

## Tigers get favourable news on Taskin

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh cricket team got a positive news on Friday as the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) medical team revealed that pacer Taskin Ahmed is improving well from his rib cage injury.

Taskin suffered the injury in the fourth T20I of the recently-concluded Zimbabwe series which left him with an undisplaced fracture on the right side of his rib cage.

"His improvement is very good and satisfying. He is going through the rehabilitation process and undergoing gym. He is doing running sessions and we will introduce bowling later," BCB chief physician Dr. Debashish Chowdhury told The Daily Star over phone yesterday.

Despite the injury scare, Taskin was included in the T20 World Cup squad, and Debashish mentioned that it has 'almost healed' and that they are hopeful about him starting in the Tigers' first World Cup game.

Bangladesh will start their World Cup campaign against Sri Lanka on June 8 in Dallas.

# Smug Shakib, clueless Bangladesh

NABID YEASIN

Witty replies at pressers, an abundance of smugness, the parroting of the same old clichés after a loss – the Bangladesh men's cricket team have it all in them to be the talk of the town, except for on-field performances that would have gone well with the aforementioned qualities to make the Tigers an eccentric unit that everyone enjoyed having around.

But when they keep on losing by putting horrendous cricket on display time and again, possessing all of these qualities only makes them a pompous and abhorrent unit that comes off as foolish and ignorant after every debacle.

Looking at how Shakib Al Hasan responded to a few of the questions at the post-match presser following Bangladesh's humiliating series loss against the USA on Thursday would go a long way in proving the above stated notion about Bangladesh cricket.

When asked why Bangladesh's top order has been misfiring for a long time now, Shakib, one of the most experienced cricketers in the Tigers' line-up, chose to channel his smugness that makes him a hit among his legions of followers as he replied: "I can't say, I don't have any

answer for that."

Shakib put his witty side on display when asked if the players on the team are going through some sort of a mental blockade, the answer to which should be known to any one in and around the team. "That I don't know. If I knew then I would have told my team and the results would have been different," he said, smirking.

As he so often does, Shakib may have tried to stun and shun the criticism Bangladesh deserved to face after becoming the first team to suffer 100 losses in T20Is, but what the poster boy of Bangladesh cricket had said rings absolutely true – none of the players and members of the team management or probably even the board know what is actually wrong with the team. And the most concerning part is, they could not be any less bothered to find out.

Had any one of those stakeholders of Bangladesh cricket been even a little embarrassed and concerned about the Tigers' dire plight, wouldn't someone at least try and find answers and ways to emerge from this crisis and be bold and sincere enough to admit that this indeed is the lowest point for Bangladesh cricket in the shortest format?

Because losing successive matches against a team 10 places lower than



PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

the ninth ranked Bangladesh in T20Is just before the T20 World Cup surely shows that the Tigers have hit the nadir just one year after they had their best run in the format – in 2023, Bangladesh had managed to win 10 of their 14 T20Is, including a whitewash of defending champions England at home.

Shakib's nonchalant comments, however, made one thing very clear. It is that the star all-rounder, who is now a lawmaker in Bangladesh, has more than just cricket to tend to. While his tendency to pick which series to play in, despite being one of the handful of players who are centrally contracted in all formats, is nothing new, Shakib could not have made it any clearer that his priorities now lay elsewhere as he remains deliberately unaware of why things are going wrong with the current Bangladesh side.

The way Shakib has been performing lately would make anyone wonder if he truly is invested in propelling Bangladesh cricket anymore. Even discounting how he had been doing with the bat for a while now, the way he managed to chop one onto his stumps in the second T20I against the USA just a ball after the Tigers lost their number seven batter Jaker Ali while needing just 21 off 19 deliveries would bring

into question whether he is bothered about the risk at stakes in any particular game for Bangladesh.

Was the pitch two-paced which made things difficult for Shakib at that instance? "Not really, I did not find the pitch to be bad," even he disagreed.

It's not that only Shakib is indifferent about the national team as the same could also be said about the members of the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB), who formed a three-member special committee to look into Bangladesh's performance following the 2023 ODI World Cup fiasco but never really showed if any good has come off it other than opting for a regulation stance of changing the leadership in all three formats.

Considering how things are now for Bangladesh, pondering how they will do at the upcoming T20 World Cup seems futile. If anything, it is time to mull where Bangladesh cricket is headed from here on.

Today, the Tigers will take on the USA in the third T20I with the threat of a whitewash looming over them, something no one had anticipated at the start of the series.

Could they spiral down further? The omens would suggest a very bleak answer for fans of a cricket-crazy nation.

## BKSP sweep 100m gold medals in jr athletics

SPORTS REPORTER

BKSP dominated in all sprint events of the Sheikh Kamal 38th Junior Athletics Championships on the opening day but athletes from districts hogged the limelight in other events at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

The country's lone sports education institute's students swept all four gold medals in 100m events – boy's, girl's, male juvenile and female juvenile sections – with Sumaiya Akter setting a new record in the female juvenile section.

Sumaiya clocked 12.49 seconds to grab the gold medal, eclipsing the previous record of 12.66 seconds set by former BKSP student Sonia Akter in 2019.

In male juvenile section, Delwar Hossain clocked 11.20 seconds to win the 100m gold, followed by Chayan Kumar Biswas of Jashore (11.35 seconds) and Omar Faruk of Cumilla (11.56 seconds).

In boy's 100m event, Shipon Mia of BKSP grabbed gold, timing 11.37 seconds while Alim Hossain of Chittagong and Mohammad Biplob of Kurigram won silver and bronze medals.

In girl's 100m event, Mim Akter of BKP clocked 12.70 seconds to bag gold medal while her teammate Sanjida Akter and Shahinur Akter of Kishoreganj won silver and bronze medals, taking 13.07 seconds and 13.34 seconds respectively.

# Should Murshedy get away with sweeping dirt under the rug?

ATIQUE ANAM

In stark contrast to many developed nations where people in power often relinquish their positions in face of charges of corruption or incompetence even before allegations are proved in a show of true accountability – there is a disturbing tendency to brush aside all sorts of allegations, even after proven, under the rug by the people in power in countries like Bangladesh, which ranks among the lowest in various corruption indexes.

We often see heads of organisations in our country – political, financial or social – washing their hands off of people who have been proven to have caused major digressions with statements like: "the organisation will not take responsibility for the activities of a few individuals."

Something similar is happening in the Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF), which has been in the limelight for serious financial mismanagement for over a year now.

Following up on FIFA's decision to ban the former BFF general secretary Abu Nayeem Shohag on April 14, 2023, the



world football's governing body, on Thursday, imposed new sanctions on Shohag while also suspending two other BFF officials, both of whom had left the federation in the wake of the initial investigation.

However, the most damaging part of the FIFA decisions was the implication on BFF's senior vice-president Abdus Salam Murshedy, who has been fined 10,000 Swiss Francs (more than Tk 12 lakh) for breaching article 14 (general duties) of the FIFA Code of Ethics.

A three-time Member of Parliament (MP) and former president of Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA), Murshedy has been holding the second senior-most position in BFF's executive body over the last 16 years and has been heading its finance committee for the last 12 years.

When a person of that stature is slapped with a monetary fine by the sport's world governing body, and the decision is made public

through channels all across the globe, it is a matter of great shame, not only for the country's football but also for the country itself.

Murshedy has since sent a press release to the media claiming that two of the three charges FIFA investigated him for were dismissed while the other one, for which he has been fined, was proven only because he was a signatory to all finance-related documents for being the chief of finance committee. The former footballer, elsewhere, claimed to a media that he has been a victim of signature forgery.

"Until and unless I've seen the paper of approval from FIFA or AFC attached for a specific fund, I do not sign the document. If they [involved BFF officials] use my scanned signature, how would I know it?" asked the footballer-turned-administrator.

Whether his claims are valid or not cannot probably be proven in court. What is proven, though, is the fact that he has been found liable in the malpractices that had taken place in his office, bearing his signature. Should he get away with sweeping the dirt under the rug?

## SHORT CORNER

### Barcelona sack Xavi with Flick tipped as replacement

Barcelona sacked coach Xavi Hernandez on Friday after the Catalan giants failed to win a trophy this season but just weeks since he and club president Joan Laporta agreed he would stay in the post. Xavi will take charge of the team's final La Liga match on Sunday at Sevilla before departing. Former Bayern Munich and Germany coach Hansi Flick is heavily tipped to replace Xavi.

### Will Xabi's men get their rhythm back?

Bundesliga winners Bayer Leverkusen face second-division Kaiserslautern in Saturday's German Cup final licking their wounds after a first loss in almost a year. Xabi Alonso's side were thoroughly outclassed in a 3-0 loss to Atalanta in the Europa League final on Wednesday, their first defeat in any competition since May 2023 – a record run of 51 games.

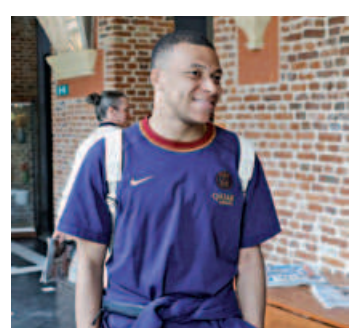
### Ranieri retires after 37 years in management

Claudio Ranieri, who famously led Leicester City to a shock Premier League title in 2016, has announced his retirement from football at the age of 72. The Italian's last match as a manager was Cagliari's 3-2 home defeat to Fiorentina on Thursday, where he received a rousing ovation from fans at the Sardegna Arena as well as a guard of honour from his players.

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PHOTO: X



[Inset] PSG star Kylian Mbappe will bring the curtain down on his career in Paris with the chance to add to his silverware as the Parisians take on Lyon in the final of the French Cup in Lille on Saturday. It will be Mbappe's 308th and final appearance for his hometown club, for whom he signed in August 2017 from Monaco in a 180 million-euro deal. Meanwhile, German midfielder Toni Kroos is set to feature in his final home game for LaLiga champions Real Madrid who host Real Betis in their league fixture of the season. The four-time LaLiga winner will get to add to his 464 appearances for Los Blancos who will face Borussia Dortmund in the Champions League final on June 1.

# Ten Hag faces judgement day as City eye history

AGENCIES

Manchester United manager Erik ten Hag hopes to bolster his chances of avoiding the sack by ruining Manchester City's history bid in the FA Cup final on Saturday.

United finished eighth in the Premier League – their lowest position in the league since 1990 – and failed even to make it out of the Champions League group stage.

Ten Hag's hopes of staying at United into a third season would be improved if they can spoil City's bid to become the first English club to win both the Premier League and FA Cup two years in a row.

"I came here to win trophies," Ten Hag said. "I'm just focusing on the job I have to do. That is first to win the game on Saturday and then keep going in the project."

On the other hand, City will be looking to follow up their own treble last season with a double.

For the second season in succession, United stand in the way of City and another landmark triumph.

Only eight clubs in English history have won the league title and FA Cup in the same season, United managing it three times during their pomp.

Last season United gave City a run for their money despite conceding a goal to Ilkay Gundogan inside 15 seconds, Erik

- Manchester City have the chance to beat city rivals Manchester United three times in one season for the very first time.
- City have won six and lost just one of their last seven meetings in all competitions against United. The Red Devils, however, have won five of their last seven FA Cup games against the Citizens.
- City's Phil Foden netted six times in his last five appearances against United, the second-most he has scored against a particular opposition as he boasts eight goals against Brighton.
- No player has assisted more goals in FA Cup finals than City's Kevin De Bruyne (3). He set Gabriel Jesus in 2019 and both of Ilkay Gundogan's strikes last season against United.

Ten Hag's side eventually losing 2-1.

This season, City have again looked untouchable, United have regressed, finishing 31 points behind Pep Guardiola's side, having scored 39 fewer goals and conceding 24 more.

United also showed their vulnerability as they slip a 3-0 lead in the semifinal against second-tier Coventry City before

winning on penalties to ensure the same two clubs contest the FA Cup final two years in a row for the first time since 1885.

With speculation swirling about Ten Hag's future, Saturday's showdown could turn out to be his last hurrah, even if the Dutchman does pull off a masterstroke and add the FA Cup to the League Cup he won his first season in charge.