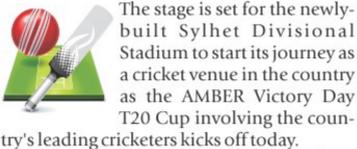


SPORT

T20 tune-up kicks off today in Sylhet

IQBAL SIDDIQUEE, Sylhet



The stage is set for the newly-built Sylhet Divisional Stadium to start its journey as a cricket venue in the country as the AMBER Victory Day T20 Cup involving the country's leading cricketers kicks off today.

The opening day will see the Mushfiqur Rahim-led Abahani take on the Tamim Iqbal-led UCB BCB XI at 1pm and the Shakib Al Hasan-led Prime Bank take on Mashrafe Bin Mortaza's Mohammedan at 5pm.

The players reached the city yesterday but it was not possible for them to visit the stadium or practise due to the delay in their flight.

Cricket fans in the north-east region will get a chance to watch their heroes from the galleries of the beautiful stadium as a dress rehearsal for the international matches during Sri Lanka's tour of Bangladesh in January-February and the ICC World Twenty20 in March next year.

National skipper Mushfiqur also hoped that the fans will come in their numbers to encourage them during the Sylhet leg of the four-team tourney.

"Sri Lanka are coming soon to play a series against us and we have a one-day match in Sylhet (on February 17). So, it's a good opportunity for us to familiarise ourselves with the conditions in advance. I hope the fans will come to the stadium to watch our game as well as encourage us," said Mushfiqur while speaking to the local reporters at the Osmani International Airport yesterday.

The Tigers skipper also thanked the board for hurriedly arranging this tournament.

"We are taking this tournament seriously because it's an opportunity for us to do some fine tuning before the World Cup (ICC World Twenty20). This tournament

will help us a lot. I must thank the board for arranging this tournament at a short notice. BCB (Bangladesh Cricket Board) did their part, now it's our duty to take this opportunity with both hands," he added.

BCB director and former national skipper Khaled Mahmud, who accompanied the team,

FIXTURES

- SYLHET**
- December 22:** Abahani vs UCB BCB XI (1pm), Prime Bank vs Mohammedan (5pm)
 - December 23:** Abahani vs Mohammedan (1pm), UCB BCB XI vs Prime Bank (5pm)
 - December 25:** Prime Bank vs Abahani (1pm), UCB BCB XI vs Mohammedan (5pm)
 - December 26:** Abahani vs UCB BCB XI (1pm), Prime Bank vs Mohammedan (5pm)
- MIRPUR**
- December 28:** Abahani vs Mohammedan (1pm), Prime Bank vs UCB BCB XI (5pm)
 - December 29:** Prime Bank vs Abahani (1pm), UCB BCB XI vs Mohammedan (5pm)
 - December 31:** Final (4pm).

said that they chose Sylhet for the tournament to get the players accustomed to the new venue.

"We are happy that the players will not sit idle. I believe this tournament will create an opportunity for the players who want to draw the attention of the selectors ahead of the T20 World Cup. And we chose Sylhet as a venue for the tournament because it will help the players to familiarise themselves with the conditions before the international matches," said Mahmud.

Mahmud also informed that they are expecting a full house today. "There has been a huge response from spectators to buy tickets. The capacity of the stadium is 14,000 but we put 12,000 on sale," he said.



Bangladesh fast bowler and Mohammedan's captain in the Victory Day T20 Cup Mashrafe Bin Mortaza arrives at Sylhet's Osmani International Airport yesterday, ahead of today's opening of the competition at the newly-built Sylhet Divisional Stadium. INSET: The scenic arena that is set to become Bangladesh's latest international venue is all decked up and sparkling new as it awaits its first taste of big-time cricket.

PHOTOS: STAR/BCB

Jamal still on top

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladeshi Jamal Hossain Mollah stayed at the top of the leaderboard after the third round of the 12th TATA Open which is being held in Jamshedpur, India. Jamal fired four birdies and two bogeys as he finished the day at two-under-69 for an aggregate of 11-under-202 yesterday. However, Jamal was joined at the top by India's M Dharma who carded a four-under-67 yesterday. Jamal, who has previously won one Professional Golfers' Tour of India (PGTI) event and currently stands at sixth position in this year's Order of Merit, has a good chance of winning his second title. Meanwhile, Shakhawat Hossain Sohel of Bangladesh was placed at joint 20th position at one-under-212.

Abahani, Army in hockey final

SPORTS REPORTER

Abahani and Bangladesh Army set up a final clash in the Walton Victory Day Hockey Competition after beating their respective semifinal opponents at the Maulana Bhasani National Hockey Stadium yesterday. Abahani blanked Azad Sporting Club by 6-0 goals in the first semifinal, thanks to a brace from Sheikh Mohammad Nannu and one goal apiece from Hasan Jubair Niloy, Ashraf Islam, Deen Islam and Nayeemuddin.

Bangladesh Army stunned Usha Krira Chakra by 5-2 goals in the second semifinal. Abdul Malek scored twice for Army while Ripon Kumar Mohanta, Sagor Hossain and Milon Hossain scored one apiece. Rubel Hossain scored both goals for Usha.

The final will take place at 3:30pm on Monday at

No response yet from sponsors

SPORTS REPORTER



With just five days to the start of the seventh edition of the Bangladesh Premier League, football's governing body is yet to get any positive response from corporate houses for the title sponsorship of the league. Grameenphone, who were the title sponsors of the professional football league in the previous two seasons, have yet to respond to Bangladesh Football Federation's (BFF's) proposal. BFF has tabled offers to a few other corporate houses, but none have responded positively, it has been learnt.

Earlier this month, BFF staged the season's curtain-raising tournament Federation Cup, where Walton Group were the title sponsors as the electronic goods manufacturing company provided Tk 20 lakh while there were two other co-sponsors in the event. That encouraged BFF to propose Walton as well as Runner Group and Square Group to become the sponsors of the Bangladesh Premier League, but none of their responses have been satisfying. The offer from Walton Group has been insufficient compared to what is required (Tk 1.5 crore minimum) as BFF has an estimated budget of Tk 2 crore for the league. Runner Group have outright rejected the proposal

while a response from Square Group is yet to be received, it has been learnt through a source. However, BFF's general secretary Abu Nayeem Shohag is hopeful that they will have a positive response within a few days.

"We have submitted proposals to nine corporate houses including Square Group, Walton Group and Runner Group for the title sponsorship and are hopeful we will finalise both title sponsors and co-sponsors before the start of the league," said Shohag at his office yesterday.

Meanwhile another of BFF's corporate partners, Prime Bank Limited, are reportedly peeved at BFF as its sponsored event, the District Football League, is yet to be finished in all the districts. Only 40 out of the 63 districts have been able to complete their respective leagues, while a divisional level and national level competition comprised of the district level winners, is yet to be started. Due to the non-completion of the leagues, Prime Bank have not sanctioned half of the total amount of the contract money, which is Tk 3 crore.

"Due to the deteriorating political situation in the county, some of the District Football Associations have not been able to organise their respective league so far. We will have to wait for the completion of the leagues to organise divisional and national level tournaments," said Shohag.

Fahad 36th

SPORTS REPORTER

FIDE Master Fahad Rahman dropped to joint 36th position after losing his fourth round match of the World Youth Chess Championship (Open U-10 group) against G M H Thilakarathne of Sri Lanka in Al-Ain, UAE yesterday. Fahad, who has three points from four matches, will take on Maache Jawad of France in the fifth round today.

V-Day cycling

SPORTS REPORTER

Cyclists of BJMC clinched six of the seven gold in the Victory Day Open Cycling competition which was held at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday. Suruj Mia won two gold and Mohammad Yasin, Protima Roy, Alamgir Hossain and Farhana Sultana won one gold apiece for BJMC while Kapil Rafid won a gold for BDC. A total of 200 cyclists from services teams, associations and clubs participated in the daylong competition at the end of which the National Sports Council Secretary Shibnath Roy distributed prizes among the winners.

India snatch impetus

AFP, Johannesburg



A direct-hit run-out of Graeme Smith ended a century opening partnership as South Africa fought to stave off defeat on the fourth day of the first Test against India at the Wanderers Stadium on Saturday.

Set to make an improbable 458 to win, South Africa were 138 for two at the close. South Africa had reached 108 without loss with both Smith and Alviro Petersen batting with increasing confidence.

But Smith, on 44, went for a risky single after he punched a ball from Ravichandran Ashwin to mid-on.

Ajinkya Rahane fielded superbly and threw down the stumps at the bowler's end, to the acclaim of his teammates.

Smith's dismissal was soon followed by that of Hashim Amla, who was bowled for the second time in the match without playing a shot.

Amla made four before ducking a short-pitched

SCOREBOARD				
INDIA: First innings 280 (Kohli 119, Rahane 47, Pujara 25, Dhoni 19; Philander 4-61, Morkel 3-34)				
SOUTH AFRICA: First innings 244 (Smith 68, Philander 59, Amla 36, Petersen 21; Ishant 4-79, Zaheer 4-88)				
INDIA: Second innings (overnight 284-2)				
Dhawan c Kallis b Philander	15			
Vijay c de Villiers b Kallis	39			
Pujara c de Villiers b Kallis	153			
Kohli c de Villiers b Duminy	96			
Rohit b Kallis	6			
Rahane c Smith b Duminy	15			
Dhoni c sub (Elgar) b Philander	29			
Ashwin c du Plessis b Philander	7			
Zaheer not out	29			
Ishant lbw b Tahir	4			
Shami b Tahir	4			
Extras: (b-9, lb-7, w-8)	24			
Total: (All out in 120.4 overs)	421			
Fall of wickets: 1-23, 2-93, 3-315, 4-325, 5-327, 6-358, 7-369, 8-384, 9-405				
Bowler	O	M	R	W
Steyn	30	5	104	0
Philander	28	10	68	3
Morkel	2	1	4	0
Kallis	20	5	68	3
Tahir	15.4	1	69	2
de Villiers	1	0	5	0
Duminy	24	0	87	2
SOUTH AFRICA: Second innings				
Petersen not out	76			
Smith run out	44			
Amla b Shami	4			
Du Plessis not out	10			
Extras	4			
Total: (For 2 wickets in 45 overs)	138			
Bowler	O	M	R	W
Zaheer	9	0	29	0
Ishant	9	2	28	0
Shami	8	1	30	1
Ashwin	16	2	42	0
Vijay	1	0	3	0
Dhoni	2	0	4	0

delivery from Mohammed Shami which kept low, going over Amla's right shoulder before hitting the top of his off stump.

The ball which accounted for Amla was one of several which kept low at the golf course end of the pitch.

Petersen, who scored a half-century in his team's second innings for the first time in 27 Tests, made 76 not out and saw out the day with Faf du Plessis (10).

With the light fading towards the close, the umpires told Indian captain Mahendra Singh Dhoni that he would have to use only slow bowlers if he wanted play to continue.

Dhoni took off his wicket keeping pads and bowled two overs in partnership with off-spinner Ashwin.

India were bowled out for 421 in their second innings, leaving South Africa to negotiate 45 overs before the close of play as well as the whole of the fifth day.

Cheteshwar Pujara and Virat Kohli took their third wicket stand to 222 before Pujara was caught behind off Jacques Kallis for 153.



Abahani captain Pushkor Khisha Mimo rushes towards the opposition goal during their Victory Day Hockey Tournament semifinal clash with Azad SC at the Maulana Bhasani Hockey Stadium yesterday. PHOTO: STAR

Boult from the blue

REUTERS, Hamilton



New Zealand opens Peter Fulton and Hamish Rutherford safely negotiated their way to the close of play on the third day of the third Test against West Indies on Saturday after their bowlers had set up a likely victory.

Trent Boult had blown the top of the West Indies order before Tim Southee polished off the tail to pick up his 100th Test wicket as New Zealand dismissed the tourists for just 103 in their second innings in Hamilton.

New Zealand were bowled out for 349 earlier on Saturday, courtesy of Ross Taylor's third century of the series, before pace-man Boult reduced the West Indies to 13 for three in a

devastating spell.

Neil Wagner and Corey Anderson then chipped in with vital wickets through the middle order before Southee claimed three victims in his ninth over to finish off the West Indies innings and set his side a victory target of 122 runs.

New Zealand reached 6-0 in the two overs they faced in the evening session.

SCOREBOARD				
WEST INDIES: First innings 367 (Chanderpaul 122 not out, Ramdin 107, Brathwaite 45; Southee 4-79, Anderson 3-47)				
NEW ZEALAND: First innings (overnight 156-3)				
Fulton c Sammy b Narine	11			
Rutherford c & b Sammy	10			
Williamson lbw b Narine	58			
Taylor c Samuels b Best	131			
McCullum c Sammy b Narine	12			
Anderson c Deonarine b Permaul	39			
Wattling c Ramdin b Sammy	20			
Southee lbw b Narine	18			
Sodhi b Narine	9			
Wagner c Edwards b Narine	22			
Boult not out	1			
Extras: (nb-4, lb-6, lb-8)	18			
Total: (All out in 117.3 overs)	349			
Fall of wickets: 1-18, 2-43, 3-138, 4-174, 5-224, 6-				
Bowler	O	M	R	W
Best	1	0	4	0
Narine	1	1	0	6