

Concerns as Mymensingh Premier League starts today

STAR SPORT DESK

Mymensingh Premier League (MPL), the first 100-ball cricket tournament of the country, gets underway in Mymensingh today amid concerns over health safety of the cricketers involved.

Marking the birth centenary of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the tournament titled 'Walton MPL-2020, a Battle of 100 Balls', will feature a number of former national players as well as members of the Under-19 World Cup winning team.

Mymensingh Masters Cricket Association (MMCA), a forum of ex-cricketers, is organising the event at the Mymensingh Circuit House ground.

A total of six teams, split into two groups, will take part in the five-day tournament, which will conclude on December 25, informed organisers at a press conference yesterday.

According to the organisers, the tournament will feature former national team players such as Mohammad Ashraf, Rakibul Hasan, Ilyus Sunny, Suvagata Hom, Sabbir Rahman, Arafat Sunny, Nasir Hossain alongside U-19 World Cup team members including Akbar Ali, Parvez Hossain Emon, Tanjid Hasan Tamim and Towhid Hridoy. Although the organisers claimed



that health guidelines and social distancing will be maintained, there is a fair amount of skepticism whether that is even possible at a divisional city and under the auspices of a local association.

Bangladesh Cricket Board's CEO Nizamuddin Chowdhury said they discourage players to be involved with any such events outside the jurisdiction of the BCB, especially during the pandemic era.

"Keeping Covid-19 at bay is a very big challenge. From the experience of the BCB President's Cup and the

Bangabandhu T20 Cup, I can say that organising events entails a lot of challenge, with great logistical and monetary investments needed during pandemic. It takes a lot of planning, effort and investment to ensure a bio-bubble. We have always discouraged players from committing to any such events and asked everyone to maintain caution and personal health safety," Chowdhury told The Daily Star.

Akbar Ali is one of the players to feature in the tournament, as per the organisers. When contacted,

the wicketkeeper-batsman said he received an invitation, but was yet to decide on participation.

"Someone informally asked me to play in a league a few days ago. I am still not certain whether I will play or not. I haven't made any commitments yet," said the 19-year-old, who, along with the other members of the U-19 World Cup winning team, is under BCB's Game Development committee contract.

*Our Mymensingh correspondent contributed to this report.

BCB hoping to appoint batting consultant soon

SPORTS REPORTER

With the home series against the West Indies scheduled to begin in January drawing nearer, the Bangladesh Cricket Board is looking to fill the vacant post of batting coach.

Former South Africa batsman Neil McKenzie resigned as Tigers' limited-overs batting consultant in August this year, ending a two-year stint with Bangladesh.

BCB then roped in former New Zealand batsman Craig McMillan as a replacement for the tour of Sri Lanka, but after the shock of his father's death, he decided not to continue in his role with the Tigers.

The board has since been looking for other candidates and it was learned that the BCB is in talks with former English cricketer

"We have a few candidates for the post of batting consultant of our national team and we are in talks with them," Akram Khan, chairman of BCB's cricket operations committee, told the media yesterday. "At the moment it won't be appropriate to disclose any name as we are yet to finalise anyone. As you know, we had Craig McMillan as the batting consultant for the Sri Lanka series, but he couldn't join us for family reasons."

"Although the tour of Sri Lanka was eventually postponed, we were looking for a new batting coach. Hopefully, we will be able to appoint one soon."

The 50-year-old Lewis was also among the shortlisted candidates for the batting consultant post after McKenzie left the job, and was even expected to arrive in Bangladesh for an interview.

Lewis had the experience of coaching in the subcontinent as he worked as Sri Lanka's batting coach in the ICC World Cup in 2019. He was also instrumental in Durham winning the Royal London One-Day Cup title back in 2014.

Meanwhile, the selectors have already chalked out the squads for the series against West Indies, who are scheduled to arrive in Bangladesh on January 10. The Caribbean side will take part in a three-match ODI and two-match Test series.

Akram had previously informed that the national camp for the West Indies series is expected to start by the first week of January and the foreign coaching staff, including head coach Russell Domingo, is expected to join the side by the time.

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AKRAM KHAN
CHAIRMAN OF BCB'S CRICKET OPERATIONS COMMITTEE

and Durham head coach Jon Lewis for the post of the Tigers' batting consultant for the upcoming West Indies series.

Navy bag second win in a row

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Navy, a team full of national players, notched their second successive win in the Walton Victory Day Hockey tournament after beating Bangladesh Air Force 3-1 at the Maulana Bhasani Hockey Stadium yesterday.

Navy, who thrashed Bangladesh Police 7-2 the previous day, toiled hard against Bangladesh Air Force to bag their second win. Debashih Kumar levelled the margin for Air Force after Ashraf Islam put Navy ahead in the very first minutes. Later, Ashraf converted another penalty to restore the lead and Moinal Islam sealed the match by scoring in the 42nd minute.

In the day's other match, Bangladesh Army made a flying start with a massive 7-2 defeat of Police. National striker Abdul Malek scored a treble before Ahsan Habib struck two in a one-sided game.

Rezaul Karim and Tanzim Ahmed also added their names to the scoresheet for Army, while Mohsin and Mohidur scored two goals for Police.

Williamson lauds 'fantastic' Seifert

AGENCIES

Opener Tim Seifert's 84 not out trumped an unbeaten 99 by Mohammed Hafeez as New Zealand claimed the second Twenty20 against Pakistan by nine wickets in Hamilton on Sunday to take the series with a game to spare.

New Zealand chased down Pakistan's 163 for six with four balls to spare. Seifert has been at the top of his game in the ongoing 3-match T20I series against Pakistan. The 26-year-old hit back to back fifties and has been clinical in the series win.

New dad captain Kane Williamson, who was rested in the 1st T20I, formed an unbeaten 129-run partnership with

Seifert in the 2nd T20I win. Williamson, at the post-match ceremony, expressed his appreciation for Seifert whose knock took the pressure off New Zealand.

"Fantastic innings by Seifert there, a really good effort with the ball. It was a good surface, there was something for the bowlers and you could build partnerships," Williamson said.

"We were chasing a par total and a couple of wickets would have made it more difficult for us. Seifert was banging it around and took the pressure off. We know the quality of their attack and it's never certain over. They pulled it back and made the game a lot tighter. We'll look to improve in the next game adapt to the conditions we get in Napier."



Brothers to be allowed in Fed Cup

SPORTS REPORTER

The Players' Status Committee of the Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) yesterday recommended that Brothers Union be provisionally allowed to take part in the season's curtain-raising Federation Cup despite their failure to submit players' registration documents within the deadline.

The football season will start tomorrow through the Federation Cup with 13 teams.

"The window of the players' registration is opened centring the Bangladesh Premier League but Brothers Union delayed for two days in submitting their documents. Although it does not match with the bylaws, we have recommended that Brothers be provisionally allowed to take part in the Federation Cup," said BFF Players' Status Committee Deputy Chairman Abdur Rahim after the meeting.

"The meeting referred the matter about Brothers' participation in the BPL to the professional league committee, who will take the final decision after discussion with the BFF executive committee," said Rahim. "The committee will also inform FIFA and other BPL clubs."



LIKE FATHER, LIKE SON!

Legendary golfer Tiger Woods and his son Charlie Woods paired up for the PNC championship family tournament, being played in Orlando, Florida. While all the focus was on the 15-time major champion, it was his 11-year-old son Charlie who stole the limelight with an impressive eagle at the par-5 third hole and nine birdies for Team Woods. Charlie, the youngest player taking part in this year's exhibition tournament featuring 20 teams, shocked many with his controlled swings at such a tender age. And according to his dad, he played just like he does at home. Charlie's shots and mannerisms created a buzz on social media, with many fans and celebrities taking to Twitter to express their excitement.

PHOTO: TWITTER



Robert Lewandowski (top) rescued all three points for Bayern Munich, scoring his second deep into stoppage time to secure a 2-1 win against Bayer Leverkusen on Saturday. On the same night, Cristiano Ronaldo netted a brace, including this soaring effort, as Juventus defeated Parma 4-0 in Serie A. Those strikes saw Ronaldo become the best league scorer of 2020 with 33 goals in Serie A, but Robert Lewandowski outshone him in all competitions with 45 strikes compared to the Juventus striker's 41.

PHOTO: TWITTER

'Serious wounds opened up'

AGENCIES

Before the Test Series began, former Australia captain Ricky Ponting predicted a 2-1 series win to the hosts. But having witnessed India's capitulation in Adelaide the Test great says a series sweep could be on the cards.

"Now there's some serious wounds opened up," Ponting told cricket.com.au.

"There could be a good chance (of a sweep). Let's hope we do get a result in Melbourne and if we do, I think India's going to find it really hard to bounce back and win a game."

If India are to bounce back they will have to do it without their talismanic captain Virat Kohli, who now heads home for the birth of his first child while his teammates head to Melbourne for the Boxing Day Test under the captaincy of Ajinkya Rahane.

Meanwhile, Australia pacesman Pat Cummins said that he was hoping for another good track when the teams meet again in the second Test in Melbourne on December 26.



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