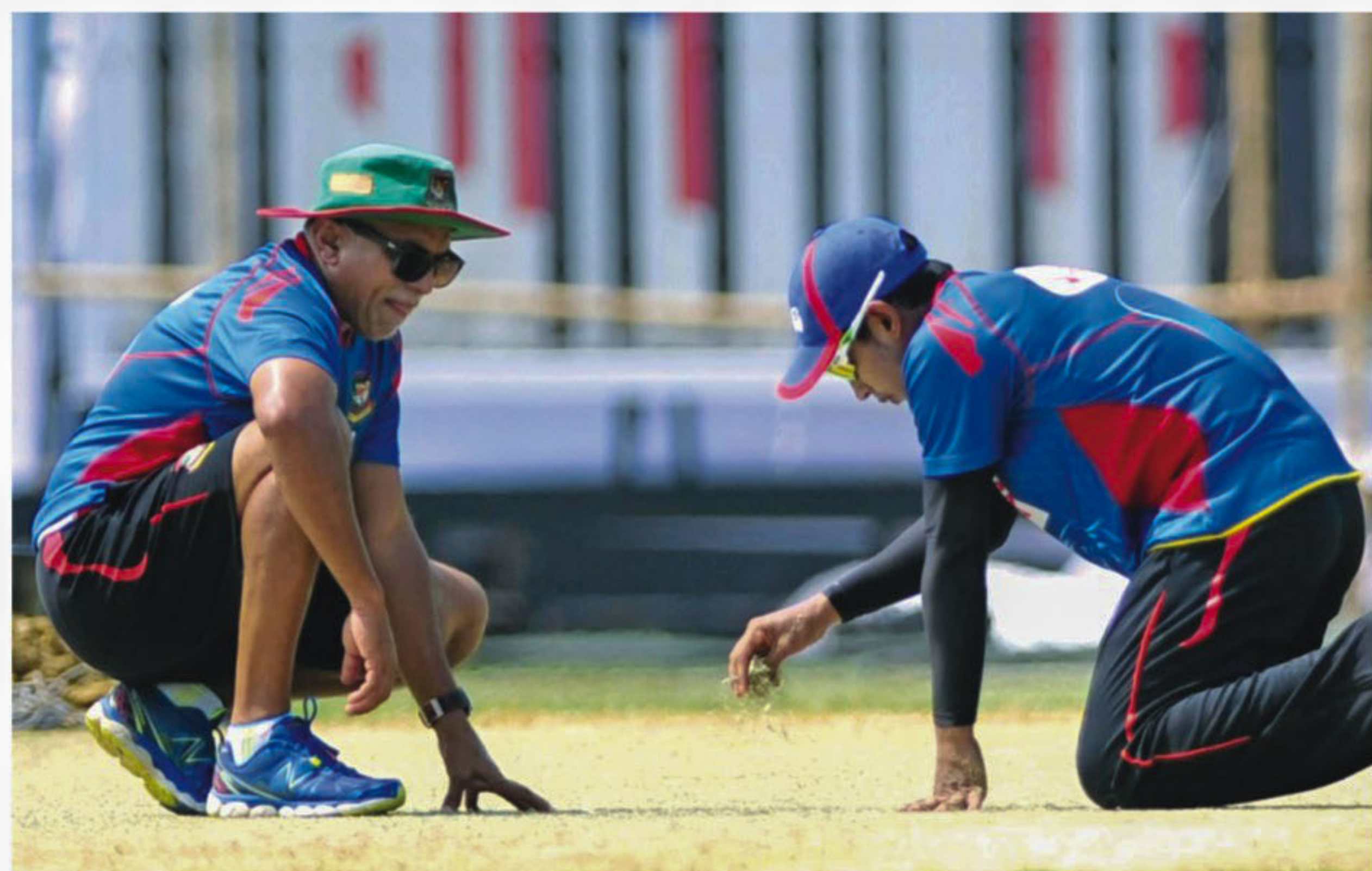


SPORT



India Test captain Virat Kohli (left) looks relaxed as he limbers up at the BCB Academy ground in Mirpur while his Bangladesh counterpart Mushfiqur Rahim (extreme right) is having a close look at the Fatullah wicket along with coach Chandika Hathurusingha yesterday.



PHOTOS: STAR

India train at Mirpur instead

SPORTS REPORTER

Few fans tried to take a dig at India Test captain Virat Kohli in front of the main entrance of the Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium in Mirpur last afternoon chanting 'Anushka, Anushka' while the tourists' team bus entered the home of Bangladesh cricket.

"What I know is that it makes him angry," responded a teenage fan when asked about the reason behind the slogan. There was however no scope for Kohli to get angry as he was sitting in a sound-proof air-conditioned bus.

The relationship between Kohli, the golden boy of Indian cricket, and Bollywood actress Anushka Sharma is one of the biggest attractions outside the cricket field whenever India is

involved in an international fixture.

It's not just the right-hander's performance on the field that has hogged the spotlight, but also his personal relationship with the Bollywood actress that has intrigued fans.

When Anushka was blamed for one of his off-days on the field, Kohli wasn't happy and he ensured to express that in a press conference later on.

The chants outside the stadium yesterday though didn't affect Kohli as he seemed to be in a good mood with his teammates during the two-hour practice in the scorching heat at the BCB Academy ground.

While the visitors initially wanted to train in Fatullah, they had to settle in Mirpur yesterday since the Tigers had their session there.

India's national cricket team reached

the Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport in Dhaka in the morning without much attention as there wasn't any media activity at the airport.

After four hours' rest at the Pan Pacific Sonargaon Hotel they headed for Mirpur for their first practice session ahead of the one-off Test against the Tigers starting tomorrow at the Fatullah Cricket Stadium.

Though the Tigers were practicing at Fatullah, Bangladesh's ODI skipper Mashrafe Bin Mortaza was in Mirpur. He spent time with several Indian players as well as their team director Ravi Shastri. Mashrafe and Shastri seemed to have a fun chat regarding the road accident that the skipper was involved in.

After the Test match in Fatullah, the teams will face off in the three ODIs, all of which will take place in Mirpur.

Tickets on sale

SPORTS REPORTER

The tickets for the Bangladesh-India series went on sale yesterday through United Commercial Bank (UCB). UCash tickets were available for collection yesterday and now physical tickets will be available at the UCB Narayanganj Branch in Tanbazar from today for the one-off Test starting from tomorrow at the Fatullah Cricket Stadium.

For the ODIs to be held on June 18, 21 and 24 at Mirpur, UCash tickets to be available for collection two days prior to the matches at the designated branches while physical tickets will be available at designated branches one day before the matches.

The branches are - Progoti Shoroni, Mirpur Road, Shantinagar, Uttara and Mirpur (physical sale).

TICKET PRICES FOR TEST	
Category	Rate
Grand Stand	Tk.500
Int'l Gallery (West)	Tk.300
Club House (East/West)	Tk.200
Western Gallery	Tk.80
Eastern Gallery	Tk.50
ODI SERIES	
BCB Hospitality Lounge	Tk.3,000
Grand Stand (North/South)	Tk.3,000
VIP Stand	Tk.1,000
Shahaed Mushtaque/Jewel Stand	Tk.500
North/South Stand	Tk.250
Eastern Stand	Tk.150

AB's record in sight for Mominul

SPORTS REPORTER

"How do you rate your competition with AB de Villiers?" This was the very first question that Mominul Haque encountered at the impromptu press conference in Fatullah yesterday.

And it took a confused-looking Mominul more than a few seconds to find an answer to that question.

"I have absolutely no clue what to say to that. I am nowhere near him. He is a king in all formats. I don't think I am a competition for him by any means," the diminutive batsman exclaimed.

The question was referring to a batting world record, held by de Villiers, which Mominul has a chance to get level with. Mominul has scored 50-plus scores in his eleven Tests; if he scores one more against India he will equal the South African's record of 12 consecutive fifties in Tests.

The left-hander, who seemed stumped by the question, however, claimed that he had no interest in those figures.

"I am not thinking about whether I will be next to anyone or not. I am just going to play this Test like any other. And I hope I can live up to the expectations that the people of this country have. These stats don't provide a special inspiration. When you [the media] come and tell me about some record that's when I become aware of

it," Mominul explained.

While the left-hander wasn't worried about the records, the one aspect that haunts him most despite boasting an average around 60 in Test cricket is his inability to find a permanent position in the one-day team. He has already been categorised by many as a Test specialist.

"There is nothing about accepting or rejecting that assumption. Had I not played well in Tests and only played well in ODIs, things would have been different. The fact is that at the moment I am getting a chance to play in one format.

"If I can do well here and if I can maintain a good average, then one day I will get a chance in the ODIs. On the other hand, if I break down thinking about the ODIs, then I'll start doing badly in both the formats," Mominul observed.

Keeping in mind the dominance of left-handed batsmen in Bangladesh's top order, India have included two specialist off-spinners in the side. Both Harbhajan Singh and Ravichandran Ashwin could feature in the sole Test in Fatullah which begins tomorrow. Mominul though didn't seem worried about the threat that strategy could pose.

"I don't play with a mentality that tells me that I should be scared of this tactic. I don't have those thoughts in my head. The way I see it... this is a good opportunity for me to learn by playing against a good bowling attack," said Mominul.



Guyana sign Akmal up

AGENCIES, Karachi

Pakistan's explosive batsman Umar Akmal has signed a deal with Guyana Amazon Warriors for the 2015 edition of the Caribbean Premier League.

The 25-year-old batsman, who has to his credit an impressive 1,293 runs in 58 innings in his Twenty20 career, will join the team in July after finishing his spell with Leicestershire.

This would be his second spell in the tournament as he had previously played for Barbados Tridents in 2013.

Akmal said that he was really looking forward to playing in the tournament again, adding that cricket was always fast-paced in this format.

Tigers more specific

SPORTS REPORTER

As the Fatullah Test draws closer, Bangladesh's training sessions seem to more clearly depict the kind of strategy that they plan to use against India.

Instead of donning the gloves Bangladesh Test captain Mushfiqur Rahim has been spending more time fielding. It's a rare sight for the Tigers considering the fact that Mushfiqur has kept wickets in 43 out of his 45 Tests. The team management is yet to state as to whether debutant Litton Das will play the first Test as the team's designated wicketkeeper, the training sessions though suggest that the Tigers are likely to enforce such a move.

Litton, who scored more than a thousand runs in the last Dhaka Premier League, is

more than handy with the bat. In the last few training sessions, it has been the 20-year-old who kept wickets. If Litton does make the playing eleven, he could either take Mahmudullah Riyad's spot at number four or play at seven. If he does play down the order then Soumya Sarkar might be promoted up the order.

While the batting order seems set, the Tigers still have to decide as to which spinner to pick. If the Tigers do go with two pacers and Taijul Islam, they will either have to select off-spinner Shuvagata Hom or leg-spinner Jubair Hossain.

With coach Chandika Hathurusingha and Mushfiqur putting plenty of emphasis on Jubair prior to the announcement of the team, it is likely for the youngster to feature once again.

'Soumya can be our Kallis'

It was around this time last year when Heath Streak arrived as Bangladesh's pace bowling coach. A year with the Zimbabwean has seen Bangladesh's pacers post much better bowling numbers. Ahead of the much-talked about India series, Streak spoke to The Daily Star's Naimul Karim regarding the work that's being done behind the scenes. The following is a brief transcript of the interview:



TDS: What are the reforms in pace bowling that you tried to enforce in the last one year?
HS: Pacers here aren't used to bowling lots of overs in domestic cricket so they get exposed when they are required to bowl long spells in international cricket since the workload is a lot higher. What we have tried to do with our strength and conditioning staff is to condition their bodies so that they can withstand the high intensity of Test cricket over five days. You can't bowl 100 balls a week and then suddenly bowl 250 in a Test. It's like a sprinter training for long distance. We are putting in these programmes and its starting to work out. We have enforced this for the Under 19s, the A team and now there's the high performance programme which is a separate committee altogether. Things can't change overnight, but this is a start.

TDS: As a coach, what do you think went wrong with Robiul Islam?
HS: Before the High Performance programme began we didn't have anyone below us to look after players who have fallen out of the national team. But now that we have the high performance set up, it's their role to support us.

Hopefully players like Robiul can renew themselves by using these programmes. It's also the responsibility of the players to make that commitment and the sacrifice. I have been in that change room for a long time and I can tell that people like Mahmudullah, Mushfiqur [Rahim], Sabbir [Rahman], Shakib [Al Hasan]... they don't perform well just by chance. They put in lots of hard yards.

TDS: Do you think Taskin Ahmed and Mashrafe Bin Mortaza can ever play Test cricket?
HS: Regarding Taskin, we are working really hard with him.



The good thing about him is that he has got a strong desire and will to play Test cricket. And he is pushing himself and doing all the right things. We are trying to get him ready for next year. I think Mash works exceptionally hard to keep himself fit. It will be difficult given the number of operations he has had on his knee. It would be nice to have his experience in the Test arena. Realistically though I think it's going to be tough for him.

TDS: Is Soumya Sarkar good enough to be considered as a specialist pacer in the Test side?
HS: He has got a real ability to become a genuine all-rounder. He can maybe possibly become a Jacques Kallis-type player. We saw him bowl a few balls in his first spell against Pakistan in the 130 mark. We know he has got that. Again it's a process with him. He has got to establish himself. You can't take a guy who is a part-time bowler and turn him into a Test bowler overnight. We have to be careful with him. I certainly see him as someone who we can use as a fourth seamer in the 2019 World Cup. I don't think people actually realise how good he can be.

Eng seek revival

1st ODI against Kiwis today
 AFP, London

England, not for the first time, will try to re-launch themselves as a one-day international cricket side when they face World Cup finalists New Zealand in the first of a five-match series at Edgbaston on Tuesday.

Since they made the third of three losing World Cup final appearances back in 1992, England have struggled to keep up with changes in the 50-over game.

But this year's World Cup represented a new low, with England failing to beat a single Test nation in a tournament where they suffered a first-round exit after a defeat by Bangladesh.

And in omitting the likes of senior pacemen James Anderson and Stuart Broad, as well as experienced batsman Ian Bell, for this series and including the hard-hitting Alex Hales, Jos Buttler and Jason Roy, as well as leg-spinner Adil Rashid, England's squad -- still led by World Cup skipper Eoin Morgan -- has something of a fresh look about it.

IN A NUTSHELL

Kitchen fire disrupts ODI build-up

A fire in a kitchen at Edgbaston on Monday briefly disrupted preparations for the first one-day international between England and New Zealand.

Fire crews and three ambulances attended the venue, which was evacuated shortly before midday, with people treated for smoke inhalation. One member of staff was sent home as a precaution while others were checked by paramedics and cleared of any problems having briefly breathed in smoke while trying to tackle the fire.

Pistorius to be released in August?

South African athlete Oscar Pistorius is set to be released from prison on parole in August after serving 10 months for culpable homicide in the killing of his model girlfriend Reeva Steenkamp, a family member said.



The Olympic and Paralympic track star is currently serving a five year prison sentence after being convicted in October following a seven-month trial.

"Oscar will be released on parole by the end of August," a Pistorius family member who did not want to be named told.

Compiled By Star Sport Desk