

U-20 footballers pay tribute to martyrs

Bangladesh's young footballers dedicated their first goal against Sri Lanka in their first match of the SAFF U-20 Championship in Kathmandu yesterday to the martyrs of the student protesters, who laid down their lives during the recent quota movement which eventually culminated in the ouster of the Sheikh Hasina-government. Mirajul Islam scored the opening goal of the game in the 17th minute of the match, and soon pulled on a t-shirt over his jersey with the words: "In memory of Mughdho and Abu Sayed; Remember the fight and the bloodshed for our country." Piash Ahmed Nova later scored a second goal late in the second half to wrap a comfortable victory for the young Bangladesh team, who picked this occasion to pay their respects to the fallen. Sayed and Mir Mughdho were two of the earliest martyrs of the movement, allegedly killed by rubber bullets fired by the police, in Rangpur and Dhaka, respectively.

PHOTO: BFF



BCB set for major shake-up

SPORTS REPORTER

The much-anticipated meeting of Bangladesh Cricket Board's (BCB) directors will take place at the Ministry of Youth and Sports today, where major decisions are likely to be made, including the resignation of long-standing board president Nazmul Hassan Papon.

Despite repeated attempts to contact CEO Nizamuddin Chowdhury -- who called the meeting on behalf of the BCB boss -- he could not be reached yesterday. However, BCB director and Game Development Committee chairman Khaled Mahmud Sujon later confirmed to The Daily Star that the meeting is scheduled to begin at 11:00 am.

"I think the decisions taken in the last board meeting and how to run the board will be discussed during the board meeting," Sujon informed.

Since the fall of the Awami League government following a student uprising on August 5, most of the BCB directors have gone into hiding, including the BCB president, leaving many positions inactive.

Papon, who is reportedly in London, is expected to join the meeting virtually alongside some other directors who also left the country, while others will attend the meeting in person.

According to the BCB constitution, if the board president resigns, the existing directors of the cricket board will decide on their next course of action to choose the next president from the directors' panel.

There has been discussion about the venue for the BCB board meeting, which is usually held at the BCB office or in hotels but will now take place at the ministry. It has been confirmed that no ministry officials will attend, as their participation contradicts the protocol.

"The Youth and Sports adviser [Asif Mahmud] isn't authorised to attend the meeting. If anyone pays a courtesy visit later after the meeting, that's a different matter," said a National Sports Council (NSC) official, adding that the adviser has urged BCB officials to follow constitutional procedures and has refrained from enforcing any decisions.

It has been learnt that NSC has already completed their framework ahead of the meeting, as they are set to nominate former national team captain Faruque Ahmed -- the frontrunner for the role of president -- and veteran coach Nazmul Abedeen Fahim as two of their directors on the board, replacing Jalal Yunus and Ahmed Sajjadul Alam Bobby.

While Yunus resigned from his position on Monday, Bobby has yet to step down; though both were asked to do so by NSC.

When contacted, Sajjadul told The Daily Star that he had not even received any notice about today's meeting. On the other hand, Fahim confirmed that he has recently been contacted by NSC officials and expressed his willingness to join BCB.

"They have contacted me recently, but until I receive a document, I can't confirm anything," said Fahim, who had contested in the BCB election in 2021 in Category C against former skipper Mahmud but lost.



Tigers out to prove a point

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh will be out to prove a point against Pakistan with an eye on improving on their past performances as the first match of the two-Test series against the hosts commences in Rawalpindi today.

Bangladesh have never beaten Pakistan in Tests, having played 13 Tests against them, losing 12 and managing only one draw in 2015 in Khulna.

The last time the Tigers played a Test in Rawalpindi was back in 2020, where they suffered an innings and 44-run loss.

Bangladesh captain Najmul Hossain Shanto, however, claimed the players are not feeling the burden of the poor record and are intent on breaking new ground in Pakistan.

"Records can be changed. It's not



Bangladesh are yet to win a Test against Pakistan. The Tigers have played 13 matches against Pakistan and have lost 12, managing to draw a solitary match at the Sheikh Abu Naser Stadium in Khulna in 2015.

» Babar Azam is 102 runs away from reaching 4000 Test runs.

» Amongst active players, Shakib Al Hasan has scored the most runs, 508 at an average of 63.5 in five matches, in Bangladesh-Pakistan Tests.

» Pakistan, currently sixth on the World Test Championships standings, have won two and lost three matches, while Bangladesh, with a solitary win and three losses, are eighth - one place ahead of bottom-placed West Indies.



Records can be changed. It's not going to be easy, but as I said we have a balanced side. We believe we can do some special things this time.

Bangladesh captain Najmul Hossain Shanto

We were sixth and seventh before [in the WTC], but we would like to play in the final this time. We have to win our home Tests.

Pakistan captain Shan Masood

going to be easy, but as I said we have a balanced side. We believe we can do some special things this time. The players are really excited to play here," Shanto said at the pre-match press conference yesterday.

The wickets in Rawalpindi have historically been batting friendly but the presence of four seamers in the Pakistan eleven, which was announced on Monday, suggests there will be some help available for the quicks.

On flat decks, batting becomes key in order to get a positive outcome but the lack of application from the batters' has been the biggest concern for the Tigers in red-ball format in recent times.

Unlike Pakistan, Bangladesh have chosen to employ the traditional way of announcing the playing eleven on the

day of the match after having a look at the wicket, said Shanto, and he also expressed optimism about his sides' chances against Pakistan.

"I felt we had a good series against New Zealand, we didn't play well against Sri Lanka. We have a good opportunity this time against Pakistan."

Bangladesh played on flat surfaces in the home series against Sri Lanka in March this year, but the batters looked out of their depths against the Lankan pacers' well planned attack in both Tests.

Inadequate preparation was argued as one of the key factors behind the batting debacle against Sri Lanka and although the bowlers have been doing well, Shanto knows the batters will have to come to the fore.

"We all know our batting hasn't been

good in the recent past. But we've had a good preparation this time. Players tried to prepare well in the time they had. Everyone has the belief that our batting unit will do well this time," Shanto said.

Veteran batter Mushfiqur Rahim is fit to play according to the skipper but all eyes would be on other veteran Shakib Al Hasan, who was a member of parliament from Awami League, which fell from power in the face of a student-led people's movement.

Shanto said that Shakib will be able to put politics behind and focus on cricket.

"He has played this game for so long so he knows his role, he knows how to prepare himself. I'm not thinking about his political career. I hope he will do something special in this series," Shanto said.

Pope ready to lead England his way

AFP, Manchester

Ollie Pope is prepared to "do his own thing" as England Test captain but accepts he is in caretaker charge of what is still effectively Ben Stokes' side.

Pope will become the 82nd man to take up the captaincy when he leads England out in the first Test against Sri Lanka at Old Trafford starting Wednesday.

The 26-year-old Surrey batter was promoted from vice-captain after Stokes was ruled out after suffering a torn hamstring playing in The Hundred.

Stokes is set to miss the three-match series against Sri Lanka. Pope's elevation caps a rapid rise for a cricketer who was not certain of his place when Stokes took charge two years ago alongside coach Brendon McCullum.

Stokes first led England in 2020, deputising for father-to-be Joe Root who left a message reading, "do it your own way".

Pope has no qualms about sticking with the basic 'Bazball' approach and will also be able to call directly on Stokes, who will be with the England squad for all three Tests.

"It's a great opportunity for me, one of the greatest honours in English cricket," Pope told

a pre-match press conference at Old Trafford on Tuesday. "But I think it's still Stokes's team."

"That's probably the difference. I've had no message in my locker but I'm sat next to him in the changing room!"

"It's going to be great to have him around. If I want to lean on him, I can lean on him and I think he's going to let me do my own thing for the course of this Test series as well."

"I've picked his brains a little bit on that moving forward. It's a lot of the same messages but from a different voice and in my own way."

"He's obviously going to be watching, chatting, so I can have those conversations in the intervals if I think anything needs to change and we can bounce a few ideas off each other."

"We've got some great coaches and obviously he's just another brain in the changing room."

Meanwhile, England have opted to include an extra fast bowler in Matthew Potts to replace the injured Stokes when they named their eleven for the first Test against Sri Lanka today. Also, Dan Lawrence earned a recall for his first Test appearance in more than two years with regular opener Zak Crawley nursing a finger complaint.



Veteran striker Jamie Vardy celebrates his equaliser that earned newly-promoted Leicester City a 1-1 draw at home with a profligate Tottenham Hotspur in their Premier League season opener on Monday. Spurs dominated the first half but Pedro Porro's opener in the 29th minute was the only time they could make one of a host of good chances count before Leicester skipper Vardy headed in his team's only goal with 57 minutes gone.

PHOTO: REUTERS