



Bangladesh players celebrate winning their first game of DBBL Asian Senior Men's Central Zone Volleyball Championship at the Shaheed Suhrawardi Indoor Stadium in Mirpur yesterday, after coming from behind to defeat Maldives.

Concern over Test pacers

SPORTS REPORTER



The final round of the Bangladesh Cricket League, which begins today, was delayed by the team management solely to provide Bangladesh's national players with four-day practice ahead of the Test series against India.

However, that plan seems to have taken a hit since a number of the national players from the preliminary squad for the India series won't be featuring in the competition due to various reasons. And that is likely to severely affect Bangladesh's bowling line-up for the lone Test.

Of the 23-member squad, Rubel Hossain, Shafiqul Islam, Jubair Hossain, Abul Hasan, Taijul Islam and Mohammad Shahid are the bowlers who are expected to be considered for the Test. However, only three of them will be featuring in the last round.

Rubel, who is recovering from a side-strain, has been advised against playing and Abul Hasan hasn't been in the best form lately.

While Shafiqul was deemed fit by the physio, he opted out. "I only started bowling in the nets two days ago. I feel that if I rush into a four-day game now, it may be risky for me. The physio and the medical team have said that am not injured.

"But I think I am yet to regain my bowl-

ing fitness. I can't comment on whether I will be fit in time to play the Test. I can answer that after five to six days of bowling practice," Shafiqul told The Daily Star.

The lack of options might compel selectors to focus on young left-arm bowler Mustafizur Rahman, who has been amongst the wickets for both Khulna and South Zone recently.

A Test call-up for the 19-year-old, who has played just one Twenty20, is currently on the cards. However, with not a lot going the selectors' way, they might just be forced to count on the youngster.

In addition, leg-spinner Jubair Hossain, who had suffered a heel injury prior to the second Test against Pakistan, hasn't even been included in the line-up by any of the four domestic teams.

The batting line-up, on the contrary, isn't a matter of concern. Although Tamim Iqbal and Mushfiqur Rahim are nursing injuries, they aren't that serious. The only possible competition could be with regards to the number seven position where Soumya Sarkar made his debut in the last series. A good performance from Nasir Hossain might have earned him a call-up back into the Test side.

League leaders Prime Bank South Zone will take on Islami Bank East Zone at the Zahir Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium in Chittagong today and the winners will take the championship. At Mirpur, Walton Central Zone will take on BCB North Zone.

IN A NUTSHELL

'Top India players may not go'

INTERNET

India great Sunil Gavaskar expressed apprehensions about the prospect of Indian cricketers touring Pakistan in near future. The ending of a six-year long spell of isolation from international cricket may be seen as a major headway by the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) but Gavaskar termed Zimbabwe's tour to the country a "baby step".

"Whatever the country's boards may decide, I am sure not many top Indian players would like to go there and play if they are asked today. After what happened in 2009, most players would refuse to tour the country," Gavaskar told NDTV.

Old Father Time no more!

INTERNET

Old Father Time, the iconic weathervane in the shape of Father Time removing the bails from a wicket at the Lord's, has been removed from its position after being damaged by strong winds in March on the third day of the first Test between England and New Zealand on Saturday.

The weathervane was a total of 6 ft 6 inches tall, with the figure of Father Time standing at 5 ft 4 inches. It was given to Lord's in 1926 by the architect of the Grandstand, Sir Herbert Baker.

The symbolism of the figure derives from Law 16(3) of the Laws of Cricket: "After the call of Time, the bails shall be removed from both wickets."



Father Time has endured many injuries and was again damaged in March by the high winds of Cyclone Nika which required extensive repair by specialists and it has now been removed, but history dictates that he will return and lord over Lord's again.

5 IPL games under scanner

INTERNET

In a sensational development, five Indian Premier League (IPL) games of the current season are under Enforcement Directorate's scanner, for spot-fixing reported Mumbai Mirror newspaper. Two places were raided on Friday in Mumbai and one each in Delhi and Jaipur by the ED, and two IPL teams are also being investigated for the same.

These raids were conducted after conducting a month-long monitoring on players, team franchises and bookies.

"Five games is our conservative estimate. There may be more games where spot-fixing took place in this edition of IPL," said an ED official.

Sweet revenge for hosts

SPORTS REPORTER

 Hosts Bangladesh came from behind to beat old rivals Maldives by 3-1 sets in the opening match of the DBBL Asian Senior Men's Central Zone Volleyball Championship at the Shaheed Suhrawardi Indoor Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

The hosts, who had suffered a defeat against the Maldivians in their last international assignment during the 2010 South Asian Games, lost the first set 20-25, but they made a brilliant comeback to take the second set 25-19. The men in green then carried the momentum and took the next two sets 25-21 and 25-20.

Bangladesh coach Emdadul Haque termed the victory as a result of the relentless effort they put in since the start of training in February this year. He was looking forward to putting up a good show against Bangladesh's next Pool B opponents Kyrgyzstan on Monday.

Bangladesh, Maldives, Kyrgyzstan and Nepal are the teams in Pool B while Pool A comprises Afghanistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.

Earlier, the first-ever international volleyball championship in Bangladesh was inaugurated through a colourful display show where Trade Minister Tofael Ahmed was present as the chief guest where chief of general staff Lieutenant General Moinul Islam was present as the special guest. Among the other dignitaries were managing director of sponsors Dutch Bangla Bank Limited, KS Tabrez, and representatives of Bangladesh, India and Iran volleyball federations.

'It was icing on the cake'

AFP, Lahore

Pakistan Saturday celebrated the return of international cricket to the country, with head coach Waqar Younis saying a Twenty20 win was the "icing on the cake".

Friday's Twenty20 game between Pakistan and Zimbabwe was the first international match in Pakistan since terrorist attacks on the Sri Lankan team bus in Lahore in March 2009.

Pakistan beat Zimbabwe by five wickets before a 27,000-strong crowd, who battled 42 degree heat and stifling security arrangements.

"It's always good to play in front of the home crowd and winning the game is like icing on the cake," said Waqar, who coached for the first time in a match in Pakistan.

"The team management had plans to give

Selectors keen on final BCL games

SPORTS REPORTER

 Chief selector Faruque Ahmed hoped that Bangladesh Test captain Mushfiqur Rahim would be fully fit before the lone India Test, which will take place at Fatullah from June 10.

"Mushfiqur has been given one week's rest, after which his injured finger will be re-examined. I think we have enough time before the Test and we are hopeful that he will be okay by then," said Faruque while he was talking to reporters ahead of the final four-day match of the Bangladesh Cricket League (BCL) yesterday.

The former Bangladesh skipper was not fully satisfied with the scenario before the BCL game, which was delayed to make sure that the national players get an opportunity to practice the longer version ahead of the Test.

"The team management had plans to give

the national players an opportunity and it would have been good had all the national players played the four-dayer. Unfortunately a number of players will miss the match due to injuries. But still, preparation wise, I believe this match will help most of the players ahead of the Test," said Faruque.

Pace bowling is the most vulnerable part of the team and that's the reason the chief selector was also looking towards pacers who are not in the preliminary squad.

"Yes, we are facing some sort of problem with the pacers. It would have been good for us had Rubel [Hossain] and Shafiqul played the BCL match. We hope Rubel will be okay before the Test match. Anyways we think the pace bowling spots are wide open, so anybody can take the opportunity," said Faruque.

"True, we don't make the team based on one match's performance, but a good performance can always influence the thinking of the team management," he added.



FARUQUE AHMED

Srini new Mir Jafar

Dalmiya is Bangladesh's godfather, says Kamal

SPORTS REPORTER

 The final of the multi-million dollar Indian Premier League between Mumbai Indians and Chennai Super Kings will take place at the famous Eden Gardens in Kolkata today.

But ahead of the blockbuster match it's not Mumbai captain Rohit Sharma or his Chennai counterpart Mahendra Singh Dhoni creating a lot of buzz in the capital of West Bengal.

Frankly speaking, it's not even an Indian, but a sitting Bangladesh minister who was calling all the shots.

The minister in question is AHM Mustafa Kamal, who is now in Kolkata as a special guest of BCCI. One may wonder how Kamal, who only a couple of months ago launched a blistering attack against the Indian board and its deposed president Narayanaswami Srinivasan, suddenly became a good friend of the BCCI.

There might be one good reason. If you are an enemy of Srinivasan, you are supposed to be the best pal of the present BCCI set-up led by Jagmohan Dalmiya.

Kamal's enmity with Srinivasan drew worldwide attention on the day of the World Cup final at the MCG, where Srinivasan handed over the World Cup trophy to the

winning Australian captain Michael Clarke as ICC chairman, depriving Kamal his bragging rights of doing the honour as ICC president.

A vindictive Srinivasan usurped Kamal's role as an act of vengeance following the latter's unbridled remarks targeting Srinivasan after the Bangladesh-India quarterfinal, where some umpiring decisions went against the Tigers.

Kamal, whose reactions then

 were more a publicity stunt than a wise comment from a person holding ICC's top post, later resigned as ICC president, but not before taking a swipe at Srinivasan.

Kamal's words were strong then. But his latest attack against Srinivasan, who lost the BCCI presidency following a court order, appeared even stronger and to some extent, amusing.

Srinivasan's words were strong then. But his latest attack against Srinivasan, who lost the BCCI presidency following a court order, appeared even stronger and to some extent, amusing.

"Dalmiya is the godfather of Bangladesh cricket. It was because of him we got the Test status," said Kamal in another note.

Rain coming to Kolkata?

CSK vs MI IPL final today

AGENCIES, Kolkata

 In what could be a repeat of the opening ceremony, thundershowers may play spoiler for cricket fans on Sunday when Chennai Super Kings and Mumbai Indians lock horns in the Indian Premier League final at the Eden Gardens here.

The regional met office on Saturday said there is a possibility of thundershowers in the next few days in West Bengal, including state capital Kolkata, but heat and humidity will shoot up till the monsoon arrives.

"We cannot exactly specify which places will receive thundershowers but there is a possibility in Kolkata in the evening," a met official said, adding details will be available on Sunday morning.

The season eight of the lucrative Twenty20 competition was not entirely free of drama with reports of a bookie approach, some ugly on-field brawls and breach of protocols.

In the middle of all this, the Mahendra Singh Dhoni-led CSK has gone about their job with absolute precision. This will be another shot at redemption for Dhoni's men, who were denied a third title by Mumbai Indians at the same venue, on May 26, two years ago.

Having clinched their maiden title here in 2013, MI's road to the final has been typical -- having suffered five losses from first six matches that included a four-match losing streak to kick off the season, but showed resilience winning seven of their last eight matches to finish the league stage on a high.

This will be Mumbai's third final and they had faced the same opponents on both the previous occasions -- in 2010 they had lost by 22 runs while in 2013 they won by 23 runs.

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