

# SPORT



Bangladesh's star all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan (R) was in high spirits throughout the practice session in Mirpur yesterday, ahead of the first Test -- and Shakib's 50th -- against Australia starting on August 27.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

## Traits of a professional

BISHWAJIT ROY



It was a Shakib Al Hasan day. A smile was glued to his face throughout the practice session; it did not evaporate even when he took part in a press conference at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur as questions ranging from his upcoming 50th Test; old memories; regrets or lack thereof about playing only a small number

matches over 10 years; Bangladesh's chances of winning both Tests against Australia; the possibilities of another unique celebration like the salute when he dismissed Ben Stokes; the strength of Bangladesh's spin attack, were all greeted by that smile.

Shakib ended this animated press meet with an announcement: "You are all invited; I will be very pleased if you take the trouble to come." While departing the media room, the ace all-rounder also promised that it will only take 10 to 15 minutes to complete the opening ceremony of his new business ventures -- Shakib's Convention Center at Mirpur-1 and All Rounder Catering Service. He also promised a delicious lunch.

He kept his promise as the programme was completed quickly in the presence of a few teammates in Taijul Islam, Soumya Sarker, Rubel Hossain, Subhasish Roy, Mominul Haque, his business partner Imrul Kayes and Tamim Iqbal.

It however took more than an hour for the reporters to leave the function but nobody had a problem with that as Shakib fascinated everybody while

having lunch with his guests and bared his soul, ranging from the trivial problems in daily life to future mega business ventures, cracking jokes like: "It's not too easy to please you people (after asking the journalists about the quality of the food)."

He became a bit emotional when sharing some anecdotes about his BKSP student life, like the fun times he spent with friends near a bridge at night.

The demeanour of Shakib -- known as a restrained individual in public -- was that of a transformed man. Even if it was because he was observing his duties as a businessman, nobody minded as the transformation was also evident in his press conference.

And that is why, when asked to compare the times gone by with the present ahead of the 50th Test, Shakib said: "When I played my first match there was no thought about how many matches

### SHAKIB'S MOST MEMORABLE

*Standing on the cusp of his 50th Test, world number one all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan recalls the best memories of his 10-year journey:*

**Most Memorable Test:** against England in 2016 that Bangladesh won by 108 runs in Mirpur.

**Best Batting Performance:** Unbeaten 96 against West Indies at Grenada in 2009 in a match that Bangladesh won by four wickets and 217 against New Zealand at Wellington in the first Test this year, which Bangladesh lost by seven wickets.

**Best Bowling Performance:** against New Zealand in 2008 at Chittagong where he had bowling figures of 25.5-7-36-7 in the first innings. However, Bangladesh lost the match by three wickets.

and how long I will play; then it was all in fun. I won't say that everything has changed from then, but now the atmosphere is different; most importantly my responsibilities have increased."

The familiar Shakib emerged when he said: "I have hardly any regrets in life. And my lack of Test matches is no exception; the main thing is how much I could perform."

Shakib was however excited as he was going to play his first Test against Australia after spending 10 years in Test cricket. "It's always exciting to play Test cricket against a country like Australia."

The most satisfying fact was that once other countries had laughed at the Tigers when it came to Test cricket, but now they were staring at the possibility of defeat. "It's most satisfying and it showed how much progress we made and I would like to thank our administration, support staff, all the coaches, ball boys, fans and even you people. The love we have for cricket over here, I don't think even in India they follow the game like that. So, cricket comes before everything else in Bangladesh right now."

Reminded of the strength of Australia to cope with any condition, the all-rounder wished that Australia will continue their recent subcontinent form -- they have lost series in India and Sri Lanka over the past year -- in the two-match series but served a warning by saying that the home spin attack is better than the visitors'.

"I think our spin attack is better than theirs; not in all conditions but on our own turf. Taijul and [Mehedi Hasan] Miraz have been doing well and I believe they will do something special in this series," he said, adding that it's the Tigers' winning mindset that has changed their fortunes in Test cricket.

In the end, yesterday was not about what he said but how he said it. It was not as if the mystery surrounding Shakib's character was solved; instead the light of true professionalism just shone a bit brighter on the best all-rounder in the world, throwing some light on what makes him special.

## Tamim to represent BD in Pakistan

SPORTS REPORTER

Opener Tamim Iqbal will represent Bangladesh in a World XI team that will play three T20 games in Pakistan in September. The series featuring players of seven different Test playing nations is tipped as the first step of reviving international games in Pakistan.

"It is always a big thing to represent in a World XI. I'm delighted to be part of that squad. But the most important thing is that Pakistan is a part of a cricketing family and our effort is to try and help them. I wish that the motive for which they are doing it becomes a success. If it is successful other teams will be encouraged to tour Pakistan," the left-handed batsman told The Daily Star immediately after Pakistan Cricket Board chairman Najam Sethi announced the World XI squad.

Sethi said South African skipper Faf du Plessis will lead the World XI. He also disclosed a list of illustrious names from seven Test playing countries.

"The World XI will play three Twenty20 Internationals for the Independence Cup against Pakistan in Lahore on 12, 13 and 15 September," Sethi told a press conference in Lahore yesterday.

Du Plessis, who recently led South Africa on the tour of England, said he was "honoured" to tour Pakistan.

"All the members of the squad have complete faith and trust in the assessment and judgment of the security experts, who have assured us that there will be no compromise on the safety and security of all those involved in the series," he said, according to a PCB statement.

Pakistan captain Sarfraz Ahmed was optimistic: "I am confident that following the success of these matches, Pakistan will host regular international series which we badly need."

**SQUAD:** Faf du Plessis (capt), Hashim Amla, Samuel Badree, George Bailey, Paul Collingwood, Ben Cutting, Grant Elliott, Tamim Iqbal, David Miller, Morne Morkel, Tim Paine, Thisara Perera, Imran Tahir, Darren Sammy.



## An event beyond cricket

SPORTS REPORTER

Nine stories above the busy streets of Mohakhali, a mere seven stories above the zooming motors on the Mohakhali flyover, Australia captain Steven Smith was standing on an open balcony and smiling as pictures were taken of the visiting captain, and for once those pictures were taken by people who do not have much to do with the game of cricket.

It was utterly at odds with the head-of-state level, prohibitive security arrangements that the team have become used to since August 18 (although that was in ample evidence with the armed security personnel very close by, just out of the photo frame), but for around 90 minutes Smith and five of his teammates were not cricketers; they were human beings from Australia getting an often painful yet enlightening insight into the lives of some of their Bangladeshi counterparts.

Inside were the offices of Oxfam in Bangladesh where Smith, Usman Khawaja, Josh Hazlewood, Jackson Bird, Mitchell Swepson and Hilton Cartwright visited yesterday morning. They heard stories of domestic workers from Dhaka's Sat Tola slum, who are part of the Domestic Workers' Network formed by Oxfam and their partners.

"Some of the kids and some of the adults have some amazing stories. Pretty tough lives growing up as you know and expect in this part of the world, but until you actually hear it, it doesn't quite sink in," Khawaja said after the session. "One of the girls went up and talked about growing

up, the harshness she's faced in life. She couldn't even finish her story, it was that traumatic."

After some of the stories and a presentation on Oxfam's operations in Bangladesh, where the charitable organisation has had a role since pre-independence days, the Australians -- whether by design or accident -- paired up according to their roles in the team to talk individually to the domestic workers. Fast bowler Bird went along with Hazlewood, youngsters Swepson and Hilton stuck together while batsmen Smith and Khawaja went off in another pairing.

"And afterwards we actually did get to meet them, which was actually the best part. We got to talk to them about life in Dhaka, about cricket. They all seemed to like cricket, which is very nice," Khawaja said with a smile. They seemed to love cricket, but the domestic workers were seemingly a patriotic bunch. When the Swepson-Cartwright group were asked who their favourite cricketer was, a chorus of 'Shakib Al Hasan!' went up.

After the individual meetings the presentations turned to the perennial clean-water crisis which has been greatly exacerbated by the terrible floods that have afflicted and destroyed the lives of so many Bangladeshis. Oxfam presented some of the ways they have gone about solving problems, measures where the Australian government has provided valuable financial assistance such as the raising of tube-wells in flooded areas and the installations of two 'ATM' water purifiers' through which slum



Australia cricketers Mitchell Swepson (2nd from R) and Hilton Cartwright (R) speak to domestic workers from Sat Tola slum as part of an enlightening experience in the offices of Oxfam in Bangladesh yesterday morning.

PHOTO: SAKIB SUBHAN

dwellers can draw eight or 20 litres of water with Tk 2 and Tk 5 coins respectively.

"We've been here for under a week and we have seen just how quickly it rains. It reminds me a lot of Brisbane, but the drainage systems aren't obviously as good," Khawaja related. "We've seen a video of ladies literally going around on a little made-up flotation device and trying to get water out. We take it for granted so much back home... clean water just comes out from a tap and we drink it. And you don't actually think about how important clean water is until you hear the stories."

The event was attended by

Australian High Commissioner to Bangladesh Julia Niblett and the interim country director of Oxfam in Bangladesh MB Akhter. The event ended with Australia captain Steven Smith recording a video message on behalf of suffering Bangladeshis: "The recent floods in Bangladesh have seen a death toll of more than 107 people with an estimated 5.71 million impacted. Many thousands have also lost their homes. Show your support for the flood victims of Bangladesh."

They then went back to the relatively trivial matter of preparing for the first Test, once again cocooned in their wall of security.



Newly appointed spin-bowling coach Sunil Joshi (R) has a few words of advice for Bangladesh's star off-spinner Mehedi Hasan Miraz during practice in Mirpur yesterday.

## 'Not the Tigers of 10 years ago'

SPORTS REPORTER



Being of subcontinent descent often brings with it an expectation that a player will be adept at playing spin, and that is something that Australia's Pakistan-born top-order batsman

Usman Khawaja will have to contend with when dealing with the barrage of spin the team will encounter when the first of two Tests against Bangladesh gets underway in Mirpur from August 27.

Making things slightly more challenging for the left-hander is the fact that he did not enjoy much success during his most recent subcontinent foray in Sri Lanka around a year ago, where he scored 55 runs in four innings. He was subsequently dropped from the Tests in India earlier this year, so rust is another factor he may have to deal with.

"It never is [easy to come back after a break], but I think I have played cricket for long enough now to know what it's like to bat in the middle," said Khawaja after a social awareness event at Oxfam in Bangladesh. "It's about going out

there and scoring runs, trying to see what the match situation is. I don't believe in rust."

Khawaja expressed satisfaction with the facilities, although understandably saying that the weather could be better. "The facilities have been great, the weather has been a bit on and off but we actually got a lot of cricket in. Quite lucky, we sort of found gaps in between the weather. It's been tough, it's very hot and humid here. But the preparation has been great. It would have been nice to play the tour game, but that didn't happen. Our spinners are bowling to our batsmen, facing fast bowlers, facing reverse swing, trying to tick all the boxes."

As for his opponents, he said: "I think they are a really good lineup in general. They are obviously very good players at home as most teams are. And they've got some very good spinners and some very good batsmen. They are not the Bangladesh team that we played against 10 years ago. They beat England, which is no easy feat because they are a very good team too. We respect them but at the same time we hope to go out and play the brand of cricket we want to play and hopefully do well."



USMAN KHAWAJA

## Ice-cool Dhoni guides India

AFP, Pallekele

Mahendra Singh Dhoni and Bhuvneshwar Kumar anchored India's chase after a stunning batting collapse as the visitors edged past Sri Lanka by three wickets in the second one-day international Thursday.

Leg-spinner Akila Dananjaya returned career-best figures of 6-54 to make India stutter at 131-7 while chasing a Duckworth-Lewis revised target of 231 in 47 overs in Pallekele.

Dhoni (45) then put on an unbeaten 100-run stand with Bhuvneshwar Kumar (53) to steer the team home in 44.2 overs and take a 2-0 lead in the five-match series.

India lost seven wickets for 22 runs after a 109-run opening partnership between Rohit Sharma (54) and Shikhar Dhawan (49).

Dhananjaya turned on the heat with his googly as he picked three crucial wickets, including skipper Virat Kohli for four in an over, to take some steam off the Indian chase.

But ice-cool Dhoni kept the chase on track with a gutsy partner at the other end in Kumar.

**SCORES IN BRIEF**  
**SRI LANKA:** 236 for 8 (Siriwardana 58, Kapugedara 40; Bumrah 4-43)

**INDIA:** 231 in 44.2 overs (Rohit 54, Dhawan 49, Dhoni 45 not out, Kumar 53 not out; Dananjaya 6-54)  
**Result:** India won by 3 wickets (D-L method)  
**Player-of-the match:** Dananjaya

## Woakes in for Roland-Jones

Eng-WI 2nd Test starts today

REUTERS, London

Chris Woakes will replace Toby Roland-Jones in the England team to play West Indies in the second Test at Headingley on Friday, captain Joe Root said on Thursday.

"Chris is back in and Toby misses out, unfortunately," Root told Sky Sports News.

Woakes, 28, has recovered from a side strain that kept him out of the first Test and the recent series against South Africa.

"West Indies will be desperate to bounce back," added Root.