



Bangladesh batting stalwart Mushfiqur Rahim shares a light moment with teammate Soumya Sarkar (R) during a practice session at the Vidarbha Cricket Association Stadium in Nagpur yesterday ahead of today's third and final T20I against India. The three-match series is tied 1-1. PHOTO: AFP

## Fizz in need of a big performance

ABDULLAH AL MEHDI from Nagpur

Bangladesh's ace pacer Mustafizur Rahman is one who can turn the tide of a game in crucial junctures. His exploits in the Indian Premier League in 2016 had brought him international fame and as the Tigers step into the third T20I in Nagpur with a chance of making history, a lot depends on their strike bowler turning up for the game. Mustafizur had taken the IPL by storm in his debut season and his performances against India during the ODI series at home had earned him the respect of his opponents. There are many in Nagpur with Bangladeshi lineage and one Indian journalist even informed that Mustafizur had a good fan following here. "They [India] studied him well and know which delivery he is bowling," he remarked. Fizz's variations have not paid dividends in this T20I series so far and that will be a big concern for the team heading into the game today. However, head coach Russell Domingo had faith in his man. "No, no concern [regarding Mustafizur]. He's a

quality bowler. Bowlers are under pressure in this format, particularly with a wet ball against top quality batters on a good wicket," Domingo said. Mustafizur was only handed two overs in the first T20I at New Delhi on a wicket suited to his slower cutters and the left-arm went for runs in the second with Rohit Sharma's aggression paying off. While a couple went past the bat's edge, Fizz was perhaps unlucky not to get a breakthrough. Still, his fitness is worrisome. Suffering from the effects of a recent ankle injury, he has not had the chance to get any games under his belt even in the domestic circuit. If Bangladesh are to push a formidable India, Fizz will need to bring his A game but his line and length has often been erratic, leading to pressure being released. The problem with the strike bowler cannot be properly understood but neither can its effects be understated. According to sources, his place in the side might be on the line following recent performances. "He is a match-winner. We know there is a big performance just around the corner," Domingo said regarding Fizz yesterday. If it is, the Tigers can do with one right now.

## Two weeks ago, no one would believe it would be 1-1: Domingo

SPORTS REPORTER from Nagpur

The Bangladesh team arrived in Nagpur with the series poised at 1-1 and a chance to right the wrongs of the second T20I, where the visitors failed to deliver with the bat before being blown away by a Rohit Sharma storm. While their performances in the first T20I, under strenuous circumstances, had garnered respect, they lost their way in the second after a positive start with the bat. Coach Russell Domingo spoke about how Bangladesh could improve their chances in the third T20I if they rectify mistakes from the past game. Straight away, Domingo mentioned that his side were capable of beating India but must first ask

questions of themselves about how the second game went. "We can definitely [beat them]. In the second game we got ourselves into a good situation with the bat and then maybe made a few mistakes." He reiterated that with more experience his side could go further along the lines of not repeating errors from the last game. "It's a learning experience for our guys and when we get to the World Cup next year, we want to have better decision making in these types of situations. Hopefully we can remedy the mistakes in the next game," he said. Bangladesh are a team that depend heavily on someone playing the anchor role. In the last match, four of the batsmen got 30-odd scores but none were able to go

on and play a big knock. "The big problem in the last game was that nobody got 70 or 80 like Rohit did [for India] or like Mushy did in the first game. A big emphasis for us is that if someone gets into the 30s, they have to try and hold the innings together which can set up a big score," Domingo commented on Bangladesh not being able to capitalise, managing 41 runs in the last five overs. T20 cricket sees a lot of power-hitting but for Domingo, Bangladesh needed to focus on different areas. "I don't think we are ever going to be a West Indies or England type of batting line-up with guys who can get the ball out of the ground. Physically, we are not that type of team... but we are trying to use the

pace, running hard between the wickets, getting gaps, picking up twos; six twos in an over is as good as two sixes. We are working on our other strengths." "It has been a tough couple of weeks before this tour, but the players deserve a lot of credit. The energy and desire they have shown in the last 10 days has been fantastic. If someone said to us two weeks ago that we would be one-all coming into Nagpur, no one would have believed it. We are pretty happy where we are, and it is a great opportunity tomorrow. The guys are really excited. At the end of the day, India are one of the best sides in the world. No one gave Bangladesh a chance, but we think if we play to our potential, we have a chance tomorrow."



Bangladesh T20I skipper Mahmudullah Riyad probably pointed something out to Mustafizur Rahman, who is yet to make any impact in the series, during a practice session yesterday at Nagpur ahead of today's series-deciding T20I against India. PHOTO: AFP

## Rohit does not want to reveal the mystery

SPORTS REPORTER

It was stand-in skipper Rohit Sharma who singlehandedly took the game away from Bangladesh and steered India to an emphatic eight-wicket victory in their second of a three-match T20I series at the Saurashtra Cricket Association Stadium in Rajkot last Thursday. The 32-year old opener struck a blistering 43-ball 85 to help India level the three-match series 1-1. Rohit seems to enjoy playing against the Tigers. The right-hander has already scored 450 runs -- the most by any batsmen between the two sides -- in the 10 T20Is he played against Bangladesh so far. He also claims the title for most boundaries hit by an Indian -- 36 fours and 21 sixes -- against Bangladesh in the format. However, when Rohit was asked about the mystery behind such staggering figures against Bangladesh, the opener was reluctant to reveal it. "If I say what the mystery is, they will know and they will restrict me. I don't want to reveal that. I've loved playing against all oppositions, not just Bangladesh. I'm here to play cricket. It's a great honour to represent your country. I'm enjoying every bit of it," said Rohit. Rohit also said that he does not believe in being favourites as it is the performance on the day that decides the winner. "We don't believe in the favourites tag at all. We just have to go out there and be at our best. That is how you win games, not by having a tag of being favourites. You have to be good on that particular day. Bangladesh were good on the first day of the series and they won the game, we were good in the second game of the series and we won." Rohit said ahead of the series decider in Nagpur today. Rohit also backed India wicketkeeper, Rishabh Pant, who made a stumping error in the second T20I that allowed Bangladesh opener Liton Das to survive. "You know there is a lot of talk about Rishabh Pant every day, every minute. I just feel that he needs to be allowed to do what he wants to do on the field. I would request everyone to keep their eyes away from Pant for a while," he said.

## 'Don't want to make knee-jerk reactions'

SPORTS REPORTER from Nagpur

"We don't want to be a team that makes knee-jerk reactions to a loss. It has been the case for this team for too long. We want to back a certain group of players. If somebody has a bad game, that doesn't mean he won't play for the next six months," Bangladesh coach Russell Domingo said in reply to whether there were going to be a lot of changes for the third and final T20I against India. Sources close to the team claimed that there would be some sort of changes after the off-spinners came in for a bit of stick following the last game although the think-tank are likely to stick with three pacers. Domingo also cited that the presence of left-handers in India's top-order meant that not much could change. However, with Aminul Islam bowling well and captain Mahmudullah Riyad himself providing a spin option, a batsman could come in for an off-spinning all-rounder. The pitch is expected to closely resemble the one at Rajkot but with the surface being laid only a few months ago, it may not exactly behave the way that the wicket in the second T20I did. Queried, Domingo replied to this reporter: "I think 150-160 could be good score here." Earlier, during the press conference he had hoped that the spinners could play a part. "We feel we are very much in the contest if the wicket spins." The surface could provide some skid for the bowlers and T20Is over the last few years have not produced big runs here. Asked if 150-160 would be a good score, Russell said: "Yes, I think so." India skipper Rohit Sharma also spoke about the pitch during his press conference yesterday, saying: "Nagpur generally is a very good track to play cricket actually. It assists the bowlers also if you are bowling in the right channels."



IS IT OKAY FOR ANOTHER STORM? India captain Rohit Sharma, who put the Tigers to the sword at Rajkot and is only two sixes shy of reaching 400 maximums across all formats, inspects the pitch during a training session at the Vidarbha Cricket Association Stadium in Nagpur yesterday ahead of today's third and final T20I. PHOTO: AFP

## Moths intrude Windies' party

AFP, Lucknow

West Indies beat Afghanistan by 47 runs Saturday to claim their first ODI series win in more than five years as their bowlers took control amid an invasion of moths. Sheldon Cottrell, Roston Chase and Hayden Walsh each took three wickets as the visitors won the three-match series with a game to spare. Afghanistan have now lost 11 ODIs in a row. Dark clouds of insects rose up every time the ball hit a boundary rope and several West Indies fielders wore masks and Pollard twice spoke to the umpires about the nuisance. "I've never played with so many flies around," said the West Indies captain. "Health is very important, so something's got to be done about that." SCORES IN BRIEF WEST INDIES: 247 for nine (Hope 43, Lewis 54, Pooran 67; Naveen 3-60) AFGHANISTAN: 200 all out in 45.4 overs (Zadran 56; Cottrell 3-29, Chase 3-30, Walsh 3-36) Result: West Indies won by 47 runs. Player-of-the-match: Nicholas Pooran

## Shakib and others meet with CWAB

SPORTS REPORTER

Four senior Bangladesh cricketers -- Shakib Al Hasan, Abdur Razzak, Imrul Kayes and Jahurul Islam -- attended a meeting with Cricketers Welfare Association of Bangladesh (CWAB) president Naimur Rahman Durjoy and vice-president Khaled Mahmud at the former's office on Thursday. Of the eleven-point demand presented by the cricketers last month, the first was the resignation of the current CWAB officials and an election to appoint their successors. During the strike, CWAB secretary Debabrata Paul informed that the present committee's tenure ended seven months ago but they could not form a new one due to the lack of cooperation from players. It has now been learnt that Shakib, Razzak, Imrul and Jahurul had discussed the possible next step to take regarding the matter with Mahmud. According to sources, the officials briefed the four on how the organisation runs and ensured them that they would cooperate to map out the best course of action. The Federation of International Cricketers Association (FICA) on October 23 extended its support for the Bangladesh players who were on strike, saying that it would review the CWAB's membership for not fulfilling its role.

## All four matches hampered by rain

SPORTS REPORTER

With cyclone Bulbul making its presence known, the opening day of all four fixtures of the fifth round of the National Cricket League (NCL) were marred by inclement weather yesterday. Right-hander Shamsur Rahman shone for Dhaka Metropolis against Sylhet Division at the Shahid Kamruzzaman Stadium in Rajshahi. Dhaka Metropolis scored 282 for seven in 76 overs, courtesy of a magnificent 193-ball 114 from Shamsur, before bad light ended play at 3:40 pm. Asked to bat, Shamsur strung a crucial 98-run second wicket stand with Rakin Ahmed to revive Dhaka Metropolis' Barishal Division against Chattogram Division in innings after receiving an early jolt in the form Barishal were both abandoned due to rain.

of the loss of opener Azmir Ahmed in the sixth over. Shamsur's century, featuring 13 boundaries, alongside an 85-ball 69 from Al-Amin helped Dhaka Metropolis reach a decent total before stumps. For Sylhet, it was Rejaur Rahman, who shone with the ball. The medium pacer, who removed danger man Shamsur in the 70th over, returned impressive figures of four for 49 in 20 overs. In Bogura, after being asked to bat, Rangpur Division managed to score 110 for five in 41 overs against Dhaka Division before the match was called off early due to bad light. Meanwhile, the matches between Khulna Division and Rajshahi Division in Dhaka and Barishal were both abandoned due to rain.



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