

What they think of the Class of 2019

Since the historic debut in the 1999 World Cup, Bangladesh have so far appeared in five editions of the biggest event in one-day cricket. There have been many memorable occasions and some not-so-memorable ones too on the way for the Tigers. But all of those who have adorned the red and green shirt in the biggest stage of all concur on one point: The 2019 squad is the best one from Bangladesh that will grace the World Cup. Star Sport Desk collated excerpts of some of the former Bangladeshi World Cuppers regarding their thoughts on the current squad, the requirements from the batters and bowlers, and their overall expectations from this batch.

AMINUL ISLAM
In the first World Cup, we planned to win one or two games if possible. But Bangladesh is an experienced side now. There are players on this team who have played together for 10 to 12 years. In 1996, when Sri Lanka had won the World Cup, at that time, Sri Lanka were not a side that had been playing cricket for a very long time. But they managed to win the World Cup and now I think that it is Bangladesh's time to do something good in this World Cup.

MINHAJUL ABEDIN
This team is, I think, one of the most experienced Bangladesh sides to take part in the World Cup so far. We have a few players who have played more than 100 matches and that a huge plus point for us. And it won't be unrealistic if we believe that this team have the ability to be among the top four teams of the tournament this time, and I am hopeful for it.

GAZI ASHRAF HOSSAIN
I dreamt of Bangladesh one day winning the World Cup 10-15 years back. I remember during an ICC meeting I told them that our age-level teams are doing so well and this time would surely be different. They used to criticise us and even said that there would be eight teams in the world at one stage.



Since then, I believed that if I am able to see Bangladesh win the World Cup once before I die, it would be the biggest achievement or dream come to true of not only my life, but also those who played cricket for Bangladesh and not to mention, the supporters.

AKRAM KHAN
It is natural that expectations rise when the team plays well. But this is a big pressure for the players. It is necessary to perform as a team, not only as individuals. Be it in bowling, batting or in fielding, everyone needs to give their best effort and then I think we can do anything.

KHALED MAHMUD
I think Bangladesh should be able to defeat Afghanistan, Sri Lanka and West Indies even though these teams are all very good. We would then have to beat to big teams and it could be anyone. It may be New Zealand or Pakistan. We defeated New Zealand in the Champions Trophy before and also Pakistan a few times. I think it could be anyone, or even South Africa, who knows?

MEHROB HOSSAIN
I think the biggest challenge [in England] will be to keep strong nerves. The environment of World Cup cricket is totally different.

England is the birthplace of cricket and the World Cup being held in England itself is a huge thing. I think we have to play the type of cricket we normally do but at the same time we have to keep our nerves strong seeing as whoever is able to do so will likely enjoy more success.

TUSHAR IMRAN
The format now is very difficult as every team will play against each another. So I hope that Bangladesh reach the second round [semifinal] as it will be very difficult this time. Maybe there were a lot more expectations in the previous World Cups but

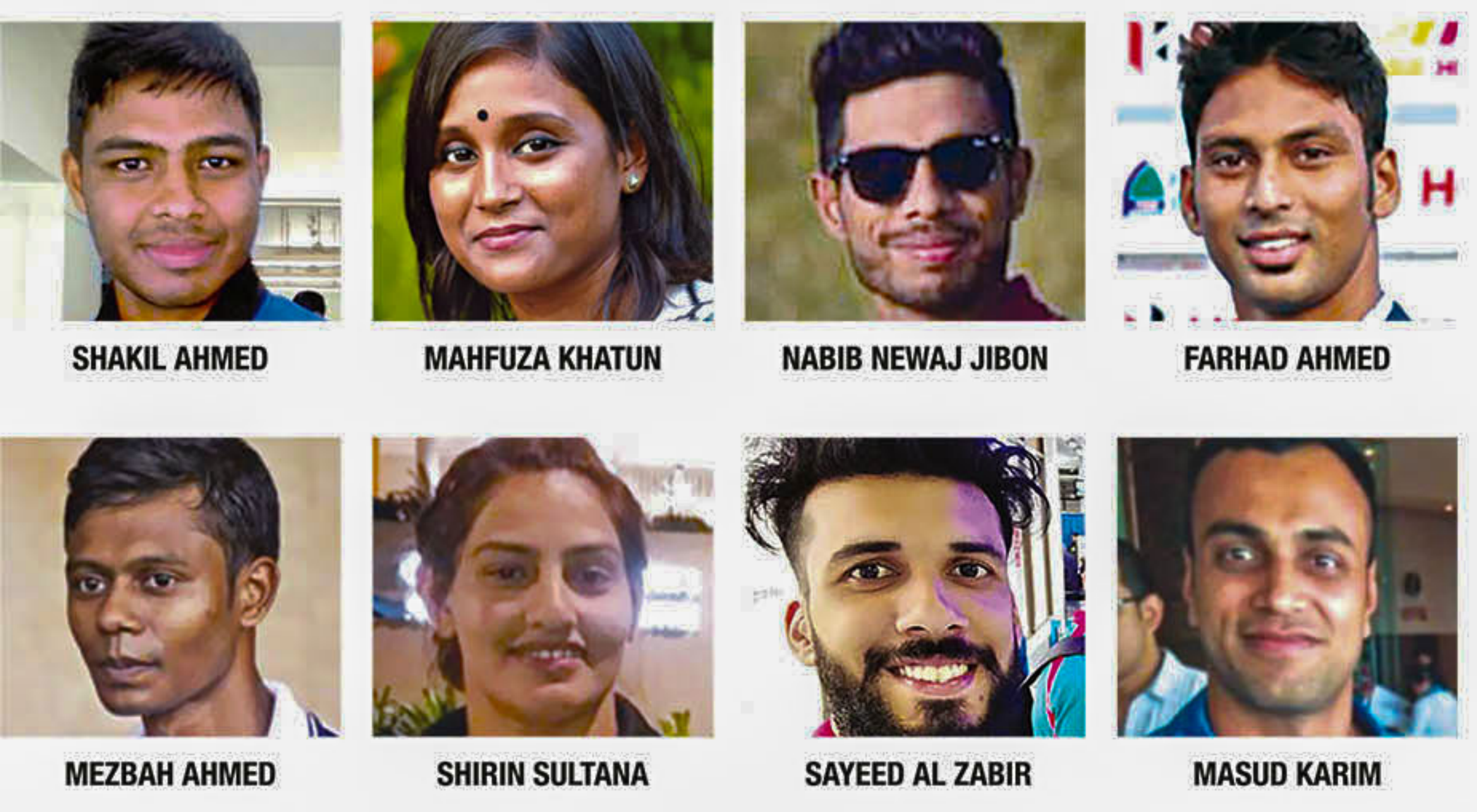
this time it would make me very happy if Bangladesh can reach the second round.

SYED RASEL
Cricket has now become a game of runs. In England, there won't be any moisture on the pitch like we used to find earlier. But the bowlers might get some swing in the air if there is wind. Other than that, it will be wrong of the bowlers and even the fans to expect some extraordinary bowling in England. The bowlers need to bank on variations like bowling slower, slower yorkers, block holes, lower full-toss deliveries at times. The faster bowlers can even bowl half-volley deliveries at a good speed as it is hard to hit and might result in only a single most of the time. But the bowlers cannot afford to bowl short and good length balls, especially in the last ten overs as those will be easy pickings.

SHAHRIAR NAFEES
I think there are no controversies regarding this squad. The only thing that could be discussed is why Imrul Kayes did not make the squad. Other than that I don't see any chances for controversy. I only felt bad for Taskin [Ahmed] but the truth is that he is still not 100 per cent fit. So if we think about it like this, then this World Cup squad is without controversy.

MOHAMMAD ASHRAFUL
Everyone dreams to see Bangladesh play in the semifinal or final after the last World Cup but the format is different as every team will play against each other so there are no weaker teams this time. In the last three World Cups there were two or three weaker teams grouped with Bangladesh. In 2007, Bermuda was a weaker team in our group. In 2011 we got two weaker teams in Ireland and Scotland and in 2015 we had Afghanistan and Scotland. But this time there are no weaker teams. So this World Cup will be a big challenge for us and if we are to emulate our last three World Cup performances then we need to play very well.

Good luck to the Tigers!



SHAKIL AHMED
SA Games gold medallist shooter
Cricket is an outdoor sport. That's why it is much more popular than shooting. I became second among 75 nations in Commonwealth Games but I am hardly known by countrymen because shooting is an indoor sport. However, I am wishing the national cricket team every success in the ICC World Cup and hope that they will fulfil the expectations of 16 crore people.

MAHFUZA KHATUN SHILA
SA Games gold medallist swimmer
Cricket is a big sport in the context of Bangladesh and the results of the cricket team is also good. We see many athletes don't play for medals, but cricketers do it for prize and they have gone to the England World Cup to achieve something. I hope the cricket team achieve their target by playing well.

NABIB NEWAJ JIBON
Striker of national football team
It is needless to say cricket is now the most popular sport in Bangladesh. I am proud of the cricket team. As a footballer, I don't get much time to watch cricket but I follow it on social media. Bangladesh, under the leadership of Mashrafe Bin Mortaza, is a very good side who I hope will reach the semifinals. I want the cricketers do something especial to make everyone proud.

MAMUNUL ISLAM
Former captain of national football team
Bangladesh did really well in the tri-nation series in Ireland, riding on



experienced cricketers like Mashrafe, Shakib Al Hasan, Mahmudullah, Tamim Iqbal and Mushfiqur Rahim. I hope they will carry those performance into the World Cup. I want to wish the cricketers best for the World Cup and I believe they have the ability to play the semifinals.

FARHAD AHMED SHITUL
Captain of national hockey team
It is a matter of pride for us that Bangladesh is playing in the World Cup. We also dream to play in hockey World Cup in future. I really pray from the bottom of my heart that Bangladesh play the final and fulfil the expectations of countrymen. I always try to manage time to watch Bangladesh's matches and there will be no exception this time around.

MEZBAH AHMED
Seven-time fastest man of Bangladesh
I just watched an interview of Mehdi Hasan Miraz on TV and am preparing to watch the practice-match between Bangladesh and Pakistan. So you can understand

how much I follow cricket. Bangladesh team is ready to take the challenge against any opponent in the World Cup and I believe they will produce good results compared to the last World Cup.

SHIRIN SULTANA
SA Games silver medallist wrestler
I'm a fan of Shakib Al Hasan and Mosaddek Hossain. I want Bangladesh to bring the trophy of the World Cup. Good results in cricket and football always inspire other athletes in Bangladesh, so I want cricketers to do it for the other athletes.

SAYEED AL ZABIR
National Volleyball player
I'm a crazy fan of cricket. I even go to the stadium to watch matches of Bangladesh. Mustafizur Rahman and Soumya Sarkar are from my home town of Satkhira. I think if Bangladesh can maintain their consistency and perform like they did in the tri-nation series recently, they can will reach semifinals. It is also the last World Cup for cricketers like Mashrafe Bhai, so I want this World Cup be memorable one for them.

MASUD KARIM
Captain of Bangladesh Kabaddi team
I spent some memorable time with Mashrafe Bin Mortaza during the 2014 Incheon Asian Games. Since then I have been watching Bangladesh's matches regularly. I am confident that under captaincy of Mashrafe, Bangladesh will produce really good results.

It is not only cricketers who follow the game passionately, but stars from all sports disciplines in Bangladesh follow cricket and have their own personal favourites when it comes to cricket teams and cricketers. They may stay busy with their own schedules, but whenever they get time these sports individuals tune in to their TV sets to watch the Tigers in action. The Daily Star's Anisur Rahman spoke to some of the sports stars regarding their expectations from the Tigers in the 2019 ICC World Cup.

Towards nation building, our commitment continues...

www.midlandbankbd.net

Contact Centre 24/7 **16596**
09617016596, 09611016596

midlandbank ltd
bank for inclusive growth