

# SPORT

## Improve rankings by 2017

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One of the most important agendas at the two-day ICC meet that took place in Dubai last week was finalising the bilateral tours in the Future Tours Programme. BCB president, Nazmul Hassan Papon, who returned home Monday from the meeting, told reporters that the board had sealed bilateral deals with the likes of Australia, India, England and South Africa. The exact dates of those tours will be released this week.

Papon told The Daily Star that the BCB's strategy was set with a special focus on improving the Tigers' overall rankings by 2017.

"We have tried our best to finalise as many tours as possible by 2017. It's risky, but it is also the only way to improve. The rule [meritocracy system] brought in Tests and T20s, the ICC wants to bring it in the ODIs as well.

"The issue [of whether the top eight teams would be playing directly in the 50-over World Cups from 2019 onwards] was brought up in the meet, but we did not want to discuss it and deferred it. However, the fact remains that we need to improve our ODI rankings before 2019," said Papon.

"In the next few years we will be playing all the big nations in their backyards, and that's a good thing however, the other important aspect is that we have got to win to improve the rankings. From that aspect it will be good if we can beat big nations at home, so that we can gain good points and overtake at least Zimbabwe in the Test rankings," he added.

While Papon hopes to announce the dates of all the tours finalised this week following a board meeting, he informed that India's short tour here was likely to begin on June 8.

"The matches might take place either on 8th, 10th and 12th or 9th, 11th and 13th of June. The Indian board wanted it to begin on the 9th, but we requested them for it to begin from the 8th and it is likely to begin then," said Papon.

The BCB president also spoke to Australia and the sidelines with an aim to send Bangladesh's players there to adjust to the conditions ahead of the World Cup in 2015.

"We communicated with them and they have agreed. We just need to send a letter, what the board will do tomorrow, in order to seal the deal in writing. Bangladesh's players may go there a month before the competition to play with the regional cricket associations there and get used to the conditions," said Papon.

Bangladesh coach Shane Jurgensen had earlier submitted a similar plan to the BCB. The Australian however, wanted to schedule it immediately after Bangladesh's tour of the West Indies, scheduled for August.



A Bangladeshi cager dribbles the ball past Sri Lankan defenders during their Citycell SABA 3-on-3 Basketball Championship match at the Dhanmondi Basketball Gymnasium yesterday. The home side won by 20-9 points. PHOTO: STAR

## Dhaka, Rajshahi keep top spots

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Dhaka and Rajshahi extended their run at the top of the table with comfortable wins in the sixth round of the National Cricket League which ended yesterday.

The round, which witnessed eight centuries -- including a double hundred from Forhad Reza -- and two 10-wicket hauls, saw each of the four-day matches produce positive results.

At the BKSP second-placed Rajshahi thumped Chittagong by 403 runs, while league leaders Dhaka defeated Barisal by eight wickets in Chittagong.

Centuries from Muktar Ali, Forhad

and Sanjamul Islam had already given Rajshahi the upper hand in the first innings. All they needed to do was maintain the pressure on Chittagong and they did exactly that. After bundling them out for 208, Mushfiqur decided against enforcing the follow on. In the second innings, Rajshahi scored a quickfire 128 in 14 overs before declaring and setting Chittagong a target of 596. A tired Chittagong gave in for 192 for eight (Tamim Iqbal was unavailable due to injury and Mahbulul Karim was absent) with the only fight coming from Mominul Haque's 75.

At the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium, Barisal were bundled out for 229 on the third day of the game,

giving Dhaka a comfortable target of 110. Dhaka raced to their target and finished the game before lunch.

Abdur Razzak's 12-wicket haul, including a nine-for in the second innings, and Tushar Imran's 107 in chase of 203 led Khulna to a five-wicket win over Dhaka Metro at the Sheikh Kamal International Cricket Stadium in Cox's Bazar yesterday.

At Fatullah, Naeem Islam's 144 in the first innings proved to be the crucial hand in Rangpur's 314-run win over Sylhet. After Rangpur posted 391, Sylhet were bundled out for 143. Rangpur decided against enforcing the follow-on and declared at 228. Sylhet's batting order collapsed yet again in the second innings, managing to score just 162.

### SCORES IN BRIEF

**RAJSHAHI:** 675 and 128 for 2 (Mushfiqur 54 not out, Forhad 40 not out; Mehedi 1-38)

**CHITTAGONG:** 208 and 192 for 8 (Mominul 75; Sanjamul 3-29, Forhad 2-63, Muktar 1-17)

**Player-of-the-match:** Forhad Reza

**Result:** Rajshahi won by 403 runs

**DHAKA METRO:** 172 and 243 all out in 84.2 overs (Shamsur 84, Shohid 52 not out; Razzak 9-91)

**KHULNA:** 213 and 206 for 5 (Tushar 107 not out, Mithun 75; Arafat 2-36)

**Player-of-the-match:** Abdur Razzak

**Result:** Khulna won by five wickets

**RANGPUR:** 391 and 228 for 6 (Ariful 58 not out, Nasir 47; Nasum 3 for 63)

**SYLHET:** 143 and 162 all out in 46.3 overs (Saker 31; Sajedul 4-46, Mahmudul 3-35)

**Player-of-the-match:** Naeem Islam

**Result:** Rangpur won by 314 runs

**BARISAL:** 323 and 229 all out in 64.4 overs (Salman 62; Nazmul 4-45)

**DHAKA:** 443 and 112 for 2 (Rony 47 not out; Monir 2-36)

**Player-of-the-match:** Taiabur

## Riyad fined

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Dhaka Metro captain Mahmudullah Riyad has been fined his full match fee and also received a one-match suspension for breaching the BCB code of conduct during his side's National Cricket League match against Khulna in Cox's Bazar.

A press release from the BCB stated, "The incident happened during the 13th over of the Dhaka Metro' second innings. After being given out Mahmudullah threw his helmet and batting gloves near the boundary ropes. He also displayed clear dissent and used abusive language in full view of the spectators, cricketers and match offi-

## Tamim out for 2 weeks

SPORTS REPORTER



Bangladesh and Chittagong opener Tamim Iqbal has been ruled out of action for a minimum of two weeks after suffering a finger injury on the third day of the sixth-round match of the National Cricket League against Rajshahi at BKSP on Monday.

The left-hander left the field after scoring one run as a ball hit his right thumb and later an X-ray report found a hairline fracture.

"An X-ray report found a hairline fracture on his right thumb. It will take a minimum of two weeks to recover. I think he will be able to return to action after three weeks," said Bangladesh Cricket Board physician Dr Debashish Chowdhury.

Recently the opener had missed the Asia Cup due to a neck strain and made his return in the ICC World Twenty20 without

much success.

The ongoing domestic league is a very important assignment for the Chittagonian as he has been struggling for form recently, to the extent that questions have even been raised about whether the time has come to give him a break.

Tamim was out for one in the first innings of the match.

Meanwhile, on the same day Rajshahi skipper Mushfiqur Rahim also suffered an injury on his finger but Dr. Debashish guessed that the player's injury, which he suffered during keeping, was not serious.

"We were informed that he had an injury on his finger. We asked him to do an X-ray but as he didn't do that and informed nothing further, we believe there is nothing wrong with his finger," said Debashish.

Mushfiqur suffered an injury on his finger during the second Test against Sri Lanka at Chittagong in February which kept him to away from keeping duties for a while.

## 3-ON-3 B'BALL Bangladesh top the table

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh topped the points table after winning all three of their matches in the Citycell SABA 3-on-3 Basketball Championship, which kicked off at the Dhanmondi Basketball Gymnasium yesterday.

The hosts beat Bhutan in the opening match of the tournament by 22-9 points before beating Sri Lanka by 20-9 points in their next match. They then overcome Nepal in the day's last match by 20-18 points.

The 3-on-3 team of Bangladesh comprises national players Rasheduzzaman, Shamsuzzaman Khan Shueb, Mithun Biswas and Khaled Mahmud Akash and is coached by national basketball coach Wasif Ali.

Bangladesh will play their last match against the Maldives today and a win against the islanders will bring the crown home.

"We went to China two years ago to play 3-on-3 basketball in the Asian Beach Games where we finished fourth out of 16 teams. So we have confidence that we would perform well. We have one game left against Maldives tomorrow and hopefully we will win with ease and lift the title," said Bangladesh captain Rasheduzzaman.

Earlier, State Minister for Youth and Sports Biren Sikder inaugurated the five-nation meet in the Chittagong venue.

## Russel punish B'dhara

SPORTS REPORTER



Defending champions Sheikh Russel KC snapped a five-match winless streak when they handed a 5-2 defeat on newcomers Uttar Baridhara Club in the first match of the second phase of the Niton Tata Bangladesh Premier League at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday. Jamaican striker Ricardo Cousins struck twice, Haitian midfielder Pascal Millien scored one while Mithun Chowdhury and Shakil Ahmed scored one goal apiece to inflict another drubbing on Uttar Baridhara, a side they had beaten 4-0 in the opening match of the league on December 27, 2013.

This was Sheikh Russel's first win since their 2-0 win over Feni Soccer in mid-January, having drawn three and lost two during the period. For Uttar Baridhara, the misery only worsened as they have now conceded 13 goals in their two previous matches.

The win took Sheikh Russel to joint third position on 15 points from 10 matches, six behind leaders Sheikh Jamal DC. Uttar Baridhara remained at eighth position with six points from ten outings.

Mithun, who had bagged a hat-trick in that opening match but had gone goalless since, gave Sheikh Russel the lead in the sixth minute heading in a cross from midfielder Sohel Rana. Millien doubled the advantage in the 32nd minute, stabbing in a low cross from Sohel before Uttar Baridhara's Nigerian forward Kosoko reduced the arrears in the 38th with a powerful shot from inside the box, which beat the keeper and found the net on the far post.

10 minutes after the breather, Cousins restored the two-goal cushion by stroking in a long ball from Millien which hit the post before going into the net. And it was all too easy thereafter for Sheikh Russel with substitute midfielder Shakil Ahmed making it 4-1 in the 74th minute, taking advantage of a defensive fumble.

Cousins bagged his second in the 82nd minute as he chested down a cross from Shakil in an unmarked position before slotting it at the back of the net.

Shahidul Islam Shopon's stoppage time penalty kick made the margin look a bit more respectable, but Sheikh Russel should have ended the match on a bigger margin had they strikers availed all the chances they

## Venue inspection defers BPL?

SPORTS REPORTER



Just a day after the resumption of the second phase of the Bangladesh Premier League, the Professional Football League Committee (PFLC) of Bangladesh Football Federation deferred the fixtures for Wednesday and Thursday to Friday, citing a visit of a BFF team and club officials to the venues outside Dhaka.

"A team comprising of three BFF members and representatives of clubs will visit three venues outside of Dhaka today. As the representatives from participating clubs will be involved, some of the clubs have asked for a deferment of the league by two days," informed BFF's general secretary Abu Nayeem Shohag yesterday.

The inspection team will visit three venues -- MA Aziz Stadium in Chittagong, the home venue of

Chittagong Abahani; Shaheed Salam Stadium in Feni, the home venue of Feni Soccer Club; and Gopalganj Sheikh Fazlul Haque Moni Stadium, the home venue of Muktijoddha Sangsad KC. The decision to visit the venues came in an emergency meeting of the BFF Executive Committee on Saturday after an impasse over holding matches of the league outside Dhaka. The venue inspection committee comprises of Salam Murshedy, Badal Roy and Sheikh Mohammad Maruf Hasan.

According to the original decision of the PFLS, the second and third phases of the league were scheduled to be held on a home and away basis, but some of the Dhaka-based clubs objected to playing away from Dhaka, citing reasons like high expenditure associated with travelling and poor facilities in those cities.

However it has been learnt that, Chittagong Abahani, who were sched-

uled to play against Sheikh Jamal Stadium today, sent a letter to BFF on Sunday refusing to play at BNS as they claimed that their second phase matches were initially proposed to be held at the MA Aziz Stadium.

"We informed BFF about our position which is not to play our home matches outside of Chittagong," said Shakil Mahmud Chowdhury, manager of Chittagong Abahani, when contacted yesterday.

"But some of the so-called big clubs of Dhaka and BFF is bending under their influence," said Shakil.

Shakil said that the conflict runs far deeper than a club-level disagreement. According to Shakil, BFF and the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) are in a tug-of-war over the MA Aziz Stadium and two directors of the BCB -- who are also occupy high positions of two big premier league clubs, are trying to convince the BFF to cancel the Chittagong venue.

## Rocky IPL returns today

PTI, Abu Dhabi



Fighting for credibility after being left devastated by a spot-fixing scandal, the glamorous but controversial Indian Premier League will roll out its seventh edition here on Wednesday with the promise of putting cricket first while keeping the drama and glitz to a bare minimum.

Defending champions Mumbai Indians, captained by Rohit Sharma, will square off against 2012 winners Kolkata Knight Riders, led by veteran opener Gautam Gambhir, in the opener at the Sheikh Zayed Stadium here.

The UAE is hosting the high-profile T20 event's first leg from April 16 to 30 owing to a clash of dates with the Indian general elections and security concerns emanating from that.

where voting would be over by that time.

The razzmatazz, which has made IPL a magnet for both the fans and the cricketers the world over, is not expected to just vanish because of the unsavoury scandal but the organisers have promised to tone down the glamour bit.

To start with, there would not be any opening ceremony this year, replaced by a gala dinner for the teams where Bollywood actor Shah Rukh Khan, co-owner of the Kolkata Knight Riders franchise, is one among the stars who is expected to perform.

But when the curtains go up on perhaps the most popular domestic cricket tournament in the world, focus will also be on the off-field matters in the backdrop of the ongoing Supreme Court monitored investigation into the betting scandal in which some big names of the league have been implicated.