

HEAD TO HEAD

BANGLADESH	MATCH	ZIMBABWE
9	9	
5	WON	4
4	LOST	5
0	TIED	0
0	NR	0

Particularly the Test match format and Twenty20 format, these two formats require a lot of attention and lot of focus in the next couple of months. Fortunately, there is not lot of one-day cricket [in the recent future] but there is a lot of Test and Twenty20 cricket so we can try to improve in those formats.

RUSSELL DOMINGO
BANGLADESH HEAD COACH

Both teams [Bangladesh and Afghanistan] are really very strong. Afghanistan is playing very good T20 cricket lately and Bangladesh have been around for a while. Both sides are really strong. We have had a lot of success in T20 cricket here. We have played very well in Bangladesh in T20 cricket. So I don't think that we are going to start far behind them.

HAMILTON MASAKADZA
ZIMBABWE SKIPPER

'Need to play some fast bowlers'

SPORTS REPORTER



The first assignment for newly appointed Bangladesh head coach Russell Domingo was clearly a disappointing one. The South African was little more than a spectator in the Tigers' one-off Test against Afghanistan, where Bangladesh were handed a 224-run thumping in Chattogram last Monday. Domingo, who was just handed his new role in mid-August, had to rely on inputs from seniors and skipper Shakib Al Hasan while making plans for the Chattogram Test.

However, going into the triangular T20 series -- featuring hosts Bangladesh, Zimbabwe and Afghanistan -- opener against Zimbabwe at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium today, Domingo would be a bit more aware of the realities of Bangladesh cricket. And as such, a shift in strategy could also be seen in the tri-nation tournament.

Bangladesh's spin ploy against the Afghans did not come off in the Test. The Tigers went with four spinners and no specialist pacers in the squad

-- the only pace bowler in the team was the part-timer Soumya Sarkar.

However, Domingo had made it clear that the same tactics would not be applied for the T20 matches anymore, keeping in mind the conditions in Australia where the ICC Men's World Twenty20 will be held from October 2020.

"This is totally a different format and different conditions, and there is a World Cup in Australia, so you need to play some fast bowlers. I think it's really important," said Domingo to the reporters during a press conference in Mirpur yesterday.

Bangladesh will be playing their next ODI in May 2020 when they will tour Ireland for three ODIs, three T20Is and a solitary Test. While this huge eight-month gap from the Tigers' favoured format is a concern for many, Domingo thought otherwise as he saw it as an opportunity for Bangladesh to improve in the two other formats.

"Particularly, the Test match format and the Twenty20 format, these two require a lot of attention and a lot of focus in the next couple of months. Fortunately, there is not



After a Test to forget against Afghanistan, a new format seemed to find Bangladesh skipper Shakib Al Hasan and his team in better spirits during practice at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium yesterday ahead of today's T20 tri-series opener against Zimbabwe. (INSET) Leading the highest-ranked team in the tournament, Afghanistan captain Rashid Khan may feel closer to the trophy than Shakib and Zimbabwe skipper Hamilton Masakadza.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED



a lot of one-day cricket [in the near future] but there is a lot of Test and Twenty20 cricket, so we can try to improve in those formats," concluded Domingo.

It can be said that when Bangladesh will be facing Zimbabwe today in the T20 tri-series opener in Mirpur, the Tigers will look to apply

some reformed tactics.

Zimbabwe skipper Hamilton Masakadza, meanwhile, said that his team will not be far behind from their opposition in the tournament, even though they are ranked four places lower than 10th-placed Bangladesh.

"Both teams [Bangladesh and Afghanistan] are really very strong.

Afghanistan is playing very good T20 cricket lately and Bangladesh have been around for a while. Both sides are really strong. We have had a lot of success in T20 cricket here. We have played very well in Bangladesh in T20 cricket. So I don't think that we are going to start far behind them," said Masakadza yesterday in Mirpur.

Adopting the Mullah's wisdom

BISHWAJIT ROY



We all know about the witty, wise and philosophical Mullah Nasruddin, a Persian character who appears in thousands of humorous stories. A well-known tale relates how judge Nasruddin was listening to a case and, after hearing the plaintiff's deposition, remarked, "You're right". Then, after the defendant had presented his case, Nasruddin again remarked, "Yes, you're right."

Nasruddin's wife was in attendance, was confused and queried, "That doesn't make any sense -- how can both the defendant and plaintiff be right?"

"You know what?" Nasruddin responded. "You're right, too!"

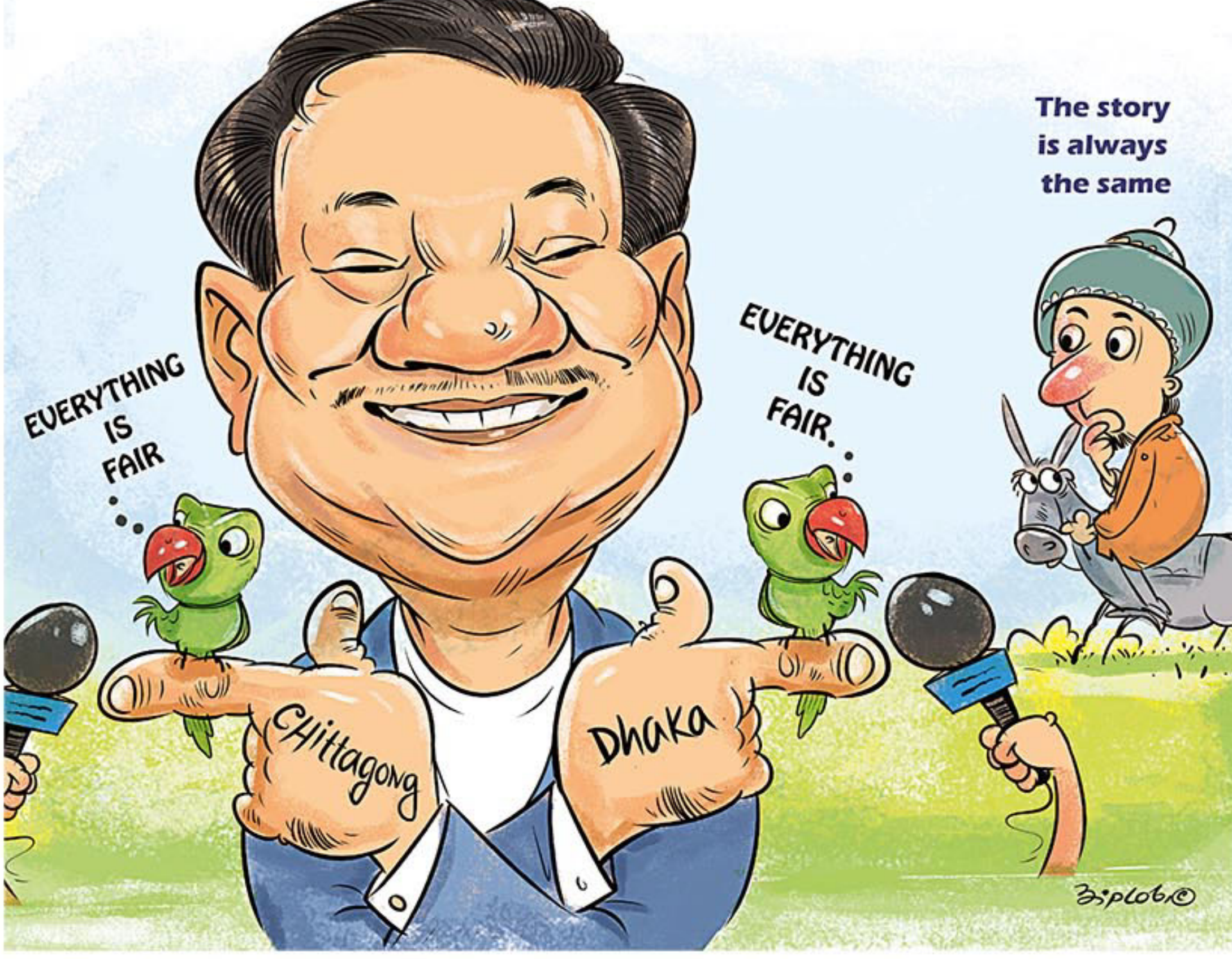
This story came to mind after the comments of Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) president Nazmul Hassan on Wednesday regarding Bangladesh's defeat to Afghanistan in the one-off Test in Chattogram. The latest observation from the BCB supremo created some confusion about whether it would be wise to bracket the defeat as a dismal performance.

Hassan was so shocked after the fourth day's play on Sunday that he questioned the ability and wherewithal of the players by asking: "Should I explain to them how to play Tests?"

The plaintiff (the press) thus mollified on Sunday, Hassan talked to the defendants (the players) after the defeat on Monday.

Then on Wednesday, when most observers of cricket in the country were ranking the defeat high in the list of most humiliating ones for Bangladesh, Hassan came up with the Mullah's wisdom to say that it was not the hardest to swallow. Rather, more painful were losses to India in the World Twenty20 group match in 2016, in the Nidahas Trophy final in 2018 and off the last ball in the Asia Cup final later that year.

And if you are impudent enough to raise



questions about Bangladesh's Test cricket, just pay heed to the BCB president: this Test [against Afghanistan] did not reflect Bangladesh's true colours.

Alas! The prosaic Shakib Al Hasan was not as witty or wise as the Mullah; why else would the Bangladesh captain cast aspersions on the standard of our first-class cricket. Why did he not understand and adopt the 'everything is alright' mantra? Did

he not read the Mullah's story? How could he say: "I haven't played NCL [National Cricket League] in the last four-five years and I didn't have any problem. Is there a problem of playing in the NCL or not playing in the NCL? I think it can be both."

Nuance and an appetite to tackle complex problems -- the Mulla's enemy in the aforementioned tale and the board president's, generally speaking.

Is it wise to raise questions about the standard of first-class cricket, allegations of corruption in lower-tier leagues or lack of long-term planning? Evidently not, because you cannot get peace down that road. Peace can only be achieved by saying 'you are right' regardless of how divergent the views are that you are validating.

Neither would anything, apparently, be achieved by the audacity of asking why a board president, who has been in office for seven years (that's seven more than you), would compare a Test debacle with T20 disappointments.

You cricket romantics may be in love with the oldest format of the game, but why do you hate reality? You are quick to cite India's upsurge in Test cricket in recent times. But if you are realistic, then you would understand that India's T20 model of success is more important than anything and therefore our main headache should be asking why we still are not good in the shortest format.

So, have we lost anything at all after the defeat against three-Test-old Afghanistan?

It would be fair to say that some of the players were losing sleep, but the president's soothing comments must have come as the perfect lullaby. The Tigers may have been feeling a bit uneasy as there is no ODI cricket, their favourite format, for almost a year and so would have been looking for success in the T20I tri-series starting today to clear the gloom. Thanks to the BCB president, that uneasiness has been removed early. See, many players also try to calm the waters by saying that 'everything is alright' and that they just need to click, so the president's words were like slipping into an old blanket.

If still the cynics try to bargain with their logic about wrong planning, a faulty system, and wonder how the players can both be in need of Test lessons and not have shown their true colours in the loss, you can always tell them, like the Mullah told his wife -- "You're right, too!"

Let us then reach a philosophical conclusion: nothing is wrong in life!

U-19s thru' to final

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh under-19 cricket team made it to the U-19 Asia Cup final, where they will face their Indian counterparts, after both sides had their respective semifinal fixtures washed out in Colombo yesterday.

Bangladesh were scheduled to play against Afghanistan but the match was delayed before eventually being called off at 2:15 pm local time due to inclement weather. The young Tigers reached the final courtesy of a top-place finish in Group B following an unbeaten run so far in the eight-team tournament.

The other semifinal, between India and Sri Lanka, was also called off with India advancing to the final, where they will face Bangladesh on Saturday. While Sri Lanka would have surely found the going tough against a strong opposition like India in their semifinal fixture, Afghanistan are certainly rueing their bad luck. The Afghans defeated Pakistan in the Group Stage and also nearly overcame India.

Bangladesh beat all three teams in their group -- the UAE, Nepal and Sri Lanka. When the young Tigers take on India at the R. Premadasa Stadium tomorrow, it will be in hopes of clinching the trophy for the first time.

'Have a few new deliveries up my sleeve'

Afghanistan's star cricketer Rashid Khan's journey has been nothing short of a fairytale since making his international debut just four years ago and in a short span becoming the face of the nation with his beguiling leg-spin. Interestingly, his mother initially did not want him to play cricket, according to Rashid. He also recalled his early days when he started playing cricket and touched on a few other topics during an interview with The Daily Star's Mazhar Uddin. Rashid sat for the interview before the one-off Test in Chattogram that Afghanistan won convincingly by 224 runs, courtesy of his 11-wicket haul that earned him the player-of-the-match award. The following are excerpts of the interview:

The Daily Star [TDS]: Started out as a teenager and now captain of the Test team, how has life changed so quickly?

Rashid Khan [RK]: It has been a big change since I debuted for Afghanistan. I have travelled the world and get fans' support everywhere. It is not the same Rashid Khan that used to walk out on the roads without being recognised. I need to be careful, not because of security [fears], but because of love from the people. I feel very lucky to be someone at this stage in a very short period and I feel proud at the same time. The focus now will be to maintain this.

TDS: How do parents and family react now?

RK: They are proud. Getting to such a stage in this short time, they are actually proud. They are happy to be called my family. They played a massive role since my U-19 days. I was not allowed to play cricket properly before that.

They wanted me to study but as soon I got into the U-19 team, then the IPL, BPL and the national team the support changed and it helped me at every stage. When I am playing in Australia, the time back home is 2:00am or so but still the entire family watches my game on TV. If the game is not shown live on television, they follow it on the internet. That is something that gives me energy to perform.

TDS: Why were you not allowed to play? And who was stricter, father or mother?

RK: Both of them. My mother was worried about me hurting myself. According to her, the ball is very hard and heavy and it hurts a lot if it hits you. She used to say I will be a goner if the ball hits me (smiles).

TDS: When did you start playing cricket professionally and when did you think you could become a leg-spinner?

RK: I used to be a batsman; I was not very



interested in bowling. I used to bowl one or two overs a game and that used to be enough for me. As soon I came to Afghanistan domestic [cricket], playing three-day matches,

I had taken up bowling seriously. I had taken 21 wickets in three games and from there on people started saying there is a leg-spinner who bowls quick and someone quite difficult to pick. I then thought if this can have a future, I should take it seriously and concentrate more on bowling. I did not have a coach to teach me. Whatever I was doing, I was experimenting and experiencing on my own. If you see my 2016 bowling action compared to the one now, it has changed a bit. I am still working hard in the nets and trying to invent new deliveries. At the moment, I have two or three new deliveries up my sleeve but have not tried in the match yet as I do not have enough control on that. But I have plans to bring them in soon in the longer format.

TDS: What is the secret behind Rashid Khan's rise?

RK: Leg-spin is the toughest job in cricket, I

believe. The main reason behind my success has been my action, the speed and the release point. A quick-arm action makes it tough for batsmen to pick. Whatever there is with me is all natural. I have not copied or been taught. It is something like a God-gifted talent.

TDS: Cricketers are turning politicians, especially in the sub-continent nowadays. Am I talking to the future prime minister of Afghanistan?

RK: I don't think I will be able to become a good politician and have never thought of that. I am still young and have a long career in cricket ahead of me and I would love to serve my country on a cricket field, make good facilities for the youngsters and help produce new talent for Afghanistan. I would rather work with cricket than be involved in politics. I am not a big fan of politics and have never followed it.