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A reluctant acceptance of World Cup failure

ASHFAQ-UL-ALAM

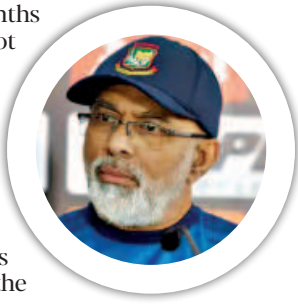
"I take the responsibility because we have disappointed the fans and ourselves," said Bangladesh coach Chandika Hathurusingha at a press conference yesterday in an apparent admittance of his role in what has been a disastrous World Cup campaign for the Tigers.

In a cricketing culture where people in charge usually resort to any and all excuses to deflect blame, his plain acceptance of responsibility was somewhat refreshing.

However, as one reads between the lines of what he said, it becomes obvious that instead of accepting the blame, the Sri Lankan was busy listing out reasons of why he should be absolved of any criticism for this trainwreck of a campaign.

Ahead of Bangladesh's penultimate match in the World Cup against Sri Lanka in Delhi, Hathurusingha missed no opportunity to remind all that he came on board as the Bangladesh coach seven months before the World Cup.

"I'm only seven months into the job -- There's not much I can do within seven months. What I did was just take the team from where the team was and make sure that they were prepared for this. Actually, my work has to start after this," said the 55-year-old.



The Sri Lankan was re-hired as the Bangladesh coach in February this year, meaning he had eight months before the World Cup, not seven.

Interestingly, Hathurusingha had only nine months in hand before the World Cup when he joined Bangladesh in his first tenure back in June of 2014.

The Sri Lankan had joined a team that was down in the dumps and coached them to their best ever finish in World Cups.

This time, Hathurusingha had a team which was fairly settled and sitting at number three in the ICC ODI Super League.

All the Sri Lankan had to do was to build on the work done by his predecessor Russel Domingo and work on the weaknesses that persisted in the team.

Hathurusingha also said that some things had happened before the campaign, which were out of his control, presumably hinting at the Tamim Iqbal fiasco.

Throughout the hullabaloo surrounding Tamim's retirement, prompt un-retirement and stepping down from captaincy, Hathurusingha played the role of a passive bystander.

Whenever asked by the media if he had made any attempts to speak with the batter, Hathurusingha dismissed that notion, saying Tamim has to approach him first.

The issues between Tamim and Shakib Al Hasan had been brewing for years and it became public knowledge in February, a few weeks after Hathurusingha joined as the coach.

As a coach, Hathurusingha was in a position to act as the mediator between them and mend the cracks forming in the team.

But in his second stint, the situation in the dressing room only worsened.

Hathurusingha's poor man management skills were not secret. In between the two terms in Bangladesh, he coached Sri Lanka from 2017 to 2020.

He was sacked by SLC after an investigation report, which revealed that Hathurusingha had created disharmony within the team and ruined team spirit.

After Bangladesh's uninspiring performances so far, it seems that Hathurusingha has successfully robbed another team of its spirit, whether he admits it or not.



Liton Das is perhaps struggling to answer Towhid Hridoy's question about why Bangladesh's batting has not been firing in the ongoing ICC World Cup. The duo was seen having a conversation in Bangladesh's training session in Delhi yesterday on the eve of their match against Sri Lanka.

PHOTO: ICC

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Champions Trophy only stake as Tigers face SL

MAZHAR UDDIN from New Delhi

With their semifinal dreams already slashed, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka will face off at the Arun Jaitley Stadium in Delhi today, with hopes of keeping their qualification dreams for the 2025 Champions Trophy alive.

Bangladesh are languishing at ninth position in the points table with just one win in seven games.

Sri Lanka haven't fared much better either, having won just two of their seven games and lie in seventh position.

The match is of no real importance in the context of the tournament but could prove crucial in the race for the Champions Trophy.

The top seven teams and hosts Pakistan, at the end of the group stage, will qualify for the 2025 competition, and with Pakistan all but certain to finish in the top eight, finishing above the bottom two should be enough to ensure a qualifying spot.

Although it will be difficult for the demoralised Tigers to bounce back after losing their last six games on the trot, head coach Chandika Hathurusingha hoped that his team

would turn up motivated against Sri Lanka in Delhi.

"The Champions Trophy [qualification] is up for grabs. We need to finish as high as possible. So, this game has a big impact on who finish higher," Hathurusingha told the media yesterday ahead of the game.

At the press conference, the

problem with the squad and felt the weight of expectations may have led to the batting failure.

"When we selected this team, before the World Cup, they had been performing. Their skill hasn't gone anywhere, whatever is going through our heads is the only thing that is disturbing us. We haven't played to our potential, we haven't shown what we are capable of," he said.

There was an injury scare in the Tigers' camp yesterday when Mushfiqur Rahim suffered a blow in his right thumb while facing throw-downs in the nets.

The team physician came rushing in and applied ice on his hand after which Mushfiqur returned to the nets again. However, after facing a couple of deliveries, Mushfiqur felt discomfort and cut his practice short.

Later in the night, the medical team informed that the wicketkeeper-batter's injury was not serious and he is expected to play today.

The toxic haze in Delhi hampered both team's preparations and will remain a challenge for both teams today.



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55-year-old accepted that the Tigers have not been able to perform according to their potential.

Batting has remained a concern throughout the tournament and questions are popping up whether not taking an extra batter in the squad has backfired.

Hathurusingha, however, saw no

Morsalin recalled to national team

SPORTS REPORTER

Forward Sheikh Morsalin has been recalled to the national team as head coach Javier Cabrera yesterday disclosed a 30-member preliminary squad for the upcoming World Cup Qualifiers against Australia and Lebanon.

The men in red and green will start their World Cup qualifying campaign away to Australia on November 16 before hosting Lebanon at the Bashundhara Kings arena in Dhaka five days later.

Central midfielder Chandon Roy is the surprise inclusion while centre-back Riadul Hasan and winger Rahim Uddin were also recalled.

Bashundhara Kings forward Morsalin was dropped from the national team along with four other players ahead of the pre-qualifiers against Maldives following his suspension from the club in an alcohol-related incident on the team's way back home from Maldives after an AFC Cup match.

Chandon, who previously represented Bangladesh in the SAFF U-19 Championship, has been picked for his brilliant performance for Sheikh Russel in the Independence Cup even though his side were eliminated from group stage.

"Chandon played 90 minutes in all three matches of the Independence Cup and was the best performer for Sheikh Russel," the club's assistant coach Abdul Baten told The Daily Star. "As a central midfielder, Chandon meets every criterion such as controlling the match, match reading, and decision making. I think the national team will get good service from him."

Bangladesh will start the preparation camp today before flying out for Australia in the early hours of November 11. The Bashundhara Kings players will join the camp after their home AFC Cup match against Mohun Bagan on November 7.



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With just his third delivery, India all-rounder Ravindra Jadeja bamboozled South Africa captain Temba Bavuma, knocking off the stumps, in their World Cup game at the Eden Gardens in Kolkata yesterday. Chasing a 327-run target, South Africa suffered a batting collapse, with Jadeja the tormentor-in-chief. The left-arm spinner returned career-best figures of 5-33 to help India bundle out the Proteas to 83 as the hosts cemented their position at the top of the table with a 243-run win.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Kohli, India's cricket icon with magic touch

AFP, New Delhi

Virat Kohli on Sunday made a 49th one-day international century, taking him level with Sachin Tendulkar's all-time record, but he will remain wary of any comparisons with his fellow cricket icon.

Kohli, celebrating his 35th birthday, reached the milestone ton in his 277th innings, far quicker than Tendulkar's 438 visits to the crease, in the World Cup game against South Africa in Kolkata.

"Every opportunity to play for India is a big one, to be able to ton up on my birthday is the stuff of dreams. Grateful to God that I've been blessed with such moments," Kohli said during the innings break of their game against the Proteas at the Eden Gardens yesterday.

Kohli's humble response even after equalling a record of such a magnitude and that too of one of the most iconic batters of all time was not surprising.

"Virat never played for records. They happened as he progressed," Kohli's biographer Vijay Lokapally told AFP.

"His batting skills and work ethic combined to create magic. Longevity leads to milestones and that is what Virat has inherited from stalwarts like Sunil Gavaskar, Kapil Dev, and Sachin Tendulkar."

Kohli has invoked a similar emotional response from cricket-crazy Indian and global fans that was once

enjoyed by Tendulkar.

Kohli's number 18 jersey has an overwhelming presence in Indian grounds.

With more than 26,000 international runs and a total of 79 centuries across three formats, comparisons with Tendulkar are obvious but Lokapally disagrees.

"He dislikes this comparison. He has his identity. Sachin Tendulkar has his. Their styles differ," said Lokapally.

"Sachin has faced some ferocious bowlers. Virat has dominated too. Sachin is incomparable. If Virat is enjoying his cricket today it is because of the reputation Indian cricket acquired courtesy of Sachin Tendulkar."

India last won a global title with the 2013 Champions Trophy and their previous World Cup victory came in 2011 under Mahendra Singh Dhoni.

Known to wear his heart on the sleeve, Kohli has never shied away from a battle on the field and despite his regular brush with controversies, the star remains one of the most popular cricketers.

Fans invading the pitch to touch his feet and take selfies remain regular occurrences at Indian venues.

Kohli went through an extended lean patch that spread across since 2021, failing to reach three figures in over 1,000 days.

Kohli hit his first hundred after a gap of 1,020 days in the 2022 T20 World Cup and has not looked back.

