

SPORT

2-step plan to allay security concerns

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To address the growing concerns over Bangladesh's capability to host the Asia Cup in February 2014 due to ongoing political instability, the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) will take two crucial steps ahead of the Asian Cricket Council (ACC) meeting on January 4 in Sri Lanka.

The first involves BCB sending a delegation to the opposition alliance, requesting them to leave cricket 'outside' of their future political programmes. The second will be to chalk out a 'foolproof security plan' that the board aims to present at the ACC meet.

BCB president Nazmul Hassan Papon and ACC CEO Syed Ashraful Haque held an informal meeting yesterday and discussed the agenda of the ACC meet. In an impromptu press conference after the meeting Papon said that the board was focusing on enhancing the security measures.

"The most important issue is security. We are working on a plan that will be based on the ICC guidelines. We want to make a strong and a foolproof plan by the 30th [of

December]. We will then submit this to the ACC," informed Papon.

The president further stated that they had drafted a letter for the opposition parties and are currently awaiting an appointment with them.

"We will request them not to hold tough programmes during the period [February-April] when the events will take place. And even if they plan to do so, we will ask them to keep cricket outside of it. It will be a big gain if we can get their support," said Papon.

Ashraful, who was also present in the press conference, emphasised the importance of explaining the scenario appropriately in front of ACC.

"I believe that if the BCB does implement the steps that the president discussed with me then there should be no problems," said Ashraful.

Bangladesh will be hosting a number of events next year. Sri Lanka are scheduled to come here at the end of January, after which the Asia Cup is scheduled to begin in February. The ICC World Twenty20 will begin in March.

Pakistan Cricket Board recently voiced concerns regarding the ongoing political instability, while Sri Lanka have said that they would closely monitor the situation.



UCB BCB XI paceman Al Amin Hossain, engulfed by his teammates, celebrates one of his five wickets against Abahani at the Sylhet Divisional Stadium yesterday. The bowler became the first player to take five wickets in an over in T20 cricket.

PHOTO: STAR

Mushfiquir out for two weeks

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National captain Mushfiquir Rahim, who received an injury on Wednesday during the Victory Day T20 Cup match against Prime Bank in Sylhet, has been diagnosed with a muscle strain in his back and will not be able to take part in the rest of the competition.

BCB sports physician Debashish Chowdhury, after meeting Mushfiquir yesterday, said that the wicketkeeper-batsman would be out of the game for at least two weeks.

"He went to play a sweep shot and that put a lot of stress on his lower left back, resulting in a Grade 1 strain. We have instructed him to rest till Saturday, after which he will start rehab. The national camp won't begin until January 10, so he has plenty of time to recover," said Debashish.

In Mushfiquir's absence, Mahmudullah Riyad led Abahani in yesterday's game.

9 share lead

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Nine players shared the lead in the Grameenphone 12th National Chess Tournament for the visually impaired at the close of the third round at the Bangladesh Chess Federation hall room yesterday.

Sheikh Jamal the team to beat

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Sheikh Jamal DC when the Bangladesh Premier League gets underway through today's opening encounter between defending champions Sheikh Russel KC and the promoted Uttar Baridhara Club at the Bangabandhu National Stadium.

After forming the strongest team on paper, Sheikh Russel KC demonstrated their prowess by pulling off the rare feat of a treble win last season. This season however, it is Sheikh Jamal who have taken Sheikh Russel's place by building a formidable side comprising nine national players and quality foreign players, including Haitian Sony Norde who struck seven goals in the Federation Cup. Sheikh Jamal proved that they are the form team this season after clinching the title of the season's curtain-raising tournament two weeks ago.

The win -- which featured dominant performances against Mohammedan, Abahani and others -- is considered the start of Sheikh Jamal's march to their stated aim of winning all the season's trophies.

However, Sheikh Jamal, who clinched the coveted professional football league trophy two years ago, have kept their feet on the ground -- they believe that winning the Bangladesh Premier League will not be easy as there are three to four opponents of equal strength.

Sheikh Jamal captain Mamunul Islam believed that they would have to face some stiff challenges from teams like Abahani, Mohammedan, Muktiyoddha Sangsad and Sheikh Russel KC.

A strong reserve bench is considered the main strength of the title contenders of the seventh edition of the professional league, which will see the participating ten clubs playing three matches against each other for the first time instead of the traditional home-and-away matches.

Sheikh Jamal's reserve bench, which many consider as strong as the first teams of other title contenders, will be especially advantageous over a long season.

"However, consistent performances are more important than having a strong reserve bench to win the league title," said Muktiyoddha Sangsad's coach Shafiqul Islam Manik, who sees his outfit as one of the title contenders after finishing behind Sheikh Jamal in the Federation Cup.

Mohammedan's assistant coach Jewel Rana believes winning the Bangladesh Premier League will be a tough job for any side -- no side can say for sure that they will win a given match. Jewel, however, believes that Mohammedan will be playing for the coveted title though they have some weaknesses in the midfield and backline.

Four-time champions Abahani are also not far behind other contenders, but their Iranian coach Ali Akbar believes that the first phase of the league would be used as a preparatory phase in their bid to regain the title while Sheikh Russel coach Maruful Haque is confident of defending their title despite having lost their strength to the pre-transfer market this time.

Teams like BJMC, Brothers Union, Feni Soccer Club, Chittagong Abahani and Uttar Baridhara will be ready to derail the title contenders, especially after the way they fought against the powerhouses in the Federation Cup.

Variations did the trick

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Pacer Al-Amin Hossain achieved a unique feat yesterday when he picked up five wickets in the last over of the first innings of the match between UCB-BCB XI and Abahani Ltd, four of which came off the last four balls. From 141 for five in the 19th over, Abahani slid to 143 all out.

Al Amin, who finished with figures of five for 17, took all his wickets in his fourth over.

He also became only the second bowler in T20 cricket to take four wickets in four balls, after Andre Russel had achieved it earlier in the season for West Indies A against India A.

"I really can't explain how it happened. I just bowled a good line and length and got the wickets!" exclaimed Al Amin. "In the Powerplays I bowled well and then used a lot of my variations in the last over. The batsmen were just going after me but misread most of the deliveries. That's why they edged so many in the air," he added.

Five wickets went down in Mohammad Aamir's final over during Pakistan's World Twenty20 match against Australia in May 2010 as well, but that included two run-outs.

Amazing Al Amin, Shakib

SPORTS REPORTER



The fourth round of the ongoing Victory Day T20 Cup witnessed a series of emphatic individual performances in Sylhet yesterday. It began with UCB BCB XI pacer Al Amin Hossain's rare feat of picking up five Abahani wickets in an over, which also saw him scalp four wickets in the last four deliveries. The performance led his side to a two-wicket win.

That was followed by Shakib Al Hasan's brilliant all-round performance for Prime Bank Cricket Club against Mohammedan in the second game where he scored an unbeaten half-century with the bat and then took 6 wickets for 18 runs in a record 2.4 overs -- which is the quickest six-wicket haul. The game also saw Prime Bank's Anamul Haque score 105 off just 63 balls. Prime Bank moved to top of the table by defeating Mohammedan by 159 runs, which is the third largest victory, in terms of runs, in T20 cricket.

Abahani, who were without their injured skipper Mushfiquir Rahim, after being put into bat, lost early wickets but recovered courtesy of a fighting 55 by Soumya Sarker. With hard-hitting Nazmul Hossain Milon (21 off 11) on strike Abahani were

poised at a healthy 141 for 6 in 19 overs and looked good to cross the relieving 150-mark. But, Al-Amin then came in and took five wickets off the last six balls and helped bundle the side out for just 143.

In reply, BCB XI rode on Tamim Iqbal's 52-ball 61 to post 146 for 8 on the penultimate ball of the innings.

Anamul became the highest scorer of the tournament with his century. He hammered nine sixes and five fours in his 90-minute innings and was well supported by Shakib's 28-ball 57. Powered by the duo, Prime Bank posted 204 for 3.

In reply, Mohammedan were bamboozled by Shakib's spin and were bundled out for 45 runs in just 8.4 overs. This was the second time this year that Shakib took six wickets in a T20 innings, following his 6 for 6 in the Caribbean Premier League in August.

ABAHANI: 143 all out (Soumya 55; Al Amin 5-17, Arafat Sunny 2-26)
UCB BCB XI: 146 for 8 in 19.5 overs (Tamim 61; Shuvashish Roy 4-27)
Result: UCB-BCB XI won by two wickets.
PRIME BANK: 204 for 3 (Anamul 105, Shakib 57; Mashrafe 2-34)
MOHAMMEDAN: 45 all out in 8.4 overs (Rakibul Hossain 13; Shakib 6-18)
Result: Prime Bank won by 159 runs.

Solid start for India

AFP, Durban



Murali Vijay and Cheteshwar Pujara shared an unbeaten century partnership before bad light stopped play on the first day of the second and final Test against India at Kingsmead on Thursday.

India were 181 for one when the day's play was brought to a premature end eight overs after tea.

Vijay (91 not out) and Pujara (58 not out) put on 140 for the second wicket as South Africa's bowlers toiled on an unresponsive pitch after Indian captain Mahendra Singh Dhoni won the toss.

SCOREBOARD

INDIA: First Innings				
Dhawan c Petersen b Morkel				29
Vijay not out				91
Pujara not out				58
Extras (lb 1, n1, w1)				3
Total: (For 1 wkt in 61 overs)				181
To bat: Kohli, Sharma, Rahane, Jadeja, Zaheer, I Sharma, Shami.				
Fall of wicket: 1-41.				
Bowler	O	M	R	W
Steyn	16	6	49	0
Philander	14	4	39	0
Morkel	12	3	26	1
Kallis	7	1	23	0
Peterson	12	2	43	0
SOUTH AFRICA: Smith, Petersen, Amla, Kallis, de Villiers, Duminy, du Plessis, Peterson, Philander, Steyn, Morkel.				
Toss: India				
Umpires: Steve Davis, Rod Tucker.				

It was an inauspicious opening day for world champions South Africa after captain Graeme Smith said the team were determined to put in a good performance to mark star all-rounder Jacques Kallis' last Test.

Kallis, 38, announced on Wednesday that he would retire from Test cricket after the match, although he will continue to play one-day cricket in an effort to be selected for the 2015 Cricket World Cup in Australia and New Zealand.

Kallis led the South African team on to the field at the start of play to the applause of his teammates, spectators and umpires Steve Davis and Rod Tucker.

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