

## Lankans have 'moved on'

SPORTS REPORTER from Sylhet

Sri Lanka team manager Mahinda Halangoda claimed that the visitors have moved past the incident in the second T20I where Bangladesh opener Soumya Sarkar was not given out following a review after the on-field umpire had raised his finger to a caught-behind appeal.

Sri Lanka have already filed a report regarding the matter and are awaiting ICC's verdict on the issue.

When asked about the issue yesterday, Halangoda said: "I think we have moved on from what had happened in that match."

He also mentioned that that episode is over for the Lankans.

"We can't undo it and there is a report being sent about umpires after every game and we have followed the procedure and whatever action needs to be taken has to be taken and ICC obviously will look at the footage and they will take whatever action they have to. I think, for us, that episode is over," he said.



Nigar Sultana Joty is centered for selfies by students of the Government Coronation School in Khulna yesterday. The women's cricket team, led by Joty, celebrated International Women's Day at the institution where the players engaged themselves in a game of cricket, gave pep talks, and signed autographs to inspire the students to take up sports. PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN

## MSC off to flyer in hockey league

SPORTS REPORTER

Title aspirants Mohammedan SC registered a 4-0 win against lowly Azad SC in their opening match of Green Delta Insurance Premier Division Hockey League at Maulana Bhasani Hockey Stadium yesterday.

The Black and Whites, playing without their foreign players, found themselves in a spot of bother with Azad players giving their superior opponents a run for their money in the first two quarters of the game.

However, the national team players of Mohammedan including Rasel Mahmud Jimmy, Sarwar Hossain, Shafiqul Alam Shishir, Al Nahyan Shuvo, and Din Islam Emon regrouped to find a breakthrough eventually.

Amirul Islam finally broke the deadlock by converting a penalty corner in the 35th minute before Emon and Jimmy struck one goal apiece in the third quarter. Monoj Babu added the fourth in the fourth quarter.

In the day's first match, Bangladesh Sporting Club registered a hard-fought 6-4 win over Victory SC, thanks to a hat-trick from Indian forward Prince Kumar. It took a tremendous performance from Prince after Victory SC, featuring all local players, surprisingly took a 3-1 lead at one stage.

## 'Tigers in a position to change history'

ABDULLAH AL MEHDI from Sylhet

A first-time T20I series win against Sri Lanka beckons Bangladesh going into the third and final T20I at Sylhet International Cricket Stadium today. Having drawn the series level with an eight-wicket win in the second match, coach Chandika Hathurusingha found plenty to be pleased about, especially on top-order approach and death bowling.

The Tigers held their practice session in the morning yesterday with batters going into the net sessions according to their batting order, as if to solidify the ideas. Liton Das, Soumya Sarkar, and skipper Najmul Hossain Shanto went into the nets first up followed by Towhid Hridoy, Mahmudullah Riyad, and Jaker Ali Anik. Barring Shoriful Islam and Taskin Ahmed, who were rested before the game, the other bowlers underwent net session with the ball.

It has been a series where Bangladesh has ventured to find some balance and stability. Liton and Soumya were the newest opening pair used within the last two years. They were counted on to continue in their roles as openers despite failing in the first T20I. The top-order

too had found a better approach while the middle and lower-middle-order of Mahmudullah Riyad and Jaker Ali had given Bangladesh the needed thrust in the first game, providing a moral boost despite the agonising three-run loss.

"I thought we played a perfect game [on Wednesday] in the way we executed our bowling and batting plans. The pleasing thing for me was how we quickly learned from the first T20I," Bangladesh coach Hathurusingha summed up the two games in the series so far during the press conference yesterday.

"Dew had some effect on both teams in that game. Our bowlers quickly learned on a pitch like that. The batters reacted well after the previous game, particularly in the Powerplay," he added.

Soumya was yet to look comfortable despite a good opening stand with Liton in the previous match, taking advantage of Powerplay. Chandika found Soumya's overall contribution worthy

while informing that both openers admitted to rectifying their game after the first T20I.

"They [Liton-Soumya] put their hands up after the first game, (saying that) their approach was wrong. They owned it and went and played really good cricket [in the second T20I]. I am old enough to understand that people make mistakes," he said.

The big improvement came in bowling on such high-scoring surfaces and Bangladesh bowlers tidied things up in the second game, having conceded 74 runs in the last four overs in the first T20I.

"We wanted to play on wickets that

are conducive to producing high scoring [encounters], to get us to understand what areas we need to improve in bowling. It is a mindset shift as well," he said adding that bowling on wickets where the average total is around 150 is a lot different than surfaces that see 200-plus scores.

Taskin Ahmed and Mustafizur Rahman, in particular, used variations to good effect in the second T20I, enough for Hathurusingha to admit that he is "pleased with how the bowling unit is shaping up."

With the T20 World Cup nearing, the head coach divulged that the stability of combinations of individuals and their roles are being discussed.

"We are looking at a combination for the World Cup [in June], how the individuals are fitting in and understanding the gameplan and be comfortable with that. We wanted to play on good wickets here," he said.

Plan-wise, only the next game, however, is in sight now as the head coach said: "There's the opportunity for us to do it [clinch the T20I series for the first time against Sri Lanka]. We are in a position to change history."



Bangladesh players celebrate their 6-0 victory over Bhutan in the last round robin match of the SAFF U-16 Women's Championship at the ANFA Complex in Kathmandu yesterday. The girls in red and green, who finished the round robin stage as the top team with nine points, will take on India in the final tomorrow. PHOTO: BFF

## 'A rude awakening for Brighton'

AGENCIES

Roberto De Zerbi revealed his regrets on Italian television after Brighton were swept aside 4-0 in the Europa League on Thursday night.

"It is a rude awakening, but Roma were far too good for us," the Italian said after the match.

The Brighton tactician was making a return to his homeland, but it was not a happy visit to the Stadio Olimpico, as his team lost the first leg of the Europa League Round of 16 by a 4-0 scoreline.

Paulo Dybala, Romelu Lukaku, Gianluca Mancini and Bryan Cristante sealed the rout, making it a huge task to turn this around next Thursday in England.

"We did our best in terms of effort, but in terms of football quality it was 20-25-30 per cent of our potential,"

De Zerbi told Sky Sport Italia. "It was in a certain sense to be expected, because we are not accustomed to playing these games, whereas Roma are and we saw a



difference in pace, calm, self-belief and experience of this knockout fixture.

"Roma were far too good for us tonight, considering what we did."

This is the first time Brighton and Hove Albion have ever played in

UEFA competition and they topped their group to reach the Round of 16, but injuries are taking their toll in recent weeks.

"The real problem is that we struggle to play three games a week with 15-16 players available. Finding the energy to play 90 minutes in the Premier League, then another 90 in the Europa League. If you don't have the ability to rotate the squad, you are running on empty," explained De Zerbi.

"It is a rude awakening, we were all hoping for a different match, a different result and also a different quality of football. The thing that irritates us the most is that we were unable to express ourselves."

Joao Pedro, Kaoru Mitoma, Solly March, James Milner and Jack Hinshelwood were all unavailable for the trip to Rome.

### SHORT CORNER

#### BCB meeting on Saturday ahead of AGM

The Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) will hold a board meeting on Saturday to approve the report of the CEO and CFO in order to hold the upcoming Annual General Meeting (AGM) later this month, confirmed BCB's cricket operations chairman Jalal Yunus on Friday. The last AGM of the BCB took place in June 2022 and the upcoming AGM is set to take place on March 31.

#### Fortis FC rope in Anjan Bista

Fortis FC confirmed the services of Nepalese forward Anjan Bista for the second leg of the Bangladesh Premier League (BPL), said the club manager Rashedul Islam on Friday. "Anjan has been a regular and experienced campaigner of Nepal national team. He also struck a hat-trick against Bangladesh. We believe he can support us upfront," said Rashedul.

#### Battling real-life odds in the ring of dreams

At the age of eighteen, Hafizur Rahman from Tangail's Pankata village achieved an impressive feat by clinching three gold medals in national-level mixed martial arts, setting the stage for a more formidable challenge. To secure a fourth victory, he had to journey to Dhaka for a vital training camp -- a daunting task for the son of a poor farmer. Yet, the magnetic allure of the combat ring kept pulling him forward.

\*Read full stories on The Daily Star website

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