



Shadman Islam (L) and Soumya Sarkar seem to have hit the ground running after returning from the tour of New Zealand. The pair emerged seemingly unscathed by the terrible incident in Christchurch last Friday and were seen hard at work at the BCB Academy ground in Mirpur yesterday ahead of the second phase of the Dhaka Premier League set to begin today.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED



## Saifuddin injured

SPORTS REPORTER

Abahani all-rounder Mohammad Saifuddin suffered a back injury while practising at the Academy Ground in Mirpur yesterday. The injury ruled the young all-rounder out of defending champions Abahani's Dhaka Premier League (DPL) second-phase opener against Shinepukur Cricket Club at the Khan Shaheb Osman Ali Stadium in Fatullah today.

Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) chief physician Dr. Debashish Chowdhury provided the update about Saifuddin's injury.

"He [Saifuddin] suffered a twisting injury on his back today [Monday]. It happened during batting practice. He has been rested for tomorrow's [Tuesday's] game. We will review his situation tomorrow," Debashish told The Daily Star yesterday.

# Tigers seeking return to normalcy

SPORTS REPORTER



Bangladesh players Tamim Iqbal, Mushfiqur Rahim, Mahmudullah Riyad and Taijul Islam -- witnesses to the horrific and tragic shooting in Christchurch last Friday that left 50 dead -- attended a doa mahfil

alongside Bangladesh ODI captain Mashrafe Bin Mortaza in Mirpur yesterday. The doa mahfil was organised by the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) to show gratitude for the safe return of the cricketers from New Zealand.

While it would be tough for the Tigers to overcome the trauma of the incident, the likes of Soumya Sarkar and Shadman Islam seemed to get back to cricketing business right away as they were seen practising at the Academy Ground in Mirpur ahead of the second phase of the Dhaka Premier League, which kicks off today. Defending champions Abahani Limited will be taking on Shinepukur Cricket Club at the Khan Shaheb Osman Ali Stadium in Fatullah while Sheikh Jamal Dhanmondi Club will battle it out with Prime Bank Cricket Club at BKSP-3. The other game of the day will see Legends of Rupganj facing Mohammedan Sporting Club at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur.

While it can be hoped that some national players will feature in the second phase of the ongoing DPL, the non-participation of one player can pretty much be assumed. Bangladesh Test and T20I

FIXTURES		
Date	Match	Venue
Mar 19	Abahani vs Shinepukur	KSOAS
	Sheikh Jamal vs Prime Bank	BKSP-3
	Legends of Rupganj vs Mohammedan	SBNCs
Mar 20	Doleshwar vs Gazi Group	SBNCs
	Khelaghar vs BKSP	KSOAS
	Brothers Union vs Uttara SC	BKSP-3
Mar 22	Abahani vs Prime Bank	KSOAS
	Sheikh Jamal vs Mohammedan	BKSP-3
	Legends of Rupganj vs Gazi Group	SBNCs
Mar 23	Doleshwar vs Khelaghar	BKSP-3
	Shinepukur vs Uttara SC	KSOAS
	Brothers Union vs BKSP	SBNCs
Mar 25	Abahani vs Mohammedan	SBNCs
	Sheikh Jamal vs Gazi Group	KSOAS
	Legends of Rupganj vs Khelaghar	BKSP-3
Mar 27	Doleshwar vs BKSP	KSOAS
	Shinepukur vs Brothers Union	BKSP-3
	Prime Bank vs Uttara SC	SBNCs

captain Shakib Al Hasan -- currently undergoing a two-week rehabilitation programme following his little finger injury -- will not be playing in this edition of the tournament.

BCB president Nazmul Hassan ruled out any chance of the ace all-rounder's participation in the DPL, labelling it an 'absolute no' when talking to reporters after the doa mahfil.

"Number one is that the whole thing depends on the medical [report] and he needs to do as the doctors suggest and we do not have any say on it.

"Number two, I don't see any possibility of him playing in the Premier Division -- absolutely no. The draft list does not have their names on it, so how can he play? I don't even know why this question arises," Hassan said.

Hassan also said that players like Tamim, Mushfiqur and Shakib, who did not put their names on the initial DPL draft, cannot expect to play from halfway into the tournament.

"If they wanted to play, then they could have put their names on the draft list initially and any club could have picked them, it would not have been a problem. It cannot be that they would not put their names on the draft and suddenly realise that they would play a game today and then again not play the next one tomorrow. The Dhaka Premier League is not that simple."

Hassan also said that a statement about Shakib's injury could be made only after another medical assessment.

"Shakib previously said to me that he wanted to play the Premier League. I said this before I went to an ICC board meeting in Dubai and then we thought that he could play in the second Test [against New Zealand]. But the report that came after that, it said that he had been advised a two-week rest period by the doctors, which ends on March 20. After that he will be assessed once again and then we can know about his situation."

## Amnesty Int'l demands

## Kiron's release

*FIFA, AFC express concern*

SPORTS REPORTER

Amnesty International yesterday demanded the 'immediate and unconditional release' of Mahfuza Akter Kiron, the women's wing chairman of Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) and FIFA Council member, who was arrested and later sent to jail on Saturday in a defamation case.

In a press release, the organisation's South Asia Campaigner Saad Hammadi said: "Championing football is not a crime. Mahfuza Akter Kiron was merely exercising her right to freedom of expression by stating that the Prime Minister favoured cricket over football. If the implications of a defamation case were not so serious, it would be laughable. Mahfuza Akter Kiron must be released immediately and unconditionally."

The statement feared that if found guilty, Kiron could be sentenced to a maximum of two years under Bangladesh's Penal Code.

Kiron was arrested in a defamation case lodged on March 12 under 'CrPC 500' by a sports organiser where the plaintiff accused the high-profile football official of making derogatory remarks against Prime Minister

Sheikh Hasina.

Making reference to similar recent arrests under what it termed as a 'Draconian Digital Security Act', Hammadi further said in the statement: "The crackdown on freedom of expression is one of the main reasons why Bangladesh's image has been tainted globally. As long as these arrests continue, and as long as these repressive laws remain in force, Bangladesh will be unable to claim its place as a rising economy that upholds human rights."

Meanwhile, the game's world governing body, FIFA, and Asian governing body, AFC, expressed concern over the arrest of the FIFA council member.

A highly-placed official of the Bangladesh Football Federation, yesterday, confirmed that Sanjeevan Balasingam, FIFA director of the members associations of Asia and Oceania zone, and , AFC official Ravi Kumar, among others, called the BFF's office and expressed their concern over the issue.

"They called our office after learning of the news from international media. They expressed deep concern at the arrest of the FIFA Council Member Mahfuza Akter Kiron," said the BFF official.



Bangladesh ODI captain Mashrafe Bin Mortaza yesterday attended a doa mahfil for the victims of last Friday's terrorist attack on two mosques in Christchurch. The prayer, organised by the BCB at its headquarters in Mirpur also to express gratitude for the cricketers' safe return, was also attended by a number of Bangladesh squad members and BCB officials.

PHOTO: STAR

## It's a historic day for Afghanistan: Asghar

AGENCIES, Dehradun



Afghanistan registered their first Test victory after Rahmat Shah's second fifty of the match helped secure their seven-wicket win against Ireland in a one-off contest in Dehradun on Monday.

Chasing 147 for the victory, Afghanistan rode a 139-run stand between Shah and Ihsanullah Janat to romp home for a memorable win nine months after their chastening Test debut against India.

It was their maiden Test victory, in just their second ever Test -- the latest feat by a team that's made a habit of it. Apart from Australia, who won in their maiden Test, only England and Pakistan have secured a Test win within two matches.

Just how much the victory meant was summed up by winning captain Asghar Afghan. "Happy for today, it's a very historic day for Afghanistan, for Afghanistan people, for our team, for our cricket board. We are very happy," he said.

"When [we play] a lot of Test matches, we mature. Nowadays, we're playing a lot in Afghanistan first-class cricket. Before, it was three-day, two-day cricket. Now we're playing first-class cricket.

"It was our dream to play Test cricket. It was just our second Test and we won the game. I'll give a lot of credit to our bowlers, especially Rashid Khan, Waqar, Yamin, and Nabi. They bowled very well, on a wicket that was good for batting."

Apart from the bowling quartet, one of Afghanistan's stars was Rahmat Shah. He put behind poor form in the ODIs -- he scored just one half-century in five outings -- to score two in as many innings in Test whites.

SCORES IN BRIEF

IRELAND: First innings 172

AFGHANISTAN: First innings 314

IRELAND: Second innings 288

AFGHANISTAN: Second innings 149 for 3 (Janat 65 not out, Shah 76; McBrine 1-35, Cameron-Dow 1-24)

Result: Afghanistan won by 7 wickets.

Player-of-the-match: Rahmat Shah.



We're already thinking about it and we are keeping them under observation. But it's not like we will have to bring in a psychologist for that incident alone. We are thinking that overall, with the World Cup coming up as well, it would be good for a psychologist to spend time with the players. If any of the players think that they would need special help then help will be sought.

NAZMUL HASSAN  
BCB PRESIDENT

## 'Security an absolute priority'

AFP, Karachi



The deadly New Zealand shootings which Bangladesh cricketers narrowly avoided means security will remain an "absolute priority" going into the World Cup, the head of cricket's governing body said Sunday.

Fifty people died in attacks on two mosques in Christchurch on Friday, in what is believed to be the worst assault on Muslims in a Western country.

Bangladesh's Test cricketers were just a few minutes from being caught up in the massacre, arriving in a bus at one of the mosques as

shooting began.

The third Test between Bangladesh and New Zealand which was due to start in Wellington on Saturday was cancelled and the team returned home.

Speaking on the sidelines of Pakistan Super League (PSL) final in Karachi, the International Cricket Council (ICC) chief executive David Richardson said security had to remain "an absolute priority".

"I don't think security is anything new, obviously something happening in New Zealand probably took a lot of people by surprise and it emphasised the need not to be complacent, especially going into the World Cup," Richardson said.

The England and Wales Cricket

Board will host the World Cup from May 30 to July 14.

"I know the work has already been done by the security director together with all the security agencies in the UK and they are leaving no stone unturned," he added.

Richardson said Pakistan had taken "a great step forward" in safely hosting the PSL matches, a decade on from an attack on the Sri Lankan team bus in Lahore which has seen foreign teams refuse to play in the country over security fears.

Pakistan has gradually tried to revive international cricket at home, having hosted the finals of Pakistan Super League for the last two years and played matches against a World XI, Sri Lanka and the West Indies.



Afghanistan players flash the victory sign after winning the solitary Test against Ireland by seven wickets at the Rajiv Gandhi International Cricket Stadium in Dehradun yesterday.

PHOTO: ACF'S TWITTER