

BFF Bhaban Opening date likely to be deferred

SPORTS REPORTER

The opening ceremony of the newly built Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) Bhaban is expected to be delayed from the proposed date of January 15.

The BFF officials, who set the date for January 15 after failing to confirm FIFA president Sepp Blatter's arrival, are now considering an AFC request to push it back to February 7, 8 or 9.

BFF deputy general secretary Manzoor Hossain Malu informed yesterday that the game's Asian governing body has requested the federation to choose a new date on February 7, 8 or 9.

The BFF has already formed a committee to celebrate the inauguration of the building with its vice-president Monir Ahmed as chairman and vice-president Sirajul Islam Bachchu as coordinator.

RU cricket

RU CORRESPONDENT

Zoology Department defeated Chemistry Department by five wickets and Population Science and Human Research Department recorded a similar result against Library and Information Science Department in the Inter-Department Cricket Tournament of Rajshahi University yesterday.

Wining the toss, Chemistry batted first and they made 97 before being all out in 20 overs. In reply, the winners reached their target losing five wickets in 19 overs.

In another match, Library Science decided to bat first and made 126-9 in 25 overs. Population Science scored 127 losing five wickets in 24 overs.

On Wednesday, Public Administration Department defeated Physiology Department by 81 runs and Management Department handed Anthropology Department a nine-wicket defeat.

Abahani fly

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Mohammedian, on the other hand, are expected to field Karnataka's young batsman Arun Jagdish in their crucial game against Old DOHS tomorrow. Jagdish, due to reach the capital today, will replace Kenyan Steve Tikolo who went back home after playing five league matches.

The Motijheel outfit have decided to bring Jagdish, an Indian under-19 international, for a brief period as they are waiting for Himachal Pradesh captain Sandeep Sharma, who will not be available before December 27.

Jamiul leads

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Hossain and Abu Khalid returned identical figures of 3-18 to help Eskaton Sabuj Sangha (87-2) record an eight-wicket victory over Nabin Sangha (85) at the Jahangirnagar University ground.

Abahani overcome

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easy chances but he finally relieved Abahani with a 53rd minute match-winner. It was their eighth and last penalty-corner of the match and after a series of passes, Prakash sealed victory pushing home from close.

The day's other match between Azad Sporting Club and Railway Sporting Club ended in a goalless draw.

Azad have six points after eight games and Railway five from seven matches.



Abahani forward Jimmy (2nd from R) is surrounded by three Sonali Bank players during their Green Delta Premier Division Hockey League match at the Maulana Bhasani National Stadium yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

Rains dash SL preps

Cricket

AFP, Auckland

Sri Lanka have turned to world rankings for motivation as they enter their one-day cricket series against New Zealand with limited preparation, without proven match-winner Muttiah Muralitharan and facing a stark climate change.

At stake in the series is the world No. 2 one-day ranking behind world champions Australia, and Sri Lanka's build-up has been wrecked by rain.

Their tour opener against Central Districts was abandoned Tuesday early in the second innings, and the second scheduled match against Northern Districts was cancelled without a ball being bowled on Thursday.

The visitors will play five one-day internationals and two Tests in New Zealand.

The home team are full of confidence after their most successful period in 32 years of one-day internationals. They have 18 wins from 22 games this year, including a tied series with world champions Australia earlier this month.

Until their arrival here it had also been a positive year for Sri Lanka, winning 20 of 27 one-dayers and currently ranked second in the world.

To add to Sri Lanka's discomfort, opening bowler Nuwan Zoysa dislocated a finger and needed stitches during the opening tour match.

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world -- just one point ahead of New Zealand.

But their hopes of an easy adjustment to New Zealand conditions have been washed away by rain, leaving skipper Marvan Atapattu to cite the rankings as a source of inspiration.

"They do matter for us," he said. "Everybody is trying to get to the top. That is one way of measuring how you are doing."

New Zealand is experiencing an unseasonably wet and cold summer and an unsettled forecast for much of the country may have an impact on the opening one-day international in Auckland on Sunday.

With temperatures hovering around 20 degrees Celsius (68 Fahrenheit), Sri Lankan coach and former Australian opener John Dyson pointed to climatic change as the biggest factor his young side had to contend with.

"They've been used to 30 degree days minimum and they are the sort of guys that get affected by it pretty quickly."

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Sanath Jayasuriya, Kumar Sangakkara, Atapattu and Mahela Jayawardene are among the top 15 run scorers in Test cricket this year.

Jayasuriya needs only a further 147 to reach 10,000 runs from 332 one-day internationals -- a feat achieved by just two other players, Sachin Tendulkar who has scored 13,431 runs in 340 matches, and Inzamamul Haq with 10,267 from 328 matches.

Atapattu is not far behind with 7,292 runs in his 224 one-day internationals.

In one-day cricket, no one has scored more this year than Sangakkara who has totalled 1,009 from 26 matches at 56.05.

If New Zealand has an Achilles heel it is in the top order, particularly an opening partner for skipper Stephen Fleming. Recent matches have seen all-rounders Scott Styris, Jacob Oram and Chris Cairns along with wicket-keeper Brendan McCullum called on to steady the innings.

Sri Lanka dominated their one-day series in New Zealand four years ago, winning 4-1, but in total have won just six of 17 one-day internationals between the two countries.

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Atapattu told reporters, adding: "It's 50 per cent he might play, 50 per cent he might not play. But it's just a bit too early (to say) at this stage."

"He's in bed and not feeling very good."

Langer is Test cricket's leading scorer in 2004 with 1,426 runs, including five centuries.

The 34-year-old left-hander was man of the match after scoring 191 and 97 in last week's first Test win over Pakistan in Perth.

The Williams sisters were faring

shorter his run-up to help his embattled team was based mainly on showmanship.

"That's what he loves. Cutting that run-up down might take a bit away from who he is, so maybe that's why he's holding on."

"He's a top bowler who can just rip through sides. But he also has the potential to bowl a heap of rubbish as well."

Shoaib, however, found a supporter in former Pakistan fast bowler Sarfaraz Nawaz who said he would be a mediocre bowler if he shortened it.

"I designed Akhtar's run-up in a camp in 1996 and his effectiveness is at its fullest if he comes from a long run-up. He has not been used properly," Nawaz told AFP, blaming Akhtar's fitness levels for his erratic form.

"For this long run-up and long bursts Akhtar needs full fitness. He has been very soft and reacted more even to minor injuries like we saw at Perth," Nawaz added.

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