

SPORT

Eid lull before action starts

SPORTS REPORTER

The country's top cricketers, including Bangladesh national squad members, are enjoying their Eid-ul-Fitr holidays in the capital and at their respective home districts, but it will soon be back to business. From July 10, a 29-member preliminary national squad will begin a camp on the newly laid turf of the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur ahead of Australia's tour of the country in August-September. Before that, the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) High Performance squad will leave for Darwin on July 1 to play five one-dayers and a three-day match against an Australian invitation XI.

But for now, it has all been about enjoying the Eid vacations after a gruelling tour of Ireland and England, which culminated in a historic semifinal finish for Bangladesh in the recently concluded Champions Trophy. ODI skipper Mashrafe Bin Mortaza braved the rain to observe Eid Narail and the likes of Shakib Al Hasan and Mustafizur Rahman went back to their family homes in Magura and Sakhrira respectively. Imrul Kayes, Sabbir Rahman, Soumya Sarkar and Musfikur Rahim were among those who posted light-hearted and relaxed pictures along with Eid wishes on their respective Facebook pages.

When the cricketers do get back to business, there will be things to mull over as, despite the positive Champions Trophy campaign, the performances of some players remain a concern. Batsmen Sabbir Rahman and Soumya Sarkar had unimpressive campaigns and failed at important times, while young pace sensation Mustafizur Rahman had a very ordinary outing in the eight-team event.

The Tigers have a busy season ahead with the two-Test series against Australia followed by a full tour of South Africa in October, and they will need more contributions from the youngsters after the seniors - Mashrafe, Shakib, Mahmudullah Riyad, Musfikur and Tamim Iqbal - did all the heavy lifting in the Champions Trophy.

Well-known campaigners currently out of national favour - such as pacer Al-Amin Hossain, opener Anamul Haque, all-rounder Nasir Hossain and wicketkeeper-batsman Liton Das - are part of the 29-member preliminary squad, although national selector Habibul Bashar had said that there is little scope to break into what is a settled national team.

Even so, chief selector Minhajul Abedin had said that experienced domestic performers like Anamul, Liton, Abdul Hasan and Mehedi Maruf were selected in the HP squad for Darwin so that they could groom 'immediate replacements' for the national team if and when the need arises.

So even as they enjoy a deserved break from their sporting excursions, the national stars and the fringe players will know that there will be much to achieve and prove after the holidays.



LEADING THE CELEBRATIONS: Away from the serious business of national sports, players took a well-deserved time off to enjoy Eid-ul-Fitr with their friends and families, and the way was shown by different national captains. (CLOCKWISE FROM L) Bangladesh Test skipper Musfikur Rahim's festive mood was matched by his festive panjabi on Eid day, T20I skipper Shakib Al Hasan went back to his hometown of Magura, national football skipper Mamunul Islam spent the day with his wife, ODI skipper Mashrafe Bin Mortaza was in Narail attending Eid prayers with his son and national women's cricket captain Jahanara Alam took this selfie while on a leisurely rickshaw ride. PHOTOS: STAR/COLLECTED

SL players given an ultimatum

APP, Colombo

The Sri Lankan government on Wednesday warned the national cricket team to get fit in three months or get booted out. The ultimatum came after the squad was found to be unfit for the series against Zimbabwe which starts Friday.

"No one has a satisfactory level of fitness, but I have made an exception this time," sports minister Dayavirsi Jayasekera said.

Players are selected by an independent panel for the national team, but the sports minister must give final approval before they can represent the country. Jayasekera said no member of the 13-man squad met required international fitness standards and noted that high levels of injuries were due to poor endurance.

Only two players - Dushmantha Chameera and Lahiru Madushanka - scored high marks in the "yo-yo" endurance test which is mainly running against the clock, a source familiar with the process told AFP.

Razzak survives road accident

SPORTS REPORTER

Veteran Bangladesh cricketer Abdul Razzak and his family suffered minor injuries in a road accident on the evening of June 27 near Gopalganj, while on their way to Dhaka from Khulna. A family member of the left-arm spinner informed The Daily Star's Khulna correspondent that Razzak and his affected family members were back home in Khulna and out of danger.

According to the family member, the accident took place on Tuesday evening and Razzak was driving. Travelling with Razzak were his wife, son and extended family members. Locals and police present at the scene took them to a nearby hospital, before they were transported back to Khulna Medical College Hospital.

After preliminary treatment, they were released from the hospital and they went home the same day. The 35-year-old Razzak is the third-highest ODI wicket-taker for Bangladesh and one of only three Bangladesh bowlers to take more than 200 wickets in the format, along with Mashrafe Bin Mortaza and Shakib Al Hasan.

He last played an international match for Bangladesh on August 27, 2014, in the lone T20I on the tour of West Indies. He is the long-serving captain of Khulna Division in the National Cricket League and of South Zone in the Bangladesh Cricket League. He also captained Sheikh Jamal Dhanomdi Club in this year's Dhaka Premier League.

Razzak's former national teammates, all enjoying their Eid holidays, took to social media to express their concern about the popular cricketer and to ask for prayers for the speedy recovery of the veteran cricketer and his family members.

VIVO retains IPL rights for Rs 2199 crore

AGENCIES, New Delhi

Indian Premier League title sponsors for the 9th and 10th edition Vivo has retained the title sponsorship for the T20 league for the next five years.

The Chinese mobile manufacturers won the rights with a bid of Rs 2,199 crore. According to the BCCI, it is a jump of 54 per cent on the previous contract signed by the company.

Speaking on the development, chairman of the IPL, Rajiv Shukla said, "We are delighted to have Vivo joining us once again as the title sponsor for IPL for next five years. The association with Vivo has been great for the past two seasons and I am sure they will continue to make it bigger and better."

Acting president of the BCCI, CK Khanna said: "Vivo as a brand has carved its niche and legacy in the market. We are extremely glad to have Vivo as the title sponsor and look forward to an enriching affiliation for both stakeholders."

SL eye redemption against Zim

APP, Colombo

Sri Lanka are looking to pick themselves up as the series against Zimbabwe begins this week in Galle after a string of poor performances prompted their coach to quit.

Angelo Mathews leads the Sri Lankans who take on Zimbabwe in the first of five ODIs on Friday as they look to get over their first-round exit in the Champions Trophy.

South African Graham Ford quit as coach last week with assistant Nic Potlath taking over in an interim capacity for the clashes against Zimbabwe, whose tour will end with a single Test match next month in Colombo.

Ford's exit just 15 months into his four-year contract adds to Sri Lanka's problems on and off the field, which are hampering preparations for the 2019 World Cup. "It is beyond our control. What happens outside the cricket field, we don't think a lot about it," Mathews said on Tuesday. "Fordy has been fantastic, one of the very best in the business. Sorry to see him go. But, we have to move on and look ahead to this series."

Veteran pacer Lasith Malinga was this week handed a one-year suspended ban after being found guilty of insulting a minister but has been retained in the 13-man ODI squad.

The islanders have just won five of their 20 one-day games since August 2016 with two coming against hosts Zimbabwe during

a tri-nation series triumph in November.

Zimbabwe on their first tour of Sri Lanka since 2001-2002, are led by Graeme Cremer and are trying to build momentum as they look ahead to the World Cup qualifying tournament in April next year.

The African nation has slipped to 11th, a place above bottom-ranked Ireland, in the International Cricket Conference ODI rankings. They lost a five-match series at home to Afghanistan 3-2 in February.

Star player Hamilton Masakadza, who has played only one of Zimbabwe's five one-day games this year, is expected to bolster the batting line-up on tricky Sri Lankan pitches. Cremer's leg-spin, off-spinner Sikandar Raza and left-arm bowler Sean Williams will lead the spin attack on surfaces that should turn.

Coach Heath Streak blamed Zimbabwe's dismal form on a "lack of cricket" as financial and administrative hurdles hinder progress.

"The problem is the volume or the lack of cricket that we have had," said the former captain. "We have got to play good competitive cricket for countries to want to play against us."

The first two ODIs will be at Galle, the first limited-overs matches there in 17 years. The remaining three games will be at the refurbished stadium in Hambantota. The only Test will be at the Premadasa Stadium in Colombo starting July 14.

JCC T20I RANKINGS Sabbir shoots into top 10

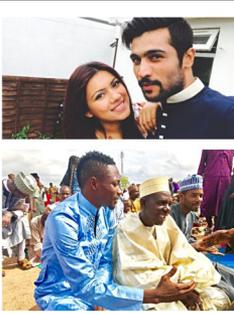
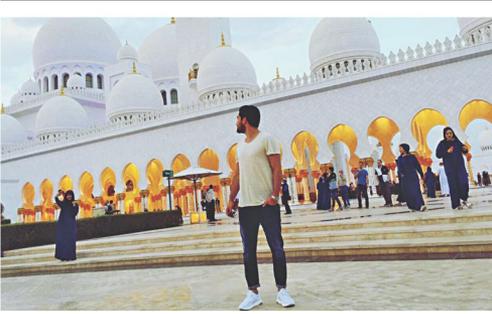
SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh batsman Sabbir Rahman cracked the top 10 in an International Cricket Council ranking table for the first time by reaching number 10 in the T20I batting rankings.

The aggressive batsman has not been having the best time in other formats, and even in T20Is his ranking points took a dip from a career-high of 620 in January this year to 657 currently, but a drop in points of other players elevated Sabbir to number 10. Only Shakib Al Hasan among Bangladesh players had cracked the top 10 among T20I batsmen, in 2012.

Of course, Shakib is a regular feature at the top of the all-rounders' rankings and currently holds the top position in all three formats. Batting all-rounders Mahmudullah Riyad is also a top-10 all-rounder, currently at number six in the T20I table.

In the T20I bowlers' rankings, Bangladesh pacer Mustafizur Rahman and Shakib are at numbers six and nine respectively.



Malinga gets suspended one-year ban

REUTERS, Colombo

Sri Lanka fast bowler Lasith Malinga has received a suspended one-year ban after pleading guilty to comments he made to the media in breach of his contract, the country's cricket board has said.

The 33-year-old's sanction will be suspended for six months and he would also lose 50 per cent of his match from the next one-day international he plays in case of a similar breach. Sri Lanka Cricket said in a statement.

Trophy. Malinga had twice breached the terms of his contract by making statements to the media without the prior written consent of the board's Chief Executive Officer. SLCC had said while launching a disciplinary inquiry against the fast bowler.

Malinga has been named in the 13-man squad for Sri Lanka's first two ODIs against Zimbabwe at home. The African nation will play five ODIs and a lone Test on their tour.

Former South Africa wicketkeeper-batsman Nic Potlath has been named Sri Lanka's interim coach after Graham Ford stepped down last week.

International stars all around the world took to social media on the occasion of Eid-ul-Fitr. Manchester City midfielder Ilkay Gundogan (L) took to Instagram and posted a photo of himself outside a picturesque mosque, while Leicester City's Ahmed Musa (Bottom R) posted this picture of himself along with Eid greetings. Mohammad Amir meanwhile, posted a picture alongside his wife on Twitter. PHOTOS: COLLECTED