



This (disclosing the batting positions like head coach Russell Domingo did during a press conference on Monday) is definitely a positive sign for our cricket. It always helps the player to take good preparation. We should maintain it.

**Bangladesh batsman Mohammad Mithun, prior to the departure for Pakistan**

The Bangladesh team left for Pakistan yesterday for the first Test in Rawalpindi from February 7. The Tigers will be hoping that stalwart Tamim Iqbal (L), who scored an unbeaten triple ton in the first round of BCL, carries on his good form while juniors like (R) Nayeem Hasan, Nazmul Hossain Shanto and Abu Jayed make a name for themselves on the demanding tour.

## 'No obstacle to Mushfiqur playing'

SPORTS REPORTER

Wicket-keeper batsman Mushfiqur Rahim is expected to fully recover from his hamstring injury by the second week of February, which means the cricketer will be available for the upcoming home test against Zimbabwe starting on February 22, informed Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) chief physician Debashish Chowdhury yesterday.

Mushfiqur is currently undergoing rehabilitation for a hamstring injury that kept him out of the first round of the Bangladesh Cricket League. There were doubts about whether the 32-year-old would be able to recover in time for the lone Test against Zimbabwe.

"Mushfiqur has been struggling from a hamstring injury for quite some time and he was in rehabilitation at the same time. As it was a Grade 1 injury, we were expecting Mushfiqur to recover by the second week of February. He has given the fitness test today [Tuesday] and it was satisfying and he is fit to play. There is no obstacle for him to play in the coming days," Debashish told reporters yesterday.

Because of security fears and his family's concern about conditions in Pakistan, Mushfiqur had withdrawn from the three-stage tour.

Questions were raised about Mushfiqur after chief selector Minhajul Abedin said that the squad picked for the first Test against Pakistan would also play the Test against Zimbabwe and the second Test against Pakistan from April 5.

BCB boss Nazmul Hassan seemed unhappy with Mushfiqur pulling out of the Pakistan tour and the Tigers succumbing to a 2-0 defeat in the three-T20I series last month. Hassan even said that Mushfiqur was not an automatic choice in the team anymore, despite previously saying that players had the option of not going to Pakistan.

Mushfiqur told Cricbuzz on Tuesday that he would be available for the Zimbabwe series, but added that his selection was not in his hands.

"Till date no one said anything to me in this regard and it does not matter if they said anything elsewhere because at the end of the day I will only act according to the way they want and if they take such decision [of dropping me] then I will ask why and take steps so that I can make a comeback in the following series," Mushfiqur told Cricbuzz.

Meanwhile, Debashish also said that Imrul Kayes, who was suffering from a calf muscle injury, had taken a fitness test and was fit to play. He also said that the board is mulling sending opener Shadman Islam, who injured his wrist, and under-19 pacer Mritunjay Chowdhury, who has

## Time for Mominul to be a good tourist

NABID YEASIN

When the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) announced that Mominul Haque would be the Test skipper for the India tour in November last year, even a cricket fraternity benumbed by the shocking news of premier all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan's ban, were left a bit surprised by the board's decision.

It was thought that Mominul's was a stopgap appointment during a time of crisis. However, putting an end to the speculation surrounding the Test captaincy, Mominul was retained as the skipper for the Pakistan tour. And with the board's stated intention of maintaining stability, it can be assumed that the team management has chalked out a long-term plan with Mominul at the helm in Tests for the foreseeable future.

Bangladesh's recent record in the longer format has been abysmal. With the unexpected yet deserved 224-run thumping by Afghanistan at home followed by two humiliating losses away to India last year, it goes without saying that an uphill task awaits the new captain.

Skipper Mominul's recent performances have not been very inspiring. He scored 44 runs -- all of which were scored in the first Test -- while leading the Tigers in the two Tests against India. Even before being named captain, Mominul's Test performances, especially in away matches, were below-par.



The two pictures of Mominul Haque -- his departure after failing to score during the pink-ball Test against India in November last year and (inset) his stroke-filled 120 against West Indies in Chattogram in 2018 -- perfectly depict his 'Tiger at home' tag.

PHOTO: STAR FILE/COLLECTED

### HIGHLIGHTS

- Mominul Haque scored six of his eight Test centuries at the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium in Chattogram. The two other Test centuries were also at home, at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur.
- It has been more than two years since Mominul last scored a Test fifty away from home.
- He played 22 Tests at home and scored 1992 runs at an average of 55.33.
- The left-hander featured in 16 away Tests for Bangladesh and scored 665 runs, averaging just 21.45.
- Mominul's highest away Test score remains his 150-ball 77 against South Africa in Potchefstroom in 2017. Since then he has averaged 8.57 in seven away Tests.

It has been over two years since the left-hander last scored a fifty away from home. The 28-year-old's willow was last raised overseas when he made 77 against South Africa in Potchefstroom in September 2017. Since then, Mominul played seven away Tests and scored at an average of 8.57 with the highest being an 80-ball 37 against India during the Indore Test.

Mominul's average, which was close to 60 just two years ago, has now plummeted to 39.65. Since 2017, Mominul played 11 away Tests, averaging 15.22, while he averaged 48.25 playing eight at home during that period. His struggle while playing on typical fast and bouncy pitches away is clear from the gulf in his home and away averages.

The 28-year-old now needs to realise that performing only at home will not help the Tigers. And now that he has been entrusted with the responsibility of steering the team to a better position, his performances, be

it home or away, would be put under the microscope even more than when he was just another regular player. And with Mushfiqur Rahim opting out of the Pakistan tour and Shakib unavailable, Mominul's performance would be of paramount importance.

Because, no matter how well the other 10 players are performing, it is the skipper's contribution that inspires the team as they know the man at the helm is firing. After Bangladesh's eighth-place finish in the World Cup last summer, it was skipper Mashrafe Bin Mortaza's underwhelming campaign that was most scrutinised.

So it is time for Mominul, who said that he was monitoring performances of other national players during the first round of the Bangladesh Cricket League, to come up with inspiring performances, especially away from home and lift the squad from a dire situation in Tests.

## India U-19s crush Pak to reach final

AFP, Potchefstroom

Defending champions India cruised to a 10-wicket win over neighbours and arch-rivals Pakistan in Potchefstroom on Tuesday to reach the Under-19 Cricket World Cup final for the seventh time.

India, the record four-time winners of the underage competition, dismissed Pakistan for 172 in 43.1 overs before comfortably knocking off the runs with 88 balls to spare.

India will play either New Zealand or Bangladesh, who meet in the second semifinal on Thursday, for the title at the same venue on Sunday. Pakistan will contest the third-place play-off in Benoni on Saturday.

Yashvi Jaiswal struck an unbeaten 105 off 113 balls, completing his century and sealing the victory in style with a six over deep mid-wicket.

"It's a dream come true for me. To be able to do this for my country is a great feeling. To score a hundred against Pakistan in a World Cup semi-final is something I can't put into words," said Jaiswal.

**SCORES IN BRIEF PAKISTAN U-19S:** 172 all out in 43.1 overs (Haider 56, Nazir 62, Haris 21; Tyagi 2-32, Mishra 3-28, Bishnoi 2-46)

**INDIA U-19S:** 176 for no loss in 35.1 overs (Jaiswal 105 not out, Saxena 59 not out)

**Result:** India U-19s won by 10 wickets.

**Player-of-the-match:** Yashvi Jaiswal.

## Agarwal replaces Sharma

New Zealand-India first ODI today

AFP, Wellington

Senior batsman Rohit Sharma was ruled out of the rest of India's tour of New Zealand with a calf strain Tuesday, while the hosts said skipper Kane Williamson was also sidelined by injury.

Sharma retired hurt Sunday after blasting 60 from 41 balls in India's seven-run win over the Black Caps in Mount Maunganui as the tourists swept to a 5-0 win in the Twenty20 series.

The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) said Sharma "sustained a left calf muscle strain" and would take no part in the three ODIs and two Tests yet to be played in New Zealand.

"He underwent an MRI scan in Hamilton on Monday... and will be referred to the National Cricket Academy (in Bangalore) for further management of his injury," a BCCI statement said.

The Indian selectors have named Mayank Agarwal as Sharma's replacement in the three ODI matches starting Wednesday. For the Test series starting February 21, Prithvi Shaw, Agarwal and Shubman Gill will be India's opening options. Prithvi Shaw, 20, returned from a doping ban in

November last year after playing two Tests for India against the West Indies in 2018. Paceman Ishant Sharma also returns to the Test team, but will be subject to fitness clearance following an ankle injury during a domestic game in January.



New Zealand's stand-in captain Tom Latham (L) and India captain Virat Kohli pose with the ODI series trophy in Wellington yesterday. PHOTO: BCCI

## Denly leads Eng fightback

AFP, Cape Town

Joe Denly hit a career-best 87 to lead an England fightback in the first one-day international against South Africa at Newlands on Tuesday.

England made 258 for eight after being sent in on a slow pitch. They were floundering at 131 for six before Denly and Chris Woakes (40) came together in a seventh-wicket stand of 91.

Left-arm wrist spinner Tabraiz Shamsi did the major damage for South Africa, taking three for 38.

England made a good start with Jason Roy and Jonny Bairstow putting on 51 for the first wicket before both were dismissed in successive overs.

Joe Root and captain Eoin Morgan seemed to be stabilising the innings before both were out in the space of three balls -- Root to a direct-hit run-out by Rassie van der Dussen and Morgan to a catch at slip off Shamsi.

Denly saw two more wickets fall before he was joined by Woakes, playing in his 100th one-day international.

Denly made his runs off 103 balls before he was caught in the deep in the last over.



South Africa spinner Tabraiz Shamsi's three-wicket haul restricted England to 258 for eight in the first ODI at the Newlands Cricket Stadium in Cape Town yesterday. PHOTO: AFP

Both teams were much-changed from their previous one-day outings, in last year's World Cup. Champions England fielded only five of the side who played in the final, while only six South Africans survived from

their World Cup squad. **SCORES IN BRIEF ENGLAND:** 258 for 8 in 50 overs (Roy 32, Bairstow 19, Root 17, Denly 87, Banton 18, Woakes 40; Shamsi 3-38)