

SPORT



Shakib Al Hasan (L) is the one cricketer that Bangladesh will desperately want to see strike form with both bat and ball in the upcoming series against Australia, the security preparations (INSET) for which had the Bangladesh dressing room momentarily in thrall during practice at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium yesterday.

PHOTOS: FIROZ AHMED

Sunshine raises hopes

Aussies set to arrive tonight

SPORTS REPORTER

Amid all the discussion surrounding Australia's two-Test tour of Bangladesh -- the Aussies arriving tonight, Stuart MacGill not coming on as Bangladesh's spin-bowling coach, the uncertainty surrounding Mominul Haque and Mahmudullah Riyad's place in the squad, the state of the water-logged venue for Australia's practice match -- the most pleasing aspect was the brilliant sunshine that bathed the city yesterday.

It was pleasing to watch the Tigers do match-scenario drills under bright sunshine in Mirpur as cricket lovers have been praying for the rain to go away for the two-match series which is going to commence after much drama. Australia will arrive tonight, but this was a tour that they had first cancelled in 2015 on security grounds and then kept the Tigers fans in suspense following a pay dispute between Cricket Australia and the Australian Cricketers Association that threatened the tour.

Bangladesh cannot afford to miss Test matches in a time when they have just started to find their feet and begun to believe that they can win a Test against any opposition, especially in home conditions. So, when Australia arrive tonight, the Tigers and their fans will just hope that rain will not play spoilsport.

It has been 11 long years since Australia last visited this country for a Test series, when they won both Tests despite the Habibul Bashar-led side coming close to a seismic upset in the first Test in Fatullah. It is however believed that a different battle is awaiting the new-look Australians against a much improved home side -- no one on either side who played in 2006 will feature in the coming series.

The Aussies will start their tour with a two-day practice match but whether the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) will be able to arrange the match at its scheduled venue of the Khan Shaheb Osman Ali Stadium in Fatullah remains uncertain.

Similarly, the identity of the person who will be the spin bowling coach instead of MacGill, after confirmation that the former Australian leg-spinner was reluctant to take up the role now, is also unclear.

Many have also been searching for confirmation on whether Mominul Haque will get the nod or if Mahmudullah Riyad will make a comeback. Everything will be confirmed when the selectors announce the team tomorrow.

The first Test will start from August 27 at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur while the second Test starts from September 4 at the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium in Chittagong.

SAFF U-15 C'SHIP

Bangladesh begin title defence

Face SL in opener today

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh begin their SAFF U-15 Championship title defence by taking on Sri Lanka in the opener at the ANFA Complex in Lalitpur, Nepal today.

Two years ago, Bangladesh clinched the title of the regional age-group championship in Sylhet through spirited showings in the championship. The boys in red and green had then been together over six months and trained at the now-defunct BFF Academy in Sylhet. But this time the boys got only one month's preparation to defend the title.

"This tournament is very important for both the boys and Bangladesh because these players are the future of Bangladesh. They are talented players. Although we had only one month and ten days of training, we will be trying to defend the title," said coach Mostafa Anwar Parvez at a pre-tournament conference in Kathmandu yesterday.

However, Parvez conceded that he had no idea about the strength of other teams, adding that he believed all teams were expected to be equally strong.

Sri Lanka's Japanese coach Suzuki Chikashi said that they had come to win the trophy and it seems a tough task is ahead of Bangladesh in the opening match.

300 shuttlers in fight for glory

SPORTS REPORTER

The Index Summer Open (Ranking) Badminton tournament gets underway from Sunday at the Shaheed Tajuddin Ahmed Indoor Stadium after a one-year hiatus.

300 shuttlers, including 45 women, from 52 districts are expected to compete in four events -- men's singles and doubles and women's singles and doubles -- during four-day competition.

Bangladesh Badminton Federation general secretary Amir Hossain Bahar informed that they were mulling whether to conduct a training programme with the selected sub-junior, junior and senior players under a foreign coach in near future.

'I want to unearth raw talent'

SPORTS REPORTER



Champaka Ramanayake arrived in Dhaka yesterday with a mission to spot raw talent from all around the country as he believes that the biggest satisfaction one can get as a coach is when he helps polish a rough diamond into the finished article. The former national pace bowling coach has come with a different assignment this time as he will mainly look after the emerging pacers but his role may extend to the national team and it is not unlikely that the Sri Lankan will accompany the team during their tour of South Africa in September-October.

Carrying a small satchel, Champaka entered the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium yesterday and got a warm reception from national team coaching staff, including compatriot Chandika

Hathurusingha, Courtney Walsh and the players. Later he met with reporters to give all the details about his new contract.

"It is High Performance fast bowling coach for the emerging players. My role is to develop them for the national team. The last time I started in the Academy for a few months and then I was upgraded to the national team. This time I am going to work with the youngsters, probably with the drop-off from the national or A team players," said Champaka when asked about his role, adding that he is here on a two-year contract.

"The coaching will be the same, but maybe I will look into the youngsters who have never been seen before. I am thinking of going around the country to unearth raw talent. Definitely there is talent, because cricket is big in the country. There should be a lot of players

with natural talent," he added about his new approach.

He also said that Bangladesh are doing well as the seniors have persisted, along with good youngsters, since he left the country in 2010.

Champaka's coaching philosophy has not changed much as he still believed that: "You shouldn't make too many changes to natural ability. That's my philosophy. In Sri Lanka, we produced a lot of freaks from nowhere because of their natural talent. Sometimes people try to change too many things and then you lose the natural ability. Everyone is different in this world, so you have to treat them differently. Actions are different so as long as they produce results and are effective, that's the main thing."

The Sri Lankan was also looking forward to work with Walsh, whom he considers a genius.



Newly arrived High Performance bowling consultant Champaka Ramanayake (C), who was formerly the national bowling coach, is warmly welcomed by fellow Sri Lankan and Bangladesh head coach Chandika Hathurusingha (L) in Mirpur yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

Young Tigers in action on opening day

SPORTS REPORTER



Bangladesh will be in action on the opening day of the 2018 ICC Under-19 World Cup in New Zealand, where the young Tigers will take on Namibia in a Group C encounter on January 13 at the Bert Sutcliffe Oval in Lincoln. The International Cricket Council released the full schedule of the tournament yesterday.

The Bangladesh Under-19 side are in a group alongside Namibia, Canada and England. There are four groups in total in the 16-team biennial global youth tournament, with the top two teams from each group progressing to the Super League while the remaining eight teams will compete in the plate championship.

The last edition of the tournament was held in January 2016 in Bangladesh, and the home

team recorded their best finish in the tournament's history by reaching the semifinals and losing to eventual champions West Indies.

The young Tigers will also play two warm-up matches before the tournament against Afghanistan and Pakistan on January 8 and January 9 respectively.

ICC 2018 U-19 WORLD CUP GROUPS
Group A: West Indies, New Zealand, South Africa, Kenya

Group B: Australia, India, Zimbabwe, Papua New Guinea

Group C: England, Bangladesh, Canada, Namibia

Group D: Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Afghanistan, Ireland

BANGLADESH'S GROUP MATCHES

Bangladesh v Namibia: January 13, 2018

Bangladesh v Canada: January 15, 2018

Bangladesh v England: January 18, 2018

U-14 WOMEN'S C'SHIP

Reinforcements sought for booters

SPORTS REPORTER

The JFA U-14 National Women's Football Championship gets underway from Sunday across six venues with the aim to unearth talented players for the U-15 national team ahead of December's SAFF U-15 Women's Championship.

Having been divided into six zones, some 35 districts -- three less than last edition's participants -- will be participating in tournament, which will follow a knock-out system. Six zonal champions and two best runners-up will advance to the final round to be held in Dhaka in October.

"We are going to hold the JFA U-14 women's tournament for the third successive time and this time our target is to find talented players and include them in the U-15 team's training activities for the upcoming SAFF Championship," said BFF women's committee chairman Mahfuza Akter Kiran at a press conference yesterday.

Replying to a query, Kiran said: "Due to the financial constraints, we can't hold the championship with a league format at the preliminary round but we will hold the matches on a round-robin league basis in the final round."

Japan Football Association (JFA) will provide \$30,000, equivalent to Tk 24 lakh, for the championship while Walton and G-Babu have been tied up as co-sponsors.

The participating teams will get Tk 15,000 as participating money while the winning team in each match will be awarded Tk 5,000. Each of the host districts have been given Tk 30,000 while each team to reach the final round will be given Tk 25,000.

Due to the flooding situation in some districts, the matches in Jessore and Gaibandha will start on August 23, three days after the start of the championship at Rajshahi, Sherpur, Rajbari and Laxmipur.

Akmal asked to show cause

REUTERS, Lahore

Umar Akmal faces sanction from the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) following the out-of-favour batsman's public outburst against head coach Mickey Arthur.

Akmal addressed a news conference on Wednesday in which he lashed out at Arthur, accusing the South African of insulting him and refusing him access to the coaching facilities at the National Cricket Academy (NCA).

"I accept my fitness isn't up to the mark, and I am trying to work on it, and I asked to be allowed a trainer to help me," Akmal said.

"But Mickey said I shouldn't even have come to the NCA and should be playing club cricket instead," he said, claiming Arthur's language as "demeaning and insulting".

The PCB said a 'show-cause' notice has been issued to Akmal following the outburst.

"The middle-order batsman has seven days to file a reply," the board said on its Twitter feed.



BCB CEO Nizamuddin Chowdhury (C), Dutch Bangla Bank managing director Abul Kashem Mohammad Shirin (L) and managing director of Impress Matra Sanaul Arefin pose for a photo after Dutch Bangla Bank Rocket was declared the title sponsors of the Australia-Bangladesh series in Mirpur yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

Cook, Root hold firm

AFP, Birmingham



The first day/night Test in England saw Alastair Cook and Joe Root in the familiar position of rebuilding the innings after the West Indies made early inroads at Edgbaston on Thursday.

England were 108 for two at lunch on the first day of the series opener, with Cook exactly 50 not out and captain Root, who won the toss, 40 not out.

Former skipper Cook and successor Root had so far added an unbroken 69 for the

third wicket.

They joined forces at 39 for two after Test debutant Mark Stoneman and Tom Westley were both dismissed for eight.

After Cook got off the mark first ball, fellow left-hander Stoneman's first two scoring shots in Test cricket were both fours.

The 30-year-old eased Kemar Roach through the covers before clipping him off his pads.

SCORES IN BRIEF

ENGLAND: First innings 108 for 2 (Cook 50 not out, Root 40 not out; Roach 1-32, Cummins 1-21)

BPL back on the menu

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh Premier League resumes today with newcomers Saif SC taking on Muktiyoddha Sangsad following a two-day postponement of the league due to 'unplayable ground conditions' at the Bangabandhu National Stadium.

Saif SC and Muktiyoddha Sangsad each have six points from three matches but the former hold the edge as they have a better goal difference. However, both sides will be looking for a win to close the gap with Chittagong Abahani, who have 12 points from four matches and lead the 12-team table.

Both teams started their campaigns with defeats, before clinching two wins and they will both be looking forward to keeping their winning run intact.

In the day's other fixture, Brothers Union will take on a demoralized Arambagh KS, who are bottom with three straight defeats. The Gopibagh outfit meanwhile are ninth with two draws in three matches.

Bashundhara's maiden victory

SPORTS REPORTER

Bashundhara Kings tasted their first victory in the Marcel Bangladesh Championship League with a single-goal win over Nofel Sporting Club at the Birshreshtha Shaheed Mostafa Kamal Stadium in Kamalapur yesterday.

Veteran Rokonuzzaman Kanchan struck the all-important goal in the very first minute to raise the newcomers' points tally to five from three matches while Nofel SC, with a first defeat in three matches, stay glued to four points.