



PHOTO: KAZI TAHSIN AGAZ APURBO

"You see, freedom has a way of destroying things."
— Scott Westerfeld, writer

SNAPSHOT

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Save Sundarbans, ensure sustainability

The article "How Valid Are the Claims in Favour of Sundarbans?" has drawn my attention as it reveals a wretched scenario. From the beginning of civilisation, human beings have endeavoured to strengthen control over different natural elements to initiate development projects. But over time, theories of sustainable development and environment sustainability gained prominence and the world is now more conscious while implementing development projects. Surprisingly, it seems quite the opposite in Bangladesh.

Bangladesh is one of the most vulnerable countries facing climate change. We are already experiencing variations in rainfall and increased temperature which have affected our lives and livelihoods in recent years. While we should take long-term eco-friendly policies to ensure environment sustainability, we are instead destroying major forestlands. Whereas different environment protection agencies expressed deep concern over the project, the government is trying to justify the construction of the coal-fired power plant at Rampal near the Sundarbans through half-truths and misleading arguments. It's time to step back from such short-sighted decisions.

The authorities concerned should take into account the ecological impacts on the forest and biodiversity as part of the efforts for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

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Death of the Brahmaputra in pictures

I was moved by the pictures showing what sand mining has done to one of our country's greatest rivers, the Brahmaputra. There are grievous ecological consequences and threats to local livelihoods and environment as a result of the industry. Authorities, by their negligence towards preserving our rivers; corporations, with their greed; and

the public, by our silence, are all complicit in the death of our rivers.

Protecting the Brahmaputra is such an important cause for us all to stand up for. As pointed out in the photo feature, the river is the lifeline of millions of Bangladeshis. Farmers and fishermen depend on it for their livelihoods, it is also the main source of food for most of the

surrounding rural populations. Increasing deforestation along the river is having numerous negative environmental impacts. I hope that we act on this before flash floods have devastating effects on life and property of millions of Bangladeshis.

Farzana Ahmed
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PHOTO: ANIK RAHMAN

The opinions expressed in these letters do not necessarily represent the views of the Star Weekend.

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The celebrations witnessed around two years ago when Bangladesh confirmed a spot in the Champions Trophy were quite extraordinary. It was a time when the Tigers had just begun winning games following their drought in 2014 and the opportunity of making it to the elite competition, all of a sudden, got everyone—fans and sports analysts included—excited.

There were talks about how 2015 would be the year of the rise of the Tigers; there were posts about how Mustafizur Rahman—having just debuted that year—would go on to change Bangladesh's cricket; comparisons were made between this group and the Sri Lankan team of 1996, which surprised the world by winning the World Cup.

Two matches into the Champions Trophy, both of which saw the Tigers struggle, and you find your Facebook wall filled with critical posts regarding how Bangladesh's cricket will 'never improve', and about how Bangladesh are still playing like they used to a decade ago.

The same fans who had gone wild and celebrated as though Bangladesh had won the World Cup, upon the confirmation of a spot in the Champions Trophy, fired a barrage of questions regarding the capability of a number of players, most of who were their heroes before the start of the tournament.

One cannot help but chuckle at the array of emotions displayed. Yes, it is true that Bangladesh, as a team, have the capability of making it through to the knockout stages of the Champions Trophy, no matter how difficult a task it is.

However, lashing out at every defeat by remaining ignorant of the conditions and the situations is a disastrous approach.

The records speak for themselves. Bangladesh have won just 40 out of their 172 games that they have played outside their home; 28 of those came against non-full member nations and Zimbabwe, while three other wins were posted against a second-string West Indian outfit.

In essence, they have barely won 10 matches against top-ranked sides outside Bangladesh and if you are a true fan, you can probably name all those wins in a jiffy.

The last three years have arguably been Bangladesh's best in their history and even during this period, they managed to win just six out of the 21 matches away from home. Three of those wins came against Afghanistan, Scotland, and Ireland.

So, to expect Bangladesh to ease past teams like Australia, England and New Zealand in conditions that they aren't used to in would be highly impractical, to say the least.

In addition, Bangladesh lost to England in their den last year and to a weakened New Zealand team in Ireland just before the start of the Champions Trophy.

Jumping to erroneous conclusions about Bangladesh cricket's supposed fall based on their performance in the Champions Trophy hold absolutely no ground. For starters, the above numbers just go on to show that it's twice as difficult for the Tigers to win a game abroad as compared to aceing one at home.

Secondly, how can one judge an entire country's cricketing growth just based on a tournament or one international competition?

If one wants to talk about Bangladesh's cricket then



Shakib Al Hasan
PHOTO: AFP

WHEN LOGIC TAKES A BACK SEAT

NAIMUL KARIM

there are plenty of worrying concerns than just their performance in a mere international game.

Talk about the young Bangladeshi cricketers from third division cricket who were slapped with 10-year bans for protesting against biased umpiring. Poor umpiring has been a perennial problem in domestic cricket and that is something even members of the Bangladesh Cricket Board have admitted.

However, despite the scenario, the board thought that the bowler who leaked 92 runs off four balls, protesting the umpire's decision, needed to be banned for a period longer than Mohammad Ashraful, since obviously, protesting on the field is a much bigger crime than match fixing.

Talk about the politics involved at various levels of domestic cricket that end up destroying the sporting culture in cricketing clubs.

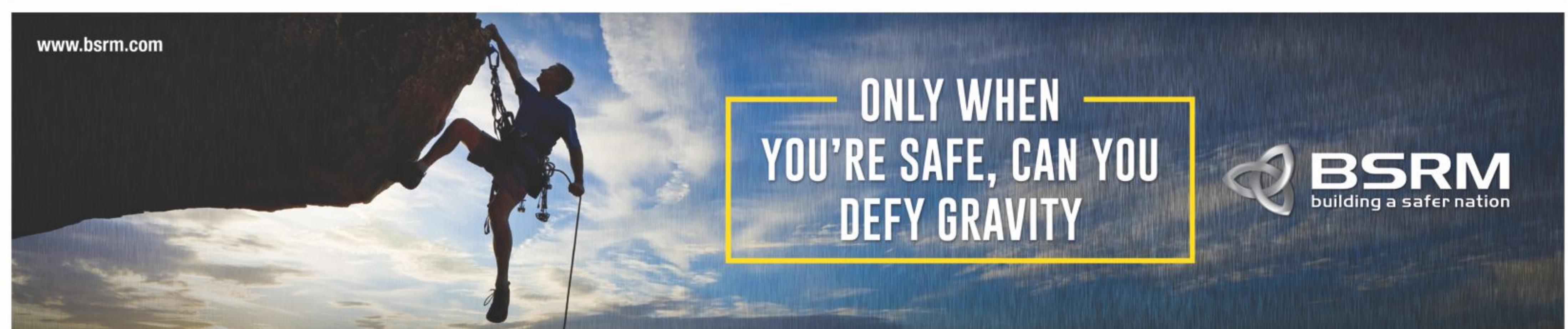
Talk about the payment issues that still haunt Bangladesh's domestic cricketers even in premier division cricket, the top-most level of the country's game. Talk about the 80-odd players who will most likely not receive BCB contracts from the next season in first-class cricket and will have to play amateur leagues in order to earn a living.

Unfortunately, these are issues which take a backseat whenever Bangladesh's national team ends up doing well in the international front. But what we don't realise is that these are the little problems that can end up destroying the game one day.

Bangladesh will take on New Zealand today in their last group stage encounter of the Champions Trophy. If they win, it's going to be a great achievement. After all, winning a game in a tournament described as a competition of the champions is no small deal.

However, nothing is going to change if they lose. It does not prove that the Tigers are not capable of playing in the big league and it most certainly does not mean that they have been pushed back by a decade. The Tigers have reached this front after plenty of hard work and they deserve to be here.

So next time we—fans, journalists, analysts et al—are on the verge of an emotional outburst, let's try to recall the facts and logically evaluate the results. And even if we have to go overboard, let's go overboard on the issues that actually need coverage; the issues that actually threaten to destroy the country's most loved sport. ■



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