

# SPORT



## 'Don't create unnecessary hype'

### HIGHLIGHTS

Since expectations have risen, this time around many are hoping that Bangladesh will reach the semifinal of the ICC Cricket World Cup. Although Mashrafe Bin Mortaza said that this is not an impossible task, the Tigers' skipper did add that it will be a very tough challenge.

Mashrafe confirmed that this will be his last World Cup as a player. It will be his fourth World Cup appearance.

The upcoming World Cup matches in the United Kingdom will be high scoring affairs and so, Mashrafe feels that the Tigers will miss a wrist spinner to get breakthroughs, unlike the other teams.

There were talks over whether the Tigers' team management would impose a guideline over social media on the cricketers during their World Cup campaign. And although Mashrafe is against imposing any team rule over the usage of social media, he did urge that it would be better for the team if the cricketers focused only on their game rather than on social media.

The chief selector mentioned before that there is still a chance for them to make a few changes to the previously announced 15-member World Cup squad, where they included four back-up players, swelling the squad to 19 ahead of the tri-nation series in Ireland. However, Mashrafe informed that the current 15-member World Cup squad will be prioritised while adding that he has faith in those players.

Mashrafe pointed out that it is important to retain wickets while batting in the first ten overs. The last ten overs both with bat and ball will also be crucial if Bangladesh are to win enough matches in the tournament.

MAZHAR UDDIN



It was the last day of Bangladesh's training camp before the Tigers depart for Ireland for the tri-nation series which will be followed by the ICC World Cup in the UK with a lot of expectations this time around from supporters.

It was a jam-packed press conference area at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur, full of curious journalists eagerly awaiting the final official press conference at home of Tigers captain Mashrafe Bin Mortaza, and as it was highly anticipated it lasted for nearly forty minutes.

From questions about expectations of reaching the World Cup semifinal to their strengths and weaknesses, or even whether it would be his last World Cup appearance, there was one particular thing that was noticeable. Mashrafe never looked over-excited and instead downplayed the extra hype with a splash of realistic sentiments.

"It has nothing to do with my personal desire because if we can do well, everyone will be happy and I will also feel good. I never want to take extra pressure as I am always a big believer of luck and at the same time we also have to work hard. It is important whether we are prepared for it. Many of the best teams have not won the World Cup and a few haven't even reached the semifinal.

"We do not have such pressure of winning the World Cup or reaching the semifinal as we are looking forward to play our best cricket. If you ask all the former great players or analysts, no one would term us as favourites. If we can do well here the world's perspective of us will totally change as it has already started to change over the years and from that perspective we would obviously want to do well.

"And the thing you guys are saying -- that it's the best team -- that is not important as we were unable to win the Asia Cup and the Champions Trophy with the same team not so long ago. It is not necessary to



create such unnecessary hype as it's the same team that played two years ago and there has not been any extraordinary changes to say that they are the best. Those who do well on the field, will do well," a realistic Mashrafe replied when asked about his personal expectations.

He also added that if the Tigers were able to win the Asia Cup last year it could have given an idea of how to win big tournaments, which they have been unable to do due to lack of the requisite mental strength.

Meanwhile, the inspirational cricketer also pointed out that it would be a big challenge for the untested fast bowling department, which hasn't done well in the Champions Trophy in the UK back in 2017.

"Actually it will depend a lot on the type of wickets we are going to play there as, if you have noticed despite having such fast bowling attacks as Australia,

South Africa and England, they are conceding 350 runs, and those scores have also been chased.

"We do have the ability to restrict the opposition below 300 but yes, we don't have the extra pace. But it's also important to have the variations along with the pace. So we have to prepare accordingly. We don't have a wrist spinner, and that is a disadvantage, we do have Shakib [Al Hasan] and [Mehedi Hasan] Miraz in the spin department. Mustafizur [Rahman], Rubel [Hossain], [Mohammad] Saifuddin and I am also there in the fast bowling department and we are able to handle the pressure. We have to use the gamut of our ability," he said.

Mashrafe also backed the likes of Soumya [Sarkar], Liton [Das] and Sabbir [Rahman] to play their natural games but he also added that it would be important not to throw wickets away and make the most use of it.

## Here not even in spirit

SAKEB SUBHAN



An official team photo session, with players donning their fresh new jerseys for the upcoming World Cup, is usually a festive and auspicious occasion. It is however not a major event, but yesterday one person made the Tigers' jersey photo session a controversial event by his absence.

"It is unfortunate. What else can I say? It was a team photo," said BCB president Nazmul Hassan after the photo session, where most BCB high-ups were also present. "I called him and asked him where he was and he told me that he had gone home and that he would visit me later tonight [Monday night]."

"All the players were told to be at the photo session. I hoped he would be here, but he is not. I think it is unfortunate for him also. Since the team is leaving day after tomorrow, I don't want to say much about it."

The disappointment was apparent in Hassan's words, but it also has to be asked whether disappointment is the only reaction. That is not to diminish Shakib's culpability. The all-rounder came back from India on Sunday night and caught up with his teammates yesterday morning. But, and since even the BCB president cannot say why and Shakib has not said anything on the subject, knowing fully well that an official team event was about to take place he just decided to go home.

At the very least, it displays a disregard for team culture and team bonding. He was absent through the whole training block -- which ended yesterday -- and



We had to seek help from our cartoonist Sadatuddin Ahmed to augment the team photo and present the full 15-member squad, and the talented artist did what the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) and the team management could not, keep vice-captain Shakib Al Hasan at the venue long enough for the photo session.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

the one day he did show up, he left the team literally incomplete. It also betrays a total lack of regard for Hassan and the BCB brass, the occasion of the photo shoot and what it means for the groundstaff who toil thanklessly so that Shakib can call the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium his turf.

While we silently speculate on Shakib's motives, one aspect in this saga needs no conjecture. The buck stops with the BCB boss,

and he said it is better not to talk about this too much because the team will leave for Ireland in just two days. The implication is that Hassan does not want to rock the boat so close to the main event. Read otherwise, he would rather wait for the boat to steady after Shakib had already rocked it by jumping overboard.

Spain sacked their football coach Julien Lopetegui on the eve of the last FIFA World Cup

because the coach had revealed to Real Madrid players that he had signed with Real Madrid for the next season.

Nothing so drastic is called for now, but this overly philosophical approach from Hassan will not discourage behaviour that can be fractious in a team culture. He was tough on Shakib when he took office in 2014, banning him for six months because of disciplinary reasons. But that stance has since

softened and he has presided over an encouragement of bad behaviour by being lenient on Sabbir Rahman in tweaking bans for serious indiscretions. If Shakib escapes sanction, it will just be the latest stroke in an established pattern.

At the risk of sounding like a broken record, perhaps the BCB should realise that a good culture leads to success on the field; not the other way around.



## We can't discount Amir: Wasim

AFP, Karachi

Legendary pacer Wasim Akram cautioned against discounting Mohammad Amir ahead of next month's World Cup, saying Pakistan's pace spearhead would return to form following a disappointing string of performances at the crease.

The 27-year-old Amir was left off Pakistan's preliminary World Cup squad but has a chance to force his way back into the final 15 if he does well in the five-match one-day international series against England starting from May 8.

Missing the upcoming World Cup would likely serve as another crippling setback for the young bowler's career after he missed the tournament in both 2011 and 2015 due to an embarrassing five-year ban over match fixing. Wasim said he still believed Amir could stage a comeback.

"We can't discount Amir from the World Cup," Wasim told AFP. "Amir would have been my first choice for the World Cup considering English conditions where he performs well."

## Hales axed from WC squad

AFP, LONDON

England batsman Alex Hales will not feature at the World Cup after being withdrawn from all international squads following an off-field incident not related to cricket, the England and Wales Cricket Board said on Monday.

Hales was included in the 15-man preliminary World Cup squad for the tournament in England and Wales but it emerged last week that he had been sanctioned under the ECB's disciplinary policy for a second time. A report in the Guardian newspaper said the hard-hitting batsman was serving a ban from cricket for recreational drug use.

A spokesman for Hales on Friday confirmed the Nottinghamshire batsman had been suspended "following an off-field incident last year".

An ECB statement on Monday said: "Alex Hales has been withdrawn from all England squads ahead of the international season. We have thought long and hard about this decision."

## Tons insufficient to lift BKSP, Keraniganj

SPORTS REPORTER



What should have been a bright day for two centuries -- Murshida Khatun Happy of Bangladesh and Krira Shikha Protisthan (BKSP) and Eka Mallick of Keraniganj Cricket Academy -- turned bleak as both their teams ended up on the losing side of their respective Dhaka Women's Premier Division Cricket League matches yesterday.

At BKSP-4 in Savar, Happy's 133-ball 101 helped BKSP post a modest 220 against Khelaghar SKS but her efforts were trumped by a magnificent 136-run fifth-wicket stand between Nigar Sultana Joty and Fahima Khatun, leading to a six-wicket victory for

Khelaghar.

Sent in to bat, Happy strung together an 89-run second-wicket partnership with Sumaiya Akter after the loss of opener Misty Rani early on. Following Sumaiya's dismissal on 37 in 30th over, no other BKSP batter could make much of an impact.

After the exchange, Khelaghar were in a spot of bother after losing four wickets for 88 runs in 18.1 overs. However, the unbeaten partnership between Joty (67) and and Fahima (66) saw the side through.

In the other game, despite Eka's unbeaten 117, Keraniganj suffered a 60-run defeat against Sk. Rasel Sports Development Academy. In chase of Sk. Rasel's 243, Keraniganj managed only 183 for nine.

## Hyderabad outclass Punjab

SPORTS REPORTER

Sunrisers Hyderabad defeated Kings XI Punjab by 45 runs in an Indian Premier League match in Hyderabad yesterday.

Punjab's KL Rahul scored a brilliant 56-ball 79 but it went in vain as wickets kept falling at regular intervals.

Batting first, Hyderabad posted a 212 for six. In their chase, Punjab mustered only 167 for eight in 20 overs.

**SCORES IN BRIEF**  
Hyderabad: 212 for 6 in 20 overs (Warner 81, Pandey 36; Ashwin 2-30, Shami 2-36)

Punjab: 167 for 8 in 20 overs (Rahul 79, Agarwal 27; Rashid 3-21, Ahmed 3-40)

**Result:** Hyderabad won by 45 runs.  
**Player-of-the-match:** David Warner.



The Daily Star's Sports Reporter Mazhar Uddin and Senior Sub-editor Sakeb Subhan examine Bangladesh's World Cup hopes after skipper Mashrafe Bin Mortaza's last press conference before leaving for Ireland on May 1.

### VIDEO

A discussion on the Tigers' WC chances

Nothing is impossible: Mash

