

# SPORT

## 'We can handle the heat'

SPORTS REPORTER



South Africa kick off their tour of Bangladesh today with a T20 warm-up match at the Fatullah Cricket Stadium. A practice match may not paint a picture of what may unfold going into the series proper, but the home side would love to see the game set the tone, like Sabbir Hossain did against Pakistan during a practice match at the same venue in April.

While the Bangladesh think-tank will be keeping an eye on recalled off-spinner Shohag Gazi, South Africa all-rounder JP Duminy said they would seek to make the most of their first game of the tour.

"For us the series starts tomorrow [Friday], it doesn't start on Sunday [when the 1st T20I is]. We know how important tomorrow's warm-up game is. We want to get the best out of the conditions we are going to face. This game will give us the feel, going into Sunday's match, that we are well prepared," said Duminy while he was talking to reporters before the training session at Mirpur yesterday.

All the talks revolved around the fact that a buoyant Bangladesh may take on South Africa with a different strategy compared to the one they followed against India in a bid to clinch their first-ever series victory over the Proteas. But Duminy made it clear that they were not at all worried about the conditions, including the heat.

"In practice matches you generally want to get a feel of the conditions. A lot of us have been off for a month. It's just about getting used to the conditions and pace of the ball, whether it's going to take a bit of turn and what our game plan is going to be."

"I guess it's about discussing amongst ourselves, sharing the knowledge that we have. A few of us have played in these conditions for a number of years now. Just assessing what your game plans are against the various bowlers," he said.

"There are few things that will be challenging. The conditions, the heat will come into play. We have to manage ourselves well. It will be our biggest hurdle. Bangladesh are going to come out fighting and we have to counter-punch them," Duminy continued, adding that, "We are definitely no strangers to this heat. April and May is definitely as hot as July in this part of the world."

Bangladesh's team think-tank surprised India with a four-pronged pace attack but they can rely on their traditional spin-strategy against South Africa. However, Duminy said they were not ready to focus solely on spin.

"Anybody can change a game of T20. It takes one over. We will have to make sure we understand what the strengths and weaknesses of every bowler are and play accordingly."

Duminy also showered praise on Bangladesh's recent performances and said that it would be a tough series for them.

### BCB XI

Imrul Kayes (captain), Anamul Hoque, Rony Talukdar, Mosaddek Hossain Saikat, Mahmudul Hasan, Saikat Ali, Shuvagata Hom, Abdur Razzak, Shohag Gazi, Al-Amin Hossain, Abul Hasan and Kamrul Islam.



Bangladesh players enjoy themselves after receiving a break during a photo-shoot organised by team sponsors Robi at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

## Professional on field, but off it?

AL-AMIN



The professional set-up of the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) is equipped enough to run the most affluent sport body of the country smoothly, even if the board of directors including the BCB president desire to go on a sabbatical.

That was the kind of impression this writer had gotten during his recent visit to the BCB headquarters. But the events which transpired in the last few weeks or before hardly justify that claim.

It's better to start with a hardly noticeable untoward incident during the Tigers' promotional event at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday, when a shooting unit of national team's sponsors Robi was seen engaged in a heated exchange with the working photo journalists. It all started when people engaged in the shooting aggressively turned to the photo journalists, claiming that they

were not even supposed to enter the ground, let alone take photographs of the cricketers at that time.

If their claims were justified then the onus was on the board's highly paid professionals to have circulated it properly, which could have easily avoided such an embarrassing incident and that too in front of the members of the touring South Africa cricket team.

If that is something one can easily duck by blaming the pensive press, the re-appointment of Khaled Mahmud as the national team's manager for the South Africa series through a text message; pending issues of renewing the contracts of two national selectors and Tigers' lone computer analyst Nasir Ahmed and sitting on the contract papers of 80 odd cricketers recommended to be drafted into the board's payroll portray a shabby picture of professionalism in the board.

National selectors Habibul Bashar and Minhzul Abedin's two-year contracts with the board

expired on June 30 and so did Nasir Ahmed's. They are now working under the president's directive to 'continue until the board's next meeting' for a concrete decision.

It's not the job of a president to take notice of such trivial issues. It's the job of a board's CEO to take notice of these things well in advance, a regulation practice for any chief executive of a smooth-functioning organisation.

For someone who has little knowledge of the BCB constitution, it is amazing to learn how forward thinking it is, allowing its CEO a full range of authority not only to execute any plan but to entrust him with the power of recommending a guideline for any issues relating to the development of Bangladesh's cricket.

Our incumbent BCB CEO Nizamuddin Chowdhury is a nice gentleman and has been associated with the board for a long time in different capacities. But in a cutthroat professional world a CEO should be more than a gentleman. His first and foremost effort should be to keep every-

thing in black and white. It is not understandable why he failed to put those three cases on the agenda of the board meeting that took place two months ago.

It is also a sheer callousness on the part of his team for failing to complete the signing formalities of those 80 odd cricketers two months after the recommendation of the chief selector. It was learnt that those first-class cricketers have not even been paid for months. If that is true then those professionals sitting in the cosy confinement of the BCB headquarters hardly deserve a pay cheque every month.

Mahmud's appointment as Tigers' manager has so far been a case of series-by-series. But his latest appointment through a text message can be a peculiar food for thought for any decent professional outfit.

The board often cries for its professionals on the playing field to live up to their billing. But it is running the risk of losing a moral ground to press for that if its other professionals off it fail to perform.

## IN A NUTSHELL

### RCB set for takeover?

For the first time, an Indian Premier League team is on the verge of changing hands. JSW Steel chairman Sajjan Jindal confirmed on Wednesday that his group is acquiring a side without naming it amid speculation that it could be Royal Challengers Bangalore, owned by liquor baron Vijay Mallya.

"Cricket is the number one sport in our country, so there is an idea to acquire a team... an IPL team. But I cannot comment which team it would be," said Jindal.

Asked whether the steel giant will indeed buy RCB, Jindal just said: "That depends on them [RCB]."

If the group buys RCB, it will be the first IPL team to be sold, although one or two other franchise owners are keen to sell.

### Azhar's last-ball heroics

Former Pakistan all-rounder Azhar Mahmood kept his cool on the hottest day of the year in England by hitting a last-ball six to seal a dramatic four-wicket win for Surrey against Gloucestershire in their domestic Twenty20 tournament clash at The Oval on Wednesday.

With temperatures in London rising to 36.7 degrees Celsius, the 40-year-old Mahmood showed he still knew how to finish with a flourish as his unbeaten 22 off 14 balls saw Surrey to victory.

After the match, Mahmood said: "I knew when I connected that it would be six."

### Marsh forcing his issue

Australia all-rounder Mitchell Marsh strengthened his bid for selection in the Ashes-holders' side to face England in next week's first Test by making his second successive hundred of the tour on Wednesday.

Marsh, competing with the more experienced Shane Watson for the role of seam-bowling all-rounder, struck an unbeaten 136 against Essex at Chelmsford on the first day of four following his 101 against Kent at Canterbury last week.

The 23-year-old played the last of his four Tests against India at Brisbane in 2014 and will hope to make it a family double next week, with older brother Shaun battling with Chris Rogers for the chance to open alongside David Warner at Cardiff's Sophia Gardens.

Compiled by Star Sport Desk



South Africa all-rounder JP Duminy yesterday said that today's practice match would signal the beginning of their series.

## Reshuffled teams SL-Pak 3rd & final Test starts today

AFP, Pallekelle



Pakistan and Sri Lanka will ring in several changes, most of them forced on them, in a bid to win the decisive third and final Test starting in Pallekelle on Friday.

Both sides are pulling out all the stops to break the 1-1 deadlock after Pakistan won the first Test by 10 wickets and Sri Lanka responded with a seven-wicket victory in the second.

Sri Lanka will take the field without their batting greats, the retired Mahela Jayawardene and Kumar Sangakkara, who had committed himself to playing just two Tests against Pakistan and two more against India in August before retiring.

Sangakkara, who has 12,305 runs from 132 Tests, will be replaced at his pivotal number three position by another left-hander Upul Tharanga, 30, who played the last of his 19 Tests a year ago.

"It's a strange experience to be without Mahela and Sangakkara, but we have some good young players who are ready to step in," vice-captain Lahiru Thirimanne told reporters on Thursday.

"Upul has been around for a long time and understands the demands of Test cricket."

Fast bowler Dushmantha Chameera, who suffered a side strain on his debut in the second Test in Colombo, will undergo a fitness test before he is picked for the crucial match.

"Chameera is 50-50 for the Test," said Thirimanne. "It is not yet certain if he will play."

Sri Lanka are planning a three-man pace attack, instead of two as in the previous Tests, on a greenish Pallekelle stadium pitch that should favour seam movement on the opening day.

"It's a good wicket for batting, but it does help the fast bowlers at the start," said Thirimanne. "We may play three seamers and just one spinner."

Veteran left-arm spinner Rangana Herath, who managed to take just two wickets in the first two Tests, is likely to be dropped, leaving young off-break bowler Tharindu Kaushal as the chief spin option.

If Chameera is unfit, seamer Suranga Lakmal will make his first appearance in the series to share the new ball with Dhammadika Prasad and Nuwan Pradeep.

Pakistan are forced to make two changes, with pace spearhead Wahab Riaz ruled out because of injury and all-rounder Mohammad Hafeez not available since he has to undergo mandatory tests after being reported for a suspect action in the first Test.

"At least we have 11 players to pick from," skipper Misbahul Haq said on Thursday. "Every player here representing Pakistan is good enough to take anyone's place."

AFP, Dhaka

South Africa's cricket team apologise to Bangladesh's military and security forces for any inconvenience this may have caused," he said in an email to AFP.

Ground staff were taken by surprise when they saw the device overhead, controlled on the ground by a South Africa team official.

"South Africa team has been told that the drone camera cannot be used because of certain restrictions. We are really happy that they've taken it in true spirit," a Bangladeshi Cricket Official said, declining to be named.

BCB officials said the country's civil aviation authority last December banned all unmanned aerial vehicles in its airspace without prior permission for national security as well as general safety reasons.

South Africa arrived in Bangladesh on Tuesday to play two Twenty20 Internationals, three one-day internationals and two Tests against the home side.

The series starts with the first T20I on July 5 in Dhaka.

"We were unaware of the strict security protocols with regards to the Bangladesh airspace and have subsequently stopped using the device."