

Shakib gets more assurance

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Sports adviser Asif Mahmud has said he does not think there is any obstacle to Shakib Al Hasan coming to Bangladesh or leaving after playing his last Test against South Africa, scheduled for Oct 21-25 in Dhaka.

"There should not be any obstacle in (him) coming or going out of the country. That is as far as I know. The law ministry can explain the legal aspect," Mahmud said at a press briefing at Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

"We have spoken with the Law Ministry too. [Law adviser] Asif Nazrul sir has already said that if his involvement is not found in the preliminary investigation, his name will be omitted from the case," Mahmud added.

Shakib, slapped with a murder case over the death of a person during the July uprising, has recently apologised through social media on being silent during the movement.

"It is the responsibility of the state to ensure the safety of every citizen. It is the responsibility of the state to ensure the security of the cricket team as well. We will make sure of that," Mahmud added.



World number one Jannik Sinner beat 24-time Grand Slam champion Novak Djokovic 7-6 (7/4), 6-3 on Sunday to win the Shanghai Masters. Sinner took a crucial break in the fourth game of the second set to defeat the Serb and deny him a 100th career singles title. The Italian was later greeted by Djokovic after the win.

PHOTO: AFP

'Visible batting problem' let Tigresses down

STAR SPORTS DESK

Unable to make opportunities count, Bangladesh ended the ICC Women's T20 World Cup with only one notable achievement as they managed to end a decade-long wait for a win in the competition when they notched up a 16-run victory in the tournament opener against Scotland in Sharjah earlier this month.

However, that was it for the Nigar Sultana Joty-led side, who crashed out of the competition following a seven-wicket loss against South Africa in Dubai on Saturday.

To Joty, the problem is quite apparent. "We had a very good start in the tournament against Scotland," the captain said.

"And after that game against England... our batters were struggling. And in the next game also. So, it's all about [batting], it's a visible problem. We've been struggling as a batting unit."

"Either we get a very good start in the Powerplay, or we're struggling in the middle. And sometimes we couldn't finish it." Bangladesh's accumulation of 119 for seven against Scotland remained their highest in the tournament -- a fact that drives home the point that Joty wanted to make.

The Tigresses did have the opportunity to upset the second-ranked T20I team England,



and they were able to put some pressure on their opponents by restricting a strong batting line-up to 118 for seven. They, however, ended up losing by a convincing margin when none other than Sobhana Mostary and skipper Joty managed to get to double figures.

Looking back, the missed opportunity of not being able to upset one of the higher-ranked teams in the group will only be coupled with the disappointment of not playing the tournament on their own turf after it had been moved to the UAE due to the unrest created back home following the student-led mass movement that toppled the previous government.

There are positives for the Tigresses though. Joty became the first Bangladeshi woman cricketer to get to 2000 T20I runs during a loss to the West Indies that put them on the brink of elimination before the South Africa loss that ensued it.

Left-arm spinner Nahida Aket became the first to the milestone of 100 T20I wickets in the Scotland game. Joty did praise her teammates, mentioning the efforts of Sobhana, Ritu Moni, and Fahima Khatun but at the end of the day, she was still left ruing the lack of a 'combined team performance' that could have made the difference.

BPL players' draft today

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The players' draft for the 11th edition of the Bangladesh Premier League is all set to take place at the Pan Pacific Sonargaon Hotel in Dhaka today.

A total of 18 players out of 198 locals in the draft list have already been signed by the seven participating franchises.

However, star cricketers like Najmul Hossain Shanto, Liton Das, Taskin Ahmed, Mahmudullah, Rishad Hossain, who are in Category 'A', will be up for grabs from the draft.

If any of these players went unpicked, there is a provision for an auction for the unsold Category 'A' players for the first time in the tournament's history.

The franchises, meanwhile, have already received a list of 439 overseas players from the BPL Governing Council from which they can pick for their respective teams.

Some of the players from the list, however, have been signed by different franchises of the tournament, which is set to get underway on December 27.

The minimum franchise squad size is 12 players (local: 10 and overseas: 2), and the maximum is unlimited, as any team can register an unlimited number of overseas players. However, maximum local player registration is limited to 14.

The event will be broadcast live on T Sports and streamed live on Bangladesh Cricket Board's (BCB) social media platforms as well as the BPL's official Facebook page from 11:00 am.

A fresh reality check on old T20I shortcomings

ABDULLAH AL MEHDI *from Hyderabad*

The third T20I between Bangladesh and India on Saturday in Hyderabad was a dead rubber, with the hosts already up by 2-0 in the series. From a Bangladeshi perspective, the main point of interest in the match was whether the Tigers could put on an improved showing, especially on the batting front.

They did put in a better effort with the bat, posting 164-7 on the board -- their highest total in the series -- but were nowhere near catching up to what India had done in the previous innings, which had pretty much been the story of the entire series.

Batting first, India had posted 297-6 -- the highest T20I score in a match between two Test-playing nations.

Sanju Samson scored a 40-ball ton, his maiden one in the format. He alongside Suryakumar Yadav, Riyan Parag and Hardik Pandya unleashed carnage over Bangladesh, the likes of which they had never endured before in T20Is.

The lengths of the bowlers gave away Bangladesh's inexperience in Indian conditions throughout the series and familiar patterns of batting collapses and

bowlers letting the opposition off the hook were also present.

The top-order collapsed in the first T20I. The bowlers started well in the second game but then lost the plot and the batters once again disappointed.

In the third T20I, the bowlers were rudderless when put under pressure and the batting was also nothing to write home about.

The true bounce that was evident in Hyderabad allowed for shots that are not seen in Bangladeshi surfaces, even from international stars.

Liton Das and Towhid Hridoy showed they can do better on flat tracks such as Hyderabad's but overall the team looked ill-equipped in both batting and bowling fronts to do well on such surfaces.

"Overall, there were a lot of deficiencies. We don't play on these kinds of wickets. I am not trying to give an excuse but the more we play on tracks like these we will improve," Hridoy said after Saturday's match.

With such performance issues existing within the squad and veterans

Mahmudullah Riyad and Shakib Al Hasan gone from T20Is, it will be a challenge for the selectors to identify the required profiles for the format.

The Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) -- the tournament usually used to gauge T20 talents in the country -- is set to begin in December.

Hridoy, who staked his claim in the national side with BPL performances, did not want to compare the tournament to the Indian Premier League (IPL), after Bangladesh got subjected to an IPL-like battering in Hyderabad.

"I don't want to compare BPL with IPL. We have to improve our skill, it's not just about the wickets," he said when asked if he expected flatter wickets in BPL.

The three-match series against a relatively under-strength India side showed how far off Bangladesh are from the pinnacle of T20Is.

The wickets back home have been a major talking point throughout the series. Having tried to secure home advantage, like they did in the back-to-back series against Australia and New Zealand in 2021, Bangladesh have fallen off the cart when it comes to big hitting and the confidence batters need to go all out simply has not developed.

"It's not that we are lagging behind a lot but our execution needs to develop with both bat and ball on such flat surfaces," Hridoy said.

With eye on the upcoming T20 World Cup, the Tigers have to find players who can be their X factors in T20s. In that regard, the India series was an eye opener but such reality checks had come before.



Voters seek committed organisers in BFF polls

SPORTS REPORTER

With the much-hyped Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) elections set to take place on October 26, a total of 57 individuals have bought 62 nomination papers to vie for the 21-member executive committee.

Out of 133 total voters, majority are new as only 47 delegates have retained their voting rights this time. Interestingly, majority of the voters are from districts, divisions and clubs -- 67 from districts and divisions, 52 from clubs -- while only 14 voters are from universities, coaches' association, referees' association and women's sports association.

Ten of the incumbent committee members are set to contest again in this year's elections.

When asked what type of BFF executive committee they want, Faridpur District Football Association delegate-cum-general secretary Abul Kashem Bhola said, "I don't want leaders who keep football confined to Dhaka, instead I want to cast my vote for those who will take football to the district level and revive football tournaments like Sher-e-Bangla Cup, Suhrawardi Cup and school football."

"We are not happy with the way football was run in the last 16 years but the important thing is that if candidates buy votes with money, then we will not get proper leadership," said former footballer Bhola, who became BFF delegate for the first time.

"We need to take care of district football but for that we need financial help from BFF and the government.

So, we will only consider those who will commit to take care of district football," said Barishal Divisional Football Association president Asaduzzaman Khasru, who is going to cast his vote for the third time.

Bangladesh Championship League outfit Wari Club's delegate Kabir Uddin said, "If an individual is not good, then nothing good is expected of him. We also want football at every level, whether it is in Dhaka or in districts. I want to cast my vote for those who are willing to spend money for the development of football instead of taking money from football."

First Division Football League outfit Jatrabari KC's delegate Mobarak Hossain said, "I was a footballer and cast my vote for Kazi Salahuddin for the love towards him but he could not uplift football like he did during his playing career.

This time, I will cast my vote for those who have been involved with football for a long time."

Second Division Football League outfit Kallol Sangha delegate Mohammad Salahuddin said, "Instead of political identity, I want to choose those who have keen interest in football."

Third division football league outfit Skylark FC delegate Rokibul Islam said, "The regime of Kazi Salahuddin was a mixed one with leagues held irregularly but the performance of the national team went downwards. I think a competitive election can elect a responsible committee and I want to cast my vote for those who want betterment of the country's football."



National team regulars in Emerging squad

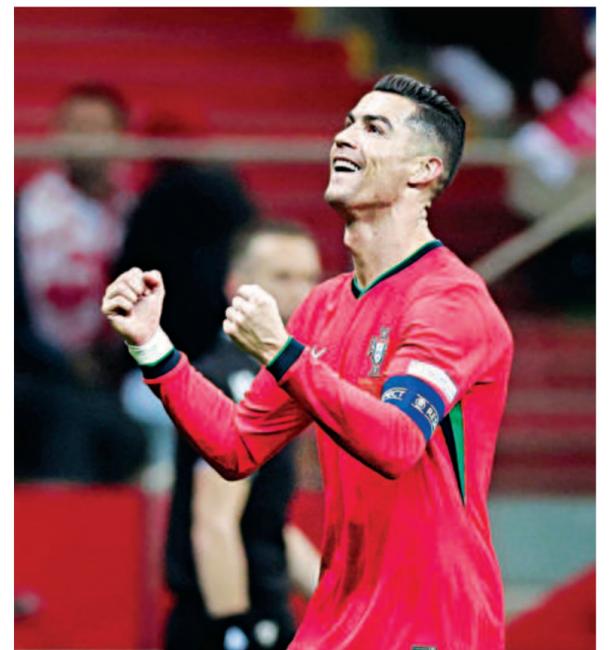
SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) on Sunday announced a 15-member squad for the ACC Men's T20 Emerging Teams Asia Cup, starting on October 18 in Oman.

Wicket-keeper batter Akbar Ali was named captain of the squad, which included a few experienced members from the national team. Towhid Hridoy's inclusion into the main squad in this regard is noteworthy and the right-handed batter also has opener Parvez Hossain Emon joining him. Both players featured in all three T20Is of the three-match series against India that finished on Saturday in Hyderabad. Jaker Ali Anik, Sheikh Mahedi, Tanzim Hasan Sakib, and Nasum Ahmed were named as reserves.

Bangladesh A, who were placed in Group B, will play the tournament opener on October 18 against Hong Kong before taking on Afghanistan A and Sri Lanka A on October 20 and 22, respectively to cap off their group fixtures.

Squad: Akbar Ali (c), Saif Hassan (vc), Parvez Hossain Emon, Naim Sheikh, Jishan Alam, Towhid Hridoy, Shamim Hossain, Mahfuzur Rahman Rabby, Rakibul Hasan, Aliss Al Islam, Wasi Siddiquee, Abu Hider Rony, Rejaur Rahman Raja, Ripon Mondol, Maruf Mridha



At 39 years of age, Cristiano Ronaldo is still delivering the goods for the national team as he helped Portugal stay perfect in the Nations League with a 3-1 win over hosts Poland in Warsaw on Saturday. Ronaldo found himself in the right place at the right time to turn in the rebound for Portugal's second after Rafael Leao's shot came back off the post as the Al-Nasser forward struck in all three wins for Portugal in this competition, taking his record men's international goals tally to 133.

PHOTO: X