



PHOTO: AFP

Sri Lanka's premier spinner Prabath Jayasuriya finally found his foothold in the two-match Test series against Bangladesh as his five-wicket haul on Day 4 of the second Test led the Lankans to an innings and 78-run win against the Tigers in Colombo yesterday. The left-armed, who was expected to be the primary threat, scalped a solitary wicket in the first Test in Galle last week and went wicketless in the first innings of the second before claiming 5-56 to get his side off to a solid start in the new cycle of the World Test Championship.

U-18 ASIA CUP HOCKEY Bangladesh women, men eye semifinals

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh are eying semifinal berths in both men's and women's events of U-18 Asia Cup hockey, which will be held in Dazhou, China from July 3-13. Bangladesh Hockey Federation's president and Air Chief Marshal Hasan Mahmood Khan met with the players of the two teams and unveiled jerseys during an event in Dhaka yesterday, two days prior to their departure for China.

Bangladesh, who were the runners-up in the men's event last time around in 2016, have been pitted in Pool A alongside Pakistan, China, Sri Lanka and Hong Kong. The team's coach Moududur Rahman Shuvo informed The Daily Star that the 18-member team is made up of BKSP players, with two of the players having experience of playing for the under-21 side.



"Our first target will be to reach the semifinals. With Pakistan and China are in the group, we will try to fight against Pakistan and get a positive result against the hosts. And then we will take step by step from there." The youth team coach, who guided the under-21 team to their first-ever Junior World Cup, informed that the team has played practice matches against Army and Air Force teams as well as among themselves with some senior BKSP players among the ranks. He also informed that Bangladesh might play a preparation match against Kazakhstan the day before the start of the tournament. Meanwhile, the women's team will be playing in the tournament for the very first time, with coach Zahid Hasan Raju eyeing semifinals berth. The coach said that despite the inexperience of the team, the four-month training camp in BKSP has given the players maturity and understanding of the tactical and technical aspects of the game.

Bangladesh women's team are in Pool A alongside favourites Japan as well as Uzbekistan and Hong Kong. The coach believes the group formation gives them a chance to qualify for the final four. "We will try to win against Uzbekistan and Hong Kong," Raju told The Daily Star. "Japan, China and India are world-class teams and we will try to play well when we them (in group or knockout rounds)."

Youth hockey team in tough World Cup group

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh have been pitted alongside last edition's runners-up France as well as hockey powerhouses Australia and South Korea in Group F of their debut campaign in the upcoming Junior World Cup Hockey, the draw for which was held in Lausanne, Switzerland yesterday. This year's tournament, to be played in Chennai and Madurai from Nov 28 to Dec 10, marks the first time 24 teams will participate, divided into six groups of four. Bangladesh enter the group as the fourth seed. Although the men in red and green secured their berth last December, the team is yet to begin formal training. According to the Bangladesh Hockey Federation's general secretary, Lt Col (Retd) Riazul Hasan, the under-21 team's training camp will begin on July 27. A foreign coach is expected to lead the squad for three months, with confirmation expected in early July. It has been learnt that the federation is in advanced discussions with Dutch coach Siegfried Aikman, who previously worked with the Oman national team.

SHANTO'S RESIGNATION leaves BCB's blunder bare

SPORTS REPORTER

The fate of the Colombo Test and Najmul Hossain Shanto's captaincy was decided yesterday and the outcome in both cases was ill-fated but not unexpected. After a woeful batting performance in the first innings, followed by toothless bowling, the writing was already on the wall for Bangladesh after the third day. And on the fourth day, Sri Lanka claimed the final four wickets and wrapped up the Bangladesh tail in less than six overs to claim an innings and 78-run win and take the two-Test series 1-0. In the post-match press conference that followed, Shanto ended weeks-long speculation and stepped down from Test captaincy. Shanto insisted that he made the decision only for the betterment of the team, and without directly spelling it out, implied that him losing the ODI captaincy to Mehidy Hasan Miraz earlier this month had nothing to do with it. "I want to clearly send a message to everyone that my decision... it is nothing

personal. It is totally for the betterment of the team. I think this will only benefit the team," Shanto told reporters yesterday. "Personally, I feel that having three different captains [in three formats] can be a bit difficult for the team. Hence, for the team's betterment, I am stepping aside," Shanto added. On June 12, just hours after Shanto had sat for a pre-tour press conference for the Sri Lanka tour, he got to know that he would no longer lead the one-day side and his long-time teammate Miraz would replace him. The decision of appointing a new ODI skipper was made during a board of directors' meeting held over Zoom right after Shanto's press conference. In the same meeting, BCB's cricket operations chairman Nazmul Abedeen Fahim was given the responsibility to

discuss the captaincy matter with both Shanto and Miraz. But the way the message came from him, it didn't go down well with Shanto as he immediately made up his mind to quit captaincy and the matter was even reported in the media. Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) president Aminul Islam Bulbul sent Fahim to Colombo on Thursday night to discuss the matter with Shanto but Fahim could not dissuade the 26-year-old. "There was a discussion going on. I didn't expect such thing to happen today [yesterday]. But I respect the decision he [Shanto] announced today," Fahim said in his reaction to Shanto's announcement to the travelling Bangladeshi journalists in Colombo. This entire episode is another example of BCB's poor communication and

mishandling of players. Over the years, such miscommunications in handling players have put the BCB in difficult situations several times. Ironically, both Fahim and Bulbul have criticised the board in the past for such mishaps and always took the players' side. As they are now at the helm of BCB, expectations were that they would not repeat the same mistakes of their predecessors. Unfortunately, they have ended up taking the same route, and have not shown players the respect they deserve. According to the Future Tour Programme (FTP), Bangladesh's next Test series will be in November against Ireland, so, the BCB don't have to appoint a new Test skipper straightway. But the entire ordeal will go down as another failure in communication of the cricket board while the way Shanto, who led Bangladesh to four victories in 14 Tests, stepped down from captaincy will be remembered as a silent protest against disrespect.



Butler optimistic about Asian Cup berth

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh coach Peter Butler feels that if his players can bring their 'A' game to the pitch, they can get through to the AFC Women's Asian Cup. Speaking ahead of the qualifying campaign in Yangon, the Englishman told media yesterday that this young group of players have shown in recent past that they can compete against higher-ranked opponents. Bangladesh, in C Group, will play their first game against Bahrain at 6:30pm (Bangladesh time) tomorrow. They will then face the toughest side of the group, Myanmar (ranked 55th), before wrapping up the campaign against lowly Turkmenistan (141st). While Bahrain are 36 places above the 128th ranked Bangladesh, recent draws against similarly higher-ranked Indonesia and Jordan gives Butler the confidence about qualifying. "We played Indonesia and Jordan and that really gave us a good sort of benchmark and a little bit of a marker in the sand of actually where we are and what we're capable of doing. I would never dismiss our chances of actually qualifying," Butler said during a pre-tournament press conference.

The team hasn't had ideal preparation in Yangon since reaching four days ago. All the training sessions were conducted during morning while the matches will be played either in the evening or in the afternoon. And then there has been consistent rain in the former capital of Myanmar over the last few days. Butler, however, was satisfied with the preparation and build-up to the campaign, feeling that working closely rising talents as well as a few senior players gives him the ideal player-pool to progress further. "We're on a journey. I'm positive and I'm very optimistic about the progress my young players have made," Butler said. "We have to be honest with ourselves and say, 'can we qualify out of this group?' The answer to that is, if everybody brings their A game, I think they can." Bahrain coach Mohammed Adnan Hussain said they want to play good football. "We've had a short time period of training, gathering of the players and we had three games -- two against Emirates and one against Saudi Arabia. The team is mixture of young players and seniors. Hopefully we're going to present something good in Myanmar."



Inter Miami superstars Lionel Messi and Luis Suarez, veterans of high-stakes clashes, face a daunting task tonight in the FIFA Club World Cup last 16 against European champions PSG. The former Barcelona duo inspired a stunning group-stage win over Porto but they may have to step it up another notch as overcoming the gulf in class with PSG may demand a lot more.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Cummins praises Webster's consistency

AGENCIES

In a match defined by momentum swings, it was Beau Webster's calm resolve that anchored Australia's crucial first Test victory over the West Indies in Bridgetown, marking a strong start to their 2025-27 World Test Championship campaign. With Australia reeling at 65 for 4 in their second innings, Webster stepped in to arrest the collapse. The towering Tasmanian stitched together a 102-run partnership with Travis Head before adding another vital stand with Alex Carey. His composed 63 off 120 balls not only steadied the innings but ultimately turned the tide in Australia's favour, setting up a match-winning lead. "He's been a fantastic asset over the last six months," skipper Pat Cummins said after the win. "Even on a tricky wicket, he knew exactly where his scoring areas were." Since making his debut against India earlier this year, Webster has emerged as a dependable all-rounder. A gritty half-century on a lively Sydney pitch and a composed 72 in the World Test Championship Final at Lord's had already signalled his arrival. Against the West Indies, he reinforced that reputation—not just with the bat, but also with two first-innings wickets that kept Australia in the contest. Cummins credited Webster's years of consistency in Sheffield Shield cricket, noting, "He's kind of knocked down the door... He always contributes in some way." In a side stacked with experience, the 31-year-old has quietly carved out a crucial role -- blending resilience with utility. As Australia look to build long-term Test stability, Webster's emergence could not have come at a better time.



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