

SPORT

Rahul out of BD tour

PTI, Kolkata

Talented Karnataka opener Lokesh Rahul was on Saturday ruled out of the Indian cricket team's upcoming tour of Bangladesh as he was yet to recover from dengue.

The 23-year-old, who made his Test debut against Australia in Melbourne, was declared unfit for the one off Test starting June 10 and no replacement has been named as of now.

"KL Rahul is still recovering from his illness so he will not be a part of the team to Bangladesh," BCCI secretary Anurag Thakur informed the mediapersons on Saturday.

Rahul, who had an inauspicious start to his Test career in Melbourne, made amends in his second Test at Sydney, where he scored his maiden hundred (110).

The Indian Test team led by Virat Kohli will leave Kolkata for Dhaka on Monday to take part in a one-off Test match and three-match ODI series.

Zia in third position

SPORTS REPORTER

Grandmaster Ziaur Rahman shared the third position along with other 10 players after collecting five points at the end of the seventh round of the 8th Mumbai Mayor's Cup International Open Chess Tournament in Mumbai, India yesterday, said a press release from Bangladesh Chess Federation.

GM Abdullah Al Rakib and GM Enamul Hossain Razib earned 4.5 points each while Kazi Mahub Afzal and Abul Kashem earned 2 points each. In the seventh round, Zia lost against GM R R Laxman of India.

Tigers analyse India

Mushfiqur to keep with soft balls in Fatullah today

SPORTS REPORTER



Preparations for the India series notched up a gear at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday as the cricketers spent the morning session in a meeting discussing the specific details of their opponents.

According to the team management, yesterday was the first time that the players got an opportunity to discuss the strengths and weaknesses of India in detail and it also gave an idea regarding the kind of strategy that the Tigers are likely to use in the Test at Fatullah which begins from June 10 onwards.

The Tigers are yet to finalise their playing eleven and there could be several strategies to ponder upon. For one, they are likely to use leg-spinner Jubair Hossain in this Test. The selectors initially weren't interested in Jubair. However, it was only after the coach and the captain recommended

the leg-spinner that they decided to put him in the squad of 14.

If Jubair does play, that would mean that the Tigers would have to reorganise their spin-attack. It could come down to a choice between Jubair and off-spinner Shuvagata Hom. The other aspect that they will be pondering upon is regarding Mushfiqur Rahim's keeping.

The skipper is expected to practice keeping with soft balls in at the Khan Shaheb Osmani Stadium in Fatullah today, where the Tigers will begin training in the morning. However, the chances of Mushfiqur keeping in the lone Test aren't that high. In which Litton Kumar Das will have to make his Test debut in Fatullah.

A talented top order batsman, Litton had scored more than a 1000 runs in the recently concluded National Cricket League and has been among the runs. While he was selected for the Test series against Pakistan as well, he didn't get an opportunity in playing eleven. With

Mushfiqur's yet to recover completely from his finger injury, Litton can hope for a different experience this time around. Mahmudullah Riyad's exclusion from the side due to a finger injury has made that option a lot more probable.

The wicket at Fatullah is expected to be a batsman's paradise. Several members from Bangladesh's contingent, including chief selector Faruque Ahmed and opener Imrul Kayes, in various press conferences in the last few days said that they were hoping for a batting track that would help them achieve a draw against India.

Bangladesh have a poor track record against India in Tests. Out of seven matches, India have won six, with the only draw taking place in Dhaka back in 2007 in a rain-affected Test match.

The Tigers managed to draw a Test against Pakistan in the last series in Khulna and the team management will be hoping that the wicket in Fatullah behaves in a similar way.



American Serena Williams (L) shows the French Open trophy to tennis legend Martina Navratilova after the former beat Lucie Safarova of Czech Republic in the final in Paris on Saturday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Serena's 3rd in Paris

AFP, Paris



Serena Williams won her 20th Grand Slam title and third French Open crown at Roland Garros on Saturday, clawing her way back from a break down in the last set to defeat Lucie Safarova 6-3, 6-7 (2/7), 6-2.

In what was a disjointed affair, the 33-year-old American was coasting to a straight-sets win, a set and 4-1 up against the Czech 13th seed, playing in her first Grand Slam final at the age of 28.

But a combination of serving woes for Williams and some top play from Safarova forced a third set, the fifth of the tournament for the American.

She fell 0-2 down in that, but recovered her composure in the nick of time to rattle off six games in a row for the title.

With 20 Grand Slam titles Williams is now second on the Open-era list, two shy of Steffi Graf. She is also now halfway to winning all four Grand Slam titles, in the same year, a feat previously achieved by just three other women, the last being Graf in 1988.

For Safarova, who reached the final without dropping a set, the consolation will be her debut in the world top 10, at number seven. And she has the women's doubles final to follow on Sunday, playing with American Bethanie Mattek-Sands.

"I played very well and she was a magnificent opponent for me," Williams said. "It's special for me because I don't play well all the time here [in Paris], but I am so pleased to win my 20th Grand Slam here."

Williams had struggled with a bout of flu throughout the tournament's second week, needing four times to fight back from a set down just to reach the final.

But after two days of "rest and therapy" in her Paris apartment she came out looking somewhat refreshed if more subdued than usual as she stared fixedly at the ground between points.

She played well within herself on serve, taking pace off her first ball and then allowing Safarova an easy hold to level.

But the American upped the pace suddenly in the fourth game, clinching the first break of the match with a scorching forehand crosscourt winner.



Ace all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan (C) is having some fun with opener Tamim Iqbal (L) in the dressing room during their training camp in Mirpur yesterday forcing Mohammad Shahid (R) to break into a smile.

PHOTO: STAR

IN A NUTSHELL

Dravid to coach India A, U-19s

Former captain Rahul Dravid was on Saturday appointed coach of the India A and under-19 cricket teams after the first meeting of BCCI's advisory committee in Kolkata but suspense continued over Ravi Shastri's tenure as the senior team's director post the Bangladesh tour.

"The good news is that Dravid has agreed to coach India A and under-19 teams in future," BCCI secretary Anurag Thakur said in a press conference after the committee's meeting.

Sources said, Dravid was, however, keen to take up the responsibility of shaping up the next generation of Indian cricket.

'Stokes can win the Ashes'

Former England captain Andrew Flintoff believes that with a 'fantastic' Ben Stokes in their line-up, England can beat the Aussies during the upcoming Ashes series.

The Mirror quoted Flintoff as saying that Stokes was a proper batsman and could take the fight to the Aussies.

Praising Stokes, Flintoff described the former as a new version of himself and Sir Ian Botham, and predicted that he would be a star in his own right and have his own image.

ICC's yes to 'Harlem Globetrotters'

ICC has given preliminary blessings to Shane Warne's proposal of leading 'Harlem Globetrotters' of cricket on a tour to USA.

Master blaster Sachin Tendulkar and the legendary spinner have been planning to form a pool of retired cricket superstars and take the game to the parts of the world where it lacks popularity.

ICC chief executive David Richardson said that the



detail was for them to explain, but essentially they were talking about exhibition matches involving iconic players similar to the Harlem Globetrotters.

He also said that they were not talking about a tournament or a league, but exhibition matches.

Richardson said the timing of Warne's proposal was perfect given the ICC were currently examining ways of increasing its presence in the USA.

Compiled By Star Sport Desk

Zahid's race against time

SPORTS REPORTER



Winger Zahid Hossain is in a race against time to be fit for the first two matches of the Joint Qualifiers for the World Cup and the Asian Cup. The 28-year-old Sheikh Russel forward is reportedly recovering from 'stomach erosion', a kind of ulcer, for the past few weeks and hasn't had any match practice since the end of the first leg of Bangladesh Premier League in the third week of May. Zahid missed the warm-up matches against Singapore on May 30th and against Afghanistan on June 2 after pulling out of the national team's camp two days after joining along with his club teammates as his illness aggravated.

"I am slowly recovering and



having light training under club coach. But I still feel weak and I don't know if I can get fit before the qualifying matches. Since I play in attacking role, I will need to get back full fitness and power in order to have an impact," said the winger when contacted yesterday.

It has been learnt that after being treated by doctors at the Apollo Hospitals, Zahid is currently under observation of his club doctor. According to national team's physiotherapist Shajib Shams Bakshi, Zahid has had issues with digesting food, which was caused by irregular food intake.

Bangladesh team's assistant coach Saiful Bari Titu, though, is hopeful that the mercurial winger will be available for the two crucial fixtures.

"We are hopeful that we will get him for the two qualifiers and he is very much in our plan. But it will all depend on when he can join the training camp because the first match is only four days away," said Titu after the team's training session at the Sheikh Jamal Dhanmondi Club ground yesterday.

Bangladesh will host Kyrgyzstan on June 11 and Tajikistan on June 16 at the Bangabandhu National Stadium in the first two fixtures of the joint qualifiers.

But it seems that the team management has already has a Plan B in place in case Zahid misses out. In absence of Zahid, head coach Lodewijk de Kruif opted for a 4-3-3 formation instead of his more preferred 4-5-1 formation, in the recent two friendlies. Veteran Enamul Haque, who returned to the national fold after five years, and young Jewel Rana, played on either side of premier marksman Zahid Hasan Emily in those two matches. Even though Bangladesh lost the first match against Singapore 1-2 before holding Afghanistan to a 1-1 draw, both Enamul and Jewel impressed in their respective positions.

Frank Worrell trophy remains with Aussies

AGENCIES, Roseau



Australia have retained the Frank Worrell trophy after defeating the West Indies in the first Test at Dominica on Friday. The match ended inside three days as the Aussies chased down the small target of 47 set by the Windies with nine wickets to spare just before the close of play.

The hosts began the third day with just 25 runs on the board and having lost two wickets already, they lost Darren Bravo to Josh Hazlewood having added just 12 more runs. But then came the rescue act from Marlon Samuels and Shane Dowrich who put on a 144-run stand for the fourth wicket. Hazlewood came back again to remove debutant Dowrich for a well compiled 70.

And then a familiar sight occurred as the windies collapsed without putting up a fight as they lost their last 6 wickets for just 27 runs. Mitchell Starc led the rout with four wickets, the last two off successive deliveries with the second new ball.

Needing just 47 runs for victory, Australia wasted no time in knocking off the runs in gathering gloom in just five overs for the loss of the rampant David Warner, who plastered 28 off 20 deliveries before falling to Jerome Taylor.

SCORES IN BRIEF
WEST INDIES: First innings 148
AUSTRALIA: First innings 318
WEST INDIES: Second innings 216 (Samuels 74, Dowrich 70; Starc 4-28, Hazlewood 2-17)
AUSTRALIA: Second innings 47 for 1 (Warner 28; Taylor 1-22)
Result: Australia won by 9 wickets.



Mahendra Kumar Singha shoots to gold in the 10m air pistol event yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

NATIONAL SHOOTING Army finish top

SPORTS REPORTER

Army Shooting Association (ASA) emerged champions and Dhaka Rifle Club (DRC) finished runners-up in the Beximco 27th National Shooting Championship, which concluded at the National Shooting Complex in Gulshan yesterday. ASA finished with seven gold medals while DRC got four gold medals in the six-day national meet.

A total of five events were decided on the concluding day, with ASA grabbing three of the gold medals. Mahendra

Kumar Singha of ASA, who had won the silver medal in the 50m free pistol event on Friday, beat his teammate Raihanul Islam by 0.1 point to snatch the gold in the 10m air pistol event yesterday.

Commonwealth Games silver medallist Abdullah Hel Baki of DRC added the 50m rifle three position gold to the gold in the 10m air rifle event, after finishing with 1141 points, five points better than Kushtia Rifle Club's Toufique Shahriar Chandan. S M Sabbir of ASA bagged the gold in skeet shooting event beating Nuruddin Selim of Chittagong Rifle Club to silver.

PCB has Plan B in case...

PTI, Karachi

With uncertainty hanging over the resumption of Indo-Pak bilateral cricket ties later this year, Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) chairman Shaharyar Khan has said that they have an alternate plan in hand if the proposed series against the neighbours in the United Arab Emirates does not materialise.

Refusing to divulge any further details, the PCB chief said the fate of the Indo-Pak series will be decided in two months time.

"We know there is always such a possibility when it comes to Indo-Pak relations but we think the situation will be clear in two months time," Shaharyar said here.

"We have a Plan B in case the series [against India] cannot be held but I can't share the details of that now. If such a situation is created we can call alternative teams," he said.

Reliable sources in the PCB confirmed that the board was in talks with two other cricket playing nations to prepare a contingency plan.

Pakistan is due to host India in the UAE in December this year as part of a six series Memorandum of Understanding signed between the two boards last month.

Shaharyar said that at present there was 70 per cent chance that the Indo-Pak series would take place if no major untoward incident happens in context with the relations between the two countries.

India has not played Pakistan in a bilateral Test series since 2007 after the terror attacks in Mumbai in 2008.