

Handshakes off as India meet Pakistan

India men's T20I captain Suryakumar Yadav recently termed the India-Pakistan contest as "not a rivalry anymore." In women's cricket, however, the difference is even starker -- Pakistan have never managed to match India's level, especially in the longer format. The two politically charged nations will face off in an ICC Women's World Cup game today at the R Premadasa Stadium in Colombo, where tensions are expected to mirror the unfriendliness seen during the recent Men's Asia Cup.

>>Pakistan will be seeking their first-ever win over archrivals India in Women's ODIs. The two teams have met 11 times, with India winning on each occasion.

>>The gulf between the sides is reflected in the results: India have won by over 100 runs five times, by 10 wickets twice, and their narrowest margins stand at six wickets and 80 runs.

>>Following the precedent set by the Indian men's team during the recent Asia Cup in Dubai, the Indian women are also reported to be avoiding customary handshakes with Pakistani players.

>>Harmanpreet Kaur's India opened their World Cup campaign with a win over Sri Lanka, and another victory today would put them on top of the table.

>>Fatima Sana's Pakistan, meanwhile, suffered a heavy defeat against Bangladesh in their first match and are still looking for their first points.

>>Yesterday's match between Sri Lanka and Australia in Colombo was washed out without a ball bowled, and there remains a forecast of light rain for today's game at the same venue.



WOMEN'S U-17 ASIAN CUP Q'FIERS

Learning the target, not qualification

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh under-17 women's football team will depart for the UAE on Sunday morning for two preparatory matches against Syria and UAE before heading to Jordan for the AFC U-17 Women's Asian Cup Qualifiers. However, the Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) has tempered expectations due to inadequate preparation and last-minute changes in the coaching setup.

Following the historic qualification for AFC Women's Asian Cup and AFC U-20 Women's Asian Cup recently, Bangladesh had the challenge of making it three-in-three with the U-17 qualification. However, with women's team's head coach Peter Butler occupied with the senior teams, the responsibility has been handed over to BFF technical director Saiful Bari Titu at the eleventh hour.

At a press conference held at the BFF House on Saturday, BFF women's wing chairperson Mahfuza Akter Kiron described the upcoming campaign as primarily a "learning experience" for the young squad.

"We didn't have the best of preparations. Our target is to see them play good, competitive football. Above all, it will be a learning experience for them. Our expectations are modest because Jordan and Chinese Taipei are very strong teams," Kiron said.

Bangladesh previously qualified for the eight-team final round of the competition in 2017 and 2019, when it was known as the AFC U-16 Women's Championship. They failed to qualify for the revamped tournament in 2024 and now face a tough challenge in this edition, as indicated by Kiron's candid assessment.

"The teams that previously qualified were in long-term training camps. But this current team has only been in training for three to six months," she admitted.

Led by Arpita Biswas, the team will play against Syria on October 7 and the UAE on October 9 during a five-day preparation camp in the UAE. They will then travel to Jordan, where they begin their Group H campaign against the hosts on October 13 and conclude against Chinese Taipei on October 17.

Only the winners from each of the eight qualifying groups will advance to the final round, joining hosts China along with the top three teams from the previous edition -- North Korea, Japan, and South Korea -- in the tournament scheduled for April-May 2026.

DRS calls a concern

SAMSUL AREFIN KHAN

Bangladesh have earned an unassailable 2-0 lead in the three-match T20I series against Afghanistan in Sharjah, but beneath the result lay a familiar flaw: reckless misuse of the Decision Review System (DRS).

Beside showing lapses in batting temperament, Bangladesh batters in both matches gave Afghanistan repeated openings by burning reviews unnecessarily, exposing the side to avoidable risks.

The first match, in particular, was a case study in how not to use technology. Chasing 152, Bangladesh were cruising at 109 for no loss in the 12th over when Parvez Hossain Emon reviewed an lbw call against Fareed Ahmad. The decision was clear-cut as ball-tracking confirmed three reds.

A few overs later -- at a critical juncture in the contest after the Tigers lost their top order in a flash -- came the most baffling moment of the series. Shamim Hossain, facing Rashid for the first ball of his innings and with the immediate task of seeing out the last three deliveries of the dangerous leg-spinner's final over, played back and was struck plumb. With Bangladesh needing only 35 runs from 32 balls, five wickets intact, and Nurul Hasan Sohan at the crease, there was no urgency for a gamble.

Yet Shamim, who had already walked halfway to the dugout while the review was in progress -- making his decision all the more baffling -- opted to challenge the umpire's call.

The outcome was inevitable, the ball-tracker verified it, showing the ball would crash into middle and leg. He departed for a duck,

leaving his side without a review. That mistake hurt immediately: In the next over, Tanzim Hasan Sakib was given lbw against Noor Ahmad despite a clear inside edge. With no review left, Sakib had to walk, and suddenly Bangladesh were wobbling at 118 for six in the 16th over.

Although they eventually scraped through, Shamim's decision to burn the last review stood out as a cardinal sin that

death overs and with at least five wickets in hand. For former captain Mohammad Ashraf, now coaching Barishal Division in the NCL T20, these incidents highlight a deeper flaw. "We're not used to these situations," he said, pointing out that domestic cricket rarely offers DRS. "If players had reviews in domestic matches, their judgment would improve."

He added that too often batters "think they can survive even

could easily have swung the game.

The trend continued into the second T20I, where Bangladesh, chasing 148, again wasted reviews. Emon, again in the middle of it, fell lbw to Azmatullah Omarzai in the fourth over after a hopeless review attempt, and later Jaker challenged a plumb lbw against Rashid Khan despite the asking rate being well under control -- below eight in the 11th over.

Both fixtures saw Bangladesh use up all two reviews before the

when they're out," a habit born of inexperience.

Ashraf also stressed the role of exposure and awareness. Regularly watching games on television, he argued, helps players instinctively judge lbw calls. Without that, "they misread situations and rely on hope rather than clarity."

The DRS may be a tool to minimise umpiring errors, but for the Tigers it has become a mirror -- reflecting immaturity and a lack of composure under pressure.

BCB POLLS

Dhaka clubs threaten domestic league boycott

SPORTS REPORTER

Less than 48 hours before the Bangladesh Cricket Board's (BCB) board of directors' election, several Dhaka-based clubs demanded the cancellation of the October 6 polls, terming them "controversial" and warning of a possible boycott of domestic leagues.

At a press conference held yesterday at the Mohammedan Sporting Club premises, organisers circulated a press release outlining their demands and concerns. While the statement warned of a non-cooperation movement if their demands were ignored, organisers themselves appeared cautious, saying they still expected government intervention to resolve the crisis.

The clubs proposed three solutions: extending the tenure of the current board to hold a proper election, forming an ad-hoc committee to oversee

the polls, or canceling the current schedule and announcing a fresh one through the existing or a new Election Commission to ensure participation of all stakeholders.

"I think the proposals we made are all positive ones," said club organiser Masuduzzaman. "If the demands are not met, it will hurt our entire sports fraternity. We will try our best to continue participating, but if all doors are closed, only then will we think about our next course of action."

Organisers alleged government interference in the nomination of councillors, the exclusion of club category candidates, and the cancellation of 15 clubs' councillorships. Representatives from 43 of Dhaka's 76 clubs were present at the press meet.

The dispute deepened after a High Court bench on September 30 issued a stay order on a writ petition filed by former BCB president Faruque Ahmed, cancelling the councillorship and voting rights of 15 clubs under Anti-Corruption Commission investigation.

On the very next day, former captain Tamim Iqbal and 15 others, including many councillors who held the press conference yesterday, withdrew their nomination forms citing government interference and conspiracy.

Meanwhile, the clubs said they would challenge the ruling once the written order is received today.

Amid growing concerns over fairness, more candidates have pulled out of the polls. Legends of Rugbanj chairman Lutfor Rahman Badal withdrew on Friday night, followed by Rajshahi Division councillor Hasibul Alam and club councillor Major (Retd) Imroze Ahmed on Saturday. Though all three names will remain on the ballot, Badal insisted he would not join the board even if elected. Abdullah Al Fuad Redwan, contesting from Dhaka Division, is also considering withdrawing.

It was a day of celebration for India and their captain, Shubman Gill. Riding on Ravindra Jadeja's all-round brilliance, the hosts thrashed West Indies by an innings and 140 runs inside three days in the first Test in Ahmedabad. In yet another heavy defeat for West Indies, Jadeja stole the show -- first with the bat, scoring an unbeaten 104 for his sixth Test century and sharing a 206-run stand with Dhruv Jurel on Friday. After India declared overnight on 448 for 5 with a lead of 286, Jadeja shone with the ball on Saturday, taking 4 for 54 to bowl out the visitors for 146 in the second session. Meanwhile, Gill had another reason to celebrate, as he replaced Rohit Sharma as India's ODI captain and will begin his tenure in the upcoming series in Australia later this month.

PHOTO: AFP

Is Windies glory fading fast?

AGENCIES

From Sharjah to Ahmedabad, the decline of West Indies cricket has become painfully stark.

Within weeks of being humbled by Nepal -- an associate nation playing its first-ever bilateral T20 series against a full member -- the once-feared Caribbean side suffered another humiliation, crushed by India inside three days in the first Test on Saturday.

The defeats, separated by format but united in despair, underline how far the West Indies have fallen from their days of dominance.

Captain Roston Chase's words after the innings-and-140-run defeat in Ahmedabad carried the tone of a man burdened by more than just on-field failure. "There is obviously a struggle in the Caribbean for finances," he admitted. "Whatever help we can get... I hope that we do get it so that we can strengthen the infrastructure for cricket."

It was a candid admission from a captain leading a side that seems trapped in a cycle of underinvestment, poor preparation, and fading belief. "The systems in the Caribbean are a bit poor in terms of training facilities," Chase said, though he was quick to add that it was no excuse for repeated poor

performances.

Still, the numbers told a grim story: bowled out for 162 and 146 on a flat pitch where India piled up 448-5 declared with three centuries.

If the Ahmedabad defeat was bruising, the Sharjah collapse was shattering. West Indies' T20 side was bowled out for just 83 as Nepal, ranked 18th in the world, sealed a historic 90-run win to clinch the series -- the biggest victory margin ever recorded by an associate nation against a full member.

It was another unwanted entry in the growing catalogue of Caribbean cricket's lows.

Earlier this year, their Test side was swept 3-0 at home by Australia, collapsing for just 27 in the third match -- the second-lowest score in Test history. They also failed to qualify for the 2023 ODI World Cup and are currently outside the direct qualifying zone for the 2027 edition.

Cricket West Indies president Dr. Kishore Shallow has since called for an emergency review, seeking input from legends like Sir Viv Richards, Sir Clive Lloyd, and Brian Lara. But unless the board finds a way to rebuild its crumbling systems -- from grassroots to governance -- the West Indies risk becoming a relic of nostalgia -- a reminder of what was, rather than a promise of what could be.

Marsh joins elite club with maiden T20I ton

AGENCIES

Captain Mitchell Marsh starred with a brilliant unbeaten 103 off 52 balls to guide Australia to a series-clinching three-wicket win over New Zealand in the final T20I in Mount Maunganui on Saturday. Chasing 157, Marsh single-handedly steered the tourists home, with only two other batters reaching double figures. His innings featured seven sixes and eight fours.

This century marked Marsh's first in T20Is and made him the sixth Australian to score hundreds in all three international formats, joining Shane Watson, Glenn Maxwell, David Warner, Josh Inglis, and Beth Mooney.

"It's a good one," Marsh said, celebrating a milestone that showcased his dominating presence in the run chase.