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PICTURE PERFECT: Dhaka's left-arm spinner Mosharraf Hossain Rubel (3rd from R) looks on as Shuvagata Hom takes the catch at first slip to remove Rangpur's Mahmudul Hasan on the third day of the National Cricket League at the Shaheed Chandu Stadium in Bogra yesterday. PHOTO: BCB

South Africa postpone women's tour

Papon looks to Dubai meet for turnaround

SPORTS REPORTER

South Africa women's cricket team's tour of Bangladesh, scheduled to begin on October 15, has been postponed indefinitely, days after Cricket Australia postponed its men's team's tour due to security concerns.

According to BCB president Nazmul Hasan Papon, the boards have mutually decided to put the series on hold and further discuss the scenario during the upcoming ICC board meeting, starting in Dubai on Friday.

"Cricket South Africa (CSA) expressed its concern after the latest turn of events and wanted to know the security plan for its women's team. Unfortunately, we don't provide security plans for women's cricket; it's mainly for the men's teams.

"So instead of trying to make one and communicating with them via mail, we have decided to speak to them face-to-face in the upcoming ICC meeting. I believe it can bring a much better result. There will be lesser risks that way. I don't think this issue can be solved through only CEO correspondence. Also the ICC needs to play a role regarding this issue," explained Papon.

"Once we meet, we will ask them (CSA) to provide their security requirements and we will carry on from that point. The alerts that have been issued against foreigners in Bangladesh is likely to be removed in the next one week and that can only make the meeting a lot more fruitful," added Papon.

The BCB boss feels the tour may begin a week later than originally scheduled.

"Both the cricket teams are free and I don't think there will be a problem if we delay the tour a bit," said the president.

Responding to a question, Papon did not rule out the recent killing of two foreign nationals in Bangladesh as a conspiracy beyond the cricket field.

"I don't think these issues are related to cricket boards' politics. I don't think this is targeting Bangladesh's cricket. Yes, there's definitely a conspiracy, or else all these issues would not have come up. But I feel this is more of a problem within the country. I don't think these events can have links from outside the nation," he observed.

He further said that his only mission in ICC's Dubai headquarters this time would be to convince the other member nations that cricket can't be held hostage to mere security threats.

"The point that I want to explain to them is that if one merely stops playing cricket just because of a threat in a place that doesn't have any previous records of terrorism, then cricket will never take place. We have to find out a solution so that we can play cricket despite these threats," explained Papon.

He also said that the BCB is contemplating to host Zimbabwe in November instead of January.

He also added that the BCB is considering granting leave for the support staff of the national cricket team after the Australia series got postponed.

BCB names 'A' team for SA, Zim

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh Cricket Board yesterday announced a young Bangladesh A outfit for its tours of South Africa and Zimbabwe. The team, which is scheduled to leave on October 14, will play two one-day matchers and a three-day match against their South African counterparts.

They will then travel to Zimbabwe to play three one-dayers and two four-day matches inbetween October 28 to November 18.

A number of changes have been made from the last A team that visited India. 19-year-old batsman Mosaddek Hossain who has scored three first-class double centuries this year and has averaged over a 100 in the longer version has been given a chance. Seven out of the 16 players selected have played Test cricket before.

SQUAD

Sadman Islam, Rony Talukdar, Liton Das, Soumya Sarkar, Sabbir Rahaman, Mosaddek Hossain Saikat, Mahmudul Hasan, Shuvagata Hom, Mohammad Mithun, Kamrul Islam Rabbi, Mohammed Shahid, Al Amin Hossain, Abu Jayed Chowdhury Rahi, Saqlain Sajib, Jubair Hossain, Taijul Islam

Marshall, Imtiaz hit tons

SPORTS REPORTER

Dhaka Metro's Marshall Ayub scored a fighting century while Sylhet's Imtiaz Hossain struck an equally gritty ton on an eventful third day of the National Cricket League yesterday. But despite their valiant efforts both Metro, who failed to avoid the follow-on mark, and Sylhet, still struggling to get anywhere near Barisal's massive score, will be fighting to save the game on the fourth and final day today.

The third day witnessed some brilliant performers with the ball also. Dhaka's Mosharraf Hossain took a six-wicket haul against Rangpur in Bogra while Bangladesh under-19 captain Mehedi Hasan Miraz followed his half-century with a six-wicket haul for Khulna in Mirpur.

Having lost four quick wickets on Day Two, Metro seemed to be in trouble against Khulna, who were defending an impressive 455. However, Marshall's 107 and a fighting 66 from Sharifullah ensured Metro post 271 before being bundled out.

Khulna still have a chance to win the game while Metro will be hoping to survive the 90 overs.

At Bogra, Dhaka's spinners bundled Rangpur out for just 248 in the first innings and forced them to a follow-on. At the end of the day, Rangpur were reeling at 55 for 3 with their key batsmen, Nasir Hossain and Liton Das, already back in the pavilion.

Barisal's charge to force a result at the Sheikh Abu Naser Stadium in Khulna faced a stubborn resistance from Sylhet's Imtiaz. After Mosaddek Hossain's double century propelled Barisal to 527, Sylhet replied with 363 for 7, courtesy of Imtiaz's 127.

The most exciting game of the round, though, is taking place at the Sheikh Kamruzzaman Stadium in Rajshahi. After conceding a first innings lead, Rajshahi did well to bundle Chittagong out for just 181 in the second innings. Slow left-armers Sanjamul Islam and Taijul Islam took three wickets each. Yasir Ali and Irfan Sukkur scored half-centuries for the port city team.

Rajshahi's openers remained unbeaten with a 98-run stand and they require another 159 runs to win on the fourth day.

SCORES IN BRIEF

KHULNA V DHAKA METRO
KHULNA: 455
DHAKA METRO: 271 all out in 95.3 overs (Marshall 107, Sharifullah 66 not out; Mehedi 6 for 61)

DHAKA V RANGPUR
DHAKA: 449
RANGPUR: 248 all out in 98.1 overs (Nasir 73, Liton 51; Mosharraf 6-82, Shuvagata 3-46) and 55 for 3 (Saymon 21; Mosharraf 2-21)

BARISAL V SYLHET
BARISAL: 527 for 9 dec
Sylhet: 363 for 7 (Imtiaz 127, Zakir 89, Rajin 55 not out; Shohag 3-75, Mosaddek 1-36)

CHITTAGONG V RAJSHAHI
CHITTAGONG: 383 and 181 all out in 67.2 overs (Yasir 61, Irfan 55; Sanjamul 3-39, Taijul 3-72)
RAJSHAHI: 308 and 98 for no loss (Junaid 53 not out, Nazmul 45 not out)

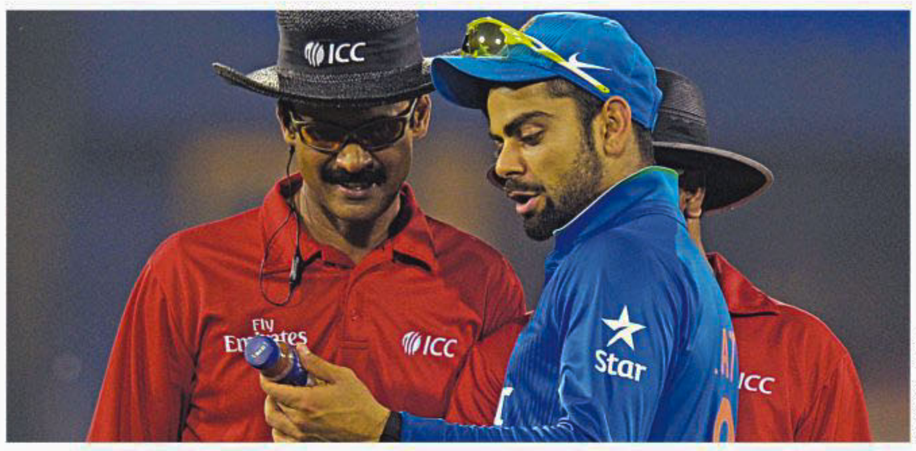

PHOTO: AFP

Virat Kohli shows a bottle thrown in the ground to umpires as play is interrupted by spectators throwing bottles onto the pitch during the second T20I in Cuttack.

SA bottle India

AFP, *Cuttack*

South Africa clinched the three-match Twenty20 series against India after winning the second match by six wickets in Cuttack on Monday, one that was marred by crowd trouble.

Albie Morkel grabbed three wickets as the Proteas bowled India out for 92 and then surpassed the modest target in 17.1 overs at the Barabati stadium.

Play was stopped for an hour when disappointed Indian fans threw bottles on to the field as the tourists were cruising to an easy win, which was achieved for the loss of just four wickets.

On an extremely different track from the first T20I, the batters had to be cautious during the chase. AB de Villiers got bowled after scoring a 21-ball 19. The visitors were three down for 49 in eight overs. However, JP Duminy scored a composed 30 off 39 balls to take the visitors over the line eventually.

Earlier, South Africa shot India out for 92.

Leg-spinner Imran Tahir and seamer Chris Morris chipped in with two wickets each after the tourists sent India in to bat on a pitch of inconsistent bounce at the Barabati stadium.

Rohit Sharma and Suresh Raina top-scored with 22 each as India were bowled out in 17.2 overs to record their second-lowest total in T20 internationals. They fell for 74 against Australia in 2008.

SCORES IN BRIEF

INDIA: 92 all out in 17.2 overs (R Sharma 22, Raina 22; Tahir 2-24, Morkel 3-12)
SOUTH AFRICA: 96 for 4 in 17.1 overs (Duminy 30; Ashwin 3-24)
Result: South Africa won by six wickets.

Afridi slams Oz decision

AFP, *Karachi*

Pakistan all-rounder Shahid Afridi criticised Australia's decision to call off their Bangladesh tour citing terrorism fears, saying Monday that while security was paramount tours should "not be cancelled over minor issues".

Australia scrapped their two-Test tour of Bangladesh last week after official warnings militants may attack Western interests.

The head of the Bangladesh Cricket Board Nazmul Hassan said measures to tighten security should have satisfied any safety concerns, telling reporters in Dhaka that while many countries face such terror threats, "it never stops cricket".

Afridi echoed that statement on the sidelines of a visit in Karachi to meet Pakistan and Bangladesh's women's teams.

"Security is paramount but tours should not get cancelled over minor issues," he told reporters.

'Foreign players not a problem'

SPORTS REPORTER

Despite the postponements of Australia's men's and South Africa's women's cricket tours to Bangladesh due to security concerns, the Governing Council of the Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) believes that the league will not face any problems with regards to the participation of foreign players.

The Governing Council has already prepared a list of about 150 foreign and 65 local players for the players' transfer which is likely to take place on October 31. There will be no auction as it preferred to follow the players-by-choice format, a method earlier used for the Dhaka Premier League.

"The majority of the players will come from England, West Indies, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. A few will also arrive from Australia, New Zealand, Ireland and Scotland. Everything is fine with the BPL when it comes to the availability of the foreign players. And we can assure everybody that we will take proper security measures for this tournament," said BCB media committee chairman Jalal Yunus after a BPL meeting yesterday.

BCB president Nazmul Hassan Papon also echoed a similar sentiment while speaking to reporters at a press conference yesterday. "Australia has Big Bash, I don't know if anyone would have come from there, but England's players have shown interest, I know that. West Indies, Zimbabwe, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, all the players who generally come, will come. If one or two countries don't want to send their players then that is a different issue, but till now everyone has shown interest," said Papon.

BPL governing council members discussed all the details of the tournament yesterday, including the formation of a technical committee, which will be finalised in their next meeting on October 7.

As per the draft, the players will be divided into four categories -- A+, A, B & C. The base price of the foreign players is expected to be set at USD 30,000, while their maximum price will be USD 70,000. The base price for local players is expected to be set at TK 5 lakh, while the maximum will be Tk 35 lakh.

The Governing Council will fix six icon players for six franchises. A team can register unlimited foreign players but can field just four in a match.

On September 16, the Governing Council informed that the tournament would begin on November 24 after the opening ceremony on November 22. But yesterday they said that it is most likely to start on November 21 with the opening ceremony scheduled to take place on November 19. "Actually the dates are yet to be finalised as we need to adjust with the Big Bash and as well as Zimbabwe's tour of Bangladesh," said Yunus.

Bilal hands Pak the series

AFP, *Harare*

Off-spinner Bilal Asif outlined his potential value to Pakistan ahead of upcoming games against England as his five-wicket haul clinched the third ODI against Zimbabwe at Harare Sports Club on Monday.

Playing in just his second ODI, Asif decimated the Zimbabwe line-up with figures of 5 for 25 as the hosts were bowled out for 161, then scored 38 as Pakistan chased their target in 34 overs.

Asif broke Zimbabwe's opening stand worth 89 in his fifth over when he had Chibhabha caught and bowled for 48, and then went on to take four further wickets in his last three overs as Zimbabwe sank to 133 for seven.

SCORES IN BRIEF

ZIMBABWE: 161 all out in 38.5 overs (Mutumbami 67; Asif 5-25)
PAKISTAN: 162 for 3 in 34 overs (Asif 38; Panyangara 1-22)
Result: Pakistan won by 7 wickets

Do or die for youths

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh are looking to dust themselves off from the frustration of being held to a 1-1 draw against Bhutan when they take on favourites Uzbekistan in the last match of AFC U-19 Championship's Group A Qualifiers today.

The unexpected draw has left the hosts' chances of qualifying for the 16-team final round very bleak as a draw in today's match might not be enough, even though a win will see them grab the top spot. Having analysed the scenario, coach Saiful Bari Titu claimed that his side will take the field for a win, no matter how difficult it is.

"As things stand, a draw in tomorrow's (Tuesday) match, which will give us five points in total, may not be enough for us to qualify. So we will go out there for a win. Miracles do happen in football," said the coach yesterday.

"We have worked with video footages of the previous matches and tried to make the players realise their mistakes. Now it all depends on how they perform on the pitch," said Titu, adding that he might bring two to three changes to the starting eleven.

Uzbekistan, on the other hand, are on top with maximum points after two matches, and are yet to concede a goal in this competition having scored ten. A draw will be good enough for them to seal the automatic qualification spot. However, Uzbekistan coach Abduraimov Jasur wants to qualify with three wins.

"Since Bangladesh are the home team, they will try to do something good with the home advantage. But we will play for a win. We will not be taking them lightly," said the Uzbekistan coach.

The match will kick off at 6:00pm at the Bangabandhu National Stadium and will be preceded by the Sri Lanka versus Bhutan fixture at 3:00pm.