

SPORT

Tamim joins festive team

SPORTS REPORTER

Opener Tamim Iqbal joined Bangladesh's training camp at Brisbane yesterday after completing his medical check-up at Melbourne. The left-hander however took a day off yesterday and will begin training today.

According to team manager Khaled Mahmud, the players had a delayed start to their training at the Allan Border Ground in the morning due to inclement weather.

"The boys trained for a very long time. We got out at 8:30 am but since it was raining we could only start training at around 9:45. We trained till 2:00pm," Mahmud told The Daily Star over phone.

According to Mahmud, their place of residence is ideal since they are located in the hub of the city where it was easy for the players to adjust.

"They are facing no problems when it comes to food. You have all kinds of food available in the malls over here. Some of them are really happy to find rice here," said Mahmud.

The players are scheduled to train till the 29th, after which they will take an off day. According to Mahmud, the cricketers are looking forward to racing on a go-kart track in the city on that day.

The Tigers are scheduled to play two warm-up matches at Brisbane before travelling to Sydney to play the official pre-World Cup matches against Ireland and Pakistan next month.



The Tigers are seen engaged in a synchronised stretching session at the Allan Border Ground yesterday in Brisbane, where they are now based as part of their preparation for the World Cup.

PHOTO: BCB

U-19s' strong start in first three-dayer

SPORTS REPORTER

Fresh from a one-day series victory, Bangladesh Under-19s made a good start in the first three-day match against Sri Lanka Under-19s at the Rangiri Dambulla International Stadium yesterday.

Left-arm spinner Mohammad Nihaduzzaman and off-spinner Mehedy Hasan Miraz shared seven wickets as the home side finished the first day on 212 for nine in 96 overs.

Nihaduzzaman claimed four wickets for 51 runs and Miraz took three wickets for 65.

Opener Salinda Ushan Pereira top scored with 77 for the local side.

The young Bangladesh outfit had earlier made a tremendous comeback to win the ODI series 3-2 after losing the first two matches.

Pak tour issues still not resolved

SPORTS REPORTER

The issues surrounding Pakistan's tour of Bangladesh, scheduled to take place in April this year, will be settled only after a discussion between the chiefs of the two boards. However, a meeting between the two chiefs however, is yet to be scheduled, BCB officials informed yesterday.

BCB CEO Nizamuddin Chowdhury, who had gone to the UAE to attend an ICC board meeting, met with his Pakistani counterpart.

"It's too early to make any comments regarding the series. There have been plenty of discussions. The PCB informed us of their demands and we told them ours. A final decision will be made only after the heads of the two boards meet," Nizamuddin told The Daily Star.

The fate of the series, was put into jeopardy after the PCB put forward certain conditions. The PCB demanded 50 per cent of the revenue from the series and had also asked to begin tour-exchange programmes between the country's under 19 and A teams.

In reply, the BCB through a letter had stated that it had sent its national team to Pakistan in 2008 to play five ODIs and a T20I, when New Zealand backed out from touring the country and that it had placed no financial conditions back then.

BCB President Nazmul Hassan Papon also stated that the board would think about tour-exchanges provided that they received security-clearance.

Big victories all around

SPORTS REPORTER



The three remaining matches of the first round of the National Cricket League ended with teams winning by huge margins.

Dhaka, courtesy of their record innings and 413-run over Barisal within three days on Tuesday, earned the most number of bonus points and currently top the table with 25 points. Khulna, Dhaka Metro and Rangpur follow with 24, 23 and 22 respectively.

A seven-wicket haul from former national left arm-spinner Abdur Razzak helped Khulna beat Sylhet by an innings and 178 runs at BKSP. In ground number three of the same venue, a strong batting performance from Metro earned them a 285-run win over Rajshahi while Rangpur

beat Chittagong by 225 runs at Fatullah.

With Sylhet starting the day at overnight score of 137 for 7, it was only a matter of time before they crumbled to a defeat. Razzak came in strongly in the morning session and scalped the last three wickets quickly, handing his side their first win.

Dhaka Metro had a similarly easy task on the last day as they needed just four Rajshahi wickets to complete their win. The Rajshahi players, who began the day on a 101 for 6 were bundled out before lunch for just 174.

Chittagong was the only team in this round who had hopes of achieving a draw on the last day. They began the day on 83 for 3. However, all hopes for a draw were quashed after they lost two wickets while adding just four runs on the board. They were bowled out for 194.

SCORES IN BRIEF		
KHULNA: 538	DHAKA METRO: 302 and 375	RANGPUR: 269 & 257 for 5 dec
SYLHET: 184 and 174 all out in 58.5 overs (Anwar 44; in 44.4 overs (Forhad 85 not out; Rajzak 7-71)	RAJSHAH: 218 and 174 all out in 72 overs (Yasir 44; Saykat 5-45, Elias 2-22)	CHITTAGONG: 107 and 194 all out in 72 overs (Yasir 44; Sohrwardi 3-39, Bishwan 2-30)
Result: Khulna won by an innings and 178 runs	Result: Dhaka Metro won by 285 runs	Result: Rangpur won by 225 runs

EXPECTATIONS DOWN UNDER

'I believe they can'

SPORTS REPORTER

Roquibul Hasan needs no description as he is a very renowned figure in Bangladesh's cricket. The former national captain has a vast knowledge regarding the game and closely monitors the country's cricket.

Talking about Bangladesh's World Cup journey, the former batsman expressed his hope regarding the Tigers' chances in the mega event with some caution and provided a very simple recipe for his beloved team's success: "be positive".

"For success in Australia everybody has to be positive and should play attacking cricket. They have to be positive in their attitude and approach," stated Roquibul, adding that Mashrafe Bin Mortaza's team has the ability to fulfil the expectations of reaching the quarterfinals.

To him the three weeks conditioning camp in Brisbane and four practice matches will be important for the team in terms of preparing themselves for the big show and their opening match against Afghanistan on February 18 will set the tone for how far they will go.



ROQUIBUL HASAN

"Our expectation will come through if we can play to our potential. I am however concerned with the batting and that's why I believe the three-week camp and practice matches are important, and the players have to capitalise on it. They especially need to concentrate on playing square of the wicket and be in tune with the back foot effort," suggested Roquibul.

"True it could have been better if the national team or even 'A' team played some matches in Australia well before the tournament like the other teams, but still the team went to Australia

with a lot of confidence. 2014 was not a good year for Bangladesh cricket but don't forget that we lost some close matches against big opponents. And though the eventual win came against a lowly opponent, the 8-0 win gave the team enough confidence," analysed Roquibul.

"Australia is my favourite team in the tournament and there are teams like New Zealand, England and South Africa. We have tough opponents in our group and it would not be an easy task to make it through to the second round. But don't forget that it's an ODI competition and the Tigers proved previously that they are capable of turning the tables on their day," he said, adding that the subcontinental teams had little hopes of lifting the trophy this time, though he praised defending champions India's batting line-up.

Besides two Associate members Afghanistan and Scotland, Roquibul sees bright chances against struggling Sri Lanka and he thinks it will be the biggest achievement for Tigers if they can make it to the quarterfinals. But he will also not be surprised if Mashrafe's brigade progresses even farther.

Djokovic sets semifinal clash with Wawrinka

AFP, Melbourne



Milos Raonic said Wednesday he felt helpless as he was dismantled by remorseless world number one Novak Djokovic at the Australian Open.

Viewed as the vanguard of the young breed in men's tennis, the big-serving Canadian eighth seed was neutralised by the power and precision of the seven-time Grand Slam champion in the quarter-finals.

The Serbian top seed ran the show, dealing out a 7-6 (7/5), 6-4, 6-2 lesson on Raonic in two hours to set up a semi-final with defending champion Stan Wawrinka.

The match just slipped away from Raonic as Djokovic tightened his grip, breaking the Canadian's huge serve three times while not conceding one break point opportunity in his 15 service games.

Raonic could only look on as Djokovic dominated proceedings with precision stroke play on the court where he has won four Australian Open crowns.

The big-serving 24-year-old, who reached the semi-finals at last year's Wimbledon, was bidding to become the first Canadian man to reach the Australian semi-finals.

While he went into Wednesday's match averaging around 25 aces per match, he was restricted to just 15 against Djokovic's rapier returns.

Raonic said his next ATP tournaments would be in Rotterdam and Marseille.

Dominka Cibulkova in straight sets to set up an all-American last four showdown with unseeded teenager Madison Keys, who defeated Venus Williams in the quarterfinals.

The other semi-final clash on Thursday is an all-Russian affair between second seed Sharapova, who owns five Grand Slam titles, and Ekaterina Makarova, seeded tenth.

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PHOTO: AFP

Novak Djokovic punches the air after disposing of Canada's Milos Raonic in an Australian Open men's singles quarterfinal in Melbourne yesterday.

Final miracle eludes Lee

RUETERS, Canberra

Brett Lee was denied a last-ball hatrick and a fairytale end to his professional cricket career as the Perth Scorchers scrambled a single off the fast bowler to win back-to-back Big Bash League titles in Canberra on Wednesday.

The Twenty20 final was the 38-year-old former Australia paceman Lee's last match and he came on to bowl the final over for the Sydney Sixers with the opposition needing eight runs.

The Perth side looked in firm control needing one run from three balls in their chase of 148 but Lee, who has played 76 Tests and 221 one-day internationals for Australia, was not ready to bow out without a final flourish.

Having dismissed Michael Klinger for his first wicket earlier, Lee clean bowled Nathan Coulter-Nile (seven) and Sam Whiteman (zero) with the fourth and fifth ball of the final over.

He was right on target with his hatrick ball but Sydney captain Moises Henriques fumbled a throw at the non-striker's end to allow Yasir Arafat to complete the required single for victory.

Lee finished his career with 3-25 off four overs as Perth won by four wickets to win their 2nd consecutive title.

DIARY

NOVAK'S NO. 1 FAN

During Novak Djokovic's Australian Open quarterfinal, a photo of his three-month-old son started making the rounds on social media.

The photo posted by his wife showed the hairless head of young Stefan in a baby chair, with knit booties and a giraffe blanket watching his dad play tennis on TV.

On-court interviewer Jim Courier asked the No. 1-ranked player about his No. 1 fan after the match, directing his attention to the big screens overhead at Rod Laver Arena.

Djokovic looked up to see the picture of his son, and smiled.

"See how he enjoys watching TV? He's daddy's boy definitely," said Djokovic after beating the big-serving Milos Raonic 7-6 (5), 6-4, 6-2, to advance to his 25th Grand Slam semifinal.

"I didn't know he was watching me this way, but I felt his energy. So that helped me tonight, definitely."

MADISON'S WISH LIST
Now that Madison Keys has advanced to her first Grand Slam semifinal, the big question is what to do with her prize money.

The question came up first when the 19-year-old had reached the Australian Open quarterfinals earlier in the week.

"I'm thinking I'm going to buy a new handbag," said Keys, who had previously never gone beyond the third round of a major. "I told myself if I make second week, I'll go out and buy a Louis Vuitton bag."

"I'm pretty good with my money," said Keys, who is listed by the WTA as having earned \$630,000 in prize money.

That changed Wednesday, when she reached the semifinals by beating her childhood idol Venus Williams 6-3, 4-6, 6-4, meaning she'll collect a check of 650,000 Australian dollars, or \$510,000.

Does the win mean she'll upgrade to a pricier purchase?

"I'm just going to stick with the handbag for now," said Keys. On second thought, "Maybe when I'm out shopping for that handbag, maybe I'll see something else."

Perhaps a new house? - asked the on-court presenter after her match.

"Let's not go that far," said Keys. "I don't think I need to buy a house right now."

ROGER'S ABSENCE IS FELT
While the capacity crowd was filling Rod Laver Arena for the start of Wednesday's play at the Australian Open, someone was remembering a four-time champion who won't make it five titles - at least this year.

"We miss you Roger," said the sign held up by a young woman who frowned when she realized the television cameras were on her.

That could only be Roger Federer, who lost in the third round here to Andreas Seppi in a big upset last Friday.

Federer, a 17-time Grand Slam singles champion, hadn't packed his bags to leave Melbourne Park that early since 2001. But five days later, someone was still thinking of him. --- AP

MSC hopefuls sent home

SPORTS REPORTER

Two Brazilian footballers, who came here to have a trial for Mohammedan Sporting Club ahead of the upcoming season, went back to their home from the Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport after failing to obtain the on-arrival Bangladesh visa.

The players, Jose Felipe Da Cruz Oliveira and Silva Palma Cesar, arrived at the airport in the morning and caught the return flight in the evening as the club's officials failed to arrange on-arrival visa for them.

"They came here via an agent for the trial and we could have signed them if they impressed us but they had to go back due to unavailability of visas," said MSC director Sarwar Hossain.

Broad's U-turn

AFP, London

England fast bowler Stuart Broad insisted Tuesday he had not meant to insult low-paid workers following an angry response to a tweet about Britain's minimum wage.

"I've heard if you earn minimum wage in England you're in the top 10 per cent earners in the world. #stay #humble," the 28-year-old posted in a now deleted tweet.

Given Broad, a senior England player for several years, earns considerably more than the minimum wage, there were many who took issue with his comments.

However, Broad subsequently insisted the hashtag was meant as a reminder to himself rather than a general instruction to the public.

"Clarifying my earlier tweet, I merely wanted to emphasise my amazement at just how big the world is," he said.