

## SPORT

## New Zealand boost semis hopes

AFP, Sharjah

New Zealand defeated Namibia by 52 runs on Friday to move closer to the T20 World Cup semi-finals. Glenn Phillips and Jimmy Neesham plundered 67 runs off the last four overs as New Zealand made 163-4 after being put into bat. In reply, Namibia were well set at 47-0 in the eighth over before they faded to 111-7.

New Zealand have six points, two ahead of Afghanistan and four in front of India who must win both their remaining games, and improve their run rate, to have any chance of making the semi-finals.

Pakistan have already booked their place in the last four from Group 2.

Pre-tournament favourites India face Scotland in Dubai later Friday.

"We knew what to expect here, it was a real scrap," said New Zealand captain Kane Williamson. Phillips hit an undefeated 39 off 21 balls with one four and three sixes while man-of-the-match Neesham made 35 from 23 deliveries with a boundary and two sixes.

The Black Caps, who face fellow semi-final hopefuls Afghanistan on Sunday, were



struggling at 96-4 off 16 overs after being put into bat by Namibia, the lowest-ranked team in the tournament.

But Namibia lost their discipline with 21 coming off the 18th over bowled by David Wiese and 18 taken from a wild 10-ball final over from JJ Smit. Namibia had limited New Zealand to 62-2 at the halfway point after winning the toss and electing to field.

One of the early wickets to fall was opener

Martin Guptill who had smashed 93 in the 16-run win over Scotland last time out.

Namibia saw openers Michael van Lingen (25) and Stephan Baard (21) make a steady start, helping their team reach 56-3 at the midway point.

But experienced seamers Tim Southee (2-15) and Trent Boult (2-20) applied the brakes as Namibia were only able to add 55 more runs off the last 10 overs.

"Afghanistan are a really, really strong side," added Williamson of their next opponents who are still in the hunt for a semi-final place.

"They have done so well in this tournament and have got match-winners throughout their side. So we are looking forward to playing them."

Namibia have one win in the Super 12s courtesy of beating Scotland.

They bring the curtain down on the group stage on Monday when they tackle India.

"We did well for 15-16 overs in the middle today but the death overs didn't go our way," said captain Gerhard Erasmus. "We have got one more game to nail against India."

"It was quite a tough pitch, 160 was a bit too much today."



Youngsters Afif Hossain and Shoriful Islam were among the Bangladeshi players who returned to the country yesterday after a disastrous T20 World Cup. The Tigers returned to the capital on two different flights. However, four senior cricketers along with the members of the coaching staff stayed back in the UAE and will return in a week.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

## Team management under the scanner

MAZHAR UDDIN from Dubai

structure of the domestic circuit, do the selectors even possess a strong pipeline to inject fresh faces for a meaningful turnaround?

And considering the upcoming T20 World Cup in Australia in 2022 and the ODI World Cup the following year, it is high time the board, selectors and the team management buckled up to form a long-term plan immediately.

Bangladesh's preparation modus operandi prior to the World Cup, where the team management had opted for slow and low pitches at home on their way to winning series against Australia and New Zealand, has already faced serious backlash.

The inability to tackle top-class bowling attacks was brutally exposed in sporting pitches at the mega event while the fielding department raised huge concerns over dropped catches that had cost Bangladesh dearly against Sri Lanka and West Indies.

Question can be raised on whether the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) high-ups and the team management had any long-term vision before heading to the World Cup or the focus was merely on short-term glory achieved from exploiting home conditions.

With the Bangladesh team not likely to get enough time to evaluate their abysmal World Cup performance as the three-match T20I series and two-match Test series against Pakistan is set to begin this month, all eyes will be on the approach from the team management.

There have been a lot of speculations over a massive overhaul in the team following the latest dreadful show but considering the reality and the

difference between the senior players and an apparent lack of leadership, both on and off the field, which had reached its peak, especially when the underperforming players could hardly raise their opinion in team meetings and find solace in pressure situations.

Also by factoring in covid-19 protocols, where life inside a bio-secure bubble can take its toll on the mental health of the cricketers, the Tigers were already on a slippery slope when the situation had spiralled out of control during the flagship event this time.

As of now, the evaluation report of the World Cup is already being prepared, where the lack of participation in various issues by the cricketers has already been mentioned. However, to create a secure and healthy environment for the players to express themselves will be of paramount importance, or else Bangladesh cricket will only be destined to accelerate into a black hole in the days to come.



## Morgan wants England to tackle racism 'head on'

REUTERS, Dubai

England's limited-overs captain Eoin Morgan wants the cricket board to tackle the Yorkshire racism row "head on", insisting there was no place for any kind of discrimination against any player. The England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) has been rocked by former player Azeem Rafiq's allegation of racism at Yorkshire County Cricket Club, which has been suspended from hosting international or major matches.

Club chairman Roger Hutton has resigned over their handling of allegations made last year by former England under-19 captain Rafiq who is of Pakistani descent.

"I think if they're matters of an extreme or serious nature like these are, they need to be met head on, and for us as a team, that's exactly what we want to see," Morgan told a news conference ahead of Saturday's Twenty20 World Cup contest against South Africa. "We firmly believe that there is no place in our sport for any type of discrimination."

"I think the actions of ECB board to Yorkshire have indicated how serious they are about dealing with issues like this ...

obviously those actions speak louder than words."

Yorkshire batsman Gary Ballance, who said he had used racist language towards his former team mate Rafiq, has been indefinitely suspended from England selection.

Asked for his view, Morgan said: "I think the decision that was taken at the start of last summer in a similar instance with Ollie Robinson is consistent with the board's decision with Gary Ballance."

Fast bowler Robinson was suspended from international cricket in June for historical racist and sexist tweets. Morgan said his team, who often take a knee before matches in an anti-racism gesture, were trying to usher in a change.

"For probably the last two to three years, our culture has been built around inclusivity and diversity. It's actually been quite a strong part of our game," the 35-year-old said.

"For that period of time in particular, we've been active about talking and actioning things that show meaningful change." "It's not perfect, but we're making good ground towards change that we want implemented."



## Australia face slippery Windies in MUST-WIN GAME

AGENCIES

With their campaign back on track with a big win against Bangladesh, Australia will hope to avoid slipping up against West Indies in Abu Dhabi on Saturday.

After losing to arch-rival England last week, Australia bounced back with a record eight-wicket win over Bangladesh on Thursday. The margin of the victory boosted their net run-rate to +1.031 (from -0.627). Still, a win may not be enough if the Proteas manage to beat England on Saturday by a margin that would lift its NRR past Australia's.

If lucky, a loss against West Indies still could hand Australia a semifinal spot if England make it five out of five, beating South Africa.

So, there's a lot at stake for both Australia and South Africa. Australia currently occupy the second spot in the points table.

Facing such an uncertain scenario, the Australians cannot afford to be complacent. Moreover, a bruised and battered West Indies

would look to salvage some pride and bow out of the showpiece with a win.

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The two-time champion West Indies failed to live up to their reputation in this T20 World Cup as they relied heavily on ageing stars like Chris Gayle, Dwayne Bravo, Andre Russell and Kieron

Pollard. Australia, on the other hand, are beginning to peak at the right time in their bid to win their only missing title.

The bowling attack came to the fore in their eight-wicket win over Bangladesh that came with 82 balls to spare -- the biggest T20I win between two full member teams. While the pace duo of Josh Hazlewood and Mitchell Starc gave the opening blows, leg-spinner Adam Zampa polished off the tail end route to career-best 5 for 19.

Even Glenn Maxwell (2-0-6-1) was tidy with his part-time off-spin and the team would only hope that he starts firing with his bat also. The inconsistent top-order also got some boost with the return of Mitchell Marsh at No 3. Marsh blasted 16 not out off five balls, an innings that included a six off Taskin Ahmed, to seal the issue after skipper Finch laid the foundation with a 40.

The team would hope that David Warner and Maxwell get into the groove against the misfiring Windies as they may stick to an unchanged XI.



Bangladesh has now played 4 World Cups under Mr Papon, things have gone bad to worse. Longest serving President has also been the most incompetent. It's always someone else's fault as he runs our cricket to the ground. Shame that we have a shameless @BCBtigers.

SABER HOSSAIN CHOWDHURY, FORMER BCB PRESIDENT ON TWITTER.

