

PREPARATIONS HAMPERED as practice match postponed

SPORTS REPORTER

The first of the two three-day practice matches of the national team, scheduled to begin today in Chattogram, has been postponed due to the ongoing unrest in the country as cricket in Bangladesh remains at a standstill during the ongoing unrest.

“A decision on the Bangladesh Tigers camp is due but the match is not taking place tomorrow [today],” one Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) official told The Daily Star yesterday.

The BCB is still hopeful about holding the matches, which were originally scheduled to begin on July 23 and 29 respectively, once the situation improves.

“The players are still at the hotel and we are hoping that when the situation improves, we will play the games. They have been waiting patiently at the hotel. We have been communicating with the law enforcement agencies over there on whether we can hold practice if the situation allows,” cricket operations chairman Jalal Yunus told The Daily Star yesterday.

Fitness cost Pandya T20 captaincy: Agarkar

AFP, Mumbai

Hardik Pandya lost out on India's T20 captaincy to Suryakumar Yadav because of concerns over his availability after frequent injury absences, India's chief selector Ajit Agarkar said Monday.

Explosive middle-order batter Suryakumar, 33, was last week named Rohit Sharma's successor in the T20 format for India's white-ball tour of Sri Lanka, which begins Saturday.

All-rounder Pandya, 30, was Rohit's deputy during India's T20 World Cup triumph last month but he has suffered from fitness problems and missed the 50-over World Cup last year with an ankle injury.

“Fitness has been something that he's struggled with,” Agarkar told reporters in Mumbai alongside new coach Gautam Gambhir.

“As selectors, it becomes difficult then. The thought behind it was that we want someone who is likely to be available more.” India begin their Sri Lanka trip with the first of three Twenty20 internationals on Saturday and Pandya has reportedly opted out of the three subsequent one-day internationals.

He was “still a very important player,” Agarkar said. “And that's what we want him to be, those skill sets are hard to find.” Agarkar praised Suryakumar's captaincy credentials. “He is one of the best T20 batters in the world,” said Agarkar. “We feel that Surya has all the necessary qualities to be a good captain.”

“We wanted a captain, who is likely to play all the games.” Suryakumar would remain solely a T20 player, said Agarkar. Rohit has retained the 50-over captaincy.

Gambhir explained his coaching philosophy, speaking to reporters for the first time since succeeding Rahul Dravid. “I think it is important to give players the freedom, that's what I believe in,” he said.



The hampering of practice schedules and practice matches due to the ongoing unrest has been a cause for frustration for the Bangladesh players, as it has disrupted the build up to their two-match Test series in Pakistan next month, which is part of the ICC World Test Championship cycle.

Two white-ball practice games on July 19

and 20, between Bangladesh Tigers and the High Performance unit were cancelled earlier due to the ongoing unrest.

Many of the Bangladesh national team stars including skipper Najmul Hossain Shanto, who was set to join the Bangladesh camp in Chattogram to play the three-day games, could not travel to

he port city to join the rest of the players in the programme.

“Our journey date [to Chattogram] has been postponed. If everything is sorted, we will possibly fly to Chattogram,” Shanto told The Daily Star yesterday.

“The practice matches might get rescheduled. Honestly speaking, the preparation for the Pakistan series has been hampered quite a bit,” he added.

Shanto had been training individually in Dhaka but for him and many of the Test players, the three-day practice games were crucial especially in light of national team's previous Test series against Sri Lanka, where questions were raised about their preparation after they got routed 2-0 at home.

While the BCB are still waiting for a green signal from law enforcement agencies to hold the remainder of the camp in Chattogram, another BCB official said they were hopeful of beginning practice from Wednesday.

“If they [law enforcement agencies] give us the green signal, and if we can move, the players will go to the practice, whether there is a curfew or not,” he said.

‘France ready to host Olympics’

AFP, Paris

President Emmanuel Macron said on Monday that France was ready to host the Paris Olympics as he visited the Athletes' Village four days before the Games begin.

“We are ready and we will be ready throughout the Games,” Macron said. “We have been working on these Games for years now and we are at the start of a decisive week which on Friday will see the opening ceremony and then the Olympiad which will be held in Paris, 100 years since the last one.”

He added: “This is the fruit of an immense amount of work which has profoundly changed the country, in particular area” of Seine-Saint-Denis, where the Athletes' Village is situated.

International Olympic Committee President Thomas Bach also visited the Village to the north of the French capital, where thousands of athletes and officials are arriving, with up to 14,500 expected there at the peak of the Games.

Comprising 40 different low-rise housing blocks, the complex has been built by employing innovative construction techniques using low-carbon concrete, water recycling and reclaimed building materials.

It was also intended to be free of air-conditioning with a natural cooling system, but some Olympic delegations are unconvinced and have ordered around 2,500 portable cooling units for their athletes.

Seine-Saint-Denis, where the main athletics stadium for the Olympics is also situated, is the poorest area in



France and is hoping to reap benefits from the sports extravaganza.

Macron promised the area would not be forgotten after the Olympics.

Meanwhile, France's foreign minister said Israeli athletes were welcome at the Paris Games after a hard-left member of the French parliament sparked outrage by urging them to stay away because of the conflict in Gaza.

“The Israeli delegation is welcome in France,” Stephane Sejourne said in Brussels ahead of talks with his Israeli counterpart, adding that the call by France Unbowed (LFI) lawmaker Thomas Portes for the country's exclusion had been “irresponsible and dangerous”.

“We will ensure the security of the delegation,” Sejourne added.

Portes drew an angry response from French Jewish groups and both

political opponents and allies.

Meanwhile, French security forces were continuing preparations for the unprecedented opening ceremony on Friday, the first time a Summer Olympics has opened outside the main stadium.

Between 6,000 and 7,000 athletes are to sail down the river on 85 barges and boats, with a backdrop of world-famous monuments including Notre-Dame cathedral, currently being renovated.

The athletes will disembark for the culmination of a ceremony at the Trocadero opposite the Eiffel Tower that organisers promise will be spectacular.

Up to 300,000 ticketed spectators will watch from stands and on the river banks and another 200,000 are expected to watch from the overlooking apartments.

HP fall to 149-run loss in Darwin

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) HP outfit were bowled out for 279 in the second innings in chase of the 429-run target set by Pakistan Shaheens to suffer a 149-run defeat on the fourth day at the DXC Arena Ground in Darwin yesterday.

Continuing from an overnight score of 20 without loss, HP were bowled out for 279 in 83.2 overs. Amit Majumder hit a team-high 71 while Parvez Hossain Emon struck 57. Shahadat Hossain Dipu, who scored 36 in the first innings, followed up with 42 in the second innings but it was not enough to see HP bat the entire day to draw the match.

Pakistan Shaheens' left-arm spinner Mehran Muntas was the pick of the bowlers, bagging four wickets for 84 runs.

Earlier, Mohammad Hunaira's double century in the first innings saw Pakistan Shaheens post 468 for three. Bangladesh HP were restricted to 266 in the first innings, with Shadman Islam scoring 88 before the Pakistani side put 226 for three in the second innings to set a 429-run chase for the fourth innings.

Boycott back in hospital

AFP, London

England batting great Geoffrey Boycott was on Sunday readmitted to hospital after suffering a setback in his recovery from throat surgery, his family revealing “things have taken a turn for the worse”.

The 83-year-old was discharged from hospital only on Friday after a successful operation to remove a cancerous tumour.

However, he has now developed pneumonia. “Thank you all for the well wishes, we've been blown away by the sheer number of them,” read a statement from the family on Boycott's X account.

“Unfortunately, things have taken a turn for the worse and my father has developed pneumonia and is unable to eat or drink so is back in hospital on oxygen and a feeding tube for the foreseeable.”

Boycott had previously been treated for throat cancer in 2002 with chemotherapy and radiotherapy. Boycott is one of a select group of cricketers to have scored 100 first-class hundreds. He scored more than 8,000 runs in 108 Tests for England.

After his 24-year first-class career ended with Yorkshire sacking him in 1986, Boycott established himself as both a newspaper columnist and a noted broadcaster, developing a global fanbase.

ICC puts USA Cricket on notice for ‘non-compliance’

AFP, Colombo

The International Cricket Council put USA Cricket on notice on Monday to comply with its membership rules on governance, along with Cricket Chile, just weeks after the United States co-hosted the T20 World Cup.

“Neither Member is considered to have in place a fit for purpose detailed governance and administrative structure and systems,” the ICC said in a statement after its annual conference in Colombo, adding that both had 12 months “to rectify their current non-compliance”.

Mushfiquur, Mominul to play in ‘A’ team’s Pak tour

SPORTS REPORTER

Veteran Bangladesh batters Mushfiquur Rahim and Mominul Haque are expected to be part of Bangladesh 'A' team's tour of Pakistan, which takes place ahead of the national team's Test tour of the country in August-September.

Mushfiquur and Mominul, currently with Bangladesh Tigers programme, will play the first four-day fixture of the A team, a BCB official informed The Daily Star.

The team is slated to depart for Pakistan on August 6 after holding three days of practice sessions in Dhaka. The team will play two four-day games in Pakistan, the first of which will take place from August 10 to 13 and the second one is slated for August 17 to 20. The last three fixtures are scheduled for August 22, 25 and 27 respectively.

Along with Mushfiquur and Mominul, players mostly from the Bangladesh Tigers programme will form the 'A' team's squad. Two other national team batters may join up to acclimatise with the conditions in Pakistan.

The national team would play two Tests in Pakistan from Aug 21-25 and Aug 30 to Sept 3 in Rawalpindi and Karachi respectively.

“We are trying to ensure that the players get maximum match practice and avail all the facilities. This is how we have been trying to schedule so that our players [members of the national team] can already play a match there [in Pakistan before the Tests],” Shahriar Nafees, in-charge of BCB cricket operations, told The Daily Star yesterday.

The national team players will, meanwhile, train in Dhaka from August 3 to 16 before departing for the Pakistan Tests.

‘Bashir showed his full bag of tricks’

AFP, Nottingham

Ben Stokes said Shoaib Bashir had “showed the world” he belonged in international cricket after the 20-year-old off-spinner bowled England to a series clinching victory over the West Indies in the second Test at Trent Bridge on Sunday.

Bashir took 5-41 as the West Indies collapsed to 143 all out on the fourth evening, with England triumphing by 241 runs to take an unassailable 2-0 lead in a three-match campaign.

It was Bashir's third five-wicket haul in just five Tests but first in England after he twice achieved the feat on spin-friendly Indian pitches earlier this year.

His latest exploits were all the more impressive given Bashir did not bowl a single ball and was out for a duck during England's innings and 114-run thrashing of the West Indies in the first Test at Lord's.

Bashir removed Kirk McKenzie, Kavem Hodge and Alick Athanaze -- all top-order batsmen -- in quick succession before bowling Jason Holder and last man Shamar Joseph as West Indies, set 385 to win, slumped to 143 all out.

“I think what Bash has done today is to show the world what he can do,” said England captain Stokes.

“That wicket hardly offered anything for a spinner throughout the whole Test match and look at what he was able to do today.



“The way in which he can change his pace, produce over-spin and under-spin...I think he showed his full bag of tricks. He's got so much talent and the ceiling is so, so high. He's got an unbelievable desire and a will to get better and learn.”

Stokes added: “It's really good for a young guy

to come out and put in a performance that wins England a Test match, it's pretty cool for him.”

For all his success in India, rising star Bashir was unable to break into the Somerset side at the start of the season after the side opted for a more experienced England spinner in Jack Leach.

That led Bashir to go on loan to Worcestershire last month, but England kept faith with him all the same.

“The decisions we make are all based around not only how far we think their talent can take them, but whether we think they're good enough for international cricket straight away,” explained Stokes.

“I don't want to sound like it's an ‘I told you so’ kind of thing but it sort of is.”

Defeat left West Indies with just pride to play for in next week's third Test at Edgbaston.

They actually managed a much-improved showing with the bat in Nottingham while making 457 in reply to England's first innings 416 prior to Sunday's spectacular slump, which saw all 10 of their second-innings wickets lost in 23 overs.

“The big positive was our first innings, scoring 400 runs was great,” said West Indies captain Kraigg Brathwaite.

“The two defeats are gone but we still have five Tests matches remaining for this year. So we keep learning and by the end of the year we'll be better off, once we have that correct mindset.”