

# BCB in observation mood as nat’l camp gets held up

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Cricket Board’s (BCB) cricket operations chairman Jalal Yunus on Saturday said the board is currently observing the ongoing countrywide unrest and is optimistic about holding the national team’s scheduled camp in Chattogram once the situation improves.

“The plan remains the same. We are observing the whole situation. We don’t know how long the curfew will continue. Let’s see what happens,” Jalal told The Daily Star yesterday.

The Bangladesh team was scheduled to begin their preparation camp today in Chattogram ahead of their two-match Test series against Pakistan next month.

Several members of the national team were expected to travel to Chattogram on Saturday for the preparation camp, however, due to the current situation, they had to postpone their flight.

“We have delayed our travel plan to Chattogram. We were supposed to fly today [Saturday]. But it was postponed. We are closely following the direction of the government. We will act accordingly,” said cricket operations manager Shahriar Nafees.

During the scheduled camp, the Tigers are expected to play two practice matches on July 23 and 29 respectively before flying to Pakistan mid-August for the Test series, which are part of the ICC Test Championship.

Jalal said that the BCB is still optimistic about holding those matches but they are giving top priority to players’ safety.

Jalal informed that some of the national team’s foreign coaching staff are already in Dhaka following their vacation post the ICC T20 World Cup and the board is expecting the others to join them soon.

“David Hemp [batting coach] and Andre Adams [fast bowling coach] have already arrived in Dhaka. The rest of the foreign coaching staff are expected to arrive within a few days. There were some flight disturbances for a Microsoft complication. Hopefully, we will learn about their arrival dates very soon.”

The first Test in Rawalpindi will take place on August 21-25 while Karachi will host the second Test on August 30-September 3.

Meanwhile, the BCB had to cancel two scheduled white ball matches between the High Performance Unit and Bangladesh Tigers at the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium in Chattogram on July 19 and 20 respectively due to the ongoing unrest.



## ‘We are competing in Olympics as token participation’

SPORTS REPORTER

Swimmer Sonia Khatun, who will represent Bangladesh in the forthcoming Paris Olympics through a wildcard, said she was unhappy with her preparation for the mega event and criticised the prevailing culture in the country’s athletics of taking part in the Olympics just to make up the numbers.

“Considering the magnitude of the Paris Olympics, my preparation is not good enough,” Sonia told The Daily Star on the eve of her departure to Paris.

“I have been training at the BKSP for the last two months whereas other swimmers across the world began their preparation for the Paris Olympic Games right after the Tokyo Olympics,” she added.

The 25-year-old swimmer feels that there is no point in Bangladesh continuing to send athletes for the Olympics if the federations and other relevant sports bodies do not invest in athletes and aim to win medals.

“We are taking part in the Olympics as token participation. We feel really sad when we produce poor timings and don’t win any medals. I think we should not participate in the Olympics just for the sake of it.

“If we want to develop our sports, we need to undertake proper planning and also require strong financial backing. We should set a goal and then design the training and other related things to

achieve it.”

In the last nine editions, since the 1988 Sydney Olympics, Bangladesh have always participated in the swimming discipline in the Games through wildcards, but haven’t achieved anything of note.

Sonia, the national record holder in 100m butterfly event, is set to become the fourth female swimmer after Doli Akter, Sonia Akter and Junayna Ahmed to represent Bangladesh in the Olympics.

The Bangladesh Navy swimmer will compete in the 50m freestyle event, where her current best timing is 30.11 seconds, which she set during the Hangzhou Asian Games in China last year.

The Bangladesh Navy swimmer spoke how competing in the Olympics will be a dream come true for her but her underwhelming preparation for the biggest sports extravaganza in the world has somewhat dampened her enthusiasm.

“Of course, like all other athletes, I always dreamed of competing at the Olympics. Despite this lack of preparation, I am optimistic about giving my best and surpassing my previous best timing.”

Sonia, whose journey in swimming began in 2013 after getting admitted at the BKSP, prefers butterfly and freestyle events but will have to compete in the 50m freestyle event in Paris, in which Bangladesh’s three-time Olympian Doli Akter (30.72 and 30.23 seconds), Sonia Akter (29.99 seconds) and Junayna Ahmed (29.78) had competed in the past.

# Cricketers uncertain about away tours

SPORTS REPORTER

Several cricketers are dealing with uncertainty regarding their upcoming tours abroad due to the country’s ongoing political unrest.

While the red-ball team of High Performance (HP) Unit are already in Australia – currently facing Pakistan Shaheens in the first of two four-day matches – the white-ball squad is expected to fly to Australia on July 27 for two one-dayers and a T20 tournament, involving Pakistan Shaheens and Big Bash teams.

HP’s white-ball preparation had taken a blow as their last two practice matches against Bangladesh Tigers had to be cancelled, and it appears that most of them could likely be forced to stay in Chattogram if the nation-wide curfew, enforced yesterday, is extended.

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“We were scheduled to travel to Dhaka on July 23. I don’t know when we will be able to fly to Australia.”

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Australia,” Afif Hossain, who is set to lead HP team in Australia during the one-day series and is also part of the T20 squad, told The Daily Star yesterday.

Meanwhile, all-rounder Mohammad Saifuddin, who was picked by Montreal Tigers in upcoming Global T20 Canada, scheduled to start on July 25, informed he is yet to get visa for Canada.

“I came to my home in Feni two days ago. As far as I know, everyone’s visa issues are ongoing. It’s not sure [about him playing in Global T20 Canada],” said Saifuddin, who was in Chattogram with Bangla Tigers.

Saifuddin aside, Shoriful Islam and Shakib Al Hasan will represent Bangla Tigers Mississauga and Rishad Hossain will feature for Toronto Nationals in the franchise tournament. Shakib, who is currently representing Los Angeles Knight Riders in the ongoing Major League Cricket in the USA, is expected to fly to Canada after the tournament ends.

# NEWS

## Heatwave poses big challenge for Greece’s workers

REUTERS, Athens

Yannis Asimakopoulos has worked as a food delivery driver in Athens for 17 years and cannot recall a hotter summer as a new heatwave gripped Greece this week.

Authorities shut all archaeological sites in Athens for a second consecutive day on Thursday and restricted outdoor work as the country sizzled under its second heatwave of the summer.

Thermal cameras have recorded temperatures of about 70 Celsius (158 Fahrenheit) on the road surface, but delivery drivers on their scooters are still needed.

“Driving is really hard. You have to wear a helmet, the lens of the helmet fogs up from the sweat. You have to stop all the time, the tyres melt faster, the street is slippery, the conditions in general are really difficult,” Asimakopoulos said after the end of his shift at noon.

“Every year I see a huge difference in the temperature. I see a rise and it lasts longer. Before it was two or three days,” he added.

As with many countries in Europe, Greece has repeatedly seen high temperatures disrupt daily activities since June, and hundreds of wildfires

have broken out following the warmest winter on record that scientists link to global climate change.

This year Greece recorded its warmest-ever winter. June was also the hottest on record and the current heatwave is forecast to be the country’s longest ever, said Kostas Lagouvardos, research director of the national observatory.

The government has ordered some businesses not to let their employees perform heavy outdoor duty from midday until 5 pm (0900 GMT to 1400 GMT) this week as the mercury is expected to reach 42 Celsius (105.8 Fahrenheit) in parts of the country.

For many delivery workers, that is not an option, Asimakopoulos said.

“Many people... who need more money for their families will continue to work, and the employers will exploit this.” More than 20,000 drivers deliver food, beverages and other goods in Athens. Their unions are demanding the restriction in working hours to apply when temperature reaches 38 Celsius (100.4 Fahrenheit), not 40 or higher.

In some areas, even the lowest temperature recorded was already 30 degrees Celsius, increasing the impact of heat stress on humans, Lagouvardos said, adding: “There is no hour in the day to feel better.”

## Restore internet now

FROM PAGE 8

Editors’ Council is urging the government to quickly resume the internet service all over the country, the statement added.

The statement was issued on Friday. However, due to a technical glitch, this portion, which was in our yesterday’s report titled “Lives upended by internet shutdown”, got dropped. We regret the error.

## Mindless destruction leaves them in ruins

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However, when they could not break the shutter on the first floor, they smashed the window glasses to get into the station.

They vandalised ticket counters, vending machines, fire extinguishers, TV screens, CCTV cameras and each and every room on the floor, the official said, wishing anonymity.

They even tried to break open the ticket vending machines to loot money, he said.

“It seems the attackers had a personal grudge against the metro rail...,” he said.

Replying to a question, he said it would take some time to replace all these equipment and fix the rooms. For example, he said, they have to set up vending machines, which have to be customised as per our usability.

“Besides, all these sophisticated equipment need to be replaced. We also have to carry out trials before starting operations in the stations,” he said.

Mass Rapid Transit Line-6, the country’s first metro rail line, was made partially operational from Uttara to Agargaon in December 2022. The Agargaon Motijheel section opened for service in October last year.

The government is implementing a Tk 33,472 crore project to build the 21.26km line from Uttara to Kamalapur, with most of the fund coming from Japan as loan.

## SC hears today pleas against HC verdict

FROM PAGE 8

keep the provision of quotas in public service, and the court cannot interfere in this decision.

On July 18, Justice M Enayetur Rahim, chamber judge of the Appellate Division, fixed today as the date for the hearing at its full bench led by the chief justice.

He passed the order after Attorney General AM Amin Uddin appealed for an early hearing of the petitions considering those as an important and urgent matter.

Following a writ petition, the HC on June 5 this year declared illegal the circular, issued by the public administration ministry on October 4, 2018, which cancelled the quota system in government jobs.

The circular said that in the case of direct recruitment to the posts of 9th grade (formerly class 1) and 10th

to 13th grades (formerly class 2), the appointments should be made based on merit.

The HC in the full text of its judgement, released on July 14, also directed the government to restore and maintain the quotas for freedom fighters’ children, districts, women, physically challenged people, tribes, minor races, and ethnic groups and others, if any, and to publish a notification in this regard as soon as possible, preferably within three months, from the date of receipt of the order.

The court, however, said the government can change, reduce or increase the ratio or percentage of the quotas in public jobs, if necessary, and can fill the vacant posts from the merit list if any quota in government recruitment is not fulfilled.

Protesting the HC judgment on June 5, students staged demonstrations

at different educational institutions, including Dhaka University. They took to the streets on July 1, demanding the reinstatement of the 2018 circular.

Students intensified their protests across the country since July 4 as the Appellate Division did not stay the HC verdict following a government petition.

Amid the situation, the government and two DU students moved two petitions before the Appellate Division seeking stay on the HC verdict.

Following their petitions, the Appellate Division on July 10 directed the authorities concerned to maintain the status quo regarding the subject matter of the case till filing of civil petitions for leave to appeal.

“The impugned judgement of the High Court shall remain inoperative till that period,” the Appellate Division said in the full text of its order.

## N Korea launching more trash balloons

Says Seoul military

AFP, Seoul

North Korea is launching more balloons believed to be carrying trash towards the South, Seoul’s military said Thursday, in the latest round of a tit-for-tat balloon war between the two Koreas.

Seoul’s Joint Chiefs of Staff said the North was “launching (suspected) trash balloons aimed at the South once again”, adding they were currently floating across the border.

“Citizens are advised to be cautious of falling debris. If you find any fallen balloons do not touch them and report them to the nearest military unit or police station,” it added.

Seoul city authorities issued an alert to residents Thursday, saying “a suspected balloon from North Korea is confirmed to have entered the airspace of Northern Gyeonggi province. Citizens should be cautious of outside activities.” This is the eighth round of trash-carrying balloons launched by Pyongyang since late May.

The nuclear-armed North has already sent more than a thousand of the balloons south, calling it retaliation for ones carrying anti-regime propaganda floated northwards by activists south of the border.

## Israel’s occupation

FROM PAGE 8

Hamas even as demands grow for him to reach a deal that would free hostages.

According to the Gaza health ministry, more than 38,919 Palestinians have been killed and nearly 90,000 people have been injured in the Israeli military offensive in Gaza since October 7.

All health facilities in southern Gaza have been pushed to “breaking point” due to an influx of people wounded by Israeli bombardments, the International Committee of the Red Cross said.

Washington has been pushing for a truce deal between Israel and Hamas

since President Joe Biden released details of what he said was an Israeli ceasefire roadmap on May 31.

But despite the efforts of Egyptian and Qatari mediators, indirect negotiations between the foes have not yet led to a final deal. Biden last week said there were “still gaps to close” but progress was being made.

Meanwhile, a drone attack on Israeli land injured several people on Friday night. The Israeli military said they detected the Iran-made drone beforehand but could not shoot it down due to human error.

Houthi movement in Yemen claimed responsibility for the attack.