



The Bangladesh national team had a practice session at the scenic Saurashtra Cricket Association Stadium yesterday, with the focus here on Mahmudullah Riyad (R). The T20I skipper will be looking to make history by leading his side on a quest to inflict India's first-ever T20I series loss at home today.

PHOTO: BCB

# 'They're desperate, but we are too'

ABDULLAH AL MEHDI from Rajkot

Mahmudullah Riyad and Co will be desperate to continue turning the tide of close defeats against India when Bangladesh take the field today for the second T20I of the three-match series with a cyclone threat looming over the game in Rajkot. Having had so many close encounters against India, Mahmudullah was keen to clinch a series against their Asian rivals on their home soil.

The Bangladesh team trained in the morning under sunny skies at the Saurashtra Cricket Association Stadium in Rajkot yesterday. Following some fielding drills the players headed to the nets but the pace unit once again worked on one of the wickets in the centre with bowling coach Charles Langeveldt, hoping to adjust their

lines and lengths.

Bangladesh players looked like a well-gelled unit on the field during the first T20I and carried that momentum in practice. Captain Mahmudullah Riyad exuded positivity during the press conference.

"From the start we have talked about our approach which has to be top; it doesn't matter if we win or lose, our approach and attitude have to be correct," Mahmudullah said.

Despite a batting-friendly wicket on offer and India possessing some of the hardest hitters in the game, Bangladesh players were looking for a positive outcome, bolstered by the seven-wicket victory in Delhi on Sunday.

"Since we won the first match, it will give us extra confidence. We are all desperately waiting for tomorrow's match. Everybody

is working hard and giving their best in practice. We are all trying so that we can give our collective effort to get the desired result tomorrow."

After the recent turbulence in the country's cricket -- a players' strike and then Shakib Al Hasan's ban from cricket for two years, with one year of that suspended -- the team could have been excused for being listless. Instead, they now look rejuvenated and up for a fight. It remains to be seen, however, if the win in the first T20I has helped the Tigers overcome the mental block against India in close matches, seen during last-ball losses in the Nidahas Trophy and Asia Cup finals in 2018.

"The mental barrier, we might be able to come out of that, even if a little. I think in T20 cricket, this sort of chance comes often and it depends on how we keep calm and

execute our skills to try and win the game.

"We can somewhat sense that they are looking to come back strongly. I feel that in T20s, if you can assess the wicket properly and the length and accordingly place your field, you have a chance to do well," Mahmudullah said. "They are really desperate and we are too. We have come to India for the first time to play a [multi-format] bilateral series, so if we can win, it will be a big achievement."

The think tank is likely to stick to the winning eleven, although Mahmudullah said they would adapt to conditions. "When we arrive tomorrow morning or maybe in the afternoon, if we feel change is required, for instance if the wicket is dry, then maybe we might change. But at the moment we will try to stick to the winning combination," the captain added.

# 'Pressure is on India to perform'

STAR SPORTS DESK

After being defeated by seven wickets in the first of the three T20Is, India would like to regroup and bounce back when they meet Bangladesh today at the Saurashtra Cricket Association Stadium in Rajkot.

It was India's bowling department that had failed to keep Bangladesh batsmen at bay in the Sunday's game as the Tigers, led by Mushfiqur Rahim's brilliant unbeaten 43-ball 60, romped to the victory with seven wickets and three balls to spare.

However, stand-in skipper Rohit Sharma thought that it was not the failure of any particular department that had cost the hosts the game.

"Pressure is just on the team to perform, as simple as that. Not

a particular department. You've lost as a team; you've not lost as a bowling unit. So, the focus will be on the team. Collectively, all of us need to come together. The batsmen need to get the job done; the bowlers need to come out and take those crucial wickets. That will

be the idea. We are not focusing on any individual departments. Because we lost as a team, not as individuals," Rohit told reporters yesterday.

The 32-year-old, who was confident that the pitch in Rajkot would be a lot better than that in

Delhi, said that there might be a few changes to his squad today considering pitch conditions.

"We will see the pitch again today [Wednesday] and we will think what we need to do in our bowling line-up. Our batting looks good, so I don't think there are any changes we need to make in our batting. But we'll analyse the pitch, and based on that we'll see what we can do as a team."

The opener also mentioned that India would go into today's game with a reformed approach.

"I cannot tell you the strategy but what I can say is that there will be changes in our approach. In the last match, we played according to the pitch. We were playing the way the pitch was reacting. But if the pitch here is good, our approach will be different as well in both bowling and batting."



The Saurashtra Cricket Association Stadium where Bangladesh are slated to play the second T20I against India today was put under covers briefly yesterday as the skies opened up under the influence of Cyclone Maha.

PHOTO: EKUSH TAPADER

# Plan for youngsters paying off

SPORTS REPORTER from Rajkot

While Bangladesh do not have the services of experienced stars such as Shakib Al Hasan and Tamim Iqbal on the India tour, youngsters such as Afif Hossain, Aminul Islam and Naim Sheikh stepped up during the first T20I in Delhi, where Bangladesh clinched their maiden T20I win over India. Chief selector Minhajul Abedin said that plans to bring youngsters through the ranks in the last few months were bearing fruit.

"It's not possible to satisfy everyone as a selector. What we tried was for the HP and 'A' team to play as many matches as possible, as they did, much like the national team. They can take the experience of how to play international matches from there," Minhajul told reporters yesterday.

Afif and Aminul both made an impact with the ball against India while Naim gave Bangladesh some stability at the top alongside Soumya Sarkar. Both Aminul and Naim have played for emerging team and A team recently.

"Biplob [Aminul], Naim did not seem like they were far from the international arena. The last three months of nursing have come good," Minhajul said.

The chief selector reiterated that there was no pressure on them to win the series tomorrow.

"It would be a great achievement to beat India in India and it will also have to be

kept in mind that they are a much more experienced side. We are not stressing about the series here. As it's a T20 game, it's difficult to say how the team will play. If our cricketers can play at their best level tomorrow, we can expect good cricket," he said.

He said that the focus cannot be on players who are not there. "Shakib could not play the final [against West Indies, which Bangladesh won] in Ireland. We should not think about who's playing and

who's not. Whoever plays has to utilise the platform, has to play well and get established," he concluded.

During yesterday's press conference, skipper Mahmudullah Riyad agreed that the youngsters had earned their places. "Afif, Naim and Biplob are very good youngsters. They have proven their capability to do well in the side, so they deserve their places and hopefully they will continue the same way they have started."



Chief selector Minhajul Abedin (L) opined that younger players would have to make the most of their opportunities and establish themselves in the team, as Liton Das has somewhat done.

PHOTO: BCB

# BPL delayed by 5 days

SPORTS REPORTER



The upcoming seventh edition of the Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) has been postponed by five days and the T20 tournament is set to start from December 11, Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) president Nazmul Hassan informed yesterday. The upcoming edition has been named the Bangabandhu BPL to celebrate the 100th birth anniversary of Father of the Nation Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

The BCB had earlier said that the BPL would start from December 6 after the BPL governing council had announced that they would scrap the franchise-based format and that the board would host the tournament on its own. The BCB boss revealed the new start date after a meeting regarding the BPL yesterday.

"As you know, initially we wanted to start the upcoming edition of the BPL on December 6. But we are also looking to stage an opening ceremony, so we decided to postpone the league by five days. Finally, we have booked November 17 for the players draft and the opening ceremony will take place on December 8, with the tournament beginning from December 11," Hassan told reporters.

Hassan also said that Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina will inaugurate the Bangabandhu BPL, and expressed hope that the opening ceremony will be the grandest ceremony ever.

The BCB boss informed that there will be seven teams participating in the tournament and that the BCB have already finalised five team sponsors. The BCB will likely operate the two remaining teams on their own.

Hassan also spoke about Lokman Hossain Bhuiyan, the BCB director arrested for his involvement with illegal casinos, and said that it was difficult for the board to take action against an elected councillor and director.

"Our stance is very clear as we will do everything according to the law. At the moment we need to wait for a while as it's difficult to suspend an elected councillor and director of the BCB. First, we need to know about the laws and then take decisions accordingly," he added.

Hassan also spoke about Shakib Al Hasan, saying that there is no scope for the BCB to appeal to reduce the two-year ban (the second of those suspended) levied by the ICC as it may have an adverse effect on the cricketer.

# Runfest or damp squib?

SPORTS REPORTER from Rajkot

At the end of the net session yesterday, head coach Russell Domingo, while having a chat with this reporter, opined: "It looks like a 170-180 wicket."

He was keen on the match just as the players were and agreed that the Tigers looked 'vibrant' on the field. With a high-scoring pitch on offer, line and length from the bowlers will have to be just right.

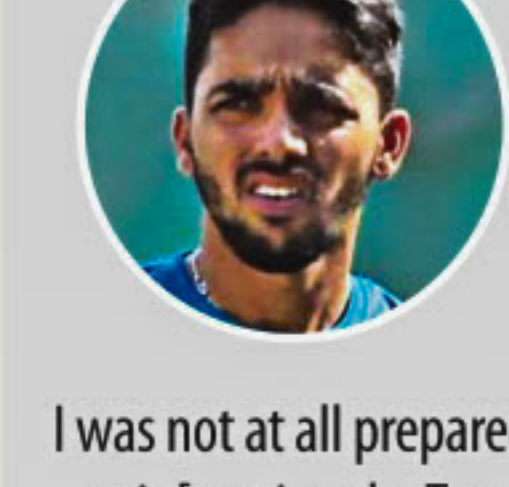
The only two T20Is played here have produced high-scoring affairs. In 2013, a 35-ball 77 from Yuvraj Singh saw the hosts eclipse Australia's 201 while Colin Munro ran rampant in 2017 with a ton as the Kiwis posted 196 before India fell 40 runs short.

However, against the backdrop of a cyclone, rain is a possibility today with showers and gusts of wind in the early evening raking across the ground and causing some damage to infrastructure yesterday.

The ground has a good drainage system but it is difficult to say what will transpire tomorrow in case of heavy showers. Skipper Mahmudullah too spoke of a 170-180 wicket being on offer but only time will tell whether moisture plays a part in tactics and lineups for both sides.

## HIGHLIGHTS

- India have never lost a three-match bilateral T20I series at home.
- Rohit Sharma is all set to play his 100th T20I match if he takes the field in the second T20I. He will be only the second player after Shoaib Malik to appear in 100 T20Is.
- Mahmudullah Riyad needs two sixes to reach 50 sixes in T20Is and he will be the first Bangladeshi cricketer to achieve the feat. Tamim Iqbal (41), Shakib Al Hasan (33) and Mushfiqur Rahim (31) are following the stand-in Bangladesh T20I skipper in the charts.
- A high-scoring venue, the average run-rate at the ground is 9.48 per over.



I was not at all prepared as it [getting the Test captaincy] was totally unexpected. I have never thought, even in my dreams, of leading Bangladesh or captaining the Test side but whatever happened... Alhamdulillah. If I think about it a lot it will affect me. If I think I have to lead from the front then there will be some pressure. If I play how I played before and have to score runs for the team, it won't be difficult.

MOMINUL HAQUE  
BANGLADESH TEST CAPTAIN