



Bangladesh's experienced batsman Mahmudullah Riyad (L) looks set to play in the crucial World Cup match against India after recovering well from a calf injury while MS Dhoni will be hoping to answer his critics in the best way possible against the Tigers in their encounter in Birmingham today.

PHOTO: BCB/AFP

## Recovery on course

SPORTS REPORTER from Birmingham

Bangladesh batsman Mahmudullah Riyad's recovery from a calf muscle tear seemed to be on course as the right-hander batted for a prolonged period at the outer nets of Edgbaston, the venue for today's all-important World Cup match against India.

Mahmudullah had sustained a Grade 1 tear on his right calf muscle during the Tigers' previous match against Afghanistan in Southampton on June 24. The ensuing seven-day break between matches would have helped the senior batsman recover as it takes around seven to 10 days to recover from the injury.

He appeared to be untroubled by the injury as he was skipping down the track to spinners and hopping on the back foot against pacers without any problem.

Skipper Mashrafe Bin Mortaza was however cautious about his chances while speaking to the media ahead of today's game.

"The physio [Thihan Chandramohan] has not yet given a final call, so there is some time on that front," said Mashrafe, who has also been struggling with a hamstring tear. "I have bowled today, so I am okay."

Team management informed later that a decision on Mahmudullah would be taken in the morning today depending on how the batsman feels after a full day of practice. The team had an optional practice session yesterday which was attended by all members with the exception of opener Tamim Iqbal, who had opted to rest before the crucial match.

## Dhoni defended after limp 'Surely not' end to England chase

AFP, Birmingham

India team bosses on Monday defended MS Dhoni after the wicketkeeper-batsman came under fire for slow batting towards the end of his side's World Cup defeat to England.

Chasing a stiff target 338 to win, previously unbeaten India needed 71 runs from the last five overs of Sunday's match at Edgbaston, with veteran big-hitter Dhoni and Kedar Jadhav at the crease.

But the pair added just 39, scrambling singles but failing to find the boundary regularly, to finish on 306-5. Dhoni was unbeaten on 42 off 31 deliveries while Jadhav was 12 not out off 13 balls.

The two batsmen were criticised in the Indian press and on social media, with pundits labelling their approach as "baffling".

But assistant coach Sanjay Bangar said the criticism levelled at the former captain surprised him, adding that 37-year-old Dhoni was "doing the job for the team".

"Except for one odd innings, he has done the role always. Five out of seven games he has done the job for the team," said Bangar.

"If you see the earlier games, against South Africa he stitched together a partnership of 70 (the partnership was

74) with Rohit (Sharma). After that, what was required of him against Australia he did that.

"In Manchester on a difficult track (against West Indies) he got a vital fifty for us. Here also he was striking the ball really well. I'm surprised that this question continues to come up every now and then."

A powerful middle-order batsman who led India to World Cup glory at Mumbai's Wankhede Stadium in 2011, Dhoni's finishing prowess has recently been questioned.

Earlier in the current tournament he faced flak for his slow knock against Afghanistan, when he scored just 28 off 52 deliveries.

Bangar said England's excellent bowling was the reason for India's struggles in Birmingham, rather than Dhoni's alleged lack of intent.

"If you look at the way they bowled towards the end, they used the dimensions really well and created difficult angles for our batters to hit," said Bangar.

"In those large boundaries and with the type of balls they were bowling -- slower bouncers, a lot of into-the-wicket deliveries, slower balls, I just felt maybe last one or two overs, the difference between runs required and balls left were a bit too much."



### INFO ZONE

HEAD TO HEAD IN WORLD CUP		
BANGLADESH		INDIA
1	WON	2
2	LOSS	1
0	TIE	0
0	NR	0

HEAD TO HEAD IN ODIS		
BANGLADESH		INDIA
5	WON	29
29	LOSS	5
0	TIE	0
1	NR	1

**LAST MEETING**  
September 28 2018 at Dubai International Cricket Stadium. India won by 3 wickets (with 0 balls remaining).

### KEY PLAYERS



BANGLADESH		INDIA
MUSHFIQUR RAHIM		ROHIT SHARMA
35.88	BAT AVE	48.56
78.83	BAT STRIKE RATE	88.24
35	50S	42
7	100S	25
144	HS	264
5885	RUNS	8450
83, 1C/2S	LAST MATCH	102

## India to persist with Pant at four

REUTERS, Birmingham

India will persist with Rishabh Pant at number four in the batting order to avail the left-right advantage in the middle overs, assistant coach Sanjay Bangar said ahead of Tuesday's Cricket World Cup match against Bangladesh.

The twice champions were left without a left-hander in the top half of their batting order after a fractured finger ended opened Shikhar Dhawan's World Cup.

Pant was flown in as Dhawan's replacement and the 21-year-old finally made his debut in Sunday's loss to England, scoring 32 after some nervous running between the wickets early in his knock.

"I felt he had a decent innings," Bangar told reporters at Edgbaston. "He got 32 and played a couple of god shots, got a partnership going (with Hardik Pandya), so we're going to persist with him."

All-rounder Vijay Shankar, who was originally picked in the squad to bat at number four, has been ruled out of the remainder of the ongoing World Cup with a toe injury, the team said on Monday.

"The team management was feeling the absence of a left-hander since Shikhar got injured," Bangar said, explaining the decision to send Pant ahead of Pandya on Sunday.

"It was a ploy to use right-left combination in the middle overs to upset the bowling plans. I feel because of that Adil Rashid could not bowl the number of overs he'd have usually bowled."

Known for his six-hitting prowess, Pant hit a century in an Oval test last year and also smashed an unbeaten 159 against Australia in Sydney in January.

Sunday's match was only his sixth one-day international but Bangar said the time



Pant spent with the World Cup squad has prepared him for the challenges ahead.

"He's spent close to two weeks with us now. He has done well at the international level, especially in the test format. The one-day format is slightly newer to him," said Bangar, who played 12 tests and 15 ODIs for India.

"We're trying to help him with the various mindsets and the roles that come with the middle order job, and the importance of the right-left combination... so straightaway he can put the pressure back on the spinners."

"It can help the team in a big way. On those lines, we've been communicating with him."

India, second in the table with 11 points, need a victory in their final two group matches to qualify for the semifinals.

### FACTS

- Mushfiqur Rahim has scored 604 runs -- the most by any Bangladeshi batsman -- in the 21 matches he played against India.
- Liton Das' 121 off 117 balls against India in the final of the Asia Cup in 2018 is the highest individual score by any Bangladeshi batsmen against India.
- India skipper Virat Kohli has amassed 654 runs -- the most by any player in either team -- in the 11 matches he played against Bangladesh. Kohli's average of 81.75 against Bangladesh is also the highest by any player from the two sides' current World Cup squads.
- Bangladesh skipper Mashrafe Bin Mortaza has scalped 23 wickets -- the most by any player among the two sides -- in the 19 matches he played against India.
- Mehedi Hasan Miraz's economy rate of 4.64 against India is the best by any player on the current Bangladesh squad.
- From India's current World Cup squad, Ravindra Jadeja has scalped the most wickets against Bangladesh. The all-rounder took 11 wickets in as many matches against the Tigers.
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### MR EFFICIENT

Sri Lanka's Avishka Fernando had a day to remember at the Riverside Ground in Chester-le-Street yesterday. The 21-year-old smashed a brilliant 104-ball 103, his maiden ODI century, against the West Indies. The right-hander combined for an 85-run third-wicket stand with Kusal Mendis before stringing a crucial 58-run fourth-wicket partnership with Angelo Mathews and another 67-run fifth-wicket stand with Lahiru Thirimanne en route to a brilliant hundred featuring nine boundaries and two maximums.

