

# SPORT

## Dhaka & Chittagong to host BPL games

SPORTS REPORTER



The fourth edition of the Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) will be held in Dhaka and Chittagong as the BPL governing council wants to maintain their security plan for the franchise-based Twenty20 tournament.

"Considering the security issues, we have decided to hold the matches in Dhaka and Chittagong because there is no way we can move to so many places with so many teams. If we want to maintain our security plan then there is no scope of playing matches in venues other than Dhaka and Chittagong," BCB director and member secretary of BPL governing council IH Mallick said after a BPL governing council meeting yesterday.

So far more than 150 foreign players have registered their names for the seven-team tournament which will kick off from November 4. The BPL governing council also confirmed that the players' draft would take place on September 30 at 3:00pm at a local hotel.

Khulna and Rajshahi returned as franchises to join Comilla Victorians, Barisal Bulls, Rangpur Riders, Dhaka Dynamites and Chittagong Vikings, while Sylhet Super Stars were terminated for breaching franchisee agreement terms.

Mango Entertainment Ltd won the rights to the Rajshahi franchise while GEMCON Group claimed the Khulna franchise.

"We have confirmed almost everything. The tournament will start from November 4 and the final will take place on either December 7 or 8. The number of teams have been increased from five to seven. There were many interested groups who expressed their desire to make a team, but you know our team will go to New Zealand and they have a training camp in Australia before the tour, so we don't have enough time on our hands to accommodate more teams," said Mallick.

The BPL governing council members said in a press conference at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium yesterday that they had no issues with any previous editions of the tournament and that everything was cleared. They also solved their problems with Channel 9, who will telecast the matches of the fourth edition.

The details of the players' auction were yet to be ironed out but the technical committee, comprising Jalal Yunus and Akram Khan, will finalise everything within the next three days. Yunus however said that there would be no icon players, rather they would select seven A+ players for the seven franchises. However the prices of top local players will be revised to reduce the huge gap with foreign players.

The old five teams may retain any two players, but none of those may be from the top categories.



Chief selector Minhajul Abedin (L), selector Habibul Bashar and Bangladesh ODI skipper Mashrafe Bin Mortaza (R) were yesterday seen in deep discussion during training ahead of today's announcement of the ODI team for the Afghanistan series. Despite the rain, the players competed in a practice match under lights at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium.

PHOTO: STAR

## Afghanistan bring spin arsenal

To play against BCB XI tomorrow

SPORTS REPORTER



The Afghanistan national cricket team arrived in Dhaka yesterday afternoon as the South Asian nation are set for a first bilateral series against Bangladesh.

The three-match ODI series will

be another high point in Afghanistan's ascendancy up the ranks of international cricket. They have previously played only one series against a full-member nation, defeating Zimbabwe 3-2 in their ODI series in October 2015.

Afghanistan have a number of experienced players and although they have only played against Bangladesh twice in their history,

they have played on Bangladeshi soil 10 times -- including four times at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium, where all the matches will be held -- so the conditions will not be completely alien for them. Using this knowledge to their advantage, the Afghans have travelled with three leg-spinners in their side, hoping the tracks will, as they traditionally have done, benefit spinners.

SQUAD
Asgar Stanikzai (capt), Mohammad Shahzad, Rahmat Shah, Mirwais Ashraf, Dawlat Zadran, Mohammad Nabi, Samiullah Shenwari, Rashid Khan, Hashmatullah Shahidi, Fareed Ahmad, Amir Hamza, Najibullah Zadran, Nawroz Mangal, Naveen-ul-Haq, Karim Janat, Shabir Noori, Ihsanullah

Players like Asghar Stanikzai, Dawlat Zardan, Mirwais Ashraf and Mohammad Nabi have a wealth of experience and they will be banking on that experience to lead the team, while also naming three uncapped players in the squad -- Ihsanullah, Naveen-ul-Haq and Karim Janat -- to bolster their squad with an injection of youth.

Afghanistan have also been playing ODI cricket regularly, competing in two ODI series in July, one a 1-0 win over Scotland and another a tied 2-2 series against Ireland.

Meanwhile, the Tigers have not played a single ODI this year and will be wary that any rust on their part might lead to an upset. The Tigers will want to go into their crucial three-match ODI and two-match Test series against England in October all guns blazing, so there will be little room for error on their part.

Before taking on the Tigers, Afghanistan will play a warm-up against a BCB XI side on

## 'Must play spin better'

India's first Test against NZ starts today

AFP, Kanpur



Skipper Virat Kohli conceded Wednesday that India must bat better against spin, as the favourites prepare to take on a dangerous New Zealand in the first Test in Kanpur.

Kohli pointed to India's loss last year at the hands of Sri Lanka's spinners on a raging turner as evidence of his side's weakness, as they begin their quest to regain the number one world ranking spot.

His team take on the Black Caps on Thursday in the first of three Tests and India's 500th in total, at Kanpur's Green Park which is expected to prove favourable to spinners.

"It's an area where we can improve, we have lost a Test match in Sri Lanka because we couldn't play as well as we would have liked," Kohli told reporters.

"The team wants to improve on that aspect of the game, [its] something that [we] surely need to get stronger," he said, adding that his batsmen were working on this.

Sri Lankan veteran spinner Rangana Herath claimed seven wickets to skittle India for 112 last August in a stunning victory, although India went on to win the next two matches.

Kohli, known for his aggressive brand of cricket, said he was impressed with New Zealand's "fearless" style of play in recent times and believes the visitors will prove tough opponents.

"I think Kane is leading the side very well. We expect very good competition and good hard-fought cricket," Kohli said of his opposite number Kane Williamson.

India, who start the series strong favourites after their recent 2-0 away victory against the West Indies, are also eyeing a return to the top of the International Cricket Council rankings.

India recently toppled Australia from the top of the rankings, only to be leapfrogged by their archrivals Pakistan.

India's spin king Ravichandran Ashwin is in form, picking up 17 wickets in the Caribbean, while batsmen Lokesh Rahul and Ajinkya Rahane have also been in good nick.

Williamson said his young side would be looking to build on their success at this year's World Twenty20 when they reached the semifinals.

"We have got some exciting young talent. We showed that in the T20 world cup."

"That was huge for us. Yes, the formats are different, but I am hoping we can build on from those experiences," the 26-year-old said.

New Zealand, who recently suffered a 1-0 loss against South Africa, will be counting on their spin bowlers including Indian-born Ish Sodhi, along with Mitchell Santner and Mark Craig.

"Yes, how our spin bowlers bowl will be important. But at the same time we are hoping for a bit of reverse swing and that certainly brings the seamers into it," said Williamson, who heads into his third series as skipper.



VIRAT KOHLI



The Afghanistan national cricket team arrived at the Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport in Dhaka in high spirits yesterday as they gear up to play against Bangladesh. This will be only their second ODI series against an ICC full-member side.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

## Ctg Abahani sack Pavlik

SPORTS REPORTER



Title contenders Chittagong Abahani sacked their Slovakian head coach Jozef Pavlik and assistant coach Hasan Al Mamun following the team's poor performance in the last two matches of the ongoing Bangladesh Premier League.

Under the guidance of the UEFA A licensed coach, big-spenders Chittagong Abahani clinched season's curtain-raising Independence Cup, but they were eliminated from the group stages of the Federation Cup. The port-city outfit are currently in third position in the 12-team table of Bangladesh Premier League with 12 points from seven matches. They are three points behind league leaders Sheikh Jamal DC after having secured just one point from the last two matches against Rahmatganj MFS and Arambagh KS.

"The team management has dismissed contracts with Pavlik and his deputy Hasan Al Mamun due to the team's poor performance in the last two league matches where the team lost 2-0 to Rahmatganj and drew goalless against Arambagh," the club's football manager Shakil Mahmud Chowdhury said. "Nazrul Islam Ledu has been appointed as interim coach and we are searching for a new foreign coach."

Pavlik was not available for a comment, but Mamun expressed his disappointment over the move, saying that he feels Chittagong Abahani are still in title race.

It was, however, learnt that the relation between Pavlik and most of the players has never been good since the appointment of the 43-year-old in March.



## Jimmy may sit out Bangladesh, India series

REUTERS, London

England fast bowler James Anderson may sit out some of the Test matches on their tours of Bangladesh and India, he said on Wednesday.

The 34-year-old, England's leading Test wicket-taker with 463 victims, was named in the squad for the tour to Bangladesh where they play two Tests next month.

England travel to India in early November for a five-Test series.

"It's a tough one because as a player if you're fit you want to play, simple as that, no matter what the format you're desperate to play," Anderson told reporters.

"But there may well come a time when it will get managed. At 34 I probably have to manage myself, be managed, quite well. You want, if possible, to play every Test but India is going to be five back to back and that's a huge ask for any bowler," he added. "There will probably come a point where we try to look and maybe I've got to sit out."

## Misbah hopes cricket returns

Pakistan captain handed Test mace

REUTERS, Lahore



Pakistan captain Misbahul Haq hopes international cricket will soon return to the country as he celebrated the team's climb to the top of the Test rankings by being awarded the ceremonial mace to mark the achievement on Tuesday.

It was a poignant occasion for the 42-year-old Misbah as he accepted the silver and gold-plated trophy at the Gaddafi Stadium in Lahore, a venue where Pakistan played their last Test on home soil.

An attack on the Sri Lanka team bus in the city in 2009 led to Pakistan's exclusion from hosting major international tours with the side forced to play 'home' games in the United Arab Emirates ever since.

"There can't be a better location to receive the ICC Test Championship mace than this ground," Misbah said after receiving the trophy from International Cricket Council (ICC) chief executive David Richardson.

"It is ironic for both the players as well as the fans that the journey to the number

one position has been [made] outside Pakistan.

"The players have missed on the crowd support, while the spectators have been unable to watch live some magnificent team and individual performances. But I am confident that things will change and international cricket will



soon return to Pakistan."

The Lahore incident saw the Sri Lankan touring party set upon by at least 10 gunmen, who wounded six players and a British coach, and killed eight Pakistanis in the attack.

Undaunted by the isolation, Misbah's

men have recently beaten Australia and England in the UAE, drawn with New Zealand, and earned impressive away series wins in Sri Lanka and Bangladesh before this year's 2-2 draw in England.

Pakistan were then elevated to number one in the rankings without bowling a ball after table-topping India were denied the 3-0 series win they needed to retain top spot against West Indies last month when the final Test ended in a damp draw.

"The next target we have set for ourselves is to finish as the number one ranked Test side at the April 1 cutoff date," said Misbah, referring to the prize money on offer to the ranking leaders on that day.

"It is not going to be easy as we have series against formidable sides like the West Indies, New Zealand and Australia."

"But instead of getting overawed by our opponents, we need to trust in our abilities, focus on our strengths and try to be as consistent as possible."

Misbah said playing in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) was tough for his side. "UAE conditions are familiar but aren't like Pakistan."