



(Clockwise from Top R) The heavy smog in New Delhi, which reached severe levels yesterday, forced Bangladesh pacer Al-Amin Hossain, head coach Russell Domingo and spin consultant Daniel Vettori to don surgical masks during practice at the Arun Jaitley Cricket Stadium. Skipper Mahmudullah Riyad, however, seemed to be enjoying himself and getting ready for another severe challenge in the first T20I against India tomorrow.

PHOTO: AFP/REUTERS

## A smoky welcome

ABDULLAH AL MEHDI from New Delhi



When the announcement came that the plane was preparing to land, this reporter looked through the window hoping to catch a bird's-eye view of Delhi. For a while, nothing except a white veil was visible. A few moments passed before trees, fields and tall buildings came into view. But it was still difficult to tell and as the aircraft got closer to the ground, the reporters onboard finally saw what the Delhi smog really is.

It has been on the news for some time but it was still surreal to experience. The whole city, as far as the eye could see, was shrouded in a mix of smoke and fog, with the seasonal stubble burning playing its part.

A Central Pollution Control Board official was quoted in local media as saying that the AQI (Air Quality Index) entered the 'severe plus' or 'emergency' category late Thursday night.

The burning smell hits your nostrils instantly when you take a whiff of the Delhi air, making it difficult to breathe. A cab driver said: "It has gotten especially bad since Diwali, you know the boom boom patakas (fireworks)."

"Not the right time for a tour, even locals are struggling," he added.

This was the environment in which the Bangladesh cricket team underwent their second day of training yesterday. The Delhi government meanwhile ordered that all schools should stay shut till November 5.

Bangladesh head coach Russell Domingo, who donned a mask to minimise the impact of the smog attack during practice at the Arun Jaitley Stadium yesterday, tried to play down the smog, saying that while not perfect it would be the same for both teams.

Nevertheless, conditions will be difficult for cricket when Bangladesh take on India in the first of three T20Is tomorrow. Luckily, the players will only have to suffer for two more days as the series moves to Rajkot. Mahmudullah Riyad and Co will be hoping that they get something in return for enduring the Delhi smog.

## Itchy eyes, sore throat but Tigers not complaining

REUTERS, New Delhi

Delhi's air pollution has left several Bangladesh players with sore throats and itchy eyes but coach Russell Domingo dismissed any health concerns and said they were focused on giving a good account of themselves in Sunday's Twenty20 match against India.

The city government instructed schools in Delhi on Friday to remain shut until Nov. 5 as residents breathed the season's worst air for a third straight day.

Several Bangladesh players and support staff wore face masks during Friday's training at the Arun Jaitley Stadium and Domingo said it was not ideal but the tourists would not make an issue out of it.

"Not obviously perfect with the smog but it's the same for both the teams," the South African told reporters.

"It's not perfect, it's not ideal, but it's nothing we're going to complain about and moan over.

We just got to get on with it...

"For sure we have some scratchy eyes, maybe a little sore throats now and then, but it's been okay. Nobody is being sick or dying or anything like that."

Delhi's notorious smog caused Sri Lankan bowler Suranga Lakmal to vomit on the field during a 2017 Tests at Kotla and prompted questions about scheduling matches in northern India during winter.

Domingo referred to Bangladesh's own struggle with air pollution and said the team were not taking any special precaution.

"We know Sri Lanka struggled a bit last time. There's bit of pollution in Bangladesh as well. So it's not a massive shock to the system," Domingo said.

India's batting coach Vikram Rathour was rather dismissive about it. "You're asking the wrong person I think," said the former player from Punjab. "I've played all my life in north India. We're used to these conditions. We are not taking any special measure. The game has

been scheduled and we're here to play."

### SHAKIB LOOMS LARGE

More than air quality, the tourists are struggling to cope with the absence of talismanic all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan, who was banned earlier this week for an anti-corruption breach.

"He [Shakib] has been a big player for Bangladesh and is close friends with a lot of players. Anybody will miss Shakib...but he made a mistake and is paying the price for it," Domingo said.

Shakib's absence has left the coach with a selection dilemma, though he expected youngsters to step up.

"It's very tricky because Shakib bats at number three and often opens the bowling or bowls first change," Domingo said.

"So you got to decide 'whether I want to replace the batsman or I replace the bowler' because it's very difficult to replace both. Not many players provide you both skills."

"I don't think there is anyone earmarked to specifically do Shakib's job."



Australia opener David Warner had a series to remember against Sri Lanka, scoring 57 not out in the third and final T20I in Melbourne yesterday. Australia won the match by seven wickets and the series 3-0.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

## Rohit leaves nets after blow to thigh

PALLAB BHATTACHARYA

India's T20I skipper Rohit Sharma was hit on his left thigh while batting in the nets at the Arun Jaitley Stadium in New Delhi yesterday, forcing him to leave the net session ahead of Sunday's first T20I against Bangladesh.

Sharma, who will lead India in the three-match series in Virat Kohli's absence, received the blow while taking throwdowns to simulate batting against Bangladesh's left-arm fast bowlers. After a few throwdowns, one sharp delivery hit Sharma on his left thigh. He immediately left the nets and was not at all happy with the pace at which the ball was hurled at him.

It was learnt that Sharma was getting treatment for the blow and didn't take further part in the net session.

It is understood that Indian batsmen are particularly training how to counter Bangladesh's left-arm paceman Mustafizur Rahman.

## U-19s square off against SL

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Under-19 team will lock horns with the visiting Sri Lanka Under-19 team in the second and final four-day game at the Sheikh Abu Naser Stadium in Chattogram today. The first game of the two-match series between the two sides ended in a draw.

## Can Khulna stretch lead?

4th round of NCL to begin today

SPORTS REPORTER



The fourth round of the National Cricket League (NCL) will begin across four venues from today.

Tier 1 table-toppers Khulna Division will take on Rangpur Division in Bogura while Rajshahi Division will host Dhaka Division. In Tier-2 Barisal will lock horns against Sylhet in Cox's Bazar and host Chittagong Division will take on Dhaka Metropolis.

Courtesy of their left-arm spin duo of Sunzamul Islam and Saqlain Sajib, who bagged five wicket each in the second innings, Rajshahi registered a magnificent six-wicket win over Rangpur in the previous round. With that win, Rajshahi jumped to the second position with 13.11 points while Khulna sits on top with 17.25 points after one win and two draws in three games.

It was Khulna's wicketkeeper-batsman Anamul Haque who registered back to back hundreds in each innings against Dhaka and the cricketer will be looking

to continue his form to make a possible comeback to the national team.

Dhaka Division are in third place with 10.2 points and they will surely miss their prolific scorer Saif Hassan, who struck a double hundred in the second round and earned a maiden call-up to the Tigers' Test squad for the two-Test series in India. Rangpur, with one defeat and two draws, are at the bottom of the table with 6.72 points.

In Tier 2, after a comprehensive nine-wicket win over Sylhet Division, Chattogram Division top the table with Barishal Division and Sylhet Division not far behind at second and third respectively. Dhaka Metropolis, who are still at the bottom of the table despite managing to draw their previous game against Barishal, courtesy of Mohammad Ashraf's hundred on the last day, which was coincidentally the day that Shakib Al Hasan was suspended for two years by the ICC for failing to report approaches from a bookmaker.

## Tigresses face Pakistan in 1st ODI today

SPORTS REPORTER

Visiting Bangladesh women's national team will take on hosts Pakistan in the first of two ODIs at the Gaddafi Stadium in Lahore today.

Rumana Ahmed will be leading the Tigresses in the one-day series after the Salma Khatun-led Bangladesh fell to a 3-0 whitewash in the three-match T20I series against the hosts.

Bangladesh's batting fired only once in the T20Is, when the visitors scored 152 for seven in the second match in chase of Pakistan's 167 for three.

The Tigresses have lost five and won three of the eight ODIs against Pakistan.

## Warner stars again in Australia's clean sweep

AFP, Melbourne



Australia cruised past Sri Lanka to clean sweep their three-match Twenty20 series Friday, with an in-form David Warner grinding out a third successive half-century in the seven-wicket win.

The home team have been dominant throughout, winning by 134 runs in Adelaide and by nine wickets with seven overs to spare in Brisbane ahead of the clash in Melbourne.

Sri Lanka's batting had been insipid until now, but they finally posted a competitive score of 142 for six, with Kusal Perera hitting 57.

However their bowlers, led by Lasith Malinga, have been no match for a quality Australian batting line-up, spearheaded by Warner who has now scored 217 in three innings without losing his wicket.

"It was pretty clinical once we got into a routine," said Australia captain Aaron

Finch.

"The way the bowlers set it up for us over the last two games, it was outstanding.

"Every game is a different challenge and a different surface, so it's important to bring in your best, in terms of preparation and mental side of the game too," he added.

"We haven't been up to our standards. We haven't performed at our best and if we don't, we will end up like this," said Sri Lanka opener Niroshan Dickwella. "We learnt a lot in this series, but we couldn't even compete properly."

### SCORES IN BRIEF

**SRI LANKA:** 142 for 6 in 20 overs (Perera 57, Fernando 20; Starc 2-32, Richardson 2-25, Cummins 2-23)

**AUSTRALIA:** 145 for 3 in 17.4 overs (Finch 37, Warner 57 not out, Turner 22 not out; Pradeep 1-20)

**Result:** Australia won by seven wickets and clinched 3-match series 3-0. **Player-of-the-match:** David Warner.

England batsman James Vince hammers one through the off side during the first of five T20Is against New Zealand at the Hagley Oval in Christchurch yesterday. England won the match by seven wickets.

PHOTO: AFP



## Vince puts England 1-0 up

AFP, Christchurch



A maiden half century from James Vince powered England to a convincing seven-wicket victory over New Zealand in the opening Twenty20 international in Christchurch on Friday.

Vince top-scored for the tourists with 59 as England chased down New Zealand's 154-run target in 18.3 overs to take a 1-0 lead in the five-match series.

While Vince's player-of-the-match performance caught the eye, captain Eoin Morgan was also full of praise for his bowlers, who laid the platform for victory by restricting the Black Caps to

153 for five.

"The game was won and lost in the first innings... James Vince played outstanding well but all credit to the bowlers today," he said.

A three-wicket haul from spinner Mitchell Santner was not enough to rescue the Black Caps, whose batting line-up failed to fire after Morgan won the toss and sent them in.

England's win came despite the absence of several senior players, who have been rested for the series after a gruelling period that saw them win the World Cup and fail to reclaim the Ashes.

A trio of debutants in the team facing New Zealand fitted in seamlessly, with Sam Curran and Pat

Brown both snaring a wicket each.

Morgan said his squad was building its depth by blooding youngsters ahead of the T20 World Cup in Australia next year.

"It's a chance for them to stake their claim," said the England captain, who emphatically ended the match with a six off the final ball to finish on 34 not out.

### SCORES IN BRIEF

**NEW ZEALAND:** 153 for 5 in 20 overs (Munro 21, Siefert 32, Taylor 44, Mitchell 30 not out; Jordan 2-28)

**ENGLAND:** 154 for 3 in 18.3 overs (Baird 35, Vince 59, Morgan 34 not out; Ferguson 2-28, Santner 3-23)

**Result:** England won by seven wickets. **Player-of-the-match:** James Vince.