

SPORT



THE WAY AHEAD: Bangladesh T20I skipper Masrafe Bin Mortaza (R) has a chat with coach Chandika Hathurusingha during the national team's training session in Chittagong yesterday.

PHOTO: ANURUP KANTI DAS

Chance to face T20 demons

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Chittagong



Bangladesh national captain Masrafe Bin Mortaza said the Tigers are hopeful of doing well in the upcoming Asia cup despite the fact that they are yet to be sure of their footing in the shortest format like they are in 50-over cricket.

Having won only 15 of their 50 Twenty20 matches, this is the one format where Bangladesh still look like newcomers even with the Asia Cup and the ICC World Twenty20 in India in March around the corner.

"We have had good practice. Everyone is here except Mushfiq [Mushfiqur Rahim], Tamim [Iqbal] and Shakib [Al Hasan]. The others also practised well here," he said while talking to reporters at the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium in Chittagong yesterday.

Expectations will be high after the Tigers' home successes last year. While those results came in their favourite 50-over format, this time the Asia Cup will be held in the T20 format.

About Bangladesh's weakness in T20s, he said: "We are not up to the mark in the T20 format. If we can do well here our confidence will increase. We are working towards that aim. We have some experienced players and some youngsters; if they can do well I hope something good will happen."

"We are doing some specific practices and trying to overcome the problems we have in the T20 format," he said, adding that it was natural that fans would come to the matches with high expectations. "We will try to deliver in the match with the same confidence with which we are practising."

Praising the U-19 cricket team the captain said it is a great achievement that they handled the pressure of playing in the country and became the third-placed team in the tournament. He hoped at least four to five cricketers will play in the national team in the future. He also praised Bangladesh U-19 captain Mehedi Hasan Miraz for his achievement of becoming man of the tournament and hoped that the youngster can perform far better for the national team in the future.

One talking point surrounding the Asia Cup is Tamim Iqbal's absence as he is expecting his first child with wife Ayesha Siddika during the tournament and has been granted leave. "His absence is unfortunate for us and for Bangladesh cricket, but obviously family comes first. He will become a father. I think it is necessary for him to stay with family now."

The Bangladesh team have been staying in the port city since February 8 and after today's practice they are scheduled to fly back to Dhaka for final preparations before taking a short break.

The Asia Cup will kick off with the Bangladesh-India match on February 24 at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur.

ICC lauds hosts Bangladesh

SPORTS REPORTER



International Cricket Council (ICC) CEO Dave Richardson yesterday congratulated the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) for successfully hosting the ICC Under-19 World Cup. He said that there was 'no stone left unturned in providing a secure environment'.

"I would like to express our appreciation for the BCB for hosting a very successful event.

Well done, not only to the Bangladesh board but also to the match venues and the practice venues. You can imagine how many of them there are that had to be used, thank you for all of them," said Richardson at a city hotel yesterday.

"One of the most important facets of hosting any event, unfortunately, is the safety and security. In this respect, I'd like to express our appreciation to the prime minister of Bangladesh, the government and all the security agencies who worked together with the ICC and BCB.

"Certainly, for this event, probably more so than any previous event, absolutely no stone was left unturned in providing a secure environment. We realise this was a massive undertaking, some would say even a top one, on the occasion. I don't think we can be too careful with matters of safety and security, and the standards have been set for all our future events going forward," he added.

Richardson further said that the success of the tournament proved that the ICC had taken the right decision when they allowed

Bangladesh to host the World Cup despite Australia's pullout.

"I think we're very pleased with the fact that we made the decision to carry on with the tournament, despite Australia's decision to withdraw their team. I think the outcomes and the results show that that was the correct decision.

"A member country is not entitled to just withdraw from a tournament, it has to be justified. Now, as to whether Cricket Australia was justified, those questions have already been answered. At this stage, to carry on with the tournament was the correct decision, and we're

pleased with it," said Richardson.

"Another point is we can't force a particular country into competing. It's up to them. As I said, it might run the risk of being in breach of a contract, but that's the decision they need to take," he added.

He also congratulated the West Indian team for winning the championship and putting on a brilliant show.

"We heard lots of rumours and stories about the young people in the Caribbean being attracted to other sports like basketball or football, etc. But I think the talent that we saw during the tourna-

WORLD TWENTY20 Everyone except Darren agrees

REUTERS, Kingston

The threat of the West Indies being forced to field a second string side at the World Twenty20 was averted on Sunday when 12 of 13 players in the original squad signed the contracts which had caused a standoff with the board.

West Indies Cricket Board (WICB) had given the players a deadline of Sunday to agree to the financial terms, which represented a sharp drop in pay compared to previous tournaments, or they would be replaced.

After a week of claim and counterclaim, with plenty of recriminations on both sides, only batsman Darren Bravo declined to take up the deal.

"The West Indies Cricket Board is in receipt of 12 signed contracts from players who were selected for the upcoming 2016 ICC World Twenty20 tournament," the WICB said in a news release on Sunday.

The WICB said that they had not yet decided on a replacement for Bravo.

SQUAD: Sulieman Benn, Jason Holder, Andre Fletcher, Darren Sammy (captain), Dwayne Bravo, Samuel Badree, Lendl Simmons, Jerome Taylor, Andre Russell, Marlon Samuels, Denesh Ramdin, Chris Gayle, Ashley Nurse and Carlos Brathwaite.

Mamunul's Tk 60-lakh move to Ctg Abahani

SPORTS REPORTER



Bangladesh captain Mamunul Islam yesterday signed a one-year deal with big spenders Chittagong Abahani club. The 28-year-old midfielder, who spent the last season with Bangladesh Premier League champions Sheikh Jamal Dhanmondi Club, signed the deal for 60 lakh taka, it has been learnt.

"It is a pleasure for me to be able to play for the club of my hometown. As per my knowledge, no Chittagong club have ever won the league title or the federation cup title. If I and the other players who are joining the club can deliver that success, it would be a great achievement for the club and the football lovers of Chittagong," Mamunul told reporters after the agreement signing ceremony at the corporate office of the club's football committee chairman, Ruhul Amin Tarafder.

Tarafder, who is also the chairman Saif Powertec Ltd, expressed his satisfaction over the signing of the country's best midfielder.

"I am very happy with getting Mamunul in my club and we have done everything according to the guidelines of the football federation," claimed the businessman.

After finishing ninth among 11 teams in the premier league last season, Chittagong Abahani spent took number of national players on loan and won the inaugural Sheikh Kamal Club Cup International Football Tournament title towards the end of the year. And ahead of the new season, they have already reportedly signed up national team players like Raihan Hasan, Sohel Rana, Ashrafur Islam Rana, Nasiruddin Chowdhury, Yeamin Munna, Toklish Ahmed, Rubel Mia and a few others.

However, the club have recently been dealt a blow by the sudden departure of coach Shafiqul Islam Manik. The club officials claimed that they would bring in a quality foreign coach soon for the next season.



ICC President Zaheer Abbas (C) speaks to the media during a press conference that took place at a city hotel yesterday following the end of the ICC Under-19 World Cup, as ICC CEO Dave Richardson (L) and BCB president Nazmul Hassan Papon (R) listen.

PHOTO: STAR

Shehzad, Wahab fined for scuffle

DAWN.COM

The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) on Monday fined left-arm fast bowler Wahab Riaz and opening batsman Ahmed Shehzad with 40 per cent and 30 per cent of their match fees respectively for 'inappropriate physical contact'.

Riaz was representing Peshawar Zalmi and Shehzad was playing for Quetta Gladiators during a PSL match on Sunday.

Gladiators, batting first, sent Shehzad and Asad Shafiq as their openers and the former was looking all set for a big innings until Wahab got rid of his middle stump in the fifth over.

The wicket followed an exchange of harsh words between the bowler and the batsman. TV replays showed Wahab provoking Shehzad by passing 'inappropriate' comments, to which the batsman reacted by colliding into the bowler.

The scuffle was, however, neutralised on the spot.

Aussie might crushes NZ

APP, Wellington



Australia inflicted a crushing innings defeat on New Zealand with a day to spare in the first Test in Wellington when they dismissed the home side for 327 on Monday.

In a Test that will be remembered for two majestic innings by Adam Voges and Usman Khawaja, as well as an umpiring howler, Australia won by an innings and 52 runs.

Voges scored 239 after he was wrongly given not out when bowled for seven. Bowler Doug Bracewell was adjudged to have sent down a no-ball, although TV replays showed it was a legitimate delivery.

New Zealand were on the back foot from the time they lost the toss and were 51-5 in the first session, according to skipper Brendon McCullum.

Nathan Lyon, Jackson Bird, Mitchell Marsh and Josh Hazlewood all shared the spoils as the last six New Zealand wickets fell for 149 on day four.

Australian captain Steve Smith said it was the first step in their quest to regain the number one Test ranking which will require them sweeping the two-Test series.

"We want to be number one in the world in all three formats and I think this Test match is a step in the right direction," he said.

"It was a pretty good toss to win. Having said that, we had to put the ball in the right areas for extended periods and I think we did that. We put the NZ batters under pressure and reaped the rewards."

"Conditions were difficult on that first morning," he said.

"We came up against a team who played a very, very good Test match and we were just a little bit short. It's not a reinvent the wheel situation but we've got to tidy up a few areas."

New Zealand had been set a target of 379 just to get in credit in their second innings after Voges' 239 set up Australia's first innings of 562.

The recognised New Zealand batsmen made starts, but were unable to turn them into big scores.

After getting to 218-7 it was left to the last three batsmen to add 109 runs. Tim Southee was in a one-day mood with 48 off 23 balls and Mark Craig contributed an unbeaten 33.

At the top of the order, Tom Latham scored 63 and Henry Nicholls, on debut, added 59 while Martin Guptill made 45 and Kane Williamson 22.

Williamson and BJ Watling are renowned as doughty batsmen capable of occupying the crease for a long time but neither lived up to their reputation in the face of a tight bowling attack.

Lyon occupied one end with his off-breaks and the quicks were rotated at the other with a plan for each of the batsmen.

SCORES IN BRIEF
NEW ZEALAND: First innings 183
AUSTRALIA: First innings 562
NEW ZEALAND: Second innings 327 (Latham 63, Guptill 45, Williamson 22, Nicholls 59, Craig 33 not out, Southee 48; Hazlewood 2-75, Marsh 3-73, Lyon 4-91)
Result: Australia won by innings and 52 runs.
Player-of-the-match: Adam Voges.



On the occasion of his 70th birthday yesterday, former Bangladesh national captain Shafiqul Haq Hira launched his autobiography entitled 'Keeping Gloves' - which includes details of his three-decade long career - at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur.

PHOTO: BCB