

# SPORT



Nimbus clouds create a night-like ambience at the Khan Shaheb Osman Ali Stadium in Fatullah on Wednesday. Big thanks to the ground staff at the venue who, after a full hour's heavy downpour, got the field ready for playing after just two hours' maintenance.



## India sing in the rain

**BISHWAJIT ROY**

If there was indeed any mystery for Bangladesh coach Chandika Hathurusingha regarding the pitch prior to the match, it must have cleared by the end of the rain-interrupted first day's play of the one-off Test at Fatullah yesterday. Rain struck heavily 25 minutes before the scheduled lunch break, allowing only a total of 56 overs of play. But it was enough for the Indian juggernaut to plunder the Bangladesh bowling on a wicket that Hathurusingha later described as 'the flattest pitch he has ever come across'.

Shikhar Dhawan struck an unbeaten 150 off 158 balls in his comeback Test, which meant India piled up 239 for no loss at stumps. Rain only brought some respite in the Bangladesh tent on a day

when everything went the visitors' way, from winning the toss to finishing the day without any casualty.

It's too early to say about a Test match's fate after the first day's play, but from 239 without loss, India would not even think to bat again on a wicket where 600-plus looks a reality even by the end of the second day's play. India now need to build on the Dhawan-Murali Vijay platform, which they would do when play resumes today, to pile up a massive total so that they can allow their bowlers to push for a victory.

When Bangladesh came up with a surprise selection with only one pacer in the line-up, India's aim was very clear as they picked five specialist bowlers including three pacers and what they needed was to win the toss and the

Lady Luck smiled on Virat Kohli, who set a new vision for India in the longest version of the game. Shuvagata Hom dropped a fairly regulation catch off Dhawan at short midwicket when the left-

looked determined about not to throw away his wicket against a toothless attack during his 178-ball 89, his left-handed opening partner Dhawan played glorious drives to cash most out of the condition.



Dhawan made merry with the Bangladesh bowlers and reached his third Test hundred playing a scoop-sweep against leg-spinner Jubair Hossain for a boundary through the midwicket region as the match resumed almost after a three-hour rain break, thanks to some fantastic job from the Fatullah ground staff.

Bangladesh captain Mushfiqur Rahim constantly changed his bowlers but without any luck as the lone paceman Mohammad Shahid lost the intensity after bowling two maiden overs.

Soumya Sarker provided the evidence that he could not be considered to fill up a genuine pacer's place and most importantly the spinners including Shakib Al Hasan kept bowling flat.

BD-IND SCOREBOARD				
<b>INDIA: First innings</b>				
Vijay not out				89
Dhawan not out				150
Extras:				0
Total: (For no loss in 56 overs)				239
To bat: R Sharma, Kohli, Rahane, Saha, Ashwin, Harbhajan, Yadav, I Sharma, Aaron.				
<b>Bowler</b>	<b>O</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>R</b>	<b>W</b>
Shahid	12	2	52	0
Soumya	2	0	7	0
Shuvagata	13	0	47	0
Shakib	9	1	34	0
Taijul	12	0	55	0
Jubair	7	0	41	0
Imrul	1	0	3	0
<b>BANGLADESH:</b> Tamim Iqbal, Imrul Kayes, Mominul Haque, Mushfiqur Rahim, Shakib Al Hasan, Soumya Sarker, Litton Das, Shuvagata Hom, Jubair Hossain, Taijul Islam, Mohammad Shahid.				

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**SUPER PERFORMER OF THE DAY**

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**SHIKHAR DHAWAN**

On a rainy afternoon with Bangladesh's bowlers toiling hard on a flat deck in Fatullah, the only form of cheer for the few thousands present at the stadium came in the shape of Shikhar Dhawan's rollicking 150. The left-hander, who is on a comeback trail, read the pitch quite early in the game and took the charge almost immediately. By the time he had reached his half-century, off 47 balls, his partner Murali Vijay had barely gotten out of his shell. Not for a moment did Dhawan back down and reached his century in the same vein. He reached the three figures after the rain break off 101 balls. Just before the end of play yesterday, he nudged and drove his way to 150. There were 21 fours in the 158-ball knock and there's more to come today.

## 'Didn't want to risk Rubel'

**NAIMUL KARIM**

"Is the air conditioner working," a smiling Chandika Hathurusingha asked the BCB's media manager as soon as he entered the media room at Fatullah yesterday evening after the first day's play.

On Tuesday the coach had spent minutes explaining Bangladesh's target in the first Test in a boiling room without the luxury of a working air conditioner, but fortunately they were functioning properly yesterday.

Throughout the disappointing day for the hosts, which saw India's openers pile on a 239-run stand for the opening wicket -- their highest against Bangladesh -- the main issue doing the rounds was Rubel Hossain's exclusion.

In a rare move, the Tigers decided to field just one pacer and four spinners in the side and that left many fans and journalists scratching their heads.

"Rubel's thing is that he is coming after an injury. He was not a hundred per cent. The other reason is the wicket.

"We thought that if Rubel plays, he has to bowl a lot on this flat wicket and then there would be a

chance for a recurrence of his injury because he didn't get to play the practice matches either," Hathurusingha explained.

"We picked the team we thought was good for the wicket and according to our strength. I think we created chances, but a number of things didn't go our way. Had we taken those opportunities, it would have been a different story," he added.

Hathurusingha further explained that they wanted to keep the pacer fit for the one-dayers and give the ODIs their best shot.

"If we win at least one ODI we have a chance of qualifying for the Champions Trophy," remarked the coach. This explanation was countered with the question that why Rubel was picked for the Test in the first place.

"It's not that he is not fit, he is not fit enough to bowl on this wicket," remarked the coach.

"To be honest this is probably the flattest wicket I have seen [in the country] so far. It's close to the one we played in Khulna."

Prior to the start of the Test, the Sri Lankan was the only member from the team management who stated that the hosts would go for a win and he repeated that yesterday. While the words were the same, there was a clear difference in the tone.



CHANDIKA HATHURUSINGHA

## A perceived mistake

**SPORTS REPORTER**

Even a gloomy day in Fatullah, in terms of the weather, couldn't dampen the brilliant strokeplay from India's openers. Both Shikhar Dhawan and Murali Vijay made the most of the flat batting track and led India to a dominant 239 for no loss at the end of Day One.

The way Dhawan drove deliveries to the boundary gave the impression that the visitors were looking to score as many runs as possible in a bid to force a win.

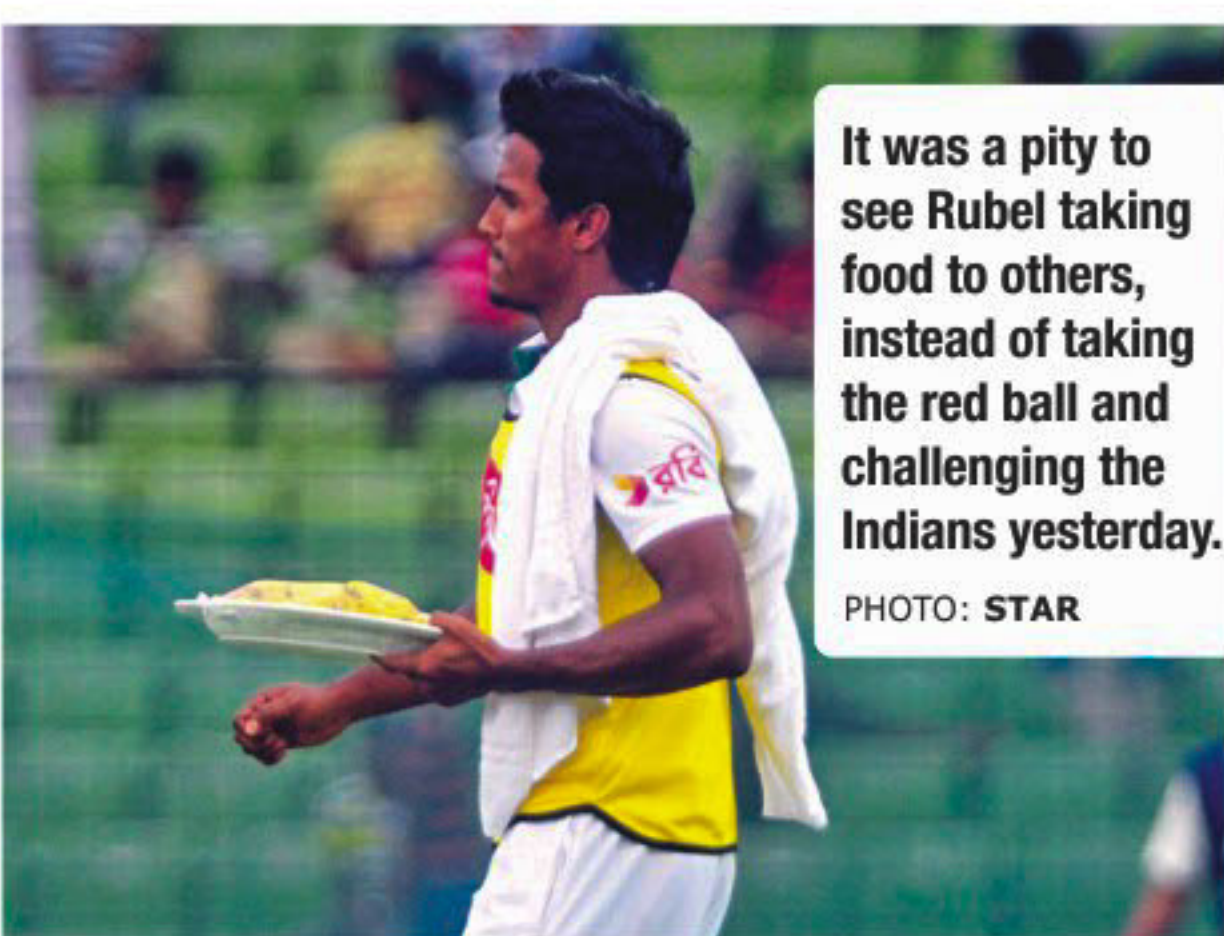
However, according to Ravichandran Ashwin, there wasn't any such plan.

"I think that's just the way our openers bat. Shikhar plays his game and Vijay settles into his game. So that's pretty much what happened today, there was no conscious effort in terms of saying, 'We have to do this'. But there is a good sense of everyone trying to express themselves in the team and we are looking to play with a lot of freedom," said Ashwin at the post-day press conference in Fatullah yesterday.

"Hopefully that is being expressed out on the field. There is no reason why we play a particular combination, it's just about maintaining consistency from where we left off in Sydney," he added.

While India's plan seemed to work flawlessly, the hosts were caught in a rut, having included just one specialist pacer in the side. When asked about Bangladesh's tactic Ashwin said, "I think it's an individual's perception. They probably saw the wicket in the way they wanted to see it and we are seeing it differently. We've got bowlers that we believe can exploit this track with 140-plus speeds, especially if there is some reverse swing later on in the game."

"It's also about how the bowlers are bowling and our bowlers have been pretty good. They have learned a lot over the last six months or so in Australia. We are backing ourselves and looking to play the best possible bowlers we have," he added.



It was a pity to see Rubel taking food to others, instead of taking the red ball and challenging the Indians yesterday. PHOTO: STAR

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