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# Our cricket : Crucial meet ahead



Despite occasional impressive performances in both versions of cricket, Bangladesh are still lying at the bottom of ICC ranking, primarily due to inconsistency and lack of winning habit. Bangladesh have already beaten Pakistan, India, Sri Lanka, Australia, Zimbabwe in the shorter version of the game, and with a little bit of luck could have beaten Pakistan and Australia in Test cricket. Given all these, none other than Wasim Akram cautioned Ricky Ponting, the proud leader of all conquering Aussies not to

underestimate Bangladesh, the emerging rookies. On its day Bangladesh is capable of beating any side at least in the shorter version of the game. The team has got potential match winners. It only needs stitching the individual brilliance to team efforts and growing the habit of winning.

Against the backdrop of the above, let us try to preview the prospect of Bangladesh in the upcoming ICC Champions Trophy scheduled to be held in two phases in India in October. Bangladesh will have to play

against the West Indies, Sri Lanka and Zimbabwe in the preliminaries to win a place in the elite group of six. On paper, cricket critics may rule out the probability of Bangladesh finishing at least second among the four but who knows? On the sub-continental wicket Bangladesh may spring a surprise or two to stun the world cricket and seal the critics who underestimate them and are desperate to decimate their credentials.

Its true that Bangladesh in the recent series against Zimbabwe failed to impress but with a little bit of luck going their way the result could be different. Without taking anything away from the impressive showing of the young Zimbabwean side, it can be safely said Bangladesh have more than even chance against them in the Champions Trophy. Young Zimbabweans will struggle on the unknown Indian wicket. Then Bangladesh will have to beat either West Indies or Sri Lanka. Although cricket is a game of glorious uncertainty, yet in the present form Sri Lanka are not only the hot favourites to win the minnows group but also may proceed to win the trophy. So the chances are not very bright against them.

However, that does not mean that the Tigers cannot roar and cause an upset. However, Bangladesh must try their best against the West Indies, an unpredictable side. If we bowl and field well we have more than even chance against the Caribbeans which will earn us a gate pass to the main phase. That will be an achievement.

Bangladesh are yet to announce the squad but there may not be big surprises other than inclusion of young Mehrah Hossain to pair with Shahriar Nafees, the newly chosen vice captain. It all depends whether Habibul Bashar recovers and is match fit, Mehrah after his very impressive performance in Pakistan should get preference over Rajin Saleh. Saleh should be at number three as he is more reliable and consistent for long innings than the flamboyant Aftab who should perform better at number five after Ashrafal at number four. If Bashir is fit to play Mehrah cannot find the spot and Rajin may open with Habibul coming at three. Bangladesh have the option to play Farhad Reza or Saquibul at no six. Farhad played with maturity and flair in the recent tour and has better all round utility. Khaled Mashud, Rafique and

Mashrafe may be used for rearguard or long handle depending on the situation. Bangladesh may opt to play with three seamers against Sri Lanka and Zimbabwe. In that case an ideal combination would be Mashrafe, Shahadat Hossain and Syed Russel. Farhad Reza and Rafique will fill the quota of bowling. If required Rajin and Aftab or even Ashrafal can chip in. But against the West Indies Bangladesh should include Razzak to partner Rafique and go with Mashrafe and Syed Russel for sharing the new ball. Bangladesh have to sharpen the fielding and catching a great deal to fancy their chances. If the team plays to its potential we find no reason why the Tigers should not proceed to the final phase. Chances will come our way and we have to grab them professionally.

Impressive performance in the tournament will enhance our reputation and will also disprove the notion that our successes were flukes.

**Saleque Sufi**  
On e-mail

## Changing Afghans

As I watch the television or read the newspaper, I am saddened by the death of the young British soldiers in Afghanistan. It appears that we are fighting an endless war. From our aspect, the Afghans are not educated or cultured, as over 80% of the population cannot even read or write in their own language. They have little understanding of human rights or democracy, and even understand little of the proper teachings of Islam. They live in caves and kill each other, and have lived in this way for a long time, and will probably continue to do so.

There is no way that a conventional war, which we are fighting, now can change Afghanistan. History shows that even Alexander the great had to return from the valley. Other forces have tried but on their return, Afghanistan remains as it was. Change cannot be brought about by war, as it is this pastime that the Afghans have been involved in for many years.

However, we cannot sit silently. We have to deal with the menace of terrorism. There has to be a functional government in the Afghanistan that will not allow its soil to be used for training and breeding of terrorism. We have to also ensure that the Afghans get to see the wisdom of growing crops to feed people instead of growing drugs that kill people.

The answer is a different kind of war. We have to contribute both financially and through teaching to bring about an educational revolution. We have to educate the Afghans. The Afghan people must learn about the world outside their own country, with a massive educational drive especially in professional and vocational education to support industrial investment and growth.

military involvement to ensure that social changes can be brought about without hindrance from the terrorists. Our involvement should be restricted to air support where the Afghan troops must maintain the order on the ground. If we cannot bring the social changes with better education, the apparent peace will collapse as soon as we leave. It is time to think seriously and draw up new strategies. We have to find a new way of fighting terrorism and drugs.

**FR Chowdhury**  
London

## Save the country

It will be an impossible task for anyone or any political party to save Bangladesh in the coming days. But one can always take a few steps, to at least give some relief to the common people.

In the name of weapons of mass destruction, America has almost ruined Iraq. Bangladesh may not have WMD, but unless 3 organisations are reorganised on a priority basis the end result will be the same.

The GoB should immediately hand over these 3 sectors to the private sector, with the condition that they will bring in foreign partners to run them.

BRTA, BSTI, and the Office of the Drug Administration should be handed over to private sector on a priority basis. If that's not done, in 10 years' time from now half the population of Bangladesh will be paying the penalty for the misdeeds of these 3 organisations and no government will be able to find a solution.

We are trying to find a solution to the arsenic problem, but soon it will contaminate all agriculture products. No one seems to be interested in this subject. The greed for money and power has already

contaminated our blood and to the best of my knowledge, no one has found a solution to this problem either.

Let's us all make an HONEST effort to save the NATION, for which we all paid a heavy price.

**Masud**  
On e-mail

## Congratulations where it's due

I'll be failing in my duties if I don't write this letter congratulating your young columnist, Zafar Sobhan for his brilliant column on Phulbari issue ('Time to choose,' Straight Talk, September 01, 2006). In that column Zafar Sobhan has shown a rare maturity and courage for his age.

Considering the political ambience in Bangladesh today, he has, in my opinion, shown extreme courage in writing this column. His analysis of our 'induced' hatred for the white men and the Indians and preference for the Middle East and China has hit the bull's eye. I use the word 'induced' just to mean that this hatred is not a natural phenomenon in average Bangladeshis but has been

cooked up by the political and military governments during the last 30 years including the present one. You also deserve thanks for publishing this article, at a time, when it can be seen as swimming against the flow.

**AZM Abdul Ali**  
Uttara, Dhaka

## Rootless girls

The present generation of youngsters will ultimately have to bear the responsibility of future leadership in all national activities. Actually, the children are the dream of the nation. But in our country they are neglected, especially the girl child.

According to UNICEF, there are 13.7 million adolescent girls aged 10-19 years in Bangladesh and it can be assumed that 20 percent of the total girls lead a miserable life with no permanent shelter. Most of them have no parents and no fixed address. Actually, they are born on the street and live on the street. Many children are deprived of their basic rights to education, health, nutrition and housing.

Girls become victims of domestic and sexual violence during their street life that offers little protection, privacy or security. Gender discrimination and related violence, including abuse, exploitation, trafficking, and acid-throwing create a socio-economic context that is challenging the promotion and the protection of the rights of children. Sometimes they are used or trapped by the criminals and finally engaged in anti-social activities.

Another serious threat to the young girls is AIDS/ HIV. According to UNICEF, only 57.2 per cent of the adolescents aged 10-19 years have heard of HIV/AIDS and 30.7 per cent are aware of preventive measures. It is a matter of great concern.

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