

## Shakib stays, Taskin returns for Pakistan tour

SPORTS REPORTER

Ace all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan was called up and pacer Taskin Ahmed returned to the Test fold after over one year's gap as Bangladesh named a 16 member squad for the upcoming two-Test series against Pakistan, scheduled to begin on August 21 in Rawalpindi.

Many fans on social media were vocal against Shakib and called for his ouster from the team following his silence during the students protests. However, the selectors decided to choose the 37-year-old for the tour.

"The emphasis was on picking our best players for this version. This is a well-balanced squad," chief selector Gazi Ashraf Hossain Lipu



was quoted in a press release yesterday.

Shakib, who recently played in the Global T20 league in Canada, is expected to join the side directly in Pakistan ahead of the series.

Meanwhile, Taskin returns to red-ball cricket after having asked to opt out of Test assignments in February for the remainder of 2024 to manage his workload following a shoulder injury.

However, the right-arm pacer has been named only for the second Test in Karachi, starting on August 30, as the selectors first want to test the pacer's mettle in red-ball cricket in Bangladesh 'A' team's second four-day game against Pakistan 'A', beginning on August 20 in Islamabad.

"We have selected five pacers mindful of the

fact that Taskin will only play the second Test. He hasn't bowled in a Test since June last year [against Afghanistan] and we have decided to include him in the 'A' Team for the second four-day game against Pakistan 'A' to get him into the rhythm for longer version matches.

"Our attack has variety with bowlers who can bowl fast and also swing the ball and I am really looking forward to seeing them perform against world class batsmen," Lipu said.

Mushfiqur Rahim, who missed the last Test series against Sri Lanka at home due to a fracture on his right thumb, returned to the Test side and has already departed for Pakistan to play the first four-day game for Bangladesh 'A' from August 13.

Shahadat Hossain Dipu and Mushfik Hasan missed the cut from the last Test series.

Despite Bangladesh's poor record in Pakistan, Lipu was hopeful that this group of players can bring success.

"Pakistan are very tough opponents, especially in their home front and it will be a challenging tour for us. It is good that we will get additional time to prepare in Lahore. Also, some players who are in Pakistan already with the Bangladesh 'A' side, will join the national team for the Test series. Their experience of the conditions should come in handy."

## No headway yet on Women's T20 WC hosting

SPORTS REPORTER

Asif Mahmud, the Youth and Sports Adviser of Bangladesh's newly formed interim government, informed the ministry will "address state-level matters" with both the Chief Adviser to the interim government, Prof. Muhammad Yunus, and seek guidance from the United Nations to facilitate the hosting of the upcoming Women's T20 World Cup.

Mahmud took office for the first time yesterday and met with Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) officials before addressing the media.

"We have talked to BCB about the Women's T20 World Cup. The most important thing is ensuring security, and to achieve that, there are state-level matters that need to be addressed," Mahmud told reporters at the Secretariat yesterday.

"We will have detailed discussions with Prof. Yunus. He is a sports-loving person, and of course, he will assist us and ensure security at the state level. We will also consult with the UN regarding their suggestions, as there are travel restrictions for a few countries," added the 26-year-old.

The International Cricket Council (ICC)

has been monitoring the situation in Bangladesh following mass protests in the country that eventually led to the fall of the Awami League government.

Bangladesh is scheduled to host the mega event from October 3 to October 20, but there are significant concerns about security following weeks of unrest. In case the tournament needs to be relocated, ICC is reportedly considering alternative options, with India, UAE and Sri Lanka being the likely candidates.

The Youth and Sports Adviser has also asked BCB – in presence of its Chief Executive Nizamuddin Chowdhury, along with seven directors – to explore the possibility of appointing an interim board president under ICC's framework, given that BCB President Nazmul Hassan is currently absent.

Mahmud further informed, "For a federation to function effectively, all of its organs need to operate. The president holds an important responsibility. However, the BCB is an autonomous federation, and we cannot impose decisions on it but can exchange suggestions.

"We want to make the necessary changes, but at the same time, we need to follow due process."



## 'HOW IS THIS POSSIBLE?'

REUTERS, Paris

Dutchwoman Sifan Hassan sprinted through the finish of the marathon and straight into the pantheon of Olympic greats on Sunday, completing her astonishing Olympic agenda with a gold medal after taking bronze in both the 5,000 and 10,000 metres.

A hundred years on from Paavo Nurmi's five golds in Paris, the 2024 Games got the athletics hero they had been waiting for in Hassan, who became the first since Czech Emil Zatopek in 1952 to medal in those three events.

"Every moment in the race I was regretting that I ran the 5000m and 10,000m. I was telling myself if I hadn't done that, I would feel great today," she said.

"From the beginning to the end, it was so hard. Every step of the way. I was thinking, 'Why did I do that? What is wrong with me?' If I hadn't done it, I would feel so

Rank	Teams	Gold	Silver	Bronze	Total
1	USA	40	44	42	126
2	China	40	27	24	91
3	Japan	20	12	13	45
4	Australia	18	19	16	53
5	France	16	26	22	64
6	Netherlands	15	7	12	34
7	Great Britain	14	22	29	65
8	Republic of Korea	13	9	10	32
9	Italy	12	13	15	40
10	Germany	12	13	8	33

comfortable here."

Hassan stunned fans three years ago when she attempted a rare Olympic treble in the 1,500m, 5,000m and 10,000m – taking bronze in the shorter distance and winning the two longer races.

She earned headlines again this time around, signing up for those three events as well as the marathon for Paris.

Throng of reporters tuned in to hear her announce which she would actually run, with few predicting she would really try the gruelling distance road run on top of the two longer track events.

"For anyone else this would be insane," retired sprint legend Michael Johnson declared. But not for Hassan, who has built a reputation as one of her sport's toughest fighters.

And 36 hours after the 10,000m wrapped up across town at the Stade de France, Hassan was on the starting line,

becoming the first woman to attempt all three – and admitted she was scared to try it.

She battled with Tigst Assefa of Ethiopia and managed to shake her off in the last stretch, crossing the finish line in an Olympic record time of two hours, 22 minutes and 55 seconds.

All told, the two-time marathon major winner raced a total of 62.2 kilometres (38.65 miles) in Paris.

"When I finished, the whole moment was a release. It is unbelievable. I have never experienced anything like that. Even the other marathons I have run were not close to this," she told reporters.

"I couldn't stop celebrating. I was feeling dizzy. I wanted to lie down. Then I thought, 'I am the Olympic champion. How is this possible?'"

Hassan's outstanding grit has won over not only fans, but her rivals, too.

"She's just awesome. Who can do that? Who can come from track and win the marathon?" said Kenya's Sharon Lokedi, who finished fourth.

"I feel like I just want to be her."



## LeBron 'super humbled' by third gold

AFP, Paris

LeBron James said his third Olympic gold felt the best of them all as the NBA's all-time leading points scorer helped the United States beat France 98-87 in the final on Saturday.

The Los Angeles Lakers superstar returned to the Olympics after a 12-year absence, notching 14 points, 10 rebounds and six assists as Team USA held off a battling France to make it five successive men's basketball golds.

"It's a big moment for USA basketball," said James. "I'm just living in the moment. I feel super humbled that I can still play this game and play it at a high level, play with 11 other great players, and a great coaching staff go out and do it for our country."

The US beat France for the second Olympic final in a row, with James back in the squad and four-time NBA champion Stephen Curry making his tournament debut.

"It was great. I think you wouldn't want it any other way to be able to face off against the host team. It was a great atmosphere," said James.

The 39-year-old won bronze as a teenager at Athens 2004 and was part of the "Redeem Team" four years later that took gold in Beijing. James appeared again at London 2012 but had not played at the Games since.

"It's the best one because it's the one that's right now," said James, suggesting it would be his final Olympics.

"I can't see myself playing in LA (in 2028). Although I also didn't see myself playing in Paris. But four years from now, I can't see it," he said.

## Resignation of BFF's Salahuddin, Kiron demanded

SPORTS REPORTER

Defying inclement weather, members of Bangladeshi Football Ultras (BFU), a fan group of Bangladesh football, gathered at the Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) headquarter in Arambagh yesterday, demanding the immediate resignation of BFF president Kazi Salahuddin and women's committee chairperson Mahfuza Akter Kiron.

Approximately 50 BFU members turned up as part of their 'March to BFF' programme braving the rain, chanting different slogans.

BFU has been campaigning for the resignations of Salahuddin, Kiron and senior vice president Abdus Salam Mursedy, who stepped down on Thursday soon after the resignation of former prime minister Sheikh Hasina in the face of vigorous protests.

BFU members now want Salahuddin and Kiron to follow Mursedy's footsteps and exit the federation.

"I want him [Salahuddin] to willingly resign from his post like Abdus Salam

Mursedy," said BFU general secretary Mehedi Hasan Ovi in front of the main gate of the BFF House yesterday.

"Kiron time and again threatened the women's footballers and she is using the sentiments for the women's footballers to accumulate wealth for herself. We demand Kiron's resignation as well.

"They are trying to tag us as extremists, dangerous for football. But we are ready to counter the dirty games Salahuddin is playing, whom we respect as a legendary footballer but he has been a failure as an organiser," he added.

Though the BFU demanded the resignation of only Salahuddin and Kiron, former footballer and coach Shafiqul Islam Manik thinks the entire BFF executive committee needs to step down.

"I think the whole BFF executive committee should resign because no one can avoid their responsibility for the failure of the country's football," said Manik, who had once contested for the BFF president post.

Manik also added that every party should be wary of FIFA's regulations over government interference in football federations, a sentiment echoed by former footballer and coach Hasanuzzaman Khan Bablu. "I think change in a systematic

way is better because there is a FIFA binding. FIFA had suspended Bangladesh in 2001 after interference of the then government. We should not do anything that forces FIFA to ban Bangladesh," Bablu said.

"I think the interim government will form a dynamic leadership in a systematic way as the BFF election is approaching close."

Although the next BFF election set to take place in October, former footballer Ashraf Uddin Ahmed Chunnunna thinks, "The entire BFF committee should resign before the election because it is a demand of the time."

Adviser of the youth and sports ministry in the interim government Asif Mahmud Sajib Bhuiyan has yet to comment on the matter but reiterated that the current government is determined to bring a systematic change everywhere.

"We want to reform the entire country. This reform is not about changing an individual from a position. We want to change the system."



Serbia players and coaching staff celebrate their 13-11 victory over Balkan rivals Croatia in the final of men's water polo on the last day of Paris Olympics at the La Defense Arena yesterday. The win extended Serbia's reign over the sport with a third successive gold medal. PHOTO: REUTERS

