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## ‘Bangladesh first need to win abroad, then dream about WC’

The eight-wicket defeat against Australia in Pune yesterday put an end to a forgettable World Cup for Bangladesh. It's now time to decipher through the wreckage of the Tigers' campaign to find where it all went wrong and figure out a path for the future. In an interview with The Daily Star's Mazhar Uddin on Friday, the team's technical director for the World Cup, Sridharan Sriram, opined that Bangladesh need to focus on winning matches abroad if they want to do well in ICC events. Following are the excerpts of the interview:

**The Daily Star (DS):** What went wrong for Bangladesh in this disastrous World Cup campaign?

**Sridharan Sriram (SS):** You make it out to be a disastrous World Cup. Yes, we should have won the game against the Netherlands, no excuses for that. But apart from that, we lost against really good teams and we never got bowled out for 50 or 70. Yes, we were unable to post big totals and our batters were unable to convert their starts into big hundreds. Unless they learn that they won't be able to challenge big teams.

**DS:** A team like Afghanistan with limited resources have done really well in this World Cup, so why couldn't Bangladesh?

**SS:** The number of Afghanistan players playing in leagues outside is phenomenal. They have got about eight or nine players playing in the IPL which really helped them get the exposure. Look at Bangladesh, we hardly get exposure in leagues overseas. Even in our Bangladesh Premier League, I really want to see our local players step up and win matches. That is something the franchises should start working on, so the local players can start winning matches when the pressure is on.

**DS:** What should the Bangladesh team do next if they want to vie for the trophy in future mega events?

**SS:** One thing I can say is that Bangladesh need to punch above their weight and not look for trophies and start beating bigger teams on a regular basis: doing well away from home and making it to the semifinals or at least pushing for a semifinal spot. We just can't reach the 10th floor straight away as you have to go one step at a time. We have got to have realistic expectations and goals but keep pushing the boundaries towards that goal. I think the realistic goal for Bangladesh is to do well away from home and the bigger teams should start to see Bangladesh as a threat, not an easy opponent. That should be the process for the board, media and fans. Having smaller targets would be better rather than saying win a major ICC trophy as it's not going to happen overnight.

**DS:** Did expectations from the fans and the media affect the players?

**SS:** It's the expectations they put on themselves. I think nobody can influence you from the outside unless you put yourself under pressure. Even the whole world can be against you but you can remain focused on your job. I think pressure is never external and what the media and public say should not matter at this level.

**DS:** You signed for the duration of the World Cup. Will you be continuing with the Bangladesh team after the tournament?

**SS:** I don't know as nobody has spoken with me yet. I have got my IPL commitment, which is very important for me. Definitely, I would like to work with Bangladesh in the coming days. The relation and rapport I have with the team I think I will savour.

Against the run of play, a sharp pick-up and throw from Marnus Labuschagne brings the downfall of Bangladesh batter Najmul Hossain Shanto, falling short of the crease despite a lunging dive. Shanto's 45 helped Bangladesh post their highest total this World Cup but it was insufficient against a high-flying Australia in Pune yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP



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## Constant shuffling hurt the team, admits Shanto

SPORTS REPORTER FROM PUNE

In a World Cup where Bangladesh's performances were mostly predictably poor, their batting order remained unpredictable throughout the tournament.

As the number of defeats kept piling on, captain Shakib Al Hasan and coach Chandika Hathurusingha would get asked in every media interaction if not having a set batting order was unsettling the players.

And their answer would always be a defiant no.

But yesterday, after the team ended their abysmal World Cup campaign with an eight-wicket defeat to Australia in Pune, stand-in captain Najmul Hossain Shanto finally relented and admitted that perhaps the constant experiments with the batting order adversely affected the team.

"To be honest, it is better if we don't [shuffle the batting order]," Shanto said during the post-match press conference yesterday. Bangladesh had begun the World Cup with a comfortable six-wicket win over Afghanistan in Dharamshala.

In that match, promoting Mehedi Hasan Miraz to number three after a wicket fell inside five overs to handle Afghan spinner Mujeeb Ur Rahman paid dividends as he hit a half-century which helped Bangladesh complete an easy chase. After that match, the management constantly shifted Miraz's batting position in the order, which forced the other batters bat out of position.

Other than openers Liton Das and Tanzid Hasan, every batter - Shanto, Towhid Hridoy, Mahmudullah,

Shakib Al Hasan and Mushfiquur Rahim - batted in different positions throughout the World Cup.

Former players and analysts have blamed this constant shuffling and experimentation by the team management for hampering the confidence of the batters, which is evident from their performances in the competition. After continuous criticism, the team management finally opted for a more conventional batting order in their last two matches in the tournament against Sri Lanka and Australia.

Against Sri Lanka, they ended their six-match losing streak by chasing down 280 and while they lost to Australia, they at least managed to post their highest score in the tournament, 306 for 8 in 50 overs.

Although Shanto initially tried to justify the shuffling, saying there were no complaints from any of the batters, eventually he accepted. "But sometimes you have to do it against certain teams, according to their strengths. But I think the less we do it, [the better]. There was a lot of [shuffling] in the World Cup but it was done with a positive intent. If we don't do it at all, even better," Shanto said. Shanto, who scored two fifties in the World Cup, also raised the importance of having sporting pitches at home in order to improve Bangladesh's performance in the white ball formats.

"We are not a poor batting unit. We came here well prepared, but we didn't get the result. We want sporting wickets in home ODIs and T20Is. Bowlers will learn how to defend 300 runs on a good wicket. I am sure the board is thinking about these types of wickets."



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AGENCIES

India will be keen to remain unbeaten at the ICC World Cup and head into the knockout stage of the tournament full of momentum when they host the Netherlands in Bengaluru today.

A great atmosphere is anticipated at the M. Chinnaswamy Stadium as the celebration of India's most popular festival, the Diwali, will approach its peak from the evening onwards.

India having rarely been troubled on their way to eight wins from eight matches, it looks like a clash between David and Goliath with the Netherlands languishing on the bottom of the standings, but it would be unwise for the tournament hosts to underestimate the Dutch.

The talented Netherlands outfit showed they are up to the class when they upset South Africa earlier in the tournament and their victory over Bangladesh was equally impressive.

The Netherlands too have their own lure, with a victory to move them into the eighth place on the standings, ahead of Sri Lanka and Bangladesh, and one of the qualification spots for the ICC Champions Trophy in 2025.

West Indies legend Sir Vivian Richards wants to see India continue to play to their strengths and avoid any negative thoughts as they strive to stay unbeaten and add to their



previous titles in 1983 and 2011.

"I believe they can go all the way unbeaten, which is really something to strive for," Richards said on his column for the ICC.

Much of India's chances of adding a third World Cup trophy to their cabinet will rest on the fortunes of Virat Kohli, with the former skipper having already scored two centuries while amassing 543 runs at the tournament at an average of 108.60.

Kohli will break Sachin Tendulkar's long-standing record of most ODI centuries in the history of the game if he can reach triple figures during the remainder of the tournament and Richards admits he remains in awe at the performances of the India star.

"Virat will have been through some tough times before this World Cup and some folks

### SCORES IN BRIEF

**Bangladesh:** 306-8 in 50 overs (Tanzid 36, Liton 36, Shanto 45, Hridoy 74, Mahmudullah 32, Mushfiquur 21, Miraz 29; Abbott 2-61, Zampa 2-32, Stoinis 1-45)

**Australia:** 307-2 in 44.4 overs (Warner 53, Marsh 177 not out, Smith 63 not out; Taskin 1-61, Mustafizur 1-74)

**Result:** Australia won by eight wickets  
**Player of the match:** Mitchell Marsh



"Seven games in a row, even when we were not at our best in some of those games, we came away with a win. Chasing 300-plus was something we did not do earlier. It feels like everything is clicking together."

Australia captain  
PAT CUMMINS

## New Zealand qualify for semifinals

AFP, Kolkata

New Zealand were assured of a place in the World Cup semi-finals on Saturday after Pakistan failed to overhaul them during their concluding group game against England.

Pakistan, the 1992 champions, needed to beat England by 287 runs to squeeze into the semi-finals at the Kiwis' expense on net run rate.

However, England batted first, closing off that avenue, and Pakistan's fate was then sealed when they were faced with the impossible task of scoring over 300 runs by the 40th ball of their reply to the champions' 337-9.

India defeated New Zealand by four wickets when they met in the group stage at Dharamshala.

South Africa crushed Australia by 134 runs in their round-robin clash at Lucknow four weeks ago.

### WHAT TO WATCH

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Aston Villa vs Fulham  
Live from 8:00 pm



**England batting stalwart Joe Root and Pakistan pacer Haris Rauf, one of the two impressive players on the day, share a light moment in the middle at the Eden Gardens in Kolkata yesterday, in their last fixture of the ongoing World Cup.**

PHOTO: AFP

## India focused as Dutch plot to spoil party

were even brave enough to call for his head," Richards said.

"They say form is temporary - and he has certainly proven that class is permanent. I am so happy for him, he looks so focused and he is a credit to the game of cricket."

India seem determined to continue winning as coach Dravid hinted that the regulars in the playing 11 would not be rested ahead of the semi-final on Wednesday.

Dravid also praised the Dutch side, saying their performances at the World Cup will give associate members hope of competing more

**The two teams met only two times in the format, both in World Cups -- in 2003 and 2011 -- with India emerging victorious on both occasions. The 2011 encounter was played in India.**

regularly on the big stage.

"The effort that they've gone through to be able to qualify... I certainly know how difficult it is for associate teams to reach this level and play," Dravid told reporters on Saturday.

"It's quite inspiring to see that in spite of the challenges that they do face, that they're able to compete at this level."

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