



Tajikistan players celebrate a goal against Pakistan in their AFC Challenge Cup clash at the Bangabandhu National Stadium on Tuesday.

PHOTO: STAR

Bad news for autographs hunters!

AFP, Dhaka

Australia's cricketers will be protected from autograph hunters by tight security when the world champions undertake their maiden Test tour of Bangladesh this week, officials said on Tuesday.

"Unlike other tours, we will have extra security for the Australian cricketers," Bangladesh Cricket Board chief executive Mahmudur Rahman told AFP.

"Players will be protected from autograph hunters and no one will be allowed to have undue access to them."

Australia, currently playing in South Africa, will fly to the Bangladeshi capital Dhaka on Thursday for the three-week tour that includes two Tests and three one-day internationals.

A security team of Cricket Australia visited Bangladesh last month and met police and Home Ministry officials.

The first Test begins in Falullah on Sunday and the second Test will be played in Chittagong from April 16-20. Chittagong will host the first one-dayer on April 23, while Falullah will hold the last two games on April 26 and 28.

Tajikistan almost thru' Kyrgyz-Macau tie abandoned, rematch today



SPORTS REPORTER

First-half goals by Odil Irgashev and Numondzhon Hakimov all but confirmed Tajikistan's chances to reach the quarterfinals of the inaugural AFC Challenge Cup from Group D with a 2-0 win over Pakistan at the Bangabandhu National Stadium on Tuesday.

Tajikistan stayed on top of the group with maximum six points after two rounds but have to wait to know their fate till the last match against their central Asian neighbours Kyrgyzstan.

Meanwhile, the Kyrgyzstan-Macau match later in the day was abandoned after 31 minutes as the season's first northwester to hit the capital with severe force flooded the ground. Kyrgyzstan were leading 1-0 with an 18-minute strike by Vladimir Verevkin when the lights went out to stop the match. A rematch is to be held today.

So fierce and heavy were the storm and shower that during the match, the substitute players' hut was sent cartwheeling but no footballer was injured. The referee called the match off after the situation prevailed for more than half an hour.

In Chittagong, Sri Lanka edged Bhutan 1-0 while Brunei upset Nepal 2-1.

TAJIKISTAN-PAKISTAN
Pakistan, who have three points from their 1-0 win over Kyrgyzstan, began brightly but a defensive lapse saw them concede the lead after 14 minutes against run of play.

The two Pakistan centre-backs hesitated to clear what looked like a harmless low cross by Irgashev from the right and Hakimov, unmarked on the edge of the penalty area, had no difficulty to drill the ball past goalkeeper Jaffer Khan.

Chinese referee Hai Tan awarded a penalty to Tajikistan four minutes later when Dzhomikhon Mukhidinov was senselessly brought down by Zahid Hameed and Irgashev made no mistake to

power the ball into Jaffer's right from the spot.

Pakistan were denied of a certain goal when Muhammad Essa found the net in the 45th minute but it was disallowed for a handball by his teammate Abdul Aziz, who had square-passed the ball.

The South Asians did not lose their heart in the second-half but efforts by Aziz and Asif Ayub were spectacularly saved by rival custodian Aslidin Khabibullov.

SRI LANKA-BHUTAN
Chandradasa Galbodapayagalage scored in the first-half stoppage time as Sri Lanka edged Bhutan 1-0 at the MA Aziz Stadium. The second consecutive win almost secured the islanders a place in the last eight from Group B.

Weeraratna Jayasuriya, who scored the all-important goal in their first match against Brunei, skirted two defenders at the right and supplied the ball to Galbodapayagalage who easily tapped the ball in.

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Bangladesh A go in front

SPORTS REPORTER

Tushar Imran led Bangladesh A from the front as the hosts recorded a 30-run win over Sri Lanka A in the first one-day of the three-match series at the Shaheed Chandu Stadium in Bogra yesterday.

The Bangladesh captain scored a responsible 66 off 91 balls as his side scored 233-9 in 50 overs after electing to bat. One-down Tushar, who shared 46 runs for the second wicket after Bangladesh had lost their first wicket on 50, hit eight boundaries and added a further 79 with Sakib Al Hasan during a third wicket stand.

Opener Nazmus Sadat made 47 and Sakib 30 before the second-string Bangladesh side lost their last eight wickets for 58 runs.

In reply, Sri Lanka A were bowled out for 203 in 47.3 overs with Kulatunga topscoring with 61. Skipper Jehan Mubarak, who captured five Bangladesh wickets for 50 from ten overs, made an explosive 20-ball 43 featuring nine fours and one six. However, from 54 for no loss after five overs, the visitors completely lost their way as Farhad Reza ripped through the top order with 5-37 from 10 overs.

BRIEF SCORES

BANGLADESH A: 233-9 in 50 overs (Sadat 47, Nazimuddin 15, Tushar 66, Sakib 30, Farhad 12, Rubel 18 not out, extras 26; Ganegama 1-21, Mubarak 5-50, Kulasekera 3-31)
SRI LANKA A: 203 all out in 47.3 overs (Mubarak 43, Daniel 10, Silva 17, Kulatunga 61, Chandana 13, Kushal 23, Kulasekera 13, extras 13; Shafiq 2-38, Farhad 5-37, Rubel 1-32, Sadat 2-5)

BD-AUS SERIES

Match officials announced

SPORTS REPORTER

The match officials for the upcoming Test and one-day international series between visiting Australia and Bangladesh have been announced.

New Zealander Jeff Crowe has been named as the match referee for both the Test and the ODI series. Pakistani umpires Aleem Dar and Nadeem Ghauri will officiate the first Test while South African Ian Howell will join Dar for the second Test.

Local umpires Mahbubur Rahman, Akhtaruddin and Nadir Shah will officiate in the three one-day matches with Ian Howell.

Meanwhile, Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) is going to extend contracts with opener Shahriar Nafees, pacers Shahadat Hossain and Syed Rasel for another six months.

Also, Alok Kapali, Abdur Razzak and Mushfiqur Rahim have been picked up under the rookie contract. BCB general secretary Mahbubur Rahman said the executive committee had approved the extension of existing contracts with the three players whose six months contracts expired on March 31.

The meeting also approved the rookie contracts of Alok Kapali, Abdur Razzak and Mushfiqur Rahim.

A six-hour long executive committee meeting was held at a local hotel on Monday.

The General Secretary also said they would appoint a professional manager for the national team through open bid.

He also informed that the Australian trainer Stuart Karpinnen is leaving Bangladesh for Australia in May and they had already interviewed four applicants to replace him.

Sanath exits in pain

AFP, Kandy

Former Sri Lankan captain Sanath Jayasuriya ended his Test career on a painful note on Tuesday when he suffered a thumb injury during the second Test against Pakistan here.

Jayasuriya, 36, needed several stitches on his right thumb that was split while catching Pakistani opener Imran Farhat in the gully region on the second morning of the Test.

"It looks like he will be out for at least four weeks," Sri Lankan team's physiotherapist Tommy Simsek told reporters after returning from the Kandy Central Hospital.

"There's also a dislocation near the joint. It is very unlikely he will take any further part in the Test."

The former Sri Lankan captain announced last week he will retire from Test cricket after the second Test, but will continue to play one-day internationals.

The Kandy Test was his 102nd match in which he made 14 in the first innings.



PHOTO: AFP

Sri Lanka spinner Muttiah Muralidaran appeals successfully for an lbw decision against Pakistan batsman Faisal Iqbal during the second day's play of the second and final Test at Kandy on Tuesday.

Bangladesh to field 2nd team against Palestine



SPORTS REPORTER

Rival camps have promised a mouth-watering clash when Bangladesh and favourites Palestine clash in the AFC Challenge Cup at the Bangabandhu National Stadium today although the home side have opted to field their second-string side.

Bangladesh's Argentine coach had fielded a second-string side against India in the SAFF Championship group match after both had secured places in the semifinals in Pakistan last December and he said he will make wholesale changes in the line-up against Palestine to reserve strength and energy.

"This match is crucial but the quarterfinal is more important. A few

of my key players are suffering from mild injuries and I won't risk them against Palestine," said Cruciani who will keep only goalkeeper Aminul, defenders Siraji and Nazrul from the lineup of the first two matches.

Alfaz and centre-back Rajani, who is also on a yellow card, are suffering from injuries. Fullback Wali Faisal is all set to make his international debut.

"For us, playing Tajikistan, Pakistan or Kyrgyzstan in the knockout stage would be the same. But it does not mean the side I choose will be weak. The young players would like to have a go."

"Palestine are physically strong and technically sound. I had said before the tournament that they would be eyeing the cup. And my view has not changed. It would be a tough task for us but we are not going to make things easy for them."

"It would also be a chance for me

to weigh up their strength and find weaknesses because if we both go through, we are expected to meet in the semifinals again," Cruciani added.

After the match between the second- and fourth-ranked teams of the tournament (FIFA rankings: Palestine 121, Bangladesh 143) Cambodia play Guam in the Group C finale which only has academic interest.

Level with Bangladesh on six points, Palestine need a draw to emerge Group C champions as they have a superior goal difference having scored 15 times against conceding none in the tournament including an 11-0 drubbing of Guam. Bangladesh boast a 3-0 victory over Guam on the back of a 2-1 win over Cambodia.

But Palestine coach Mohammed Sabbah would not settle for anything less than a win.

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PHOTO: STAR

Macau players and match officials take shelter from the heavy rain during their match against Kyrgyzstan in the AFC Challenge Cup at the Bangabandhu National Stadium on Tuesday.

Australia whitewash SA



AFP, Johannesburg

Brett Lee and Michael Kasprovicz earned redemption for an Ashes-defining failure when they took Australia to a tense two-wicket win on the fifth day of the third and final Test against South Africa at the Wanderers Stadium Tuesday.

Last August, Lee and Kasprovicz put on 59 for the last wicket in the second Test against England in Birmingham, only for Kasprovicz to be dismissed to give England a two-run win. The result leveled a series, which England went on to win.

Tuesday, they were effectively the last pair again - although injured opener Justin Langer defied doctor's orders and put on the pads with about ten runs needed.

This time they got Australia home with an unbeaten 19-run stand to complete a 3-0 series sweep - the first by an Australian team in South Africa.

"It was a bit of justice after what happened in England," said Australian captain Ricky Ponting.

"It was almost exactly the same situation. I know how much it hurt those guys that day. We sat down after that game and we all basically said to them how proud we were of

what they had done, although we didn't get across the line. It was unbelievably difficult conditions for batting out there."

Australia started the day needing 44 to win with six wickets down. The second new ball was taken after two runs had been added, nine balls into the day.

Damien Martyn completed his 13th Test century but was leg before wicket to Shaun Pollock for 101 four balls later, with 34 still needed. Stuart Clark hit two fours off Makhaya Ntini but then top-edged a catch to wicketkeeper Mark Boucher, bringing Kasprovicz to the crease.

Lee and Kasprovicz both batted confidently as they neared the target, with Lee hitting Pollock through the covers for four and Kasprovicz doing the same to Ntini before Lee hit the winning runs, cracking Pollock square on the off-side for four.

Man-of-the-match Lee, who took three wickets in each innings and scored 64 in the first innings, made 24 not out.

It was Australia's fifth successive win over South Africa, after the first match of a three-Test series in Australia earlier this season was drawn.

South African captain Jacques Kallis said it had been a big blow not to be able to call on fast bowler Andre Nel during the final innings

because of illness.

"But we arrived this morning really believing we could win it. They played aggressively and it paid off."

Seam bowler Stuart Clark, who made his debut in the first Test at the age of 30, was named man of the series after taking 20 wickets at an average of 15.85.

"He's been like a Glenn McGrath, but five years younger," said Ponting.

SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard on the fifth day of the third and final Test between South Africa and Australia at the Wanderers Stadium Tuesday:
SOUTH AFRICA: First innings 303
AUSTRALIA: First innings 270
SOUTH AFRICA: Second innings 258

AUSTRALIA: Second innings (overnight 248-6)
Hayden c De Villiers b Ntini 0
Hussey lbw b Boje 89
Ponting c Boucher b Kallis 20
Martyn lbw b Pollock 101
Symonds c Boucher b Kallis 29
Gilchrist c Boucher b Ntini 0
Warne c Boucher b Ntini 3
Lee not out 24
Clark c Boucher b Ntini 10
Kasprovicz not out 11
Extras: (b-1, lb-9, nb-1) 7
Total: (For 8 wks in 91.4 overs) 294

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Flintoff feels the heat



AFP, New Delhi

Andrew Flintoff faced calls on Tuesday to step down for the remainder of the one-day series in India after England crashed to their third consecutive defeat in Goa.

The tourists found little joy in India's most popular holiday resort as they slid to a 49-run defeat on Monday chasing 294-6 in oppressive hot and humid weather.

The contest looks effectively over for England in the seven-match series where they must bounce back from a 0-3 deficit and win the remaining four games in equally challenging tropical conditions.

The travelling British media was particularly worried about star all-rounder Flintoff, who is leading the side in the absence of the injured Michael Vaughan.

"There are many reasons to be

concerned about England's one-day side ... selection, skill levels, morale..." said the Daily Telegraph.

"But the biggest worry of all must

"Flintoff is not the kind of man who would ever put himself before the team. But perhaps the England management should consider doing exactly that."

Flintoff's anguish at the team's performance in the Goa heat "was painful to see," wrote the Telegraph's correspondent.

Former Australian Test star Dean Jones, who is covering the tour for television, blamed the lack of fitness and the gruelling travelling schedule for England's misery.

"This is a seriously accident-prone team," said Jones, referring to missing stars like Vaughan, Marcus Trescothick, Simon Jones and Steve Harmison.

Worse, Kevin Pietersen was forced to miss Monday's match with a stomach ailment, the first to fall to such avoidable bugs.

"Never have I seen so many injuries and illnesses in a touring team, it is quite bizarre," said Jones.



ANDREW FLINTOFF

be Andrew Flintoff. While other senior players rest at home, England's Atlas is carrying this arduous tour on his shoulders.

What to WATCH

- BTV**
AFC Challenge Cup
Bangladesh vs Palestine
Live at 3:30 pm
Philippines vs Afghanistan
Live at 6:00 pm
- BTV World**
AFC Challenge Cup
India vs Chinese Taipei
Live at 3:30 pm
Cambodia vs Guam
Live at 6:00 pm
- TEN Sports**
Sri Lanka vs Pakistan
2nd Test, Day Three
Live at 10:30 am
- ESPN**
UEFA Champions League
Barcelona vs Benfica
Live at 12:30 am (Thursday)
- STAR Sports**
UEFA Champions League
Juventus vs Arsenal
Live at 12:30 am (Thursday)

DAY'S EVENT

- AFC Challenge Cup**
India vs Chinese Taipei (3:30 pm)
Philippines vs Afghanistan (6:00 pm)
Venue: MA Aziz Stadium, Chittagong
- Bangladesh vs Palestine (3:30 pm)**
Cambodia vs Guam (6:00 pm)
Venue: Bangabandhu National Stadium

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