



A fan proudly waves the Bangladesh flag as a thoughtful Mashrafe Bin Mortaza arrives at the Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport yesterday to depart along with the national team for Australia.

PHOTO:
FIROZ AHMED

Wary Tigers seek high ground

SPORTS REPORTER



With an aim to reach a higher pedestal, the second group of the Bangladesh national cricket team, including limited-overs captain Mashrafe Bin Mortaza, Shakib Al Hasan, Tamim Iqbal, Mahmudullah Riyad and a host of others, left for Australia yesterday night.

While the first group of players, including Test skipper Mushfiquur Rahim and a number of players who were done with their Bangladesh Premier League commitments, left on November 8, the remaining cricketers caught the Singapore Airlines flight last night, which left at around 10 pm.

The 23-member team will spend two weeks in Australia, preparing for their tour of New Zealand. The tour will begin on December 26 with an ODI series. Bangladesh will play three ODIs, three T20Is and two Tests within the next one month.

Prior to their departure, the common sentiment among the players was that of caution. While they were no doubt confident about the series, they do not want to overplay expectations this time.

Take for instance the case of Tamim Iqbal. The left-hander is generally an avid talker prior to any series. He often speaks about targeting centuries and other landmarks, this time though the star opener was not too keen to express himself before the New Zealand series.

Speaking to The Daily Star yesterday, the left-hander said: "If you must write something, then just ask everyone to pray for us. Hopefully we will do well. Other than that, I don't really want to say anything. Let's see how it goes."

Mashrafe Bin Mortaza, who had spoken to reporters on Friday morning, said that the tour would be difficult but that his team are ready for the challenge. "The quicker we adjust to conditions over there, the better for us. It's going to be difficult but I am sure we can take good memories from the wins that we have had at home in the last two years. Playing away from home is a new challenge and hopefully we can do well," he had said.

Mashrafe's deputy in limited overs cricket, Shakib Al Hasan, had a similar message and hoped for a good start. When asked about his thoughts regarding the New Zealand series after the final of the BPL on Friday, he said: "We will be playing in new conditions. We will be going out after a long time and it will be a big challenge for us. Hopefully the camp in Australia will help us. We need to start the series well. If we can start the ODI series well, then I believe we can do well throughout the series."

Mahmudullah Riyad, the player of the tournament of the recently concluded BPL was a bit more positive. He reckons that this was a good time to play New Zealand.

Riyad's positive mindset might be based on the fact that he had a brilliant time in Australia and New Zealand during the World Cup in 2015.

In fact, it's not just Riyad; quite a few Bangladesh players have recorded their best numbers against New Zealand.

Take for instance Mominul Haque. The left-hander averages a staggering 188 in two Tests against New Zealand and he has two centuries including his highest score of 181 against them.

Shakib's best bowling figures in a Test innings, seven for 36, was against the Kiwis. Rubel Hossain has a hat-trick against New Zealand in ODIs and has recorded figures of six for 26 against the Kiwis.

All these numbers, of course, were recorded at home. Away from home, Bangladesh lost all seven of their ODIs and sole Test against New Zealand. The last time they played a bilateral series in New Zealand was back in 2010 when they lost the ODIs 3-0 and the Test series 1-0.

On the whole, Bangladesh have beaten New Zealand in eight ODIs and have lost 17. They will however take heart from the fact that they have beaten New Zealand seven out of eight times in the last five years.

Having set a brilliant record at home, the Tigers now hope they can replicate their performance abroad. As Mashrafe put it on Friday, even the most prominent sides struggle abroad and from that perspective, it is going to be very difficult for Bangladesh.

While that is the harsh reality, the country's cricket fraternity hopes that the men in green can take inspiration from their two-week camp in Australia and further break landmarks.

'Kohli from another planet'

STAR SPORT DESK

After watching India captain Virat Kohli stroke a sublime 147 against England, batting legend Sunil Gavaskar jokingly said that Kohli must be from a planet yet undiscovered.

"Virat Kohli is from another planet. I think he comes from an undiscovered planet," The 67-year-old former great was quoted by NDTV Sports as saying. He also praised the tremendous balance Kohli displayed while securing a 51-run lead for his team in the fourth Test.

Kohli's captaincy also drew words of praise from Gavaskar. "As a captain, he is still very young, but he is willing to learn and get better every day," he said.

Pakistan crush CA XI by 210 runs

AFP, Cairns

Opener Azhar Ali hit an unbeaten 82 and spinner Mohammad Nawaz took three wickets as Pakistan thrashed a modest Cricket Australia XI by 210 runs in Cairns on Saturday.

The tourists declared their second innings at 216 for six and then polished off the CA XI for 109 off 27.3 overs to win early on the final day of their three-day day-night game ahead of next week's first Test against Australia in Brisbane.

Pakistan set the CA XI a target of 311 run but the inexperienced home side never got within range with left-arm spinner Nawaz snaring three for 31 and pacemen Mohammad Amir and Rahat Ali each capturing two wickets.

Ali added 38 to his overnight score and struck three of his seven fours and two sixes on the final day before the Pakistan declaration to set up the result.

Nawaz was unbeaten alongside Ali on 36 off 47 balls, with Sarfraz Ahmed the only man to be dismissed on Saturday, bowled for 39.

Pakistan are coming off a two-Test series defeat in New Zealand and have lost their last nine Tests in Australia going back to 1999.

Sochi samples of Russians to be reanalysed

AFP, Lausanne

The International Olympic Committee (IOC) announced Friday that it will reanalyse all 254 urine samples taken from Russian athletes who took part in the 2014 Sochi Winter Olympics.

The IOC said it had also extended the mandate of its own Oswald disciplinary commission to examine all samples collected from Russian athletes during the London Summer Olympics in 2012.

The decisions were taken, the IOC said, following the publication Friday of Richard McLaren's full report into doping in Russia that revealed an "institutional conspiracy" by Moscow to cheat between 2011-15.

All 63 blood samples collected from Russian athletes in Sochi have already been reanalysed by the IOC in cooperation with McLaren. All came back negative.

The IOC said the urine samples would be retested because "McLaren's mandate did not include a full reanalysis of all these samples".

A Kohli masterpiece

AFP, Mumbai



Captain Virat Kohli smashed a sensational unbeaten 147 to propel India into the lead on the third day of the fourth Test against England in Mumbai on Saturday.

The Indian skipper, who has enjoyed a remarkable and record-breaking year, hit 17 fours as India reached 451-7 in their first innings at stumps.

"He played exceptionally well today and you have to take your hat off sometimes and just accept it," England's Joe Root said of Kohli afterwards.

"The amount of runs Kohli has scored this series, if you take those away it's a completely different series," added the 25-year-old Root, whose England side must win if they are to keep the contest alive.

Batsman Kohli crossed 1,000 Test runs for the year and 4,000 for his career during his 241-ball knock to ensure India take a 51-run lead with three wickets remaining into day four.

The 28-year-old entered the fray early in the morning session after Cheteshwar Pujara (47) was bowled out by Jake Ball on just the second ball of the day at the Wankhede Stadium.

Kohli, who has hit two double centuries in 2016, held fort at one end, crossing the century mark mid-way through the final session.

It marked the Indian captain's

second century of the series after his stunning 167 in the second Test at Visakhapatnam.

Kohli's unbeaten century came after Indian opener Murali Vijay smashed 10 fours and three sixes on his way to a magnificent 136 after starting the morning on 70.

Vijay was sent packing shortly after lunch when spinner Adil Rashid caught and bowled the right-handed batsman.

Kohli excelled at the crease with some exquisite shotmaking as the wickets of Parthiv Patel (15) and Ravichandran Ashwin (0) fell to Root.

Rashid grabbed his second wicket of the day when Ravindra Jadeja was dismissed for 25 but Jayant Yadav stood firm and was batting on 30 with

Kohli when stumps were called.

"Any lead is gold on this wicket," Vijay told reporters.

"During tea-time we just thought get close to their target but now the way Virat and Yadav are batting I think we're in a pretty good position."

Scoreboard at stumps on day three of the fourth cricket Test between India and England in Mumbai on Saturday:

SCORES IN BRIEF

ENGLAND: First innings 400 (Jennings 112, Buttler 76; Ashwin 6-112)

INDIA: First innings 451-7 in 142 overs (M Vijay 136, Kohli 147 not out; Moeen 2-139, Rashid 2-152, Root 2-18)



India captain Virat Kohli salutes the Wankhede crowd after scoring a fabulous unbeaten 147 during the third day of the fourth Test against England yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

BFF unveils elaborate plan, calendar

SPORTS REPORTER



Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) president Kazi Salahuddin has said that having completed his primary objective to keep football rolling throughout his tenure's first eight years, he wishes to see the country's football take a step forward by implementing a number of new objectives over the next four years.

The BFF boss made these statements during a press conference held at the BFF headquarters yesterday where he also officially unveiled the third phase of the BFF development plan along with a calendar for the next four years (2017-2020).

"In 2008 my main commitment was to keep football on the ground. And I can say that we have been successful in doing that," said Salahuddin. "Now I have the mandate of my councillors to take the country's football forward for the next four years. The calendar for the next four years has been prepared after consensus and input from all the stakeholders."

Despite the BFF previously failing on numerous occasions to stick to its annual calendars, mostly due to a lack of will to participate from the clubs, the BFF boss was adamant that the calendar will be strictly maintained from now on, claiming that the BFF has financial backing to implement the elaborate plans.

"I have done my homework. This programme is completely backed by finance. We will reveal the sources of funds and the specific areas where those funds will be used in January. We have discussed with the clubs and have been assured that they would stick to the calendar," continued Salahuddin.

The new four-year calendar set specific time frames for each tournament, training camp and transfer window in each year in accordance with domestic and international events. In a bid to maintain the link between the football league's top and lower tiers, the calendar will also include the re-introduction of tournaments such as the Sher-e-Bangla Cup and Suhrawardi Cup while also making time for new tournaments.

The development plan is to be focused on eight key technical areas, namely elite player development, coach education and development, competitions, referee development, medical and sports science, professional clubs and leagues and women's football and grassroots.

As grassroots and age-level football will be one of the principal focuses of the proposed third phase of the development plan, Salahuddin expects a strong youth team in four years' time, which will eventually form a strong senior national team. "Four years later the under-16 team will turn into under-20s, and I will want that team to be winning titles in this region. I think we will be in a respectable position. I want to see the national team in the SAFF Championship final and in a respectable position in Asian football at the end of four years," Salahuddin explained.

Among others, the programme was attended by the BFF's senior vice president Abdus Salam Murshedy, women's wing chairman Mahfuza Akter Kiron, BFF general secretary Abu Nayeem Shohag, BFF's technical and strategic director Paul Smalley. However, the federation's development committee chairman Badal Roy and National Teams Committee chairman Kazi Nabil Ahmed were, among others, not present, due to personal engagements, as claimed.



BFF president Kazi Salahuddin makes a point while unveiling what he termed as the third phase of his development plan -- a calendar for the next four years-- during a press conference at the BFF House yesterday.

PHOTO: BFF

24

HOURS

Appointment
& Emergency Hotline

10678

STS Group

Apollo HOSPITALS

DHAKA

TOUCHING LIVES

Many thanks to BIFFL for
arranging the
Green Brick Convention.

BIFFL
GREEN BRICK
CONVENTION
2016

Bangladesh Auto Bricks
Manufacturers Association

www.babma.net