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# Tigers clutching at straws for inspiration

**MAZHAR UDDIN** from New Delhi

The Bangladesh team have already resigned to their fate in the ongoing ODI World Cup. Almost nothing has gone right for the Tigers in the tournament. After suffering six comprehensive defeats on the trot, the players find themselves at the bottom of a pit of despair.

The Tigers are already out of contention for the semifinal and their chances to qualify for the 2025 ICC Champions Trophy are also dangling by a thread with two games remaining in the World Cup.

While drowning in the misery of their own creation, Shakib Al Hasan and his troops must be clutching at straws for some inspiration ahead of their next match against Sri Lanka.

Fortunately for the demoralised Tigers, the venue of Monday's match, the Arun Jaitley stadium in Delhi, has some inspiration on offer.

Almost exactly four years ago, on November 3, 2019, Bangladesh clinched their maiden Twenty20 win against India at this venue.

The situation back then was also quite dire as that was the Bangladesh team's first match after



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India's vaunted pace attack would be looking to continue their form when they come up against the marauding batting line-up of South Africa when the two sides meet at the Eden Gardens in Kolkata today.

PHOTO: AFP/REUTERS

# Eden Gardens set for top-of-table contest

**AGENCIES**

Tournament pacesetters India and South Africa will meet in a mouth-watering contest at Kolkata's Eden Gardens today.

The hosts have already qualified for the semi-finals after winning all seven of their matches to date while South Africa also guaranteed top-four spot after Pakistan's victory against New Zealand yesterday. The Proteas will be wary of the India challenge going into the encounter.

"You've got two teams who are in-form, coming up against each other and I think it's just a matter of who breaks first and who's able to, I guess, exploit that moment or that weakness," South Africa captain Bavuma told a pre-match press conference yesterday.

The diminutive 33-year-old added: "We understand that there will be pressure moments within the World Cup, moments that we've overcome to get to this point, and there will still be more. We'll deal with them as best as we can."

India's top five have all shown form, with even Shubman Gill getting among the runs at Wankhede with a solid 92. India's pace attack has looked leagues ahead of their counterparts, performing with aplomb

under the lights in their last two fixtures.

"It's obviously a world-class bowling attack, they know everything about these conditions," said the South Africa skipper.

"The three up front, Bumrah, Siraj, as well as Shami...if there's swing, if there's nip, they can exploit that.."

South Africa, however, will know that batting first has worked in their favour so far in the tournament. The Proteas have thrived with that option, regularly crossing the 350-run threshold with ease.

While fellow opener Quinton de Kock tops the batting charts with 545 runs in seven games, including four centuries, Bavuma has managed only 111 runs in five matches despite some decent starts.

"You always want to be making contributions. I take comfort in the fact that I've been involved in some partnerships with Quinton up front," Bavuma said.

And even if they don't get their preferred bat-first, there is enough firepower in the South Africa pace attack to rattle India. In addition, they carry a strong spin arsenal in Keshav Maharaj and Tabraiz Shamsi.

An important factor in the contest will be the wicket in Kolkata, which hasn't yielded big scoring games so far.

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- After 90 ODIs involving the two teams, South Africa won 50 matches against India's 37, with 3 fixtures yielding no result. In terms of recent encounters, South Africa lead 3-2.
- The two countries have met five times in ODI World Cup history, with South Africa also holding a 3-2 lead over India. However, India won the last two meetings, in 2015 and 2019.
- The two teams have met three times at Kolkata's Eden Gardens stadium, with the home team holding a 2-1 advantage. In overall 31 clashes between the two teams in India, South Africa won 14 matches against India's 17.



PHOTO: EKUSH TAPADER

Shakib's two-year ban (one year suspended) from the ICC over keeping undisclosed contacts with bookmakers.

A Bangladesh team without Shakib and Tamim Iqbal, who had opted out of the tour, stunned the hosts in the first game of the series and clinched a historic seven-wicket win in Delhi.

In that match, the experienced duo of Mushfiqur Rahim and skipper Mahmudullah Riyad made sure the Tigers go past the winning line to somewhat make up for their failure in that infamous one-run defeat to India in the ICC T20 World Cup in 2016.

Once again, expectations will be high on Mahmudullah, who is the leading run-getter for the Tigers so far, scoring 274 runs in seven games, which included a hundred against South Africa.

Interestingly, similar to the match four years back, Delhi's air quality is once again in the news ahead of the match.

Before that match, Liton Das had drawn extra attention from the Indian media when he wore a mask while in training.

On Saturday, skipper Shakib also wore a mask to the team's training session in the evening. This was the team's first training session in Delhi after they called off the training the previous day due to the toxic haze.

The Sri Lankan team also cancelled its training on Saturday but the Tigers decided to brave out the poor air quality in the evening.

The players, however, looked demotivated and going through the motions in training, like a team waiting for their misery to end.



## 'Tough to digest'

**REUTERS, Bengaluru**

India vice-captain Hardik Pandya has been ruled out of the rest of the World Cup after the all-rounder sustained an ankle injury last month, the International Cricket Council (ICC) announced on Saturday as it approved Prasidh Krishna as his replacement.

Pandya injured his left ankle while trying to stop a shot with his foot on his own bowling during India's seven-wicket win over Bangladesh in Pune on Oct. 19. He then missed matches against England, New Zealand and Sri Lanka.

"Tough to digest the fact that I will miss out on the remaining part of the World Cup," Pandya posted on messaging platform X, formerly known as Twitter. "I'll be with the team, in spirit, cheering them on every ball of every game."

"Thanks for all the wishes, the love, and the support has been incredible. This team is special and I'm sure we'll make everyone proud."

Pandya picked up five wickets for the hosts in their opening three games of the World Cup tournament and pace bowler Krishna has played 17 one-day internationals and two Twenty20 matches for India claiming 33 wickets overall.



PHOTO: AFP

## Sk Russel, Fortis eliminated

**SPORTS REPORTER**

Former champions Sheikh Russel KC were eliminated from the Independence Cup following a 2-0 defeat against Abahani yesterday.

Jonathan Fernandes and Washington Brandao -two Brazilians of Abahani scored in the second half of the match in Gopalganj to help their team top Group B with nine points from three matches.

Rahmartganj and Sheikh Russel finished with four points each, but the Old Dhaka outfit edged former champions Sheikh Russel due to superior goal difference. Bangladesh Air Force finished bottom of the group without a point.

In Group C fixture in Munshiganj, Mohammedan and Fortis FC played out a 1-1 draw, which saw Mohammedan emerge group winners ahead of Bangladesh Army while Fortis were eliminated, despite all three teams finishing on same number of points.

There is only one match of the group stage remaining - between Bashundhara Kings and Chittagong Abahani, which will be held on December 1 following Bashundhara Kings' AFC Cup match and national team's World Cup qualifying matches.

## Nurul, Al Amin shine as Khulna crush Rajshahi

**SPORTS REPORTER**

Nurul Hasan hit a century and Al Amin Hossain claimed a five-wicket haul as Khulna Division defeated Rajshahi Division by an innings and 109 runs on the third day of their Tier two match in the National Cricket League (NCL) at the Sylhet Academy Ground yesterday.

Nurul, who resumed the day's play on 93, finished on 125 as Khulna posted 472 in their first innings, to take a 287-run lead.

Pacer Al-Amin then took a fiver while spinner Nahidul Islam took three to bowl out Khulna for 178.

In a Tier one clash in Rajshahi, Dhaka Division spinner Nazmul Islam took six wickets to bundle out Rangpur Division for 178, setting up a 17-run target, which Dhaka chased down without losing any wickets.

The Dhaka Metro and Sylhet Division match in Cox's Bazar is heading towards a draw, with the latter ending the day on 348-6, still trailing by 253 runs in the first innings.

Sylhet batter Shamsur Rahman hit a century on the day, 101, after Metro batters Shadman Islam and Naeem Islam hit double hundreds the previous day.

In the other match in Sylhet, Chattogram Division are eight wickets away from a win against Barishal Division.

Barishal are two down for 21, chasing 355, after Mominul Haque's 84 helped Chattogram declare on 256-9.

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Mitchell Starc lived up to billing as the Australia pace spearhead pushed England on the backfoot early in their chase of 287 runs in Ahmedabad yesterday, removing Jonny Bairstow in the first ball before dismissing mainstay Joe Root in his third over. With Bairstow wicket, Starc became the third-highest wicket-taker in World Cup history, surpassing Lasith Malinga's 56 scalps.