



Bangladesh T20I skipper Mahmudullah Riyad (L) was all smiles as the team reached the Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport yesterday to start their journey towards Pakistan. Shorn of experienced players like the banned Shakib Al Hasan and Mushfiqur Rahim, who opted not to tour, the Tigers will be relying on the likes of (R-L) Soumya Sarkar, Al-Amin Hossain, Shafiu Islam, Mustafizur Rahman and Rubel Hossain during the tour. PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED/BCB

## India will not host Asia XI-World XI matches

New Ahmedabad venue will not be ready in time

SPORTS REPORTER

India will not host any of the matches between Asia XI and World XI, organised by the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) to mark the 100th birth anniversary of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

Board of Control for Cricket in India [BCCI] president Sourav Ganguly had planned to have one of the two matches of the series at Sardar Patel Stadium, currently under construction in Ahmedabad, to mark the inauguration of the venue.

According to BCB CEO Nizamuddin Chowdhury, the construction of the stadium will not be completed in time to host one of the matches. BCB has planned to hold both matches - which will have T20I status -- on March 18 and 22 at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur.

"A match was expected to be played in India as they were expected to inaugurate a big stadium but now, they [BCCI] are not ready to do it and both matches will be hosted here," Chowdhury told reporters Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

The board is planning to invite legends of the game to attend the matches to add to the significance of the occasion.

"We are open to inviting everyone. We will definitely invite the high-ups of the cricket world, dignitaries who are in the ICC [International Cricket Council] and other important positions. Also, we will try to bring cricketing legends of different eras. We will try to make all the necessary measurements to make the event colourful."

"We are communicating with almost everyone. As I said, we are contacting every player in our list. There are a few complications that we need to work on. There are some cases where there is a series starting during or right after the event. In those cases, we are working on how we can ensure their participation," he said.

## 'Tigers should do well in Pakistan'

SPORTS REPORTER

More than eight private security personnel surrounded the elevator area leading to the A.S Mahmud Seminar Hall in The Daily Star

Centre as Shakib Al Hasan walked out from the elevator and went towards the packed hall to renew his brand ambassador contract with Lifebuoy yesterday.

Although he has been banned from cricket for two years, the second of which is a suspended sentence, for not reporting corrupt approaches from a bookmaker to the ICC's anti-corruption unit, Shakib's aura has not diminished even a little.

Bangladesh cricket's apex superstar has not been at the forefront since his ban in October last year and has generally avoided speaking to the media, especially about cricket, during promotional events that he has attended.

Yesterday was perhaps the first time since the ban that the 32-year-old came out of his shell after an video was played ahead of the event showing a determined Shakib working out in the gym and gearing up for his comeback. In the video, Shakib also pledged his continuing support for the national team despite currently being out of cricket.

Followed by the official introduction speeches it was time for the journalists to ask questions and

despite instructions from organisers to restrict queries to Shakib's involvement with the brand, that was not how it went.

Shakib replied in typical fashion when asked whether he was gearing up for a comeback, as shown in the video. "For that you have to wait until



SHAKIB AL HASAN

I return to the field. If I say I have done a lot of things for the comeback and it's not proven, then it won't be good and acceptable. Wait for it... if everything goes well you will get the answer," Shakib said with a smile.

When questions arose about how much he is missing cricket or how he is spending his days away from the game, Shakib chose to duck that line of attack.

"I don't want to share these things as when the right time comes when I need to share those, I will. But before that I am not comfortable to share such things," the champion all-rounder said.

But when you have Shakib in front of the media, questions about the 'Tigers' upcoming assignment are inevitable. Yesterday, the former Test and T20I skipper could not resist giving his take on Bangladesh's upcoming T20I tour of Pakistan.

"I would hope everyone will go there [Pakistan] safely and return home after playing well. Obviously, Bangladesh can get success there as Pakistan has recently lost a three-match [T20I] series against Sri Lanka at home 3-0. So, I think we should also do well," Shakib said.

According to Shakib, he is still in regular touch with Tigers' head coach Russell Domingo, as well as with board members. Meanwhile, millions of his fans would be eagerly waiting to see him not just in promotional events but also to witness his heroics on the field.

## Shakib sets a different trend!

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan has set the rare trend of gaining more endorsements while serving a ban. Last year, a renowned company suspended their association with Indian cricketer Hardik Pandya after the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) suspended the all-rounder following misogynistic comments about women on a television show. What they believed was that such comments did not reflect the values of their company.

A shameful attempt to cheat in South Africa cost Steve Smith and David Warner huge sponsorship deals after they were handed 12-month bans over the ball-tampering scandal.

Golf icon Tiger Woods also lost a plethora of endorsements after a 2009 sex scandal while the world's leading companies suspended endorsement deals with Russian tennis star Maria Sharapova after she admitted to failing a drug test at the Australian Open in 2016.

Likewise, England all-rounder Ben Stokes lost lucrative contracts following a brawl at a Bristol nightclub, with one company commenting that such behaviour did not match their brand's culture and values.

Such examples abound because it is believed that such incidents go against the spirit of sport and any involvement with any disgraced athlete has an effect on the image of a company's brand.

Shakib, however, has been enjoying a different experience in this regard as he has signed a number of deals with major companies since the International Cricket Council (ICC) banned Bangladesh's Test and T20I captain from all cricket for two years, with one year of that suspended, after he accepted three charges of breaching the ICC's Anti-Corruption Code.

Shakib's latest was a contract extension with Lifebuoy that he signed during a programme at The Daily Star premises yesterday.

Curious reporters wanted to know about the recipe to his signing one deal after another while serving a ban and the 32-year-old only increased the curiosity by saying: "You have to try to find out the reason behind that."

However, only a good research can unearth the reason!

## Tigresses win Women's T20 Quadrangular



SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh women's cricket team emerged champions of the Women's T20 Quadrangular series with a 14-run win over India B in the final in Patna yesterday.

Sanjida Islam and Murshida Khatun, each scoring 34, set up the Tigresses' total of 117 for seven after

skipper Salma Khatun chose to bat first at the toss.

Then off-spinner Salma and pacer Jahanara Alam bowled economical spells, taking two wickets for 18 and two for 17 respectively, to restrict India B to 103 for eight after 20 overs.

India A and Thailand were the two other teams in the quadrangular

tournament.

The Tigresses had lost just one match during their march to the final, when they were defeated by 14 runs by none other than India B on January 18. India B, meanwhile, had marched undefeated to the final, where Bangladesh avenged their league defeat by an identical margin to bag the trophy.

## Mathews' 200 puts SL on top

AFP, Harare

Angelo Mathews scored a maiden Test double-century as Sri Lanka took control of the first Test against Zimbabwe at the close of day four at the Harare Sports Club on Wednesday.

Mathews was unbeaten on 200 from 468 balls after batting for exactly 10 hours to lead the tourists to 515 for nine declared and a first innings lead of 157.

Zimbabwe weathered a difficult period before the close to go to stumps on 30 without loss, with openers Prince Masvaire (15) and Brian Mudzinganyama (14) at the crease.

The uncapped Mudzinganyama is the sixth case of a concussion substitute in Test cricket since the rule was introduced on Aug. 1 last year.

**SCORES IN BRIEF ZIMBABWE:** First innings 358 and second innings 30 for no loss. **SRI LANKA:** First innings 515 for 9 declared (Mathews 200 not out, Mendis 80, De Silva 63, Dickwella 63, Lakmal; Nyauchi 3-69, Raza 3-62)

## Cesar happy to be here

SPORTS REPORTER

Former Brazil goalkeeper Julio Cesar landed in Bangladesh yesterday afternoon as a special guest of Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) for the Bangabandhu Gold Cup.

Cesar, who represented the Selecao 87 times, was a member of the country's 2004 Copa America winning team as well as 2009 and 2013 FIFA Confederations Cup winning teams. At club level, Cesar won five Serie A titles, three Copa Italia trophies and one UEFA Champions League title with Inter Milan apart from numerous other trophies for other clubs in Europe and South America.

"I'm really happy to be here. I want to thank FIFA and BFF, who invited me here for this important moment regarding the Father of the Nation and for the tournament," Cesar told reporters at the Hazrat Shah Jalal International Airport.

Asked whether he knows about the huge following of Brazilian football in Bangladesh, Cesar said, "Brazil is one of the powerful countries in football. We have a lot of idols like Ronaldinho, Neymar, Kaka. So it is normal that there are a lot of people loving Brazil national football team," Cesar said. "I don't know too much about Bangladesh football, but I will spend time here to learn about that."

The 40-year-old will have a busy schedule today as he would start his official tour with a visit to Dhanmondi Road No.32 to pay homage to Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman before heading to the BFF headquarters, where he would join training of women's football and have a session with the country's young goalkeepers.



Former Brazil goalkeeper Julio Cesar arrived in Dhaka yesterday for the Bangabandhu Gold Cup.

PHOTO: BFF

Then he will spend time with BFF executive members before a briefing with the media in the afternoon. Cesar will then head to the Bangabandhu Stadium to meet the players of Bangladesh and Burundi before watching the second semifinal. The Brazilian is scheduled to leave in the early hours of Friday.