



Bangladesh skipper Mashrafe Bin Mortaza shares his ideas with coach Chandika Hathurusingha at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

# Mashrafe's test today

SPORTS REPORTER

Zimbabwe's warm-up game against Bangladesh Cricket Board XI in Fatullah today has, all of a sudden, become the center of attention. The inclusion of skipper Mashrafe Bin Mortaza in the side has helped the match garner a lot more interest than it ideally would have gotten.

According to coach Chandika Hathurusingha, Mashrafe, who was recently hospitalised after being diagnosed with dengue, has been

included in the BCB side so that he can prove his fitness levels.

Speaking to reporters at Mirpur yesterday he said: "Mashrafe is still recovering. He is still not 100 percent. He is playing the practice game and he needs to prove his fitness. We will take a call after the practice game and see how it goes."

The pacer has indeed struggled with fitness and it was something which was evident during the training sessions, some of which he couldn't take part with full intensity, in the last few days.

The kind of character that

Mashrafe is, there's no doubt that the Narail Express is going to give it his all in order to prove himself.

At the moment Bangladesh's pace scenario does seem to be in a bit of a problem. Apart from Mashrafe, Taskin Ahmed and Rubel Hossain are also unfit. While this has paved the way for Al-Amin Hossain and Kamrul Islam Rabbi, it's still likely that Bangladesh will depend more on their spinners against Zimbabwe.

"If you notice, we have been playing both ways. So, I think we are equipped with both. If we want to go with spin we can go with spin. We have enough

spinners in our team to cause trouble for any opposition. At the same time we have fast bowlers," said Hathurusingha, when asked whether the Tigers would use spin as their main weapon.

"But I am worried about our fast bowling unit because of the injuries. We will decide according to the opposition's limitation and the pitches. Whatever we do, I am confident we will do well," he added.

Mushfiqur Rahim, Jubair Hossain, Liton Das and Sabbir Rahman are the other players from the national side included in this warm-up game. The

# Chandika confident, not complacent

SPORTS REPORTER



The one point that was ascertained following yesterday's pre-series press conference in Mirpur was that when coach Chandika Hathurusingha exudes confidence, he leaves no stone unturned.

Some of his statements -- 'we can beat any team by a big margin' or 'we are good enough to attack with either spin or pace' -- reflected the huge amount of confidence brimming within the Tigers and also his growing belief in this team.

A notion that he brushed aside, one which was repeatedly brought up in the media in the last few days, was the threat of complacency. Would there be any lack of motivation amongst the Bangladeshi players in this series? Hathurusingha certainly didn't think so.

"There's no complacency in our team. We all know that we are playing for your national team and no one is taking things for granted because there's a lot of competition for places. Whoever takes things lightly will be in a very dangerous situation."

"We have good, healthy internal competition. Sportsmen are driven by challenges so I think we are in a good situation. The other good thing is that the guys who are coming are capable of doing their job in hand," explained the Sri Lankan.

"I can't take any international series lightly and there's no difference when it comes to Zimbabwe. If we want to try things we will always use the other platforms, like practice games or A team games. This [the ODI series] is going to be full-on," he added when asked if the Tigers were looking to

experiment a bit with the side in this series.

In terms of the quality of the sides, the year 2015 has arguably been the best ever for the Tigers. It's an achievement that the coach savoured.

"I think we played dominant cricket against every team [this year]. If you see in the last three series, whenever we won matches we won them by either 7 to 8 wickets or 80 runs."

"I think it's the way we are playing. We need to stick to our game-plan and strengths. If we can do that then we can beat any team by a big margin," said Hathurusingha.

While the series may not have the same amount of excitement as the ones that took place earlier this year, there still remains a lot to prove for a number of players in the side. The younger players, the likes of Sabbir Rahman and Liton Das especially, will want to up their game and make the most of this opportunity.

A number of these players, including Soumya Sarkar, toured South Africa and India with the A team recently but failed to make much of an impact. In fact, Soumya failed to post a half-century in the 12 innings that he played in those countries. That however, wasn't an issue that the coach was concerned about.

"They [Soumya and Liton] are world class players I am telling you. Every player goes through bad patches or lean periods in international or first-class cricket."

"What we are trying to do is to give them opportunities and experience in different conditions and give them chances because they haven't played enough cricket. They are young players. I have no doubt that they can do what we have seen them do before," said Hathurusingha.

# Siddikur returns to favourite course

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh's premier golfer Siddikur Rahman is hoping to take advantage of his terrific track record at the Delhi Golf Club as he aims for a third Asian Tour win at the Panasonic Open India, starting today.

The 30-year-old golfer has won once at the venerable Delhi course and finished runner-up on three occasions in the last five years. He has also secured eight other top-10 results, making him one of the top favourites to contend for the title. In fact the second of Siddikur's two Asian Tour victories came at this course in November 2013 in the Hero Indian Open.

However, despite his impeccable track record at the tree-lined Delhi course, Siddikur is slightly disappointed that he has not won more Asian Tour titles at the venue.

"I finished second so many times here and that could have been victories. I wish I won more at Delhi because this golf course suits my game. I have good confidence here and that's the key to playing well here," Siddikur told Asiantour.com.

Siddikur will be among an elite cast which include two-time Asian Tour number one Thaworn Wiratchant of Thailand, Marcus Both of Australia and Chikka S of India. Siddikur will also have compatriot Jamal Hossain Mollah and Dulal Hossain competing in this 400,000-dollar event.

# Soumya uncertain

SPORTS REPORTER

Top order batsman Soumya Sarkar received a blow ahead of the start of the ODI series against Zimbabwe as he hurt his ribcage area while bowling in Mirpur on Tuesday. He underwent an MRI yesterday morning at a city hospital, the report of which will be revealed today.

"After speaking to the doctor it seems as though there is a problem with Soumya. I will understand the seriousness of the situation once I get the report," said BCB sports physician Debashish Chowdhury.

According to sources, Soumya could well be diagnosed with a side strain. The report today will reveal the extent of Soumya's participation in the upcoming series.

# BD A take series

SPORTS REPORTER



A team effort from Bangladesh A led them to a series victory over their Zimbabwean counterparts at the Harare Sports Club yesterday as they beat the hosts by 36 runs and took an unassailable 2-0 lead in the three-match series.

Batting first, the visitors rode on half-centuries from Mohammad Mithun and Mosaddek Hossain to post a formidable 282 for 6. In reply, Zimbabwe A were bowled out for 246 runs.

Mithun, who had scored a century in the first unofficial ODI, posted a resolute 66 yesterday to anchor Bangladesh's innings. He scored five fours and two sixes in his 91-ball knock. He was well supported by opener Sadman Islam's 47 at the top. The duo shared a century stand for the second wicket and laid the foundation for the second-string side. By the time both batsmen were sent back, the visitors were cruising at 146 for 3 in 32.1 overs.

While the foundation was good, they needed a boost from the lower order and that came in the form of Mosaddek. He came in at number six and smacked a 60-ball 50 to provide much needed impetus late in the innings.

After the exchange, Tajul Islam took the crucial wicket of Zimbabwe opener Brian Chari -- when the batsman was on 69 -- and stifled the hosts' chase.

Muktar Ali took two wickets each, while Mahmudul Hasan and Shuvagata Hom scalped one each to help restrict the hosts.

# Sharjah Test on a knife-edge

AFP, Sharjah

Pakistan grabbed two early wickets to hit England hard in their chase of a 284-run target as the third and final Test heads for an intriguing finish after day four in Sharjah on Wednesday.

England were 46-2 with Alastair Cook (17) and Joe Root (six) fighting hard against Pakistan's spinners, led by Shoaib Malik who claimed both the wickets on a weary Sharjah stadium pitch.

England will need another 238 runs on the fifth and final day on Thursday for a series-levelling win while Pakistan will fancy a 2-0 victory.

Pakistan won the second Test by 178 runs in Dubai while the first ended in a draw in Abu Dhabi.

It was Malik, due to quit Test cricket after this match, who provided Pakistan early breakthroughs, trapping Moeen Ali (22) leg-before and then bowled Ian Bell (nought) in successive overs.

Cook and Root survived confident leg-before appeals off Zulfiqar Babar in the dying moments, much to the relief of the England camp.

England's best chase in all Test cricket is 332 they did against Australia at Melbourne in 1928 while they have not crossed more than 209-run target in Asia, achieved against Bangladesh at Dhaka five years ago.

England could have dismissed



Mohammad Hafeez raises his bat after reaching 150 on the fourth day of the final Test against England in Sharjah yesterday. PHOTO: REUTERS

Pakistan for less than 355 in their second innings and subsequently chasing an easier target had they not dropped two crucial catches of Hafeez on 113 and Asad Shafiq, who made 46, on 29.

It was pacesman Stuart Broad who led the attack admirably with 3-44 and

was ably backed up by James Anderson (2-52) to help England take the last six Pakistan wicket with the second new ball for 126 runs.

It was only through Shafiq and Srafraz Ahmed's 55-run stand for the seventh wicket that Pakistan's lead soared over 250 plus as the pair batted with determination.

Spinner Samit Patel dismissed the Pakistan wicket-keeper for 36 before Broad had Shafiq to leave Pakistan at 354-9.

England took the second new ball after 81 overs with Pakistan at a lurch score of 229-4 and Broad struck in the fifth over, trapping Pakistan skipper Misbahul Haq leg before for 38.

Misbah hit two fours and a six and became Broad's 50th wicket in the calendar year in 13th Test, the best in 2015.

Misbah and Hafeez added an invaluable 93 runs for the fifth wicket.

Hafeez, dropped by Broad off his own bowling when on 113, drove Anderson for two to complete the 150-mark, his 4th 150 plus in all Tests but a run later holed out to spinner Ali at long-on where Bell took a simple catch.

## SCORES IN BRIEF

PAKISTAN: First innings 234  
ENGLAND: First innings 306  
PAKISTAN: Second innings 355 (Hafeez 151, Azhar 34, Misbah 38, Shafiq 46, Sarfraz 36, Riaz 21, Anderson 2-52, Broad 3-44)

# Victorians launched

SPORTS REPORTER

The Comilla Victorians formally launched their campaign for the third edition of the Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) Twenty20 Tournament yesterday at the Westin Hotel.

AHM Mustafa Kamal, chief adviser of the team, unveiled the team's logo.

The franchise also officially declared Mashrafe Bin Mortaza as the captain of their team. Former captain Khaled Mashud was named team manager while Mohammad Salahuddin was named head coach. The three were called on stage and their designations were officially introduced by the chairman of the Victorians, Nafeesa Kamal. Soon after, the jersey of the team was unveiled.

Speaking on stage, Mashrafe said that he expects a tough BPL contest this season.

"Due to the lottery all the franchises have formed their best possible teams for the BPL. We will try to play to the best of our ability and be successful,"

## LOCAL SNIPPETS

SPORTS REPORTER

The semifinal line-up for the girl's singles of the 29th Bangladesh ITF Junior Tennis Championship completed yesterday.

Australia's Mays Lisa beat China's Hu Xiaowei 7-6, 6-1; Netherlands' Tran Lian beat China's Yang Jing Jing 6-1, 6-3; Netherlands' Tran Demi beat China's Zhao Haibo 6-2, 6-1 while Sri Lanka's Karunaratne beat Ong of Philippines 6-0, 6-1 to move into the semifinals.

In the boys' singles, India's Sunish, Jagtiani, Mahadevan, Dahiya, Patel and Sonami, Chinese Taipei's Yu Hsiang and Syria's Hazem Naw advance into the quarterfinals.

## Baki and Co frustrate

Country's top shooter Abdullah Hel Baki disappointed yet again as he failed to qualify for the final round of the 10m air rifle event in the 13th Asian Shooting Championship in Kuwait yesterday.

The Commonwealth Games silver medallist finished 18th among 56 shooters after scoring 618.1 points, 4.5 points less than the last and eighth qualifier. Baki's teammate Shovon Chowdhury finished 23rd with a score of 615.2 points.

Young shooters Risalatul Islam and Jesimuzzaman followed the footsteps of their senior teammates by finishing 12th and 18th in the 10m air rifle junior event. Risalatul scored 614.4 points while Zesimuzzaman shot 606.4 points.

## Archers' shambolic show

The Bangladeshi archers produced poor results in the team and mixed events of the 19th Asian Archery Championship in Bangkok yesterday.

Bangladesh finished second from bottom in all three compound events -- men's, women's and mixed team. Men's team scored 1955 points to finish 12th among 13 teams while women's team became ninth among 10 teams with a score of 1979 points. The mixed team finished 11th among 12 teams with a score of 1325 points.

Earlier on Tuesday, men's recurve team became 11th among 19 teams with a score of 1915 points while women's team finished 12th out of 15 teams with a score of 1772 points.

## Goals galore in KFC football

The KFC National Women's Football Championship yesterday witnessed a total of 88 goals including 13 hattricks in six matches at different venues.

BJMC overwhelmed Chuwadanga 26-0, Ansar & VDP thrashed Noakhali 25-0, Tangail crushed Sirajganj 15-0, Gopalganj beat Munsiganj 9-0, Thakurgaon blanked Panchagarh 8-0 and Satkhira defeated Bagerhat 4-1 in Jessore.

## Kalshindur emerge Dhaka division champions

Dhobaura Kalshindur Government Primary School of Mymensingh emerged Dhaka division champions in the Bangamata Gold Cup Football Tournament beating Majbari Hurannecha School of Rajbari district by 8-0 goals at Sheikh Fazlul Haque Mani Stadium in Gopalganj yesterday. Primary and mass education minister Mostafizur Rahman distributed prizes among the winners as the chief guest.

# ICC security team arrives

SPORTS REPORTER

A four-member International Cricket Council (ICC) security team arrived in Dhaka yesterday to inspect the venues of the 2016 ICC Under-19 Cricket World Cup, which is scheduled to take place in Bangladesh from January 22 to February 14, 2016.

As per the itinerary, the team is scheduled to meet the High Commissioners of United Kingdom and Australia today. The Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) will then present them with a security plan after which they will travel to Cox's Bazar to inspect the venue.

They also reportedly have meetings scheduled with the National Security Intelligence, the Directorate General of Forces Intelligence and the Home Ministry. Towards the end they will have a final

# SL cruise to series win

AFP, Colombo

Sri Lanka took a 2-0 lead in the three-match ODI series against the West Indies after a thumping eight-wicket victory in the rain-curtailed second one-dayer in Colombo yesterday.

Chasing a revised target of 225, the Lankans raced home with nine balls to spare and eight wickets in hand, thanks to Kusal Perera's 92-ball 99 and an unbeaten 81 from Lahiru Thirimanne.

Earlier, the visitors managed to get to 214 before being dismissed on the fourth delivery of the 38th and final over, thanks to opener Johnson Charles' 70-ball 83 and 63 from Marlon Samuels.

The third and final one-dayer will be played on Saturday followed by two

## Erratum

In an article titled 'Mashrafe to lead BCB XI' on Wednesday's issue of The Daily Star Sport, we inadvertently wrote that Mashrafe Bin Mortaza is the 'captain of the ODI and Test' teams. He is actually the ODI and T20I captain of the Bangladesh national cricket team. We regret this mistake. --Sports Editor