

ON TV TODAY

INDIA VS BANGLADESH: 2ND TEST

Day 1 live from Eden Gardens, Kolkata, on Star Sports 1 & 3 — 1300 hrs onwards

Not in the pink of health

The colour of the ball & conditions may bring the teams closer, but Bangladesh's decline doesn't promise an equal contest

Bhuvi, Kuldeep back in squad for WI series

Kolkata: A fit-again Bhuvneshwar Kumar on Thursday returned to the Indian teams for next month's T20 and ODI series against West Indies, while all-rounder Shivam Dube was rewarded with a maiden call-up in the 50-over format. India is scheduled to play three Twenty 20 Internationals against the West Indies with the series-opener in Mumbai on December 6 followed by matches in Thiruvananthapuram (December 8) and Hyderabad (December 11).

The three ODIs will be played in Chennai (December 15), Visakhapatnam (December 18) and Cuttack (December 22). A side strain and a hamstring injury forced seamer Bhuvneshwar to come back midway from the tour of West Indies in August.

The Indian squad bears a full-strength look with skipper Virat Kohli back at the helm and his deputy Rohit Sharma also not opting for a break. Kohli coming back meant that Sanju Samson, who was included in the last series as specialist batsman had to go out without getting a match. It is learnt that Samson wasn't seen as a back-up keeper.

Senior opener Shikhar Dhawan, despite his poor run of form, gets another go at the top while in-form speedster Mohammed Shami and left-arm spinner Kuldeep Yadav were back in the shortest format after some time. Krunal Pandya, who had been a regular feature in the T20 setup for a year has been dropped, with Ravindra Jadeja back after a break.

The pace bowling departments in both squads bear a familiar look with Bhuvneshwar and Shami leading the way. It is expected that Jasprit Bumrah will join the duo soon and, along with Deepak, could be the main four pacers in white ball format.

SQUAD (ODIS): Virat Kohli (c), Rohit Sharma, Shikhar Dhawan, KL Rahul, Shreyas Iyer, Manish Pandey, Rishabh Pant, Shivam Dube, Kedar Jadhav, Ravindra Jadeja, Yuzvendra Chahal, Kuldeep Yadav, Deepak Chahar, Mohd Shami, Bhuvneshwar Kumar

SQUAD (T20IS): Virat Kohli (c), Rohit Sharma, Shikhar Dhawan, KL Rahul, Shreyas Iyer, Manish Pandey, Rishabh Pant, Shivam Dube, Washington Sundar, Ravindra Jadeja, Yuzvendra Chahal, Kuldeep Yadav, Deepak Chahar, Mohammed Shami, Bhuvneshwar Kumar. **PTI**



LANDMARK TEST

Kolkata's tallest building — The 42 — radiates in pink light on Thursday, a day before India's first day-night Test match. Partha Paul

The majority of the Bangladesh batsmen don't have techniques that a pink-ball, day-night Test demands. Maybe, a strong-arm approach would serve them better. A few agricultural boundaries, a couple of top-edged sixes, and there would be runs on the board.

board. But to start with, their bowlers must raise their game. At Indore, they bowled boundary balls for fun. Here, conditions will make their job easier if they show discipline and try to keep the Indian batsmen in check. Dot balls build pressure. Bangladesh must stick to basics if they want to put the hosts under pressure.

And they must believe in their abilities. Bangladesh captain Mominul Haque's body language at the pre-match press conference didn't inspire confidence. He was asked if his team could cause an upset at Eden Gardens. "No, no, no," he replied with a sheepish smile.

White ball priority

One of the reasons why Bangladesh have failed to grow as a Test team is that their structure and itinerary give precedence to

limited-overs cricket. The pink-ball Test starting Friday would only be their seventh long-form fixture in the last one year. Going ahead, they will play a few more, thanks to the ongoing World Test Championship. But Bangladesh must make the game's purest format their top priority if they want to become a serious Test nation.

"I can't speak for another team, another board; how they look at Test cricket. But from our point of view, from the BCCI's point of view, the only discussion we have had over the last two-three years is how we can have Test cricket right up there. And that takes the commitment of the board, firstly, and the total commitment of the players. If you look at how exciting as a team we have been over the past two-three years, it tells you why people come and watch us play as well. It's a partnership of the board and the players," Kohli said.

"If you look at our contract system as well, a lot of importance has been given to Test cricketers. So, all things have to coincide and every Test nation that has done that have teams that are playing strong Test cricket and their hearts and their minds are totally in sync with keeping Test cricket on top. You can't just tell the players you have to be committed to playing Test cricket but contractually we are not going to do anything for you."

Bangladesh, and a few other Test-playing countries, would do well to take a leaf out of India's book.

Day-night Tests can't be the only way: Kohli

SHAMIK CHAKRABARTY
KOLKATA, NOVEMBER 21

VIRAT KOHLI doesn't want day-night Test cricket to become the long-form's staple diet. He feels any move in that direction will dilute the sanctity of the game's purest format.

"This shouldn't become the only way Test cricket is played. Because, then you are losing out on that nervousness of the first session in the morning. You can bring excitement to Test cricket, but you can't purely make Test cricket based on entertaining people. The entertainment of Test cricket lies in the fact that the batsman is trying to survive the first session, the bowlers trying to set up a batsman; if people don't respond to that, too bad," Kohli said on Thursday.

The hype around India's first-ever day-night Test is going through the roof. Kolkata's centre square has turned pink. Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee will jointly ring the Eden bell to start the second Test.

Kohli compared the build-up with the India versus Pakistan World T20 fixture at this venue in 2016. "We are excited about the pink-ball Test anyway. The last time Eden had such a buzz, such excitement, was before the India-Pakistan T20 game (in 2016). There too

you had VIPs and they were felicitated and the stadium was packed. I think the atmosphere will be similar. It can be daunting, intimidating, but very exciting as well.

"As it is, playing with the pink ball is not that easy and bowlers will get a boost. I think the first hour will be very exciting because energy levels will be very high and the public will get what they paid for. Obviously, this is a landmark occasion in Indian cricket, and we are lucky that we are part of this start."

Test cricket is not in the pink of health. Save England and Australia, matches are usually played before empty stands. The ICC has introduced the World Test Championship, but the global body so hasn't done any hard-selling to promote the event. The very idea of the pink-ball, day-night Test cricket is to draw crowds to the long-form. Even BCCI president Sourav Ganguly is of the view that day-night Test cricket is the "way forward". Kohli, however, put things in perspective.

"If I don't like Test cricket, you can't push me into liking it. If someone gets excitement or boost from watching the battle between bat and ball and a great session of Test cricket, in my opinion those are the people that should come and watch Test cricket."

Kohli called for bringing "more system" into the scheduling of Test matches to make the format spectator-friendly. He was cate-

gorical that day-night Test could be a happy detour, not the actual journey.

"I think this (day-night Test) can be a one-off thing (in a series), it should not be a regular scenario."

Open to playing D-N Tests abroad

Eden has set the ball rolling, and Kohli's team are now open to playing day-night Tests away from home as well. But adequate preparation time is a pre-requisite.

"One before the Test could be a pink-ball practice game. If it's second or third Test, I would ideally like to have a longer break between the two Tests and have a practice game before the pink-ball Test whenever that is, obviously under lights. It can't be a pink-ball practice tour game before the series and the Test is actually the third game. That wouldn't make any sense," Kohli said.

Last year, India had refused to play a day-night Test at Adelaide. But as Ganguly said he received a positive feedback from the captain "in three seconds", when he proposed that the Eden Test be a pink-ball affair. So what changed? "The thing was to experience the pink-ball Test in our own condition first... Then eventually going on to playing pink-ball Tests anywhere in the world. It can't be a sudden thing. This one, we had been talking about for a while," the skipper explained.

Naseem, 16, makes debut, Pak all out for 240

REUTERS
NOVEMBER 21

MITCHELL STARC took four for 52 as a middle-session blitz and some late new-ball fire-works helped Australia dismiss Pakistan for 240 to bring a close to the opening day of the first Test in Brisbane on Thursday. Pat Cummins took three wickets (3-60) and the third quick, Josh Hazlewood, grabbed two as the Australian bowlers took the honours on a sunny day at the Gabba.

Pakistan's Asad Shafiq offered most resistance to the barrage from the Australian pace battalion with a fine knock of 76 before he was ousted by a Cummins delivery that removed his middle stump. Left-arm Starc took the second new ball in the final hour of the day and made good use of it, dismissing Yasir Shah (26) with a trademark yorker and Shaheen Shah (0) in successive deliveries to put himself on a hat-trick.

Naseem Shah, the 16-year-old fast bowler who was playing his first Test, faced the next delivery and, without appearing to know much about it, managed to keep the ball from hitting his stumps with a thick inside edge. The teenager was the last batsman to depart, caught and bowled by Starc for seven to bring an end to a day that ebbed and flowed with long periods of Pakistani resistance punctuated by bursts of wickets.

"In the end, not a bad result," said Australia captain Tim Paine. "We weren't quite at our best in that first session, we thought we bowled a bit short... But apart



Australia's Mitchell Starc (not in the picture) gets rid of Pakistan's Yasir Shah on Day One of the first Test between the two teams in Brisbane on Thursday. AP

from that we stuck to the task and got better as the day went on."

After losing the toss, Australia had been frustrated by an opening stand of 75 from Azhar Ali (39) and Shan Masood (27) in a partnership that lasted throughout the first session and into the second. The Australian quicks finally found their length, however,

and removed both in three deliveries before swiftly adding the wickets of Haris Sohail and Babar Azam for one run apiece.

That spell of four wickets at the cost of three runs had the tourists rocking and a rout looked in order when Iftikhar Ahmed departed for seven to leave Pakistan on 95-5. Cummins was fortunate to make the next

The first session we thought would be difficult we got through pretty well, but then we gave it away."

WAQAR YOUNIS
PAKISTAN'S BOWLING COACH

breakthrough when he dismissed Mohammad Rizwan for 37 as the replays, when reviewed, showed what looked to be a no ball.

"I look at the scoreboard, it says a wicket," Cummins added. "I'll take it but I was really nervous until they put the finger up."

Asad clearly enjoys playing Down Under, however, and backed up centuries in Pakistan's two tour matches at a ground where he scored 137 when the tourists came close to chasing down an unlikely victory in 2016. Reflecting the discipline that the openers had earlier employed, he brought up his 24th test half century in a partnership of 84 with Yasir before Australia took the new ball and seized the day.

"We are not too unhappy but it could have been a lot better," said Pakistan bowling coach Waqar Younis. "The first session we thought would be difficult we got through pretty well, but then we gave it away. We need a really good session tomorrow to be in the game."

BRIEF SCORES: Pakistan first innings 240 in 86.2 overs (Asad Shafiq 76, Azhar Ali 39, Mohammad Rizwan 37; Mitchell Starc 4/52, Pat Cummins 3/60, Josh Hazlewood 2/46) v Australia at the Gabba.

'Freak' Stokes torments New Zealand once again

Mount Maunganui: New Zealand targeted the wicket of "freak" Ben Stokes on Thursday as they battle to get back into the first Test against England at Mount Maunganui. The honours were even when the New Zealand-born Stokes went to the middle just before tea on day one with England 120 for three. But by stumps, with Stokes in imperious form, the score had doubled and England will resume on Friday on 241 for four, with the 28-year-old all-rounder unbeaten on 67.

"He's a special talent. He's a bit of a freak at times," New Zealand short-ball specialist Neil Wagner said after Stokes clubbed his bouncers four times to the boundary.

Stokes has tormented New Zealand this year after he played a key role in England's nail-biting victory on boundary countback in the 50-over World Cup final in July.

As well as dispatching Wagner's short stuff, he also showed a liking for the fuller delivery when he took four boundaries off successive balls from Trent Boult, including one that burst through the hands of the usually reliable Ross Taylor at first slip. It was a drop that frustrated the New Zealanders who had earlier seen opener Rory Burns survive three chances including a waist-high edge that went between Taylor and Tom Latham in the slip cordon. However, Wagner believed that despite England going into day two with six wickets in hand, the game was not out of New Zealand's control.

Stokes and Joe Denly (74) put on 83 for the fourth wicket to lift England after they had



Ben Stokes is batting on 67. AP

slowly accumulated runs through the first two sessions against a New Zealand bowling tight lines. England's top three played their part in getting a safe start with Surrey pair Rory Burns (52) and Dom Sibley (22) putting on 52 for the first wicket before Burns and Denly added 61 for the second. Captain Root, however, took 21 balls to get off the mark with a two and then wafled at a wide next delivery from Wagner and was caught behind.

BRIEF SCORES: England first innings 241 for 4 in 90 overs (Joe Denly 74, Ben Stokes 67 not out, Rory Burns 52; Colin de Grandhomme 2/28) v New Zealand at Bay Oval. **AFP**