

In a touching, widespread donation to children impacted by the earthquake in Turkey and neighbouring Syria, Besiktas fans threw thousands of stuffed toys onto the pitch during Sunday's match against Antalyaspor. The Turkish Super Lig game, which ended 0-0, was paused after four minutes and 17 seconds to allow fans to throw the gifts onto the pitch. The earthquake first struck Turkey at 04:17 local time on 6 February.



PHOTO: BESIKTAS

England series pivotal for Riyad

SPORTS REPORTER

Mahmudullah Riyad looked comfortable in the nets against the bowling machine, timing his shots as Jamie Siddons kept close watch. But those deliveries were not as challenging as the ones Taskin Ahmed, Mustafizur Rahman and Hasan Mahmud were testing Mushfiqur Rahim, Tamim Iqbal and Najmul Hossain Shanto with.

When Mahmudullah's turn to face spinners came, he did not look at his flowing best. Something was off as he looked to gain control.

Circumstances have not been in his favour since being dropped from the T20 set-up last year ahead of the series against Zimbabwe, shorn of captaincy. He opted to retire from Test cricket under peculiar circumstances and, in the recent BPL, could not play the kind of impact innings that Fortune Barishal had hoped for.

But in the ODI format, the only format that he is active in, his scores should have kept away the doubters. But those voices are growing louder.



Papon mentioned in a recent interview that coach Chandika Hathurusingha was worried about Bangladesh's fielding. "He said that he could hide one or two cricketers, but how can he hide five to six fielders."

He added on Mahmudullah's fielding woes: "I don't have any problem with Mahmudullah's batting, but so far the complaints or negatives that I have heard about him from others are about his fielding."

Papon had added: "With age, a lot of things change, like reflexes, eyesight and reaction time."

Batting has not been an issue, with the 37-year-old producing 77 runs against India during an important partnership with Mehedi Hasan Miraz. Despite that, it was revealed during the course of the interview that the BCB president had asked when he wanted to retire. "I called Mahmudullah a couple of days back and said to him, 'if you have any retirement plans, please tell us, because we are ready to have a situation where you can retire after playing a series.'"

While other players have struggled with retirement in the past, the BCB president asking for a plan would not have boosted Mahmudullah's confidence levels.

Ahead of an important series, the pressure is once again on the veteran. A hero of many victories, the England series could prove pivotal given recent suggestions.



PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

After returning from the USA, Bangladesh's star all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan joined the team yesterday ahead of the Tigers' crucial white-ball series against England next month. Despite Bangladesh Cricket Board president Nazmul Hassan Papon confirming the rumoured rift between Shakib and ODI skipper Tamim Iqbal, both cricketers looked their usual selves during training.

'Must reflect where we stand'

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh's first-ever ODI captain Gazi Ashraf Hossain Lipu opined that the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) president Nazmul Hassan Papon could have waited till the end of the upcoming England series to give rise to the new talk of the town, relating to the previously assumed strained relationship between two Bangladesh stalwarts – Shakib Al Hasan and Tamim Iqbal.

The BCB boss, in his recent interview with Cricbuzz, has apparently opened a can of worms. Lipu thinks such revelation "should not have come out to public, especially from the board president" who he believes had "spoken out in frustration from the fact that he could not find a solution."

"I think that the president could have been careful about letting such information out before the [England] series. At the end of day, we wouldn't want two of our legends to reach such a situation," he said during an episode of Non-Striker's End, The Daily Star's multimedia programme.

The former captain, however, is still not willing to draw any conclusion on the matter, and he believes "conflict of ideas is bound to happen in every sphere of life."

"Look, have we heard from Shakib or Tamim that their relationship deteriorated? Has anyone ever witnessed on the field that, at any point, Tamim dropped a catch to deny Shakib a wicket? Or that they ran the other out?"

"They gave their 100 per cent whenever they played. When players engage on a constant basis, it's quite normal that

discussions about off-field matters take place, and everyone experiences it, more or less," he added.

England captain Jos Buttler said that his side are eager to thrive in Bangladesh conditions, which he assumes to be similar to what teams will face in the ODI World Cup in India later this year. Asked if Bangladesh should do the same, Lipu recommended that it would be wise to focus on one series at a time and that



the expectations from the Tigers should be kept in check as their stars have approached the twilight of their careers.

"Look, if you see things from a bigger perspective, yes, we should prepare with the World Cup in mind. At the same time, it seems we'll be content on making it to the semifinals and there is the challenge of the knock-out stage. But we must reflect where we stand at present."

"Our best players have aged and alongside them, new faces made their way in. So, with this sort of team, it is not fair

to expect too much from the upcoming World Cup."

In addition, he thinks the BCB "has set some short-term goals", and admitted that he has not witnessed prior evidence of anything beyond the short-term.

The culture, or the apparent absence of it, in Bangladesh cricket has been often talked about. Lipu recalled the 80's and the 90's and lamented how the vision that was established in the initial days, have derailed. The development is focused on the national team, tournaments like Bangladesh Premier League, High Performance events and so on, leaving the grassroots infrastructure ignored to many extents.

Speaking further on the culture, Lipu said it is "not a good practice by any means when players go straight to the president" instead of going to the ones in charge at the Cricket Operations Committee, for instance.

"Those who have been bestowed with the responsibility of taking care of the national cricketers for the last ten to fifteen years in the Cricket Operations [Committee] chairman post, the likes of Akram [Khan], [Naimur Rahman] Durjoy and Jalal [Yunus] bhai at present, all quite capable, I think they should be given the scope to play a role [in their post]."

"And if they fail, then the board president could always intervene."

"But if players bypass them [the ones at Cricket Operations], the coach and go directly to the president, it's not a very good practice," said Lipu, who was also the team manager during Bangladesh's maiden World Cup appearance in 1999.

Amite ton propels South

SPORTS REPORTER

Thanks to a ton from Amite Hasan, South Zone managed to take a commanding lead against Central Zone on the third day of their Bangladesh Cricket League (BCL) game at the Shaheed Chandu Stadium in Bogura on Monday.

Amite hit 18 boundaries and remained unbeaten on 112 at stumps to give his side a 276-run lead heading into the fourth and final day.

Central pacers Abu Hider Rony and Mushfiq Hasan inflicted some early damage to leave South three down for 28 runs but Amite stitched a crucial 192-run stand with Fazle Mahmud to steady the ship. Fazle, however, missed out on a ton for just 10 runs.

Meanwhile, at the Sheikh Kamal International Cricket Stadium in Cox's Bazar, North Zone took a 113-run lead after bundling out East Zone for 403.

East skipper Jahurul Islam scored his 17th first-class ton to help his side take a slender 25-run lead in reply to North's 378 for five in the first innings.

Djokovic scales another peak

AGENCIES, Dubai

Novak Djokovic achieved another historic milestone yesterday, overtaking Steffi Graf's record for most weeks as World No. 1 in tennis history.

The Serbian already held the record for the most weeks as No. 1 in the history of the men's rankings (since 1973) when he surpassed Roger Federer's mark of 310 weeks in March 2021. Now he has moved past Graf by beginning his 378th week on top of tennis' mountain.

Djokovic returned to No. 1 last month for the first time since last June by winning a record-extending 10th Australian Open crown.

"Of course with your love and great strength that you have given me over the years, I've managed to achieve many fantastic achievements throughout my career," Djokovic said in a video for the fans. The Serb will spend his 378th week at the top of men's tennis competing in Dubai, where he will play his first tournament since capturing a record-equalling 22nd Grand Slam title last month. "I still want more achievements," Djokovic told reporters on Sunday.



Bangladesh all-rounder Mehedi Hasan Miraz received a cap from the ICC yesterday for claiming a spot in the ICC Men's ODI Team of the Year for 2022 earlier in January this year. The all-rounder, who impressed with 24 wickets and 330 runs at a stunning average of 66 in 15 games last year, will hope to continue his good form this year as well, starting from the Tigers' upcoming home series against England.

PHOTO: BCB

Ten Hag's United 'happy but not satisfied'

REUTERS, London

Manchester United's near six-year trophy drought was almost overlooked in the build-up to the League Cup final as Newcastle United's wait for major silverware spanned nearly seven decades.

A clinical 2-0 victory at Wembley got the Old Trafford trophy cabinet door swinging open again though and, perhaps more importantly, gave a glimpse of greater things to come under astute Dutch manager Erik ten Hag.

The former Ajax Amsterdam boss arrived at Old Trafford with the club in a state of some turmoil on and off the pitch after finishing in sixth place in the Premier League last season.

But while there is little he can do about the future ownership of the 20-time English champions, which the American Glazer family have expressed a wish to sell, on the pitch he is shaping a team that looks capable of reviving the glory days.

A season that began under a Cristiano Ronaldo-shaped cloud has been transformed since the Portuguese talisman was finally shown the door after a toxic fall-out.

Ten Hag has quietly gone about his business, moulding an intelligent team that works tirelessly and is beginning to make winning a habit. A sixth League Cup triumph



turned into a world-beater and the signing of midfielder Casemiro has looked like a stroke of genius.

A defence built around the terrier-like Lisandro Martinez and the cultured Raphael Varane snuffed out Newcastle on Sunday, winger Antony is becoming a fan favourite and even old-fashioned centre forward Wout Weghorst, a puzzling signing at the time, looks as though he would run through brick walls for Ten Hag.

It is not so much about individuals though. For Ten Hag the key is having every player pulling in the same direction.

"Winning a trophy shows that its worth to suffer and sacrifice to give every day your best," he told reporters. "If you want to prove something you have to win something."

"This shows we are on a good pathway and it's going in the right direction. We will be happy for 24 hours but we will not be satisfied because satisfaction leads to laziness."

Ten Hag said the confidence of Sunday's win could be a key for the rest of the season.

"I hope this is a big inspiration, but you can't look too far ahead," he said. "It's a big win this and we are really happy tonight. Winning breeds confidence as long as you don't go over the top and keep doing the right things."

ended the club's longest wait for a trophy since 1983.

And the season could still get better. They are in the fifth round of the FA Cup, the last 16 of the Europa League after knocking out Barcelona in midweek and in third place in the Premier League and not out of the title race.

Ten Hag experienced some difficult early days. A 4-0 hammering at Brentford in August had some predicting he might be out before the leaves fell off the trees and then there was a humiliating 6-3 defeat at Manchester City.

Since that drubbing at the Etihad in early October, United have lost only twice in all competitions, forward Marcus Rashford has

VARENDRA UNIVERSITY

Join Our Team as
Vice Chancellor
Shape the Future of Higher Education

Varendra University (VU), the first private university in the northern region of Bangladesh, has been established in 2012 in the city of education, Rajshahi. To produce graduates of international standard by providing updated and scientific instructions, VU now runs with more than 6000 students. In this year the university is going to be shifted to its Permanent Campus with the state-of-the-art facilities of modern teaching and learning system.

In this situation, The Board of Trustees of Varendra University is inviting applications for a Proficient Vice Chancellor. He/She will fulfill his/her responsibilities according to the Private University Act, rules and regulations of the University and report to the Chairman of the Trustees. He/She will engage with key stakeholders including the UGC, Ministry of Education, Alumni, Recruiters, Donors, Industries, Parents etc. and will closely work with the 'Trustee Board' to execute the mission and vision of the university.

The eligible candidate will have to meet the minimum qualifications as specified in the section 31 of Private University Act 2010. The candidate should be a Professor with a PhD degree from a renowned university. Experience as a Vice Chancellor or Pro-Vice Chancellor in an internationally recognized University will be an advantage.

The Trustee Board reserves the right to relax the necessary qualifications for an exceptionally suitable candidate. Interested candidates are welcomed to send a complete CV with relevant documents on or before 30 March, 2023 to the following address:

Chairman
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