

# An entertaining critique on our T-20 campaign

PLEASURE IS ALL MINE



SHAH HUSAIN IMAM

**A** sports correspondent of a Bangla national daily covering the New Zealand-Bangladesh match in Kolkata was apparently



PHOTO: AFP

puzzled over how crowd support at the Eden Garden swayed from one side to the other. He expected, in his conventional way of thinking, that neighbouring Bangladesh would have more support from Kolkata crowds than far away New Zealand. He was proved both right and wrong. Well, when Bangladesh was fielding to New Zealand's batting the stadium roared to Mustafizur's devastating 5/22 spell. The Black Caps folded up within 145 runs largely due to Satkhira wonderboy's slower off cutters difficult to read from his effortless pacy bowling style. A 'Joy to watch', seasoned commentators sang in praise of the young lad. So far so good, but the same crowd switched support to New Zealand almost 180 degrees when the Black Caps' spin attack had Bangladesh skittle to its lowest T-20 score - 70 runs. For the first time the margin of defeat was 75, being larger than runs Bangladesh had put on board. Boria Majumder, a cricket writer and commentator from Kolkata, when asked by BBC about Bangladesh's debacle, said there was no planning in batting at all. The problem with opening batsmen remained, tested run-getters like Mahmudullah and Sabbir Rahman came down the batting order; in fact, the chase was thrown off gear by some out of form batsmen. It was also 'inexplicable' how in Eden Garden, of all places, Pakistan could garner support vis-à-vis

Bangladesh having been given a target of 202 runs to prevail over Pakistan in the opening super ten round. Only the Bangladeshi crowd stood by the national side through thick and thin. Given the high passion aroused by India-Pakistan matches, one might have

expected a slice of that rivalry to radiate through some kind of a cheer for Bangladesh struggling through an uphill chase of a big Pakistani total. Again that was not to be!

The explanations for such apparently contrarian, if not contradictory, behavioural pattern among crowds could be two-fold: First, it may be a sign of maturity to value performance over any sentimental nationality leanings; and secondly, crowd psychology prefers to be on the winning side.

One wishes though, things were that simplistic, especially between India and Pakistan, and in an extended sense, the two countries' approach to the rising momentum of Bangladesh cricket.

West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee presided over cricket diplomacy bringing legendary Pakistani cricketers Imran Khan, Wasim Akram and Waqar Younis under the same panoply with Indian legends Sunil Gavaskar, Sachin Tendulkar, Virendra Sehwag and above all, Amitabh Bachchan. This goodwill gesture followed on the heels of Pakistan preferring Eden Garden to Dharmashala in Himachal Pradesh as the venue apparently prompted by security reasons. Whether the change of arena according to Pakistan's choice or the goodwill gesture of cricketing bonhomie prior to the match did anything to pare down the effect of Pakistan's defeat in the encounter, belongs to the realm of speculation. But this much is certain that the Pakistani team on arrival back home had to endure chants - 'shame, shame'. Waqar Younis, chief coach of Pakistani side,

whose extended term ends in May offered his apologies and said he was ready to resign.

An AFP report sourced in Pakistan stated that barring 'low ranking' Bangladesh side, Pakistan couldn't win against any side in the Super 10.

Contrast this 'low ranking' snide remark with a noted British commentator underscoring Bangladesh's new profile as it were in the following words, "India had a 'narrow escape from Bangladesh' in her encounter with the country." If fact, the narrowest of escape it was when the equation was two runs and three balls with two set Bangladeshi batsmen opting for unnecessarily big hits.

Were it not for that Indian victory over Bangladesh, India would have been out of reckoning. 'What ifs' have been a constant companion of cricketing history that courted oblivion in the face of what is and who emerges the winner at the end of the day.

Bangladesh's another standout performance was the close match with Australia in the shadows of Tamim not playing and Taskin and Arafat Sunny reported for suspect bowling action. Those who replaced the bowlers in limbo couldn't perform well enough. Mashrafe's captaincy, otherwise praiseworthy, came under criticism in this match - field placement, sticking to expensive bowlers and the like.

One more thing - the batters must acquire the skill of placing shots not into the hands of the fielders but through to the fence or over it.

We must learn from our mistakes that have been too widely discussed and sharply pinpointed to bear any repetition.

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**B**REXIT - Britain's exit from the European Union. Biscuit - Britain's exit from direct cargo flights from Bangladesh. A team from the UK arrives to assess the airport (cargo) security and recommends a British company (duh!) which is hired at warp speed. Talk about being on 'emergency export duty'. By the way, we miserably fail the dummy explosives test - delay triggered by the head of the team way after he leaves Dhaka.

The fate of passengers may follow that of cargo. Reshuffle at the Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh (CAAB) and the Biman board. Bangladesh Biman Chairman of seven years is replaced. Aha! The history behind the song [I did it] My Way by Frank Sinatra, aka, the 'Chairman of the Board'.

More emergency duty. The Bangladesh Bank heist fast tracks a World Bank recommended US/Indian IT firm to get on board. Next, UNICEF may tell me I'm doing a terrible job of raising my kids and recommend me a Swiss nanny at US\$ 200 per hour who I can afford only through a micro loan from the World Bank.

As if things couldn't get any worse, Malaysia halts the hiring of 1.3 million Bangladeshi workers. That is a pre-emptive action by Malaysia since these 1.3M workers would probably eventually not have been able to travel to KL anyway due to not getting their machine readable passports on time - a job contracted to the Malaysian firm IRIS.



The first all-women flight crew of the Royal Brunei Airlines.

PHOTO: COURTESY

Mess inside, so look outside. Taking cue of 'inside, looking out', the US Government abruptly drops the case against Apple (also backed by Google and Facebook) for Apple's refusal to unlock the iPhone of the San Bernardino, California terrorist. A third party from Israel successfully unlocks the iPhone. Dude. You guys could have done it at a bargain with the bloke sitting under the over-bridge in Farmgate. Three whole months to get the truth out of the iPhone through Apple, something Bangladesh could have accomplished in three minutes with a

boiled egg, the fear of which proably compels the Philipino casino businessman expressing his willingness to return US\$14.4M of Bangladesh Bank's money.

Meanwhile, the terrorists are having a field day - Ankara, Brussels, Baghdad, Lahore, though I didn't see many making their Facebook profiles don the shades of the Turkish, Iraqi or Pakistani flags.

Riding the wave, Seif Eldin Mustafa rides the Egypt Air flight out of Alexandria and commandeers it to Cyprus, only to deliver a four page letter to his Cypriot ex-wife. The bomb on his waist turns out to

be fake, not before a selfie (which was not a selfie) with the British passenger, thinking this would be his (the Brit's) last. As one Egyptian foreign ministry official said of Mustafa: "He's not a terrorist, he's an idiot. Terrorists are crazy but they aren't stupid. This guy is." Midlife crisis causes a midair crisis. Yes, it was all for a woman - watch out for Troy 2. Cyprus, plagued by its financial woes, is not capable of even having a proper hijacking.

And Donald Trump? He promptly capitalizes on the goings on and says Pakistan is a big problem. Sure, but with him in the White House, Pakistan will pale into a Disney ride with...Donald Duck.

Not to be outdone, France's Women's Rights Minister Laurence Rossignol lashes out at women in hijab as being 'consenting slaves', akin to those in the American South of yesteryears (yes, she did use the 'n' word to refer to the latter). Really? What about the Royal Brunei Airlines flight with an all-female crew in hijab flying to Saudi Arabia, a country where women are not allowed to drive? So, I guess the hijabi flight deck crew's adhering to the clearance from Jeddah air traffic control (ATC) to land is an act of 'consenting slavery'. It could however be a another story after landing the Boeing 787 Dreamliner - taxiing on the runway may be considered as driving...

Wow! So much, so quick. You can fool me today on April 1, or fool G W Bush twice, but 160 million people? Not so fast - hang in there Tonu, justice will prevail.

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