

Tamim under observation

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh ODI captain Tamim Iqbal consulted a spine specialist in London and was administered a few injections as he remains currently under observation.

The 34-year-old on Tuesday underwent an MRI scan, and, as part of the process, Tamim underwent an invasive pain management procedure Thursday, confirmed the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) through a press release on Friday.

"Tamim consulted a spine specialist for his ongoing back pain and underwent invasive pain management procedure yesterday [Thursday]. He will be under observation for the next two days and will be reassessed to determine the outcome of the procedure," BCB's senior physician Dr Debashis Chowdhury, who has accompanied the player to the UK, was quoted as saying in the press release.

Tamim reached London last Monday for his treatment of a back injury which the cricketer first noticed in November last year ahead of the series against India.

According to sources, the player is still not considering surgery as an option and will continue through pain management for now. Keeping in mind the two upcoming major events – the Asia Cup and the ODI World Cup – Tamim, however, will be given the option to carry on with the pain management procedure or go under the knife, with the latter requiring a longer time to recover.

It will ultimately be the player's call as Tamim will have to decide the path he wants to take.

Yorkshire punished over racism

AFP, London

Yorkshire County Cricket Club were slapped with a huge 48-point deduction in the English County Championship on Friday after admitting four charges related to the Azeem Rafiq racism scandal.

The independent Cricket Discipline Commission (CDC) also fined the club £400,000 (\$514,000), £300,000 of which is suspended for two years.

The points penalty sends Yorkshire to the bottom of Division Two of the County Championship.

Pakistan-born bowler Rafiq, 32, went public with allegations of racism and bullying in September 2020, related to his two spells at the English county.

"We are accountable for these issues," the Yorkshire board said in a statement.



Lauren James scored a wonder strike in her first Women's World Cup start to lead England to a 1-0 Group D victory over Denmark on Friday, all but guaranteeing the European champions a spot in the knockout stage. James sped past one defender and then curled in a rocket from 22 yards out in the sixth minute that goalkeeper Lene Christensen had little chance of stopping at Sydney Football Stadium.

PHOTO: AFP

Friendly matches against Afghanistan in Sylhet?

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh national football team are likely to play two FIFA friendly matches against Afghanistan at home in September even though two more teams – Myanmar and Nepal – are also in Bangladesh Football Federation's consideration. There might be a trimming of the list of probable oppositions during a meeting of national teams' committee (NTC) today.

As part of the national team's preparation for October's first round of World Cup Qualifiers against Maldives, the National Teams Committee is committed to provide an ideal platform of preparation by arranging two friendly matches in September's 4-12 window.

The national team will begin their preparation for the Qualifiers on August 20, soon after the international engagements of Bashundhara Kings and Abahani in the middle of August, leaving the charges of Javier Cabrera for the two friendly matches with two weeks' preparation.

"We have not decided on the opposition yet. We have a meeting tomorrow and it is not that we will take the final call there. We have been discussing with Afghanistan, Nepal, Myanmar and a few other countries for the friendly matches but have not confirmed them yet," NTC chairman Kazi Nabil Ahmed told The Daily Star yesterday.

With Afghanistan having expressed willingness to visit Bangladesh, the likelihood of playing the former SAFF



country is more than the other teams. Nabil said, "There is a possibility to play [against Afghanistan] but we will take the final decision after discussing the matter with the head coach [Cabrera], which is what we always do."

The game's local governing body is trying to arrange two matches even though the NTC initially wanted to host a tri-nation tournament in September.

"Our target is to hold two matches. The committee was initially considering whether we can host a tri-nation tournament but most of the teams wanted to play two matches, so the initial thought was dropped and we are planning to hold two matches at home," informed NTC member Satyajit Das Rupu.

Nabil also informed that they are looking forward to holding the matches in Sylhet as Sylhet District Stadium is currently the only available venue that is recognised to host international football matches for senior men's football.

"We are thinking of the hosting the matches at the existing venue – Sylhet District Stadium," Nabil said. "Bangabandhu National Stadium is not currently available and we don't even have any information about the venue. However, we may enquire about it."

Sylhet District Stadium is currently hosting an inter-university football tournament, which was scheduled to end yesterday. Abahani are supposed to take over the ground ahead of their AFC Cup match against Club Eagles on August 16.

"It is important to have seating arrangement at a venue to host international matches, but the BNS is currently going through renovation work. FIFA won't allow holding matches without chair-seating arrangement," Rupu said. "The ground at Sylhet is not a bad one as an inspection was made there on July 26. After the completion of the inter-university tournament, the ground will be prepared for the August 16 match."

BFF to look into women's Satkhira participation

SPORTS REPORTER

Mahfuza Akhter Kiron, chairperson of Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) women's wing, said that she would look into the participation of eight women's team players in a local football tournament in Satkhira.

The Warrior Sports Academy Championship 2023, organised by Warrior Sports Academy and assisted by Satkhira District Football Association, got underway today with eight teams – four female and four male – participating in the three-day tournament, which will end on Sunday.

Maria Manda, Matsushima Sumaya, Shamsunnahar Sr, Shamsunnar Jr, Tahura Khatun, Rupna Chakma, Marzia and Masura Parveen – all national team players – are participating in the women's tournament upon invitation from the national team captain Sabina Khatun, who is also an organiser of the tournament.

"All the players of the national team are on vacation and we don't have any idea about what they are doing now. As they are part of the national camp, they need permission to play in such tournaments, but they did not. Once they return to the camp, we will look into the matter," Kiron told The Daily Star.

The national camp for upcoming Asian Games is scheduled to get underway on August 1 and all the players are scheduled to report on July 31. The players were given vacation after two FIFA friendly matches against Nepal recently. Assistant coach Mahabubur Rahman Litu informed that he only knows that some players including Maria and Shamsunnahar Sr were supposed to travel to Satkhira upon Sabina's invitation.

Mahrez joins Al-Ahli

AFP, London

Manchester City forward Riyad Mahrez has joined Saudi side Al-Ahli, the two clubs announced on Friday, becoming the latest big-name player to be lured to the cash-rich league in the Gulf state.

The 32-year-old Algerian winger joined Pep Guardiola's team in 2018 from Leicester, winning 11 major trophies at the club.

"The wait is over: Riyad is real," the Saudi Pro League club said in a social media post.

City agreed a fee understood to be worth up to £30 million (\$38.6 million) with Al-Ahli last week. "To play for City has been an honour," Mahrez said.



Karim Benzema's journey with Saudi Arabia's Al-Ittihad was off to a very good start after he scored a brilliant goal on Thursday in his debut game. The former Real Madrid star took his team to victory against Esperance Sportive de Tunis (ES Tunis) with a score of 2-1 as part of the King Salman Club Cup games.

PHOTO: AFP

India to continue experimenting

AGENCIES

India made it clear in the first ODI against West Indies in Bridgetown on Thursday that they would take the three-match ODI series as a way to test their middle-order ahead of the ODI World Cup later this year.

India, who won the preceding two Test series 1-0, will look to seal the ODI series at the same venue on Saturday.

Left-arm spinners Kuldeep Yadav and Ravindra Jadeja masterminded the rout of an abject West Indies team as India romped to a five-wicket victory with more than 27 overs to spare in the first game.

In what was clearly a bit of an audition for younger batting aspirants ahead of the World Cup, champion batter Virat Kohli did not feature while captain Rohit Sharma only appeared at the fall of the fifth wicket, that too after India lost three quick wickets at the end in their chase of a modest 114-run target.

Following the win, Rohit said that the team wanted to give the rest of the batters, particularly those who were not part of the Test team, some time in the middle which is why he and Kohli chose to not play in their regular positions. According to the Indian skipper, they will 'keep trying those

things' whenever possible in the series.

"We wanted to give game time to the ODI guys who have come in, we will keep trying those things whenever possible. To restrict them to 115, we knew we could try these guys and give them a go. I don't think they'll get many chances like this," Rohit said.

While India are expected to make adjustments in the batting line-up today, their bowling looks sorted at the moment. Kuldeep Yadav was phenomenal in the first ODI, picking up four wickets and the player-of-the-match award for his efforts while Ravindra Jadeja picked up three. The spinners will once again be key in their game today and it will be interesting if the team management brings up Yuzvendra Chahal in the mix as he can prove to be deadly.

When it comes to West Indies, there is a lot of room for improvement at the moment. Their batting unit once again failed to deliver and nothing seems going in their favour. Gudakesh Motie tried to create some sort of impact but the batters didn't give him enough runs to defend. They lack a bit of motivation as well and hence, the team management will have to step up in order to bring some momentum back.



England pacer Stuart Broad celebrates the dismissal of Australia's Travis Head on the second day of the fifth Ashes Test at The Oval in London yesterday. Broad took two wickets as England fought back in the match, reducing the visitors to 186 for seven at Tea with the hosts leading by 97 runs.

PHOTO: AFP