



East Bengal forward Ranti Martins (L) puts the ball into an empty net as prostrated Mohammedan goalkeeper Ashraf Islam Rana watches helplessly during the second semifinal of the Sheikh Kamal International Club Cup at the MA Aziz Stadium in Chittagong yesterday.

Asia Cup in Dhaka

SPORTS REPORTER



Next year's Asia Cup will be held in Bangladesh, confirmed Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) president Nazmul Hassan Papon after returning from a meeting of the Asian Cricket Council (ACC) in Singapore late last night.

"The Asia Cup will be held in Bangladesh. The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) representative proposed Bangladesh's name as their preferred choice for hosting for the tournament and no one raised any objection to the proposal, which was unanimously approved during the meeting," Papon told reporters on his arrival.

"There was another thought that since Australia's tour to Bangladesh was postponed everyone felt having this tournament in Bangladesh would go some way in compensating any financial loss that we might have incurred. Representatives of all the countries were very positive and accommodating," Papon added. "This is a very good news for Bangladesh cricket and a positive message as well as we will be hosting a lot of cricket over the next few months."

The BCB president informed that the Asia Cup, which will be held in Twenty20 format

for the first time, will be accommodated in the slot available between February 24 and March 6, 2016. The event will be participated by the four full Asian members of the ICC - India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh - and one associate Asian member, who will come through a qualifying phase, Papon informed.

The BCB boss also said that the meeting in Singapore also discussed about the possibility of introducing an under-19 championship among the member countries. Papon was accompanied by BCB's chief executive officer, Nizamuddin Chowdhury, during the two-day meeting.

The BCB boss had said last month that Bangladesh were in with a chance of hosting the tournament for the third successive time if India, the original choice, were not interested and made it clear that "If Bangladesh receives the proposal, the Asia Cup will be held in Bangladesh."

Things took a turn as India became an unpopular destination for Pakistan after the scheduled talks between the PCB and the BCCI was cancelled due to a Shiv Sena attack at the latter's Mumbai headquarters on November 19.

Bangladesh have always had the reputation of being good hosts and have smoothly staged, apart from bilateral tours, the 2012 and 2014 editions of the Asia Cup as well as

East Bengal rip MSC

ANISUR RAHMAN from Chittagong

A weakened Mohammedan Sporting Club meekly surrendered a 0-3 defeat to East Bengal in the second semifinal of the Sheikh Kamal International Club Cup at the MA Aziz Stadium yesterday. The Kolkata giants, who themselves had brought an all but second-string side to Bangladesh after releasing 14 players for the Indian Super League, will take on hosts Chittagong Abahani in the final on Friday.

Fielding a fit-enough side was the main challenge for Mohammedan coach Josimuddin Ahmed Joshi, who had to make do with whatever he had at his disposal. Influential winger Mohammad Ibrahim was left out of the starting eleven while striker Nabib Newaz Jibon was given strong antibiotics to alleviate his stomach problem. Wingers Mobarak Hossain and Faisal Ahmed took the field after having recovered from fever in time.

Although the Black and Whites failed to replicate their group-stage performance, they should have at least taken the lead in the third minute but Mobarak's beautifully-worked delivery found no one at hand to poke home. Two minutes later Jibon headed a well-judged cross from Arup Kumar Baidya awfully wide of target.

East Bengal took the lead, somewhat against the run of play, in the tenth minute when Nigerian striker

EAST BENGAL 3-0 MOHAMMEDAN

Ranti Martins tapped home a cross from Abinash Ruidas which Mohammedan defender Mintu Sheikh failed to clear.

Mohammedan got a decent opportunity to get level but Jibon drove his shot wide from inside the six-yard box in the 14th minute. Goalkeeper Ashraf Islam Rana brilliantly denied Martins and Mohammad Rafique to keep the margin to a minimum before

the break but the former Army goalkeeper could not stop Rafique three minutes into the second half.

This time defender Yonta Michael, who was blamed for the lone goal Mohammedan conceded against De Spin Ghar Bazan in their opening match, lost possession on the edge of the box and Rafique darted to bury the ball home on the second attempt.

Mohammedan players looked too tired to keep pace with East Bengal, who grasped that opportunity with both hands to launch numerous attacks. Despite Rana denying the opposition several times, he could not stop the third goal in the 52nd minute when Prohlahd Roy went deep inside the left-hand box and chipped it for Martins, who found the back of the net with an effortless header.

Mohammedan sent three fresh legs in place of Faisal, Mobarak and Arup but the changes failed to make any impact as the surprising run of the youthful squad ended with a helpless defeat, ending the possibility of an all-Bangladeshi outfits final.

Imrul, Al-Amin back

BCB names 18-member squad for Zim series

SPORTS REPORTER



The national selectors included four cricketers who haven't played any limited-overs matches in Bangladesh this year in its 18-member preliminary squad for the Zimbabwe series.

Opener Imrul Kayes and pacers Al-Amin Hossain and Shafiqul Islam have been recalled, while 23-year-old medium-pace Kamrul Islam has been given a possible shot at making his international debut.

Of all the players, the selectors' decision to include Kayes seems to be the most interesting move because he didn't feature in any of Bangladesh's historic wins this year.

While he was included in Bangladesh's World Cup squad, he was as a late replacement for the injured Anamul Haque. And over past two years Imrul has played just eight ODIs.

In a sense, the left-hander was virtually written off the limited-overs circuit. However, Kayes' good run in the longer version of the game seems to have impressed the selectors. At the moment, the left-hander has every chance of being selected ahead of Anamul as the team's back-up opener.

"He has been in good touch lately. We feel that he still has a good opportunity in the ODIs. As a back-up opener, he's a good choice," said chief selector Faruque Ahmed.

Injured pacer Rubel Hossain will be the only player from the South Africa series to miss out on the series next month. In addition, both Mashrafe Bin Mortaza and Taskin Ahmed aren't fully fit and as a result, the selectors have decided to provide a slightly longer squad than the usual and have included back-up pacers.

Al-Amin Hossain, who had last featured during the World Cup and seemingly lost his way ever since, will hope he can start anew with the Zimbabwe series. The pacer has been in fine nick, scalping a host of wickets for Bangladesh A recently.

Like Al-Amin, Kamrul has had decent runs in the last few domestic seasons and the selectors will hope he can replicate those performances at the

highest level. Shafiqul and Taskin are currently recovering from injuries and it's still uncertain how many matches they can play in the series. The good news is that both pacers have begun bowling in the nets recently and none of them have complained of any pain.

"According to our physio both

is because we will make both the ODI and T20I squads from here," explained Faruque.

Mashrafe, who is still on the recovery after being afflicted by dengue, is yet to hit the nets. The skipper is busy regaining his fitness levels at the moment. He was seen bowling casual throw-downs without a proper run-up



AL-AMIN: Last ODI in Nov 2014



IMRUL KAYES: Last ODI in Mar 2015



SHAFIUL ISLAM: Last ODI in Nov 2014



KAMRUL ISLAM: Uncapped

PRELIMINARY SQUAD

Mashrafe Bin Mortaza, Tamim Iqbal, Anamul Haque, Liton Das, Soumya Sarkar, Shakib Al Hasan, Mushfiqur Rahim, Mahmudullah, Sabbir Rahman, Nasir Hossain, Arafat Sunny, Jubair Hossain, Imrul Kayes, Mustafizur Rahman, Al-Amin Hossain, Kamrul Islam Rabbi, Shafiqul Islam, Taskin Ahmed

Taskin and Shafiqul are recovering well. We are keeping an eye on them to see how many matches they can play. Who knows? Taskin may just feature for the T20Is. On the whole, the reason why we have named an 18-member squad

at the nets in Mirpur yesterday, but that was as far as he went. The training camp will begin today and Zimbabwe will arrive on November 2 to play three ODIs and two T20Is.

Bazan booters eager to go home

SPORTS REPORTER from Chittagong

The footballers of De Spin Ghar Bazan, the Afghan champions who were eliminated from the semifinals of the Sheikh Kamal International Club Cup on Tuesday night, have constantly kept their eyes on TV screens for the last three days after a 7.5-magnitude earthquake hit the north-eastern region of Afghanistan and Pakistan, claiming hundreds of lives in both countries.

The players are sharing the information and pictures of the catastrophe that they are getting from social networking sites. The brother-in-law of winger Anwar Akbari was killed in the earthquake while a sister of defender Zekria Azizi, wife of manager Alias Ahmad Maocheer and a relative of coach Waheedullah were injured.

Now all players and officials are eager to meet their families and friends and they are counting the hours before they can leave Bangladesh, even though they will have to wait till Thursday night before flying out to Kabul.

"The players repeatedly requested us to manage the air tickets by this [Wednesday] morning as they don't want to spend any more time away from their family," said the team's liaison officer Mohammad Parvez, who elaborated the situation at the team's hotel over the past two days.

Afghanistan coach Waheedullah, during the post-match press conference on Tuesday, said his charges were not mentally prepared for the match following the earthquake and Akbari echoed his coach's sentiments.

"Actually yesterday [Tuesday] night was very tough for me on the pitch because I lost my brother-in-law in the earthquake. I was not prepared mentally for the match because I wanted to go home and be beside my sister," said Akbari with the help of team-doctor Behram Siddique as the translator.

"The players have been staying in a five-star hotel with good, free food and swimming facilities which they don't get at the club. But they don't feel good here anymore and want to return home. The roofs and walls of some of the players' houses collapsed in the earthquake and the players want to stay with their families to give them support," said Siddique.

"We came to know about the earthquake soon after it hit as people started posting images on the internet. The players and officials were trying to reach their family members through internet and telephone to know whether they were safe," said Siddique, who is also eager to meet his wife and his child.

Cities like Badakhsan, Takhar, Baghlan, Parwan and Nangarhar were the most-affected and nine people of Nangarhar, an area where De Spin Ghar Bazan is situated, were killed, informed Siddique adding that the club

Afghans seal T20 series too

CRICINFO, Bulawayo

Afghanistan sealed another historic first with a 2-0 Twenty20 series victory over Zimbabwe in the second match at Queens Sports Club on Wednesday.

Opener Usman Ghani and all-rounder Gulbadin Naib led Afghanistan's charge as they hunted down Zimbabwe's 190 for 7 with one ball to spare. Ghani weathered a fierce short-ball assault from Zimbabwe's quicks to rush to his first T20 fifty, and after he departed, Naib picked up where he left off, marshalling the second half of the chase and registering a maiden fifty of his own.

Their efforts meant that Sean Williams' quickfire 54, which equalled the Zimbabwe record for the fastest T20 fifty, went in vain. The game was a close one and Afghanistan won with just one ball remaining. The first T20I was a similarly close encounter, as Afghanistan won the game with just 5 balls remaining.

Dawlat Zadran, Gulbadin Naib and Amir Hamza significantly contributed to Afghanistan's cause, taking two wickets each.

SCORES IN BRIEF
ZIMBABWE: 190 for 7 in 20 overs (Raza 21, Williams 54, Mutumbami 43; Dawlat 2-24, Hamza 2-26)
AFGHANISTAN: 191 for 5 in 19.5 overs (Shahzad 24, Ghani 65, Naib 56 not out; Chibhabha 2-37)
Result: Afghanistan won by 5 wickets and clinched 2-match series 2-0.



De Spin Ghar Bazan players entertained the Chittagong crowd in their first international tournament outside Afghanistan before bowing out in the semis. PHOTO: STAR

Socceroos full-strength for BD

AFP, Sydney



The Socceroos received a boost Wednesday with captain Mile Jedinak and goalkeeper Mat Ryan declared fit for Australia's World Cup qualifiers against Kyrgyzstan and Bangladesh next month.

Neither have been able to play for their country since the opening game of the qualifiers in June and their return gives coach Ange Postecoglou added firepower for the matches in Canberra on November 12 and Dhaka

on November 17. "Having Mile and Matty [Ryan] available again is a boost for the next two matches," Postecoglou said.

"Mile has made his return from injury and as the skipper his presence will be a bonus for us while Mat will be back in full training by the time the window comes along next week."

Australia are second in Group B on nine points, four adrift of leaders Jordan who upset the Socceroos 2-0 in Amman to go top earlier this month.

Kyrgyzstan are on five points with Bangladesh in last position in the group on with just a solitary point.

SQUAD

Nathan Burns (FC Tokyo), Tim Cahill (Shanghai Shenhua), Alex Cisak (Leyton Orient), Jason Davidson (Huddersfield Town), Adam Federici (Bournemouth), Mile Jedinak (Crystal Palace), Tomi Juric (Roda Kerkrade), Mathew Leckie (FC Ingolstadt), Massimo Luongo (Queens Park Rangers), Ryan McGowan (Dundee United), Matt McKay (Brisbane Roar), James Meredith (Bradford City), Mark Milligan (Baniyas), Aaron Mooy (Melbourne City), Tommy Oar (Ipswich), Josh Risdon (Perth Glory), Tom Rogic (Celtic), Matt Ryan (Valencia), Trent Sainsbury (PEC Zwolle), Matt Spiranovic (Hangzhou Greentown), James Troisi (Al Ittihad), Alex Wilkinson (Jeonbuk Hyundai), Bailey Wright (Preston North End).