

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Bangladesh women's team players train at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday on the eve of what will be their first break in big time football.

Cricketers to donate to Savar victims

SPORTS REPORTER

With an aim to support the victims of the Savar tragedy, caused by the collapse of the Rana Plaza, players of the national cricket team will be donating approximately Tk 40 lakhs. Captain Mushfiqur Rahim, who had earlier dedicated the team's Test victory over Zimbabwe to the victims of the tragedy, told reporters that the action was based on the team's decision.

Niaz, Shirin both lose

SPORTS REPORTER

GM Niaz Murshed and Sharmin Sultana Shirin lost their respective matches of the Asian Continental Chess Championship in Manila, Philippines yesterday. Niaz lost against Indian GM Adhiban Baskaran while Shirin lost against Mongolian WFM Lkhamsuren Uuganbayar in their third round matches. Niaz has 1.5 points from three matches while Shirin is yet to get off the mark.

Ctg Abahani beat Wari

SPORTS REPORTER

Chitagong Abahani edged Wari Club 2-1 in their Premier Bank Bangladesh Championship League match at the Birshreshtha Mostafa Kamal Stadium in Kamalapur yesterday. Mahbubur Titu put Wari ahead in the 19th minute but Soheli Mia equalised in the 53rd minute. Javed Khan then sealed victory for the Chittagong club, scoring in the 76th minute. The win took Abahani's tally to 19 points from nine matches, two behind leaders Uttar Baridhara while Wari remained on nine points from the same number of matches.

Women's league from May 24

SPORTS REPORTER

The sixth women's national cricket league is scheduled to resume from May 24 after a break of nearly three months. The matches will take place at the Sylhet Divisional Stadium and Sylhet District Stadium. In the opening matches, second-placed Dhaka will face third-placed Rangpur at the Divisional Stadium while league leaders Khulna will play Barisal at the District Stadium. The top four teams of the league will progress to the second round.

League could be boycotted if...

SPORTS REPORTER



The country's top cricketers led by Mushfiqur Rahim sat for two hours yesterday at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur to discuss the much-talked about Dhaka Premier Cricket League.

However after the marathon meeting, no cricketer including Mushfiqur was ready to say what actually they discussed. The players were tight-lipped and what a perturbed-looking Mushfiqur said after repeated attempts was: "When time comes, you will know... wait for two more days." But it was learnt that around 20 cricketers, including Mashrafe Bin Mortaza, Mahmudullah Riyad, Shakib Al Hasan and Tamim Iqbal, who were present in the meeting convened by Mushfiqur, were unanimous on one point that they would not accept the proposed new payment system for the country's most coveted and lone 50-overs competition in line with the Bangladesh Premier League (BPL).

And if the board finally takes any decision favouring the new payment system, then the players will go for the tough decision of boycotting the league. According to sources the cricketers signed a paper and conveyed their message to the authority.

Bangladesh Cricket Board's (BCB's) ad-hoc committee member Ismail Haider Mallick informed, "Mushfiqur met BCB president Nazmul Hassan Papon but I don't know what they discussed. The president will meet the club officials tomorrow [Tuesday] and after that everything will be cleared."

"But the board can't do anything if the clubs don't agree on any issue," added Mallick, who will attend today's meeting as a representative of Abahani.

The players however expressed their concern over the new payment system because of their bitter experience with the BPL payment.

"Actually the meeting was called as the national cricketers wanted to discuss some major issues. The discussion also included the non-payment issue of BPL. The players haven't received their payments and we believe time has come to do something in this regards. We just cannot accept the proposed BPL-like payment system for the Dhaka League. It's simply a trap for us. We are all against it," said a cricketer, who requested anonymity.

Interestingly meeting was arranged without informing the Cricketers' Welfare Association of Bangladesh. "We are unaware of this meeting. We are also working on how we can settle all the problems regarding the League. We are fighting for the players' benefits and they must think if such a meeting weakened the movement," said its president Naimur Rahman.

New experience for BANGLADESH

Thailand the team to beat in the AFC Women's Asian Cup Qualifiers

SPORTS REPORTER



The Bangladesh women's football team embarks on new territory this evening when they take on Thailand in their first-ever match of the AFC Women's Asian Cup Qualifiers at the Bangabandhu National Stadium (7:00 pm kick-off).

Women's football has been active in Bangladesh for almost seven years, but Bangladesh are still taking baby steps with regards to international exposure, having only played 14 international matches (with 6 victories) mostly involving regional South Asian rivals like India, Nepal, Sri Lanka. This evening's clash against the 29th ranked Thailand therefore represents a big step up for the Bangladeshi players and a chance to test just how far they have progressed.

The women's game is exponentially more active in Thailand and it shows in their results

– they have won it once in 1983 and finished runners-up three times. They have also played the final round for six successive times and thus comes into this tournament as the marked favourites ahead of group rivals Iran (53 rank), Philippines (83 rank) and Bangladesh (108 rank).

They are understandably upbeat and coach Piyakul Kawnamkang was pulling no punches.

"We are here to qualify for the finals," he said.

Neither Iran nor the Philippines have ever beaten Thailand. On the contrary both have fallen prey to vicious defeats (8-1 and 12-0 respectively), leading to the question of Bangladesh playing to save pride and concede as little as possible.

But Piyakul was diplomatic: "Bangladesh will be pressure for us and we will be treating them like other opponents as they will play in front of home crowd."

Bangladesh, on the other hand seem to be

approaching the match with a blank slate. The coach

Syed Golam Jinali admitted that they had no idea about the opposition and would decide the strategy after the first ten minutes of the game.

Philippines coach Ernie Nierras however, rated Thailand as better than his charges but admitted that an upset could be on the cards. "Thailand is the favourite but we want to win all three matches here to qualify for the final round. It is possible to beat Thailand if we can perform accordingly," said Nierras.

Iran's Portuguese coach Helena Costa was concentrating on her own team who have come to Bangladesh on the back of four wins in warm-up games in Russia.

"Ranking has no impact on performance," said Costa. "Our target is qualification and we are not thinking about Thailand."

Iran will take on Philippines at 4:00pm in the day's first encounter.

BHF to announce transfers soon

SPORTS REPORTER

The stalemate in hockey could be broken soon as the president of the Bangladesh Hockey Federation (BHF) Air Vice Marshall Enamul Bari yesterday asked respective club officials to sit with him next week to decide on the players transfer as soon as possible.

"The president will sit with the top officials of the premier league clubs next week. The date of transfer could be decided there," informed the president's representative Rafiul Haque.

The players' transfer could be held as early as the next month before the elections, informed a source inside the federation. Most of the top clubs including Mohammedan, Abahani, Usha and Sadharan Bima are prepared to enter the players' transfer as soon as they are held, it was learnt.

This decision is expected to break the ice between the federation and the players, who threatened to boycott the national team's camp for the Asia Cup.

SAFF FOOTBALL

Conditioning camp away from Dhaka

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh national football team is to go for a two-and-a-half month conditioning camp at the start of July ahead of their SAFF Championship campaign scheduled for September in Nepal. The venue of the camp was not disclosed, but it will be not be in Dhaka, confirmed Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) vice-president Tabith Awal after a meeting of the National Teams Committee yesterday. The camp will start after the arrival before July of Dutch coaches Lodewijk de Kruij and Rene Koster, who will take charge of the team for a two-year term.

"The coaches will arrive before July and we will arrange a two-month conditioning camp for the national team starting from beginning of July," Tabith said yesterday.

BFF is also lining up a number of friendly matches as part of the preparation, especially after the scheduled friendlies against India and Pakistan in England were scrapped by the organisers. Bangladesh are expected to play friendlies against Thailand and Malaysia at home, whom they played away last year. Two or three other teams from the Middle East like Bahrain, UAE and Kuwait are also being talked to about possible friendlies.

"We will be playing at least two friendly matches at home, either during the camp or after it, for SAFF preparations while a few other teams from Middle East are also being contacted," Tabith said.

Decision on Super Cup soon

SPORTS REPORTER

BFF president Kazi Salahuddin is trying to convince the Premier League clubs to participate in the Tk 1 crore Super Cup.

The BFF boss, who returned from Bahrain on Sunday, had an informal meeting with Sheikh Jamal DC president Manzur Kader at his BFF office yesterday. The BFF boss is expected to sit with presidents of a number of other clubs in a day or two before taking a final decision on the issue.

The BFF is trying to squeeze the tournament in June before the national team's camp starts in July. Now that the national team's England tour has been postponed indefinitely, BFF is trying to arrange the Super Cup, to give the local players maximum opportunity to perform and make their case for the SAFF Championship.

BU Ctg Cricket League champs

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Brothers Union defeated reigning champions Ispahani Sporting Club by seven wickets to win the "CJKS Ispahani Premier Cricket League 2013" at Chittagong's MA Aziz Stadium yesterday. Chasing a below-par target of 87, Brothers Union raced home in just 23.4 overs. Former national opener Nafees Iqbal top-scored with 40 runs, and Moinuddin played second fiddle with 23.

Earlier, menacing spells from Ali Akbar (4-33) and Asif Ahmed (3-13) helped bundle out Ispahani SC in just 36.3 overs.

Sixteen teams, divided into two groups, participated in this league. The top six sides played in the super six round.



THIS ONE IS FOR YOU GUYS: It was an emotional night for Barcelona's French defender Eric Abidal, a cancer survivor who has hardly featured in the Los Cules' campaign of regaining the La Liga title from rivals Real Madrid this season with four games to spare. Here Abidal (R) holds the coveted piece of glory with his coach Tito Vilanova, also a cancer survivor, during a ceremony at the Camp Nou, where they celebrated their 22nd league title with a 2-1 win over Valladolid on Sunday.

PHOTO: AFP

Battle of Equals

CSK-MI first play-off today

PTI, New Delhi



It will be a 'Battle of Equals' when mighty Chennai Super Kings meet the formidable Mumbai Indians in the first play-off match named Qualifier 1 of the Pepsi Indian Premier League on Tuesday.

On paper, there is very little to choose between the two teams, who have both won 11 out of their 16 matches and have a number of match-winners who can turn the tables on a given day.

Mumbai Indians under stewardship of Rohit Sharma has been a force to reckon with having won all their eight matches at home, while CSK's season has been a mix and match but they have successfully finished off a number of close encounters, which has been their hallmark over the years.

Mumbai Indians might just have a psychological advantage having beaten the 'Men in Yellow' in both home and away games.

However it will be an altogether different test on a 'neutral venue' as they will be playing at the Ferozeshah Kotla which has been known for producing dodgy 22-yard strips over the years.

With both teams relying on their batsmen to do the trick, one can brace up for 'some battles' within the main contest.

It can be a Sachin Tendulkar versus Ravichandran Ashwin, Mahendra Singh Dhoni versus Harbhajan Singh, Kieron Pollard against Mohit Sharma or Mike Hussey versus Pragyan Ojha affair.

Tendulkar is likely to make a comeback at the top of the order and the senior batsman would certainly want to play an innings of impact.