

Tigers off to England

Hopes high as they target India

SPORTS REPORTER



Bangladesh cricket team left here for England yesterday, reiterating that they have targeted defending champions India to fulfil their dream of making the Super

Eights of the ICC World Twenty20.

Banking on their batting depth, the Tigers believe that it is not an impossible task to beat high-flying India as it's a T20 game, so that there will be no need to wait for the second group match against Ireland.

"It's a Twenty20 game where you can get knocked out anytime. But realistically we should be in the Super Eights. We can even make it to the semifinals because nothing is impossible in this format of the game. We will definitely try against India before the Ireland game," said Bangladesh coach Jamie Siddons while talking with the reporters at the Zia International Airport.

The Australian pointed out his side's batting depth to make a mark in the second version of the tournament.

"We have batting depth in the team. Just look, Mushi (Mushfiquur Rahim) is batting at number six and he is followed by Riyad (Mahmudullah) and Mash (Mashrafe Bin Mortaza) and this is very important," he added.

Captain Mohammad Ashraful, who along with his deputy Mashrafe, leaves today to join the team in England and believes that nothing is impossible in Twenty20 cricket.

"The beauty of the T20 format is that you can win the match against India and lose a game against Ireland. It's always risky to tag someone favourites or minnows in this format of the

game. We can even make it to the last four if we can beat India in the first game," said Ashraful, who returned home on Friday after a fruitless IPL trip in South Africa.

The Bangladesh skipper said that they might have lacked match practice before the World Cup because of one-match appearance in the IPL, but informed that they had been very much in practice.

"It was frustrating not to play too many matches there (in the IPL), but I did have a very good time as it gave me the opportunity to come across so many world stars. I learnt many things from this trip which I believe would be very helpful for me," he said.

Bangladesh will definitely be looking to number one all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan to make their dream come true as the young man already made him a key performer for the Tigers.

"In Twenty20 game, any side can win the match. We have nothing to lose. The June 6 match [against India] may be ours if we can put up our best performance," said a confident Shakib before departure.

He was however not ready to focus on the past success. "We upset India in the 2007 World Cup but in a one-day match. This time we will play in a totally different format. We have to perform to our best if we want to beat the inform team," he added.

Bangladesh, who have been pitted in Group A along with India and Ireland, will be based in Wormsley until the end of this month. Bangladesh have additional practice matches lined up against New Zealand at Wormsley on May 26 and against the Netherlands on May 28. They then face Scotland on May 29.

Their official practice games are against Australia on June 1 and Sri Lanka the next day at Nottingham.



PHOTO: AFP

Rahul Dravid of Royal Challengers Bangalore kneels down to lift one towards midwicket boundary during his fine knock of 44 against Chennai Super Kings in the IPL T20 semifinal at the Wanderers Cricket Stadium in Johannesburg yesterday.

Bashar gets ICL NOC, submits to BCB today

SPORTS REPORTER

Former Bangladesh captain Habibul Bashar will submit his ICL no objection certificate (NOC) to the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) today to facilitate his comeback to the mainstream.

"I got the NOC from ICL [Indian Cricket League] authority and submit it to BCB tomorrow [Sunday]. Hope everything will be clear for me after submitting this certificate. I am looking forward to starting afresh," expected Bashar.

The 36-year-old former skipper was the first to come forward to take the opportunity of "amnesty" announced by BCB for the players associated with the unapproved ICL.

No other player has yet followed his footsteps and Bashar questioned whether the other rebels could understand what the future held for them.

"It's now clear that there is no problem from the ICL as they are ready to release any player. I don't know whether other players could realise the situation. But I wish they did," he said.

BCB has decided to allow Bangladeshi cricketers under contract with the ICL to participate in domestic cricket subject to the termination of their contracts by June 15 this year.

MCA make it one-all

SPORTS REPORTER

Maharashtra Cricket Association (MCA) levelled the three-match one-day series with a four-wicket win over Bangladesh A at the Bir Shreshtha Shahid Matiur Rahman Stadium in Khulna yesterday.

The tourists reached the 220-run target in only 43.4 overs after the home side posted a modest 215 all out in 48.5 overs.

Bangladesh A badly missed Rajin Saleh who had a knee injury but Mohammad Sharifullah stood up, scoring 65 and picking up three wickets.

But apart from Sharif and to some extent captain Mehrab Hossain (43), none of the second string side's batsmen made an impression. Seamer Samad Fallah picked up three wicket while Srikanth Munde and Aditya Dale had two each.

MCA chased well, with Ameiya Shrikhande hitting 75 off 93 balls with eight boundaries. And the 23-year-old batsman found good support from Kedar Jadhav (59), adding 113 for the third wicket. The partnership got their side closer to the target before Ankit Bawne (20*) and Srikanth Munde (1*) confirmed the victory with 38 balls to spare.

Sharif was the pick of the Bangladesh A bowlers although Suharwardi Shuvo took two for 44 from his 8.4 overs.

The third and deciding one-day match will be played tomorrow at the same venue.

It's Bangalore v Deccan

AFP, Johannesburg



Indian stalwart Rahul Dravid and two of the country's rising stars took the Royal Challengers Bangalore

to victory in their Indian Premier League semifinal against the Chennai Super Kings at the Wanderers Stadium on Saturday.

Bangalore will meet the Deccan Chargers in the final at the same ground Sunday in a contest between the teams that filled the bottom two places on the

login in the first IPL in 2008.

Dravid (44) and 19-year-old Manish Pandey (48) put on 72 for the third wicket to lay the foundation for Bangalore's six-wicket win, then Virat Kohli, 20, finished the match off by hitting 24 not out off 17 balls.

As in the first semifinal, when Deccan beat the Delhi Daredevils Friday, the team finishing lower on the log won the knock-out match.

Chennai made a good start after being sent in, with Matthew Hayden, the tournament's leading scorer, and Parthiv Patel putting on 61 for the first wicket.

But the innings lost momentum when

Hayden lofted Vinay Kumar to deep mid-wicket off the last ball of the seventh over after making 26.

Patel followed two overs later when he was leg before to Jacques Kallis for 36.

Chennai captain Mahendra Singh Dhoni and the left-handed Suresh Raina added 35 for the third wicket.

Raina hit a four and six off successive balls against Vinay Kumar but the threatened acceleration was cut short in the next over when he top-edged a pull against Praveen Kumar and was caught by wicketkeeper Mark Boucher for 20.

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PHOTO: STAR

Newcomers Mohammad Mithun (L) and Shamsur Rahman (2nd from L) pose with Shakib Al Hasan and Zunaed Siddiqui yesterday at the Zia International Airport before the Bangladesh cricket team flew off to London to play the ICC World Twenty20s from June 5.



SET Max
Indian Premier League
Final
Royal Challengers Bangalore v
Deccan Chargers
Live from 8:30pm
STAR Cricket
England v West Indies
Second ODI
Live from 3:45pm
ESPN
Primera Liga
Real Madrid v Mallorca
Live from 2:00am (Monday)



Amitabh Bachchan
(Bollywood megastar)
"I don't have as much money as Shah Rukh Khan. He has money and so he owns a team."

Chittagong slowly raise their voice

Cricket

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

A cross-section of people in Chittagong have begun to raise voices in their demand to host one or two matches of the cricket World Cup 2011.

Sports organisers, members of the civil society, different professionals, political leaders and the incumbent city mayor and former mayor of the port city at a meeting here yesterday urged the government to take a final decision to awarding Chittagong at least two matches.

Thanking the Sports Minister for agreeing in principle to award the matches, they said it's now upto the government to finalise a decision in this regard and implement it without any delay.

In a view exchange meeting held at a local restaurant, the speakers mentioned the past successes of Chittagong in arranging Tests, ODIs, Under-19 World Cup matches and the recently held Port-city Cricket League.

They urged the government not to undermine the organisational capability of Chittagong and said that the port city is one of the pioneers of Bangladesh cricket and hence it deserves the honour of hosting world cup matches.

They observed that it would be most disgraceful for the

sports organisers and people of Chittagong to have World Cup matches through a movement or placing a demand. The speakers also urged the city mayor and other leaders of major parties to take joint effort to materialise the expectation of the locals.

City Mayor ABM Mohiuddin Chowdhury, former minister and BNP joint secretary general Abdullah Al Noman, former Mayor Mahmudul Islam Chowdhury, Premier University vice-chancellor Dr Anupam Sen, Chittagong Chamber of Commerce and Industries (CCCI) senior vice-president MA Salam, CDSA general secretary Sirajuddin Md Alamgir and vice-president Ali Abbas spoke among others.

Four-star Fazlul sinks Shingra

SPORTS REPORTER

Fazlul Haque scored four times as Sirajganj Ekok Sangha blanked Shingra Upazila 8-0 in one of twelve matches in the Bashundhara Champions Club Cup at the Rajshahi Stadium yesterday.

The striker opened the floodgates in the fifth minute, and

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Bashar fooling no one

Cricket

QUAZI ZULQUARNAIN ISLAM

A little over seven months after a dramatic retirement and subsequent defection to the rebel Indian Cricket League (ICL), one-time Bangladesh skipper Habibul Bashar 'realized' the value of national pride.

After leading the mass mutiny against the BCB in September last year, it has taken Bashar about half a year and a drastic change in circumstances to mellow his stance and proclaim his love and support for a national side he felt no qualms about deserting not so long ago.

But contradiction is not out of character for the man, who had proclaimed that the public had not understood his stance properly back then.

As a player, Bashar had been invaluable during the infancy of Bangladesh cricket. His consistent showings gained him the tag of Mr. Fifty and he was repeatedly one of our top performers.

Post-World Cup 2007 however, there was a noticeable decline in his performances (he did not make a Test fifty for almost two years before his last Test) and his reactive, defensive captaincy only added to the voices of discontent.

This was a cricketer past his best. And so fell the axe, and with it were sown the roots of his angst.

Understandably Bashar did not take the decision well. Six months after being discarded from the side, Bashar had handed in his resignation and moved to the greener pastures of the ICL.

And now six months later, he wants back.

No matter how he sugarcoats it, Bashar's choices are self-interested. There is nothing wrong in that, but his continual disregard for the general public is shocking.

Upon joining the ICL, Bashar seemed utterly surprised to be labelled a 'rebel'. "We joined the ICL only because they never asked us to stop playing for our country," said Bashar. Such comments would have made sense if only Bashar

had not just a few days earlier handed in his resignation to the board citing 'improper structure'.

"I did not feel wanted," he later added and justified his defect by grossly misquoting earning figures of national players in an interview with the Times of India. He would stoop to nothing to justify his cause, it seemed.

But then, his cause deserted him and Bashar was left high and dry.

As talks with the ICC failed, the ICL increasingly looked like a dead-end destination. And the Mumbai attacks further clouded its very existence. Bashar realized that his hopes of riding into the sunset seemed to hang by a thread.

So what does a self-respecting 36 year old, who knows only how to play cricket, do in such a circumstance?

Make a simple net present value calculation, that's what.

Bashar realized that with the ICL facing the prospect of extinction, his 'Indian summer' had come to an end. He realised his next best alternative was

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Hughes confident

Cricket

AFP, Sydney

Australian Test opener Phillip Hughes said Friday he will head into this year's Ashes series full of confidence after his 'Bradmanesque' stint in English county cricket.

The adventurous 20-year-old left-hander, named this

week in Australia's 16-man squad for the upcoming five-Test series against England, earned comparisons with the immortal Donald Bradman following four hundreds for Middlesex in four weeks.

Hughes arrived home on Friday, saying he had benefited from playing at three of the five Ashes venues ahead of the Test series in July and August.

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