

## Shakib likely to miss initial Zim T20Is

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh ace all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan is set for a return to the country ahead of the upcoming five T20Is against Zimbabwe at home, starting from May 3, but he might miss a few matches at the start of the series.

There is a possibility of him playing Dhaka Premier League's ongoing Super League phase for Sheikh Jamal Dhanmondi Club.

"He has said that he will try to play three games in the Super League, maybe the last three. It's mostly certain but we can't be sure until he arrives here," a Sheikh Jamal official told The Daily Star yesterday.

BCB chief selector Gazi Ashraf Hossain Lipu informed that they expect Shakib to appear in the matches close to the end of the series, which means Shakib will likely be available during the two fixtures in Dhaka.

"We have contacted him... there is a possibility he will play one or two matches in the DPL," Lipu informed reporters yesterday.

"Afterwards, he will join the Bangladesh team management and there he will have an opportunity for skill training. It will happen how he and the team management want it. Still, we would want that since there are five matches, he gets an opportunity to play near the end of the series.

"We will give the team on the 28th and it will become clear for how many matches he will be available," he added.



Football dominated the 25th Laureus World Sports Awards as England midfielder Jude Bellingham (R), posing with legendary Jamaican sprinter Usain Bolt ahead of the gala in Madrid on Monday, became the first footballer to bag the World Breakthrough of the Year prize, a fitting recognition for his stellar debut season in Real Madrid colours. [Inset] Tennis great Novak Djokovic lifted the Sportsman of the Year award on the back of three Grand Slam titles last year, while Aitana Bonmati [dressed in red, beside national teammates Salma Paralluelo and Ivana Andres] took home the Sportswoman of the Year award, another first for football in the category, for her pivotal role in leading Spain to a maiden Women's World Cup triumph and FC Barcelona to Champions League glory. Moreover, Spain women's football team were named the World Team of the Year, the first all-female team to win the prestigious award. PHOTO: AFP



**"In Asia, you always see that a leg-spinner, a mystery spinner, or a chinaman is bowling in the nets in club cricket and in net practices. You've got to go to local coaches and hopefully, that is where my experience will come into play. We can communicate [with the local coaches] and meet lots of club coaches and first-class coaches and then we can figure out how to find good leg-spinners and chinamans because in white-ball cricket, you need to have spinners who can get you wickets in the middle overs. It's very important to look for mystery spinners."**

Mushtaq Ahmed  
 Bangladesh spin-bowling coach

## Tigers' World Cup squad starts to take shape

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh head coach Chandika Hathurusingha had returned to the country on Sunday and there were quite a few key meetings, including one with selectors and another with cricket operations, before a preparatory squad was announced yesterday for the upcoming home T20I series against Zimbabwe as the World Cup squad starts to take shape.

The head coach yesterday went to Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium (SBNSC) and met newly appointed spin coach Mushtaq Ahmed, while the rest of the coaching staff -- David Hemp, Andre Adams and Mohsin Khan -- were available.

The deadline for submitting the 15-member World Cup squad is on May 1, and although the team can be changed later even without injuries, the squad was formed to prepare for both Zimbabwe and matches in the USA. It closely resembles the World Cup squad one, informed chief selector Gazi Ashraf Hossain Lipu.

"We will try to take the highest advantage. We have to submit the World Cup squad by May 1, according to regulations. It's not like this team [preparation camp] would be the World Cup squad. There are many matches, and many things can happen such as injuries. But it will be close to the team [for the World Cup]. It's a matter for the board and it will be up to the board whether to announce it or not," Lipu informed reporters after announcing the Tigers' 17-member squad.

For the preparation camp, priority was given to players that have not had experience in global T20I or have not worked with Hathurusingha in inter-squad sessions or otherwise. The squad will undergo match-scenario training at Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium in Chattogram from April 26th till April 28th.



Two key players in Mustafizur Rahman and Shakib Al Hasan were not named as they are out of the country, while two players who were left out of the camp of prioritised players are Shamim Hossain Patwari and Mehedi Hasan Miraz.

Shamim was in the "red zone" after his latest physical performance assessment. Team management sources told this newspaper that his fitness was a serious concern since he completed his four laps in seven minutes at the Bangabandhu National Stadium. Although Miraz was left out, Lipu acknowledged that the player is a backup option for the mega event in June, in case of an injury to an off-spinner.

Soumya Sarkar yesterday was seen doing running sessions at SBNSC and the medical department said that he would undergo fitness tests. Lipu reckoned that he will be carried with the team at the camp for the tactical side of things.

"Maybe Soumya Sarkar may not return to the field by then and whatever opportunity we have, as we can change the squad even without injuries, we will take those opportunities and maybe we will be able to declare the team officially later," remarked the chief selector. Mohammad Saifuddin, meanwhile, who

returned to national team camp after a long time, will have to make his case in the camp and the Zimbabwe series. "It's a good opportunity for him in the Zimbabwe series to return as his old self because we have a lot of interest in him," Lipu said of Saifuddin.

For the opening batting roles, Anamul Haque Bijoy was not considered and Tanzid Hasan Tamim alongside Soumya and Liton Das would be prioritised at the World Cup. Towhid Hridoy, Mahmudullah Riyad and Jaker Ali form the middle-order while Rishad Hossain and Mahedi Hasan are set to be included as all-rounders in the Najmul

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Chief selector Gazi Ashraf Hossain Lipu

Hossain Shanto-led squad. Barring injury issues, the three pacers in Taskin Ahmed, Shoriful Islam, Tanzim Sakib alongside Mustafizur are all slated to make the World Cup squad, while spinner Tanvir Islam also has a significant chance of making the cut.

### SHORT CORNER



#### India women's cricket team arrive in Sylhet

Indian women's cricket team arrived in Sylhet yesterday ahead of their five-match Twenty20 International series against Bangladesh, starting on April 28. After the series opener on Sunday, the remaining four matches will be played on April 30, May 2, 6 and 9 respectively.

#### Police in Federation Cup semis after three seasons

Bangladesh Police FC advanced to the semifinals of the Federation Cup after three seasons with a 3-0 win over three-time champions Sheikh Jamal DC in the third quarterfinal at the Sheikh Fazlul Haque Moni Stadium in Gopalganj yesterday. Uzbek duo Javokhir Sokhibov and Azmat Abdullaev and an own goal from Sheikh Jamal's Shokhrukhbek Kholmatov in the first half saw off Sheikh Jamal through.

#### Toffee to stream ICC T20 World Cup in Bangladesh

Banglalink is all set to stream six major events of the International Cricket Council (ICC) in the next two years including the upcoming ICC Twenty20 World Cup exclusively on its OTT platform Toffee. The telecom company secured the exclusive digital streaming rights in Bangladesh territory for the ICC Men's and Women's T20 World Cup in 2024, ICC Men's Champions Trophy, ICC Under-19 Women's T20 World Cup, World Test Championship final and the ICC Women's World Cup in 2025.

\*\*Read full stories on The Daily Star's website

## Inter's future bright but off-field uncertainty reigns

AFP, MILAN

Inter Milan are flying high after sealing the Serie A title by winning the Milan derby but off-field uncertainty is still the order of the day for the new Italian champions.

Last season's run to the Champions League final looked like a one-off for Inter, one of Europe's grand clubs who like much of the continent's football royalty have to deal with a huge resource gap to the Premier League and state-backed clubs like Paris Saint-Germain.

And their situation off the field is yet to fully stabilise even as they receive a second star on their jersey for their 20th league crown.

Hanging over Inter for the past three years has been an emergency loan taken out with investment fund Oaktree, which must be paid in full next month and after interest reportedly amounts to between 375-380 million euros.

Oaktree can take control of Inter should that loan either be not repaid or refinanced by Inter's Chinese owners Suning.

Inter president Steven Zhang appeared bullish at Sunday's Formula One Chinese Grand Prix, strongly hinting that come the summer he will still be president.

"Every day there are rumours (about Suning selling)... What I can say is that we will continue to fight, continue to win," said



Zhang to Sky Sport on the paddock at the Shanghai International Circuit.

Zhang is negotiating a reported 400-million-euro loan with another US fund, this time with Pimco, which Inter will use to pay off Oaktree and keep the club

with Suning.

While effectively kicking the can down the road with another reported three-year loan with even higher interest than the 12 percent negotiated with Oaktree, strong performances on the pitch and in the transfer

market should boost accounts which have taken a beating since the pandemic.

Inter's posted losses of 85 million euros in 2022/23, following even heavier losses of 140 million euros and 245.6 million euros in the previous two seasons as stadiums were partially or fully closed due to the pandemic.

Zhang also basically confirmed a contract extension for Simone Inzaghi, who has done a superb job in difficult circumstances since replacing Antonio Conte three years ago and is expected to sign an extension until 2027.

New deals for captain Lautaro Martinez and Italy midfielder Nicolò Barella are also in the offing, while this summer is set to be the first in some time where a star player won't need to be sold to balance the books.

"I've said many times that it's a gift for me as president to work with a coach like Inzaghi," added Zhang.

Inter also remain in limbo with regards to getting their own stadium after plans to build a new ground on the San Siro site with AC Milan petered out last year.

Inter have pushed ahead with a new stadium project in the town of Rozzano, just south of Milan, which corporate CEO Alessandro Antonello has said is the club's priority despite talks with AC Milan and Milan city council over potentially taking possession of a renovated version of the current San Siro.



This is Simone Inzaghi's first league title, but his sixth title overall as an Inter Milan manager which puts him behind only the legendary Heleno Herrera and Roberto Mancini both of whom have won seven titles each with the Nerazzurri.

This is the first time in Serie A history that the title was decided through Milan derby.

This is the sixth straight time that Inter Milan have beaten their city rivals in Milan derby.

Inter Milan have become the second team in Italy to win 20 league titles, earning the right to wear a second star on their shirt, 16 top-tier league titles behind Juventus.

Inter have won the title with five games remaining, equaling a record which was held by themselves as well as four other clubs.