

OPENING MIGHT BE BROUGHT FORWARD Budget set to be approved

SPORTS REPORTER

The opening ceremony of the ICC World Cup 2011, which is slated for February 18 at the Bangabandhu National Stadium (BNS), may be brought forward by a day to give the team's a one-day break before the start of the main event.

The operations committee has decided in its last meeting three days back to put the proposal before the central organising committee (COC) for final approval. The next COC meeting was scheduled in Dhaka but now it will take place in Mumbai on September 2.

"The operations committee has decided to hold the opening ceremony on February 17 to make sure the teams get a day for travelling to the venues before the start of the main event. It will be finally approved in the COC meeting," informed Jalal Yunus, BCB's media committee chairman.

"We have prepared the budget and operations plan to place before the next

ICC meeting in October for approval. The venue of the next COC meeting has changed to avoid further travel for the officials who will be in Mumbai to attend the awards night," said BCB senior vice-president Mahbubul Anam, who is also secretary of the COC.

Anam, who is also a convener of the budget and operations sub committee, said that the venue inspections would be completed by October and the match schedule will be announced the following month.

But for Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) the reality is that it was almost seven months back when they told the press that they were lagging behind in preparation and with only 17 months in hand there has hardly been any improvement in this regard.

Jalal Yunus said that the preparation will gather pace once a nearly Tk 150 crore budget will be approved in today's Executive Committee of the National Economic Council (ECNEC) meeting.

"Hope the budget will be passed in today's ECNEC meeting because it was approved in the pre-ECNEC meeting and as well it was also scrutinised by the plan-

ning commission members," said Yunus.

"The tender process will be launched once the budget gets the approval. And all the work will be executed through the National Sports Council (NSC) but BCB will give them a consultant in the tendering process," he added.

Near about Tk 63 crore will be spent to upgrade the standard of the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur while Tk 57 crore is planned for the Fatullah Cricket Stadium which will include installation of electronic scoreboards, floodlights, giant screens, upgradation of grounds etc and a further Tk 31 crore for renovation of BNS where only the opening ceremony will take place.

"We also submitted the DPP (development project planning) for Chittagong to NSC," said Yunus adding that the port city is being considered for a match venue.

Bangladesh will host eight matches of the showcase event including two quarterfinals while highest 29 matches out of 49 will be played in India including one quarterfinal, semifinal and the final, 12 matches in Sri Lanka including one quarterfinal and semifinal.



PHOTO: AFP

England captain Andrew Strauss (C) holds the Ashes trophy aloft while the team celebrates at the end of the fifth and final Ashes Test at The Oval in London on Sunday.

Hockey needs soul back

ANISUR RAHMAN

Seven national hockey players left Dhaka for Germany yesterday to hone their skills for different clubs in the most modern domestic competition as part of their preparation for next year's South Asian Games.

But the training of such high standard for a select band of 19 players (three players are already in Germany while nine will join them later) hardly reflected the uncertain future of many others in a sport that is destined for desertion due to the absence of domestic competitions.

More than a year has elapsed since the last match of the Premier Hockey League, the most attractive domestic event, was held on June 6, 2008. Since then the Bangladesh Hockey Federation (BHF) could manage to organize only the Shaheed Dibash hockey tournament and that too sans two most revered outfits in the domestic circuit -- Abahani and Mohammedan.

The BHF deserves kudos for providing higher training for the members of the national team. But at the same time they have miserably failed to strike a deal with the clubs virtually putting this year's

domestic competitions in limbo. The federation wanted to fix a date for inter-club players' transfer this month, but fell through because of the absence of any representatives of the two popular clubs in that futile meeting. The federation fixed a fresh date of transfer in October. But unless they show the patience and wisdom to feel the pulse of the clubs, they might run the risk of passing a season without a domestic event.

"I must appreciate the initiatives of the federation for sending the national team players abroad for training, but one thing they should not forget is that our hockey is not about nourishing only 20 players," said midfielder Shahidullah Titu, who donned the national jersey in this year's Asia Cup.

The absence of uninterrupted domestic competition has already affected the players.

"Now I am in Faridpur doing a business as there is no attempt from the federation to start the domestic meets, which is our main source of income," said a dejected Musa Mia, whose two younger brothers Isa Mia and Yamin have also joined their elder brother in business.

Medio Ehsan Rana has also become

involved in a business in Dhaka while Ashiqur Rahman has joined a bank, apparently sensing a bleak future of a game, which was once considered a bright prospect after football and cricket.

Lot was expected when Khondokar Jamil Uddin, a well-known organizer, won the chief executives post in the elections last year. But the BHF general secretary's focus on international frontiers overlooking the domestic affairs put his credential in jeopardy.

He often says that no one can develop hockey if he fails, but the fact is that despite having a beautiful turf and all facilities he or his executive committee is yet to declare a domestic calendar after being elected in the last year's October polls.

Bangladesh finished last in the seven-team Asia Cup in Kuala Lumpur where they conceded 32 goals in four games. This latest debacle can be an eye opener for us that unless we have a strong domestic base like we had in the 80s and 90s we are destined to suffer in any international meet.

Country's hockey now fully depends on the Bangladesh Krira Shikkha Protisthan (BKSP), of whom 16 players

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Did U Know?

In 1898, one of the first programmes to be broadcasted on radio was a yacht race that took place in British waters.



Sir Alex Ferguson

(Man United manager)
"He's still a young lad and some players are at a club for many years and don't reach that total. Because of his age I'm sure he'll go on and score many more goals for us. He's a very important player for us." After Wayne Rooney reaching the milestone (100 goals) for the club during his side's 5-0 victory against Wigan on Saturday.



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Under-19 schedules released

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) released itineraries for the England Under-19s and Zimbabwe Under-19s tours to Bangladesh in October-November this year.

In the reciprocal tour England Under-19 team will arrive in Dhaka on October 9 to play a four-day Test and seven one-day matches against the young Tigers, who visited England last month to win the five-match one-day series 2-1 after losing the two-match four-day Test series 0-1.

The series would be followed by five-match one-day competition against Zimbabwe Under-19s, who will arrive in Dhaka on November 8.

Bangladesh Under-19s will play the two series as part of their preparations for

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Freddie fire still burning Eyes Bangladesh tour

Cricket

CRICINFO, undated

The morning after England's 2005 Ashes victory, Andrew Flintoff could barely stand, having enjoyed an all-night vigil at the bar which continued well into the following day. Fast-forward four years and it was a much more sober and mature Flintoff who reflected on his second series triumph over Australia and prepared himself for another long period of rehabilitation.

With England securing the Ashes in four days, Flintoff's knee operation was brought forward to Monday evening and by the time he left his press conference he was already nil-by-mouth. There'll be no more champagne or beer, at least until the general anaesthetic has worn off. Four years ago he wouldn't have needed any drugs to get through major surgery.

Flintoff's morning-after feeling this time was more to do with the realisation that he faces another painful round of recuperation from his latest surgery. When news of his operation was first reported last week a nine-month lay-off was one figure bandied around, but the man himself will wait and see how the procedure goes and hasn't ruled out a return for the one-

day series in Bangladesh next February.

"The fortunate thing about winning a day early is that they have brought my op forward," he said. "I can get that done tonight (Monday) - then it's all about getting fit. The harsh reality is now that I need to get my knee sorted out. It's made me more determined to get back to playing fit. Last week was a hard one for me, lots of talks with the surgeon but the incentive is wearing the three lions and I desperately want to wear them again, albeit in one-day matches and Twenty20s."

"The surgeon has a good idea of what he's going to find. I think it'd be wrong for me to speculate on that. Then, like I say, the rehab... we'll see when I wake up after the anaesthetic and see where I'm at with it."

"Realistically I think before Christmas I'm going to struggle. Obviously I've retired from Test cricket but there's a tour to Bangladesh which I desperately want to be involved in. So realistically I think that could be my first cricket after this Test. I want to be the best one-day cricketer in the world and I can set my sights on that."

While Flintoff repeated his desire to be the best limited-overs player on the planet he wants the Test team that he knows leaves behind to learn from the mistakes of 2005 and

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PHOTO: AFP

Swiss World number one Roger Federer holds aloft the Cincinnati Masters trophy after defeating Novak Djokovic of Serbia in the final in Ohio on Sunday.

Roger takes Cincy title

Tennis

AFP, Cincinnati

World number one Roger Federer defeated fourth-seeded Novak Djokovic 6-1, 7-5 to win the Cincinnati Masters title Sunday and cement his status as favourite for the upcoming US Open.

Federer set the tone in the second game of the match, when Djokovic saved six break points but still couldn't ward off the break of serve.

"A good start always helps," said Federer. "That was the case today."

When Djokovic finally held serve in the sixth game of the match he could only look at the sky and smile.

He presented a tougher challenge in the second set but couldn't capitalize on a set point in the 10th game. Federer earned the key break for a 6-5 lead before serving out the match with a love game.

"The closest I was going to get to the first-place trophy is now," the world's fourth-ranked player said on the court immediately following the match.

Federer won his third Cincinnati title after victories here in 2005 and 2007. He also captured his 16th Masters crown -- second only to Andre Agassi's career total of 17 in the elite series.

"I felt like my game was already pretty well in place in practice, so knew coming over here it was not just to show up," he said.

He turned the tables on Djokovic, who had beaten him in two prior meetings this season.

More importantly, the five-time defending US Open champion showed he is on form with the last Grand Slam of the season scheduled to start at Flushing Meadows on August 31.

"The fans for me really turned it around, and that's why this year I'm so excited going back there," Federer said. "I've had even better results, so I hope I can again show them what I can do on a tennis court."

After capturing the Masters title in Madrid, Federer posted milestone victories at Roland Garros and Wimbledon this year.

His first French Open title made him just the sixth man to complete a career Grand Slam and his triumph over Andy Roddick in an epic Wimbledon final gave him a record 15th career Grand Slam.

Mash returns home after surgery

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh captain Mashrafe Bin Mortaza returned home yesterday after successful operations on both his knees in Melbourne, Australia.

"I already spent two weeks out of the six-week of rehabilitation programme and I can understand my position once I start running. But I feel good now and hopeful that I can start playing from the Premier Division Cricket," said Mashrafe.

The most coveted domestic competition, the Premier Division Cricket League will kick off with the T20 version from October 10 to October 18 while the one-day competition is scheduled for October 23 to December 15.

On the other hand Bangladesh's next international assignment is against Zimbabwe, who will arrive in Dhaka on October 23 to play five one-day internationals

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Ponting down but not out

Cricket

CRICINFO, undated

So acute is the pain of a second Ashes defeat that Ricky Ponting, the Australian captain, has declared himself amenable to the idea of a fifth tour of England in 2013. Ponting, who on Sunday became the first Australian captain since Billy Murdoch to twice lead Australia to Ashes series defeats in England, said the prospect of atoning for losses in 2005 and 2009 could convince him to return for one final campaign at the age of 38.

"We'll see how I'm going in four years," Ponting said. "Hopefully I'll have another chance to play another Ashes series back in Australia, but it would be nice, with everything I've done in my career and the games I've played, to have some good memories from this ground. I might have to come back next time and find some."

"With a loss, I'm more determined than ever to be a better player and leader than I am at the moment. I don't really know what to expect when I get back. Hopefully most of the questions will be from journalists, not from people above. But we'll see. I've felt I've given myself the best opportunity and done a good job as a captain and leader in this series. Leaders are always looked upon on their results on their team. Unfortunately for me and the rest of the guys we haven't got the results we would have

liked. Ultimately it is my responsibility to get the best out of the guys and to win series. I felt I ticked most of those boxes, other than making a few more runs myself."

Ponting cut a forlorn figure at Sunday's post-match press conference, having watched his side squander a shot at a world record run-chase with two run-outs -- one of which cost him his wicket -- in the space of six deliveries. First innings collapses at Lord's, Edgbaston and The Oval, coupled with the failure to extract England's final wicket at Cardiff, contributed heavily to Australia's 2-1 series defeat; the same margin by which they lost in 2005.

Ponting said the sting of defeat at The Oval on Sunday was every bit as painful as that he felt at the same ground four years ago. "I don't think you can get any more disappointed than I am right now," he said. "Looking back at 2005, I was feeling exactly the same back then. We all spoke about it and built the series up so much...but we've come up short. I'm obviously hurting, the rest of the guys are hurting as well."

"For me, the leader, the captain, the most experienced player, it's difficult for me to accept. It's just as difficult for the rest of the guys. We couldn't have done anything else, we have given ourselves the best opportunity. Just a couple of really bad sessions during the course of five Tests have cost us the series. When we were good we were exceptional, when we were bad we were very poor. We need to become more consistent in our performance."

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PHOTO: BANGLARCHOKH.COM

Mohammedan coach Maruful Haque oversees his charges in their first training of the season at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.