

SPORT



Tamim Iqbal, who had withdrawn from the recently concluded India tour, batted in the nets in Mirpur yesterday as he looks to get back to competitive cricket in the upcoming BPL. Meanwhile, Tamim's Dhaka Platoon teammate Mominul Haque, who captained Bangladesh in Tests in India, seemed to be shrugging off the haunting memories of the tour ahead of the start of the BPL next month.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

'Tamim will soon regain his rhythm'

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh's star opener Tamim Iqbal will be aiming to get back to competitive cricket by turning out for Dhaka Platoon in the seventh edition of the Bangladesh Premier League (BPL), scheduled to begin from December 11. And although BPL teams are yet to start their official practice, Tamim has already returned to business as he practised on his own at the Academy Ground in Mirpur yesterday.

Tamim has only played one round of the National Cricket League for Chattogram Division in October since he captained Bangladesh on their Sri Lanka tour in July, after which he took a break from international cricket that saw him missing the one-off Test against Afghanistan in September and the following tri-nation T20I series.

Tamim had also pulled out of the Tigers' recent India tour to be with his pregnant wife. However, Dhaka Platoon coach Mohammad Salahuddin, under whose guidance Tamim practised yesterday, said that the left-hander will not take long to get back his rhythm.

"Dhaka Platoon did not start to train yet. We usually do this, practise personally. I am doing that with Tamim now as there are a lot of tournaments ahead and also because Tamim has been out of cricket

for a long time. That's why he needs to concentrate more on training and that is the reason we started the session. At first, we need to see how Tamim is connecting the ball. It looked like he is in very good shape and hopefully will get back his rhythm after two or three days' practice," said Salahuddin.

Salahuddin will also be working with Bangladesh ODI captain Mashrafe Bin

Mashrafe, who is currently going under a rehabilitation programme for a groin injury he picked up while practising in mid-November, was also present in Mirpur yesterday.

Mortaza as the right-artermer will also be playing for Dhaka Platoon in this BPL. Mashrafe, who is currently going under a rehabilitation programme for a groin injury he picked up while practising in mid-November, was also present in Mirpur yesterday but did not practise.

Salahuddin however mentioned that he is hopeful of getting Mashrafe from the start of the tournament, but also mentioned that the Dhaka Platoon team management is yet to decide on the 36-year-old's role as a captain in this BPL.

Brooks, Cornwall put WI on top

AFP, Lucknow

A maiden Test century by Shamarh Brooks and wily spin bowling put the West Indies in firm command of the one-off Test against Afghanistan on Thursday.

Brooks made 111 as West Indies managed a lead of 90 after they were 277 all out in the second session of day two in the northern Indian city of Lucknow, which has been hit by heavy air pollution over the past month.

Spinners Rakheem Cornwall and Roston Chase then took three wickets each to leave Afghanistan tottering at 109 for seven at stumps on day two. The Afghans lead by just 19 runs in their second innings.

Opener Javed Ahmadi made 62 before falling to Chase's off spin on the final delivery of the day dominated by West Indies, who resumed on 68 for two in response to Afghanistan's 187.

Cornwall rattled the Afghanistan top-order and improved his match haul to 10 so far.

The 26-year-old Cornwall, who returned figures of 7-75 with his off spin on day one, struck in three successive overs.

SCORES IN BRIEF

AFGHANISTAN: First innings 187

WEST INDIES: First innings 277 all out (Campbell 55, Brooks 111, Dowrich 42; Amir 5-74, Rashid 3-114, Zahir 2-53)

AFGHANISTAN: Second innings 109 for 7 (Ibrahim 23, Javed Ahmadi 62; Cornwall 3-41, Chase 3-10)



West Indies' Shamarh Brooks scored his maiden century on the second day of the one-off Test against Afghanistan in Lucknow yesterday.

PHOTO: TWITTER

Saif pays visa fine

PALLAB BHATTACHARYA from New Delhi

Bangladesh batsman Saif Hasan had to pay a Rs 21,600 fine to be allowed to fly out of the Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose International Airport in Kolkata because he overstayed his visa.

Hasan travelled with the Bangladesh team as a back-up opener for the recently concluded Test series against India and returned home on Wednesday night.

Hasan, who was considered for the day-night pink ball Test at Eden Gardens but missed out due to split webbing between two fingers, had stayed on with the team without noticing that his six-month visa had expired.

"His [Hasan's] visa expired two days ago and he realized it only at the airport. He could not board the booked flight. As per the new rules of overstay, he had to pay the fine," Bangladesh's Deputy High Commissioner Toufique Hassan said yesterday. "Thankfully, the Indian High Commission processed his visa and gave him the exit clearance and he left for home yesterday [Wednesday]."

Australia unchanged

D/N Test against Pakistan starts today

AFP, Adelaide

Australia Thursday named an unchanged team for the day-night second Test against Pakistan after trouncing them in Brisbane, but took a risk by releasing concussion substitute Cameron Bancroft.

The home side easily won the first Test by an innings and five runs inside four days, but selectors resisted the urge to rest one of their strike bowlers or add a fourth to help share the load at Adelaide Oval.

That means swing bowler Michael Neser will be 12th man when the Test starts on Friday, with paceman James Pattinson and batsman Bancroft released to play domestic cricket.

"We're unchanged," said skipper Tim Paine. "Obviously we thought we played a pretty good game of cricket last week (in Brisbane)."

"Our attack is all feeling good and fresh and they have all got great pink-ball records so no need to change."

Bancroft's departure to play for Western Australia in Perth means there will be no immediate batting

substitute in case of a concussion.

Paine joked that "we'll just get someone out the crowd", before adding: "Bangers' is a couple of hours away on a plane so if anything does happen, we will be able to get him back pretty quickly."

The decision comes just days after Bangladesh were forced to use two concussion substitutes in one day, with Liton Das and Nayeem Hasan both forced out of their day-night Test against India in Kolkata.

The task facing Pakistan is ominous with Mitchell Starc, Josh Hazlewood and Nathan Lyon all in the world's top five wicket-takers in day-night Tests, while Pat Cummins is the world's top-ranked bowler.

Pakistan were set to recall paceman Mohammad Abbas as they look to add consistency to their bowling attack under lights.

Skipper Azhar Ali will also drop down the order to bat at number three in the day-night Test starting Friday, with Imam-ul-Haq set to get the nod to open the innings alongside Shan Masood and Haris Sohail dropped.

TIME TO CHOOSE A LONG-TERM CAPTAIN

BISHWAJIT ROY



The current problem in Bangladesh cricket is a multifaceted one. The national team's struggle to reach a desired international level especially in Test cricket, a lack of foresight in planning towards future targets, alleged corruption in lower-tier cricket are just a few of the problems.

These multifaceted problems must be viewed from a systemic perspective.

Finding new leadership for the national team is itself another multifaceted problem that requires a proportional response from the country's cricket authorities.

All effective cricket teams need a good leader and we need not go far for an example in this regard -- the influence of Mashrafe Bin Mortaza in the formation of a spirited team is good enough to understand the value of a good captain.

Unfortunately, like many other issues the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) has so far shown hardly any signs of dealing with this very vital issue with any proficiency. From an as yet undecided stance regarding Mashrafe's future to the bizarre appointment of Mominul Haque as Test captain for a challenging series in India, there seem to be no clarity in thought process.

There is a lot of emotion attached to the name of Mashrafe. He is a true icon of Bangladesh cricket but the inspirational Bangladesh ODI captain's underwhelming performances in the 2019 World Cup in England and fitness issues have provided enough evidence for the country's cricket authorities to decide on their next course of action if they really want to set their eyes on the next World Cup.

The BCB can in no way take their sweet time to make up their minds or wait for the final word from Mashrafe if they are not convinced that Mashrafe, at 36, is still good enough to provide his services as ODI skipper for a considerable time.

If leading by example on the field is the main criterion for a good captain, then Shakib Al Hasan is the only choice across the formats but questions remain about how willing Shakib is to build a team for the future. The other concern is that



PHOTO: STAR FILE

from a young bunch of cricketers, most of whose place in the team is not permanent. The Soumya Sarkar-Sabbir Rahman generation has failed to live up to expectations and it has actually created a big fault line in the national team and that is why former Bangladesh captain Gazi Ashraf Hossain said: "The biggest problem of Bangladesh cricket is the lack of good performers in the team. When most of the young players are struggling to secure their places in the team, how

big events and a captain should be given enough time to establish his command in the team. You can't judge someone's ability as captain by giving him the job for one or two series," Ashraf explained, adding that it is an issue that requires serious attention from the board.

Another former skipper, Faruque Ahmed, also batted in favour of an experienced campaigner. "The role of captain is very big in cricket to shape a good team and it seems to me that like many other issues the board is suffering from indecision. I am not sure what convinced the board high-ups when they picked the new captain. But it is an area where the board should give utmost priority," said Faruque, also a former chief selector.

"I don't think at this moment that there is any young player with whom the board can gamble for the long term. On the other hand, Shakib was in and out of the captaincy role even before [his last stint] and they also tried with Tamim as a stopgap solution. In my opinion, the board has hardly any choice other than giving Mahmudullah Riyad an opportunity. Yes, you can raise questions about his Test credentials but so far what I have seen in him is that he is capable but he would need a long-term assurance to establish his authority on the side. You see, South Africa once picked up young Graeme Smith as captain, even though there were many senior players. But unfortunately, we don't have one such to rely upon," said Faruque.

True, things are not easy for the Nazmul Hassan-led board as they have a lack of resources and options, but it is undoubtedly high time for them to mix some boldness with prudence, keeping in mind the ongoing World Test Championship, the T20 World Cup in October next year, the 2023 50-over World Cup and generally for the future of the Test team. The need of the hour is to engage the right people to take the right decisions in this regard.

can you consider them for the much bigger role of captaincy?"

Then are stopgap solutions the only way forward for the board?

"No. It is true that at this moment the board does not have many options, but they still have to look forward and in my opinion they need to pick an experienced player [as captain] as young players are not performing. And if we find any potential in a young player who can lead the team in the future, then it is the right time to tag him as a deputy. Stopgap is not a solution; we have to look at the coming



Australia captain Tim Paine (L) inspects the wicket on the eve of the second Test against Pakistan, which will start in Adelaide today.

PHOTO: AFP