

"I'd find it hard to fathom playing [the Women's World Cup] there [in Bangladesh] at the moment, as a human being, I feel like it might be the wrong thing to do... but I'll leave it to the ICC to work out."

Australia women's cricket captain Alyssa Healy



## BCB in flux as key ICC meeting approaches

SPORTS REPORTER

There was plenty of activity in Bangladesh cricket yesterday, and while this will influence how the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) is run, the focus will be on today's ICC virtual meeting, where the decision on whether Bangladesh will be able to host the upcoming Women's T20 World Cup will be made.

While the Youth and Sports Adviser, Asif Mahmud, visited the BCB headquarters for the first time, the highlight of the day was the resignation of board director and cricket operations chairman Jalal Yunus, which signalled significant developments in store.

The BCB's modus operandi has garnered interest ever since the fall of the Awami League government on August 5, which saw many board directors go into hiding, including its president, Nazmul Hassan Papon.

Although there were suggestions from various quarters that the BCB directors might resign altogether, the National Sports Council (NSC) route was ultimately chosen to keep the board functional.

The NSC has five councillors and nominated two board directors, Jalal Yunus and Ahmed Sajjadul Alam Bobby, in the BCB's 25-member board of directors. Eventually, Yunus resigned from his directorship role under the NSC quota. "I have resigned as director for the greater good of cricket," Jalal told The Daily Star yesterday.

However, Bobby informed The Daily Star that he will not follow Yunus's lead, having received a call from NSC secretary Aminul Islam earlier on Monday.

"The secretary called me in the morning. He said that I would have to resign from both the councillorship and directorship. I told him that the NSC nominated me as a Councillor for four years, and by that equation, I am a director. So they should decide what they want to do with this Councillorship and Directorship and then inform me of their decision," Sajjadul said.

According to BCB constitution, a councillor can only be ineligible for nomination or remain a member if the person has been convicted or declared bankrupt by a court or found to be mentally ill. Regarding the matter, The Daily Star attempted to contact NSC secretary Aminul but he did not pick up his phone.

Meanwhile, with the BCB president missing, questions have been raised about who will attend the ICC's virtual meeting on the board's behalf. "The meeting will be attended by the existing members of the board," BCB CEO Nizamuddin Chowdhury said at a press conference yesterday, adding that the ICC's communications about the BCB's World Cup arrangements so far have been positive.

It is expected that Nizamuddin and another senior board director, Mahub Anam, will attend the ICC meeting.



Former Bangladesh captain Tamim Iqbal and BCB CEO Nizamuddin Chowdhury show Asif Mahmud, the adviser of Youth and Sports Ministry of the interim government, around inside the Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium in Mirpur yesterday. It was Mahmud's first visit to Bangladesh's home of cricket since taking charge of the ministry. When asked in which capacity was Tamim accompanying the sports adviser, Nizamuddin said he did not know.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

## We have all our bases covered against Pakistan, SAYS HATHURUSINGHA

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh head coach Chandika Hathurusingha feels that his side is ready to face any challenge thrown at them by their Pakistani counterparts in the first Test of the two-match series set to take place at the Rawalpindi Cricket Stadium, starting Wednesday.

In a bold move, Pakistan named their playing XI for the opening Test yesterday, two days before the match begins, where they picked four pacers - Shaheen Shah Afridi, Naseem Shah, Khuram Shahzad and Mohammad Ali - alongside seven genuine batters.

Bangladesh have packed five pacers in their 16-member squad, of which four will be available for the first Test as Taskin Ahmed is in the squad only for the second Test.

Pacers Khaled Ahmed, Nahid Rana, Hasan Mahmud and Shoriful Islam are available for selection and the Tigers also have two spin-bowling all-rounders in Shakib Al Hasan and Mehedi Hasan Miraz, which emboldened Hathurusingha to claim that they have 'all bases covered'.

"The Pindi pitch looks more favourable for fast bowling and batting. They [Pakistan] also didn't pick any spinners," Hathurusingha told reporters during a press conference in Rawalpindi yesterday.

"Lately, we have developed a lot of good fast bowlers in our rank as well. If the condition favours, they will do well. Shakib



Al Hasan and Miraz are two world-class allrounders. We have all our bases covered for whatever they throw at us," he added.

Batting department has been a real concern for Bangladesh for quite a long time and when it comes to the longest format, their performance has been especially poor.

Bangladesh could not go past the 200-run mark in five of their last eight innings in Tests. They went past the 300-run mark thrice with a highest total of 338 runs against New Zealand in November last year in Sylhet.

"Batting has been a concern for a while, but not for one reason. We play in result-oriented wickets back home. Sometimes 250 is a winning score in those pitches. Obviously when you play on these pitches, the batters have a tough time.

"The pitches in Pakistan generally favour batting. It is a good contest between

bat and ball. We will show better results on these pitches," he said, adding that Shakib is doing well with his batting despite his recent struggle with an eye problem.

"He is actually batting well. He has looked fitter. He has done some eye testing as well. He is saying that it helped him with the problem he had," said the Sri Lankan.

Meanwhile, Hathurusingha claimed that spin-bowling coach Mushtaq Ahmed has gelled really well with the group and the players are taking his advice not only on bowling but also about other sectors as well.

**"I don't know what's happening back home. I have signed a contract till whatever the date [February 2025]. I am looking forward to serve the term. If the board changes, and the new people want to make a change, I am okay with that. If they want to continue with me, I am happy to continue."**

"I know Mushy. We met in 1988. That's how old we are. He has fitted into the coaching group really well. He has a lot of experience working with England and Pakistan. He has a lot of local knowledge and experience from other parts of the world. Not just bowling, we take his advice in certain decisions."

## Women's NCL to start from August 24

SPORTS REPORTER

The National Women's Cricket League, which will be held in T20 format keeping the upcoming ICC Women's T20 World Cup in mind, will get underway on August 24 at two different venues in Rajshahi.

The league was originally scheduled to start on August 19 but due to the political crisis in the country, it was deferred by five days. Now the eight-team event will be held at the Shaheed Kamruzzaman Stadium and Bangla Trac Cricket Academy venue.

According to a BCB women's wing official, the players will travel to Rajshahi on August 22 before attending a training session on the following day.

The tournament will be held in round-robin league system and there will be a rest day after two rounds. Four matches will be held in two venues on each match day. The last league matches will be held on September 2.

The women's NCL will be the last preparatory tournament for the Tigresses ahead of the ninth edition of the ICC Women's T20 World Cup, scheduled to start on October 3 in Bangladesh. However, the recent unrest and the subsequent fall of the Awami League government on August 5 has put a serious question mark over the fate of Bangladesh hosting the mega event.

## Cameroonian club field only eight players in continental tie

AFP, Johannesburg

Cameroon club Fovu Baham fielded only eight players in a CAF Confederation Cup qualifier on Sunday and suffered a 4-0 loss away to Paynesville of Liberia.

A Confederation of African Football official told AFP that "only eight of the Fovu players who travelled to Monrovia were registered to play in the competition".

It was not immediately known why the Cameroonian outfit did not take at least 11 eligible players to Liberia for the first round, first leg so they could field a full strength side.

Playing with a goalkeeper and seven outfield players, Baham were no match for the hosts, who scored twice in each half to build a convincing aggregate lead before the August 25 second leg.

Mark Paye netted in each half for African debutants Paynesville, whose other goals came from Lawrence Kumeh and Dean Weah.

The failure of Fovu to field 11 players came 24 hours after another unusual incident in the African equivalent of the UEFA Europa League.

AS Otho from Congo Brazzaville travelled to Equatorial Guinea for a fixture against 15 de Agosto only for the match to be called off because the match venue was staging a concert.

CAF reacted by ordering both legs to be played in the Congo with the first on August 25 and the second three days later.

Nsoatreman of Ghana were another west African club to win convincingly at home as two goals from Mohammed Abdul Rahaman and one from Meider Kwabena earned a 3-0 win over Elect Sport of Chad.

## U-20s set sights on semis in SAFF opener

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh are eager to make a strong start in the SAFF U-20 Championship as they face Sri Lanka in a Group A fixture at the ANFA Complex in Nepal today.

The match is set to kick off at 3:15 pm (Bangladesh time).

Bangladesh are still seeking their first title in this competition, having finished as runners-up three times in last five editions. In the previous edition, however, the boys in red and green were eliminated in the group stage after losses to India and Bhutan.

With Sri Lanka suffering a 1-0 defeat to hosts Nepal in their campaign opener, a winning start for Bangladesh will secure them a place in the semifinals before they face Nepal.

The team, under the guidance of coach Maruful Haque, are optimistic about overcoming the island nation - a team they defeated twice in the 2019 and 2022 editions of the competition.

"We are not taking Sri Lanka lightly as they

are good opponents, but we are hopeful of leaving the ground with a victory if the players can execute the coach's plan and remember their responsibilities on the field," said captain and goalkeeper Mehedi Hasan Srabon in an audio message provided by Bangladesh Football Federation after the practice session.

Srabon, who is also the second-choice goalkeeper for the senior side, believes their mission will be only half done if they can beat Sri Lanka today.

UEFA A licenced coach Maruful had nearly two weeks of preparation with his charges, most of whom have experience playing in the country's top-flight football league.

"Before coming to Nepal, we stated that our goal is to play in the final. I believe the boys are on the right track with the hard work, dedication, and sacrifices they have shown in training.

"We have analysed Sri Lanka's strengths and weaknesses and prepared our game plan accordingly. Playing in the final and winning the title is always a challenge, so the first match is very important," said Maruful, who has also coached the Bangladesh national team.



Manchester City's Norwegian striker Erling Haaland (R) celebrates his team's first goal against Chelsea in their first match of the English Premier League season at Stamford Bridge on Sunday. It was Haaland's 91st goal in his 100th appearance for the English champions. Mateo Kovacic later added another as the Citizens won the match 2-0.

PHOTO: AFP