

A fixer-upper with no fix in sight

NABID YEASIN

An act of publicly taking the blame and responsibility, an initiation or indication of setting in motion an overhaul, or a statement of how things are to be taken from here on – none of the aforementioned measures or steps were taken by the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) even as over a fortnight passed since Bangladesh closed their disastrous World Cup campaign.

Perhaps it is nothing surprising from a board that usually thrives in doing things unconventionally.

Hence, it is only understandable that, unlike England team director Rob Key, no one from the BCB brass came up and admitted the ‘fault in approach’, changes were not made in the selection panel or the leadership like it was done by the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB), and nor any clear indication about on whom the board will be keeping its faith on moving forward – like it was done by the England Cricket Board (ECB) after their 2015 World Cup debacle – were made.

Yesterday was perhaps the busiest day in the country’s cricketing fraternity since the World Cup in India. It was supposed to be a busy one, with it being the day before the Najmul Hossain Shanto-led Tigers open their latest chapter of the World Test Championship cycle through their first Test against New Zealand in Sylhet.

However, the BCB president Nazmul Hassan Papon and former ODI skipper Tamim Iqbal’s separate appearances in front of the media only added to the commotion.

But, what did all that amount to? Zilch, unfortunately.

It was the first time that the BCB president Hassan met with Tamim after he had been dropped from the World Cup squad – an incident that transpired hot on the heels of a lot of hullabaloo.



Following his omission from the squad, Tamim had said that he did not ‘want to be a part of the dirty game’ that goes on in Bangladesh cricket.

Exactly two months after Tamim’s serious allegations, the BCB president yesterday promised to ‘understand’ and ‘get to the bottom of the problem’ before taking a decision which will be ‘after the [national] elections [next year January] when the Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) starts’.

Tamim, in his press briefing during which he refused to take questions, only informed of his willingness to wait it out till Hassan unearths the issues and takes some ‘strict decisions’.

While that was the scenario in the capital, Shanto, in his press conference in Sylhet, mentioned his eagerness to take on the responsibility of the side in all three formats for the long term, if the board sees him fit for the role.

From the vantage point of a professional, Shanto’s expression of desire is logical. As things stand, Bangladesh cricket remains in an uncertain state – at the mercy of interims and stopgap fixes aimed at getting by one series or one tour at a time.

Regular skipper Shakib Al Hasan, who had already said even before the World Cup began that he would not be leading the Tigers in ODIs after the showpiece event, is not near the cricketing actions, and he won’t be anytime soon with the all rounder rehabilitating from a finger injury and busy with preparations for the national elections after being granted nomination.

Experienced campaigner Tamim said he would be back through the BPL next year, but as far as his international career is concerned, things are still murky like it has been for a while.

Given the situation, BCB boss Hassan, who has been in charge of the board for over a decade, might just have to get on with his plans of ‘fixing the team’ sooner.



Bangladesh captain Najmul Hossain Shanto and coach Chandika Hathurusingha ponder over the pitch at the Sylhet International Cricket Stadium yesterday ahead of the first Test against New Zealand, which starts today. The hosts, bereft of a number of experienced campaigners, will be up against the Kiwis who have come here with a lot of ammunition.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Concerns over home advantage in new cycle

ABDULLAH AL MEHDI

Bangladesh will embark on their journey in the third ICC World Test Championship (WTC) cycle with the series against New Zealand, slated to begin with the first Test in Sylhet today.

The Tigers have 12 Tests in the 2023-2025 cycle, with three series at home and as many away. Ahead of the latest WTC cycle, the home advantage factor was once again in discussion during stand-in Test skipper Najmul Hossain Shanto’s press conference.

Home advantage has, however, been a double-edged sword in Bangladesh cricket for many years. Whether Bangladesh’s home advantage factor actually work across their whole cricket schedule is a crucial question, given that they often feel like fish out of water in away conditions where good sporting wickets are in place.

More acutely, Bangladesh’s record over the preceding Test Championships portrays an inability to take home advantage as well as their eight home Tests across two cycles yielded just one draw.

“I believe we are a team capable of winning at home, given the kind of bowling attack and batters we have. We need to slowly build the habit,” Shanto said at the pre-match press conference in Sylhet yesterday.

However, Shanto was not keen on focusing on the home advantage factor ahead of the beginning of the cycle when asked about the wicket for the first Test.

“Don’t want to say it’s a home advantage. I believe whenever a side plays at home, they procure some advantage automatically. We will try to take those. In the first session it could be understood how the wicket

is behaving,” he said.

It signifies problems that Bangladesh skipper and team management usually face in Tests at home. If spin options are prioritised, they need to gauge the opponent’s spin option too. The Tigers famously lost to West Indies after Kyle Mayers stormed in a spin-friendly wicket.

When Bangladesh played Afghanistan in their last Test assignment, Mirpur served a pace-friendly wicket and the Bangladesh pacers did their bit. It was a strategy that bore fruit because of Afghanistan batters’ known weakness to red-ball pace attacks and the visitors’ lack of pace threat.



The same cannot be said about the visiting New Zealand, who have five spin options to pick from: Mitchell Santner, Ajaz Patel, Ish Sodhi, Rachin Ravindra and Glenn Phillips. Their spin options may likely extract more purchase out of the wicket in the upcoming Test than Bangladesh’s Mehedi Hasan, Taijul Islam or Nayeem Hasan. In Trent Boult and Tim Southee, they have pace quality as well.

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