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A risky venture

BCB set to send women's team to Pakistan

SPORTS REPORTER

Amid security concerns, the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) is set to send the national women's team to Pakistan for a short visit. The board has already obtained the GO (government order) for players and officials for the series -- two One Day Internationals and as many T20I matches scheduled to be held in Karachi and Lahore. The board has also booked flights on September 27 and September 28 and return flights on October 7.

All the requisite work regarding this trip is almost done and BCB president Nazmul Hassan Papon is expected to make the official announcement today upon his return from abroad.

"We are waiting for our board president to return to the country tomorrow [Wednesday]. Once he is here, he will hold further discussions and then reveal the final decision," said BCB's director and chairman of media committee Jalal Yunus yesterday.

Many have been considering the visit as a risky venture to a risky place, with reports of terrorist attacks in various parts of the country, including attacks inside secured zones and on high-profile politicians, grabbing world headlines.

However, the board took the decision based on the report of a four-member security team, which visited Karachi and Lahore on September 5. According to sources, the security team submitted their report to the BCB president, mentioning that they were convinced the security arrangements would

allow the board to go ahead with the tour. There was also some advice in the report, but nothing was deemed serious enough for the board to cancel the tour.

According to board insiders, the BCB is keen to continue its good relationship with the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) in order to maintain bilateral series as well as Pakistan players' participation in Bangladesh's domestic circuit.

Zimbabwe's tour in May this year signalled the return of international cricket to Pakistan, six years after a militant attack on the Sri Lanka national cricket team bus on March 2009. However, amid all the celebrations, Zimbabwe's tour was marred by a suicide attack near the Gaddafi Stadium during the second match.

Bangladesh men's cricket team was due to tour Pakistan in April 2012, but the High Court blocked that tour following a public outcry. Then in 2013, there was a discussion about having a short tour, consisting of one T20I and one ODI, but the BCB cancelled the tour, saying Pakistan was not safe for its players. This decision led to some animosity from the PCB, which barred its players from participating in the Bangladesh Premier League in 2013.

The last time the Tigers visited Pakistan was in July 2008 for the Asia Cup, playing matches in Lahore and Karachi, while the Bangladesh national football team played a World Cup pre-qualifying match in Lahore in July 2011. The most recent visit was made by the Bangladesh women's handball team, who travelled to Faisalabad for the IHF Trophy in December 2014, preceded by the Bangladesh women's football team's visit to Islamabad in November 2014 for the SAFF Women's Championship.



A SOBERING THOUGHT: Bangladesh women's cricket team skipper Salma Khatun (R) seems to be contemplating the Pakistan tour while taking a breather after a hard day's practice at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

Batting was poor: Faruque

SPORTS REPORTER

19-year-old pacer Prasad Krishna ran through Bangladesh A's top order yesterday to leave the visitors in shambles on the first day of their three-day encounter against Ranji Trophy champions Karnataka in Mysore.

The pacer scalped five wickets to help his side bundle the visitors out for 158 in just 38.4 overs. Karnataka, in reply, ended the day on 163 for 6. Bangladesh's top order failed to fire for the fourth consecutive match in this tour.

Anamul Haque, Rony Talukdar, Mominul Haque and Soumya Sarkar were all sent back to the pavilion for single digits.

Interestingly, the team management promoted Liton Das to number three and the player responded by smacking eleven boundaries in his run-a-ball 50. At 109 for 8, Bangladesh were destined for a much lower score, however Shuvagata Hom helped the visitors cross the 150-mark with a stroke-filled 55 off 65 deliveries.

Chief Selector Faruque Ahmed, who is with the team in Karnataka, rued the way his batsmen applied themselves.

"Initially we played a few bad shots and then there were good deliveries as well. But I must say that the main reason behind our batting failure was poor application. The top order batted poorly. They went for too many drives and edged quite a few," Faruque told The Daily Star.

"They have come into this series

straight after the one-dayers and we didn't get enough time to have a proper training session with the red ball. I think that's one of the reasons why they couldn't perform," he added.

With the two-match Test series against Australia next month, the current form of the batters -- especially the likes of Mominul and Soumya, who are likely to be in the Test side -- is far from encouraging.

When asked if he was worried, Faruque said, "This is the reason why we organise tours, so that players can adjust themselves and learn to play in different conditions."

"On the brighter side, I thought

Saqlain Sajib and Shuvagata bowled well," he added.

Spinners Saqlain and Shuvagata scalped three wickets each and had reduced the hosts to 100 for 6 after 32.1 overs. However, Shishir Bhavane and Jagadeesha Suchith ensured that there were no further hiccups and took their side past Bangladesh's score.

SCORES IN BRIEF

BANGLADESH A: 158 all out in 38.4 overs (Shuvagata 55, Liton 50; Prasad 5-49)
 KARNATAKA: 163 for 6 (Bhavane 55 not out; Shuvagata 3-29, Saqlain 3-48)



Bangladesh A's slow left-arter Saqlain Sajib (L) celebrates one of his three wickets, while Nasir Hossain (R) is ecstatic after taking a diving catch during their three-day match against Karnataka in Mysore yesterday.

Soumya, Imrul in BCB XI

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) yesterday announced the squad for the three-day tour match against Australia, which will begin at the Khan Shaheb Osman Ali Stadium in Fatullah from October 3.

The players will report at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium the day before the game. The team includes a mixture of experienced and young players. Imrul Kayes and Soumya Sarkar are the only players in the eleven who were included in Bangladesh's last Test squad against South Africa.

The side also includes former under-19 captain Mahmudul Hasan, middle-order batsman Mosaddek Hossain and young pacer Abu Zayed.

SQUAD

Imrul Kayes, Anamul Haque, Mahmudul Hasan, Mohammad Mithun, Soumya Sarkar, Sabbir Rahman, Mosaddek Hossain, Shuvagata Hom, Naeem Islam, Al-Amin Hossain, Kamrul Islam Rabbi, Abu Zayed Rahi, Shaiful Islam

India, Nepal show the way forward

SPORTS REPORTER

Barely a month after lifting the SAFF U-16 Championship title at home, Bangladesh

colts were licking the wounds of a miserable home campaign in the AFC U-16 Championship Qualifiers, where they failed to collect a single point, conceding 11 goals in two matches against Saudi Arabia and Arab Emirates. Around the same time, two of the other South Asian sides, India and Nepal, were having a ball as they qualified for the 16-team final round of the same competition.

The fact that India had lost twice against Bangladesh during the SAFF Championship, can be partly explained by the South Asian powerhouse's decision to send its second-string side to Bangladesh while sending the main team to Germany as part of preparation for the AFC U-16 Championship and the FIFA U-17 World Cup, both of the tournaments to be hosted by India over the next two years.

The rewards were evident. The Indian under-16 team beat Bahrain (5-0) and Lebanon (6-0) while losing against Iran (0-3) to go through as runners-up from Group C while Nepal, who beat Jordan (2-1) and Kyrgyzstan (4-2) before losing against Oman (1-4), advanced as runners-up from Group B.

While the qualification of both India and Nepal at the expense of some of the big names of Asia is a bit of a surprise, this is in all fair-

ness down to the fact that these two countries put more emphasis on grassroots football much earlier than their South Asian counterparts, while not neglecting their seniorsides.

Both these countries started to restructure grassroots football by setting up academies in 2012 under direct supervision of their football federations while the rest of the countries of the region were left to play catch-up. The All India Football Federation is operating three academies -- two in Goa and one in Kolkata -- apart from the private academies like Tata Football Academy, Liverpool Academy, Boca Juniors Academy, Baichung Bhutia Academy etc, which have sprouted across the country. The All Nepal Football Association has reportedly set up four academies in four provinces.

Bangladesh Football Federation, on the other hand, only managed to partially launch its maiden academy at the end of last year, even though there are a few small academies around the country, which are neither affiliated with the federation nor under any supervision of the game's governing body.

Even the nationwide primary school football championships, the events which are supposed to find talents as young as 10, are run by the education ministry, with the federation playing a minimal role.

If the federation could get the private academies under its direct supervision and assistance, and involve its coaching staff in the school championships, the health of our age-group football will improve substantially.

Taskin out for 6 weeks

SPORTS REPORTER

Injured pacer Taskin Ahmed began a new rehabilitation process at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday. The pacer, who had suffered a side strain during Bangladesh A's first one-dayer against India A, is expected to be out of action for at least six weeks.

Taskin underwent an MRI scan a few days ago and the report was received by the Bangladesh Cricket Board's medical team yesterday. The new rehabilitation programme for Taskin is expected to last for at least a month.

The latest revelation means that the pacer will have to work hard in order to be match-fit by the time the Bangladesh Premier League kicks off from November 24.

IN A NUTSHELL

'We won't beg India'

Pakistan cricket chief Shahryar Khan Tuesday ruled out giving an ultimatum to India to play a proposed cricket series, saying if it does not go ahead he will make alternative fixtures.

Earlier this month the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) wrote a letter to the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) seeking confirmation as to whether or not India would play the series in the United Arab Emirates.

But India has so far not replied and current political tension between the two countries has cast doubt over the series.

Khan said Pakistan will not beg India to agree to the matches.

"I don't want to give any ultimatum to India but I am going to talk to them on the sidelines of ICC meeting next month," Khan told media.

"I will tell them that you [BCCI] have not yet taken permission from the government which is unfair and there will be two fall outs of that: one that we are not going to beg."

KP in for PSL?

Former England batsmen Kevin Pietersen looks set to feature alongside Shakib Al Hasan, Angelo Mathews and Chris Gayle in the Pakistan Super League next year.

Pietersen confirmed his involvement via a video message played during the launch of the 2016 PSL.

"Absolutely buzzing to be a part of the Pakistani mela [event]. I can't wait to get it started," Pietersen said.

Players brawl on pitch

A brawl was witnessed in a domestic game in Bermuda, which led to one of the players getting a life-ban.

In between overs, Bermuda international Jason Anderson and George O'Brien were involved in a tussle. The batsman swung his bat at Anderson and both players wrestled each other to the ground, before players, officials and even members of the Bermuda Police stopped them.

After reviewing the video footage, Anderson got a life-ban, while O'Brien got a six month suspension.

Compiled by Star Sport Desk



Walton executive director SM Zahid Hasan (L) speaks to reporters during a ceremony, at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday, in which the company was declared as the title sponsor for the upcoming two-Test series between Bangladesh and Australia.