

The second and final Test between hosts India and Bangladesh today will be the first Test in about four years and only the second one in eight years at the Green Park stadium in Kanpur.

The drawn Test between India and New Zealand in November 2021 was the last Test played at this venue. Before that, another India-New Zealand contest was held here in 2016.

This is set to be the final away Test for premier all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan, who announced his retirement plans on Thursday.

Rain is in forecast for the first three days of the Kanpur Test.

India all-rounder Ravindra Jadeja, who has scored 3122 Test runs, is just one wicket shy of completing the double of 3000 runs and 300 wickets in the format. Achieving that in this game, Jadeja's 74th Test, will see him become the second fastest to the feat after Ian Botham (72).

Left-arm spinner Tajjul Islam, who did not play the first Test in Chennai, is five short of 200 Test wickets. He will only be the second Bangladeshi to do so, behind Shakib who leads the chart with 242.



Bangladesh skipper Najmul Hossain Shanto and head coach Chandika Hathurusingha yesterday inspect one of the two pitches prepared for their second and final Test against hosts India, set to be played at the Green Park stadium today. While one pitch had a green tinge on it, the other was reported to have a black soil covering which would be aiding spinners more -- something that India skipper Rohit Sharma and head coach Gautam Gambhir [bottom] might have had in their minds.

PHOTO: AFP/BCCI

'BCB does not have authority to ensure Shakib safe exit'

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) president Faruque Ahmed said that the board is incapable of doing anything regarding premier all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan's safety concerns when and if he arrives in the country.

"Actually, I am not a member of any [law enforcement] agency -- not that I am from RAB or Police. So, this is not in my hand," Faruque said following the board directors' meeting at the BCB headquarters in Mirpur yesterday.

The safety issue for Shakib was raised by the cricketer when he informed during a press conference in Kanpur yesterday, ahead of the Tigers' second and final Test in their ongoing series against hosts India today, that he would like to retire from the longer format after playing the upcoming home series against South Africa in October-November.

"I believe there is nothing better than him being able to play his final Test at home. But his safety issues are not in our hands as these need to come from the highest authorities and the player himself. The board does not have the authority to ensure security clearance to any individual," Faruque added.

When asked about Shakib's demand for ensuring a "safe exit" from the country, Faruque said: "I don't think the board has such authority."

Shakib, an MP of the former Awami League government that was toppled on August 5, was named in a murder case and was fined Tk 50 lakh for fraudulent trading in the share market following the previous government's departure.

Meanwhile, Faruque also informed that the players' draft for the upcoming Bangladesh Premier League will be held on October 14 and was hopeful that the tournament would begin on December 27 -- the previously disclosed date -- mentioning that "95 percent of the teams have been confirmed" for the franchise-based tournament.

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Manchester United forward Marcus Rashford looks dejected after the Red Devils drew 1-1 against Dutch side FC Twente in their Europa League group-stage fixture at home on Wednesday. Christian Eriksen put Erik Ten Hag's side ahead in the 35th minute before Sam Lammers found the equaliser in the 68th minute for Twente.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Tigers hope to bounce back in Kanpur amid new challenges

ABDULLAH AL MEHDI *from Kanpur*

Bangladesh's challenge in the second Test in Kanpur may just have gotten a little spicier after ace all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan came in the press conference and announced that his Test career is coming to an end in the home Test series against South Africa in October-November.

Shakib is one of the spearheads of the team as its all-time leading all-rounder. His Test career coming to an end is big news and even the second Test against India is now having to take a backseat as Shakib becomes the point of discussion, not just for the cricket but for politics as



I don't know which surface we are going to play on yet. But both the pitches look pretty good. Kanpur is often known to have good pitches. I am not sure about the bounce yet. With the conditions and the forecast, it is going to be interesting as to how when we turn up to go in the morning.

India's assistant coach ABHISHEK NAYAR on two different types of pitches prepared for Kanpur Test

well. Yet, for the Bangladesh team, it is about managing their own focus on the upcoming assignment. India handed the Tigers a heavy defeat in Chennai despite things falling their way during the first two days, condition-wise.

There was peculiar weather on offer in Kanpur as it remained overcast and rained through most of the day on Thursday. The Tigers also failed to complete their session in the afternoon due to downpour.

Kanpur is expected to produce runs and the Bangladesh top-order must thwart India's top-quality attack in order to get something from the game. There is speculation about the black soil on the

pitch being conducive to low and slow bounce. Kanpur has historically produced drawn Tests. The last 10 Tests here have seen four draws and the last away team to win here were the West Indies, back in 1983.

Although the last Test ended in a draw, it was an exciting finish as New Zealand survived with just a wicket in hand, thanks to bad light ending play early on Day 5.

Given the skills that India possess, it would mean whatever the surface, it is the Bangladesh batters that have to overcome any loss of focus and turn out with the bat.

Shakib himself said that facing opponents like India or Australia meant

that the conditions do not matter a lot, to general nod in agreement from the contingent of media present. It is India's quality that Bangladesh would have to tackle, a challenge that in itself would have been a tough prospect even without Shakib's announcement of retirement plans.

But come the Test match, everything else would have to take a backseat. Team combinations are being thought out. India may have lined up a different challenge, with the last Test against New Zealand they played here, seeing them turn up with three spinners. Shakib said that they expected to put on a better showing in Chennai. "We thought we were a better team than that and we need to show that," he said.

Bangladesh have, of course, done it before and pretty recently too. When the situation in the country was unstable due to unrest, the Tigers gathered as a unit to seize a famous series sweep against Pakistan in Pakistan.

Kanpur being one step closer to his swansong, Shakib would love to get some runs under his belt, having showed he is recovering his batting form despite not making big runs. Thus, the challenges could galvanise the Tigers and they will hope to do something special, as they did in Pakistan. On the upside, they could also be motivated to do something in Shakib's last-ever Test away from home.

Punishment awaits serial offenders Azampur FC

ANISUR RAHMAN

Two years after being acquitted of allegations of illegal activities such as online betting, spot-fixing, match manipulation, and match-fixing in the Bangladesh Premier League (BPL), Azampur FC Uttara are all set to receive punishment by the Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) over the same allegations.

The Fixed-Match Identification Committee (FIC) of BFF has submitted its final report to its disciplinary committee following a one-year investigation, conducted in light of three league match data provided by FIFA through its Fraud Detection System last year.

Azampur FC, who were relegated to the Bangladesh Championship League (BCL) in 2023-24 but did not play in the second tier, were allegedly involved in malpractices during the 2022-23 season matches against Mohammedan (Feb 10, 2023), Abahani (Feb 24, 2023) and Sheikh Jamal (Feb 17, 2023).

The FIC found involvement of the club's players and officials in the two matches against Mohammedan and Abahani during its investigation, which was conducted between May, 2023 and

March, 2024.

The club had previously come under scrutiny over match-fixing in a BCL match against Farashganj SC in 2022 following allegations by its coach Saifur Rahman Moni.

BFF subsequently launched



the investigation in April that year and cleared the club of any wrongdoing in September the same year, allowing them to play in top-tier league in 2023-24 season as runners-up of the second tier.

BFF's competitions manager Zaber Bin Taher Ansari told The Daily Star that the committee found the involvement of the club by analysing data and videos and through interrogation of its players

and officials.

Zaber also informed that even though the players and officials denied their involvement in illegal activities in BPL matches, a whistleblower helped the committee by providing information in the early

stage of investigation.

Replying to a query, Zaber said, "Mohammedan and Abahani have not been included in the process because neither those clubs had any role in illegal activities while the match against Sheikh Jamal was not considered as there were no similarities between FDS suspicion and the outcome of the match."

The report was forwarded to the BFF disciplinary committee, who

sat for its first meeting on May 20 this year and served show-cause notices to around 10 players and officials.

"As per the instructions from the disciplinary committee, we are going to issue show-cause notices to the rest of the players and officials within a couple of days. Approximately half of the 10 players and officials replied to the show-cause notices explaining their positions against the allegations regarding matches against Mohammedan and Abahani in early 2023," said Zaber.

The BFF official also informed that the disciplinary committee is likely to mete out the punishments following feedback over the second show-cause notice.

The severity of the punishment is expected to be decided on the basis of the reports provided by the FIC, which had previously punished three clubs in 2021 and 2022 for illegal activities in the BPL and the BCL.

Arambagh KS were demoted to the third tier in 2021 tier and then Uttar Baridhara Club and Karwanbazar Samaj Kallyan Sangsha were demoted to the 2nd and 3rd divisions respectively.



Sri Lanka's Kamindu Mendis celebrates after reaching his half-century, becoming the first batter to score fifty or more runs in eight consecutive Tests, as all-rounder Angelo Mathews watches on during the first day's play in their second and final Test against New Zealand at Galle yesterday. Mendis and Mathews remained unbeaten on 51 and 78, respectively, as the hosts piled up 306 for three at stumps following Dinesh Chandimal's 16th Test ton earlier in the day.

PHOTO: AFP