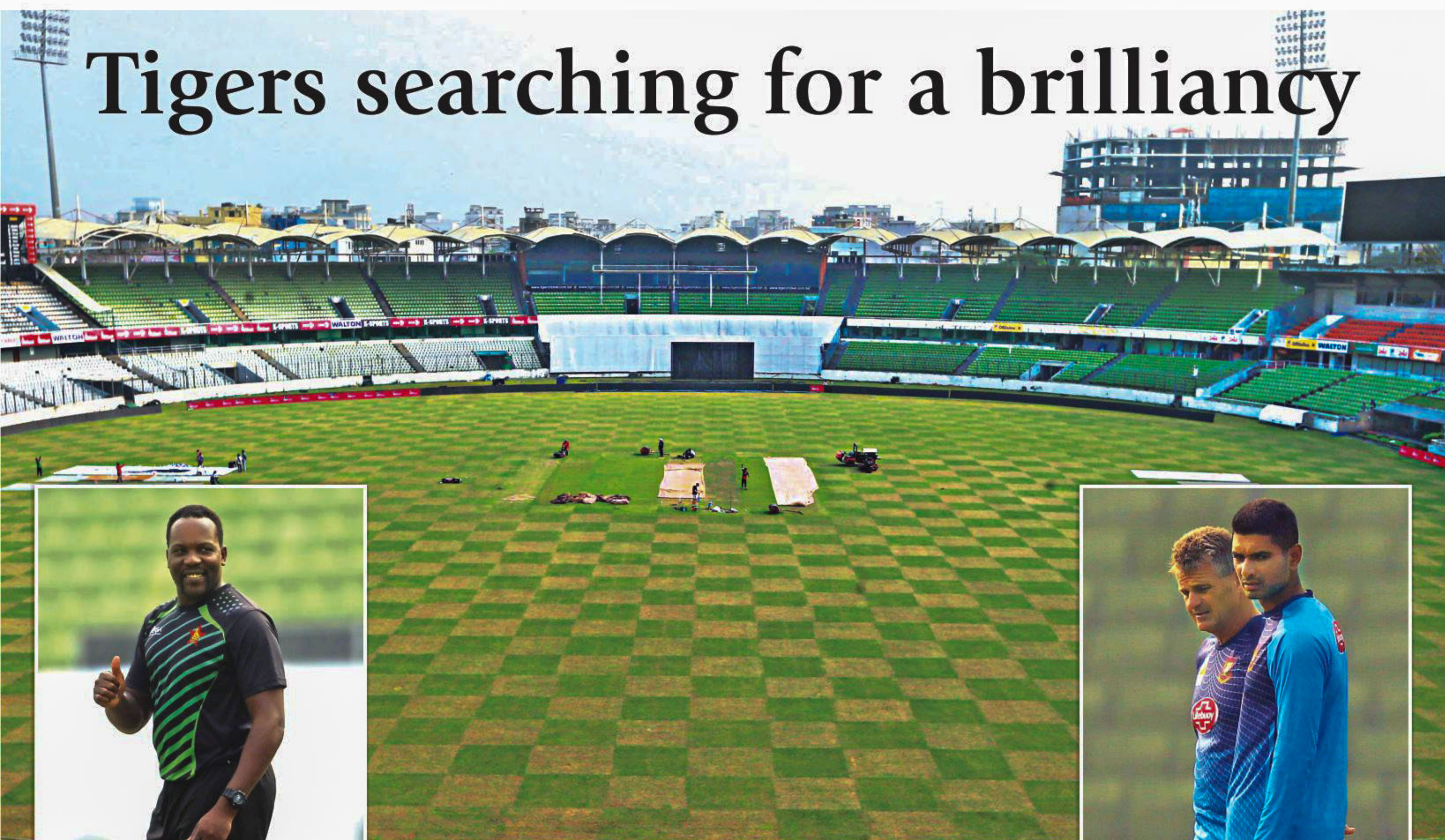




Tigers searching for a brilliancy



With the board set for Bangladesh to take on Zimbabwe at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium, (R inset) Mahmudullah Riyad epitomised the pressure mounting on Bangladesh to salvage the Test series while Zimbabwe's Hamilton Masakadza seems upbeat about sealing only their third away Test series victory.

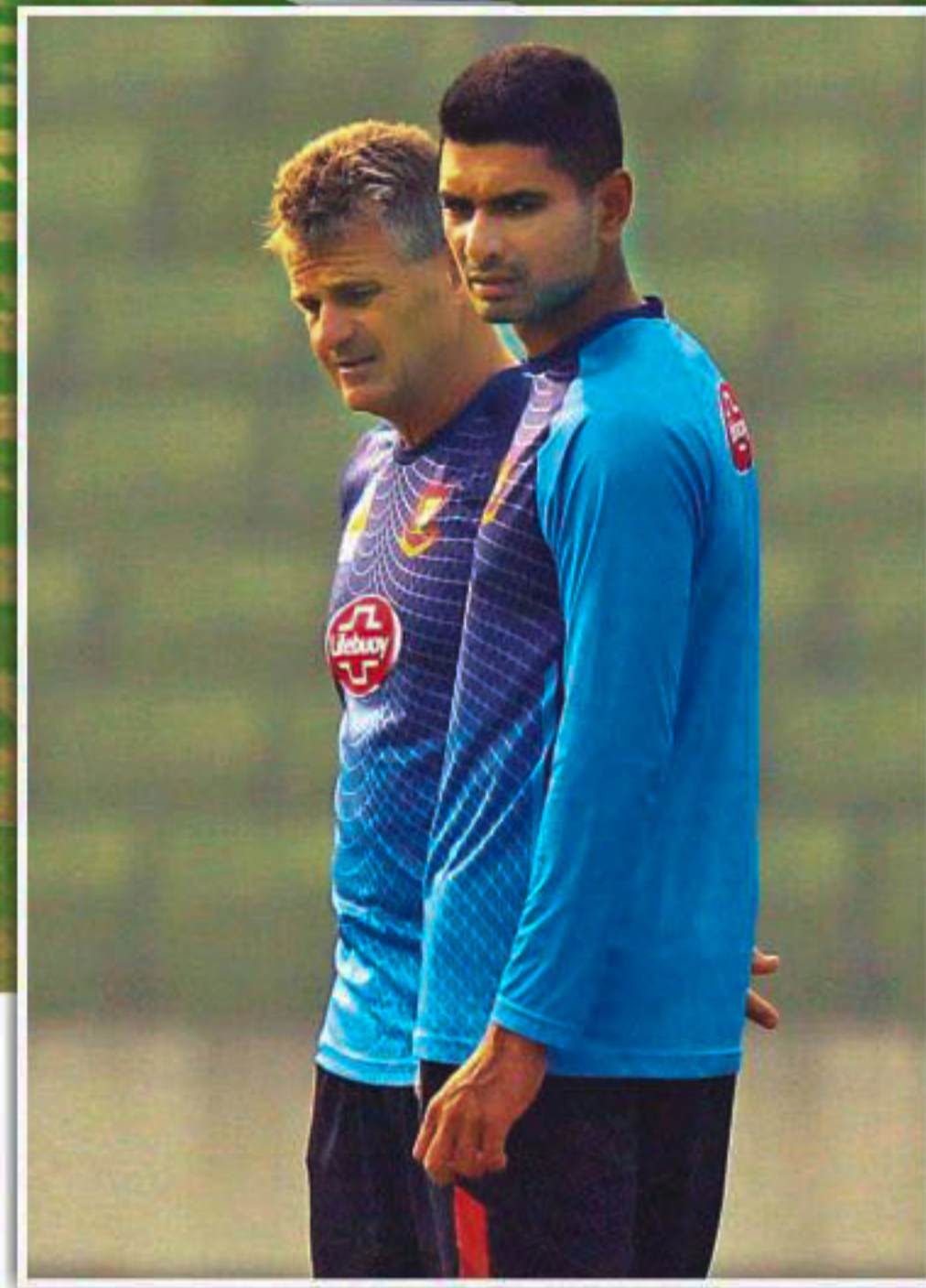


PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

SPORTS REPORTER

Despite the series-deciding second Test between Bangladesh and Zimbabwe set to begin the next day, it was the news of two of the Tigers' skippers -- Shakib Al Hasan and Mashrafe Bin Mortaza -- seeking nomination tickets from the Awami League for the upcoming general elections that hogged the limelight at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

There was immense curiosity among journalists regarding the issue but it will be Test cricket that will take centre stage from the Tigers' point of view when they take on the visitors in a bid to save the series after a humiliating 151-run defeat in the first Test.

Whether it is their knowledge of how to best utilise the unpredictable Mirpur wicket or even the team composition, the home team will surely come up with a better game plan this time around.

Batting remains the biggest area of concern for the Tigers after Zimbabwe stretched the Tigers' failure to score more than 200 runs to eight consecutive Tests innings.

"We have discussed our lacking and strengths

and pointed out a few areas to work on after the defeat in Sylhet. Our main area of concern is the batting department. This is one particular area in which we were unable to perform as we did in other



Mustafizur Rahman shares a laugh with bowling coach Courtney Walsh in Mirpur yesterday. The pacer's return will surely bring smiles to Bangladesh's bowling department. PHOTO: STAR

formats," captain Mahmudullah Riyad told reporters yesterday.

"But at the same time if we over think things it will put extra pressure on us so we are willing to play our normal game. And if we are able to do things right we will have a chance of doing well."

It was learned that the team management are likely to make three changes to the team that capitulated in the first Test.

Bangladesh are likely to bin their one-seamer strategy and, according to sources, the think-tank is keen to have two pacers in the playing eleven today.

The good news is that Mustafizur Rahman is all set to return to the side after being rested for the first Test which would see Abu Jayed, who bowled well in the first Test, make way.

Another pacer in the form of Khaled Ahmed, who has impressed head coach Steve Rhodes, is likely to make his Test debut alongside fellow Test debutant Mohammad Mithun, who has been in good form in the shorter formats.

Left-arm spinner Nazmul Islam and young left-hander Nazmul Hossain, who disappointed in the first Test, are likely to be dropped.

Tajjul Islam, who scalped 11 wickets in the first

We are in a situation where our backs are against the wall at the moment. We have to come back strongly; we have no other option.

BANGLADESH CAPTAIN MAHMUDULLAH RIYAD

Test, will once again lead the spin-bowling attack. He will be backed by Mehedi Hasan Miraz, who needs to rethink his strategy after being below-par in the first Test.

On the other hand, Zimbabwe will be booming with confidence after registering their first Test win in five years and first away Test win after 17 long years. Hamilton Masakadza and his troops will be eying their third-ever Test series win away from home.

The Mirpur pitch has always been unpredictable, even for the home side, so once again, whoever executes in the conditions early on will likely gain the momentum.

Bangladesh's debacle dependency

MAZHAR UDDIN

When 20-time Grand Slam winner Roger Federer was asked what set him apart from his peers, he philosophically mused: "Maybe they hate losing and I love winning."

However, when it comes to the Bangladesh cricket team, it seems that the driving force is a fear of failure. A cycle that involves a big loss followed by intense scrutiny and finally a resurgence; before long however, that trend repeats itself.

There have been quite a few instances where the Bangladesh team have bounced back with their backs to the wall. Those pressure situations always seem to bring the best out of the Tigers.

That can be exemplified by the win in Bangladesh's historic 100th Test match against Sri Lanka last year which came on the back of a comprehensive 259-run defeat or the comeback to win both the ODI and T20I series following a Test debacle in the West Indies earlier this year that saw the Tigers bundled out for their lowest-ever total of 43 runs.

There are many more instances that saw the Tigers bounce back after disastrous performances and those wins have often overshadowed their inadequacies. But, alarmingly, the pattern has remained.

Once again the Tigers find themselves in a familiar situation as they take on Zimbabwe in the second and perhaps series-saving Test in Mirpur today on the back of a humiliating 151-run defeat in the first match.

Stand-in skipper Mahmudullah Riyad

said after the first Test in Sylhet that Bangladesh had bounced back and that they would be up for a fight in the second Test.

However, the question remains why they cannot stay focused before these debacles occur. Why does the mentality so drastically change only in the face of disaster?

That question was put to Mahmudullah ahead of the second Test and the experience cricketer opined that it was the players' realisation that they have to give something back to the nation.

"I think it's a personal belief in everyone and the players may realise that it's high time we have to do something. It is not that we don't have the hunger; we always have that whenever we wear our jersey," Mahmudullah explained to reporters during the pre-match press conference yesterday.

"Maybe that feeling works more [after big losses] and I can say that our players play their heart out. I don't know about the other teams and I am sure they also do the same playing for their own nation. Probably we will give 120 per cent this game."

Bangladesh have a lot to lose and very little to gain even if they manage to level the series against the lowest-ranked Test side, but it's that unhealthy process which the Tigers must change if they really want to become a consistent and better side.

Yesterday marked Bangladesh stepping into its 18th year of Test cricket, but it seems that the fear of losing still outweighs the love for winning and if things continue to go that way, much like Pakistan, Bangladesh will also be termed a capricious side in world cricket.

INFO-ZONE

BANGLADESH v ZIMBABWE

HEAD TO HEAD IN BANGLADESH

M	W	L	D	M	W	L	D
8	4	2	2	8	2	4	2

HEAD TO HEAD IN ALL TESTS

M	W	L	D	M	W	L	D
15	5	7	3	15	7	5	3

Last meeting in Tests: Sylhet International Stadium, Nov 3, 2018. Zimbabwe won by 151 runs.



Mustafizur Rahman



Brandon Mavuta

26	Wickets	4
16	Innings	2
31.50	Average	12.00
3.16	Economy	3.00
0	5-wkt haul	0
4/37	Best Bowling	4/21

'A win would be huge'

SPORTS REPORTER



Zimbabwe have nothing to lose after an emphatic victory in Sylhet and instead the second and final Test against Bangladesh is a good opportunity for the visitors to further enhance their reputation on the international stage.

In that context, there was nothing wrong when Zimbabwe captain Hamilton Masakadza told reporters in a pre-match press conference yesterday: "We know they will be under a little bit of pressure."

However, the Zimbabwe skipper was looking forward to grasping the opportunity of winning an away Test series.

"It will be huge for the team if we manage to win the series. We haven't won a series in the recent past and didn't win too many games so it will really boost the team if they can get a win here," Masakadza said, adding that 'the performance in the first Test gave us a lot of confidence'.

"They [Bangladesh] will be hungry and will come hard at us. They are a very proud and good team. We expect a very tough

battle. We expect them to come at us very hard in an attempt to level the series. But we are also prepared to give them a good game. If we get a result then it will be great for us," he added.

Masakadza said that because the Mirpur wicket always offers a result, they were looking forward to making it 2-0.

"The Mirpur wicket has always been a bit of a stranger. You never really know what you will get. It does look a little bit dry, very similar to the one-day wicket that we played on. So, I expect it will be similar to that wicket."

"As a captain I would really love that. But more importantly as a team, we are definitely looking to try and win the series. This is always a result wicket. We know that to win the series we have to win. As a team we are definitely looking forward to doing it and trying to be on top again," a confident Zimbabwean captain added.

However, he was also aware that the team which could execute their plans in the middle would ultimately win.

"We have to execute well. The team that executes their skills better will win the game," suggested Masakadza.



Khaled Ahmed (C) won a bet after being asked to bowl in a specific area by coach Steve Rhodes yesterday but the greatest reward for his efforts will likely come today if he makes his Test debut today in Mirpur.

PHOTO: STAR

WOMEN'S WORLD T20 Tigresses annihilated

SPORTS REPORTER

Salma Khatun had promised better batting but things went from bad to worse in Bangladesh's opening match at the ICC Women's World T20 against hosts West Indies in Georgetown on Friday.

The Tigresses were made to swallow their third-lowest total and the lowest-ever total at the Women's World T20 as they were bundled out for a paltry 46 runs in chase of 107, losing by 60 runs.

The hosts' batting faltered in the face of accurate bowling and a committed fielding performance from Bangladesh but their pacers, led by Deandra Dottin, proved that the total was good enough.

Shakera Selman and Shamilia Connell kept things tight, but it was Dottin, who finished with incredible figures of 3.4-1-5-5, that tore through the Bangladesh middle order. From Bangladesh's side, nobody made it into double digits.

Bangladesh put the home side in and their bowlers immediately applied pressure. Pacer Jahanara Alam took two wickets in two balls to send back both openers.

Stafanie Taylor struggled against the spinners and at 50 for 5, the hosts looked in some trouble. Only a notable 32 off 24 balls from Kycia Knight gave the home crowd something to cheer for and took West Indies past 100.

Jahanara finished with three for 23 and Rumana Ahmed claimed two for 16 runs.

Bangladesh will face England in their second Group A encounter at St Lucia on November 12.

SCORES IN BRIEF

WEST INDIES: 106 for 8 in 20 overs (Taylor 29, McLean 11, Kycia 32; Jahanara 3-23, Rumana 2-16)

BANGLADESH: 46 all out 14.4 overs (Shamima 5, Ayasha 6, Fargana 8, Dottin 5-5)

Result: West Indies won by 60 runs.

Player-of-the-match: Deandra Dottin.