

SPORT

FIFA PRESIDENCY POLL

We will vote: Salahuddin

SPORTS REPORTER

With the whole world glued to the FIFA headquarters in Zurich for the last two days ever since the football's governing body was rocked by the arrest of its seven officials by the Swiss police in the wee hours of Wednesday, the biggest question doing the rounds at the moment is if Friday's election for the FIFA presidency would take place.

UEFA, the sport's European governing body, has called for the presidential vote to be postponed and was meeting yesterday to decide whether to boycott the election where Sepp Blatter is seeking a fifth term for the hottest seat. Blatter's rival for the FIFA presidency is Prince Ali bin al Hussein, a FIFA vice-president from Jordan.

Although Bangladesh, one of the 209 FIFA members, is there to more importantly fill the numbers than any other serious concerns, a lot of people in this part of the world however are quite keen to know what is BFF's (the governing body of Bangladesh football) stance after these extraordinary happenings in Zurich.

"I'm feeling very uncomfortable at this moment. I have attended four previous FIFA Congresses, but this one is certainly very nervy with a lot of things happening around us," said BFF president Kazi Salahuddin over telephone to The Daily Star Sport on Thursday afternoon.

Salahuddin is now in Zurich along with BFF vice-president Arif Khan Joy, who is also the deputy sports minister, and BFF general secretary Abu Nayeem Sohag to attend the FIFA Congress.

Besides, Salahuddin will vote for Bangladesh if the presidential election takes place today.

Asked if he would vote for a president in the wake of the controversy that embroiled the FIFA after so many arrests following bribery probe in the US, Salahuddin said: "I will cast my vote if there is an election for the FIFA presidency on Friday."

But the magnificent striker of the 70s and early 80s refused to comment who he would vote for.

Although Blatter, the 79-year-old Swiss, is now the public enemy number one in Europe following the awarding of the 2018 World Cup to Russia, and especially the 2022 edition to Qatar, he remained still popular in the other parts of the world including Asia.

Blatter made two visits to Bangladesh with the last one on March 6 in 2012. At that time he inaugurated the artificial turf, funded by the FIFA, and the Football Academy in Sylhet.

IN A NUTSHELL

Ben inspired by his mum

INTERNET

Ben Stokes, the hero of Lord's Test that England won by 124 runs against New Zealand, is inspired by his mother who played cricket while she was pregnant with him. Deborah, mother of Ben, was a respectable cricketer in New Zealand before he was born in 1991.

With dad Ged a formidable rugby league forward who represented the Kiwis, Ben was always destined to make a professional career in sports like his parents. Excited with his son's heroic performance at Lord's, Ged says that with the time difference, they were awake all the nights watching it, and hardly had any sleep during those five days, the Mirror reported.

Chanderpaul unhappy

INTERNET

Shivnarine Chanderpaul is disappointed with the manner in which his career as a West Indies cricketer has come to an end but insists that he has not yet retired from the game.

"My request to finish up with the Australian series is not asking too much," Chanderpaul was quoted as saying in the local newspaper 'Kaiter News' on Tuesday. "It gives me a chance to acknowledge my supporters at home... I should not be pushed into retirement."

Bravo releases video

INTERNET

West Indies all-rounder Dwayne Bravo aka DJ Bravo has decided to give music a crack, and he's enlisted the help of his cricketing friends to star in his video.



The video, which has had 30,000 views on YouTube, was released this week and features Bravo meeting a woman in a club and falling madly in love with her.

Bravo decides to marry the girl and goes on to celebrate with IPL peers Virat Kohli, Mike Hussey, Chris Gayle and Brendon McCullum. The cricketers have brief cameos in the song as they are seen towards the end standing alongside Bravo and trying to dance like him.

Expectations high against India Training camp begins today

SPORTS REPORTER



The camp for the much-awaited India series will begin in Mirpur today with all the players of the 23-member preliminary squad scheduled to hit the gym at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in the morning.

After a brilliant performance against Pakistan, which saw the Tigers whitewash them in the ODIs, win the sole T20I and put up record stands in the Tests, the expectations for the India series, which begins on June 10, have increased manifold.

In addition to the momentum, the Tigers will be encouraged by the fact that a single win in the three-match ODI series can lift them above the West Indies to the seventh position in the ICC rankings. A

winnerless series though, would send them back below Pakistan to number nine.

While Bangladesh's record against India in both Tests and ODIs isn't anything to write home about, one believes that the hosts can bank on the momentum gained from a historic series against Pakistan.

In Tests, Bangladesh have lost six out of the seven matches between the two sides, managing to draw the lone rain-hit Test in Chittagong in 2007. The last time the two teams met was at Mirpur in 2010. A game India comfortably won by 10 wickets.

However, that match saw a brilliant 151 from opener Tamim Iqbal, which helped prevent yet another innings defeat for the Tigers against India.

The good news for Bangladesh is that Tamim seems to have revived his form. With a double-



Mashrafe Bin Mortaza has played key roles against India before, and he will be expected to lift the Tigers again in the ODI series.

PHOTO: STAR FILE

century to his name in the last series, the left-hander seems to be enjoying himself. He has played two matches against India and has a healthy average of 58.50.

It's not just the left-hander who boasts a good record against India. Moshfiqur Rahim and Mahmudullah Riyad have scored runs at an average of 61.66 against the men in blue. In addition, the lone Test will take place on an expectedly flat Fatullah track where one expects batsmen to flourish.

However, the problem for the Tigers lies in their bowling. Apart from Mohammad Shahid, the Tigers are yet to find a pacer who is either fit or in form.

Rubel Hossain and Shafiq Islam, both of whom are recovering from their respective injuries, have been bowling in the nets regularly over the last few days and will hope they can make it in time for the Test.

Abul Hasan, who got on the wickets column after quite a while in the recently concluded Bangladesh Cricket League, is the other option.

While the pacers may not exactly hold the key for Bangladesh in the Test series, they are expected to play a leading role for the Tigers in the three-match ODI series in Mirpur.

From the current team, Mashrafe Bin Mortaza (16), Shakib Al Hasan (14) and Taskin Ahmed (10), are the highest wicket-takers against India.

Bangladesh's chances of winning an ODI against India increase quite a bit when Mashrafe puts on a good show with the ball, with the skipper playing extremely crucial roles in each of Bangladesh's three wins against India.

In 2004, he scored 31 runs and took two wickets. The famous

World Cup win in 2007 saw him bowl beautifully to take a four-wicket haul. In the Asia Cup in 2012, Mashrafe again took two crucial wickets.

The last time India visited Bangladesh was in 2014. Back then the team management decided to spice up the tracks and attack India with pace. That's when Taskin made a brilliant ODI debut by taking five wickets.

Although the plan then backfired as the Tigers themselves failed to handle the movement of the pitch, whether the Tigers will try out a similar strategy this time around remains uncertain.

However, the mood in the camp will be extremely different, as opposed to the seemingly derailed attitude last year. As skipper Mashrafe himself put it a number of times in the last few weeks, 'the players are extremely hungry for wins right now'.



Turkmenistan clinched the DBBL Asian Senior Men's Central Zone Volleyball Championship after grinding out a win against Maldives in the final at Shaheed Suhrawardi indoor Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

Big names move on

AFP, Paris

Novak Djokovic and Andy Murray reached the French Open third round Thursday, setting up intriguing clashes with next generation Australians, Thanasi Kokkinakis and Nick Kyrgios.

Top seed Djokovic survived a worrying injury scare before coasting to a 6-1, 6-4, 6-1 win over Gilles Muller of Luxembourg.

Djokovic will face 19-year-old Kokkinakis who saved three match points to beat fellow Australian Bernard Tomic 3-6, 3-6, 6-3, 6-4, 8-6.

Murray, the third seed, went into the last 32 with a 6-2, 4-6, 6-4, 6-1 win over Joao Sousa of Portugal.

The Scot took his record to 12-0 on clay this season and he will meet 20-year-old Kyrgios who enjoyed a walkover into the third round when scheduled opponent Kyle Edmund of Britain withdrew with a stomach injury.

Defending champion and sixth seed Rafael Nadal, chasing a 10th Paris title, enjoyed a 6-4, 6-3, 6-1 breeze past Spanish compatriot Nicolas Almagro.

Nadal will face Andrey Kuznetsov for a place in the last 16 after the Russian defeated Austria's Jurgen Melzer 6-1, 5-7, 6-2 (7/0), 7-5.

US Open champion Marin Cilic also reached the third round for the fourth successive year. The ninth-seeded Croatian fired 38 winners in a 7-6 (7/3), 6-1, 6-1 win over Italian qualifier Andrea Arnaboldi.

In the women's section, Serena Williams and Petra Kvitova survived big scares, both needing to come back from a set down to reach the third round.

Williams, 19 times a Grand Slam winner, survived an almighty fight before finally seeing off the challenge of world number 105 Anna-Lena Friedsam of Germany in a 5-7, 6-3, 6-3 win.

She will next face two-time Australian Open champion Victoria Azarenka of Belarus who eased past Lucie Hradecka of the Czech Republic 6-2, 6-3.

In a day marked by cold, blustery conditions, fourth seed Kvitova made it through to the last 32 with a 6-7 (4/7), 6-4, 6-2 win over Spain's Silvia Soler-Espinosa. But as it turned out, only fifth seed Caroline Wozniacki was packing her bags for home after the Dane lost 6-4, 7-6 (7/4) to an impressive Julia Goerges of Germany.

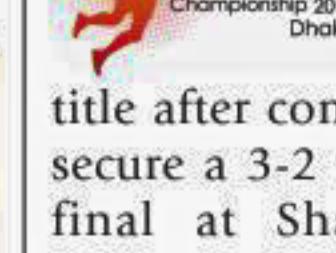


Spain's Rafael Nadal celebrates after winning a point against compatriot Nicolas Almagro during second round of the French Open in Paris yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

Title Turkmenistan's

SPORTS REPORTER



Turkmenistan clinched the DBBL Asian Senior Men's Central Zone Volleyball Championship title after coming back from 2-0 down to secure a 3-2 victory over Maldives in the final at Shaheed Suhrawardi Indoor Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

Maldives, who started the tournament with a defeat against hosts Bangladesh, dominated the first two sets 29-27 and 25-22 and were on course for lifting the glittering trophy, but Turkmenistan, who were not tagged favourites before the tournament, came back strongly to level the margin 2-2 by winning the third and fourth sets and took the final into a decisive fifth set, where they dominated from the outset and didn't look behind before securing it 15-13 to win first-ever international title.

"Maldives played really well in the first two sets and then our coach instructed us to block the opponents' number 9 [Sajid Ismail] and after that we started gaining momentum," said lifter Usmanbek Kalandarov after the match.

"Personally I am very glad to be a member of this winning team and I want to thank

the very cordial people of Bangladesh, who supported us from the beginning," said Usmanbek in his broken English.

"I'm very happy that the boys showed their skills in the last three sets to win the tournament," coach Atayev Gammarguly was quoted as saying by Usmanbek.

Though Maldives lost the final, they won the hearts of hundreds of spectators through their celebrations after getting each point. Maldives player Sajid was named the most valuable player of the tournament.

"I was declared the man of the tournament but I am not happy to hang the silver medal around my neck because we lost the final and my achievement did not help the team," said Sajid.

He believed the players felt a bit overconfident after winning the first two sets and that should be one of reasons behind the defeat and that they could not block well in the later part of the last set.

After the final, spectators took to the wooden floor and took photos with players of both teams.

Afghanistan finished third after beating Nepal 24-26, 25-18, 34-32, 22-25, 15-11.

The champions were awarded 1,000 dollars while the runners-up received 500 dollars.

Eng bank on Stokes 2nd Test against NZ starts today

APP, Leeds



Ben Stokes will find himself the centre of attention when England face his native New Zealand in the second day-night match in Lahore on Friday, hoping to capitalise on the suspension of Zimbabwe's in-form captain Elton Chigumbura.

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England's last one-day series win came against Sri Lanka in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) in February 2014 before embarking on a five-series losing streak.

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Pak-Zim 2nd ODI today

APP, Lahore

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