

## 'Women deserve same respect as men in sports'

Bangladesh scaled to many new heights in women's cricket in 2023 and the person who led them in this ascend from the front was captain Nigar Sultana Joty. Right as a new year begins with new possibilities and host of challenges, The Daily Star's Ekush Tapader caught up with Jyoti, where she spoke about the remarkable 2023 and what she hopes to achieve in 2024. Excerpts of the interview are given below:

**DS:** What's your assessment of the team's performances in 2023?

**NSJ:** I can't claim that 2024 will go exactly like 2023. It all depends on what initiative we take. This is also the World Cup year. Another big point is that all of our matches this year are at home. Naturally, we want to do well in our home condition.

**DS:** What are your expectations in 2024?

**NSJ:** I can't claim that 2024 will go exactly like 2023. It all depends on what initiative we take. This is also the World Cup year. Another big point is that all of our matches this year are at home. Naturally, we want to do well in our home condition.

**DS:** Bangladesh will host Australia for a bilateral series for the first time in March. How do you think your team will fare against the World Champions?

**NSJ:** I want the matches to be played on good wickets. If we make a 100 runs and bowl them out for 80 to win a match, our cricket won't be benefited by that. I want competitive cricket from both sides. They should also feel that even though they are the top ranked team and we are seventh, we gave them a tough time.

**DS:** What did you learn from the South Africa tour?

**NSJ:** Firstly, we had never before won a match on South African soil. Our victories in this tour were a huge achievement. But at the same time, we had an opportunity to achieve something even greater and win the series in ODIs and T20s.

**DS:** Even though some batters scored runs in South Africa, the team still struggles to score big away from home. What's your take on that?



**NSJ:** You know how difficult it is to maintain a good strike-rate in Asian countries. I don't need to spell it out (smiles). When we play on a good wicket, the game changes. We are working very hard on our batting. Still, we are struggling. We have to identify the reason behind this struggle.

**DS:** So, you want better batting wickets in home games?

**NSJ:** Definitely, definitely. Cricket has changed a lot, it's now all about runs. If you don't have the habit of posting 300, how can you expect to do it in the big stage. What happens now in T20s, is that we score around 130-140. We have won matches after even scoring just 110. In ICC events, you have to post at least 150 runs. Otherwise, how can you expect your bowlers to deliver?

**DS:** Experienced cricketers like Salma Khatun, Rumana Ahmed and Jahanara Alam no longer regular members in the side. How do you view this change?

**NSJ:** If we want to improve as a team, we need to strengthen the pipeline. Today, I'm in the team, I might not be here tomorrow. Nobody knows what will happen in the future. If there are options in hand, there is an added motivation to do better.

**DS:** What are your expectations from 2024 as a batter?

**NSJ:** I had a horrible 2023. I'm not at all satisfied by it. I couldn't deliver what my team had expected from me. I was able to do it in some matches, failed to do it in others. 2023 was a flop year for me.

**DS:** Still, you were the highest run-getter in T20s this year for Bangladesh.

**NSJ:** But I'm not satisfied.

**DS:** How do you view the state of women's sports in the country?

**NSJ:** I feel that the situation has improved. I won't say that the men's and women's sports are getting the same importance, but the situation has improved a lot. For us, the biggest thing is respect. We don't want huge sums of money, we want to be respected. We want to feel important. We want to feel that we are getting prioritised. The women hope for the same respect that men receive in every sport.

**DS:** What's your aim in this year's T20 World Cup?

**NSJ:** The next T20 World Cup will be in Bangladesh, in front of our home fans. Our goal is to play well in the T20 World Cup. We have gone without winning a single match in the last T20 World Cup. We definitely want to win some games this time around.

\*The extended version of the interview is available on The Daily Star website

## Rohit relishes India's win on 'dangerous' pitch

It was the shortest completed Test in terms of balls bowled. The match that lasted only over four sessions had seen only 642 balls bowled in total.

**Shortest completed Test matches (by balls bowled)**  
642 - SA vs IND, Cape Town, 2024  
656 - AUS vs SA, Melbourne, 1932  
672 - WI vs ENG, Bridgetown, 1935  
788 - ENG vs AUS, Manchester, 1888  
792 - ENG vs AUS, Lord's, 1888

India became the first Asian side to win a Test at Newlands, Cape Town when they beat hosts South Africa by seven wickets in the second Test to level the two-match series on Thursday.

A total of 464 runs were scored in the Test -- the lowest match aggregate in completed India vs South Africa Tests.

This was only the third Test involving India that was completed inside two days. India won all those contests.

South Africa have now been involved in 11 Tests that finished within two days. The Proteas won only twice.

### AGENCIES

Things unfolded at a brisk pace at Newlands, Capetown as it saw the shortest-ever Test played, with India on Thursday claiming a seven-wicket win against hosts South Africa inside just two days.

India bounced back from an innings defeat in the first Test in Centurion to share the two-match series 1-1, chasing down a target of 79 an hour after lunch despite a stunning century by home batter Aiden Markram.

But it inevitably was the bowlers who ruled the roost on a seaming surface with variable bounce.

"Even though the conditions were tough for the batters, the bowlers still had to get the ball in the right areas," said India skipper Rohit Sharma, insisting that the dominating comeback win demonstrated his side's ability to play anywhere in the world.

"We batted well to get a hundred-run lead. We knew it was going to be a short match and every run mattered. To get that lead was very important for us.

"To come to this part of the world is always challenging but in the last four or five years we have become a very good travelling team.

"For us to come out here and win like this gives us a lot of confidence that we can perform under any conditions."

The type of pitch and the fact that a Test got over inside just two days may as



PHOTO: REUTERS

well give critics in India a scope for a number of questions.

However, with variable bounce and sideways movement through the 4-1/2 sessions, Rohit described the conditions as dangerous, but added he had no problem playing on such surfaces as long as it was accepted that Indian pitches will turn from day one.

"I don't mind being on pitches like this as long as everyone keeps their mouth shut in India and no-one is talking about the pitches there," Rohit told reporters.

"Yes it is dangerous, but you come here (South Africa) to challenge yourself and you must face up to it."

After 23 wickets fell on the first day -- with Mohammed Siraj paving the way for the visitors with six for 15 in the first innings to skittle out South Africa for 55 before lunch -- the second morning turned into a battle between Markram and Jasprit Bumrah.

The Indian bowler took six for 61 -- and was denied the wicket of Markram when the batsman, on 71. Defying the pitch, Markram hit 106 off 103 balls in South Africa's second innings of 176.

"To the naked eye, it [the pitch] looked like quite a nice one but it played totally different from what everyone thought it would play," said Dean Elgar, South Africa's stand-in captain in his last match before retiring from international cricket. He was also named along with Jasprit Bumrah as players of the series.

## Jamal overly optimistic about 2024

### ANISUR RAHMAN

Following a seemingly never-ending slump, Bangladesh eventually turned the tide in the middle of last year during the SAFF Championship before retaining momentum for the rest of 2023.

This year, steeper hurdles await the men in red and green, with several FIFA World Cup Qualifiers fixtures lined up. Captain Jamal Bhuiyan believes if Bangladesh can raise their pro-activeness in the field and keep tempo intact throughout the match, they can climb up the FIFA rankings from a lowly 184.

"If we can establish a bit of dominance in the match, especially in the second half, then we can get more positive results," said Jamal while speaking to The Daily Star over phone on Wednesday from Denmark, where the poster boy of Bangladesh football is enjoying his vacation after playing for Sol de Mayo, a third division football club in Argentina.

The Denmark-born midfielder stated that his teammates' greatest achievement last year was their "self-belief". Capitalising on it, Jamal reckons Bangladesh can make their presence felt in the qualifiers.

"I can assume that Australia will win all of their group matches. Then, we have three matches left against Palestine and Lebanon, including a match at home where we are really strong. If we can secure seven points in three matches, then it is possible to advance to the top 18-team third round," explained the 33-year-old midfielder.

Jamal admitted that their mentality has transformed significantly after fighting neck and neck with superior Lebanon and Kuwait during the SAFF Championship. However, they were disappointed to come away with a draw over Lebanon at home last November.

"During the SAFF Championship, our



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JAMAL BHUIYAN  
BANGLADESH  
CAPTAIN

mentality was to secure a point against Lebanon by deploying a low-block but our mentality was different against the same opponents during the FIFA World Cup Qualifiers. There, we did not find much of a gap between the two teams, taking into account the on-field performances."

The Bangladesh captain further revealed how they acquired confidence and continued to give a consistent performance under Spanish coach Javier Cabrera.

"We have not produced good results before despite having performed better. But things started changing with the introduction of a new system, involving a false nine; though we were not used to such a formation even at the club level," he said.

"This system really suited us as our opponents hardly understood which system we adopted."

Jamal also believes that the much-awaited return of experienced defender Tapu Barman and goalkeeper Anisur Rahman Zico, who just began playing in the domestic league following the withdrawal of club suspension, will boost Bangladesh's squad depth.

"If you see the Bangladesh squad, it is a comparatively very young side with the players having one to three years' international experience except Sohel Rana Sr. and me," said Jamal, hoping that one or two new players will emerge from Bangladesh Premier League to strengthen the squad further.

Last month, Jamal was invited by LaLiga officials to visit Spain and observe the match between Atletico Madrid and Getafe CF.

"It was a good experience to visit the LaLiga office, TwentyNine's restaurant and the LEGENDS Collection. It was also a good feeling to see the facilities of Atletico Madrid," informed Jamal, adding that he will return to Argentina after enjoying a one-month winter vacation in Denmark.



**PSG's French forward Kylian Mbappe poses with the trophy after he helped his side with a goal to a 2-0 win over Toulouse to claim the French Champions Trophy at the Parc des Princes yesterday. Speaking after the match, Mbappe addressed the elephant in the room regarding his transfer situation, saying that he hadn't yet made up his mind about his next destination. "We've got titles to go after and we've already won one, so that's already done. After that, no, I haven't made up my mind yet," he said. The 25-year-old has already made it clear to PSG that he would not be going for the option to extend his contract for a year after it expires this summer. He was set to leave on a free transfer at the end of the 2021-22 season but ultimately signed a two-year contract extension, with the option of a further year. Mbappe, who is still strongly linked with Real Madrid, reportedly turned down a move to Spain when he agreed to his current deal with PSG in May 2022.**

PHOTO: REUTERS