

All set to launch 3rd JFA Cup

SPORTS REPORTER

With the view to hunt talents, the 3rd JFA Cup Under-15 Football Championship kicks off tomorrow across the country with the qualifying rounds.

Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) organises the tournament with financial help from Japan Football Association (JFA), which will provide US dollars 25,000 (Tk 17,37,200) for the third edition, informed tournament committee chairman Abdur Rahim at a press conference at the BFF Bhaban yesterday.

A total of 58 teams, 57 districts and BKSP, will take part in the knockout first phase where eight venues -- Comilla, Mymensingh, Khulna, Sirajganj, Shariatpur, Narail, Manikganj, Natore -- will be used.

The eight zonal champions, split into two groups, will compete in the round-robin final phase, expected to start in Dhaka on February 24.

Teams will receive Tk 9,000 participation money in the first phase and the winners of each round a bonus of Tk 4,000.

Each of the eight finalists will receive Tk 25,000 and the last four an additional Tk 5,000 each.

The BFF, which has an estimated budget of Tk 19 lakh, will give the hosting districts Tk 30,000 each.

Opening day's matches: Faridpur v Rajbari (Manikganj), Sherpur v Jamalpur (Mymensingh), Feni v Laxmipur (Comilla), Naogaon v Bogra (Sirajganj), Bagerhat v Jessore (Khulna) and Dinajpur v Panchagarh (Natore).

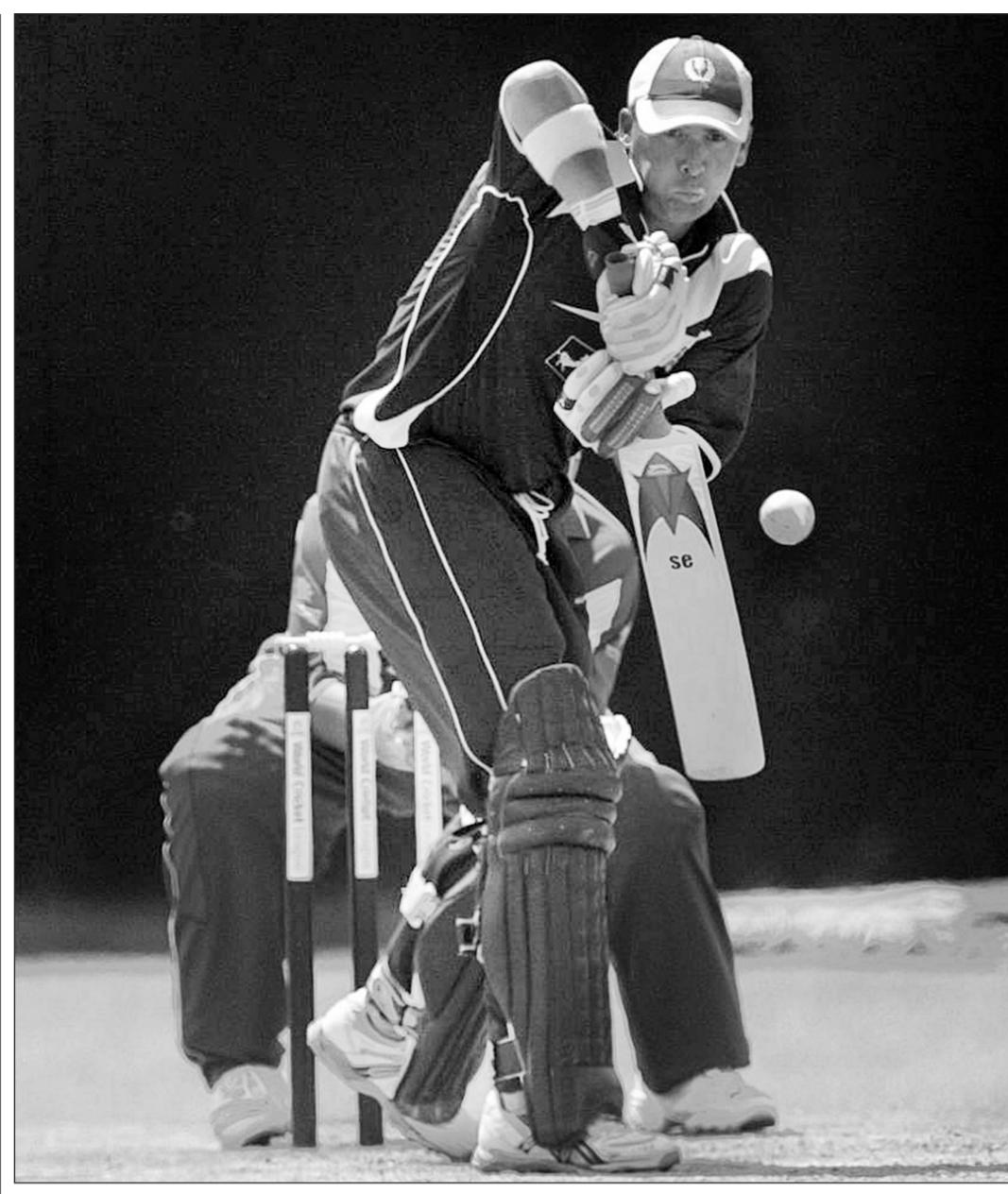


PHOTO: AFP

Scotland's Gavin Hamilton blocks the ball during their ICC World Cricket League match against Bermuda at the Rauraka Sports Club in Nairobi on Monday.

All-round Scots dump Kenya

Cricket

AFP, Nairobi

Lanka bank on 'X factor'

AFP, New Delhi

Sri Lanka will rely on unpredictable fast bowler Lasith Malinga to rattle India in the one-day series starting this week, vice-captain Kumar Sangakkara said on Monday.

The 23-year-old Malinga has claimed 71 wickets in 21 Tests and scalped 37 victims in 25 one-dayers with his unusual round-arm slinging action that batsmen find difficult to read.

Sangakkara said Malinga would be Sri Lanka's main weapon in the four matches against India in the absence of stalwarts Chaminda Vaas and Muttiah Muralidaran, who were rested ahead of the World Cup.

"Malinga has brought that X-factor into the side, that bit of unpredictability," Sangakkara said ahead of the first match at the Eden Gardens in Kolkata on Thursday.

"He bowls at 150 kmph-plus (95 miles) regularly. He is very accurate and has got a very positive attitude."

"That ruts off on all the guys in the team and when we play with him we tend to be a bit more aggressive, a bit more positive, follow him along."

"We have got an all-round pace attack. We've got a good balance, got guys who bowl fast and guys who bowl line and length."

The four-match series will be the last for the rivals before the World Cup opens in the Caribbean on March 13.

Both India and Sri Lanka are drawn in Group B of the World Cup preliminary league along with Bangladesh and first-timers Bermuda.

Sangakkara, a brilliant batsman-wicketkeeper, dismissed suggestions that Vaas and Muralidaran should have taken part in the India series to warm up for the World Cup.

"They have played for such a long time for Sri Lanka and I don't think four more matches would make a difference as long as they put in hours of practice and prepare well," he said.

Breaking records

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make players available for national age group teams by picking up the talents from the competition.

The BCB has brought change in the format as there would be only one age-group (under-16) unlike the previous occasions. "We have decided to go with one age-group to avoid controversy over age," informed Jamil.

The game development committee emphasised on improvement of the grounds that remain a big problem and it has allotted a big chunk of money (Tk 25 lakh) to upgrade the grounds through BCB's grounds committee.

As per a three-year contract, the Standard Chartered Bank will provide Tk 5 lakh for the second year out of the total Tk 1.27-crone budget.

"At Standard Chartered we believe prioritising long-term grassroots development is the way to go. We are indeed delighted to lead this grassroots level development in partnership with Bangladesh Cricket Board," said Shah Masud Imam, head of corporate affairs of the bank.

Cricket

REUTERS, Dubai

Chief executive Malcolm Speed says the International Cricket Council (ICC) took on a sizeable task by agreeing to stage the World Cup on nine different Caribbean islands and has called for understanding when problems arise.

"There will be logistical problems, everyone knows that," Speed told Reuters at the Dubai Desert Classic golf tournament. "There will be times when for one reason or another the arrangements are criticised in the media."

"I think we need to bear in mind the size of the undertaking of playing a major sporting event in nine countries. Each country is different to each other; they do very little together but have all come together to host this World Cup."

Speed acknowledged transportation would be a major issue during the March 13-April 28 tournament in Jamaica, Barbados,

Guyana, Trinidad & Tobago, Antigua, Grenada, St Lucia, St Vincent and St Kitts and Nevis.

"The issue of getting people to the next country are difficult but there are people who have been working on it for several years now and we hope to have very few problems," said the 58-year-old Australian.

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that anyone who goes to these venues will be very impressed with what they see."

The World Cup was first staged in England in 1975 but Speed said the forthcoming tournament would be different to the previous eight editions.

"I think it will be a unique World Cup," he said. "We are playing in nine countries who have put in a lot of work while the governments have provided exceptionally good support."

On the playing side, Speed said that even though England's stock had slumped after a string of poor Test and one-day performances in Australia, they will have been given a lift by Friday's 92-run victory over the world champions in Sydney.

"It seems all the venues are on track, the grounds will be excellent," he said. "They are working very hard to get the pitches and the playing fields up to standard."

"I am quite confident the work that's gone into the planning for the venues has been outstanding and

violence that stains the world of soccer".

Prime Minister Romano Prodi told Raciti's widow and two children that his death had "shocked and moved Italy". He said hooligans had transformed a simple game into "a guerrilla war". Raciti's 15-year-old daughter gave a tearful speech, saying: "I hope your death can transform society". His wife told the mourners that Raciti's last day started like any other.

"We said goodbye just like we always do, 'Ciao, see you later'. I imagined he would come back a bit bruised," she said. "I never imagined he would come back like this."

Raciti was the 13th person to be killed in or around Italy's football stadiums since 1962. The last fatality at a Serie A match hap-

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