

SPORT



Test skipper Mushfiqur Rahim (L) is all set to participate in the upcoming tour of India after being deemed fit, but concerns remains about the availability of left-handed opener Imrul Kayes for the one-off Test in Hyderabad.

PHOTOS: FROZO AHMED

Injured trio now 'pain-free'

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh national team went back to training in Mirpur yesterday for the first time since returning from their New Zealand series. They went through a series of sessions, which were, according to Bangladesh assistant coach Richard Halsall, slightly 'low-key'. The team management plans to increase the intensity in the coming days.

The positive news for the team management is that injured players Mushfiqur Rahim, Imrul Kayes and Mominul Haque spent a pain-free training session.

During the first Test against New Zealand in Wellington, Mushfiqur had hurt his thumb, Imrul suffered from a grade one muscle tear in his thigh, while Mominul bruised his ribs.

According to Halsall, they all did well yesterday.

"Mushfiqur kept today and he was pain-free. The physio put quite a firm plaster around the injured digit and he came through well. It was fairly low-key what we did today but yeah, he was pain-free."

"Imrul and Mominul also came through pain-free following the rigorous fielding sessions. We will see them today [Tuesday] morning as well. They will have a batting session tomorrow and a slightly more vigorous fielding session as well. They didn't have to do any diving too," Halsall told reporters at Mirpur yesterday.

Bangladesh's fielding in New Zealand was not up to the mark. They dropped quite a few sitters, which really hurt them on an ill-fated tour.

"The fielding was very disappointing. 16 to 17 catches going down, you don't expect that from our group. We have been excellent in the last two years, so this is a concern. We have to work on this," said Halsall.

When asked if the unfamiliar weather and the wind were the main reasons behind

the dropped catches, Halsall replied in the negative.

"You drop catches either because you are technically not very good or you are not mentally in the game or it's a combination of the two with some players. It's a technical issue with some and it's a mental issue for others. It's different for each individual. It's



RICHARD HALSALL

never a black and white problem.

"So, we will look at them individually. We will look at how many we caught during practice, where we managed to take those catches during practice and all that. It was never really that cold. In fact, the New Zealanders were as mystified as us regarding why they dropped so many catches. They were as concerned as us regarding the number of catches going down," he said.

When asked about the management's plans regarding the Hyderabad Test, he said: "I am sure the captain and head coach will sit and look on that. The last time I was in Hyderabad, England went in with one spinner and three seamers and that was not enough."

"We should have gone with two and two. But that was four years ago. Hyderabad was a good batting wicket and India have been producing good batting wickets recently. They haven't produced wickets that have turned from the start lately, so your seamers will have work to do," he added.

BLIND WORLD T20 Bangladesh bounce back

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh bounced back from an opening loss as they handed South Africa a 72-run defeat in their second match at the Blind Cricket World T20 yesterday.

Bangladesh had slumped to a 129-run defeat at the hands of defending champions India in the opening match of the tournament on Monday, but they came back with some style in the second match.

Abdul Malek (90) and Mohsin Hosen Joy (62) set the platform with a 154-run opening stand. Malek hit eight fours in his 64-ball stay before being run out on the first ball of the final over. By that point however, they had reached a strong position and went on to post 223, boosted by 43 extras.

In reply, South Africa could only reach 151 for the loss of two wickets in their allotted overs with Ephraim Mathabo top-scoring with a 53-ball 47.

Bangladesh will play the third match against Nepal today.

Full-strength India await Tigers

India name 16-man squad for one-off Test

PALLAB BHATTACHARYA from New Delhi



India yesterday named a 16-member team led by Virat Kohli to take on Bangladesh in the historic one-off Test match to be played in Hyderabad from February 9.

Tamil Nadu opener Abhinav Mukund, who will lead India A against the visiting Bangladesh team in the two-day warm-up match from February 5, returned to the Test side after over five years while fit-again wicketkeeper-batsman Wriddhiman Saha was also selected by the national selection committee headed by MSK Prasad.

The selection puts to rest speculation that the selectors might have picked a second-string side in order to rest some of the big names for the four-match Test series against Australia which will follow.

The inclusion of the likes of Ravichandran Ashwin -- arguably India's most important player in Test cricket -- along with Ravindra Jadeja, Cheteshwar Pujara, Murali Vijay, Karun Nair, KL Rahul and Jayant Yadav makes it clear that India have picked a full-strength team.

SQUAD

Virat Kohli (captain), Murali Vijay, Lokesh Rahul, Cheteshwar Pujara, Ajinkya Rahane, Karun Nair, Wriddhiman Saha, Ravichandran Ashwin, Ravindra Jadeja, Jayant Yadav, Umesh Yadav, Ishant Sharma, Bhuvneshwar Kumar, Amit Mishra, Abhinav Mukund, Hardik Pandya.

Saha was out with tendonitis after the second Test against England in Visakhapatnam and has made a strong comeback in domestic cricket with an unbeaten double hundred to guide Rest of India to triumph in the Irani Cup.

Yadav and Vijay, both of whom have recovered from their injuries, also found places in the squad.



ABHINAV MUKUND

Bangladesh will get to prepare against Yadav as he will play in the warm-up game for India A.

Ajinkya Rahane, who missed the last two Tests against England after fracturing a finger, also staged a comeback but it remains to be seen if his place in the playing XI is assured, considering his replacement in the team -- Karun Nair -- struck a triple-century in India's last match.

In the spin department, selectors went for an extra spinner in Amit Mishra to go with Ashwin, Jadeja and Yadav.

This is the first time that Bangladesh will play a Test in India since being elevated to Test status 17 years ago. The significance of the occasion is not lost on Indian authorities who are trying to ensure a full Rajiv Gandhi Stadium.

Abhinav Mukund, a left-handed batsman, has returned to the side after six years. He has played in five Test matches, scored 211 runs at an average of 21.10 with the highest score being 62. His last Test appearance was against England in Nottingham in July-August 2011.

Earlier yesterday, there was drama ahead of the squad selection at a five-star hotel when Indian cricket board official Amitabh Chaudhary was barred from attending the meeting of selectors.

The selection committee meeting was delayed by four hours after BCCI joint secretary Chaudhary was found ineligible to convene the meeting.

The meeting was supposed to be held at 12 noon but Chaudhary, who was present at the hotel, was not allowed to attend reportedly as per the instruction of Vinod Rai, chief of the 4-member Committee of Administrators.

BCCI CEO Rahul Johri chaired the selection committee meeting. The selection committee is headed by former India wicket-keeper MSK Prasad.

When the T20 and ODI squad was selected for the England series, Amitabh Chaudhary was also barred from attending the selection committee meeting by the Justice R M Lodha committee.

Question mark over Fizz

BD squad to be named today

SPORTS REPORTER



Bangladesh head coach Chandika Hathurusingha said before leaving New Zealand that it would take only 10 minutes to make a squad for the one-off Test against India once he gets the update reports of his three injured players.

And if that is any indication there is hardly any scope to go through a brainstorming session before announcing the India-bound team; instead, the focus is apparently only on the fitness of captain Mushfiqur Rahim, left-handed opener Imrul Kayes and top-order batsman Mominul Haque.

The coach's comments also indicated that the Bangladesh think-tank made up their minds to tour without pace sensation Mustafizur Rahman, who has been declared 'medically fit' but is still unable to bowl at full pace for unknown reasons.

22-year-old Mustafizur missed both the Tests against New Zealand, complaining of back pain, but Bangladesh team physio Dean Conway, after conducting all the medical examinations, came to the conclusion that his pain was more a mental issue than a physical one.

The team is expected to be declared today and it may be a 16-member squad, which is scheduled to fly to India tomorrow, as the selectors may prefer one more pace bowler in the team.

However, it is not Mustafizur -- who featured in the two ODIs and as many T20I matches during the long trip to New Zealand -- but the fitness of Imrul which is most concerning for the selection panel.

"We are yet to get the green signal from our medical team and physio regarding the full recovery of Imrul and we will discuss the matter tomorrow morning before finalising the team for the India tour. We are hopeful about Imrul but if he finally fails to get the green signal we will pick an opener in place of him. We have a number of options for the opening slot," chief selector Minhajul Abedin told The Daily Star yesterday.

However, he did not disclose the name of the probable candidates.

The team think-tank is considering adding one more pacer to the side that includes Taskin Ahmed, Kamrul Islam Rabbi, Rubel Hossain and Subhashis Roy. But that will entirely depend on Mustafizur. If the young pacer decides against playing the demanding five-day game due to 'pain' then Shafiqul Islam, who bowled well in the National Cricket League after recovering from injury, may join the tour party.

On the other hand young batsman Nazmul Hossain, who made his debut in New Zealand following injuries to the three key batsmen during the opening Test at Wellington, may continue his journey with the senior team.

A predictable stalemate

SPORTS REPORTER



The first round Bangladesh Cricket League match between BCB North Zone and Prime Bank South Zone, as expected, ended in a draw at the Sylhet International Cricket Stadium.

After Naeem Islam scored 185 and ensured that North Zone bat out more than two out of the four days on a good batting track, the game was always heading towards one direction. In response to North Zone's 492, Abdur Razzak's South Zone were bowled out for 448 on the fourth day yesterday.

Fazle Mahmud, who fell three runs short of 150, was their highest run-getter. The opener hit three sixes and 14 fours. Half-centuries from Mosaddek Hossain and Ziaur Rahman further helped the team's cause.

North Zone's best bowler was Taijul Islam, who bowled a marathon 50 overs for his five for 136. Taijul's figures will definitely impress the national team management, who are hopeful that he can put on a good show if selected for the India Test. After the exchange, North Zone finished on 69 for two.

As a result of the first innings lead and because they bundled South Zone out, BCB North Zone gathered bonus points and are currently placed second with three points. South Zone managed to get just one and are placed third.

On top of the table after a comprehensive victory over Walton Central Zone, are Islami Bank East Zone. They have earned six points from the first game. Central are at the bottom.

SCORES IN BRIEF

BCB NORTH ZONE V PRIME BANK SOUTH ZONE	
BCB NORTH ZONE:	492 for 9 dec 69 for 2 (Jahurul 29, Junaid 29 not out; Nazmul 1-26, Gazi 1-22)
PRIME BANK SOUTH ZONE:	448 all out in 129.2 overs (Fazle 147, Ziaur 57, Mosaddek 54; Taijul 5-136, Shafiqul 2-85)
Result: Match Drawn.	
Player of the match: Naeem Islam	

HOCKEY WORLD LEAGUE Canada pull out

SPORTS REPORTER

Canada have withdrawn from the Hockey World League [Round-2], scheduled to be held in Dhaka from March 4 to 12, on security grounds, confirmed a Bangladesh Hockey Federation (BHF) official yesterday.

Canada, the top-ranked side among the eight participating teams, were placed alongside hosts Bangladesh, Oman and Fiji in Pool A while Pool B features China, Egypt, Ghana and Sri Lanka.

"It is very sad that Canada have withdrawn from the competition on security grounds, which we learnt yesterday [Monday] through the FIH [International Hockey

Federation]," BHF general secretary Abdus Sadeque told The Daily Star.

"We are taking this matter to the FIH because we have already given our security plans to them which include security from airport to the hotel, from the hotel to the stadium and security inside the team hotel. One of our vice presidents briefed the FIH on the detailed security plan," Sadeque said. "The FIH report has mentioned that Bangladesh have efficiently organised the England cricket team's tour. It would have been better had the 12th-ranked team in the world [Canada] would have come."

Sadeque believes the FIH may replace Canada with another team.

Waiter's tip helped Sachin

STAR SPORT DESK



Sachin Tendulkar is an institution of batsmanship, and it is not just his run-scoring records that make him so -- his technique and discipline is a shining example to cricketers young and old.

The former India batsman had a teammate in Virender Sehwag whose only coach in formative years was the example of Tendulkar on the television screen. India's first triple-century modelled his own technique on Tendulkar's and enjoyed a successful career.

So it was quite unusual when a waiter in a Chennai hotel walked up to him and gave his honest suggestion about improving the master

batsman's bat swing. And it did wonders, by Tendulkar's own admission.

"If you have an open mind, you can develop so many things. In Chennai it was a waiter who came up to me and said 'if you don't mind and don't get offended I want to tell you something,' I said 'go ahead.' He said my elbow guard restricts my bat swing. And he was 100 per cent right," the Hindustan Times quoted Tendulkar as saying.

The owner of 100 international centuries then followed the waiter's advice.



"I knew I was feeling uncomfortable but I never thought of doing it myself. A few years down the line I got hit a couple of times on my elbow guard and it hurt. That's when I realised that the padding on my elbow guard is inadequate," he said.

"I instantly redesigned my elbow guard. I needed to re-open it and work on it, get the fibre and cushion on either side to absorb the impact. In our country everyone from a panwala to CEOs will give you advice. But one should still be open about ideas."