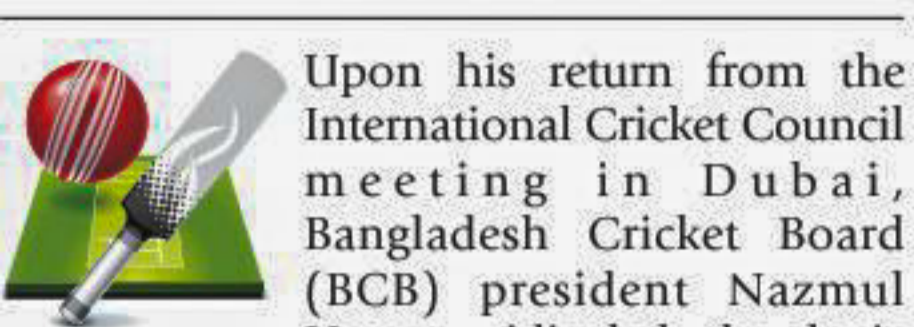


SPORT

Hassan puzzled by PCB cancellation

Confirms Australia's tour in August

SPORTS REPORTER



Upon his return from the International Cricket Council meeting in Dubai, Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) president Nazmul Hassan ridiculed the logic behind Pakistan Cricket Board's cancellation of the scheduled tour to Bangladesh in July-August this year. Speaking to reporters yesterday, the BCB president also conveyed the good news of the confirmation of Australia's tour of Bangladesh as scheduled, saying that the world champions will arrive in August.

"The Australia series has been finalised. I can say this because I had a chat with the president of Cricket Australia after the ICC meeting. He told me that he will be coming to watch the first Test with his wife. That was the first time I talked to him about the Bangladesh series there," said Hassan.

"They will be coming here in August. The first Test will be before Eid, but the second Test will begin on the third day of Eid. Initially we had kept a gap of five days for Eid holidays, but they didn't want to stay here for that long so we decided to cut that short," added the BCB president. The upcoming tour was originally scheduled for 2015, but the CA had postponed it due to security fears.

As per Bangladesh's home schedule, they are supposed to host Pakistan in July ahead of the Australia series. However, the chairman of the Pakistan Cricket Board earlier this week said that they would not be touring Bangladesh. According to the PCB, one of the reasons behind cancelling the tour was that they did not want to tour Bangladesh for a third consecutive time without the BCB reciprocating.

"The decision taken by Pakistan cricket surprised us. Honestly speaking they didn't tell us about the cancellation officially. After the ICC board meeting, their chairman told me that it was going to be difficult for them to tour Bangladesh and that we needed to meet. But soon after that it was reported in the media that they would not be coming," said Hassan.

"I have heard from elsewhere that they have had reservations about coming here for the third time. But that does not seem a valid reason to me. They have toured other countries for more than three times. So now

will they stop playing cricket? "It may be a case with the rankings. It may not be. It's hard to tell because they haven't officially communicated the problem to us. We will send them the official schedule and then get a response from them. After that we can talk about this in a more detailed manner. We want to play cricket," he added.

According to the Future Tours Programme (FTP) a tour of Pakistan was lined up for Bangladesh in 2012 when Mustafa Kamal was at the helm of the BCB. However, that tour was cancelled due to security concerns. Later on, the BCB had to compensate the PCB for cancelling the tour, as the tour was in an advanced stage of planning.

Hassan also said that officials from the ICC will come to Bangladesh to train the umpires here in a month's time in order to improve the quality of umpiring in domestic cricket.

Furthermore, Hassan spoke on the developments of the ICC meeting, in which India lost a crucial vote.

"India's concern was mainly with the financials [revenue sharing model]. We have supported India throughout, but when there's a proposal which will give Bangladesh more money than before, then I can't say no to that. Bangladesh is going to get USD 132 million, which is almost double what we used to get.

"Let me clarify that the BCCI did not have any problem with Bangladesh getting more money, but they had a problem with them getting less money. So now, they are trying to come up with a new formula. There's still time till June. If the ICC feels that their [BCCI's] claims are fine then they will logically increase their share," explained Hassan.

"I think as far as the BCCI is concerned, one of the problems was that they had different people representing them in the last few meetings because they are going through an interim phase right now.

"So there wasn't continuity. Because I don't think the decrease in money should be a problem for them. They are earning a lot. I think the officials who are coming to the meeting are just cautious about accepting such a proposal because the blame might later fall on them. But I am sure the ICC can handle the situation properly," he added.



Tigers' do some light stretching ahead of their first practice session in Sussex yesterday. They have gone to Brighton for a 10-day camp to gear up ahead of a tri-nation series in Ireland and the Champions Trophy following that.

PHOTO: BCB

Luck of the draw against U-16s

Bangladesh drawn with North Korea, Japan and Australia

SPORTS REPORTER



Bangladesh were pitted in the toughest group of the AFC U-16 Women's Championships as the draw of the eight-nation finals was held at the AFC House in Kuala Lumpur yesterday.

Bangladesh emerged as group champions in the qualifying round ahead of the mighty Chinese Taipei and Iran, and the going will not get any easier as they now find themselves alongside defending champions North Korea, 2015 runners-up Japan and a potent Australian side in Group B.

The finals will get underway from September 10 in Chunburi, Thailand. Meanwhile, hosts Thailand were drawn alongside South Korea, China and Laos in Group A. The top two finishers from each group will advance to the semifinals -- which will also serve as the qualifier for the 2018 FIFA U-17 Women's World Cup with the top three finishers representing Asia.

Since the completion of the qualifying round earlier in September and the SAFF Women's Championship, the girls in red and green have played a few practice matches in Japan, Singapore and China under the guidance of Golam Rabbani Choton.

Although neither the coach nor the players have been speaking to the media under instructions from the Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) women's committee, BFF president Kazi Salahuddin believes that playing against Asia's top three teams is itself a matter of pride.

"This is the toughest group. Australia, North Korea and Japan are the top [teams] of the world. So having the opportunity to play against them is something we can be proud of. Let's see what happens," said Salahuddin, adding that he would have expected victories if teams like Thailand and Laos had been drawn alongside Bangladesh.

Afridi declines farewell offer

Former Pakistan captain Shahid Afridi on Friday declined an offer by Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) executive committee chairman Najam Sethi to give him a farewell upon his retirement from international cricket.

Afridi took to Twitter to thank Sethi for meeting him last Sunday and offering to arrange a "fitting farewell".

Afridi, however, declined to accept the farewell offer citing his 'commitments' and said his earlier desire for a farewell was just to "set a new trend".



Satkhira (playing in green) had a chance to qualify from their group with an outright win, but a draw against Sylhet saw them eliminated from the U-18 National Football Championship at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

U-18 NAT'L FOOTBALL C'SHIP

Chittagong, Sylhet move into semis

SPORTS REPORTER

The stage for the semifinal of the U-18 National Football Championship was set yesterday after Chittagong and Sylhet moved into the last-four battle from Group B.

Chittagong emerged as group champions with a come-from-behind 2-1 win over Barisal at the Bangabandhu National Stadium. Badsha had given Barisal the lead in the first half, but Atiqur Rahman and Jamir Uddin's strikes in the second half saw them set a date against Dhaka in the semis.

In the day's other match, Sylhet staged a comeback to play out a 1-1 draw against Satkhira at the same venue, securing the group's second spot. Satkhira could have finished as champions if they won, but they were booted from the title race as Abu Bakar equalised from the spot in the 86th minute after Habibur Rahman had given Satkhira a well-deserved lead in the 29th minute.

Sylhet will face Group A champions BKSP in Sunday's first semifinal.

Top order powers SRH

STAR SPORT DESK



Sunrisers Hyderabad's top batsmen fired in style in their Indian Premier League match last night as they subjected Kings XI Punjab to a 26-run defeat in Mohali.

Opener Shikhar Dhawan scored 77 to lift Hyderabad to 207 for three, and the weight of the stiff chase proved too much as Punjab were restricted to 181 for nine in 20 overs.

After being asked to bat on a belter, skipper David Warner and Dhawan hammered 107 in just 10 overs before Warner was bowled by Glenn Maxwell for a 27-ball 51. Dhawan carried on in his 48-ball innings before being caught off Mohit Sharma in the 15th over. Kane Williamson then caressed the ball all over the park to be unbeaten on a silted 27-ball 54.

In Punjab's chase, Shaun Marsh scored a fine 50-ball 84 but received little support from the rest in the face of tight bowling. No one was more stingy than Afghanistan leg-

spinner Rashid Khan who bowled four overs for only 16 runs for the vital wicket of Eoin Morgan.

In the day's first match in Kolkata, skipper Gautam Gambhir hit an unbeaten 71 to help Kolkata Knight Riders overhaul Delhi Daredevil's total of 160 and stay at the top of the eight-team table with their seventh win in nine matches.

SCORES IN BRIEF
SUNRISERS HYDERABAD: 207 for 3 (Dhawan 77, Williamson 54 not out, Warner 51; Maxwell 2-29) v **KINGS XI PUNJAB:** 181 for 9 (Marsh 84, Morgan 26; Kaul 3-36, Kumar 2-27)
Result: Hyderabad won by 26 runs
Player-of-the-match: Rashid Khan
DELHI DAREDEVILS: 160 for 6 (Samson 60, Iyer 47; Coulter-Nile 3-34) v **KOLKATA KNIGHT RIDERS:** 161 for 3 in 16.3 overs (Gambhir 71 not out, Uthappa 59; Rabada 2-20)
Result: Kolkata won by 7 wickets.
Player-of-the-match: Gautam Gambhir.

Siddikur in 43rd

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh' premier golfer Siddikur Rahman fell from his overnight position of 33rd to 45th after returning a one-over-par in the second round of the Yeangder Heritage in Chinese Taipei yesterday.

Siddikur had also carded a one-over-par (70), and his score now stands at two-over-par (146) in the USD 300,000 event and finds himself a fair distance off the leading trio -- South Korea's Yikeun Chang and the Thailand's Natipong Srihong and Danthai Boonma -- who have scores of six-under-par (138).

However, the 32-year-old still made the cut by two strokes in Miaoili's National Golf Country Club and will hope to put up a better showing in the next two rounds.

India's participation to be known by May 7

Most ready to play without India: PCB boss

AGENCIES



The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) is likely to name the team for the ICC Champions Trophy soon as its boycott threat has petered out.

Many BCCI members have expressed displeasure over the confrontational approach of the senior cricket officials who attended the International Cricket Council (ICC) meetings in Dubai and suffered a loss of face.

Top Indian cricket board officials had claimed on Wednesday they will invoke the Members Participation Agreement (MPA) and pull out of the Champions Trophy, starting in England on June 1. They had even threatened legal action after the ICC carried out a rollback of revenue and administrative proposals, leaving BCCI isolated.

"We will hold the SGM but the view of the members is that we should announce the team first. Anyway, there is bound to be opposition to the move to pull out. It will be a divided house," a senior BCCI official told Hindustan Times. "In fact, most want to avoid confrontation. We can't afford to pull out, for the simple reason we will be penalised. The penalty will be to the tune of 2,000 crore.

"And what if the board is suspended for this? Foreign boards can also threaten to pull players out of the IPL. And what if they don't keep a window for IPL? It will totally

be BCCI's loss," the BCCI functionary said.

Later yesterday, Vinod Rai, head of Committee of Administrators (COA), said India's Champions Trophy participation will be known only after the BCCI SGM on May 7 and they are ready for all "possible scenarios".

"It is a part of the game. Let it unfold slowly, let's see how it progresses, what happens," said Rai while speaking to reporters on the sidelines of a book signing.

Rai however refused to answer whether COA will overrule SGM decision if they decide to pull-out of Champions Trophy.

'READY TO PLAY WITHOUT INDIA'
 Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) chairman Shahryar Khan, meanwhile, said that most countries are ready to go ahead with the Champions Trophy even if India pull out.

"Yes India has strongly opposed the resolution at the ICC meeting. However, it received support only from Sri Lanka while the rest were in favour of getting rid of the Big Three formula," Shaharyar was quoted by The Dawn as saying.

"India has warned the ICC about its likely reaction which may come in the form of a Champions Trophy boycott but let me clear it that it will not work as most of the member countries are ready to play without India. And in that case [India boycotting Champions Trophy], West Indies or any other team could be included in the fray by the ICC."

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