



PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

## Favourable conditions go begging on opening day

SPORTS REPORTER



The gloomy weather throughout the first day of the second Test was expected to provide assistance to Bangladeshi seamers Ebadot Hossain and Khaled Ahmed, but once again left-arm spinner Taijul Islam was the only successful bowler, picking up both Pakistan wickets that fell in Mirpur yesterday.

A lot was expected of champion all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan on his return to the side, but he failed to meet those demands with the ball on the first day.

The left-arter, making a comeback after recovering from a hamstring injury sustained during the T20 World Cup, bowled with a rather short run-up and it appeared he was yet to get into the groove.

On the other hand, Taijul picked up where he left off in the first Test in Chattogram, where he had bagged seven wickets, and

posed continual threats to inform Pakistani openers Abid Ali and Abdullah Shafique after being introduced in the tenth over of the innings.

Pakistan eventually went for lunch on 78 for two, with Taijul dismissing both Abid and Shafique. But the hosts certainly missed an opportunity to apply even more pressure on the Pakistani batting following a brief rain break in the second session.

Pakistan skipper Babar Azam and Azhar Ali added an unbeaten 91-run third-wicket stand as the visitors bounced back to score

### BRIEF SCORE

#### PAKISTAN

First Innings- 161 for 2 in 57 overs (Babar 60 not out, Abid 39, Azhar 36 not out; Taijul 2-49, Shakib 0-33, Ebadot 0-28)

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MEHEDI HASAN MIRAZ

83 without losing a wicket in the second session before the day's play was called off due to bad light.

Ebadot bowled nine overs and conceded 28 runs but tried to test the batters with his initial swing movement while mixing in a few bouncers.

However, Khaled, who replaced Abu Jayed, lacked any sort of bite. The tall right-arm seamer bowled just four overs and was guilty of bowling on the shorter side despite

the favourable overcast conditions, allowing the two Pakistani openers to score freely.

"It's important to pick up early wickets in Test cricket and when you are not able to pick wickets, it's crucial to contain runs. That was not happening initially. Ebadot bowled some good deliveries but I won't say we did too bad in the first session," off-spinner Mehedi Hasan Miraz told the media yesterday. "If we could have picked up two more wickets in the second session, it would have been easier for us. We could have picked up a couple more wickets if we utilised the weather and conditions."

According to the 24-year-old, it will be important for Bangladesh to bundle Pakistan out early when they resume the second day in order to take control of the game in the coming days.

Despite play for the next four days scheduled to start from 9:30am, there is no good news according to the weather forecast which suggests a high possibility of rain over the next few days in the capital.

## SHAKIB AFFAIR turned messy

SPORTS REPORTER



What could have been a simple incident turned into a messy affair with the inclusion of Bangladesh's premier all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan for the tour of New Zealand. Shakib was included in Bangladesh's 18-man squad for tour in January, which features two Tests, despite verbally communicating his unavailability. According to sources, he responded to the selectors' query by responding that he would not be available for the tour. But the Minhajul Abedin-led selection panel still included the all-rounder.

While the BCB announced the squad through a media release yesterday, its president Nazmul Hassan informed reporters of Shakib's unwillingness to tour.

"Shakib verbally informed us that he would be unavailable for the New Zealand series. But he did not give anything written yet. Only when he gives a written application will we know why he doesn't want to go," the president said.

Shakib, however, was quick to send a written plea to the board.

"With due respect, I, Shakib Al Hasan, would like to state that I am unable to go to New Zealand for the upcoming Test series due to unavoidable family reasons. I am really sorry to make myself unavailable, but I have no other option. My commitment to Bangladesh cricket and the Bangladesh cricket team is one hundred per cent and I hope to return to the fold for the next series. I hope you will understand my position and allow me to skip the New Zealand tour," Shakib wrote in his letter.

Meanwhile, young Mahmudul Hasan Joy, who made his debut in the ongoing second Test against Pakistan, was kept alongside Naim Sheikh.

Three players from the existing 20-member squad for the second Test against Pakistan were dropped for the New Zealand tour. Opener Saif Hasan has already been ruled out after he suffered from typhoid while off-spinner Nayem Hasan and pacer Rejaur Rahman Raja were the two others to be dropped without even playing a game against Pakistan.

Young left-arm seamer Shoriful Islam

### SQUAD

Mominul Haque (Captain), Shadman Islam, Najmul Hossain Shanto, Mushfiqur Rahim, Shakib Al Hasan, Litton Das, Nurul Hasan Sohan, Yasir Ali, Mehedi Hasan Miraz, Taijul Islam, Taskin Ahmed, Abu Jayed Rahi, Ebadot Hossain, Shoriful Islam, Khaled Ahmed, Shohidul Islam, Mahmudul Hasan Joy and Naim Sheikh.

### ITINERARY

January 1-5, 2022: First Test, Bay Oval, Tauranga.  
January 9-13, 2022: Second Test, Hagley Oval, Christchurch.

also returned to the side after recovering from injury while pacer Taskin Ahmed also made it into the squad after missing both Tests against Pakistan due to injury.

Bangladesh will board a flight for New Zealand on December 9 and take part in two warm-up matches following the mandatory seven-day quarantine.



Mahmudul Hasan Joy gets his Test cap from Bangladesh's premier all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan before the toss of the second Test against Pakistan in Mirpur yesterday. Joy became the 99th cricketer to play Tests for Bangladesh.

PHOTO: STAR



## Cummins will be 'fine' as captain, says Langer

REUTERS



Australia coach Justin Langer has backed Pat Cummins to handle the workload in his new role as captain after becoming the first fast bowler to hold the post in more than 65 years, ahead of next week's start to the Ashes series against England.

Cummins will lead the team into the series opener at the Gabba in Brisbane on Wednesday and, with former captain Steve Smith serving as deputy, the 28-year-old has enough support to be able to deal with the challenge, Langer said.

"England will be incredibly well prepared for us and we'll be incredibly well prepared for England," Langer told reporters on Saturday.

"Pat will get all the golden nuggets (of data) and he's got a lot of support around him.

"Steve Smith's the formal vice-captain, David Warner's got as good a cricket brain as is in the game. Alex Carey has been a captain before, he's behind the stumps. He's got his three best mates there, the bowlers, who will have a view on it.

"He'll be fine strategically, I think. It will be just maintaining the balance with his bowling load and then captaining and all the other commitments that come with that. We'll keep an eye on that."

## Hassan breaks his silence

SPORTS REPORTER



Rumours had been bubbling that ace all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan was unlikely to feature in Bangladesh's tour to New Zealand series and, following a board meeting yesterday, the southpaw was first thing on the BCB president Nazmul Hassan's agenda.

"He hasn't said anything officially but he did inform us [about not going to New Zealand]. I told him to present his case officially and then I would look into it. Let's see what his explanation is," Hassan commented.

The World Cup debacle left the BCB doing some soul-searching and the absence of its president Nazmul Hassan in front of the media added more uncertainty regarding the team's current situation and the board's stance on certain matters. Appearing before the media for the first time since the T20 World Cup debacle yesterday, Hassan spoke about quite a few burning issues, including Russell Domingo's continuation as head coach and the investigation into the World Cup failure. There was also the small matter of Shakib Al Hasan being reluctant to play the New Zealand series.

Interestingly, around the same time that the BCB president was giving his press conference, the BCB announced a squad for the New Zealand series with Shakib included.

The issue of Russell Domingo's continuation had also been a burning issue from well before



the T20 World Cup. Home series wins over Australia and New Zealand had quelled some of the fire but media reports pointed to a lack of trust in Domingo, especially from the players, following the World Cup.

Some sources claimed the players were not particularly willing to follow his guidance. However, Domingo has recently been handed a contract extension, making his fate murkier. On that topic, the BCB president's comments were more opaque, with even the tenure of the extension not being divulged.

"Before the World Cup, he wrote to us saying that he had a good offer on the table and wanted to go. He wanted to know whether we would extend his contract because he didn't want to take a risk in case we did not extend. We were looking but saw that we couldn't manage a coach. Even if we did manage, we doubtful of bringing in a new coach ahead of the World Cup. The coaches he had looked at were engaged till the 2022 World Cup."

"We took those matters into account and handed him an extension. If you ask me right now, our thinking is the same as it was previously. We are still waiting for the World Cup report," he said.

The BCB president's comments on the World Cup report, due at the end of November, suggested that BCB were in murky waters

regarding the World Cup debacle, mostly because the investigation was perhaps not going to return a result.

"We formed an investigative committee consisting of Jalal [Younus] bhai and [Enayet Husain] Siraj bhai and they are to submit the report soon. I have talked to Jalal bhai informally but the reality is that nothing significant has been found yet. I am not surprised because I know that such matters can't be unearthed easily," he said, adding that players had not complained regarding coach.

"I understand that players can't just say everything or say something after being asked just once," he reflected, adding that he would make attempts to personally understand the lack of trust around the team.

"This investigation is not enough. I think I should do interviews too. I want to talk to some seniors and junior players one-on-one. I want to sit with someone like Mahmudullah [Riyad], since he won't go to New Zealand, shortly after they submit the report."

As things stand, it was clear that decisions on any change in coaching panel, selection panel and the distrust in the team's environment will come after January. The BCB president explained the situation perfectly when he said: "Everyone can go through bad times but the times for BCB are a bit too bad."

## India delay SA tour over Omicron

AFP, NEW DELHI

India's cricket board on Saturday delayed the national side's South Africa tour over the heavily mutated Omicron strain of Covid-19, it said in a statement.

Omicron was first discovered in South Africa and has led to global panic, uncertainty and fresh travel curbs in the last few days, raising questions over the prospects for the tour.

The first Test of a three-match series against the Proteas has been put back from December 17 to December 26.

The tour "will proceed with the revised dates and itinerary", Jay Shah, secretary for the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI), said in a statement.

As originally scheduled, a three-match ODI series will follow the five-day games, Shah said, but he did not give timings for the team's arrival in South Africa or a detailed match itinerary.

India's Test skipper Virat Kohli this week sought clarity on the series after conflicting media reports about Omicron.

Some players would need to quarantine ahead of the tour, he said. "Those kinds of things you want to seek clarity as soon as possible," Kohli added.