



Bangladesh forwards Sauravi Akanda Prity (3L), Mosammat Sultana (R), and others -- not part of the starting eleven in Sunday's 7-0 rout of Bahrain in Yangon -- pose during a light recovery session that began with a refreshing swim yesterday. With a much tougher opponents Myanmar up next, the fringe players will be keen to make an impact after watching the established stars dominate a side ranked 36 places higher in the AFC Women's Asian Cup 2026 Qualifiers.

PHOTO: BFF

Expats' trial ends in festive mood

SPORTS REPORTER

The three-day trial organised by the Bangladesh Football Federation, titled "BFF next global star", concluded at the National Stadium in Dhaka in a festive atmosphere.

The trial ended with two matches of one-hour duration each – one for the under-19 level and the other for the under-23 level – as the game's local governing body looks for talented Bangladeshi-origin footballers from across the world to strengthen its pipeline.

Following the second match, 49 players, who had come from 14 countries of the world with their families of their own expenditure, received certificates and souvenirs from the BFF high-ups. And then the national stadium turned into a farewell for those budding talents – swarmed by scores of fans – happy to take home memories of bonds they had forged with their peers over the last few days.

Most of them had come to Dhaka seeing the likes of Hamza Choudhury and Shamit Shome don the Bangladesh jersey in recent months as the BFF expedited the process of blooding the national team with expat footballers. Nabil Nasir, a winger from the USA, said he arrived in Sylhet a month ago and trained by himself with the aim of getting selected.

"My favourite Bangladeshi are Hamza and Shamit. Among the locals, I like Rakib," Nasir told reporters,



PHOTO:FIROZ AHMED

adding that he would definitely like to play in Bangladesh's local league if he gets a call-up from the local clubs.

Ashiqur Rahman, another midfielder at the trial for the under-23s, said he would be going back to London and work hard, with an aim of getting called up for the camp for next month for AFC U-23 Asian Cup Qualifiers.

However, there was no information divulged from the BFF regarding whether there will be any results announced regarding selection anytime soon. When asked over phone, one of the panel coaches of the trial said: "I can't talk about this. We have been asked not to speak to media on this issue."

While there was expectation and goodwill among the footballers, the event produced a bit of embarrassment for the BFF as the national team's head coach, Javier Cabrera, was booed off after the proceedings by a few hundred fans who were allowed free entry in the galleries.

Miraz's moment BY VISION, OR VACANCY?

ASHEAQ-UL-ALAM

In the midst of the commotion surrounding Najmul Hossain Shanto's sudden removal as ODI captain just before the Sri Lanka tour, Mehidy Hasan Miraz's elevation to the role quietly slipped under the radar.

Miraz was earmarked for captaincy since his days in age-level cricket, having led Bangladesh in the 2016 ICC Under-19 World Cup at home, a tournament where Bangladesh finished third and Miraz emerged as the player of the tournament.

In that sense, Miraz officially receiving the captaincy baton almost nine years after debuting for the Tigers may seem like the outcome of a well-thought-out plan of grooming the all-rounder for the role.

But in reality, the nature of his ascension was slapdash, as is the case for most captains in Bangladesh, and he was chosen for the role less for being the most deserving candidate but more for being the only viable option.

Miraz is set to officially begin his captaincy tenure in the three-match ODI series against Sri Lanka, starting in Colombo tomorrow.

The manner in which Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) sacked Shanto, with no warning and right before a tour, was questionable; though from a result-oriented approach, it did make some sense.

Under his leadership, Bangladesh returned empty-handed from the Champions Trophy campaign in Pakistan, suffering heavy defeats



against India and New Zealand. That followed a 3-0 whitewash in the West Indies and a 2-1 series loss against Afghanistan in Sharjah.

A format which once used to be Bangladesh's strong suit turned into their weakness during Shanto's tenure, with the Tigers losing eight of their last ten matches and slipping to 10th in the ICC rankings last month.

Putting the blame for this downfall squarely on Shanto seems hardly fair, but in cricket, someone usually has to take the fall in bad times and often it ends up being the leader of the side.

Having already decided that Shanto had to be replaced, the next point of action for the management was to decide who would replace him – and they went for Miraz.

At 27, Miraz is one of the more seasoned names in the side and a key figure in the ODI setup. Since 2022, he has been Bangladesh's

fifth-highest run-scorer in ODIs with 1,191 runs, averaging 32.18, often batting at No. 7 or 8. With the ball, he has been even more crucial, taking 55 wickets – second only to Taskin Ahmed in that period.

Miraz's recent ODI record establishes him as a consistent performer, which makes him a good captaincy candidate as he could lead by example. His pedigree as a leader, however, is not as impressive.

Miraz has led the ODI side as a stand-in skipper on four occasions and all of those matches have ended in defeats for the Tigers.

Not only that, all of those defeats have taken place in 2024, meaning four of the eight defeats Bangladesh have conceded in their last 10 ODIs have come under Miraz.

Still, the board kept their faith in Miraz over another candidate in the recently appointed T20 captain Litton Das.

While under Miraz, Bangladesh got clean-swept 3-0 last year in the Caribbean, Litton led Bangladesh to a 3-0 sweep in the T20s with astute captaincy.

But Litton's unpredictable form, which cost him his place in the Champions Trophy, coupled with the recent T20 series defeats against the UAE and Pakistan, worked against him – leaving Miraz as the only option to replace Shanto.

But uncertainty looms – both about team dynamics following Shanto's sacking and Miraz's role in the batting order. The bigger question now is whether Miraz can calm the storm or be swept away by it.

'I can't work under syndicates'

Syed Ashraful Haque, a veteran cricket administrator and key architect behind Bangladesh's Test status, has expressed a strong desire to become BCB president – but only if there is no government interference and a truly free and fair election. In an interview with The Daily Star's Samsul Arefin Khan, he vowed to decentralise cricket, reform the club-centric board structure and ensure financial transparency if given the chance. Ashraful also discussed constitutional amendments, term limits for directors and improving facilities nationwide, emphasising the need for proper grounds rather than just stadiums. He challenged those who have been on the board for years to explain their achievements, criticising the Dhaka-centric, syndicate-dominated system and stressing the need for shared power. In his twilight years, he hopes to give back to cricket through genuine, lasting reforms.



Read the full interview on The Daily Star online.

SHORT CORNER

Gambhir faces growing pressure ahead of Edgbaston Test

Gautam Gambhir is under growing pressure ahead of the second Test against England after India's loss at Headingley made it seven defeats in 11 red-ball matches since he became coach last year. The 43-year-old is facing flak from some quarters for his selections, man management and how he carries himself in press conferences.

England unchanged for second India Test

England named an unchanged team for the second Test against India starting at Edgbaston on Wednesday, as Jofra Archer was made to wait for his return. Archer has not played Test cricket since February 2021 but had been called into action after bowling for Sussex last week.

Ritu's golazo for late little brother lights up Yangon

As the scoreboard flashed 7-0 in Yangon on Sunday, it was easy to lose sight of the human stories behind Bangladesh's breathtaking win over Bahrain in the AFC Women's Asian Cup Qualifiers. Once such instance was Ritu Porna Chakma's thunderbolt from distance. From the Thuwunna Stadium, it was a message sent skyward, three years to the day since she lost her younger brother to a tragic electrocution accident.

Wimbledon sizzles: Fans face the heatwave with humour

Tennis devotees armed themselves with hats, sun cream, mini-fans and a sense of humour for the first day of Wimbledon Monday, as the tournament provisionally recorded its hottest ever opener.

**Read The Daily Star website for full stories.



Top seed Aryna Sabalenka overcame Canadian qualifier Carson Branstine on a sweltering Court One to get her quest for a first Wimbledon title up and running with a 6-1 7-5 win yesterday. The three-time Grand Slam champion, who has never been beyond the semifinals in the competition, will be looking to ease the pain of losing in the finals of the Australian Open and the French Open this year.

PHOTO: REUTERS

PSG's 'historic season' faces Bayern challenge

AGENCIES

Paris Saint-Germain's pursuit of footballing immortality remains firmly on track.

Fresh from a commanding 4-0 win over Inter Miami in the Club World Cup last 16, the French giants are now bracing for their biggest test yet – a high-stakes quarterfinal against Bayern Munich, who downed Flamengo 4-2 thanks to a Harry Kane double.

For PSG manager Luis Enrique, the objective is clear: continue writing history.

"This is clearly a historic season for our club, and we intend to continue making history in this competition," Enrique declared after Sunday's win.

With Ligue 1, the French Cup and the Champions League already in the bag, PSG are chasing a clean sweep – a perfect season few clubs have ever achieved.

The win over Miami, emotionally tinged by Enrique's reunion with former Barcelona proteges Lionel Messi and Javier Mascherano, was also a reminder of PSG's cold efficiency.

"It was a special game," Enrique said. "But we didn't allow sentiment to cloud our focus. The first half was where we really imposed ourselves – we didn't give them a single chance."

Now comes Bayern – a familiar and formidable foe and perhaps the only team standing between PSG and an unprecedented haul.

With the match looming, Enrique's message was sharp and unwavering. "We have to stay focused," he said. "Holidays and next season can wait. The next 90 minutes are all that matter."



PHOTO: REAL MADRID

Real Madrid face Juventus in Orlando tonight (01:00am Wednesday, Bangladesh Time) in the Club World Cup, hoping to reach the quarterfinals. They are set to be boosted by the return of superstar striker Kylian Mbappe, who missed all three group games and was even hospitalised with acute gastroenteritis, but has been training normally for several days.