

‘Want to do well as a team and as a player’

It was a relaxed day for the Tigers after the five-wicket win in the practice game against the Sri Lankan Board President's XI on Tuesday as the members of the Bangladesh team spent most of yesterday at the gym and swimming pool of the Taj Samudra Hotel in Colombo. Stand-in captain Tamim Iqbal was seen roaming around the hotel lobby and The Daily Star's Mazhar Uddin, along with two other reporters, caught up with the dashing opener for an interview. Tamim spoke about the new captaincy role and the expectations from the three-ODI series against Sri Lanka. The following are the excerpts of the interview:

The Daily Star (TDS): What does the captaincy of the national team mean for you?

Tamim Iqbal (TI): Responsibility... captaincy is such a thing that I never thought of as I did not have much interest over the captaincy since childhood. I might have done the captaincy during the BPL, but during the Under-19 days I never thought that I would become captain. I have been given the responsibility as regular captain Mashrafe [Bin Mortaza] bhai is injured while vice-captain Shakib [Al Hasan] is not available for personal reasons. I have been playing for the national team for over 12 years now and as the board has given me the responsibility in their absence, I should take that. I will try to give my best despite it being for a short time. I don't know about my future in this but I want to give it my best shot.

TDS: You led the side once in the past during the Christchurch Test back in 2017 against New Zealand. What is the difference between then and now?

TI: There is a difference as I was not the captain of the team on that tour. Regular captain Mushfiqur Rahim was injured and I had to lead the side for the second Test. This time I knew that I am going to lead the side and had five to six days to think about it.

TDS: As regular captain Mashrafe is on the verge of retirement, do you think this Sri Lanka tour will be an audition for you to become the next captain?

TI: Not at all. Mashrafe bhai is still my captain as he is yet to retire from cricket and after his retirement there is regular vice-captain Shakib Al Hasan. The board will decide who will be the next captain of the team and I don't want to say that I would want to do the captaincy... or not at the moment. As I have been given the responsibility for these three games, I want to fulfil that by giving my best.

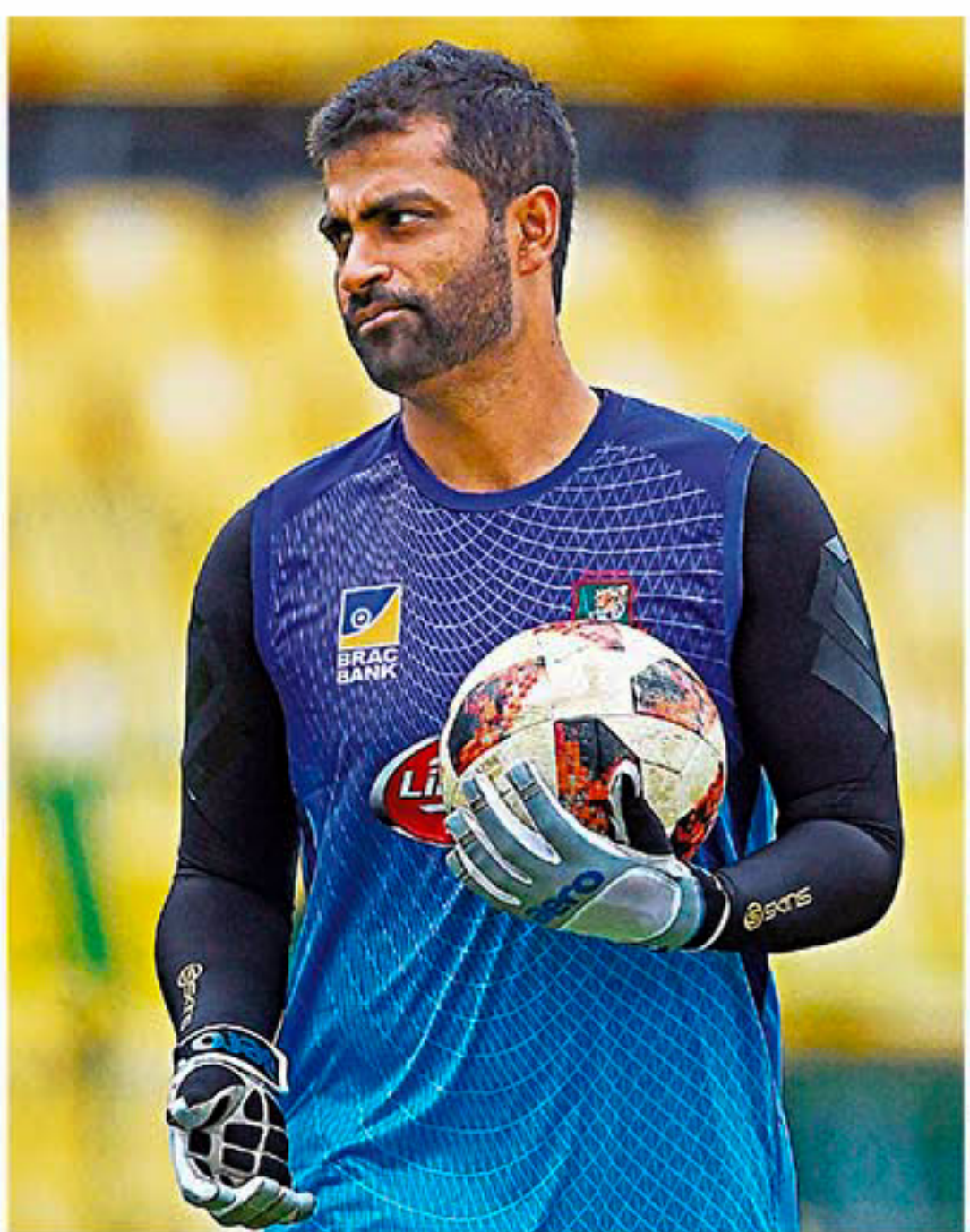
TDS: What happens to you in the World Cup as a batsman? You have scored just 718 runs in 29 World Cup games. Do you feel unfortunate when it comes to World Cups?

TI: I don't want to give myself that tag as it will sound like an excuse. I am ready to admit when I fail... I might have taken extra pressure on myself

that I would just have to do well. There was no problem in my processes as my form was good. I opted to skip the Dhaka Premier League and sacrificed a huge amount of money to work on my fitness. But things got clumsy as I wanted to do very well in the World Cup.

TDS: Just wanted to remind you that you have scored centuries in the first games of the Sri Lanka tour in 2013 and 2017. Does that work as inspiration for this time?

TI: I hope this time it will be the third one (smiling). I like remembering stats but I don't think that it guarantees that I will do well next time. I don't think I need to change my technique as I scored runs in the last four years with the same technique. I have the belief and I don't want to break that process. I am hoping that both as a team and as a player we will be able to do well in Sri Lanka.



Abu Jayed, who was left out of the ODI squad for the Tigers' tour of Sri Lanka, ensured that Bangladesh A did not stumble to yet another defeat against the touring Afghanistan A side, picking up four wickets in his side's first win against the visitors at Chattogram yesterday.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

Jayed's 4-for resuscitates BD A

SPORTS REPORTER



Right-arm pacer Abu Jayed's four-for helped Bangladesh A register a comfortable seven-wicket win against their Afghani counterparts at the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium in Chattogram yesterday.

After losing the first two one-dayers, this victory keeps the home side in contention in the five-match series.

Jayed, who did not make it into the squad for the Sri Lanka tour after warming the bench throughout the World Cup, had a day to remember after Bangladesh opted to field. The 25-year-old ran riot, returning impressive figures of four for 28

in 5.4 overs to help bundle out the visitors for a paltry 122 in 32.4 overs.

Jayed's early breakthroughs reduced Afghanistan to 25 for two inside five overs before off-spinner Mahedi Hasan took three quick wickets that left the tourists in deep trouble, reeling on 50 for five after 11.5 overs. It became extremely difficult for Afghanistan to mount a comeback from that dire situation and Jayed wrapped things up by picking up two more wickets at the death.

Jayed, who have felt hard done by after not being given a chance to showcase his abilities on the biggest of stages, proved a point through his performance.

Coming in to chase the below-par total,

Bangladesh lost three early wickets for 48 runs in nine overs and were left in a spot of bother. However, an unbeaten 75-run fourth-wicket stand between Fazle Rabbi and Afif Hossain saw the home side over the mark with seven wickets to spare. Rabbi remained unbeaten on 57 off 79 balls while Afif scored an unbeaten 21 off 55.

SCORES IN BRIEF

AFGHANISTAN A: 122 all out in 32.4 overs (Zadran 25, Rasooli 16, Ashraf 17; Jayed 4-28, Mahedi 3-24)

BD A: 123 for 3 in 30.3 overs (Imrul 23, Fazle 57 not out, Afif 21 not out; Janat 1-25)

Result: Bangladesh A won by 7 wickets. **Player-of-the-match:** Abu Jayed.

Dinner: for the players, by the players

SPORTS REPORTER from Colombo

Sri Lanka has been a markedly different place since the horrific suicide bombings which killed over 250 people in April earlier this year, which shook the island nation.

Being the first international team to visit Sri Lanka after the attack, the Bangladesh team has been given top security by the Lankan government and that has made it difficult for the cricketers even to roam around Colombo without informing security.

Apart from travelling to the ground the Tigers mostly have to while away their time at the Taj Samudra Hotel, and it can understandably be monotonous.

The Tigers have therefore opted to make life more homely by spending time together in their hotel rooms, and to make hotel life more enjoyable the team management decided to arrange a dinner at the hotel poolside yesterday.

Mushfiqur Rahim was the head chef of the four-man cooking team, which also boasted Mahmudullah Riyad, Mehedi Hasan Miraz and Forhad Reza. The menu was khichuri, meat along with some pickles that were brought all the way from Bangladesh.

The reason behind arranging the dinner party cooked by the players themselves was to promote team bonding in a rather tensed atmosphere here in Sri Lanka.

"The idea behind the dinner party is to create bonding among players as there is nothing much to do for them other than staying at the hotel when they are not training," Bangladesh's acting head coach Khaled Mahmud told The Daily Star yesterday.

On Tuesday, the Bangladesh team went to the Bangladesh High Commission in Sri Lanka, where the players were praised for their friendly gesture of touring Sri Lanka in a crisis situation.

The Tigers are also expected to visit one of the churches hit by the horrific suicide bombings to pay their respects ahead of the training session today.

Sri Lanka reduce squad to 16

AFP, Colombo

Sri Lanka on Wednesday reduced their original 22-strong squad to 16 for the three-match one-day international series against Bangladesh in Colombo.

The first ODI will be played on Friday, the second two days later and the final match on July 31. Lasith Malinga will retire after the first ODI and will be replaced for the next two matches by Dasun Shanaka, the Sri Lanka cricket board said. **SQUAD:** Dimuth Karunaratna (captain), Kusal Perera, Avishka Fernando, Kusal Mendis, Angelo Mathews, Lahiru Thirimane, Shehan Jayasuriya, Dhananjaya de Silva, Wanindu Hasaranga, Akila Dananjaya, Lasith Malinga, Nuwan Pradeep, Lahiru Kumara, Thisara Perera, Isuru Udana and Kasun Rajitha.

‘Shafiu’s experience a good option’

MAZHAR UDDIN from Colombo



The question of when pacer Shafiu Islam last played an ODI away from home would be a difficult one for Bangladesh cricket fans to answer. The lean fast bowler himself was not sure about the answer when he was asked this question by this reporter in New Zealand earlier this year.

Shafiu played his last ODI away from home back in May 2013 against Zimbabwe in Bulawayo and the last time he played an ODI was back in 2016 against England, another trivia that the lean pacer could not remember.

Shafiu did not play a game during that New Zealand tour and four months later, the 29-year-old was once again included as the 15th member of the Tigers squad for the

three-match ODI series against Sri Lanka.

The question that now arises is whether one more tour will go by where Shafiu will only fulfil the function of a net bowler. A further point of contention surrounds Shafiu being picked ahead of Abu Jayed, who was dropped from the squad after the World Cup despite not getting a game in the mega event.

Things, however, may change this time as according to sources close to the team management, there was not much confidence in pacer Taskin Ahmed after his performance in the practice match on Tuesday.

Taskin was wayward in line and length during the game and conceded 57 from his eight overs while taking a solitary wicket. He also dropped a rather easy catch at the boundary, which made things even worse for the 24-year-old.

According to acting coach Khaled

Mahmud, Shafiu's experience will help the team in the bowling department, especially in the death overs, which is an area of concern.

"We had a place left in the squad so thought of including a fast bowler. I feel the wicket and conditions here will help Shafiu do well, given his experience. We are honestly concerned with our death bowling, so Shafiu will be a good inclusion as he does well in the death overs in the BPL [Bangladesh Premier League]. If he is fit, we will have a good option in him.

"I am not worried at all with the batting department. The boys have been doing well since the world cup. But with bowling there is a bit of a concern; we don't have experienced bowlers like Shakib and Mashrafe. Those we have are capable but it is good to have an extra fast bowler in the squad," Mahmud told reporters yesterday.

Ireland's stunning 122-run lead

AFP, London



Ireland were dismissed for 207 in reply to England's woeful 85, a first-innings lead of 122 runs, on the opening day of a one-off Test at Lord's on Wednesday.

Andrew Balbirnie top-scored with 55 -- the only fifty on either side so far in the match -- with pacemen Sam Curran, Olly Stone and Stuart Broad taking three wickets apiece.

Earlier, Tim Murtagh took five wickets on his Lord's home ground before lunch as Ireland made a sensational start in their first-ever Test against England by bowling out the home side for 85.

The 37-year-old Murtagh, who plays at Lord's for Middlesex, finished with five wickets for 13 runs in nine overs after England captain Joe Root had won the toss.

Only three England batsmen made it into double figures -- Joe Denly (23), Olly Stone (19) and Sam Curran (18) -- in an innings that was finished inside 24 overs.

But of those only Denly is a top-order batsman, with fast bowler Stone making his Test debut. This was the fourth time in 34 Tests that England had lost all 10 wickets in a session -- a worrying sign ahead of next week's start of the Ashes -- with Bangladesh at Mirpur in 2016, New Zealand at Auckland in 2018 and India at Nottingham, also in 2018, the other three instances.

"I'm not quite sure what's happened



Ireland's Tim Murtagh celebrates after the dismissal of England's Jonny Bairstow on the first day of the one-off Test at Lord's in London yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

in the last two hours," an elated Murtagh told Sky Sports during the lunch interval.

England's collapse followed their 77 all out away to the West Indies in Barbados in January.

This Test was only scheduled for a maximum of four days rather than the usual five but at this rate there was no danger of the match petering out into a draw.

On a ground where they won the World Cup just over a week ago, England were soon in deep trouble despite Root's insistence they did not want to

"sleepwalk" into this match.

A green-tinted pitch promised to offer Ireland's seamers some assistance but few could have foreseen the flurry of England wickets that followed, with Jonny Bairstow, Moeen Ali and Chris Woakes all out for nought on a sunny day.

SCORES IN BRIEF

ENGLAND: First innings 85 all out (Denly 23, Curran 18, Stone 19; Murtagh 5-13, Adair 3-32, Rankin 2-5)

IRELAND: First innings 207 all out (Balbirnie 55, Stirling 36; Broad 3-60, Stone 3-29, Curran 3-28)

‘Break before India match hampered Tigers’

SPORTS REPORTER



NAZMUL HASSAN

Since the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) severed ties with Steve Rhodes after the Tigers' dismal World Cup, uncertainty has been swirling around the vacant head coach position, with Khaled Mahmud only appointed on an interim basis for the current Sri Lanka tour.

So, when the BCB informed through a media release on Tuesday that a press conference was to be held yesterday, many had expected substantial statements regarding the preferred candidates for the position or at least further updates on ODI skipper Mashrafe Bin Mortaza -- who was ruled out of the Sri Lanka tour with a last-minute hamstring injury.

Although no updates or statements were given regarding the aforementioned matters, BCB president Nazmul Hassan did mention a few reasons that played a part in their mutual separation with former coach Rhodes.

"The players were given a five-day break before the matches against India and Pakistan. I think that hampered the players' concentration. I am not against giving rest to players. But in a World Cup, when you are about to face two strong opponents like India and Pakistan and you learn that your players are going to Europe tours, how would that feel?

"Giving players a 2-3 days' rest is fine because at that time cricket is all that should be going through a player's mind. The most surprising thing is that I did not know about it. It never happened before. Although there were lapses on everyone's part," said Nazmul.

Nazmul also mentioned that he was not made aware of some last-minute changes to the playing 11 before the game against Pakistan.

"If I talk about team selection, then I should mention that I was with the team till 11:30pm the night before the match against Pakistan. I saw that Mushfiqur [Rahim] had bandages wrapped around his hand and he was not included in the squad [11]. Mashrafe was also not included as he did not practise the day before. But the next day I saw that a different team was fielded."

Nazmul also informed that the board would arrange two T20I matches between Asia All Stars and Rest of the World to celebrate the 100th birthday of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman next year at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur.