

'The situation is not normal'

BISHWAJIT ROY

What comes next? Will Shakib Al Hasan ultimately tour South Africa or will he only be available for the Test series? Does the team management have any failsafe mechanism in place if the premier all-rounder ultimately sticks to skipping the series?

There was no definite comeback from Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) yesterday and perhaps a follow-up response from Shakib would clear the air after he fired the opening salvo on Sunday night saying he was neither mentally nor physically prepared for the upcoming tour of South Africa.

While talking to The Daily Star over phone yesterday, the BCB president Nazmul Hassan mentioned that Shakib aside, other seniors players like Tamim Iqbal, who announced his T20I sabbatical for six months in January this year but remained open for a return for the T20 World Cup in Australia in October.

Hassan also recalled the saga surrounding Mahmudullah Riyad's sudden Test retirement last year.

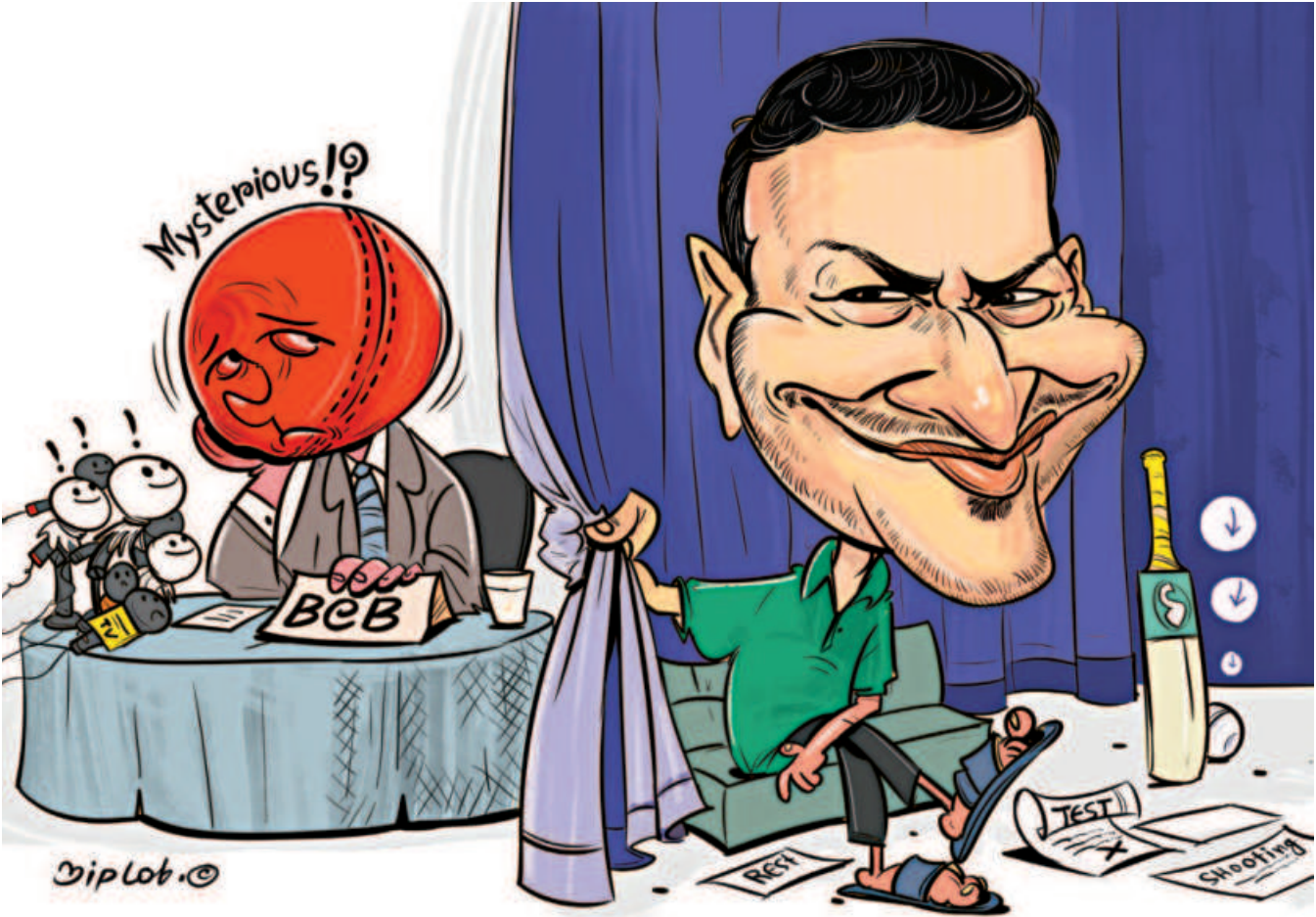
"They (senior players) have served our cricket immensely. Their contribution is huge but the problem is that they are now at the tail end of their career," Hassan dictated.

"They are actually confused regarding their future, I believe. We need to sit face to face with them to solve the issue.

"See, if a player like Shakib agrees to play and then says no, what can we do? Look, if he wants to play and I say no, then think about the criticism I have to face in consequence.

"I kept saying that I and the board have no problem if someone doesn't want to play but they must let us know earlier. They have to submit their written plan," Hassan continued further.

"We gave them enough room to do this kind of things because of their contribution but you cannot allow after a certain level," warned the BCB boss who, however, found something new in Shakib's latest episode as he was taken



aback by the content of the statement of the all-rounder and the timing and place of his announcement as well.

"If someone doesn't enjoy, then there is no point in playing, he could discuss it with team management and the board. Rather he [Shakib] told all those things in the airport. If a player like Shakib doesn't enjoy, then it will affect other players because they follow them," Hassan opined.

Asked whether Shakib had any communication with captain, coach or anyone else from the team management, Hassan replied, "No, no, this is the problem. The situation is not normal."

While Shakib has fussed over not receiving a long-term plan from BCB, the board had repeatedly accused the same from senior players for failing to submit their long-term plans. Thus, this bizarre feedback loop of miscommunication has created a state of sustained chaos.

Hassan, however, reminded that the board are now going to dictate the terms regarding the players' involvement.

"They have given written consent and then proceed to do what they like. It cannot happen.

"Who plays what format will be decided by the team management and the board because we'll not be able to

form a team if this practice continues?

"We will not abide by their conditions. Instead, they have to follow the board's rules since they signed a contract. Team interest must come first," the board president said.

Shakib's latest revelation may have given enough indications about his concern for the teammates and country while the BCB boss has appeared to have brought forth the team's interest to the forefront.

But would the notion of 'team is greater than any individual' be a reality for Bangladesh cricket under current circumstances?

Nigar unhappy with conditions

SPORTS REPORTER

Nigar Sultana Joty, captain of Bangladesh women's national cricket team, expressed her disappointment over the playing conditions which staged a nine-wicket defeat for the Tigresses against host New Zealand in both sides' second ICC Women's World Cup game in Dunedin yesterday.

Heavy rain, resulting in a four-hour delay, had reduced the match to 27 overs per side after and bad weather returned while the Tigresses were fielding to defend their 140-run total. The wet outfield had the Bangladesh captain concerned over the safety of her fielders.

"I would like to say that this is not good, playable conditions because there was a lot of rain over there, but still we played," Joty told the media during the post-match press conference.

"Sometimes the bowlers couldn't grip the ball, and the boundary fielders couldn't watch the ball well. I was a bit worried about the safety of my fielders because we have five more matches to go."

The Tigresses skipper informed that despite her request for a break when there was light rain during Bangladesh's defence, the match officials still urged her to continue the play.

Asked whether this was an excuse, she replied, "If you think this is an excuse, then no. During the first innings, the rain was not that heavy, the conditions were much better, at least when we batted. When we bowled and fielded, the rain was much heavier."

Bangladesh, who lost their opening game of the World Cup against South Africa by 32 runs, will play Pakistan next in Hamilton on March 14.



Fargana Hoque scored a half-century – the first for Bangladesh women in World Cup – in a losing cause against New Zealand. PHOTO: TWITTER



Bayern Munich's Joshua Kimmich (L) and Serge Gnabry stretch during a training session on the eve of their Champions League last-16, second-leg tie against Salzburg in Munich. PHOTO: AFP

Sharifi drives Police

SPORTS REPORTER

Afghan forward Amiruddin Sharifi slotted the fourth hattrick of the Bangladesh Premier League as Bangladesh Police thumped Swadhinata KS 4-2 at the Muktijoddha Smriti Stadium in Rajshahi yesterday.

In the battle between two newcomers, Police emerged victorious with Sharifi scoring in the 49th, 61st and 78th minutes after Adil Kouskous had given Police the lead in the 26th minute. Swadhinata pulled back two goals through Rafal Zaborowski and Nedo Turkvic but could not avoid their fifth defeat. Police climbed up to fifth position with 11 points from seven matches.

Meanwhile in Gopalganj, Rahmatganj beat Muktijoddha Sangsad 1-0, thanks to an own goal by Camara Younossa.

Lewy, Diaz in focus

AFP, PARIS

Bayern Munich might do better to focus on their midweek last-16 Champions League clash, but with Robert Lewandowski agitating for a new contract, transfer speculation around the Poland striker's future is clouding the issue.

Bayern host Red Bull Salzburg in a Champions League last 16, return-leg tie on Tuesday following a 1-1 draw in Austria.

Unusually for him, Lewandowski has not scored in his last three games and off the field, his future beyond this season appears a little unclear.

Over the weekend, there were reports Manchester United lead a list of Premier League clubs to have contacted Lewandowski's agent Pini Zahavi.

Lewandowski, 33, like fellow Bayern veterans Manuel Neuer, 35, and Thomas Mueller, 32, is out of contract in June 2023.

Yet while Neuer and Mueller have reportedly been told in person that the club want to extend, Lewandowski has not.

Speculation aside, it is clear Lewandowski will decide where he plays next season.

"With all my experience, I'm calm,"

Lewandowski replied when asked about a contract extension.

"I'm open to everything, but anything to do with contracts is a secondary issue and stays in the background."

Meanwhile, Liverpool manager Jurgen Klopp is still laughing off the idea his side could win a historic quadruple of trophies, but he does concede he has the best squad during his tenure at Anfield.

One of the reasons for that bold statement is the recent arrival of Colombian winger Luis Diaz, who has boosted the German's attacking options for the second half of the season.

They are heavy favourites to reach the quarter-finals of the Champions League on Tuesday -- 2-0 up against Inter Milan after the first leg of their last-16 tie -- while a heavily rotated team cruised into the FA Cup quarter-finals with ease.

In the San Siro three weeks ago, it was Diaz's introduction that helped turn the tide as Klopp made four changes before the hour mark.

"When we saw him play for Porto we thought that is exactly what we want him to do as well," said Klopp. "He looks like a Liverpool player."

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