified by the fact that the Tigers operated in absence of five familiar faces, including regular skipper Shakib Al Hasan; that too, on the back of a disastrous World Cup mission in India last month.

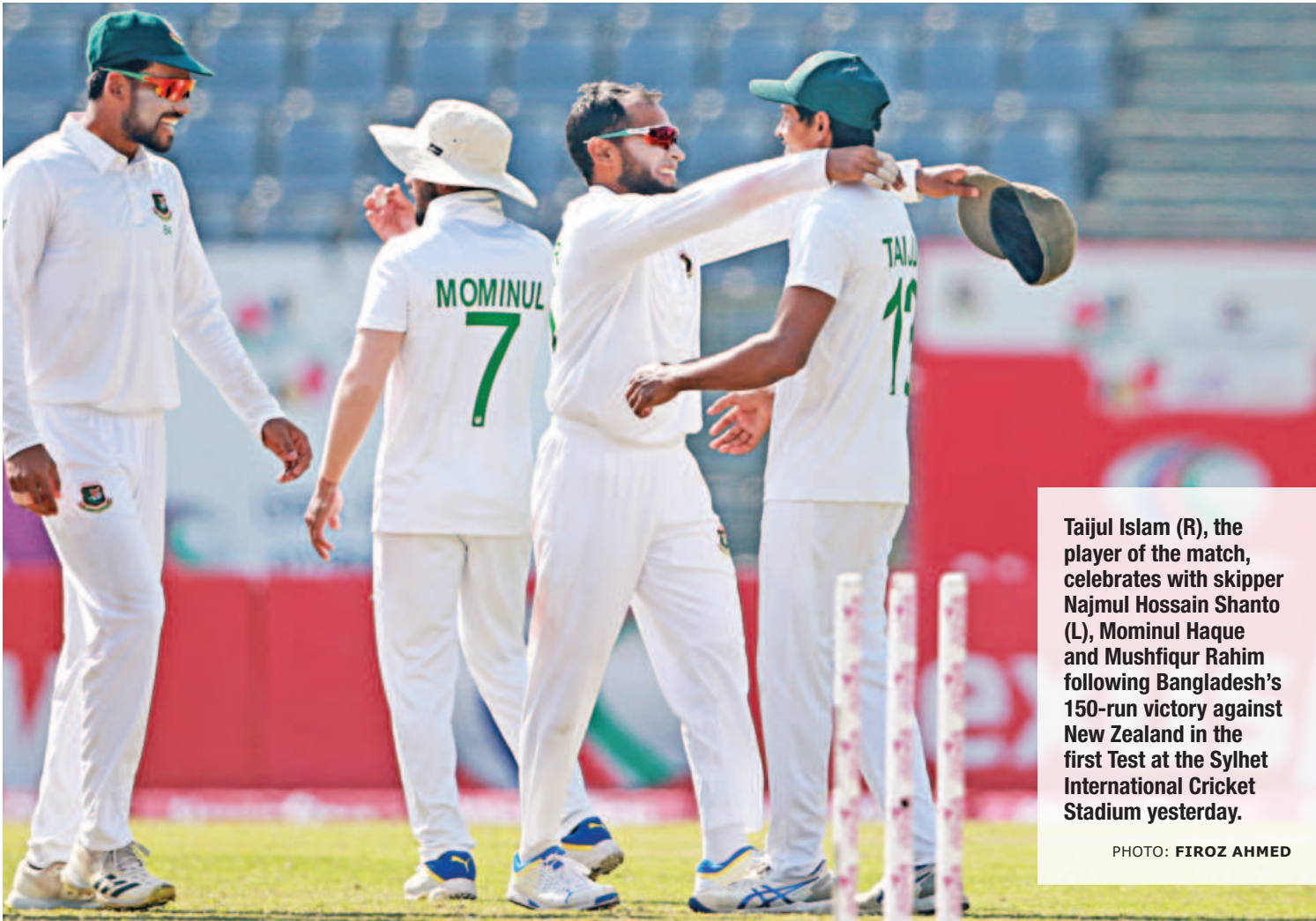
The visitors, who arrived with a full-strength side, were regarded as the favourites before the start of the two-match Test series. However, Bangladesh kicked off their third cycle of the World Test Championship (WTC) on the best possible note.

Coincidentally, it was Bangladesh's second victory in the WTC and both had materialised against the same oppositions -- the first of which came in Mount Maunganui in 2022 in the previous WTC cycle.

In a win where almost everyone chipped in, Taijul Islam stood out and was rightly adjudged as the Player of the Match. The left-arm spinner scalped two-third of the wickets needed for victory on the fifth and final day, en route to his second ten-wicket haul in Tests, allowing Najmul Hossain Shanto and Co to wrap the game up with an estimated two-and-a-half sessions to spare.

Resuming the final day on 113 for seven, in chase of 332 runs, New Zealand were staring at a defeat and required something exceptional to bail out, with all hopes riding on overnight batter Daryl Mitchell. However, the Kiwi

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Taijul Islam (R), the player of the match, celebrates with skipper Najmul Hossain Shanto (L), Mominul Haque and Mushfiqur Rahim following Bangladesh's 150-run victory against New Zealand in the first Test at the Sylhet International Cricket Stadium yesterday.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

BUSINESS

Food welfare expands as election nears

Public food distribution rose more than 23 percent year-on-year in the first five months of 2023-24 amid higher inflation, as the government expanded the populist measure ahead of the national election.

Data from the food ministry showed that 12.92 lakh tonnes of rice and wheat were distributed under various schemes such as the Open Market Sales (OMS) and the Food-Friendly Programme as of November 23 of the current financial year. It was 10.50 lakh tonnes during the same period in 2022-23.

STORY ON B1

Only 4.71pc of candidates are women

ASIFUR RAHMAN

A total of 128 female candidates are set to run for 99 seats in the January 7 national election. This is only 4.71 percent of the total 2,713 candidates taking part in the polls.

As many as 68 female candidates contested the 2018 general election. The figure was 3.64 percent of the total candidates, according to Election Commission data.

This time, only 16 out of the 29 political parties that are contesting the polls have fielded 83 female candidates. Besides, 45 women will run as independents.

The Representation of the People Order (RPO)-1972 stipulates that political parties will set aside at least 33 percent of all their committee posts for women, including the central committee. However, the major political parties have yet to fulfil this obligation.

In 2021, the Election Commission set 2030 for fulfilling the obligation.

The ruling Awami League has fielded the highest number of 23 female candidates, including party President Sheikh Hasina, Jatiya Sangsad Speaker Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury, incumbent MPs Matia Chowdhury, Umme Kulsum Smrity, Syeda Zakia Noor, Sagulta Yeasmin, Simin Hossain, Meher Afroze, and Selima Ahmed.

Jatiya Party has nominated nine women, the second highest. However, party Chief Patron Raushan Ershad didn't collect a nomination form.

Only two female MPs, including Raushan, are representing the JP in the 11th parliament. The other lawmaker, Nasrin Jahan Ratna, has secured a party ticket.

JP Presidium Member Salma Islam and Sherifa Quader, wife of party Chairman GM Quader, are among the party's other female nominees.

Only three out of the 91 candidates from Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal are women, including Shirin Akhter MP.

Bangladesh Congress and the National People's Party have nominated eight female candidates each, while

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Israel bombards southern Gaza

Palestinians fear new ground offensive; Macron says Israel's goal to destroy Hamas risks decade of war

AGENCIES

Israeli war planes and artillery bombarded the south of the Gaza Strip yesterday, hitting mosques, homes and close to a hospital, after the collapse of a truce in the nearly two-month-old war between Israel and Hamas.

Residents feared the barrages were a prelude to an Israeli ground operation in the south of the Palestinian territory which would bottle them up in a shrinking area and possibly try to push them into neighbouring Egypt.

The Gaza health ministry said at least 240 Palestinians had been killed and 650 wounded since the truce ended on Friday morning. More than 15,000 Palestinians have been killed in Gaza since the war started on October 7, according to AFP.

The Israeli military said that in the last 24 hours combined attacks by its ground, air and naval forces had hit 400 targets and killed an unspecified number of Hamas fighters.

Meanwhile, French President Emmanuel Macron warned that Israel's aim of eliminating the Palestinian group Hamas risked

unleashing a decade of war.

Achieving the "total destruction of Hamas" would mean "the war will last 10 years", Macron said at a press conference on the sidelines of the UN's COP28 climate talks in Dubai, reports AFP.

"So this objective must be clarified," he added.

The president said France was



Gaza struck over 400 times since truce collapse, Israel army says



240 killed, 650 injured in the enclave since then, says Gaza health ministry

"very concerned" by the resumption of violence in Gaza and that he was heading to Qatar to help in efforts to kickstart a new truce ahead of a ceasefire, reports Reuters.

A temporary truce between Israel and Hamas collapsed on Friday after mediators were unable to extend it. Israel and Hamas have

traded blame over the collapse.

"There is no lasting security for Israel in the region if its security is achieved at the cost of Palestinian lives and thus of the resentment of public opinions in the region. Let's be collectively lucid," Macron added.

The head of the International Red Cross said the renewed fighting was intense.

"It's a new layer of destruction coming on top of massive, unparalleled destruction of critical infrastructure, of civilian houses and neighbourhoods," Robert Mardini told Reuters in Dubai.

With conditions inside the Hamas-ruled enclave reaching "breaking point", in Mardini's words, the first aid trucks since the end of the truce entered Gaza through the Egyptian side of the Rafah crossing yesterday, Egyptian security and Red Crescent sources said.

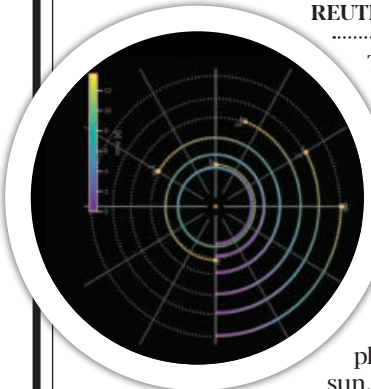
During the truce, Hamas released hostages in exchange for Palestinian prisoners held in Israeli jails.

But yesterday, Deputy Hamas chief Saleh Al-Aroui told the pan-Arab Al Jazeera TV that no more

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6 planets may help solve the cosmic puzzle

REUTERS, Washington



They are the most common type of planet observed in our Milky Way galaxy - two to three times the diameter of Earth but smaller than Neptune, and orbiting closer to their stars than our solar system's innermost planet Mercury does to the sun.

Called "sub-Neptunes,"

they are absent from our solar system and their fundamental nature has remained a puzzle. But the discovery announced on Wednesday of six of them in synchronised orbits around a star about 20 percent smaller in mass than the sun is giving astronomers hope that an answer could come soon.

The researchers determined that the six planets were in a rare condition called orbital resonance, with their synchronised orbits around the star apparently unchanged since they formed about four billion years ago. That indicates no chaotic event like a giant impact event has perturbed their orbits.

"The resonance aspect is really interesting - partly the mathematical beauty of it," said astronomer Hugh Osborn of the University of Bern in Switzerland, one of the authors of the research published in the journal Nature.

"The key thing about this system is its potential to unlock the secrets of these mysterious sub-Neptune planets, which we know so little about," Osborn added. "These are definitely not Earth-like planets."

Hundreds of sub-Neptunes have been discovered.

PM pushing country into crisis: Rizvi

3 buses torched on the eve of BNP's 48-hr blockade today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP has accused Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina of pushing the country into crisis to win the upcoming general election.

"Bangladesh is now disconnected from the democratic world. Ignoring calls from various countries, Sheikh Hasina will stage a drama on January 7," BNP Senior Joint Secretary General Ruhul Kabir Rizvi said at a virtual press briefing last night.

"Sheikh Hasina has pushed everything into crisis to be in power," he said

The BNP and its allies have announced a fresh 48-hour nationwide blockade starting this morning, demanding the election under a non-party interim government. This will be the ninth round of blockades called by the BNP since October 28.

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A Palestinian man carries a child injured during Israeli bombardment in Rafah, on the southern Gaza Strip yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

COP28 CLIMATE TALKS

110 nations rally behind renewables

AFP, Dubai

More than 110 nations pledged to triple the world's renewable energy within seven years at UN climate talks yesterday as the United States pushed to slash methane emissions and boost nuclear capacity.

With smoggy skies in Dubai highlighting the challenges facing the world, leaders at the COP28 conference threw their support behind voluntary pledges aimed at ramping up alternatives to fossil fuels.

A massive deployment of solar, wind, hydroelectric and other renewables is crucial to efforts to displace demand for planet-heating coal, oil and gas and achieve net zero carbon emissions by 2050.

The nearly 200 nations negotiating a COP28 climate deal face tougher talks over the next two weeks on the fate of fossil fuels.

More than half signed up to a commitment to tripling global renewable energy capacity and doubling energy efficiency by 2030, the COP28's Emirati presidency said.

But major oil producers including Russia, Saudi Arabia and Iran, and top consumer China were not on the list.

"I do need more, and I'm kindly requesting all parties to come on board as soon as possible please," COP28 president Sultan Al Jaber told delegates.

"This can and will help transition the world away from unabated coal," said Jaber, who also heads the UAE's national oil company and a renewable energy firm.

Clean power advocates welcomed the commitment but said it must be accompanied by the phase-out of dirtier

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