

## Don't see my position under threat: Jamal

Jamal Bhuiyan, the most-capped player in Bangladesh's history, is slowly becoming a peripheral figure in the team despite being the captain. He has not made it to the playing XI only three times in his 82-match international career, the latest of which came in the AFC Asian Cup Qualifiers against India. With Sheffield United's Hamza Chowdhury joining the Bangladesh midfield, questions are rising whether the 35-year-old captain's time with the Red and Greens is coming to an end. To know his views on this issue and his overall plans in football, *The Daily Star's Anisur Rahman and Atique Anam* caught up with the Denmark-born midfielder. Following are the excerpts of the interview.

**The Daily Star (DS):** You were the first foreign-based footballer to represent Bangladesh 12 years ago. Now players like Hamza Chowdhury are following your footsteps. How proud do you feel when you realise this?

**Jamal Bhuiyan (JB):** Of course, I feel proud that Hamza also came here to represent Bangladesh following my footsteps. Even when Tariq [Kazi] made debut for Bangladesh, I told him that I felt proud for him. Besides, I kept communicating with Tariq because he had a bit of problem in his first season

who doesn't talk much and he is a very quiet person. After coming back to Bangladesh from India, Hamza and his family visited my home in Dhaka and next day he left for England and I went to Denmark.

**DS:** Do you feel, in any way, that your position has come under threat due to Hamza's presence?

**JB:** If you look back, under Javier Cabrera I have never played in the position where Hamza played against India. Instead I played as a right midfielder, or a left midfielder or in

India team that I had seen in the last seven or eight years and we should have won the match.

**DS:** Did the coach or any member of the coaching staff communicate to you before the game that you wouldn't start the match?

**JB:** No. No one communicated with me before the match. After the match, the coach only told me that I was not fielded for the good of the team. That one sentence was all from the coach.

**DS:** You haven't played 90 minutes of football for Bangladesh for some time. Have you had any understanding with the coach regarding how much you want to play?

**JB:** The coach decides what he wants to do, but of course I want to play as much as possible, that is no secret.

**DS:** You missed the first half of the domestic season due to some misunderstanding with Abahani. How did you keep yourself motivated during this time? What was your routine and how did you keep yourself fit?

**JB:** I kept playing in Denmark with a club. To be honest, I leave all other thoughts out of my mind when I play football. So, it was easy for me to concentrate on football. I had regular gym sessions in the morning and practised with football in the afternoon sessions.

**DS:** What are your expectations from the rest of the games in the qualifying campaign in the Asian Cup Qualifiers?

**JB:** Our next two vital matches will be played at home. If we can secure full points, it will be good for us. I hope we can qualify and that is also the aim, the teams in the group are very similar when we talk about



in Bangladesh. Now, Hamza playing for Bangladesh is a positive thing because Hamza is two/three levels above us and I think it is also inspiration for me.

**DS:** How much impact, do you think, has the arrival of Hamza had on the confidence and environment of the team's dressing room?

**JB:** Dressing room has been the same, there is no change because a person can't change another person but the confidence level, what I have seen, has raised to 90 percent from 50 percent.

**DS:** How has been your experience with Hamza so far?

**JB:** Hamza is a very humble person

No. 10 position. However, I have played many times previously in the position Hamza and Mohammad Ridoy are playing now. So, I don't think my position is under threat.

**DS:** You went to Shillong as the captain and faced the media before the game. But it came as a shock to many when they didn't see you in the starting XI or as a substitute. How did you take it?

**JB:** Of course, I was much disappointed because I wanted to play the game as a footballer. I think it is the same feeling for every footballer who doesn't get the opportunity to play a game. So my condition was the same and I was disappointed. I thought it was the worst



## Leo Beenhakker dies aged 82

REUTERS

Former Real Madrid and Netherlands coach Leo Beenhakker has died at the age of 82, the LaLiga club said on Thursday.

The Dutchman coached clubs such as Feyenoord and Ajax Amsterdam as well as the Saudi Arabia, Trinidad and Tobago and Poland national teams.



He led Ajax to the Eredivisie title in the 1979-80 and 1989-90 seasons before winning the Dutch top-flight again with Feyenoord in 1998-99.

However, Beenhakker's most successful stint came at Madrid, where he won three LaLiga titles, one Copa del Rey and two Supercopa de Espana trophies.

"Real Madrid, its president and board of directors, are deeply saddened by the death of Leo Beenhakker, the legendary Real Madrid coach who led the Whites between 1986 and 1989, and in 1992," the Spanish side said in a statement.

"Real Madrid would like to express their condolences and affection to his family, clubs, and loved ones.

"Leo Beenhakker has passed away at the age of 82. Real Madrid extends its condolences to all Madridistas. May he rest in peace."

## Tonali, Fagioli suspects in new gambling probe

AFP, Rome

Sandro Tonali and Nicolò Fagioli are again in investigators' crosshairs in a new probe into betting on illegal gambling platforms, Italian news agencies reported on Friday.

ANSA and AGI report that Newcastle United midfielder Tonali and fellow Italy international Fagioli, who plays for Fiorentina, are among a dozen current or former Serie A players suspected of illicit betting activity.

Roma midfielder Leandro Paredes and Angel Di Maria, who played the 2022/23 season with Fagioli at Juventus, are two of the other footballers named by news agencies as suspects in an investigation by prosecutors in Milan.

Current Juve players Weston McKennie and Mattia Perin and Italy internationals Raoul Bellanova and Samuele Ricci are also among those being investigated for poker games and betting on sporting events -- but not on football matches -- on banned gambling platforms.

In a statement released Friday morning, the Milan prosecutor's office announced that it had placed under house arrest "for illegal gambling activities and money laundering" five people who organised and managed the clandestine platforms from a jewelry store in the city.

## SHAMIT SHOME says 'yes' to Bangladesh



SPORTS REPORTER

Canada-based midfielder Shamit Shome has initiated the procedure to play for Bangladesh, Bangladesh Football Federation's (BFF) vice-president Fahad Karim confirmed on Friday, marking a significant development in BFF's ongoing efforts to attract diaspora talent after roping in Sheffield United midfielder Hamza Chowdhury recently.

The 27-year-old, currently a regular for Cavalry FC in the Canadian Premier League, was previously capped twice in friendlies for the Canada senior team in 2020.

Born in Alberta to Bangladeshi parents from Sylhet, Shome has represented Canada at U-20 and U-21 levels and carved out a steady club career after starting professionally with FC Edmonton in 2016.

Despite initial hesitation, Shome has now expressed a clear desire to represent Bangladesh, inspired in part by the recent switch of Hamza -- who had, likewise, played for England's youth team.

"After news came out in local media in the morning, I had texted him to enquire about his desire. He replied to me, saying he is willing to play for Bangladesh," Karim told reporters yesterday afternoon. "We are supposed to have a meeting with over zoom where we will discuss everything."

The development comes two weeks after Shomit had asked for two weeks to decide on the issue on insistence from the BFF.

"He has a Canadian passport, so we are trying to form his Bangladeshi passport. His parents have not renewed their Bangladeshi passport since 1993, so everyone's passport has to be worked on," said Shomit's agent Amit Hassan, adding that the birth certificates of the player and his parents need to be made prior to the passport as well.

"The documents will be forwarded to FIFA afterwards. Hopefully the birth certificate will be finalised by Sunday at the earliest next week.

"Then he will visit the Canadian embassy and if everything works out well, he'll be joining the [Bangladesh] team in June," he informed further.

"If completed in time -- although it appears to be unlikely, given the procedure -- Shome could feature in Bangladesh's AFC Asian Cup qualifying campaign in their key fixture against Singapore in June 10 at National Stadium in Dhaka, providing a significant boost to the midfield ranks," Amit added.



## Amorim backs Onana after Lyon nightmare

AFP, Lyon

Ruben Amorim defended Andre Onana and said mistakes "can happen" after the Manchester United goalkeeper committed a pair of errors in Thursday's 2-2 draw at Lyon in the first leg of their Europa League quarter-final.

Onana landed himself in a war of words before the match with Lyon midfielder Nemanja Matic, which prompted the former United player to call the goalkeeper "one of the worst" in the history of the club.

Booed by Lyon supporters each time he touched the ball, Onana made a weak effort to save Thiago Almada's free-kick which gave the hosts the lead.

After goals from Leny Yoro and Joshua Zirkzee turned the game in United's favour, another error from Onana allowed Rayan Cherki to equalise with the last touch of the match.

"It can happen. If you play football, and we play a lot of games, you can make mistakes," said United manager Amorim. "There is nothing I can say to Andre in this moment that will help."

"We have one more game to change everything and that should be our focus," he added.

United remain unbeaten in Europe this season but Amorim admitted the late goal had left his players deflated.

"I felt the dressing room was really quiet and that is a good thing. We draw away in Europe, that is always hard. The team is suffering and we need to change that," he said.

With success in the Europa League their only route into the Champions League next term -- and the financial windfall that comes with it -- United know their season is on the line next week in the second leg.

"I think it's 50-50," said Amorim. "It's a really difficult match but when we play at home with our fans, we play with one more player."

The 19-year-old Yoro, who played for Lyon boss Paulo Fonseca while at Lille, is confident United can get the job done after scoring his first goal for the club.

"We know that matches like these, away from home, if we win it puts us in a really good position for the return at home," he said.

"Unfortunately we conceded that goal at the end so come away with a draw and will do everything to win the second leg."

But Cherki said there was more to come from Lyon as he put United on notice.

"We deserved a lot better. We were better and from the start we felt the fear in them," he said.

"Now we're just waiting for one thing, to go over there to win. When they set up against us with two defensive midfielders, that means they're afraid of us."