



Exasperated Dhaka Rangers FC players sip on water in a cooling break during their UCB Women's Football League fixture against Siraj Sriti Sangsad under the floodlights at the Birshreshtha Shaheed Mostafa Kamal Stadium in Kamalapur yesterday. Despite the shift of matches to evenings, there was little respite for the players from the oppressive heat and humidity. PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

## Top-order troubles once again come to fore

SPORTS REPORTER

Batting was once again the point of focus after Bangladesh women's cricket team's 44-run loss in the first of five Twenty20s against India at the Sylhet International Stadium yesterday.

The bowlers had their work cut out after India had a solid start, reaching 100 runs in the 14th over before Fahima Khatun then removed India skipper Harmanpreet Kaur after a 22-ball 30 and the next over, Rabeya Khan bagged Yastika Bhatia following a team-high 36 off 29 deliveries.

The dismissals curbed India's momentum as they managed to score just 35 runs in the last five overs, posting 145 for seven after opting to bat first.

But Bangladesh's batting, especially in the powerplay, did not allow the Tigresses pose any threat to the visitors as they could muster a measly 101 for eight in their 20 overs.

Bangladesh lost three wickets for 30 runs in the first six overs and struggled from then on. Skipper Nigar Sultana Joty stuck around for a

48-ball 51 but it did not help Bangladesh's cause. Rabeya, who took three for 23, said the bowlers are improving but batters need to catch up.

"Bowlers have been doing their job well in the last six months but unfortunately the top-order did not get set. We could have finished the match better if a few batters from the top-order had done well," the leg-spinner said after the match.

She also recognised that the batters were unable to keep up with the required rate in the chase and their lack of intent did not help their cause.

"If the top-order batters get going, the latter batters find it easier. Joty apu is scoring runs but we are not getting runs or partnership at the top which is the



problem.

"It was a chaseable score but unfortunately we couldn't. The wicket was good," she said, adding they did not punish bad deliveries. Joty apu is very responsible and in these kinds of situations, she tries to play long innings. But no one was able to support her. But everyone is trying."

# Typical move but under A MISCONCEPTION

ASHEFAQ UL-ALAM

Bangladesh are set to host Zimbabwe next month for what seems like the umpteenth time, a series that from the host team's point of view is an opportunity to work out some kinks before the all-important ICC Twenty World Cup in June.

The Zimbabwe team arrived in Bangladesh yesterday for the five-match T20 series, which will begin on May 3 at the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium in Chattogram.

The Tigers are approaching this assignment as more of a preparatory series, evidenced by talks of making Shakib Al Hasan, the team's most experienced T20 player, play only two or three matches in the latter stage and the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) director Khaled Mahmud Sujon telling the media that Bangladesh do not need Mustafizur Rahman to win the series.

The country's cricket fans are also viewing this as a filler series.

The general perception among the fans is that whenever the Tigers are in a rut, struggling to find a win, they invite the Zimbabweans over or make a trip to the African nation to score some wins, boost up their confidence, and quieten the barrage of criticism.

This perception is gaining wind considering Zimbabwe are not even part of the next ICC T20 World Cup as the Test nation failed to qualify for the 20-team event – the biggest-ever edition of the tournament in terms of team



participation.

Even if the Tigers dominate the visitors in the forthcoming series, it would be fair to question whether these victories would prepare them for the challenges that are waiting in the Caribbean and the USA.

However, the perception of Zimbabwe being a pushover for Bangladesh in the shortest format is far from reality as recent results have shown the margin between the two teams is not that large.

The Zimbabwe team have been struggling to make it to ICC events for a few years now, missing the cut in the 16-team 2021 ICC T20 World Cup in the UAE

and last year's 10-team ODI World Cup in India.

But during this period, the Zimbabweans have held their own very well against the Tigers in the shortest format, having won three of their seven T20s against Bangladesh since 2021.

Two of the three wins came in 2022, the last bilateral T20 series between the two countries, which Zimbabwe won 2-1.

The last T20 match between the two sides happened in the previous T20 World Cup, where Bangladesh escaped by the skin of their teeth to secure a nervy three-run win in Brisbane, Australia.

## Saifuddin back for Zim series

SPORTS REPORTER

Mohammad Saifuddin will look to make an impact ahead of the upcoming T20I World Cup as he was recalled to the national squad for the first three games of the five-match series against Zimbabwe, starting in Chattogram on May 3.

The pace-bowling all-rounder last played for Bangladesh in Christchurch in a tri-nation T20I against Pakistan in October, 2022.

The 27-year-old had performed decently with the ball in recent times, taking 13 wickets in 10 innings in the Dhaka Premier League following 15 in nine matches in the Bangladesh Premier League.

Opener Tanzid Tamim is the only uncapped player in the squad.

The squad will miss a couple of regular players – Shakib Al Hasan and Mustafizur Rahman – both of whom have been rested for the first three matches. Among those who played in the recent-most series for the Tigers, Anamul Haque Bijoy, Naim Sheikh and Soumya Sarker were not included, the latter due to an injury.

Another opening batter, Parvez Hossain Emon, made a return to the squad following his excellent form in the DPL. Emon has played three T20Is for Bangladesh, with two matches in the Asian Games in September last year being his latest.

Left-handed batter Afif Hossain and left-arm spinner Tanvir Islam were also recalled despite not having had the best of impacts either in BPL or DPL recently.

**SQUAD** Najmul Hossain Shanto (Captain), Litton Kumar Das, Tanzid Hasan Tamim, Towhid Hridoy, Mahmud Ullah, Jaker Ali Anik, Sheikh Mahedi Hasan, Rishad Hossain, Taskin Ahmed, Shoriful Islam, Tanzim Hasan Sakib, Parvez Hossain Emon, Tanvir Islam, Afif Hossain, Mohammad Saifuddin

### SHORT CORNER

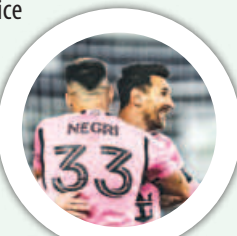
#### Masfia Afrin qualifies as a White Badge referee

Masfia Afrin from Bangladesh received the ITF White Badge School certificate following an exam held from 24-28 April in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. Masfia's White Badge recognition qualifies her for conducting ATF-sanctioned international competitions. It may be noted that previously Sarwar Mustafa Joy of Bangladesh was recognised as an 'ITF White Badge Chair Umpire' in 2000.



#### Messi scores two more as Miami beat New England

Lionel Messi continued his rich vein of scoring in MLS, finding the target twice as league leaders Inter Miami came from behind for a 4-1 win at the New England Revolution on Saturday. With his brace Messi, the top scorer in MLS, took his tally to nine goals from seven



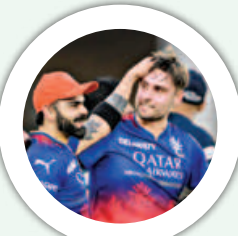
appearances this season.

#### Pakistan appoint Kirsten, Gillespie as head coaches

Pakistan have appointed former South Africa batsman Gary Kirsten as head coach of their men's white-ball teams, while their test side will be guided by former Australia fast bowler Jason Gillespie, the country's cricket board said on Sunday. Former Pakistan all-rounder Azhar Mahmood will assist both head coaches, the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) said, adding all three had signed two-year deals.

#### Jacks hits ton as Bengaluru crush Gujarat

England batsman Will Jacks smashed an unbeaten 41-ball 100 as Royal Challengers Bengaluru hammered Gujarat Titans by nine wickets in the Indian Premier League on Sunday. Chasing 201, Bengaluru achieved victory with four overs to spare when Jacks hit the winning six, which also made his century.



\*\*Read full stories on The Daily Star's website.



Arsenal winger Bukayo Saka celebrates after scoring his side's second goal in a 3-2 victory in the north London derby over Tottenham Hotspur at the Tottenham Hotspur Stadium in the Premier League on Sunday. The win took the Gunners four points clear of defending champions Manchester City who sit second with 76 points and have two games in hand. The Citizens were scheduled to take on Nottingham Forest away later that evening but Mikel Arteta's side will stay ahead no matter the outcome from the City game. PHOTO: REUTERS