

'Rehabilitation was very painful'

Right-back **Bishwanath Ghosh**, once a key attacking outlet for the Bangladesh national team, spent nearly one-and-a-half years out after suffering a knee injury during a FIFA friendly against Bhutan on September 3, 2024. The 26-year-old, who has 44 international caps, has now recovered from a lateral meniscus cartilage injury and returned to the preliminary squad for upcoming fixtures against Vietnam and Singapore. In an interview with **The Daily Star's Anisur Rahman**, Bishwanath spoke about his gruelling rehabilitation, the uncertainty surrounding his comeback, and the resolve it took to push for a place in the final 23. Excerpts follow:

DS: How does it feel to return to the national team setup after such a long injury layoff?

BG: To be honest, it feels like the first time I was called up. After 17 to 18 months out, everything feels new, and it feels really good to be back. I had been waiting a long time to get back on the field.

DS: Did you ever fear you might not return?

BG: Yes. Being away for so long made me feel, at times, that I might not come back. I had knee surgery in Thailand in mid-December 2024, with support from Bashundhara Kings, and was bedridden for three months, moving only with crutches. Later, I started light exercises at home and then swimming, where someone had to help me in and out of the pool. The rehabilitation was very painful, and I kept counting the days to return. At times, frustration took over, but my wife supported me immensely. Physio Sufian bhai, doctor Tushar bhai, my younger brothers Saikat and Moyeen, and even ball boy Maruf helped me a lot through that phase. Finally, I am grateful for the grace of God.



DS: In your first league appearance this season, what did those four minutes against Abahani in December last year mean to you?

BG: Coach Mario and trainer Khalil told me I was ready and that I would get a chance against Abahani. Before matchday, we usually pray as a team, and then the 23-member squad is announced. I was eagerly waiting for that moment. When the list was delayed, I even called my wife to ask why it had not been released yet. When I finally saw my name, I felt a deep sense of peace – something I cannot describe in words. I was also nervous before the match, but once I stepped onto the pitch for the warm-up, the support from teammates, coaches, and spectators helped me overcome that nervousness.

DS: How are you approaching this comeback?

BG: My main goal is to become a regular player for my club. If you perform consistently at club level, the national call will come. In football, name doesn't matter – you have to prove yourself through performance.

DS: What difference have players like Hamza Choudhury and Shamit Shome made?

BG: During my recovery, I watched matches and hoped to return – it was a difficult feeling. I don't think one or two players can change everything. Our team was good before and is still good now with players like Hamza and Shamit. But earlier, we lacked leadership on the pitch. Since Hamza joined, he has brought that – controlling the game and helping the team gel.

DS: Are you excited to share the dressing room with Hamza and Shamit?

BG: Not thinking of that right now. My focus is on earning a place in the final 23. The competition is very tough, and I know I have to perform.

From NSC to ICC: BCB's puzzling stand

ABDULLAH AL MEHDI

The Bangladesh Cricket Board's (BCB) statement issued on Monday night, in response to the National Sports Council's (NSC) March 11 gazette regarding an investigation into the October 2025 BCB elections, has left many within the cricketing fraternity confused.

There are, in fact, plenty of reasons behind this confusion.

According to the BCB statement, the current board held "informal" talks with the International Cricket Council (ICC) leadership regarding the matter, citing "external interference in the affairs of an elected cricket board" – a remark that could be interpreted as a thinly veiled threat towards the NSC.

What adds to the surprise is that two highly placed BCB directors told this newspaper yesterday that they had no knowledge of how the statement came about. BCB CEO Nizamuddin Chowdhury preferred not to comment on this issue.

This has raised questions over whether BCB president Aminul Islam Bulbul made the decision to issue it single-handedly.

Ironically, the current BCB administration had not previously voiced concerns regarding government intervention.

"It is a kind of threat, saying they communicated with the ICC regarding interference, so that they will be saved. It is quite ironic for the current board to complain to the ICC [about government interference]," former BCB general

secretary and ex-Asian Cricket Council (ACC) CEO Syed Ashraf Huiq told *The Daily Star* yesterday.

Another aspect that appears inconsistent is that the last board elections, in fact, took place under the NSC, which is now investigating them. Both Bulbul and Faruque Ahmed entered the board by availing the NSC-held quotas for directorship.

Following the interim government's

takeover, instances of government interference were widely reported, particularly through the NSC quota, which conflicts with the principles of a self-governed organisation and reinforces the notion of state involvement.

BCB's current stance now threatens to escalate into a legal battle between the board and the NSC. Under the 'Jatiyo Kriira Parishad Ain, 2018', the NSC is authorised

to form investigation committees, and sports federations are obliged to respond to government inquiries. If a board fails to function properly or acts against the interests of the federation, the NSC can dissolve the executive committee and, if necessary, appoint an ad-hoc committee.

"If BCB can't run cricket well, NSC has the right to dissolve it – it's there in the laws. The cricket leagues weren't run well, among other issues, and if there

were violations of election laws, they can dissolve it. NSC can do that without question because BCB is a part of NSC. ICC also cannot raise objections since this is outlined in the BCB constitution, which the ICC follows. Yes, the ICC has guidelines regarding good governance through democratic elections, but those are guidelines, not mandatory requirements," Ashraf said, adding that

all assets – including grounds – belong to the NSC. He warned that in the event of a conflict, if the government restricts the board's access to these assets, the board would be rendered ineffective.

Ashraf also recalled that the ICC did not intervene when the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) changed its president multiple times.

"We are under the ICC, but first we are under the NSC, which is the parent body. The ICC does not interfere in domestic governance as long as the BCB constitution is followed. It did not intervene when Pakistan changed its board president multiple times within a few months," he added.

"ICC is not our master; they are facilitators and friends. They will follow the constitution," he further stated.

Meanwhile, State Minister for Youth and Sports, Aminul Haque, said yesterday that the NSC would review the investigation report before speaking to the ICC and considering the next steps.

"I believe we should first review the investigation report. After that, I will speak with the ICC and then inform you of our next steps. We will take all our decisions after consulting with the ICC," Aminul said.

Ultimately, cricket in the country has always operated within a spectrum of political influence, which makes the current stance of Bulbul's BCB appear even more unusual.



Kerr puts Matildas in final

Chelsea striker Sam Kerr celebrates with her teammates after sending Australia into the final of the Women's Asian Cup final with a tense 2-1 victory over defending champions China in Perth yesterday. Kerr fired home from a tight angle in the 58th minute, her fourth goal of the tournament proving the difference in a gruelling semi-final in front of 35,170 fans. Arsenal forward Caitlin Foord had given the hosts a 17th minute lead before Zhang Linyan converted from the spot nine minutes later. The Matildas will face title favourites Japan or South Korea in Saturday's final in Sydney.

PHOTO: FACEBOOK

85 GOALS

85 DAYS



85 names, one legacy

So far, Brazil have had the highest number of different goalscorers in World Cup history – a total of 85 players. At the top of that scorers' list is Ronaldo with 15 goals. Pele sits second with 12 goals, while Jairzinho and Vava jointly occupy third place with nine goals each. Altogether, Brazil, the record five-time winners of the competition, have scored 237 goals in 114 World Cup matches.

** Visit *The Daily Star's* website to also read: 'When underdogs rewrite history'

Newcastle up against it in daunting Camp Nou clash

STAR SPORTS DESK

Newcastle will be up against it when they travel to the Camp Nou in the second leg of their round of 16 Champions League clash against Barcelona on Wednesday evening.

The tie is delicately poised after a 1-1 draw in last week's first leg at St James' Park. Newcastle winger Harvey Barnes appeared to have secured victory for the hosts with an 86th-minute strike before Barcelona teenager Lamine Yamal converted a dramatic penalty in the 96th minute to level the contest.

The late equaliser could prove significant. Barcelona have progressed from each of their last 10 Champions League knockout ties after drawing the first leg away from home, with their last such elimination coming against Juventus in the 2002-03 quarterfinals.

The Catalan giants will also take confidence from their attacking consistency. They have failed to score in just one of their last 29 Champions League matches – a 3-0 defeat away to Chelsea F.C. earlier this season. However, defensive frailties remain a concern, with Barcelona having gone 12 consecutive matches in the competition without a clean sheet.



Barcelona's record against English oppositions at home is formidable. They have lost only two of their 37 UEFA competition matches at home to English clubs (W22 D13) and are unbeaten in their last 14 such games since a 2-1 defeat to Liverpool in 2006-07. The hosts head into the clash in high spirits after a 5-2 win over Sevilla in La Liga on Sunday, a result that restored their four-point lead at the top of the



table. Newcastle, meanwhile, bounced back from their first-leg frustration with a 1-0 Premier League victory away to Chelsea, courtesy of a first-half strike from Anthony Gordon – their fourth win in five away games across all competitions.

Eddie Howe's side have also impressed in Europe, going unbeaten in their last six Champions League matches (W3 D3). In this season's competition they have lost just two of 11 games (W6 D3), including a 2-1 defeat at home to Barcelona on matchday one.

Victory in Spain would send Newcastle into uncharted territory as the Magpies have never progressed beyond the Champions League round of 16.

Elsewhere, Liverpool will attempt to overturn a 1-0 first-leg deficit against Galatasaray at Anfield, while Atalanta face a daunting task away to Bayern Munich after a 6-1 defeat in the first leg.

Meanwhile, Atletico Madrid have one foot in the quarters after thrashing Tottenham Hotspur 5-2 in the Spanish capital, with the second leg in London expected to be little more than a formality for Atletico.



PHOTO: REUTERS

Two players from Iran's women's football squad who sought asylum in Australia have begun new lives in the country and were recently pictured training with a local A-League club. Midfielder Fatemeh Pasandideh and defender Atefeh Ramezanizadeh were among seven members of Iran's delegation granted humanitarian visas after fears they could face persecution if they returned home following their AFC Women's Asian Cup campaign in Australia. Concerns over their safety arose after several players did not sing the national anthem before their opening match on the Gold Coast in Queensland. Iranian state media branded them 'wartime traitors' as the tournament coincided with air strikes on Iran by the United States and Israel. Five members of the group later withdrew their asylum requests and made their way home via Malaysia, although their destination was unclear. Queensland-based Brisbane Roar FC said Pasandideh and Ramezanizadeh joined a women's team training session on Monday, with photos showing them meeting players and taking part in shooting drills. Meanwhile, Iran's football federation president Mehdi Taj said they were in discussions with FIFA about moving their World Cup matches to Mexico from the United States due to concerns about the safety of their players after the US launched joint air strikes at the country along with Israel. Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum, in response, said yesterday that her country would have no problem hosting Iran's matches if FIFA agrees.