



Aminul Islam Bulbul will be remembered as long as Bangladesh play Test cricket for his magnificent century in the inaugural Test match against India at the Bangabandhu National Stadium in November 2000. Here the right-hander cuts the ball as Indian wicketkeeper Saba Karim looks on. Aminul scored 145.

FILE PHOTO:  
ANISUR RAHMAN



**Manzarul Islam Rana**  
1984-2007

Of the 85 cricketers to have donned the Test cap for Bangladesh, one will be sorely missed on this auspicious occasion of the 100th Test. Manzarul Islam Rana, an accomplished all-rounder from Khulna, was very much part of the Bangladesh team's set-up, both in Tests and ODIs. Although he played in only six Test matches, the all-rounder made a great impression with both bat and ball. 257 runs at an average of 25.7 in those days was no mean achievement. Add to that the five wickets he took and you get a really promising all-rounder, only sadly that promise was never fulfilled due to a road accident in 2007.

# LIVE THE VISION AND *grow with it*

**SABER H. CHOWDHURY**

Bangladesh Cricket Board's long cherished dream of playing at the highest level of cricket was realised in June 2000 at the annual Conference of International Cricket Council in London. An aspiration many doubted would ever come true was finally a reality.

As vice president of BCCB from 1991-1996, I became increasingly convinced of the potential of Bangladesh cricket and although not many were enthusiastic at that time to apply for Test status, I believed this was worth going for.

It was thus in one of the early meetings of the newly formed executive committee of what was then known as Bangladesh Cricket Control Board (BCCB) in the latter half of 1996, I asked the question as the new president -- what goals and targets should we be setting for our cricket?

I was fortunate to have in that committee individuals of the stature and experience of Syed Ashraf Haque and each member of the board had a cricket background. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and State Minister for Youth and Sports, Mr. Obaidul Quader backed and extended full support to the new board.

So started our dream and the most challenging of quests to achieve Test status. Having a proper plan to achieve any goal has always been fundamental to me and as I always remind myself, if



BCB president Saber Hossain Chowdhury shows the gold coin used for the toss prior to the start of Bangladesh's inaugural Test against India at the Bangabandhu National Stadium on November 10, 2000.

FILE PHOTO: STAR

you fail to plan, you are planning to fail. Starting with changing the eligibility rules to play in national teams at the Associate Membership level of the ICC, winning the ACC Trophy in 1996 followed by the memorable win against Kenya in the final of the 1997 ICC Trophy in Malaysia and our performance in our first ever World Cup (in England in 1999 when we won two matches including the historic win against Pakistan), branding Bangladesh cricket with a new identity and constitution, organising top-notch international events such as the Mini World Cup and the Independence Trophy to establish Dhaka as a major venue and centre of



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina marks the start of Bangladesh's Test journey at a colourful inauguration ceremony.

FILE PHOTO: STAR

cricket, achieving ODI status, impressively show-casing to the international cricket community the heritage, love and passion for cricket amongst the people of Bangladesh coupled with strong media interest and sponsorship potential, our focus and commitment was absolute and each step of our plan worked like clockwork.

With the strong support of our South Asian friends (India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka), our inner confidence levels were on the rise and after winning the ICC Trophy for the first time in 1997, I declared publicly and set year 2000 as the target date for achieving Test status. We in fact achieved our Test status first and later on our domestic cricket was given first class recognition.

I drew inspiration from the wisdom and insights of Ali Bacher of South Africa, Denis Rogers of Australia and of course Jagmohan Dalmiya -- the finest set of cricket administrators we are ever likely to see, and it was my honour and privilege to be a fellow member of the ICC Board at that time.

Not only did we secure Test status, within a few months there of we were able to arrange and play our Inaugural Test at the Bangabandhu National Stadium. Eddie Barlow, our national coach, sensing my tension reassuringly said, "The boys will do just fine Mr. President -- don't worry!" and they certainly did in the first innings with Aminul Islam Bulbul's masterful century and Naimur Rahman Durjoy's impressive wicket haul.

When I look back, it is still a wonder we were able to achieve so much and that too within a mere four-year period. The audacity and courage to dream, the deep rooted and firm belief in the beauty of that dream and the supreme confidence that we can and shall succeed has indeed made this a magical journey.

Perhaps the most fulfilling and satisfying aspect has been how the

sport of cricket has united the nation, added a new dimension to our identity, allows us to feel good about ourselves and our country -- cricket does not just build character, it will help us grow and bloom as a nation.

Achieving Test Status was of course never an end but rather a means to an end -- one day Bangladesh would be the best and most respected cricketing nation. Our cricket would embody the true spirit of the game and personify the flair of West Indies, the brilliance of South Africa, the professionalism of England, and the competitiveness of the Australians.

As we take on Sri Lanka in our 100th Test in Colombo and reach the century mark, it is time to hit the pause button and reflect on the journey thus far from baby steps to being a juvenile, where we want to be when we play our 150th and 200th Tests, how we will pace this bigger innings in the grand scheme of things.

A record of eight victories in 99 Test matches over a seventeen year period does not exactly set the house on fire but there have been flashes of individual brilliance that keeps the candle of hope burning. To do justice to this hope will require hard work, commitment, highest levels of integrity, strong governance off the field and ensuring cricket does not become a victim of its own success.

Attention must be paid to our domestic structure -- it needs to be revamped and aligned to our Test demands. How can we, for instance, expect our players to win five day Test matches when they play just a few four day matches in an entire season in the domestic league? Let us not fail to plan and thus plan to fail.

Saber H. Chowdhury MP successfully piloted Bangladesh's elevation to Test Status as President of Bangladesh Cricket Board. He is the current President of Geneva based Inter Parliamentary Union.  
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# HEAR IT FROM THE CAPTAINS



**Naimur Rahman**

Reaching 100 Tests is a historic moment, but it has come after a long time. When we started playing Test cricket, only some of us had first-class experience. The romance, the excitement of playing Test cricket back then was something else all together. It was more than a dream.



**Khaled Mashud**

Once it was out of our imagination that we would play Test cricket. When it was finally time, we could not sleep the day before of the match, but it was a fantastic inaugural Test for us. Unfortunately we have not reached the levels that were expected since then.



**Khaled Mahmud**

When we started playing, the possibility of playing Tests wasn't in our minds. National captaincy was on my mind as I had captained in the Chittagong and Dhaka Leagues. I thoroughly enjoyed it. My best moment was the Pakistan series, especially the Multan Test.



**Habibul Bashar**

When we had started, we had to face a lot of difficulties. There were lots of questions regarding our Test status. Today, we are proving everyone wrong. It's great that we are playing our 100th Test. Yes, we have taken some time, but we have started to prove ourselves.



**Mohammad Ashraful**

When we got to play Test cricket, we just had one season of first-class experience. We weren't ready back then. In our current lineup we have batsmen who have the capability of scoring more than 200 runs, but our bowling needs more time. I expect more draws in the coming years.



**Mashrafe Bin Mortaza**

We have started playing very well. The current group is doing well. It's Test cricket. No one can improve overnight. There have been good and bad times and I am really happy that we are reaching our 100th Test. We are progressing and that's the important thing.



**Shakib Al Hasan**

We have reached 100 Tests and it has been quite a few years getting there. 100 Tests in 17 years is not that much. Whether we won or lost, cricket has improved. Every match is special but if we can win our 100th match, nothing will be bigger than that.



**Mushfiqur Rahim**

It will be a big honour for me to lead the side out on this historic occasion. In the 16 years we have not been able to give Bangladesh cricket all it wanted, but if we keep playing like we have for the past two-and-a-half years then Bangladesh will improve a lot in Tests.



**Tamim Iqbal**

100 looks like a huge number, but it took us almost 17 years. It is a special thing, but it is not as if we will do something different. We will try to give something to the nation in our 100th Test. We always try our best and we will try our best in this Test too.