



ICC inspection team in city

SPORTS REPORTER



An International Cricket Council (ICC) inspection team reached the city yesterday to assess the progress of the Twenty20 World Cup venues due next year.

The visit which will confirm the venues for next year's mega event is scheduled to begin from today onwards. "On Saturday they will be inspecting the Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium and BKSP. They will then travel to Sylhet on August 18. The stadiums at Chittagong and Cox's Bazar will be inspected after August 20," said BCB's acting CEO Nizamuddin Chowdhury.

During their previous visits, the inspection team raised concerns regarding the progress of the stadiums in Sylhet and Cox's Bazar. One of the major concerns with the Sylhet Divisional Stadium was the building of the new five-story grandstand. According to Chowdhury, the stand has been constructed till the second floor and the entire venue is expected to be ready by mid-October. Fatullah has been named as an alternate venue for Sylhet. The BCB president during his last visit to Fatullah had complained about the poor drainage system in the outer field of the stadium, a task which he said needed to be addressed before the inspection.

The construction of the Cox's Bazar stadium, where the women's World Cup is expected to take place, is progressing with the help of the army. BKSP has been named as an alternate venue for Cox's Bazar.

"There has been plenty of progress ever since their last visit. The BCB is confident and expects a positive response from the inspection team," said Chowdhury.

Ezekiel Kemboi of Kenya celebrates his victory in the men's 3000 metres steeplechase final of the IAAF World Athletics Championships at the Luzhniki Stadium in Moscow on Thursday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Tamim scores 20 as St Lucia win

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Opener Tamim Iqbal scored a 19-ball 20 as his side St Lucia Zouks beat Antigua Hawksbills by 17 runs under the D/L system at the Sir Vivian Richards Stadium in Antigua yesterday. Tamim was caught at point while trying to hit Marlon Samuels out of the ground in the sixth over.

The win keeps alive St Lucia's opportunity to progress through to the semifinals. They are currently placed at the bottom of the table with four points.

Batting first, St Lucia rode on Andre Fletcher's 76 to post a strong total of 179. In reply, the Hawksbills were poised at 76 for 3 in 10.4 overs when rain brought play to a halt. They were 17 runs behind the D/L par.

Tamim is expected to play his last group stage game when the Zouks take on Trinidad and Tobago Red Steels tonight.

BD A lose to Worcs

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Anamul Haque's century (110 off 122) went in vain as Worcestershire chased down Bangladesh A's total of 274 with six wickets and 15 balls remaining at Worcester yesterday. This was Bangladesh A's fifth match of their tour of England.

Chasing the target Worcestershire began strongly as their opening pair scored 97 runs in 15 overs.

The hosts rode on a century from Daryl Mitchell (101) and some steady contributions from the top order as they comfortably reached their target.

Earlier a steady century from Anamul and a quick 50 by Mominul Haque (64 off 60) helped Bangladesh A post a defendable total. Anamul scored eight fours and two sixes and gave the visitors hope of winning their first match of the tour. The visiting side's bowling however did not live up to the expectation as they suffered their fifth successive loss.

Following this match the second string side will play three one day games against England A, the first of which will take place on August 20.

Sk Jamal start camp tomorrow

SPORTS REPORTER



Sheikh Jamal Dhanmondi Club will begin their preparation for the upcoming season from tomorrow as Nigerian coach Joseph Afusi, Argentine trainer Ariel Coleman and Haitian striker Sony Norde have already arrived in Dhaka along with two more foreign booters yesterday.

Dazzling striker Sony Norde, who played a key role in Sheikh Russel KC's treble-winning campaign last season, is set to sign for Sheikh Jamal DC this season at a record signing of 73,000 dollars while new foreign recruits -- Haitian striker Anselme Wedson, who played in the Haitian Division-1 for Aigle Noir last season and Nigerian defensive-midfielder Ali Abdullah, who played in the Conference Division League in England -- have also come for a trial.

Having arrived after a long 30-hour journey, the duo was not prepared to talk to the media but Abdullah said a few words.

"Time hasn't come to make statements but I have heard that there are a few clubs in Bangladesh who play competitive football. If I can secure a place, I will be trying to utilise my experience in Bangladesh," said Abdullah, who believes he would be able to entertain the Bangladesh spectators.

"What I have heard about Sheikh Jamal is

fantastic and I believe they will have different time this season and bring some trophies home," said Abdullah.

All local players except for the ten national booters, who are currently with the SAFF Championship squad, have already reported to the team management while those ten national players including captain Mamunul Islam yesterday visited the club tent at Dhanmondi to spend some time with their teammates.

"The pre-season camp has been scheduled to get underway from Sunday after a discussion with the coach Joseph Afusi," said Sheikh Jamal manager Anwarul Karim Helal.

Afusi initially gets 10 senior players, 18 players from Sheikh Jamal football academy and four foreign players including Nigerian winger Femi Orunimi, who played for Sheikh Jamal one season ago.

Helal also informed that four more Nigerian players are scheduled to arrive in Dhaka for trial within the next five days while the national booters will join the camp after the completion of the SAFF Championship.

Nigerian trainer Coleman had worked with the national team twice -- once with his compatriot Diego Cruciani and then with Brazilian coach Edson Silva Dido. Coleman came in Dhaka for the third time to work with a club team while Afusi has been retained after he guided Sheikh Jamal to second position in Federation Cup, Independence Cup and Bangladesh Premier League.



Novak Djokovic of Serbia serves against David Goffin of Belgium during their pre-quarterfinal match of the Cincinnati Masters at the Lindner Family Tennis Center in Cincinnati, Ohio on Thursday.

PHOTO: AFP

Djokovic steady

AFP, Cincinnati



Novak Djokovic continued his quest for a first title at the Cincinnati Masters while Roger Federer kept alive his bid for a sixth as the seeded pair advanced into the quarter-finals on Thursday.

The contrast between the wins could not have been more stark, with top seed Djokovic crushing Belgian qualifier David Goffin 6-2, 6-0 in just 50 minutes.

Federer is seeded fifth and was the winner here a year ago on the fast hardcourt where he thrives. He had to rally from the depths after a

disaster of an opening set, finally overhauling German Tommy Haas 1-6, 7-5, 6-3.

The Swiss has gone back to his traditional racquet after experimenting without much success last month with a larger, more modern model. He said he needed to go back to basics to pull off his 12th win from 15 meetings with Haas, seeded 11th.

"I wasn't playing great in the first set, I needed to clean up my game from the baseline," said the crowd favourite and fifth seed. "I'm happy to be through to have another match."

"Sometimes on fast courts it's tough to get rhythm, you are thinking of too many things. I had to simplify my game in order to win."

Bolt, Pearson sail thru'

AFP, Moscow



Usain Bolt and Sally Pearson both safely negotiated their way through qualification at the world championships on Friday as Yelena Isinbayeva backtracked over her apparent support of Russia's anti-gay law.

Two-time defending world champion Bolt cruised his 200m heat in his bid for a third successive title in the event.

The 26-year-old Jamaican, who won the 200m titles in Berlin in 2009 and Daegu in 2011 and is also double Olympic champion and world record holder, eased up with fully 40 metres to run, clocking an easy-going 20.66sec.

"I'm feeling good. I'm not a morning person. I worked really hard this week," said Bolt, who has been nursing a sore foot.

"It's feeling better," he said. "I have worked on it for the last four days."

Australia's defending world 100m hurdles champion Pearson comfortably won her heat to advance to Saturday's semi-final alongside a strong quartet of Americans: Olympic champion Dawn Harper, Brianna Rollins, Queen Harrison and Nia Ali.

"It was difficult running out there because it was half in the sun and then half in shade," said Pearson, who has struggled to regain her 2011 world title-winning form after a debilitating hamstring injury.

"I screwed up the last two hurdles," she said. "I have been dying to get started. I got great inspiration for the race watching the

4x400 boys last night."

Off the track, Russian pole vault star Isinbayeva was the centre of a backlash from activists and fellow track and field legends after backing Russia's controversial new anti-gay law and saying competitors at the Sochi Winter Olympics should respect it.

Isinbayeva on Thursday came out in support of the law signed by President Vladimir Putin in June which punishes the dissemination of information about homosexuality to minors.

Activists argue it could be used for a broad crackdown against gays, although Russian authorities have said all athletes will be free and safe to compete at the Winter Olympics regardless of their sexual orientation, as long as they obey Russian law.

"We just live with boys with women, women with boys," Isinbayeva had said Thursday. "We are tolerant of all existing opinions and respect all people."

"But they must be respectful of our laws and not promote the ideas of non-traditional orientations on the street," she added, using the term used by Russian officials to describe homosexuality.

The comments by Isinbayeva, an ambassador for both the IOC Youth Olympics and the February Winter Olympics in Sochi, drew outrage from the likes of American 400 metres legend and world record holder Michael Johnson.

"She is very popular over here with a small group of people who are very powerful and who probably buy into that view in this country," Johnson said in his capacity as a BBC pundit.

Kemboi the great

AFP, Moscow

Ezekiel Kemboi laid claim to being the greatest steeplechaser of all time on Thursday as the extrovert Kenyan won a record-equalling third 3000 metres steeplechase world title at the World Athletics Championships.

The 31-year-old two-time Olympic champion - sporting a new Mohican hairstyle and who danced stylishly in celebration - equalled compatriot Moses Kiptanui's record as he coasted to victory.

"It's good to be the king," smiled the never shy 31-year-old.

Kemboi, who also has three world silvers, could well win a record fourth in two years time but the all-time record haul of world titles in all events will be beyond him.

That record of eight is at risk of falling as American sprint queen Allyson Felix - who has three 200m gold and five relay titles - looked sublime in cruising into the 200m final.

Should she prevail in Friday's final she will move one ahead of joint-holders, and now retired, compatriots Michael Johnson and Carl Lewis.

However, she has been promised a real fight.

Jamaica's Shelly-Ann Fraser-Pryce, fresh from regaining her 100m crown declared she was the best, but she will have to improve considerably after being outclassed by the 27-year-old American in the Olympic final last year.

Rules relaxed for Robson

AFP, Sydney

Cricket Australia cleared the way on Friday for prolific Middlesex opener Sam Robson to play in the Sheffield Shield, as they bid to keep him out of the clutches of oldest rivals England.

CA announced changes to the rule governing the eligibility of Australian players with dual passports to play in more than one (ICC full-member) domestic competition, particularly England.

Sydney-born Robson, 24, is the leading run-scorer in the English County Championship this season with Middlesex and the focus of an "Ashes-themed tug of war", according to reports.

Robson, whose mother hails from the English city of Nottingham, previously could not be chosen for New South Wales as a domestic player because although born in Australia, he played county cricket on a British passport.

CA's rule change has effectively freed Robson from having to choose between NSW and Middlesex, allowing him to represent both as England and Australia compete for his international loyalties.

Back injury ends Bresnan's season

AFP, London



England pace bowling all-rounder Tim Bresnan has been ruled out of the remainder of the Ashes and the rest of the home international season with a stress fracture in his lower back, the England and Wales Cricket Board announced Thursday.

Bresnan starred with both bat and ball as England beat Australia by 74 runs in the fourth Test against Australia at Chester-le-Street on Monday as they went 3-0 up with one to play and so won a third straight Ashes series.

He took the key wicket of David Warner to pave the way for Stuart Broad's match-winning spell.

"England and Yorkshire pace bowler Tim Bresnan has been ruled out of the remainder of the international season with a stress fracture in his lower back," an ECB statement said.

"Bresnan will begin a recovery and rehabilitation programme and a date for his return to cricket will be determined in due course."

The first England match Bresnan will miss is next week's fifth and final Test against Australia at The Oval in south London starting on Wednesday, August 21.

Whether the 28-year-old Bresnan will be fit for the return Ashes in Australia starting in November remains to be seen.

He has played in three of the four Ashes Tests to date after replacing Middlesex quick Steven Finn at Lord's, taking 10 wickets.

At Chester-le-Street, Bresnan, batting as nightwatchman, made an important 45 in England's second innings 330.

He then took two wickets for 36 as Australia, chasing 299 for victory, were bowled out for 224, removing opener Warner for 71 before snaring all-rounder Shane Watson for two as Broad took six wickets in the innings with England winning inside four days.

As well as the fifth Test, Bresnan will now miss the two-match Twenty20 series at the end of the month, the lone one-day international against Ireland and the five-match one-day series against Australia which starts at his Headingley home ground on September 6.

SL's no to night Tests

AFP, Colombo

Sri Lanka Cricket (SLC) on Friday turned down a request from Pakistan to play day-night Tests in the upcoming series in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) where both countries have loyal fans.

SLC said it decided against playing day-night Tests "since the national team players have not practised under lights and with the new pink ball".

The challenge facing such Tests has been to find a ball that is clearly visible in both sunshine and floodlights, and the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) said it had sent the Sri Lankan board a dozen balls of pink and orange colour for them to examine.