GTV AND STAR SPORTS 1 ICC World Cup Qualifier Sri Lanka vs Ireland Live from 1:00 pm

SAFF Championships 2023 Bangladesh vs Maldives Live from 4:00 pm Bhutan vs Lebanon

Live from 8:00 pm **SONY SPORTS 5** Women's Ashes England vs Australia Only Test, Day 4 Live from 4:00 pm

Pothas warns of Afghan white-ball threat

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh's assistant coach Nick Pothas believes that Afghanistan will be more motivated to make a statement and come hard at the hosts in the white-ball series following their record 546-run defeat in the lone Test.

The return of star leg-spinner Rashid Khan, along with Mujeeb Ur Rahman and Mohammad Nabi, will strengthen the Afghan side and they are expected to give tough fight to the Tigers.

'A lot of their (Afghanistan) main players will now be fresh. They've had a break. They're going to come back. They're a very proud nation. The defeat in the Test match will motivate them as well when we're coming back," Pothas told the media in Mirpur yesterday.

"But it's very exciting for us because it'll tell us where we are and it'll give us a really good insight as to what we need to work on, what we're doing well, etc. So, it's an exciting series, but it's going to be very, very tough." The three-match ODI series, starting early next month, is expected to be the last series for the Tigers to prepare and chalk out plans for the upcoming Asia Cup and the ICC ODI World Cup later this year.

"All of this is part of a much bigger picture. The big picture is obviously the World Cup, the Asia Cup. We cannot wish for better preparation for that than a series against Afghanistan. They are a very good one-day team," he said. "With regards to pressure on us, pressure only comes from one side. It comes from the media and the supporters, not from us. So, it's up to you how much pressure you want to put us on," said the South African.



After losing their SAFF Championship opener against Lebanon in a disappointing manner -- conceding two late goals due to errors from the defenders -- Jamal Bhuiyan and Co. will hope to put on a better display when Bangladesh face Maldives in a crucial Group B encounter at the Sree Kanteerava Stadium in Bengaluru today.

Dutch, WI and Zim progress

AFP, Harare

The Netherlands progressed to the Super Sixes with a seven-wicket victory which knocked Nepal out of the World Cup qualifying tournament in Harare on Saturday.

Indies and Zimbabwe's progress into Nepal were put in to bat in the

The Dutch win also confirms West

crunch tie by the Netherlands but folded for 167 after a middle-overs crisis initiated by Vikramjit Singh and developed by Logan van Beek.

Van Beek got Aasif Sheikh chopped on in the third over of Nepal's innings, but Kushal Bhurtel and Bhim Sharki did well to fight their way through.

Bhurtel welcomed Vikramjit with a cut that went through cover for four and a punch through mid-on for

But Vikramjit found his lengths to firstly dry up the runs, and then dismiss Bhurtel and Aarif Sheikh in the 15th and the 17th overs

Nepal slumped from 46 for 1 to 91 for 5, and were unable to recover.

Cagers give new hope

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh national basketball team can win an elusive medal in the next South Asian Games, believes team's coach Ranjit Chandra Das after leading the team to a runnersup spot in the recently-concluded Five Nation Basketball Championship in Bhutan.

Bangladesh have never been able to win a basketball medal in the regional multi-sport event, but Ranjit thinks that if the team is given opportunities to train continuously and play more matches, they can end the drought sooner rather than later.

The next South Asian Games is scheduled to be held in Pakistan even though the time of the event has not been decided as yet.

Bangladesh agonisingly short of the fivenation title, also featuring Pakistan, Nepal, Bhutan and Maldives, after losing to Bhutan by 62-60 points in the final in Maldives on Thursday night. The men in red and green were leading



by a point with less than a minute remaining, but eventually conceded a two-point defeat.

"We were unlucky. We could've won it had luck been in our favour. We conceded a silly foul in the dying moments which eventually cost us the title," the veteran coach told The Daily Star as the team were in Sri Lanka last night, en route to Dhaka. "Of course everyone was disappointed. But we came with a young team and it was a very good learning experience for us. Even the crowd appreciated us despite the

Bangladesh Basketball Federation lost its long-time home, the Dhanmondi Indoor Basketball Gymnasium, last year and now the team only gets to train at the Mirpur Indoor Stadium ahead of any tournament.

"We came to Maldives with the target of becoming champions, but with only about a month's preparation – 20 days in Jashore and then 15 days in Dhaka. If we had better preparation, we could have won it," he said. The coach felt that if this young team is given enough

exposure and provided a permanent home for training and tournaments, they can not only win a medal in SA Games but also bring more glory for the country.

Bangladesh ready for today's 'final'

ANISUR RAHMAN from Bengaluru

Bangladesh coach Javier Cabrera appeared to be taking a contemplative walk around the artificial turf at the Karnataka State Association Stadium in Bengaluru with his head bowed and his hands behind his back before starting the final preparations for today's SAFF Championship match against

Before the start of the training, fitness coach Ivan Razlog tried to raise spirits, engaging the players in a game based on wearing their bibs quickly and correctly.

Cabrera then showed the players various things designed to break down Maldives, who have proven to be a formidable opponent for Bangladesh. Maldives have remained unbeaten against Bangladesh for the past 20 years, ever since a loss to Bangladesh in the 2003 SAFF Championship in Dhaka.

Asked if Bangladesh were ready to deal with the challenge, Cabrera said: "We are ready. It is a very, very important match for us. Not getting any points against Lebanon was disappointing, but we have to adding that Sunday's match was depend on ourselves. We need to win; we want to win. The atmosphere is good. Everyone is positive and tomorrow we have a really tough fight. But we believe we will achieve

looking back to the past, which he

OVERALL HEAD-TO-HEAD

Match | W |

1997 SAFF Championship Bangladesh 1 -1 Maldives (Group Stage) Bangladesh 1-0 Maldives (Group Stage) Bangladesh 1 (5) -1 (3) Maldives (final

2011 SAFF Championship Maldives 3-1 Bangladesh (Group Stage) 2015 SAFF Championship Bangladesh 1-3 Maldives (Group Stage) **2021 SAFF Championship** Bangladesh 0-2 Maldives (Group Stage)

regarded as just a statistic. He said Bangladesh aimed to win and keep their semifinal hopes alive.

"We are focusing on the present. We are in a positive moment and we are quite positive about the performance against Lebanon regardless of the result. That will give us the strength to face Maldives tomorrow," the Spaniard said, going to be a 50-50 affair.

When Cabrera was reminded that Bangladesh had fallen apart in crunch situations in the past five campaigns, he replied: "I think pressure applies to both sides Cabrera was uninterested in because I don't think Maldives will come looking for one point since

that would be risky. Both teams will give their best and we are looking forward to getting three points."

Nevertheless, Maldives, who have more skillful players than Bangladesh, are expected to cause various problems. But plans have been made to restrict their forwards.

"We had a team meeting today [Sunday]. The players know the formation and we always highlight the opposition's top players as well as study their weaknesses and strengths. We did the same before the match against Lebanon and we will have the same plan against Maldives. They have talented players up front, but we believe that we also have talented players in the forward line-up who can win matches," Cabrera said, adding that he had emphasised set-pieces in training.

Defender Tapu Barman added: "Keeping a clean sheet will be vital and we will try our best to do that." He also reiterated the words that were heard from the Bangladesh camp previously, saying: "We will treat this match like a final."

After the completion of the final preparations, Cabrera called on team manager Amer Khan, team leader Shawakat Ali Khan Jahangir and team attendant Mohammad Mohsin to bring everyone together and form a circle in the middle of the field. Once the short briefing was finished, loud screams were heard from the players. They will be hoping to make some noise once again after the 'final'.

Ruman wins individual gold after five years

SPORTS REPORTER

Ace archer Ruman Sana regained his national individual gold after five years with a 6-0 sets victory over Mishad Prodhan in the final of the men's individual recurve event of the 14th Teer National Archery Championships in Tongi

Ruman had won the title from 2013 to 2017 but failed to win it in the last five years. His form had dipped a bit in recent years and a disciplinary suspension in November 2022 also had an impact on his game too. However, the 28-year-old archer had his two-year suspension lifted in March this year and had been training ever since before taking part in the national competition, which concluded yesterday.

The Bangladesh Ansar archer missed out on two gold medals earlier in the day, settling for Siddique and missing out on a medal altogether in men's recurve team event However, the man from Khulna proved too good for Mishad of BKSP in

the final of the individual event after winning 6-0 against Hakim Ahmed Rubel of Bangladesh Police Archery Club in the semifinals.

Meanwhile, Ansar's Diya finished with two gold medals and a silver medal following the defeat to Bangladesh Police's Rubel and Jyoti Rani in the mixed team event.

Ansar finished on top of the medals tally with five gold and one silver medal, followed by BKSP who won three gold, two silver and one bronze medal. Police finished third with one gold, one silver and three bronze medals.

'We now have many different heroes in the team'

In the second and final part of an exclusive interview with The Daily Star's Mazhar Uddin, Bangladesh head coach Chandika Hathurusingha talked about the thought process behind approaching any particular opponent, the Tigers' chances in the upcoming major events and the change in mentality of the team as a unit among other topics. The excerpts of the interview are as follows:

The Daily Star (DS): You talked about in ODIs]. We don't have to fool ourselves. exploiting home conditions keeping in mind the strengths of the opposition. Is using seamfriendly pitches at home, as it was during the recent Afghanistan Test, part of the plan to do better in away Tests?

Chandika Hathurusingha (CH): No. The nature of the surface is adjusted depending on how we want to play against certain opponents. We can work in the nets and training facilities to improve the skill level. Sporting wickets are also being prepared during the NCL and BCL. But we can not think of just playing on seam-friendly pitches in order to play well abroad. It depends on our strengths. If I did not have fast bowlers, then there would be no point in preparing a seaming pitch. But now we have that. If I want spin from the surface, I can have spinconducive pitches as I have spinners in my team. Tactically, we can play however we want. It would depend on the opposition's strengths and limitations.

DS: You said that Bangladesh have the best opportunity to do something special in the forthcoming Asia Cup. Considering the strength of teams like India and Pakistan, where do Bangladesh stand?

CH: I think we are in such a position that if we can play our best cricket, we can do something special. I know the rankings do not lie and we are ranked number eighth [seventh

But I know that we have the skill and talent to compete with anyone on a given day and that's what I meant. This is an opportunity for us to do something special.

DS: Bangladesh reached the quarterfinal of the 2015 ODI World Cup during your first stint as coach. We have since been optimistic of our chances prior to major events. However, optimism has been kept in check this time as the team, despite being in form, has repeatedly cracked under pressure when the stakes were high. Do you think the collective mental strength of the team has now reached to a level that fans can really dream big this

CH: Fans always have expectations. That's why they are fans. I want them to have hope because we want them to support our team. In 2015, I think we played beyond our capabilities. We beat England [to reach the quartefinal] and we had some good momentum. We played well in the Champions Trophy [in 2017] -- reaching the semifinal by beating New Zealand in foreign conditions. At that time, we believed that we could go a step further. We nearly beat India in 2016 [T20 World Cup]. This time, the tournament is very different because we play every team and have nine games. So you can't have an off day. So, it will be a tough challenge. We might be given the favourites' tag considering that



we are third in the ODI Super League. But it will not be counted once we go to the World Cup. I think we have the capability to do well and that's what I am banking on.

DS: Can we handle pressure in crunch

CH: It is in human nature to handle pressure. For instance, let's say with all the structure in place, you go to a jungle. The moment somebody shouts there is a lion nearby, everyone will jump and start running. The human instinct is to survive. It is similar in sports as well. Whenever in pressure situations, players follow their instinct. And that's where the structure and the game plan become important. That's what I am trying to do -- having a team culture, structure, and have to develop and from what I see, they particular tactics in place. Instead of letting the pressure consume you, doing the boring stuff that you always do during practice sessions will give you the best chance to be successful. I am trying to bring that change

- that players do not become stiff and not do anything during pressure situations. **DS:** It seems Bangladesh often tend to rely

on the individual heroics of Shakib Al Hasan, Tamim Iqbal, or Mushfiqur Rahim. Do you think this needs to change?

CH: Look, I can not comment on how the fans or other people perceive it. Looking at the last few series, we can see there were so many different heroes. I don't think Shakib or Tamim were involved in winning major tournaments. In the India series, who was the man of the series? It was [Mehedi Hasan] Miraz. You don't have to worry about only one or two people now as we have a good team.

DS: Players like Shakib, Mushfiqur Rahim, and Tamim are approaching the end of their careers. Are you focusing on developing the leadership aspects of others? Do you feel the likes of [Najmul Hossain] Shanto, Liton [Das], Miraz and Taskin [Ahmed] have gained enough experience to fill those big shoes?

CH: I think the board has already put Liton in charge of some games while Shanto was the vice-captain. Miraz was also the vicecaptain in some series. I don't think they

are already leading by action. Shanto, Miraz, Taijul [Islam], Taskin, Ebadot [Hossain] are all leading by action. I think they are ready.

DS: There was this belief from within the board and fans that you are probably the right person to take Bangladesh cricket to the next stage as a coach. So, there's a lot of expectation. Do you realise that?

CH: I have my own expectations — things that I can control. I can not control other people's expectations. I am glad that they think I am capable of doing that and it is good to hear. My own expectations are really high but at the same time, I am very practical. All I can ask is for the players to be pushing themselves to get better.

DS: We played a Test in England 13 years ago and in Australia 20 years back. How difficult is it to become a good Test unit and compete with the big teams, considering the fact that Bangladesh do not play enough Tests?

CH: 100 per cent. You can not get better if you are not doing something and we need to do something. It is really a disadvantage for us and unfortunate that the players are expected to do wonders during a 30-day tour. Even the best teams like Australia struggle in subcontinental conditions. They learn and get better on their 15th tour. [Having more away Test fixtures] It is something beyond our control, unfortunately.