

SPORT



Bangladesh captain Mashrafe Bin Mortaza is given a hearty welcome from Bangladeshi expats in New Zealand upon the team's arrival at their hotel in Tauranga yesterday. The Tigers will play the second T20I against the hosts at the nearby Bay Oval in Mount Maunganui tomorrow. PHOTO: BCB

We have the ability to win: Mahmudullah

SPORTS REPORTER from Tauranga



So far Bangladesh have been far from impressive in New Zealand. The Tigers are still struggling to put their best foot forward on the demanding trip as they lost all three ODIs as well as the first T20I of the three-match series. Taking a bus drive from Napier, where they suffered a six-wicket defeat to the home side in the first T20I on Tuesday, the Mashrafe Bin Mortaza-led team reached the harbourside city of Tauranga last evening.

The team reached there with renewed hopes to turn the table while they play the remaining two T20 International matches on January 6 and 8 respectively at the Bay Oval in Mount Maunganui; a major residential, commercial and industrial suburb of Tauranga, located on a peninsula to the north-east of Tauranga's city centre.

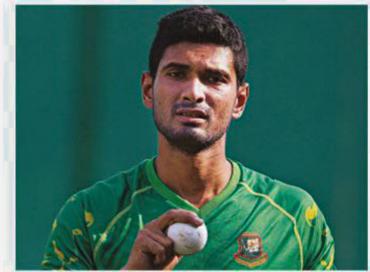
"Definitely we still have a chance. We have the belief in ourselves as we have the ability and strength to beat New Zealand," said Mahmudullah Riyad yesterday morning, while talking to reporters before leaving Napier.

"If we can correct the small mistakes we made in the previous matches then we have a good chance to win the match. We need to perform as a team and at this moment it's our target to perform as a team. I think that we are

improving as a team but it's always a tough challenge away from home," he continued.

Riyad, who got back among the runs with a 52-run innings in the first T20I after failing in the three-match ODI series, rued squandering the opportunities they have so far created on tour.

"We have created an opportunity even in the last game but unfortunately we failed to



capitalise on it. New Zealand are a strong team on their home soil but we went close in the last few matches but failed to build on the good platforms. So we have to capitalise on the opportunities," said Riyad.

He also said that they would need to make a fresh start and a good start is always important for success.

Regarding the first T20I, Riyad said that they didn't have the experience of playing such a peculiar ground and they were 15 to 20 runs short.

Aus visit almost certain

SPORTS REPORTER



Cricket Australia's CEO James Sutherland has said that Australia have a high chance of touring Bangladesh in late 2017.

Speaking to ABC radio yesterday, Sutherland said: "I think they are quite high," when asked about the chances of the tour going ahead.

"What we saw at the end of last year was the England team tour Bangladesh. We certainly saw very strong security around the team. We actually sent our head of security, Sean Carroll, over to observe for seven or 10 days, just to get a little bit of comfort on the systems and processes that were in place.

"Anything can happen between now and then, and we continue to monitor what's happening in Bangladesh, but we work on the assumption that we're going to play and we start to plan accordingly. At the moment I would assume that we would be playing two Tests over there," he added.

Chairman of Bangladesh Cricket Board's media wing, Jalal Yunus, said that he was happy to hear the positive statement from Sutherland.

"They came here during the England series and were quite satisfied. Honestly speaking, it was always safe to play in Bangladesh and it still is. The kind of security that our government provides is state level and it's not easy to penetrate that. The teams are given VVIP security.

"We know that they want to come here in September 2017 to play two Tests and we are happy. We want to play as many Tests as possible. We are yet to fix an official schedule for the tour," Yunus told The Daily Star yesterday.

Australia were supposed to tour Bangladesh in September 2015. However, Cricket Australia (CA) postponed that tour indefinitely on security grounds. The CA also did not send its Under-19 team to Bangladesh to take part in the World Cup. They were the only team to back out.

The pristine treasures of Lake Taupo

AL-AMIN from Tauranga

Our taxi driver Gazza made an interesting disclosure when we were waiting for the robot to turn green from red.

"This is the only signal you will find in Taupo," the giant-sized Birmingham man quipped as we were heading to Tauranga after a one-and-a-half hour stop-over in that small but beautiful city in the north island of New Zealand.

The biggest tourist attraction of this small and sleepy city is its magnificent Lake Taupo, the crystal clear blue water of its vast reservoir is perhaps unmatched as far as the world's pristine lakes are concerned. Bigger than Singapore in size, this is the most popular tourist destination for people of this part of the world. We were actually lucky to enjoy our time under glorious sunshine in the great lake as we were heading from Napier to Tauranga, where Bangladesh will play their next two T20 Internationals later this week.

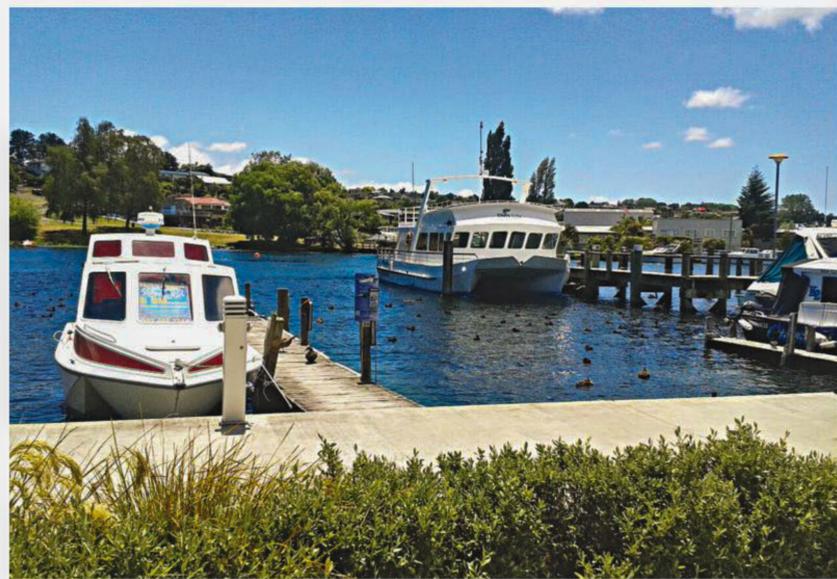
The 142-kilometre drive may be a pleasing experience through the beautiful landscape surrounded by hills, pine forest and vast farmlands, but the site of Lake Taupo from a distance gave us the impression that we were looking at a blue pearl on the lap of a white Alpine Mountain. I have been to Phewa Lake in the Phokhara Valley of Nepal or our own Kaptai Lake in Chittagong. Those are certainly beautiful but Taupo is not only enormous in size, it is a beholder's paradise and provides full value of multi-

ple entertainments. Born out of a violent volcanic eruption as long as 2000 years ago, this pristine lake is primarily a popular destination for fishing. But starting from scuba diving, sailing, short trips on old-fashioned and modern powerboats to enjoying seafood

minute drive from the lake, is another very popular tourist destination.

"This thundering 11-metre high waterfall is the most visited and photographed natural attraction in New Zealand. The sheer volume of water flowing over the falls amounts to 220,000 litres per

the millions of tonnes of water flowing in a small bridge. Standing on that bailey bridge and looking at the cascading flow of water, one thing everyone in the mix did was take photographs as long as they could. The young ones tried to wink down before being refrained by their parents. It was a day to



and a cup of espresso coffee sitting on the shore, it has got everything for you and your family to enjoy a never-before-experienced holiday.

Every lake has a system to flush out its overflowing water and the Huka Falls, which is only a five-

second -- enough to fill one Olympic sized swimming pool in 11 seconds!" quotes a popular article. But you hardly feel that mighty flow of water even when you are as close as 100 metres of that narrow strip between two granite banks. The best place to see

enjoy the tranquillity and the beautiful fury of nature. The only disturbing aspect of our whole trip from Napier to Tauranga was a road accident -- a head-on-collision between two cars -- on the freeway as we were moving from Taupo to Tauranga.

Double-ton at 18

SPORTS REPORTER



Bangladesh Under-19 skipper Saif Hassan became the youngest Bangladeshi player to score a double-century in first-class cricket yesterday when he posted a powerful 204 for Dhaka in the second day of the National Cricket League's sixth-round matches yesterday.

Saif, who is 18 years and 66 days old, took over the helm from Mosaddek Hossain who had scored his first double-century at the age of 19 last year.

The player who generally loves to stay on the wicket for as long as possible, as opposed to Mosaddek and some of his other stroke-loving peers, had an overnight score of 131. He added 73 more runs and reached his double-hundred off 405 balls after lunch. On the whole, he hit 20 fours and a six at the Sylhet International Cricket Stadium against Barisal.

Saif though was not the only one to reach 200 runs yesterday. His partner, Taibur Parvez, who had an overnight score of 70 ended up scoring a career best 242 off 302 balls. Taibur reached his double hundred after Saif with the help of 22 boundaries in 275 deliveries. He unleashed himself after reaching that mark and scored 42 runs off

the next 27 balls before being dismissed by pacer Towhidul Islam.

Dhaka declared soon after on 588 for six. Five of those six wickets were taken by Towhidul who, unlike his teammates, had a good day on the field with figures of five for 87 in 20.5 overs.

After the exchange, a tired Barisal reached 101 for 6 in 22 overs with Shahadat Hossain and Mohammad Sharif taking two wickets each.

Sylhet's Alok Kapali turned out to be the third double-century of the day when he smashed 10 sixes and 12 fours to reach 200 off 266 balls against the hosts at the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium in Chittagong.

The former national player reached his 50 off 97 balls and his 100 off 204 balls. He scored his next 100 runs in just 62 balls. It was a brilliant phase which saw him smash five fours and eight sixes. Sylhet declared on 555 for seven and then reduced Chittagong to 115 for three before stumps yesterday.

Meanwhile, half-centuries from Nasir Hossain, Liton Das and Dhiman Ghosh helped Rangpur take a crucial first innings lead against Rajshahi at Bogra.

At Fatullah, Khulna were in firm control against Dhaka Metro after Anamul Haque's century.



SAIF ... 204

BSPA to felicitate sportspersons

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh Sports Press Association (BSPA) yesterday disclosed the nominees and awardees of its sports awards for the years 2015 and 2016, with three players being nominated for the sports person for each year.

Cricketers Mahmudullah Riyad, Soumya Sarkar and Mustafizur Rahman have been nominated for the sports person of 2015 while swimmer Mahfuza Khatun Shila, cricketer Tamim Iqbal and hockey player Ashraf Islam were nominated for sports person of 2016. The winners will be declared at the Kool-BSPA Sports Awards programme to be held on January 30 at a hotel in the capital.

Dhoni quits captaincy

REUTERS, New Delhi



Mahendra Singh Dhoni has stepped down as India's limited-overs captain but will still be available for selection, the Indian cricket board (BCCI) said on Wednesday.

"Mahendra Singh Dhoni has informed the BCCI that he wishes to step down as the captain of the Indian Cricket Team from the One-Day Internationals and the T20 Internationals formats of the game," the BCCI said in a statement.

Dhoni not only holds the record for most matches as captain of an international side, with 331 games across all formats, but also is the only captain to have won all three ICC Trophies -- ODI World Cup, World Twenty20 and Champions Trophy.

Considered India's most successful ever captain, Dhoni stunned everyone when he announced his decision to quit test cricket in the middle of an Australian tour in 2014, handing the mantle to Virat Kohli who is likely to be also given the reins in the shorter formats.

The BCCI, however, did not immediately name a successor. The 35-year-old Dhoni, who was named captain in 2007,

led the cricket-crazed country to the top of the world test rankings and is the only player to captain in more than 50 matches in each of the three formats.

Having made his international debut in 2004, Dhoni, whose life inspired a Bollywood biopic in 2016, quickly rose up the ranks in Indian cricket.

One of Dhoni's most iconic moments came in 2011 when he hit a massive six to end the country's 28-year wait for the ODI World Cup.

"On behalf of every Indian cricket fan and the BCCI, I would like to thank MS Dhoni for his outstanding contribution as the captain of the Indian team across all formats," BCCI chief executive Rahul Johri said in a statement.

"Under his leadership, the Indian team has touched new heights and his achievements will remain etched forever in the annals of Indian cricket."

Dhoni led India in 199 ODIs, of which he won 110 and lost 74, and was captain in 72 Twenty20s, of which India won 41 and lost 28. His last series as captain came against New Zealand at home, where he led the Indian side to a 3-2 series win.

Dhoni will be available for selection for the ODI and Twenty20 series against England, starting Jan. 15.



SCORES IN BRIEF

DHAKA VS BARISAL DHAKA: 588 for 6 dec (Taibur 242, Saif 204; Towhidul 5-87) BARISAL: 101 for 6 (Al-Amin 34, Gazi 25; Shahadat 2-21, Sharif 2-28, Mosharraf 1-17)	RAJSHAHI VS RANGPUR RAJSHAHI: 191 and 41 for 1 (Junaid 21; Sajedul 1-9) RANGPUR: 351 all out in 94.5 overs (Dhiman 97, Nasir 68; Mamun 5-81)
KHULNA VS DHAKA METRO KHULNA: 207 and 272 for 3 (Anamul 122, Tushar 73; Hider 1-46)	SYLHET VS CHITTAGONG SYLHET: 555 for 7 dec (Kapali 200 not out, Jaker 78; Iftekhar 3-105, Nayeem 2-189)
DHAKA METRO: 122 all out in 36 overs (Sharifullah 38; Razzak 3-15, Ashiqzaman 3-31, Al-Amin 3-39)	CHITTAGONG: 115 for 3 (Yasir 53 not out, Nafees 51 not out; Abu 2-16)