

SPORT

'Venues lifeless without matches'

SPORTS REPORTER

Generally there has been a cry among sports organisers for more grounds in the country, but on the contrary the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) is now crying out for more matches at their grounds all over the country.

BCB's grounds committee chairman Hanif Bhuiyan said yesterday that they now have enough grounds and to maintain these they are spending a huge amount of money. Unfortunately however, the dearth of international matches has resulted in most of the grounds being unused for long periods of time.

"In reality we don't get a lot of international matches to host in our country and what we get, we host mostly in Dhaka and Chittagong. But we have a number of international venues. So I want to ask the district sports organisations to arrange tournaments locally with the help of the sponsors so that the grounds will be utilised properly," said Bhuiyan.

"Everybody cannot only depend on the BCB; rather they have to undertake their own initiatives. Just go 15 to 20 years back; we had seen exciting cricket tournaments in district towns like Mymensingh and Comilla, but unfortunately those days are gone. We are ready to give the local organisers full support if they take any initiative. There will be no life in the venues if you don't arrange matches in the grounds," he continued.

The Shaheed Chandu Stadium in Bogra is considered a good international venue but it last hosted an international match in December 2006, since when there have only been local matches there, the sporadic nature of which saddens Hanif. He also wants to see the ball rolling regularly at the



Once a venue that hosted five passionately attended ODIs and one buzzing Test, for much of the past 10 years the Shaheed Chandu Stadium in Bogra has become host to foliage growing through cracks in the neglected galleries in the absence of any international engagements. PHOTO: STAR

fantastic Sylhet International Cricket Stadium where a few ICC Under-19 World Cup matches took place this year after the T20I between Ireland and Netherlands in March 2014.

"You know the board is also giving some grants for district stadiums but what is the point if there are no matches? Local tournaments can not only keep the stadiums alive but also bring new talent for the country," opined Hanif.

Despite the bleak picture regarding the disused state of maximum grounds, the BCB is however driving to create more.

"We have to prepare more grounds because a

ground in an area creates opportunities for the locals. We are going to make a good ground in Keraniganj where third-division matches will take place from next year," Hanif added.

"In the past there were a number of pitches at the outer stadium, which is the Paltan Maidan, and I will sit with the NSC [National Sports Council] officials so that we can prepare some pitches there for Old Dhaka youths to play cricket. It's really unfortunate that Old Dhaka was once a rich breeding ground for cricketers like Roquibul Hasan and Aminul Islam, but now that is history," he said.

Rubel thrust into spotlight

SPORTS REPORTER

Having built a formidable pace arsenal, all of a sudden Bangladesh find themselves in danger of playing their next series against England in October without a couple of their top pacers.

The injured Mustafizur Rahman is set to undergo shoulder surgery this month, which will sideline him for at least six months, while Taskin Ahmed is working on his bowling action and is yet to be cleared by the International Cricket Council.

In such a time of need, the Tigers will look to their second-highest wicket-taker in international cricket to step up. Truth be told, Rubel Hossain has gone through a rough patch ever since his heroic performance against England in the 2015 World Cup, which took Bangladesh through to the quarterfinal stage for the first time.

He suffered a calf injury in September during Bangladesh A's tour of India and then had been excluded from the national contract for not following his rehabilitation schedule properly.

The 26-year-old has however shown signs of improvements. He did well in the recently concluded Dhaka Premier League where he scalped 19 wickets at an average of 29. It was a good performance considering that he had just returned from injury.

Speaking to reporters at the Sher-e-

Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday, Rubel said that he was trying his best to find his way back into the team.

"I was injured for a long time and I have missed a lot. This camp is my chance to improve my fitness levels again," said Rubel.

"My main strength is that I can bowl with a lot of power. So lately I have been working on increasing my pace. During training, I try hard to match my previous pace. Judging by the way I bowled in the Dhaka Premier League, I don't think I have decreased too much," he added.

Apart from trying to increase his pace, the bowler is also trying to learn new variations.

"I am actually working on a new delivery. I basically grip the ball in deep between my fingers and then once the ball lands on the pitch, it becomes a bit slow. It's deceptive, but I need to work on it. I am also trying to add some other variations," he said.

While many reckon that the absence of Mustafizur Rahman may just give Rubel, who last played for Bangladesh in July 2015, a chance to make it back to the squad, the pacer himself isn't looking at it the same way.

"Mustafizur is a different kind of bowler and you can't compare me to him. I, and the entire team, really want him to get back to the national team as soon as possible. Bangladesh needs him. When he plays, the opponents are automatically under pressure, he is that good," said Rubel.

Shakil in pole position

SPORTS REPORTER

International Master Abu Suafian Shakil shares the lead in the Commonwealth Chess Championship as the second round came to a close at Waskaduwa in Sri Lanka yesterday.

Shakil, who shares the lead with 30 other participants, beat Sri Lankan counterpart Fernando JM Marlon during his second round board, earning him the maximum two points available from as many matches.

Shakil overcame another Sri Lankan, Abeyasinghe HMJ Janandani, in the first round and as per a Bangladesh Chess Federation press release; he faces Malaysian Looi Xin Hao in the third round.

A total of 185 players from 10 countries which include nine grandmasters, two women grandmasters, six International Masters and four women International Masters are participating in the event.

Shakib quiet again as Jamaica lose

STAR SPORT DESK



The outcome was much the same in a re-match of Saturday's Caribbean Premier League match between Jamaica Tallawahs and St Lucia Zouks with the latter going on to win their second match in two days by defeating Jamaica by 17 runs in Lauderhill on Sunday.

Bangladesh all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan once again had a good day with the ball while not having much say with the bat. After Tallawahs skipper Chris Gayle chose to field first, Shakib was given the new ball and his left-arm spin proved to be the most economical suit for the Jamaica bowling for the second day running. He bowled three overs on the trot in the Powerplay overs and gave away only 21 runs without picking up a wicket.

Despite Shakib's efforts the batting from the Zouks was strong as they lost only three wickets while amassing 194 runs. Opener Andre Fletcher (70 off 54)

and Johnson Charles (64 off 35) did the lion's share of the scoring during their 104-run partnership, before an unbeaten 17-ball 42 from retired Australian all-rounder Shane Watson provided the finishing fireworks.

Gayle's 15-ball 30 offered early hopes of a stirring chase, but his dismissal kept Jamaica behind the required rate. Shakib came in to bat at number eight when 49 runs were required off 21 deliveries, but he could only score a run-a-ball nine as Jamaica came to a halt 17 runs short.

Despite losing two matches in a row the Tallawahs have their playoff place secured. They are scheduled to play against top-placed Guyana Amazon Warriors on Wednesday.

SCORES IN BRIEF

ST LUCIA: 194 for 3 (Fletcher 70, Charles 64, Watson 42 not out; Powell 2-45)

JAMAICA: 177 for 6 (Gayle 30, Powell 28, Sangakkara 24; Shillingford 2-30, Watson 1-26)

Result: St Lucia Zouks won by 17 runs
Player-of-the-match: Shane Watson



Shift in focus? With Mustafizur Rahman injured and Taskin Ahmed (L) yet to clear his bowling action, Bangladesh's pace department might have to depend a lot more on Rubel Hossain (R) during the England series in October this year. PHOTO: STAR

Lehmann to coach Aus till WC '19

AFP, Sydney

Cricket Australia said Monday it has extended the contract of head coach Darren Lehmann until October 2019 to keep him in place during the next Ashes series and World Cup.

Lehmann's contract was due to expire in June next year. CA said it has been extended to cover the 2017-18 Ashes series in Australia and the 2019 ICC Cricket World Cup in England and Wales.

Since Lehmann's appointment in 2013 he has taken Australia's Test and one-day teams to the top world ranking, won a home Ashes series 5-0, beat South Africa in a Test series away from home and won last year's ICC Cricket World Cup.

"2019 is such a big year for Australian cricket and we wanted certainty and stability for the playing group, with both the coach and assistant coach contracted, as we build towards the Ashes series and the 2019 World Cup," CA's executive general manager Pat Howard said in a statement.

India in firm control with big lead

AFP, Kingston



West Indies captain Jason Holder earned a richly-deserved wicket at the end of an excellent spell of bowling, but India remained firmly in control at 425 for six at lunch on the third day of the second Test at Sabina Park in Jamaica on Monday.

That gave the tourists a lead of 229 runs after the home side's meagre first innings total of 196.

Ajinkya Rahane survived a searching examination from medium-pacer Holder and benefited from a dropped chance off leg-spinner Devendra Bishoo to be

unbeaten on 74 at the interval.

However the West Indies finally enjoyed a bit of success for their discipline and persistence with the ball when wicketkeeper-batsman Wriddhiman Saha was ruled leg-before to Holder for 47 on the stroke of the interval.

Their sixth-wicket partnership was worth 98 runs and further solidified India's already dominant position in the match, even though they were again kept to a pedestrian scoring rate with only 67 runs added in the two hours of play.

Holder, who had gone wicketless through 54 overs in the series, troubled Rahane consistently in a nine-over spell after replacing fast bowler Shannon Gabriel 40 minutes into

the session.

In one particularly testing over, he had three vehement LBW appeals turned down and twice beat the outside edge of the well-set batsman.

Bishoo should have claimed a wicket at the other end but Rajendra Chandrika failed to hold on to a low diving effort at backward-point when Rahane, on 65, top-edged an attempted cut.

A weather forecast of torrential rain on the fourth day suggests that the Indians may be inclined to pursue quick runs in the day's second session and seek to put the West Indies under greater pressure in their second innings by the close of play.

Earlier Lokesh Rahul's Test-best of 158 anchored India's formidable reply to the West Indies first innings total of 196.

Making the most of a recall to the team as replacement for the injured Murali Vijay, Rahul interspersed moments of rare aggression with long periods of watchful defiance over his near seven-hour occupation of the crease in compiling his third hundred in just six Tests.

Notwithstanding the mid-innings wobble, India remain firmly in control with Ajinkya Rahane and Amit Mishra at the crease at lunch. At the moment, the way things are going it seems as though India are cruising to a two-nil lead in the series.

'Tried to keep it simple'

PTI, Kingston



Going through a purple patch, centurion Lokesh Rahul said his intention to stay positive and aggressive on the second day paid off as he put India on the driver's seat in the second Test against West Indies here.

Opening the innings, Rahul scored a composed 158 on day two to help India finish at 358/5, a lead of 162 runs with still three days to go. It was the highest individual score for Rahul, who had notched up his maiden ODI hundred on debut in Zimbabwe. This is his third Test ton overall and all three of them have come outside India -- Australia, Sri Lanka and now in the Caribbean.

Even so, his place in the eleven is not confirmed yet, as he was a replacement for the injured Murali Vijay. That could change in the near future.

"To me, it didn't look too difficult. I went in there and started hitting the ball from the first or second ball. Obviously, I've been spending a lot of time in the nets. It's a different challenge once you go out there and when you have the pressure of the game," Rahul said after the end of the second day's play.

"I tried to keep things simple. I've been in good form for the last 3-4 months. I've been moving well, and hitting the ball really well.

"My plan when I went out yesterday was to put the loose balls away and be positive and have a very aggressive intent.

"I am really happy with the way I batted. I don't know whether it is easy or tough, but the simplest things if you do it right, it pays off all the time.

"That is to play to the merit of the ball, you think the ball is there to be hit, and you feel confident, then you hit the ball. I tried to keep it simple," he added.



LOKESH RAHUL



India batsman Ajinkya Rahane carried on with the plan of batting West Indies out of the second Test. India increased their lead to 229 runs with four wickets remaining by lunch of the third day's play yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

SCOREBOARD				
WEST INDIES: First Innings 196				
INDIA: First Innings (overnight 126 for 1)				
Rahul c Dowrich b Gabriel	158			
Dhawan c Bravo b Chase	27			
Pujara run out	46			
Kohli c Chandrika b Chase	44			
Rahane not out	74			
Ashwin lbw Bishoo	3			
Saha lbw b Holder	47			
Extras: (b-8, lb-3, w-6, nb-9)	21			
Total: (For 6 wickets in 151.4 overs)	425			
Fall of wickets: 1-87, 2-208, 3-277, 4-310, 5-327, 6-425.				
To bat: Mishra, Shami, Sharma, Yadav.				
Bowler	O	M	R	W
Gabriel	28	8	62	1
Cummins	21.4	4	74	0
Holder	32	12	66	1
Chase	29	3	91	2