

# SPORT

## Rubel gets over difficult times

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh pacer Rubel Hossain has said that while he did go through a 'difficult' last one month, which saw him face rape charges and land in jail for a brief period, he has managed to revive himself mentally.

"Yes, I was under a bit of a mental stress. But at this point of time I have nothing of that in my mind. I am not thinking about those issues right now. My main target is cricket and I want to play for my country. I am going to the World Cup and this in itself is a very big deal for me.

"All I am thinking of right now is how I can do well for my country," Rubel told reporters at Mirpur yesterday.

"For a few days, I went through a tough phase in my life. But I can't be stuck, I want to move on. We have a very important mission ahead of us and we need to focus on that. We need to see how we can be successful," he added.

The right-hand paceman reckoned that the conditions in Australia and New Zealand, which are different when compared to the home grounds, would help him as a bowler. He hoped to be able to use the extra bounce to his advantage.

"We are not used to playing on bouncy wickets so we need to keep our line and length right. We have to make the most of the time that we are getting over there during preparation, in order to adjust. I like to bowl bouncers, so hopefully I can do well.

"We are also working on our death-bowling and that will be an important aspect. We are working on how we can check the run-flow towards the end," said Rubel.

Rubel, who was charged under the Women and Children Repression Prevention Act, is currently on bail.



Captain Mashrafe Bin Mortaza hands over Bangladesh's World Cup jersey to Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at the Gonobhaban yesterday. The 15-member squad, which leaves for Brisbane on Saturday, spent a special evening with the PM on the eve of their departure.

PHOTO: PMO



## TIGERS' VENUES DOWN UNDER

NAJMUN NOOR

For a relatively new venue like the Manuka Oval, where Bangladesh will open their World Cup campaign on February 18, the outfield isn't substandard but not the most pleasant sight either when compared to international venues in the Oceania region. Bangladesh's performance against lowly Afghanistan has to be convincing in advance of the schedule with Australia being fully aware of the growing stature of Afghanistan as an irksome and menacing opponent capable of causing upsets. Bangladesh will also have to be aware that fortunes are evenly balanced for sides batting first or second here. Speculations have varied in both extremes -- there's been testimony based on soft bounce occasionally manifested in games already played but the organisers and curators alike would rather label it being hard and bouncy. Of course, Bangladesh will rely on their spin



"doctors" and good and agile legs in a heavy field if Afghanistan were about to kick start a stormy blitzkrieg. The venue is not replete with mammoth scores and not by the high and mighty

teams either. *The author is a marketing professional from the airline and telecommunications industry. He is a former Bangladesh national cricket player.*

## Tamim has got fever

SPORTS REPORTER

Tamim Iqbal didn't take part in practice yesterday as he was suffering from fever.

The left-handed opener is going through a rehabilitation programme and gradually taking on work-load after successfully undergoing a surgery on his left knee.

"Yes, he is suffering from fever but it is nothing serious. Tamim is working as per the rehabilitation plan and improving well," said BCB's senior physician Debashish Chowdhury yesterday.

Tamim will not fly with the team for Brisbane on Saturday as he will first fly to Melbourne on January 25 where he has to take an injection, before joining the team in Brisbane.

## FIFA to give Tier-1 status

### De Kruif takes charge Saturday

SPORTS REPORTER



Thailand and Malaysia, two of the six participating teams, yesterday confirmed that they will send Olympic (U-23) teams for the Bangabandhu Gold Cup international football tournament as part of their preparation for the 2016 Olympic Qualifiers.

This means the third edition of the Bangabandhu Gold Cup has all but turned into a competition of U-23s as Bahrain and Singapore had earlier confirmed to send their Olympic teams for the tournament, scheduled from January 29 to February 8 in Dhaka and Sylhet.

However, hosts Bangladesh and Sri Lanka, the two lowest FIFA ranking sides of the tournament, will field senior sides in the invitational tournament, which will be recognised as FIFA Tier-1 competition. The FIFA Competitions Committee has ensured that the tournament will be recognised as FIFA Tier-1 competition, subject receiving

relevant information provided, informed Bangladesh Football federation general secretary Abu Nayeem Shohag.

Nevertheless, the participation of four Olympic teams may give Bangladesh an edge on home soil and they will be hoping to grasp the opportunity with both hands.

"Malaysia's decision to send U-23 team will make our group a bit easier but we cannot sure how strong their team will be," said coach Saiful Bari Titu. "No matter which team from Malaysia comes, we will need to perform on the pitch and the first match against Malaysia will be very important for us."

The former Bangladesh international however believes they can beat Sri Lanka to ensure last-four berth.

Meanwhile, Abahani midfielders Shahedul Alam Shahed and Abdul Baten Komol yesterday had their first practice session with the national team at the Bangladesh Krira Shikkha Protisthan in Savar yesterday. The booters will play their second and final practice match against Sheikh Russel KC on Saturday under the guidance of Lodewijk de Kruif, who is scheduled to arrive here Saturday morning.

## Afridi's desire

DAWN.COM, Karachi

Pakistan all-rounder Shahid Afridi said during an interview that he will try to wrest back the record of scoring the fastest ODI century when Pakistan tours New Zealand and during the World Cup, NDTV reported.

The flamboyant batsman said if he achieves the record, it would be a memorable farewell for him and his fans from the limited overs version of the game.

"You never plan out to set such records. It just happens when you have a very special day and your confidence is sky high. If everything works out for me and it is my special day than I will try to improve the record set by AB de Villiers in New Zealand or in the World Cup," Afridi said in the interview.

Afridi said that he was happy to see someone of de Villiers class hold the record for the fastest fifty and century in ODIs.

"He played like a champion to get the record and it was his special day," he said. South African de Villiers broke the record against the West Indies on Sunday scoring a century from just 31 balls.

Afridi held the record for the fastest one-day hundred for nearly 17 years after blasting 102 off 37 balls against Sri Lanka in Nairobi.

## Make or break against Oman

SPORTS REPORTER



Bangladesh face a do-or-die battle against familiar foes Oman today in the third quarterfinal of the Hockey World League (Round-2) in Singapore. A win against the gulf nation will keep Bangladesh's hopes of making it through to the third round alive while a defeat will effectively end their campaign, making remaining place-deciding matches as mere academic activity.

Assistant manager of the Bangladesh team, Rafiqul Islam Kamal, informed that the team went through a practice session as well as video analysis session of their previous matches yesterday.

Bangladesh reached the quarterfinal stage by winning a single match against Mexico while losing against Japan and Poland. In their 0-5 defeat against Poland on Monday, Bangladesh conceded four goals from penalty corners and failed to capitalise on either of the five penalty corners they availed.

"We have conceded most of the goals from the mistakes by defenders and goalkeeper while we could not avail our chances as the opposition goalkeeper made quite a few brilliant saves," said Kamal while speaking to The Daily Star over phone, adding that they will try variations in the penalty corners in the match against Oman.

According to the latest world hockey rankings prepared on December 15 but officially released only yesterday, Bangladesh (29) lie six places behind the Oman (23), reflecting the upper hand the gulf nation have enjoyed over Bangladesh in recent years. Bangladesh lost against Oman in two major tournaments -- by 2-3 goals in the Asian Games in September, 2014 and by 2-4 goals in the Asia Cup in August, 2013 -- both in neutral venues while beating the gulf nation by 6-1 goals at home during the Asian Games Qualifiers in March last year.

Kamal admitted that Oman are an opposition worthy of respect, but feels that if Bangladesh can play to their full potential, a win is quite attainable. The midfielders and forwards are in good form and that gives the Bangladesh think-tank hope, according to Kamal.

The match will start at 3:30pm Bangladesh time. Three teams from this ten-team zone will go through to the third round.

## Sledging no worse now

BBC ONLINE



England bowler James Anderson insists sledging in cricket is no worse in the modern game than in previous years.

Australia's David Warner clashed with Rohit Sharma last week when he told the India batsman to "speak English".

The International Cricket Council has warned that on-field spats will not be tolerated at the World Cup next month.

But Anderson said: "I don't think at the moment there is any more sledging than there's been in the history of cricket -- it's gone on for years."

ICC chief executive David Richardson said: "Over the last six months there have been too many examples of player behaviour going too far."

"Since then, we have done a lot of work with our umpires and match referees to ensure they are much more proactive in terms of policing behaviour on the field."

"For the World Cup it will be no different -- and at all pre-event briefings with the teams, the match referees will be making sure that message is delivered loud and clear."

Former New Zealand batsman Martin Crowe has suggested using football-style red and yellow cards to combat dissent.

Anderson was cleared of a serious

misconduct charge last summer following an incident with Ravindra Jadeja at Trent Bridge, but the 32-year-old Lancastrian, who has played 185 ODIs, believes there is a place for verbal jousting between opposing players.

"I don't think it should disappear from the game. I think it's quite entertaining when it's done in the right manner," Anderson said.

"I think guys have got to use their heads a little bit and be a bit smart about what is said on the field, if anything is said at all."

"But you don't want to take away the aggression from teams."

England and Australia meet again in the triangular series in Hobart on Friday.

## ULAB cricket meet from today

SPORTS REPORTER

The eighth ULAB Fair Play Cup, an inter-private university cricket tournament, will begin at the varsity campus today. Sixteen universities will take part in the T20 competition.

A total of 32 matches will take place and the final will be held on February 11. The teams have been divided into four groups. The top two finishers of each group will then participate in the knock-out second round. The champions will be awarded Tk 40,000 while the runners-up will receive Tk 25,000.

## Proteas secure series

STAR SPORT DESK



Hashim Amla and Faf du Plessis struck unbeaten half-centuries as South Africa raced to a nine-wicket victory over the West Indies in the third

one-day international at Buffalo Park yesterday and took a winning 3-0 lead in the five-match series.

Chasing a paltry target of 123, Amla scored 61 while du Plessis scored 51 to complete the chase in 24.4 overs after opener Rylee Rossouw had departed for just seven runs.

Earlier, the West Indies collapsed to 122 in 33.4 overs after electing to bat first. Marlon Samuels made 26 but no other West Indian batsmen reached 20 in a dismal performance on a good pitch.

Imran Tahir claimed a career-best four for 28.

Philander had opening batsmen Dwayne Smith and Chris Gayle caught behind and fast bowler Dale Steyn followed up with the wickets of Narsingh Deonarine and Denesh Ramdin as the West Indies stumbled to 43 for four.

Samuels looked the one batsman capable of playing a major innings before he was caught on the long-off boundary off Tahir.

SCORES IN BRIEF

WEST INDIES: 122 all out in 33.4 overs (Samuels 26, Carter 18, Russell 16, Holder 17 not out, Benn 18; Philander 3-27, Steyn 2-21, Tahir 4-28)

SOUTH AFRICA: 124 for 1 in 24.4 overs (Amla 61 not out, du Plessis 51 not out; Holder 1-14).

Result: South Africa won by 9 wickets to take 3-0 lead in the series.

Player-of-the-match: Vernon Philander.

## AUSTRALIA DAY Wilcock wishes Tigers well

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Australian High Commissioner in Dhaka Greg Wilcock expressed hopes that the Tigers would play strongly in the ICC World Cup in Australia and New Zealand from February 14 to March 29.

Referring to Bangladesh's group match against hosts Australia on February 21, the high commissioner said: "Although my loyalty to the Bangladesh team might lapse that day, I otherwise look forward to seeing the Tigers perform strongly during the ICC World Cup 2015."

He made the remark at a reception on Tuesday at his residence marking the 'Australia Day', which also highlighted the upcoming World Cup.

Bangladesh team players also attended the programme besides diplomats, officials of the Bangladesh Cricket Board, civil society members and journalists.

## Sagar grabs sole lead

SPORTS REPORTER

IM Minhazuddin Ahmed Sagar grabbed sole lead with 7.5 points after beating FM Mehdi Hasan Parag in the eighth round of the Prime Bank 17th International Rating Chess Tournament yesterday.

Joint overnight leader rand Master Enamul Hossain Rajib lost against FM Aminul Islam slipped to second position. Rajib, playing with black pieces, lost against Aminul after 35 moves to stay with 6.5 points and shared the second position along with Aminul, FM Mohammed Javed and IM Abu Sufian Shakil.