



LANDED: The Bangladesh cricket contingent is all smiles after reaching Dharamsala yesterday on a chartered flight. The players will get one day to get accustomed to the conditions before they play their first World Cup match against the Netherlands tomorrow.

PHOTO: BANGLARCHOKH

'Don't believe in heroism'

Tigers face the Netherlands tomorrow

AL-AMIN from Dharamsala



The Kangra airport in Himachal Pradesh of India is not one of those airports where you can find frantic activities. The gateway of a tourist destination typically sports a laid-back air for most of the day. But on Monday afternoon it was brimming with activity with the arrival of the Bangladesh cricket team on a special SpiceJet aircraft.

The moment the Tigers disembarked from the propeller-driven plane, they showed little sign of any jetlag, and more importantly weariness, after Sunday night's absorbing Asia Cup final against India.

"It's a bit hectic, but not that much. Professionally you need to get ready wherever you go and whenever you play," said Bangladesh batsman Mahmudullah Riyad while speaking to reporters at the airport.

The right-hander, who is going through a purple patch batting at number six or seven, also said that his quick-fire knock of 33 might have given his side a good total in the previous night's final but it was a tad disappointing to lose the final.

"It was a bit of disappointment. It was a very good opportunity for us [against India]. The way we played in the tournament, I think it was a big step forward for us," said the technically compact batsman whose late thrust is something new from a batsman who has given new meaning to the term power-hitting, a different skill in the Tigers' batting line-up.

Sporting a black sunglasses and with a mischievous smile on his face, Riyad outright rejected the idea of heroism that has been doing the rounds involving him ever since the World Cup last year, when he struck two magnificent back-to-back hundreds.

"I don't believe in heroism. I always try to contribute to my team and that's what I want," he said, adding that he wanted to continue with his different role in the coming ICC World T20, where the Tigers will have to go through the qualifying phase for a place in the Super Ten.

Asked if he would have an eye on scoring a century in the shortest version of the game, the soft-spoken batsman was more inclined to look at ground realities.

"You never know but it's difficult to score 100 from six or seven. It's a different format and at the moment I'm really enjoying my role in the team. I think our sessions in Khulna and Chittagong really helped me mentally. I'm scoring at the moment. But it might also be the case that I will get out to the first ball I face," added Riyad.

He also snubbed the notion that Bangladesh are a team only good at home.

"I don't think we are good at home only. We are now a good team capable of performing anywhere," said the confident batsman.

When asked how he is going to take the three qualifying games against Ireland, Holland and Oman in Dharamsala, especially after playing the Asia Cup final, he said: "From a mental perspective I want to take those games as build-up for the World Cup".

He signed off from the impromptu press briefing, addressing some pressing issues.

"Hopefully, we will be at the ground tomorrow (Tuesday) morning. We know it's cold here in January. I think the weather is good at the moment and we will play our first game [against the Netherlands tomorrow] during the day. So, the next two days are important for us."

INDIAN RHYTHMS

Of airports and winged globetrotters

AL-AMIN from Dharamsala

Dhaka's Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport is not the kind that travelling passengers would like to remember for all the good reasons. And for a frequent traveller like Arindam Chatterjee, a Kolkata-based consultant, Bangladesh's premier airport gives a false impression about the many wonderful things happening beyond that old-fashioned building.

"I stayed in Dhaka for 10 days on my recent visit and have imparted training in leadership skills to a multi-national company. But to be honest your airport needs to improve some basic things for the welfare of the passengers," said Arindam while having a chat with this reporter on his trip back to Kolkata.

Short in stature, Arindam may need assistance to heave his luggage down from the overhead baggage compartment of a plane, but his wisdom in the field of customer care is something our airport management can take serious note of. He observed that the travelling passengers need sympathy like a patient before any sort of medical procedure. He did not refer

to the newly-built Netaji Subash Chandra International Airport in Kolkata, but it was a pleasant change for someone who was making his first trip outside Bangladesh since 2006.

The airport in Kolkata is nothing special. It is like any other airport across Asia. It has got substantial and neatly arranged passport control desks, a well-defined transit area, standard luggage control mechanism and sports a neat and clean attire. And these are the basic things that the Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport is still struggling to provide.

Mosquitoes are quite dominant in Dhaka in this time of the year. But once this reporter entered the Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport on the night of March 5 for a flight to Dharamsala via Kolkata and Delhi, mosquitoes mobbed him like many others even through the green channel and inside the waiting aircraft. I'm not sure if a few brave mosquitoes made that one-hour trip to Kolkata. But once we were in the Subash Bose airport terminals, we felt absolutely secure from any mosquito menace and happily walked out through the exit gate with our luggage intact.

Honours even after first day

SPORTS REPORTER



The first day of the fifth round of the Bangladesh Cricket League belonged to the former national players. Islami Bank East Zone's Alok Kapali posted an unbeaten 121, while Walton Central Zone's Rakibul Hasan followed his double-century in the last game with a well-composed 114 at the grounds of the Sheikh Kamal International Cricket Stadium in Cox's Bazar yesterday.

Batting first, the men from the east were reduced to 29 for three early on. That's when Kapali and captain Mominul Haque joined forces to help their side recover. The duo put on a 115-run stand for the fourth wicket and brought them back into the game. Mominul, who was the main aggressor during the partnership, smacked a 105-ball 94. It was an innings that yielded two sixes and 12 fours.

After Mominul's departure, Kapali ensured that he stayed on till the end of the day and he received good support from Mohammad

Saifuddin. The former national batsman ended up scoring 15 boundaries in 251 balls.

East Zone finished on a healthy 277 for 5 and will be looking to further pile on the runs tomorrow.

In the day's other game, Rakibul's 114 helped Central Zone progress. Rakibul was well supported by Shuvagata Hom's 53. After both batsmen got out, Tanveer Haider and Sharifullah shared an unbeaten 42-run stand for the sixth wicket and took Central to 289 for five before the close of play.

While Rakibul hit 13 fours and a six, Shuvagata hit six boundaries during his 73-ball knock.

After day one, both matches are in the balance with all four sides in the game.

SCORES IN BRIEF

EAST ZONE: 277 for 5 (Kapali 121 not out, Mominul 94; Maman 2-25, Naem 1-26) v **NORTH ZONE**
CENTRAL ZONE: 289 for 5 (Rakibul 114, Shuvagata 53; Forhad 2-45, Razzak 2-98) v **SOUTH ZONE**

World T20 qualifiers kick off today

SPORTS REPORTER from Dharamsala

The qualifying round of the ICC World Twenty20 is set to kick off today at Nagpur, India, with Hong Kong taking on Zimbabwe in the Group B game at 3:30 pm BST. It will be a double header today with the Vidharbha Cricket Association playing host to the evening game between Afghanistan and Scotland.

Bangladesh -- in Group A along with Oman, Ireland and the Netherlands -- will also be playing the qualifiers with their first match to take place tomorrow against the

Netherlands in Dharamsala. The top team from each group will then join the Super Ten stage where the top eight T20I teams await.

However, there is bad news for cricket fans as it rained almost all day and night in Dharamsala on Monday. It also brought back the chilly weather with the mercury dropping as low as 19 degrees Celsius in the night. The unfriendly rain, which is very unlikely at this time of the season, places Bangladesh's scheduled morning practice session in danger.

Bangladesh reached Dharamsala yesterday evening after having contested the Asia Cup T20 final the previous night.

Bongo launches cricket website & android app

STAFF REPORTER

Bongo, an online content-on-demand platform launched a website and an android mobile application which will allow viewers to watch ICC WorldTwenty20 live.

It has exclusive contracts with the ICC.

The website is www.bongocricket.com and the mobile application is called Bongo Loaded.

The mobile application will be available on Google play store and will also be available on the iOS platform within the next ten days.

Speaking at a press conference at the ceremony that took place at The Daily Star, Navidul Huq, director of Bongo described the launch as a historical move.

In order to display the content the company has signed a contract with GTV and has also established partnerships with The Daily Star, Prothom Alo and Radio ABC.

Users will be able to watch live matches, clips and highlights, views live scores via the website and the application on the go.

The first round of the ICC World Twenty20 will begin today.

Roughing it to the HPCA



Himachal Pradesh Cricket Association ground in Dharamsala.

PHOTO: INTERNET

SPORTS REPORTER from Dharamsala



The Himachal Pradesh Cricket Association (HPCA) ground is a paradise for cricket fans. It is not just the scenic landscape that surrounds the venue, but its structure that made the ground unique. The venue is tempting but at the same time a bit deceiving for someone who wants to spend some good amount of money to enjoy a cricket match.

To be honest one has to have the necessary skill or some sort of trekking experience before thinking of watch-

ing a game in what is increasingly becoming a prominent venue in India, thanks mainly to BCCI secretary Anurag Thakur, who is a popular figure of Himachal Pradesh.

It was quite an experience for the army of Bangladeshi journalists on Monday for their maiden dash at the venue. They had to leave their rented cars about 1.5km away from the main entrance. It could have been a good constitutional had it been a walk on the plain. It was indeed a steep journey to and fro. Excessive security at the entrance added more pain as a spell of unfriendly rain kept the reporters in the open with no shelter for protection from the biting drops visible. It is like a

lonely cathedral in the middle of a mountain. A nearly two-hour journey was finally over when the media support staffs appeared with accreditation cards. At that moment it seemed the ordeal was over and access to the venue appeared a matter of time.

But the security officials were rigid that reporters should only get through Gate Number 3. The disgruntled reporters, after a failed argument, embarked on a steep ride up the hill before they were called back and were allowed to enter through the famed entrance. However, it was not before a security check-in, which was as well-drilled and thorough as in an airport.



Ahad Mohammad Bhai (L), managing director of Bongo, delivers his speech on the inauguration of the Bongo cricket app at The Daily Star Centre in the capital yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR