



'More space with Chandika gone'

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"The head coach leaving is less significant than big players leaving. None of our big players left, none of our young players have left but the coach has left." With those words Bangladesh assistant coach Richard Halsall tried to remind the reporters yesterday that it is not the coach but the players who matter most in cricket, so there is no reason to be worried about the absence of Chandika Hathurusingha when the Tigers play the ODI tri-series against Sri Lanka and Zimbabwe, which will be followed by a two-match Test and two-match T20I series against Sri Lanka at home.

Halsall sang the praises of the players during his conversation with reporters in Mirpur and dismissed the notion put forward by some that it was Hathurusingha's strategies that brought success for Bangladesh in recent times.

"Talking of strategies, how did it go in South Africa, did the strategies work?" questioned Halsall.

"Strategies are a small part for players. Good players win you cricket matches. If you have good players playing well, you win cricket matches. We have got lots of good players here but they did not play well in South Africa. They did play well in a couple of games in the Champions Trophy, specifically in the New Zealand game. So we have good players, we have to get them playing good cricket," he went on.

Hathurusingha's long-time associate also believes that the former coach's absence will make players more responsible and give the senior players more space.

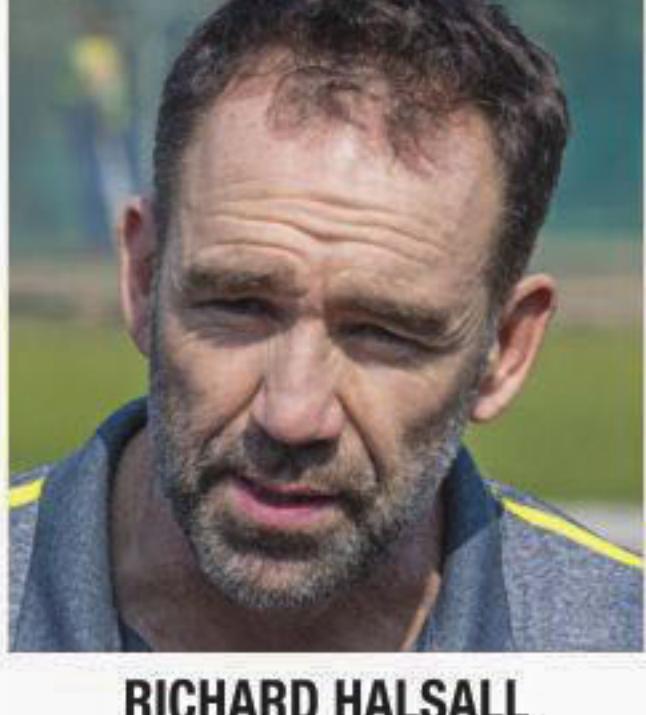
"I think Hathurusingha's principal reason for leaving was that he thought that he cannot add any more to the players at the moment. So I think that's a really good place for the players to be at, because Chandika not being here will give them more space to think and more responsibility."

"But Bangladesh is very lucky as they have got some excellent senior players like Shakib Al Hasan, Mashrafe Mortaza, the two captains, and Mashfiqur Rahim, Mahmudullah Riyad and Tamim Iqbal. These players now can be more involved. I think when you get older you become more responsible. That's exciting. I think it is another exciting step for that group of players," he observed.

Halsall also reminded how good the Tigers are in their own den.

"It's a great chance after having the disappointing tour of South Africa. We know how well we play at home. As an outsider I think that the players had a very exciting BPL. The camp here has a great feel to it at the moment. I am sure they cannot wait to get back to international cricket back in Dhaka. They love playing at the national stadium and I think you can see the excitement in the group of players," he said.

Halsall also put the Tigers ahead of Sri Lanka in the coming series as he believes that Bangladesh is a settled side.



RICHARD HALSALL

Archers take aim at targets during the opening day of the Teer 9th National Archery Championships at the Shaheed Ahsanullah Master Stadium in Tongi yesterday.

Stiff competition for selection

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The top archers of the country reached pre-quarterfinals stage in both recurve and compound events on the opening day of the Teer 9th National Archery Championships at the Shaheed Ahsanullah Master Stadium in Tongi yesterday.

As expected Sana, Tamim Islam, Hafiz Ahmed Rubel and Ibrahim Rezwan, all part of the national team in November's event, won their respective matches to book pre-quarterfinals berth in men's recurve bow event, which will be held today. Rokhsana Akter, Susmita Banik, Bonna Akter and Bipasha Akter, who fought for the bronze medal match in the compound team event of the same championships in November, also moved to the pre-quarterfinals stage in women's compound events.

The fight for men's recurve bow title is usually confined to within four national players, but the scenario is different this time due to the return of experienced archers Sheikh Sajib and Durul Huda, both of whom did not take part in the selection process for November's event due to exams. However, they are back and posing threats to the national archers by having confirmed pre-quarterfinal berths.

Sana admitted that they are facing tough challenge in every stage because all archers are determined to deliver their best to draw attention of the selection committee.

"To be honest, my heart starts pumping when I take part in competitions at home even though I do not feel any pressure competing in international events because all local archers are determined to beat each other, whether it is the ranking round or the elimination round," said Sana, who became 11th out of 79 archers in the ranking round of Asian Archery Championship.

Sana believes the national archery championships are getting more competitive every day because a lot of archers are coming up and there is no way to take those competitors lightly anymore.

"You can say top 16 archers in recurve bow are very good and they have the ability to upset anyone. Archers from Army, BKSP and a few clubs are doing well at this level," Sana said. "We had previously competed against only a few good archers but this time we are fighting against some 20 good archers."

Sana, who had also qualified for the quarterfinals in men's recurve bow event in 19th Asian Archery Championship in Thailand in 2015, believes the national team will be a strong one and produce good results in near future.

DPL set for February 5 start

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The Dhaka Premier League (DPL) will start from February 5 and the player-by-choice draft is set to take place on January 20, informed the Cricket Committee of Dhaka Metropolis (CCDM) chairman Kazi Inam Ahmed after a CCDM meeting which took place at the BCB headquarters yesterday.

Earlier, Inam had informed that they are trying to start the lone 50-over domestic tournament of the country from January 20 but the Bangladesh Cricket Board's tournament committee later decided to start the Bangladesh Cricket League, a first-class tournament which will be split into two legs to accommodate the DPL in between, from January 8.

"Our Chairman Nazmul Hassan told us to complete the main cricket

leagues like DPL within the cricket season. We had a target of starting the league in the last week of January or at the beginning of February. But we have a shortage of grounds and since the NCL [National Cricket League] has finished now, we want to start the BCL rounds [three rounds] from January 8 and it will end within January 24. So the player-by-choice will be held on January 20 for Dhaka Premier League. And the premier league will start from February 5," Inam told reporters after the meeting yesterday.

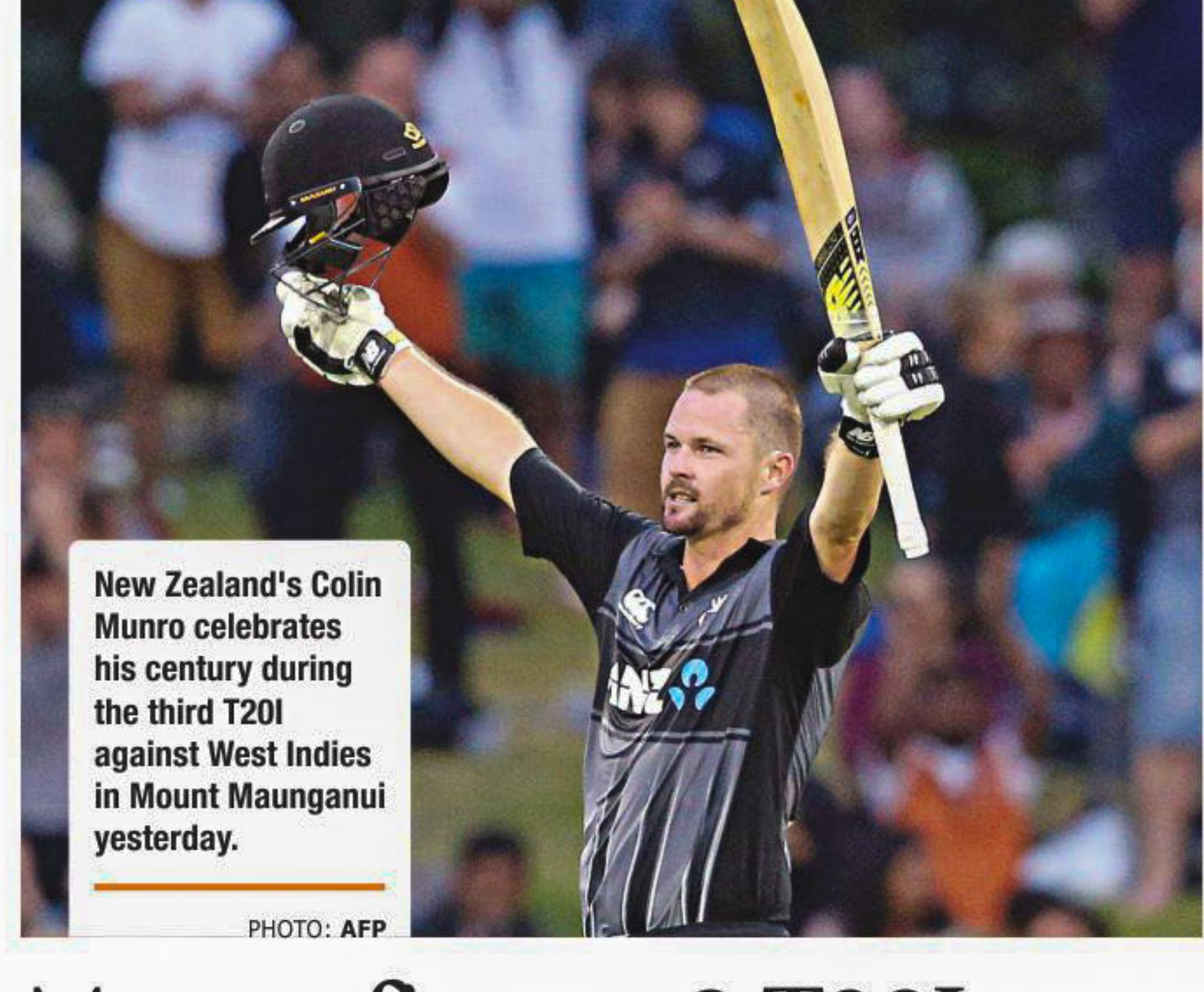
According to the CCDM chairman, each team can retain five players from the previous season apart from the 12 A-plus and A category players who will be available for the players' draft, along with the rest of the players.

"There is always concern among the players about regular payments, so we have decided that clubs will

need to pay 50 per cent of the remuneration to the retained players ahead of the draft. If any club fails, that player cannot be retained and he has to go to the draft.

"And those players who will be picked in the draft will have to be paid 50 per cent of the remuneration within the given deadline ahead of the tournament's start. 25 per cent of the remainder will have to be paid during the tournament and the last 25 per cent will be paid after the tournament ends," he added.

Inam also added that the Second Division League will start on January 20 and the players' transfer will take place on January 10. The First Division League will start after the DPL, third division will start after the second division and if the CCDM can arrange some more venues then these tournaments may overlap.



New Zealand's Colin Munro celebrates his century during the third T20I against West Indies in Mount Maunganui yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

Young Tigers outplayed in practice game

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The touring Bangladesh Under-19 team lost their second practice match against Otago XI by six wickets at the University Oval in Dunedin, New Zealand yesterday. The practice matches are part of the 10-day training camp ahead of the ICC Under-19 World Cup starting across New Zealand on January 13.

Bangladesh got off to a poor start after electing to bat, with opener Naim Sheikh departing after scoring just two while partner Pinak Ghosh added 14. Skipper Saif Hasan tried to hold the ship together and top-scored with 54 off 69 balls, striking eight fours and a six, while vice-captain Afif Hossain added 40 off 44 balls with three fours and two sixes. The young Tigers were unable to build partnerships and were bundled out for a paltry 170 in 40.2 overs.

Medium pacer Christi Viljoen was the

pick of the bowlers, bagging five wickets for 31 runs from his nine overs and fellow seamer Francois Mostert scalped two wickets.

Otago rode on an 88-run opening partnership between GW Croudus and HD Rutherford until the latter was dismissed after scoring 44 off 55 balls with five fours and a six.

Croudus reached his half-century and was run out after scoring highest 73 off 96 balls, an innings studded with six fours and a six, while HJ Visavadiya remained unbeaten on 30 to reach the target for the loss of four wickets and with 13.1 overs to spare.

Off-spinner Robiul Haque picked up three for 16 from six overs and was the only bowler to make an impact.

Bangladesh will play their third practice match against the same opponents tomorrow after their first game was cancelled due to rain.

Medium pacer Christi Viljoen was the

Tigers likely to play in USA

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The Bangladesh cricket team is likely to play international cricket in the USA for the first time during their tour of West Indies in June-July this year.

Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) sources confirmed yesterday that they have received a draft schedule of the tour, in which the West Indies Cricket Board drafted two T20Is in Florida.

Bangladesh will also play two Tests and three ODIs in the West Indies.

International cricket is nothing new to the USA as New Zealand, Sri Lanka, West Indies and India played T20I matches at Lauderhill since 2010. The last match in Florida was played between West Indies and India in August 2016.

Munro first to 3 T20I tons

Kiwis beat Windies by 119 runs

AFP, Mount Maunganui

New Zealand's master blaster Colin Munro attributed his record-setting century to sink the West Indies in the third Twenty20 in Mount Maunganui on Wednesday to a hit-and-hope philosophy.

"I try and go out there and swing from ball one and see what happens," he said after blasting 104 off 53 deliveries.

On the back of Munro's heroics, New Zealand won the third Twenty20 by 119 runs to complete a sweep of the tour by the West Indies, having won both Tests, all three one-day internationals and two T20s.

Munro became the first player to score three centuries in international T20s, going one clear of four other players, including the West Indies' Chris Gayle.

"If I'm lucky enough to get a good start, I try and carry that momentum and if it's my night, it's my night and if not then back to the drawing board," said the 30-year-old left-hander, who cracked 10 sixes and three fours.

New Zealand made 243 for five in their 20 overs and the West Indies' reply ended at 124 for nine in 16.3 overs, with Shah Hope unable to bat after being injured while fielding.

Munro was named man of the series after scores of 53 and 104 in the two completed Twenty20s and 66 in the washed-out second match.

The West Indies, desperate to get at least one win on the tour, tried every trick in their playbook but captain Carlos Brathwaite admitted Munro was too good.

"He took the game away from us," Brathwaite said.

SCORES IN BRIEF

NEW ZEALAND: 243 for five in 20 overs (Guptill 63, Munro 104, Bruce 23, Williamson 19, Brathwaite 5-50)

WEST INDIES: 124 for 9 in 16.3 overs (Fletcher 46, Powell 16, Brathwaite 15, Southee 3-21, Boult 2-29, Sodhi 2-25)

Result: New Zealand won by 119 runs and clinched 3-match series 2-0.

Player-of-the-match: Colin Munro.

Player-of-the-series: Colin Munro.