

# SPORT



Bangladesh opener Tamim Iqbal (R) speaks with coach Steve Rhodes (C) in Hamilton before embarking for Wellington for the second Test against New Zealand yesterday. The journey, which included a two-hour bus trek (inset) while the hosts took a direct flight, was an arduous one. PHOTO: BCB



## Shakib starts recovery

SPORTS REPORTER



Bangladesh Test and T20I skipper Shakib Al Hasan was seen doing light running sessions at the Academy Ground in Mirpur yesterday. According to sources involved with his recovery from a left little finger fracture, the light running sessions are the first step to getting the ace all-rounder fit for the third and final Test in New Zealand.

Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) president Nazmul Hassan said on Monday that Shakib was advised a seven-day rest following a medical test on Sunday. However, it was clarified by the source that the seven-day rest was prescribed for his fractured finger and not for the full body.

Shakib started his exercises yesterday and will be proceeding slowly and gradually along a recovery plan that has been sketched out for the 31-year-old. The recovery plan was probably made keeping proper precautions in mind and so that his injured finger gets proper rest as throwing and catching practice -- activities that would involve his injured finger -- are scheduled to be the last step in his recovery process.

The BCB boss mentioned that Shakib had shown an interest in participating in the Dhaka Premier League (DPL), the 50-over version of which is scheduled to begin from March 8, to get some match practice ahead



Shakib Al Hasan began his recovery process at the BCB Academy yesterday, raising hopes for his return ahead of the Third Test against New Zealand. PHOTO: COLLECTED

of the third Test in New Zealand starting from March 16. Although he might not see his desire fulfilled due to the seven-day rest period, the chances are bright that the nation's best all-rounder will be fit to feature in the third Test.

## Challenges on the field and on the road

MAZHAR UDDIN from Wellington

The challenge of adapting to hostile New Zealand conditions was an unavoidable one for the Tigers because it entailed getting used to a climate and surface conditions markedly different from Bangladesh, but there has been another hurdle facing the tourists that the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) could well have avoided.

Bangladesh ODI skipper Mashrafe Bin Mortaza and opener Tamim Iqbal's fear of flying in small aircrafts has already been well documented, but it seems that the hassle of travelling from city to city -- as they did yesterday from Hamilton to Wellington for the second Test -- has become a much more widespread headache for the entire Bangladesh team.

The hassle of extra and seemingly unnecessary travel started right from the practice one-dayer on February 10 after they arrived in New Zealand. Despite there being the option of direct flights, the

visitors had to change flights and even take the bus for inter-city travel before almost every game.

The first batch of the Bangladesh squad arrived in Christchurch on February and they took part in a practice game the next day, ahead of the first of the three-match ODI series that started in Napier.

The Bangladesh cricketers had to wait for over three hours at the Wellington airport to board another flight to reach Napier. Things remained the same while returning from Napier as the Tigers went to Christchurch for the second ODI via Wellington.

On the other hand, the New Zealand team took a direct flight from Napier to Christchurch, which took just an hour and a half. Meanwhile, it took more than five hours for Bangladesh to reach the same destination.

The scenario was pretty similar in the Test series as Bangladesh had to take a flight from Christchurch to Auckland, from where they undertook a two-hour bus journey to reach Hamilton. By contrast, New Zealand again flew directly from Christchurch to Hamilton.

### TIGERS' TRAVEL HASSLES

- ODIS**
- February 11:** Christchurch to Napier via Wellington by air (New Zealand took the direct flight)
  - February 14:** Napier to Christchurch via Wellington by air (New Zealand took the direct flight)
  - February 17:** Travelled directly from Christchurch to Dunedin

- TESTS**
- February 25:** Christchurch to Auckland by flight - Auckland to Hamilton two hours bus journey (New Zealand took the direct flight)
  - March 5:** Hamilton to Auckland two-hour bus journey -- Auckland to Wellington by flight (New Zealand took direct flight from Hamilton)

During the trip back from Hamilton to Wellington yesterday -- which takes hardly an hour to reach by plane, which the hosts did -- Bangladesh travelled to Auckland from Hamilton by bus and then took the flight for Wellington to take part in the second Test starting

from March 8.

It's standard practice before every tour that the host board sends the entire plan for the visiting team, including travel and accommodations, and it is only after the visiting team's cricket operations department's approval that the itinerary is finalised.

It was not the first time that the Tigers had to face such hassles when touring abroad, while most teams visiting Bangladesh receive all the comfort and convenience that they bargained for keeping the best interests of the cricketers in mind.

It therefore has to be asked whether the BCB cricket operations committee, led by former Bangladesh captain Akram Khan, had indeed studied the tour plan before giving the final approval, knowing well that the details could have been altered upon request.

Although it is not the main reason for the Tigers' failures in New Zealand so far, but such things certainly add to the negative psychological impact that has been created by a hitherto unsuccessful tour.

## DPL to begin on March 8

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The 50-over version of the Dhaka Premier League (DPL) is set to begin from March 8 following the inaugural edition of DPL T20, which ended last Monday with Sheikh Jamal Dhanmondi Club becoming champions.

As most of the national players are currently on the tour of New Zealand, everyone's attention has now turned to Mashrafe Bin Mortaza's involvement in the tournament. Mashrafe is expected to be available to lead Abahani from their second match onwards after returning from a family trip abroad. Moreover, the overseas players are expected to arrive for the tournament soon.

### FIXTURES (FIRST PHASE)

Date	Match	Venue
Mar 8	Abahani vs BKSP	SBNSC
	Sheikh Jamal vs Uttara Sporting Legends of Rupganj vs Brothers Union	KSOAS
Mar 9	Doleswar vs Shinepukur	KSOAS
	Khelaghar vs Prime Bank	SBNSC
Mar 11	Gazi Group vs Mohammedan	BKSP-3
	Abahani vs Uttara Sporting	KSOAS
Mar 12	Sheikh Jamal vs Brothers Union	SBNSC
	Legends of Rupganj vs Shinepukur	BKSP-3
Mar 14	Doleswar vs Prime Bank	BKSP-3
	Khelaghar vs Mohammedan	SBNSC
Mar 15	Gazi Group vs BKSP	KSOAS
	Abahani vs Brothers Union	SBNSC
Mar 15	Sheikh Jamal vs Shinepukur	KSOAS
	Legends of Rupganj vs Prime Bank	BKSP-3
Mar 15	Doleswar vs Mohammedan	SBNSC
	Khelaghar vs Gazi Group	BKSP-3
Mar 15	Uttara Sporting vs BKSP	KSOAS



### We'll try to emulate Hamilton approach

Shadman Islam is one of the more promising newcomers in Bangladesh cricket. The Tigers have searched for a stable opening partner alongside Tamim Iqbal. Three innings into his Test career, 23-year-old Shadman has certainly displayed enough promise for fans to be hopeful. A debut innings of 76 at home against the West Indies in November 2018 followed by innings of 24 and 37 in the recently concluded first Test against New Zealand in Hamilton.

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## Booters leave for Cambodia today

SPORTS REPORTER



The Bangladesh national football team will leave for Phnom Penh, Cambodia today to play a FIFA friendly match against the hosts. The match, slated for March 9, is the first international fixture for the boys in red and green since they faced Palestine in the Bangabandhu Gold Cup in Cox's Bazar last October.

Having picked a 23-member squad, with the exclusion of veteran Mamunul Islam and three others, English coach Jamie Day is looking forward to producing a good performance against Cambodia, who are 20 placed ahead of Bangladesh (192) in FIFA rankings. Day will also use this opportunity to scrutinise the Under-23 team members in the squad ahead of this month's AFC U-23 Championship Qualifiers in Bahrain.



JAMIE DAY

to keep ourselves on the track to avail the next FIFA window in June. We will try our best to win the match against Cambodia," said Day at a press conference at the BFF House yesterday.

Although Day's charges did not get an opportunity to practice together ahead of today's departure, the booters will get at least two days to figure out the game plan before facing Cambodia, a team they have not yet lost to in three meetings.

It may be said that Bangladesh will go up against Cambodia with a lack of preparation but the fact remains that they have been in action since November, participating in the Federation Cup, Independence Cup and at least nine matches of the Bangladesh Premier League. Aside from that, it is practically the same squad which featured in the Asian Games, SAFF Championship and Bangabandhu Gold Cup. Therefore, Jamie should not have to toil hard to have his charges adapt to the game plan.

While it has been puzzling as to why Bangladesh almost always travels abroad with what seems to be toothless attackers, the good news is that this time at least two strikers -- Nabib Newaj Jibon and Matin Mia -- have been in good form.

After the booters return on March 10, the U-23 team will leave for Qatar for a 10-day training camp the following day. The national U-23 team will then head to Bahrain from Doha to participate in the AFC U-23 Championship Qualifiers, billed for March 22 to 26.

## 'Must rectify our mistakes'

SPORTS REPORTER



Back in 2016, when Bangladesh surpassed tournament favourites such as Chinese Taipei and Iran to emerge

Group C champions and qualify for the final round of the AFC U-16 Women's Championship, the achievement could have been deemed a fluke.

Three years on, the next batch of girls have done it again, ensuring back-to-back participation in the final round of the championship by crossing the two-layer qualification process to deservingly progress.

However, making it to the finals this time around was not as easy for Bangladesh as the girls in red and green had to first overcome mighty opponents like Vietnam and Lebanon at home in September, 2018 in Qualification Round-1. Golam Rabbani Choton's charges then faced a tough challenge in Qualification Round-2 in the form of hosts Myanmar and the Philippines, both of whom Bangladesh successfully navigated before going down against China.

After a successful campaign in Myanmar, the girls in red and green returned home in high spirits in the early hours of Tuesday with their ticket to the final round in Thailand firmly in grasp.

"We went to Myanmar with a plan to play match by match. Though we lost a match against China due to a few mistakes, we executed our plan well to win



Bangladesh U-16 women's team captain Maria Manda (L) and vice-captain Akhi Khatun attend a press conference after returning from Myanmar, where they secured a spot in the final round of the AFC U-16 Women's Championship for the second consecutive time, at the BFF House yesterday. PHOTO: STAR

two matches," captain Maria Manda told reporters at the BFF House yesterday.

Although Bangladesh enjoyed a flying start by beating the Philippines, they were made to toil against Myanmar but ultimately registered a single-goal win, courtesy of a 67th minute strike from Monika Chakma.

"Before playing in Myanmar, we were a bit worried and nervous thinking of strong opponents. But, we grew confidence after beating Philippines in the first match. Before the crucial match against Myanmar, we had been asked to concentrate on our performance instead of the opponents. We did it and tried to give our best and finally got success against the hosts," said vice-captain-cum-central

defender Akhi Khatun. Captain Maria also informed that her aim now is to win the SAFF Women's Championship, to be held in Nepal from March 12 to 22, before preparing for September's eight-team final round of the AFC U-16 Women's Championship.

"If we want to produce good results in the final round, we must rectify the mistakes we made during qualification and put up our best against top Asian nations like Japan, North Korea, South Korea and others," said Maria.

Meanwhile, the Bangladesh Football Federation is mulling over whether to arrange some practice matches in Europe to better prepare them for the final round.