



Bangladesh wicketkeeper-batsman Mushfiqur Rahim (R) shares a light moment with opener Tamim Iqbal (2nd from L) during a gym session at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

An understanding not quite mutual

STAR SPORT DESK



The Australian cricket board, through a spokesman, finally announced yesterday that Bangladesh's scheduled tour of the country in August-September this year will not happen. It was a day after news filtered through that the tour part of the International Cricket Council's (ICC's) Future Tours Programme (FTP), would be called off. Cricket Australia (CA) had told the Bangladesh Cricket Board earlier this year that they were unwilling to host the Tigers for the two Tests and three ODIs and they left a counterproposal from the BCB unanswered.

However, in making the official announcement, CA managed to further muddy the waters of a negotiation process that was murky in the best of times. BCB CEO Nizamuddin Chowdhury had said on Wednesday, when ESPNcricinfo reported that the tour was scrapped, that the BCB were not aware of any such decision. Yesterday, a report on CA's official website—cricket.com.au—spoke of a T20I tri-series in Australia in late 2019 that will involve Bangladesh and the spin seemed to be that it was somehow in lieu of the scrapped 2018 tour of Australia.

A CA spokesman was quoted as saying: "The window allocated in the ICC FTP for Bangladesh to tour Australia in August this year has been postponed, by mutual agreement by both Cricket Australia and the Bangladesh Cricket Board."

The CA's machinations seemed to catch Chowdhury unaware once again yesterday; the spokesman's claim of 'mutual understanding' puzzled him. CA had communicated with us and said that the [2018] tour would not be possible for certain reasons. We have an understanding of their reasoning but that does not equate to mutual understanding.

"I want to stress that an alternative proposal [to play only ODIs] was made and we had not gotten a reply. If they take this as mutual understanding, I do not agree," Chowdhury told The Daily Star yesterday.

It seems from Chowdhury's words that the BCB believed, not without ample justification, that since CA were yet to respond to the counterproposal the tour negotiations were ongoing, albeit with little urgency from CA.

Leaving that aside, the shakiest claim of the cricket.com.au report and the CA spokesman was that the 2019 T20I tri-series was part of the negotiations for the 2018 tour. It is common knowledge that a new post-2019 FTP is being negotiated independent of the current one.

"Both countries agreed to postponing that tour to be better aligned ahead of the ICC World T20 in 2020 in Australia," said the CA spokesman.

"We are discussing regarding the future FTP. It has nothing to do with the current FTP," Chowdhury said.

In a final example of the CA's muddled thinking, the article said that the board refuted ESPNcricinfo's quote of chief executive James Sutherland that 'the huge cost to play up there [northern regions] and getting broadcasters and what have you to pick it up, just makes it [Bangladesh tour] difficult' and that there were in fact no economic considerations behind scrapping the tour.

The article also sought to justify the cancellation by citing India's recent rejection of the day-night Test in their upcoming Australian tour, as if to show that plans change on cricket tours. It however only serves to highlight CA's condescension towards the BCB -- India's tour is still taking place with the agreed number of matches but CA had to kowtow to the demands of a more powerful board, while they seemed to have chosen to make much bigger decisions unilaterally when it came to the less powerful BCB.

'Afghanistan will be a big challenge'

SPORTS REPORTER



Afghanistan are currently ranked eighth while Bangladesh sit in 10th position in the ICC T20I team rankings. Many may have reservation about the T20I rankings, but there is some truth in the standings as Bangladesh wicketkeeper-batsman Mushfiqur Rahim endorsed it by saying: "Afghanistan are a dangerous team in T20 cricket. In this format they are very challenging."

Where does the biggest challenge lie for the Tigers? One of Bangladesh's finest bats-

men, Mushfiqur rightly identified that it would be a huge challenge for the batsmen to handle Afghanistan's two quality spinners -- leg-spinner Rashid Khan and off-spinner Mujeeb Ur Rahman -- in the three-match T20I series in Dehradun from June 3, especially as there is concern over the Bangladesh batsmen's ability to negotiate quality spin bowling.

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Mirpur yesterday.

He emphasised on good planning in order to negotiate the bowlers. "It will be challenging for us. Personally, I am working on a few things like what kind of shot I need to play to score runs against them. T20 is a format where you cannot be cautious against any particular bowler; we have to draw up a good plan so that we can take some calculated risks. I am confident in our team as we have high-quality cricketers in the side. I am hopeful that it will be a good series if we can click."

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under such conditions in Sri Lanka. If we could adjust to the conditions in Sri Lanka, why not in Dehradun?

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He however wanted to take inspiration from their last T20I performance in Sri Lanka.

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