

Zimbabwe A itinerary announced

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The Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) released the itinerary of the Zimbabwe A team's tour of Bangladesh yesterday. The second string Zimbabwean side will arrive in Dhaka on September 10 and fly for Cox's Bazar the very next day where they will play the first four-dayer against their Bangladesh counterparts at the Sheikh Kamal International Cricket Stadium from September 14. The second four-day match is slated for September 21-24 at the Fatullah Cricket Stadium, where the two teams will also play three one-day matches on September 27, September 29 and October 1.

Gamage given women's cricket reins

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The Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) has appointed former Sri Lanka paceman Janak Champika Gamage as the national women's team's head coach.

The 50-year-old Gamage, who represented Sri Lanka in four ODIs, arrived in Dhaka yesterday to start his tenure after BCB gave him a one-year term.

Gamage is a familiar face in Bangladesh cricket as he played with distinction in Dhaka Premier League for Wari, Mohammedan Sporting Club and Kalabagan between 1987 and 2000. In 2006 he returned to Bangladesh and coached Mohammedan in the Dhaka Premier League. "The goal for me would be to try and improve our ICC ranking. I believe that with my local knowledge and coaching experience I will be able to make a positive impression" said Gamage, who can speak Bangla, while recalling his fond memories of Bangladesh cricket.

4 share lead

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Four players shared the lead in the 40th National B Chess Championship at the close of the fourth round at the Bangladesh Chess Federation hall room yesterday. They are IM Minhazuddin Ahmed Sagar, FM Sheikh Nasir Ahmed, FM Debaraj Chatterjee and FM Mehdi Hasan Parag, who have now maximum four points from as many games. Five players -- FM Aminul Islam, Golam Mostafa Bhuiyan, Saiful Islam Chowdhury, Delwar Hossain and Mohammad Sagar -- were jointly in second position with 3.5 points each.

Walton boxing underway

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Walton 13th National Men's Intermediate and the First Junior Women's Boxing Championships got underway yesterday at the Mohammad Ali Boxing Stadium with some 116 boxers fighting it out for 11 gold medals. The Men's Intermediate featured 86 boxers, who will fight in six different categories -- 46kg, 49kg, 52kg, 56kg, 60kg and 69kg -- while the junior women's section comprised five categories: 36kg, 40kg, 50kg and 55 kg.

On the opening day, all preliminary rounds were held after deputy sports minister Arif Khan Joy declared the four-day meet open.

'Excited to be back in national colours'

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The arrival of Shakib Al Hasan brought some excitement to the last day of the two-day players' transfer for the Dhaka Premier Division Cricket League at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

The news spread quickly that the ace all-rounder was heading for the country's premier venue after the uncertainty regarding his transfer process was solved by the ruling of Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) president Nazmul Hassan Papon, which allowed Shakib to choose his team as a non-pool player.

The smiling all-rounder signed for Gazi Tank Cricketers and then openly talked to the media for the first time since the board imposed a six-month ban on disciplinary grounds on July 7, which later in a board meeting on August 26 was significantly reduced to allow him to be available for selection from September 15.

"Now I don't want to look back; rather I want to think about what I can do in the coming days," was the response from the all-rounder when asked about how life was without cricket.

He thanked everybody for the support during his tough time. "I am really happy. I must thank the board and those who helped me during that tough time. I cordially thank all of you -- including journalists, family members and those who were not known to me -- for being so supportive. I can't explain it in words. The most important and significant matter for me is that I'm getting back on the field, excited to be back among the red and green very soon," said an excited Shakib, adding that he was a relieved man when the board reduced his punishment.

Shakib was diplomatic when he encountered a question regarding BCB's decision to stick to the sanction of not providing the left-hander with No Objection Certificates (NOCs) to play foreign leagues until December 31, 2015.

"It's totally in the board's jurisdiction. I will try



Bangladesh ace all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan signs for Gazi Tank Cricketers during the last day of the two-day players' transfer for the Dhaka Premier Division Cricket League at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

my best to maintain a life which is good for everybody and also for me. I ensure that I follow the board's existing code of conduct and discipline. To err is human. But I will try my best to be a good human being. How I can improve myself and contribute for my country is my motto in every-day training," said Shakib.

About the uncertainty over his transfer, Shakib said: "I don't want to make any comment. I believe that the board never wants to harm any player. There were some problems created as I was not in the pool due to the suspension, but I think everything is now settled through discussions," said Shakib.

He also expressed happiness at being able to

sign for his desired club.

"Naturally, for every player they have a comfort zone and every player wants to play for his desired club. And he feels bad when his desire is not fulfilled," he opined.

Lutfur Rahman Badal, the owner of Gazi Tank Cricketers, thanked Papon for taking the right decision in the right time.

"I always make a team to become champion. Shakib is the number one all-rounder in the world and I kept a pool player quota vacant for him. I must thank BCB president as he took the right decision. But it would be fantastic if Shakib got 15 days more to play the Test series in West Indies," said Badal.

Sachin backs ISL

Del Piero set to play for Delhi Dynamos

AFP, Mumbai



Batting superstar Sachin Tendulkar on Thursday threw his weight behind the upcoming Indian Super League (ISL), saying it was the way forward to unearth football talent in the cricket-mad country.

"There is a lot of sporting talent in the country, but no platform to showcase the talent. Perhaps ISL is the answer," Tendulkar said in Mumbai at the launch of the eight-city franchise-based tournament to be played in October-December.

Tendulkar, who retired last year as the leading run-getter in both Test and one-day cricket, is co-owner of the Kochi franchise in the new league that has been modelled on the lines of cricket's cash-rich Indian Premier League (IPL).

While the 40-year-old's fame and fortune is due to his exploits on the cricket field, he said that the most important thing was for Indians to develop and nurture a love of sport.

"My vision for India is sport for all. It is not about being professional but staying healthy and fit," he said.

Meanwhile, Italian World Cup winner Alessandro Del Piero, 39, was set to play for Delhi Dynamos and also serve as a brand ambassador for the ISL, a source associated with the league told AFP.

"He is on board, a formal announcement will be made shortly," the source added.

Del Piero, who has been playing more recently in Australia, will be the biggest star in the league that will also feature former French international David Trezeguet and ex-England goalkeeper David James.

Eight city-based teams are due to take part in the tournament which runs from October 12 to December 20. Several of the franchises have tie-ups with European football giants such as La Liga champions Atletico Madrid who are the co-owners of Atletico Kolkata.



Indian cricket legend and co-owner of Kerala Blasters, Sachin Tendulkar signs a football replica during the emblem unveiling ceremony of the Indian Super League in Mumbai yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS



PHOTO: STAR

Bangladesh U-23 booters stretch during a practice session at the Sylhet Cricket Stadium yesterday.

U-23s aim at series sweep

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Fresh from a single-goal win over the Nepal U-23 team, Bangladesh U-23s are looking forward to wrapping up the two-

match SS Steel International Friendly series with a victory when they take on the visitors at the Sylhet District Stadium today.

The match will start at 5:00pm with state-owned Bangladesh Television (World) telecasting the match live from Sylhet, which is set to host its first international football friendly. And the good news for the governing body of country's football, that has been struggling to draw a decent crowd in any domestic football competitions, is that the game is expected to be played in front of a 25,000 sell-out crowd.

While the team management will be looking for the home team to carry on with the pace and verve displayed in the first game, they will also be looking for some improvements up front -- the lone area that looked a little shaky in the first game, although the forwards scored regular goals in the practice matches against local teams.

Lodewijk de Kruij's charges put pressure on the visitors from the very first minutes with a good combination of the three departments -- the midfield comprising Mamunul Islam, Shohel Rana and Hemanta Vincent functioned well while debutant left-

winger Yousuf Sifat and promising right-winger Toklish Ahmed penetrated the opposition backline effectively and consistently, even though they had to wait for an hour for Shohel's eye-catching decider.

The hosts' backline was also rock solid except for one mistake and the management will definitely be hoping that they do not commit any fumbles in today's match.

However, head coach de Kruij wants his charges to play in the same tempo from the outset till the last minute, although they did struggle in the last 15 to 20 minutes on Tuesday.

Captain Mamunul Islam was cautious about the opponents, who he believes are better than Bangladesh and can turn the tables around at any time.

"I am hopeful that we can carry the momentum of the first match to the second game," said Mamunul, who expects that a capacity crowd will help them perform better to wrap up the series.

Bangladesh had their practice in the afternoon while Nepal practised in the morning at the Sylhet Divisional Stadium.

Nepal, for their part, are eager to level the series.

"Tomorrow's (Friday's) match is very important for us as we already lost the first game and we need to win the second one," said Nepal U-23 captain Sagar Thapa, who however believed that the home side is different to the squad that played in the SAFF Championship last year.

Tigers eye Tests

Rain ruins lone T20I

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The Tigers' limited-overs campaign ended with the one-off T20 International called off due to incessant rain after 17 minutes of play at the Warner Park in St Kitts on Wednesday night.

After being whitewashed in the three-match one-day series, the tourists had a good start in the match as the opening pair of Tamim Iqbal (11) and Anamul Haque (19) posted 31 for no loss in 4.4 overs before the match was called off more than two hours later.

Mithun Ali got his first match of the tour, taking the place of Imrul Kayes, who was dropped following his poor showing in the ODI series, but could not make an appearance in the middle. He is set to return home along with left-arm spinner Abdur Razzak and pacers Taskin Ahmed and Mashrafe Bin Mortaza, who was rested from the lone T20I because of a groin injury and made way for Rubel Hossain.

Mushfiquur Rahim's men will now shift their focus to the longer version with a three-day practice match against St Kitts and Nevis starting from August 30, which will give them an opportunity to fine tune the transition ahead of the two-match Test series against West Indies.

The team management is planning to give Anamul, the opener who hit a hundred in the first ODI, a new role in the batting order in the Test series. The right-hander may bat at number five or six.

After the three-day practice match, the Tigers will fly for St Vincent where they play the first Test from September 5 to 9 and the second and final Test will take place in St Lucia from September 13 to 17.

The struggling Tigers will desperately be looking for some solace in the series before ending their Caribbean trip and everybody will also be looking forward to see how under-fire Bangladesh skipper Mushfiquur inspires his side to recover from their lean patch this year. Anything positive to come from the series will put some balm on the wounds and may push the discussions regarding the captaincy of the wicketkeeper-batsman on the backburner for the time being.

Mushfiquur has been appointed captain till the 2015 World Cup but the board members have already discussed the possibility of a split captaincy by giving the limited-overs job to Mashrafe, who will lead the team in the coming Asian Games.

Another failure in the Test series may intensify the whispers about his ineptitude as a captain.

Sharapova, Wawrinka battle thru' to 3rd Rd

AFP, New York



French Open champion Maria Sharapova and Australian Open winner Stan

Wawrinka survived some shaky moments Wednesday to book their third-round berths at the US Open.

Sharapova, who lifted her fifth Grand Slam title at Roland Garros this year, fought back from a set down in a gritty 4-6, 6-3, 6-2 win over 95th-ranked Romanian Alexandra Dulgheru.

Sharapova and Wawrinka were the day's headliners as two-time defending women's champion Serena Williams and the top men Novak Djokovic, Roger Federer and Andy Murray all had the day off.

Wawrinka, the third seed from Switzerland, turned back the challenge of Brazilian left-hander Thomaz Bellucci 6-3, 6-4, 3-6, 7-6 (7/1) to become the first men's seed into the third round.

American women were keeping the home flag flying, and five-time Grand Slam champion Venus Williams did her part.

The two-time winner, who hadn't made it past the second round the past three years, reached the third round with a 6-1, 6-4 victory over Timea

Bacsinszky.

Fourth-seeded Pole Agnieszka Radwanska became the tournament's biggest upset victim, falling 6-3, 6-4 to China's Peng Shuai.

World number two Simona Halep needed less than an hour to book her third-round berth, with a 6-2, 6-1 victory over Slovakian Jana Cepelova.

Halep was broken early to trail 0-2, but won 12 of the next 13 games to secure the win.

Sixth-seeded German Angelique Kerber also advanced on cue, downing Russian Alla Kudryavtseva 6-2, 6-4.

Men's sixth-seed Tomas Berdych of Czech Republic brought Lleyton Hewitt's 62nd Grand Slam appearance to a quick end, downing the former world number one, and 2001 champion, 6-3, 6-4, 6-3.

Seventh-seeded Bulgarian Grigor Dimitrov finally ended his US Open jinx. After coming up empty in three straight appearances, he defeated US wildcard Harrison 6-2, 7-6 (7/4), 6-2.

South African Kevin Anderson rallied from a break down in the final set to defeat Uruguay's Pablo Cuevas 6-3, 6-7 (3/7), 4-6, 6-2, 7-6 (7/1) in just over four hours.

But three men's matches were cut short by injury retirements.