

We will definitely keep in mind the 2026 [T20] World Cup when we begin this T20I series [against India]. There are 4-5 players outside of the 15 selected for this series. So, going forward, these are the players with whom we will try to prepare well.

Bangladesh captain
Najmul Hossain Shanto



Tigresses vow not to 'back down' against England

SPORTS REPORTER

Taking confidence from their win over Scotland in the opener, Bangladesh will take on England, the champions of the inaugural ICC Women's T20 World Cup in 2009, in their second Group B encounter at the Sharjah Cricket Stadium today.

Nigar Sultana Joty's side started their campaign on a high, beating Scotland by 16 runs on Thursday at the same ground, courtesy of a well-rounded bowling effort – the main area of strength for the Tigresses.

The victory brought an end to a 16-match winless streak in Women's T20 World Cups for Bangladesh that started in 2014.

With the confidence of a win in the tournament opener, Bangladesh should be better settled but the proposition of facing a top side such as England can be daunting.

The two sides have met thrice in the major event and England have stormed past the Tigresses in all three meetings – at home in 2014 before suffering defeats in 2016 and 2018.

Despite the significant mismatch, Bangladesh seamer Ritu Moni – player of the match against Scotland for her figures of two for 15 – said the Tigresses

won't be fazed when they face the number two ranked side in T20Is.

"They are a good side, one of the best but we will not back down," Ritu said in a video message after an optional training session in Sharjah yesterday. "I always try to bowl economically regardless of the quality of the opponent. I try to bowl dots in training and will try the same in the match."

While the bowling has largely been stable, batting has been a perennial concern for the Tigresses. In their first match, Bangladesh failed to capitalise on a solid top-order start as the middle-order misfired and lost impetus to propel their side to a bigger total.

Top-order batter Sobhana Mostary, who scored a team-high 38-ball 36 against Scotland, acknowledged the untimely manner of her dismissal as it made it difficult for new batters to up the ante later in the innings.

"I would've been happier if I contributed more for the team. I got out at a very bad time and couldn't get to my half century. If I was there for longer, perhaps the total could've been 125 instead of 120 [119 for seven]," Sobhana said yesterday.

"We haven't played much against England but we played very well against them in the ODI World Cup. The bowling unit did very well then.



Bangladesh all-rounder Jahanara Alam, who was not picked during their win over Scotland in the previous game, was one of the six players to turn up to the optional practice session yesterday ahead of the Tigresses' crucial T20 World Cup game against England in Sharjah today.

PHOTO: BCB

"The wicket in Sharjah is slow but the ball comes onto the bat well. The outfield, however, is very slow. We missed out on five or six boundaries in the

previous match due to the slowness. The dimensions on a couple of sides are as big as 72 metres. So, we're adjusting to that. It was very hot in the day game."

England 'looking forward' to Pakistan challenge

AFP, Multan

Opener Zak Crawley said on Friday that England will be looking forward to the challenge in their upcoming Test series in Pakistan, mentioning that their young pace attack will face a "test of character" in a country where pitches baked by searing temperatures and surging smog levels await.

The team touched down this week in the central city of Multan, which will host the first two of a three-match Test series starting on Monday.

With training underway, temperatures are 37 degrees Celsius (99 degrees Fahrenheit) and air pollution is up to 27 times the level deemed safe by the World Health Organization, according to monitoring firm IQAir.

"It will be challenging, but we have got all the things in place to counter that," said Crawley, returning to the squad after missing a home series against Sri Lanka with a fractured finger.

"We are looking forward to that challenge," the 26-year-old told reporters in Multan. "We have been talking about it for the last couple of weeks."

He predicted England's quintet of pace bowlers – on their maiden tours of Pakistan – would particularly face a "test of character and test of skill".

With experienced pace duo James Anderson and Stuart Broad now retired, the baton of pace bowling is with Brydon Carse, Matthew Potts, Gus Atkinson, Olly Stone, and Chris Woakes.

"These young guys have got a lot of skill," said Crawley. "Being young brings in energy and fire in the belly as well, and I am sure they will be raring to go and do well."

Pakistan's international cricket performance is in dire straits, and the red-ball team has lost all five matches during the tenure of skipper Shan Masood which began last year.

Last month they suffered a humiliating first-ever 2-0 home series defeat to low-ranked Bangladesh.

New T20 approach but WHERE DOES RIYAD FIT IN IT?

ABDULLAH AL MEHEDI from Gwalior

Towhid Hridoy flicked a ball that went the distance while batting against a net bowler yesterday in Gwalior's Shrimant Madhavrao Scindia Cricket Stadium. While the youngster almost casually cleared the boundary, the veteran Mahmudullah Riyad had to take his time to get his bat speed going once he came to bat in the nets.

The first delivery went through him in a flash. He then left a few alone from Mustafizur Rahman and some of his slogs did not connect at first. It was almost reminiscent of how he batted in the last game of this year's T20 World Cup against Afghanistan, where his approach was the opposite of what was required.

Before the practice session, skipper Najmul Hossain Shanto was asked about what the approach would be of the



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slightly new-look T20I side, especially in light of building the foundation for the 2026 T20 World Cup.

"From this series, you will see our players trying to play with a new approach. Everyone will play to win," Shanto said at the press conference on Friday.

"I think the players that are here [for the series], and four or five others, will be the ones playing the 2026 World Cup. So, I think from this series, our preparations will properly begin," he added.

The Tigers have been talking about adopting a more aggressive approach in T20Is even before the last T20 World Cup. They often struggle in the format

because they fall short of the current standards of T20 batting. The wickets back home are particularly to blame but batters' approach has not been exemplary either.

Thus, the return question Shanto had to field was where he saw Mahmudullah in this new approach of the Tigers.

Shanto's reply signaled that the veteran was perhaps pondering the eventuality of his T20I career.

"This is a very important series for him [Mahmudullah] and maybe he will be in talks with the selectors, I am not too clear on that. But I feel that obviously there will be a discussion with the selectors and the board."

If Bangladesh are looking to adopt a new approach in T20Is, it would be the likes of Tanzid Tamim, Rishad Hossain and Hridoy who can possibly set the tone. Mahmudullah's legacy is not in question but there are reservations over whether he can make an impact in a new approach.

The inevitable question then followed, whether this was Mahmudullah's last T20I series.

"We haven't gone into any discussions about it. Going forward, let's see if it [discussion] happens. I don't want to get into this discussion before the start of a series," Shanto said.

Shakib Al Hasan, who announced his retirement from the format last month, is one player that would be hard to replace but Shanto said he was banking on Mehedi Hasan Miraz to lead the way in the format.

All-rounders of Miraz's quality are vital. Mahmudullah too has been useful with the ball at times. But if batting approach is the question, Mahmudullah's specialty lies in pulling off rescue acts and get the team to a respectable score. But scoring big off handful of deliveries lower down the order has hardly ever been his strong suit.

A lot of runs were on offer in Gwalior in a domestic T20 tournament and big scores are likely to be in the offing in the first T20I.

If Bangladesh's T20I approach changes, it would be apparent from the first T20I and show the way for the future but where is Mahmudullah's place in it would continue to be a question.

SHORT CORNER

Protests prohibited to ensure peaceful Bangladesh-India T20I clash in Gwalior

On Friday, two days ahead of the opening fixture of the three-match T20I series between India and Bangladesh in Gwalior, Madhya Pradesh, the district magistrate of Gwalior has clamped prohibitory orders, banning protests and the circulation of inflammatory material, especially on social media, to maintain peace and ensure an incident-free match. The Madhavrao Scindia Cricket Stadium in Gwalior will host the match, marking the return of international cricket in the city after a gap of 14 years. Around 1,600 policemen are being deployed for security and traffic management.



'King' Rashid ties the knot

Afghanistan cricket sensation Rashid Khan celebrated his wedding at a grand ceremony in Kabul yesterday, with the added delight of three of his brothers tying the knot on the same night. The 26-year-old leg-spinner, who has long been the face of Afghan cricket, was joined by several of his teammates, including Mohammad Nabi, Azmatullah Omarzai, and Mujeeb Ur Rehman, to mark the special occasion.

Read full stories on The Daily Star's website.

'Not worried about losing my place'

Bangladesh's all-format pacer Shoriful Islam witnessed a few ups and downs this year due to injuries. The 23-year-old pacer hurt his finger during a warm-up match before the ICC T20 World Cup. Although he had recovered and was available for selection from the second match, he ended up warming the benches for the whole tournament. After average stints in IPL and GT20 Canada following the World Cup, Shoriful was brilliant in the opening Test against Pakistan but missed the second one due to a groin injury. The left-arm pacer wasn't picked for the India Tests to heal up completely for the three-match T20I series against the same team. Before leaving for India with the rest of the T20 squad, Shoriful spoke with The Daily Star's Samsul Arefin Khan about his topsy-turvy year. Here are the excerpts:

The Daily Star (DS): Just this year, you have travelled to the USA, Caribbean, Sri Lanka, Canada and Pakistan for cricketing assignments. In some cases, you had to play a

match right on the back of a long-haul flight. How did you adjust to it?

Shoriful Islam (SI): Initially, I used to feel tired some times. But now during a long flight, I try to get as much sleep as possible. Many people have the habit of sleeping during flight and I am also trying to acquire it. Of course, jet lag is an issue and it affects you for one or two days after landing. But after that, everything becomes normal.

DS: How do you see the pacers' role in the upcoming India series?

SI: I think our team is equally strong in all departments. We are doing well in pace-oriented pitches. I'm not worried about the wickets. No matter what wicket they will provide, we will try to plan accordingly.

DS: What are your views on workload management for pacers?

SI: We actually talk about this in the online group created for the pacer's workload management. [BCB physiotherapist] Bayjedul [Islam] bhai is in that group and he and others

instruct us on how many overs we can bowl per week.

DS: How difficult was it for you to not play any games in the T20 World Cup?

SI: When that injury happened, I felt I wouldn't be able to play in the World Cup. I suffered a cut in the middle of my bowling finger. I recovered quickly within seven to eight days. After the Sri Lanka match, I was available for selection. But our team was doing really well and Tanzim Sakib was bowling brilliantly. I was at risk of getting injured again if I played in place of Sakib. Him playing more matches and doing well was also good for me as I got time to completely recover from the injury. I am not at all disappointed about not playing in the World Cup. It was not in my fate.

DS: How do you see the competition in the pace unit across all formats?

SI: I think it's a healthy competition. When a pacer gets injured, his back-up also does well. It's a good sign for Bangladesh cricket. I'm not worried about losing my place. Whoever does

well, I want him to play. I actually feel really good when I see my colleagues perform well as we all play for the country. I take it positively. I think everyone in the team feels that even if they are not playing in the match, they are still part of the team. I think it's helping the team.

DS: You have worked under three foreign pace bowling coaches – Otis Gibson, Allan Donald and Andre Adams – in the Bangladesh team. Can you compare their techniques?

SI: I think the coaching theory is the same. But motivation wise, they are different. I'm very happy to have them all as coaches. Hopefully their work is reflecting in our performances as well.

DS: How about your childhood coach Alamgir Kabir?

SI: Whether I'm bowling well or not, I always talk to Alamgir sir. He has brought me to this position from nowhere, I am completely indebted to him. It still feels like a dream when I think about where I started from and where I'm now.

