



VICTORY ALL AROUND

Yesterday, on December 16, Bangladesh celebrated its Victory Day and the occasion was marked by victories in the country's men's and women's cricket. The Bangladesh national cricket team got things started with a thrilling seven-run win in the first of the three T20Is against hosts West Indies in Antigua, thanks to a brilliant all-round effort from Mahedi Hasan and pacer Hasan Mahmud's brilliant final over, he successfully defended 10 runs. After being whitewashed in the preceding three-match ODI series, the Tigers returned to winning ways on their Caribbean tour to lead the T20I series 1-0. Meanwhile, in Kuala Lumpur, the Bangladesh girls got their Under-19 Women's T20 Asia Cup campaign off to a fine start, beating their Sri Lankan counterparts by 28 runs in a rain-curtailed 17-over game. Also, former cricketers and footballers took part in the traditional Victory Day matches. The Exhibition cricket match between Shaheed Mustaq XI and Shaheed Jewel XI took place at the Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium in Mirpur while the Victory Day Football match between the Red and Green teams happened at the BFF Artificial Turf in Motijheel. The outcomes of those matches were immaterial as the true spirit of the day was reflected through the camaraderie of the ex-national stars. After the exhibition cricket match, players of both teams posed with Suriya Khanam, the elder sister of Shaheed Jewel.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED/CWI/ACC/BFF



No update on Shakib, but Tamim in focus

SPORTS REPORTER

National team chief selector Gazi Ashraf Hossain Lipu said yesterday at a press conference that they are willing to sit down with Tamim Iqbal to discuss his availability for the forthcoming ICC Champions Trophy but provided no insights on what the board's plans are regarding Shakib Al Hasan.

"Everybody is already aware of Shakib's issue. I cannot provide any clear statement on that matter. As for Tamim, he has resumed playing [in NCL T20], which is a good sign. I believe we'll know very soon whether he will be available [for Champions Trophy selection] or not. If he is, that would be wonderful!" Lipu told



reporters in Mirpur.

"We are in a position to discuss things with him [Tamim]. The board and the selectors will sit together to find a solution," Lipu said, adding that Tamim's fitness should not be a concern as the board would provide him 'help' to get ready.

With the Champions Trophy set to begin in February next year, the selectors should ideally already have in mind what the squad should be in the event, which unfortunately seems not to be the case as the Tamim and Shakib question still hangs in the air. Tamim has not been with the Bangladesh team in any format since last year's September but is active in domestic and franchise cricket.

Shakib, meanwhile, last played in the India tour in September-October and has not returned to the country since the fall of the Awami League government, of which he was a part of as a lawmaker.

The all-rounder's bowling action was also recently ruled illegal and until he clears it in an ICC authorised laboratory, he cannot bowl in competitive cricket, which further complicates his situation.

"When selecting a team, we follow a procedure... The physio and trainers inform us which players are available. If there are other issues beyond that, such as political or even something else and we are notified by the board about a player's unavailability for a series, we follow that guidance," Lipu said, adding they are waiting for board's guidance on Shakib.

Mahedi nails tactics in Tigers' much-needed win

SPORTS REPORTER

Having been dispatched for a 3-0 series sweep in the preceding ODI series, Bangladesh bowlers produced a spectacular effort against the West Indies to force a top-order collapse in the first T20I in St. Vincent yesterday, paving the way for a seven-run win.

Off-spinner Sheikh Mahedi Hasan, a peripheral character in the Tigers T20I outfit, turned up as the star of the show with four wickets -- an effort that will enliven the side for the rest of the series. Soumya Sarkar's 43 at the top, followed by Mahedi and Shamim Hossain's 26 and 27, helped the visitors to a middling 147 for six. Skipper Liton Das had identified that it was not going to be easy for the batters on that surface, and it proved to be the case.

Taskin Ahmed started the rout, picking up Brandon King cheaply with a late outswinger that produced a leading edge, which was taken at mid-off. After that, it became the Mahedi show.

The 30-year-old varied his lengths and adapted quickly in the Powerplay. Seeing Nicholas Pooran come down the wicket, the right-arm dragged his length back. The straighter one beat the batter in flight and trajectory, leading to a simple stumping as Windies were two for two.

Windies saw wind back in their sails with 25 taken off a Tanzim Sakib over. Johnson Charles looked to take the game away, but when he moved away

from his stumps, Mahedi once again adjusted, making sure Charles did not get on top of the delivery, resulting in a simple catch.

After the Powerplay, Mahedi struck a double blow in an over to see the hosts slump to five for 38. First, he got Andre Fletcher out caught behind with one that did not turn in the seventh over, and later in the same over, Roston Chase was in a knot trying a reverse sweep that took the glove, which Liton

to change lengths to fit the surface

"My plan was not to allow them to play easy shots or play them comfortably since they are very strong. So I had to plan really well, and I'm fortunate that it worked," he added.

However, after Rovman Powell's 67-run stand off 33 deliveries with Romario Shepherd, the game was slipping. Hasan Mahmud, however, turned up with a hard-to-beat last over to seize the win, giving away just



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BANGLADESH ALL-ROUNDER MAHEDI HASAN

gathered without fail.

Having shone in his early forays with the old ball during the death overs in the franchise Bangladesh Premier League, Mahedi's ability to bowl with the new ball in the Powerplay was well utilised by Liton.

Mahedi put it all down to plans. "In these kinds of wickets, you can target 180-200 if you have wickets in hand. Obviously, there is help on the surface for spinners and pacers. But it's all about how you plan to bowl on what kind of surfaces and adapt to any situation," he said about his readiness

two runs defending 10 and taking two wickets, including the all-important one of Powell.

Mahedi said he believed Hasan would be able to do it. "I still remember during an Ireland series, Hasan won the game for us in the death over, and I had the feeling that Hasan could do it," Mahedi told reporters after the game.

Chief selector Gazi Ashraf Hossain informed that Mahedi Hasan Miraz suffered a groin injury. It perhaps enabled Mahedi to showcase his craft in a time when his team were desperate for a turnaround.

Williamson ton leaves England with mountain to climb

Overnight batter Kane Williamson converted his 50 to a century -- his 33rd in Tests -- before departing for a 204-ball 156 as New Zealand set England a humongous 658-run target on Day 3 of their third and final Test at the Seddon Park in Hamilton yesterday. England, who already sealed the series with wins in the first two games, made a wretched start to their unrealistic chase as they were reeling at 18 for two by the end of the day, losing openers Ben Duckett and Zak Crawley in the six overs bowled before stumps.



Kane Williamson struck 20 fours and one six as he took his tally of Test runs at Seddon Park to 1,614, the most by any batter at any New Zealand venue.

This was also Williamson's fifth successive Test ton at Seddon Park.

After this innings, Williamson now averages 94.94 at Seddon Park in Hamilton -- the highest for any player at any ground with at least 20 Test innings at the venue. He went past Windies legend Brian Lara, who averages 78 in Antigua.

Set a target of 658, England will have to break a 21-year-old record for the highest successful chase in the format if they want to win the third Test. The record currently belongs to the West Indies who, in May 2003, chased a 418-run target against Australia in Antigua -- the highest successful chase in the format.

Poor planning stalls Bangladesh's badminton prospects

ANISUR RAHMAN

While athletes from other disciplines strive for international exposure to gain valuable experience, the country's badminton players squander such opportunities despite regular chances to compete in international tournaments. However, this is largely due to a lack of necessary groundwork by the Bangladesh Badminton Federation (BBF).

As the Yonex Sunrise Bangladesh International Challenge (YBIC) 2024 begins today, participants from 13 nations converge at Shaheed Tajuddin Ahmed Indoor Stadium in Dhaka. However, the country's shuttlers are surprisingly entering the ranking tournament without optimum preparation.

Since 2011, the BBF has hosted 11 international tournaments, thanks to former general secretary Mahabubur Rob, a former national player, who persuaded the World Badminton Federation (WBF) to approve the YBIC tournament. The goal was to address the lack of international exposure for Bangladesh's shuttlers.

The game's local governing body, however, could hardly capitalise on the benefits of hosting the YBIC due to the lack of adequate training around this international tournament every year.

"Individually, I have tried to prepare myself as much as possible, though you can't give your maximum effort in such individual training even if you want to," said Urm

Akter -- the country's top female shuttler, who has been participating in the YBIC since 2016 -- adding that there was also a gap in training because of her participation in two international tournaments in India.

"To be honest, you need proper preparation to take part in such a tournament, but we don't have such facilities, nor has there been

of affairs.

"The shuttlers did not get any training ahead of the tournament, but I think they would have had a good opportunity to perform well if they were given at least a one-month preparation," said Javed, who participated in the YBIC three times in the past, further informed that they had received



PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

a national camp, and it is always difficult to gear up individually," informed Urm, who won three gold and one silver medals in women's doubles and mixed doubles in the Junior Bangladesh International Series in the past, but she has never won a medal in a senior event.

Former national player-turned-coach Mostafa Javed also expressed the sorry state

two to three months of training under a foreign coach during their playing career, but he had no idea why the federation did not arrange any training this time.

BBF general secretary Alamgir Hossain said that financial constraints and the absence of officials were the main reasons for the absence of a preparatory camp, as only seven to eight officials are running the

federation since the political changeover on August 5.

Compounding the challenges for Bangladesh, the junior shuttlers from India and Indonesia told journalists yesterday that they had come to compete in the tournament on the back of five to six months of preparation, with their respective federations and individual sponsors assisting them financially.

"There is no big difference between Bangladeshi shuttlers and Indonesian and Indian shuttlers, but they are ahead of us because they have been playing a lot of international tournaments and have gained experience," Urm said.

"We also need to participate in international tournaments beyond our boundaries; then our rankings will improve, and we will also be able to fight against them."

Urm further opined that there is no alternative to playing international tournaments to develop themselves, but they need financial help from the federation as well as corporate houses.

The BBF general secretary, however, informed that Bangladesh's shuttlers started participating in overseas tournaments last year as a couple of individuals and the federation is trying to provide financial help to the shuttlers.

As things stand, without long-term planning and sustained support, the country's badminton future remains uncertain.