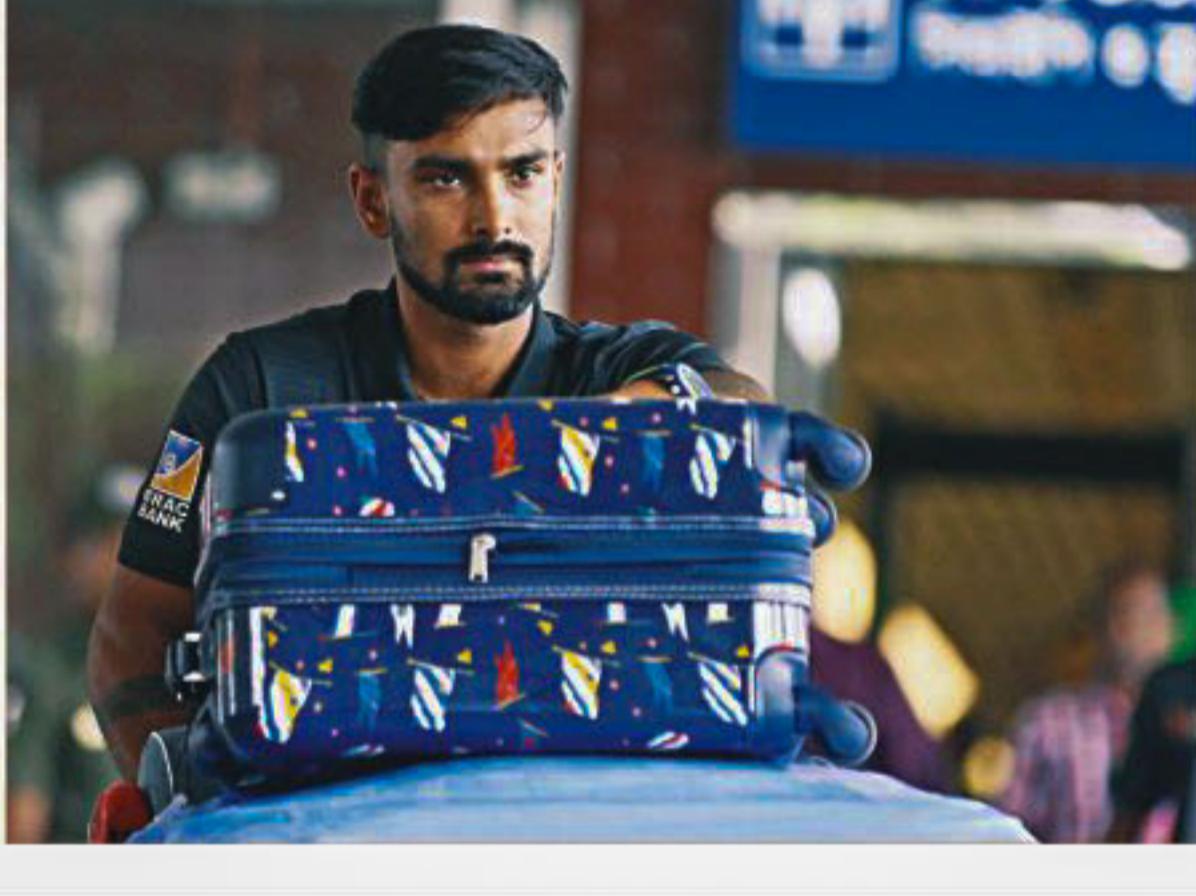


SPORT



After a largely successful tour of West Indies, four young Bangladesh cricketers who were integral to the wins in the ODI and T20I series -- (Clockwise from top L) pacer Mustafizur Rahman, left-arm spinner Nazmul Islam, wicketkeeper-batsman Liton Das and off-spinner Mehedi Hasan Miraz -- appeared in good spirits upon arrival at the Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport yesterday.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Rhodes also a selector

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) president Nazmul Hassan said yesterday that they will continue their policy of making the head coach a selection committee member. The policy, designed in 2016, had triggered lot of controversy but Hassan again defended it and confirmed that like his predecessor Chandika Hathurusingha, incumbent head coach Steve Rhodes will also act as a squad selector.

"It will be the same as before. The selection process will be the same -- cricket operations committee chairman Akram Khan is head of the committee while coach, captain, manager and selectors will work together," he said after a meeting with Rhodes.

"You should keep in mind that the coach will tell you about the kind of match, kind of pitch and condition," he explained.

The meeting was arranged to know the opinion of Rhodes regarding the recently concluded series against West Indies. "We learnt about his planning as well as his thinking about us and our structure."

'Need Test bowlers who can hit the deck'

SPORTS REPORTER

His tenure started in tumultuous fashion with a drubbing in the Test series, and although the gloom lifted soon afterwards under the Caribbean sun in the ODI and T20I series wins against West Indies, new Bangladesh coach Steve Rhodes' words upon returning to the country showed that he had not forgotten the abysmal performances that started the tour.

That sentiment reverberated during the impromptu press conference at the Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport yesterday morning after a section of the team returned to the capital. The general feeling on both sides of the microphone was of satisfaction because of the two series wins, but that was tinged with concern about how thoroughly Bangladesh were outclassed in the Tests.

"The Test series was tough, we took a bit of a beating but very proud of the way the boys have come back strong," said the Englishman.

"Winning the one-dayers was something we quite fancied. The T20s were a bit of a surprise, we really did play well in the second and third games and are delighted to bring home two series

trophies, which is a great effort."

The new coach did not agree that the bowling was inconsistent through the tour, instead saying that it was impressive in the limited-overs leg while not as much in the longer version.

"In the ODIs and the T20s both captains handled their bowlers magnificently -- Mashrafe [Bin Mortaza] and Shakib [Al Hasan] -- both of them worked their bowlers really well," he said. "We got some quality spin bowlers and some of the pace bowling was excellent and it proved to be better than the West Indies. In the Test matches we obviously need to find a couple of quicker bowlers -- bowlers who will hit the wicket, which is what the West Indian bowlers did."

The team failed to cross 200 in any of the four Test innings and were all out for 43 -- their lowest total -- in the first Test in Antigua. It was not surprising, therefore, that Rhodes identified that as an area for improvement.

"Our batting was exposed a little bit in the Test matches. Generally I think we need to tidy up a little bit and try and improve our Test match batting. We've got quality players; we just need to adapt to the conditions and the opposition a little bit quicker in Test matches when we're playing away from home."

"I think in the first Test match

losing the toss was crucial. The wicket seamed and bounced and swung. And of course the West Indies attack with the Dukes cricket ball.... [Jason] Holder is a very useful bowler, and obviously the likes of [Kemar] Roach, who took the wickets, and Shannon Gabriel and [Miguel] Cummins... they are a useful outfit. So most line-ups would have struggled on that first Test in Antigua."

'A very satisfying tour'

SPORTS REPORTER

"Very satisfied," Bangladesh Test and T20I skipper Shakib Al Hasan told reporters at the Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport yesterday regarding the outcome of the recently-concluded tour of the West Indies.

The reason behind that, according to the ace all-rounder, was very simple: "Overall this tour was successful because we won two trophies out of three. Generally, we hardly have such results abroad."

Under Shakib's leadership the Tigers had



PHOTO: STAR

Bangladesh Test and T20I captain Shakib Al Hasan (R) and new coach Steve Rhodes have a brief discussion before heading home from the airport yesterday.

missed the opportunity to excel in the Test series away from home as they lost both the matches in humiliating fashion, mainly because of a lacklustre batting performance.

However, guided by the inspirational Mashrafe Bin Mortaza, the team regained their belief to win the ODI series 2-1 and what followed in the three-match T20I series under Shakib's leadership was simply amazing.

From an ordinary performance in the first T20I, the Tigers bounced back strongly in Florida to win the series 2-1.

Shakib believed that their success in limited-overs cricket against the West Indies provided the platform for them to approach things with a new train of thought.

"The confidence of every player is high. Especially after such a good series, I believe we can think of doing something new from here and I believe it will help us a lot in the upcoming Asia Cup," said a confident Shakib.

Shakib was also happy with his own performance. "I am very happy with my performance but it would have been even more satisfying had I contributed more."

A lot of questions have been raised about the performances of the younger cricketers in the team, especially after the success came mainly due to the contributions of the five senior stalwarts. However, Shakib offered a different perspective.

"The names you mentioned are batting in the top order so we have the most opportunity to contribute and we should have done it. That's the reason the percentage of our contribution is high," he responded to the statement that senior players had scored 71 per cent of the runs in the recently-concluded series.

Selfless Sinha Bhai

SPORTS REPORTER

Afzalur Rahman Sinha was one of the few survivors of a select group of organisers who served the country's sport without giving a slightest thought to personal benefits. The 68-year-old sports patron breathed his last at a hospital in Chennai on Wednesday. He held important posts at different sports bodies. He was the Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) governing council chairman and a director of the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB). He was also a key director of Abahani, one of the two most popular clubs in the country. He served the club as its hockey committee chairman. He was the president of the posh Dhaka Club. Sinha also held key posts in many sport bodies at a time when selfless patrons were needed for them to survive and then thrive.

But it was not all the portfolios he held that separated him from others. Sinha has never been a person looking for posts. When it came to supporting a club, an organiser or a player in need of financial support, his door was always ajar. The country has so many affluent



persons, but Sinha was one of those who spent money for sport with an open heart. He was one of those individuals who never allowed his business interests to clash with sport.

Over the past two and a half decades he has never been embroiled in any controversial episode save the first two editions of the BPL, which was tainted by a fixing storm and non-payment of the players. Under his loving but firm guidance, the BPL emerged from its dark phase and has become the most attractive and lucrative

domestic event. Modesty was Sinha's biggest attribute and those who have known him closely have hardly heard him raise his voice. He always tried to keep a low profile. For the final time too, he left the arena he loved most silently. Over the last 24 hours the sports fraternity has been trying to come to terms with the shock demise of someone whose contribution to this field cannot be expressed in mere words.

Sinha also served as president of the Surj Tarun Club for 10 years -- a role he took great pleasure in. One of the grassroots cricket organisers, Golam Faruk Fatik, the cricket manager of Surj Tarun, summed it up quite aptly.

"Sinha Bhai has selflessly served sport.

He was here to give, not to take, which is now a trend."

The body of the beloved Sinha bhai was scheduled to be brought to the BCB headquarters in Mirpur at 9:00am today to pay our last respects, but due to the flight being rescheduled it has been rearranged at 5:30pm. Whenever Sinha Bhai's mortal remains arrive, it will be time not to take, but to give him a heartfelt and tearful farewell.

Chandimal returns to SL T20 squad

AFP, Colombo

Sri Lanka skipper Dinesh Chandimal returned to their Twenty20 squad Thursday after serving an international ban for breaching the spirit of the game.

Chandimal was included in a 15-member squad for the one-off T20I.

The 28-year-old missed the two-Test series and was out of the first four one-day internationals. The fifth and final ODI is on Sunday, but he was not included.

But he was included in the T20 squad and will play in the day-night game against South Africa on Tuesday.

Chandimal was banned by the ICC along with coach Chandika Hathurusingha and manager Asanka Gurusinha for refusing to take to the field for two hours during the second Test against the West Indies in June.

Rain washes out first day

AFP, London

Rain meant there was no play on the first day of the second Test between England and India at Lord's on Thursday.

Early morning overcast skies in north London eventually gave way to gentle but persistent rain which was sufficient to ensure the pitch and square remained fully covered.

The match had been due to start at 11:00am (1000 GMT) but with rain still falling and the skies above Lord's increasingly dark, the umpires called it a day at 4:50pm (1550 GMT).

It was the first time a whole day's Test play in England had been lost to bad weather since August 24, 2013 when the fourth day of the fifth Ashes clash at The Oval was abandoned without a ball bowled.

The last time a day's Test play was washed out completely at Lord's came 17 years ago when the scheduled opening day of the first Test

against Pakistan was abandoned on May 17 2001.

England lead the current five-match series 1-0 after a 31-run victory in the first Test at Edgbaston last week.

They will, however, make at least two changes to their side.

England captain Joe Root confirmed on Wednesday that Ollie Pope, a 20-year-old Surrey batsman, would make his Test debut in place of the dropped Dawid Malan.

The hosts will also be without Ben Stokes, who took three wickets on Sunday's fourth and final day at Edgbaston, including the prize scalp of India captain Virat Kohli, because of the Durham all-rounder's ongoing trial for affray in Bristol.

England have yet to decide whether Chris Woakes, a fellow pace-bowling all-rounder, or off-spinner Moeen Ali will replace Stokes.

Neither England nor India, who might also make changes, are obliged to confirm their teams until the toss takes place.