

# SPORT



Stripped of captaincy but still the highest run-getter for Bangladesh in 2014, will Mushfiqur Rahim finally be able to make his mark after two unremarkable World Cups or will it be the same old story for the Tigers?

PHOTO: STAR

## 'Will meet him after reaching last four'

Booters say after being admonished by BFF boss

SPORTS REPORTER



Booters of the Bangladesh national team have vowed to reach the semifinals of the upcoming Bangabandhu Gold Cup international football tournament after being summoned by the Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) president Kazi Salahuddin at his office yesterday.

The national team, who had suffered a morale-shattering 0-2 defeat against premier league giants Abahani in a practice match at BKSP in Savar on Monday, skipped their scheduled morning training session to rush to the BFF headquarters. The players and the coaching staff were reportedly taken to task for their disappointing performance before the BFF boss offered them some motivational words for putting up a good show in the six-national tournament, scheduled to begin on January 31.

"Salahuddin bhai was not happy with our performance against Abahani and asked us to explain how we lost the match," said skipper Mamunul Islam after the meeting.

Neither Mamunul nor the team's coach Saiful Bari Titu could offer any plausible explanation for the defeat yet vowed to reach the last four of the Bangabandhu Gold Cup.

"We have promised that we will meet him (Salahuddin) again only after qualifying for the semifinals," said the Sheikh Jamal midfielder adding that every player will have to take his share of the blame if they fail to perform according to expectations.

"Salahuddin bhai also motivated us to give our best efforts in the tournament so that we can make it easier for him to take football to the next level," added Mamunul.

Salahuddin had made it clear to the media quite a few times that he wishes the team reaches the last four of the tournament at least, if not any further.

Meanwhile, coach Titu called up Abahani midfielder Shahedul Alam Shahed and winger Abdul Baten Komol to the national squad to boost the attacking options after watching the sparkling performances of the two players in recent practice matches. The coach believes that the inclusion of Shahed and Komol will give him options before picking up the final squad for the tournament. Komol had recently struck a hat-trick for Abahani during a practice match against Muktiyoddha Sangsad KC.



## TIGERS DOWN UNDER

# Mushy looks beyond the qtrs

BISHWAJIT ROY

Admit it or not, Mushfiqur Rahim must be feeling the pain of not captaining the team in the World Cup. He was supposed to lead the team, but a string of defeats under his leadership last year shattered his dream.

The team's forlorn performances however overshadowed his individual success; the success that has taken him to such a height that he became the most vital cog in the batting unit. After finishing 2014 with 704 runs, the highest by a Bangladeshi, it is believed that Bangladesh's batting success in the ICC World Cup in Australia and New Zealand mostly depends on the little right-hander. His work ethic and commitment towards the game already became an example for the young players, so the expectation is that the 26-year-old wicketkeeper-batsman maximises all in the mega event.

Besides the batting job he has another vital role to play behind the stumps as a wicketkeeper. There has been debate over his keeping job, as many believe that he should be relieved of this additional burden, so that he can fully concentrate on his batting. His inconsistent efforts behind the stumps also sometimes ignite the debate. Most importantly a shoulder injury put him at risk but the man himself seemed determined to continue with the job as he said that he was gradually advancing towards taking the keeping job, after recovering from his latest shoulder injury.

"I gave up thinking about captaincy long ago. My only focus now is to be consistent in my batting. There are always responsibilities on my shoulder, whether I am the captain or not," said Mushfiqur, who is the only player who maintained a batting average of above 40 last year.

Mushfiqur also has a desire of achieving something in his third appearance in the World Cup. He knows that the world will not end if he fails down under, but is aware of the fact that it's an opportunity for him and the other senior players to make their presence felt.

"It is a big opportunity to prove ourselves. We have been doing everything to make it happen. I am hopeful that we will do better with the grace of Allah. It is not unlikely to see two to three Bangladeshi batsmen in the list of top five batsmen in the World Cup. This is my belief. We are practising and just need to execute it in the middle," he expressed his high hopes.

The experienced campaigner said that the conditions in Australia and New Zealand would be challenging but that would not be putting any pressure on them, rather the consistent bounce could

help them in their batting if they could execute their plans in the middle.

"Conditions is an issue and you should consider the differences in pitches, weather and everything and we must prepare ourselves accordingly. If a batsman can set himself then batting becomes easy because of consistent bounce there," opined the former Bangladesh ODI captain.

Mushfiqur has little doubt over his team's ability and that is the reason why he sees his team's chances of progressing beyond the quarterfinals. He believes that it can happen if they play to their potential and without any doubt he has to play a vital role if he wants to fulfil his desires.

He may have had forgettable World Cups before, but one may reckon that 2015 is going to be his year and he will enjoy many more individual successes unlike the ones in 2007 or 2011.

## U-19 team lose again

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh under-19s came close yesterday but embraced the same fate as last time in the second one-dayer and went down 2-0 in the five-match series against their Sri Lanka counterparts.

After a top-order collapse, number seven Shahanur Rahman hit 72 and number eight Mohammad Saifuddin added 29 runs, but their scores were not enough as Bangladesh fell short by four runs in the second game at the Colts Cricket Club ground in Colombo.

Chasing 179, the visitors were bundled out for 175 with 17 balls yet to be bowled.

Right-arm paceman Asitha Fernando destroyed the tourists' innings by taking six wickets for 37 runs.

Bangladesh lost the first game by seven wickets.

The two teams will play their third game tomorrow in Colombo.

## Kane canes Sri Lanka

AFP, Nelson

Kane Williamson made a welcome return to the New Zealand side with an elegant century to set up a four-wicket victory over Sri Lanka in the fourth one-day international Tuesday.

Backed by lusty hitting from Corey Anderson and Luke Ronchi, New Zealand overtook Sri Lanka's 276 with 11 balls to spare and move 2-1 ahead in the seven-match series.

In a tense finish New Zealand needed 47 off 36 balls when the 24-year-old Williamson was removed for 103, his fifth ODI century.

Anderson was run out for 47 with New Zealand needing 32 runs with 26 balls left.

Up stepped Luke Ronchi to blast a rapid 32 including three sixes and Daniel Vettori hit a four as New Zealand finished with a flourish.

After losing the early wickets of Brendon McCullum, Martin Guptill and Ross Taylor cheaply, an unflustered Williamson led the rescue mission, first in partnership with Grant Elliott and then with Anderson.

### SCORES IN BRIEF

**SRI LANKA:** 276 all out in 49.3 overs (Dilshan 44, Sangakkara 76, Jayawardene 94, Thirimanne 19; Southee 3-59, Milne 2-28, McClenaghan 2-58)

**NEW ZEALAND:** 280 for 6 in 48.1 overs (Guptill 20, Williamson 103, Elliott 44, Anderson 47, Ronchi 32 not out; Mathews 1-16)

**Result:** New Zealand won by 4 wickets and lead 7-match series 2-1.

**Player-of-the-match:** Kane Williamson.



Ace golfer Siddikur Rahman and amateur golfer Samaun Anjum Auroni began a new journey in their lives. The two golfers were bound by wedlock through a lavish ceremony at the Kurmitola Golf Club last night.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

## Eng thrashing for India

AFP, Brisbane



Pacemen Steven Finn produced a career-best performance to lead England to a nine-wicket thrashing of India in both countries' second outing in a triangular one-day series in Brisbane on Tuesday.

India's decision to bat first backfired when they were dismissed for just 153 in 39.3 overs, with Finn exploiting the Gabba's pace and bounce to claim five wickets for 33.

In reply, England cruised to victory in just 27.3 overs giving them a much-needed confidence boost ahead of the World Cup in Australia and New Zealand that kicks off next month.

Their recent one-day form has been very poor, but they were never stretched with the bat as they finished on 156 for one, with opener Ian Bell unbeaten on 88 and James Taylor on 56 as they notched their first win under new captain Eoin Morgan.

Stuart Binny, who top-scored for India with 44 in his return to the side, claimed the

only wicket to fall, that of opener Moeen Ali for eight.

After losing to Australia on Sunday, the Indian batsmen struggled to cope with the lively wicket.

Finn, on the other hand, made the most of it to claim his first five-wicket haul in 49 one-day internationals, including a number of prized Indian scalps.

He did most of his damage to the top order, as India lost their way after being in a sound position at 57-1.

Seamer James Anderson, returning to the English side after injury, claimed the first wicket, removing the struggling Shikhar Dhawan for one, before Ajinkya Rahane and Ambati Rayudu steadied the Indian cause with a 56-run stand.

### SCORES IN BRIEF

**INDIA:** 153 all out in 39.3 overs (Rahane 33, Rayudu 23, Dhoni 34, Binny 44; Anderson 4-18, Finn 5-33)

**ENGLAND:** 156 for 1 in 27.3 overs (Bell 88 not out, Taylor 56 not out; Binny 1-34)

**Result:** England won by nine wickets. **Player-of-the-match:** Steven Finn.

## Rajib, Sagar lead rating chess

SPORTS REPORTER

GM Enamul Hossain Rajib and IM Minhazuddin Ahmed Sagar shared the lead at the close of the seventh round of the Prime Bank 17th International Rating Chess Tournament at the Bangladesh Chess Federation yesterday.

Rajib and Sagar beat FM Saif Uddin and Enayet Hossain respectively to maintain their joint lead having 6.5 points each.

IM Abu Sufian Shakil, FM Aminul Islam, FM Mohammad Javed, FM Mehdi Hasan Parag, CM Sohel Chowdhury, Anisuzzaman Jewel and Mohammad Sherajul Kabir were in joint second position with 5.5 points each.

## BD thumped by Poland

Will face Oman in quarterfinals

SPORTS REPORTER



Bangladesh finished third in Pool B of the Hockey World League (Round-2) after suffering a 0-5 defeat against Poland in Singapore yesterday, which set a quarterfinal clash against Oman.

The men in red and green, who lost 1-5 against Japan in their opening fixture before bouncing back with a 6-1 win against Mexico, were completely outplayed by Poland, the 18th ranked side in the world. The Poles made a frenetic start, scoring two goals inside the five minutes, after the match had started with a minute's silence observed in memory of late Bangladeshi hockey legend Jummun Lusak.

Polish skipper Pawel Bratkowski scored the two opening goals in the third and fifth minute of the match from penalty corners. Bangladesh coach Gobinathan Krishnamurti made as many as six substitutions immediately, managing somewhat to stem the flow

of goals. However, the Polish skipper completed his hat-trick in the 22nd minute, converting yet another penalty corner.

The poles scored two more goals in the 42nd and 44th minute -- one from open play and the other from a penalty corner -- to complete the goal fest.

The result meant Bangladesh finished third in Pool B with three points from three matches, behind pool winners Poland and Japan and above Mexico.

Later in the day, Oman beat Ukraine 2-1 to claim the second spot in Pool A, which ensured they will be facing Bangladesh in the quarterfinals tomorrow.

Bangladesh, ranked 30th in the world, have had relatively less success against 22nd ranked Oman in recent years. Having beaten the gulf nation by 6-1 goals at home during the Asian Games Qualifiers in March last year, Bangladesh went on to lose against the same opposition by 2-3 goals in the Games proper in September. Prior to those matches, Bangladesh had lost against Oman by 2-4 goals in the 2013 Asia Cup.

## Junaid's WC uncertain

AFP, Lahore

Pakistan's left-arm pace-man Junaid Khan has been ruled out of the upcoming one-day series in New Zealand because of a leg injury, fuelling doubts about whether he will play in next month's World Cup.

The Pakistan team leaves for New Zealand late on Tuesday to play two one-day internationals on January 31 and February 3, with all-rounder Bilawal Bhatti replacing Junaid in the 15-man squad.

The 25-year-old, who is one of his country's most promising young seamers, sustained his injury during a short training camp in Lahore last week.

## 'Rein in the motormouth'

AFP, New Delhi



India's media on Tuesday lashed out at David Warner over his repeated verbal clashes with Mahendra Singh Dhoni's touring team, demanding the aggressive Australian opener be reined in.

"Brakes on motormouth Warner" and "Talkative Warner crosses the line" read two headlines in Indian newspapers after Warner was fined 50 percent of his match fee for demanding Rohit Sharma "speak English" during Sunday's one-dayer in Melbourne.

"Warner has a knack of getting into trouble. Despite warnings in the past he does not seem to learn," the Times of India wrote, referring to his constant run-ins with the Indians during the preceding Test series.

The Hindustan Times said Indian team managers had decided to ignore Warner rather than react to the sledging.

"The Indian team management, despite all the verbal volleys that flew from the Aussie camp, confirmed that the team had decided to not react and concentrate in getting back to

winning ways," the paper wrote.

The Australian fielders had taken offence when the Indians went for a single off an overthrow which they wrongly believed was in breach of cricket etiquette.

The reporter for the Wisden India website covering the series said Warner's behaviour was unwarranted and would one day "come back to bite him very badly where it hurts".

"Warner is also the perfect example of a man fighting for all the wrong causes, however strong his conviction might be that he is doing the right thing," the website wrote.

"He does not suffer from white line fever so much as define it. One day, it will come back to bite him very badly where it hurts."

"Australia have made 'playing hard but fair' one of the most laughable cliches in the cricket world. By their estimation, everything they do is 'hard but fair', but everything the opposition does is unfair."

Warner admitted he should not have confronted Sharma but said the pair had been engaging in "friendly banter" during the match, which Australia won with six balls to spare despite a century by Sharma, and he didn't feel the need to apologise.