



The Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur is now back to its pristine self and ready for action after extensive renovation works. The Tigers and the country's cricket fans will however be hoping for a swift resolution to the pay dispute between Cricket Australia and its players, some of whom are scheduled to tour Bangladesh in August-September, which became more complicated after the CA missed yesterday's deadline to resolve the issue.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

CA misses deadline to strike deal

Cricketers now unemployed; Bangladesh series in doubt

AFP, Sydney

Cricket Australia said it had failed to strike a new pay deal with the players' union ahead of Friday's deadline, leaving players unemployed and threatening fixtures including this year's Ashes series.

CA said there was no prospect of a new Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) being resolved with the Australian Cricketers' Association (ACA) before the current deal expires at midnight local time.

The impasse, following weeks of dispute, throws into question the immediate future of almost 230 men and women players at domestic and international level, most of whom are now out of contract.

"Cricket Australia today acknowledged that a new Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) will not be agreed before 1 July," the statement read. "And repeated its call for the Australian Cricketers' Association (ACA) to come to the negotiating table and show genuine flexibility in

REVENUE SHARING THE BONE OF CONTENTION

At the heart of the bitter dispute is the revenue-sharing model that has underpinned previous agreements over the past two decades and under which players receive around 25 per cent of Cricket Australia's (CA's) agreed cricket-related income. CA, seeking greater flexibility in using its resources, wants to scrap the arrangement and has instead offered to share surplus income among international players. The Australian Cricketers' Association remains staunchly opposed, insisting the surplus should be shared among players at all levels.

the best interests of the players and the game.

"CA has been disappointed by the ACA's unwillingness to consider the sensible and necessary change CA has proposed to the fixed share of revenue player payments model."

Along with the players, fixtures are also at risk including Australia's Test tour to Bangladesh from August, the one-day international series in India in September and the home Ashes series against England later this year.

CA and the players' union have hit an impasse after the board attempted to scrap the 20-year-old arrangement of giving players a fixed share of revenues, in favour of dividing surpluses amongst elite

players and offering a pay rise.

Leading players have hit out at the move to scrap revenue-sharing with Australia batsman David Warner insisting they "won't budge" and threatening a strike during the Ashes.

Following the missed deadline, players who are on multi-year contracts that go beyond June 30 will continue to be paid, and will be required to play and train as before.

The Australia A tour to South Africa in July is the first in the firing line, with its fate unknown if a new accord is not struck.

Players were due to assemble in Brisbane for training on Monday ahead of the South Africa trip. The first tour match is supposed to start

on July 12. Reports said CA could hand out-of-contract stars like Glenn Maxwell and Usman Khawaja tour contracts to play the series, although there is also the possibility of a boycott.

Australia's women's team are currently competing in the World Cup in England, but they have a special contract that will run until the tournament is complete.

The ACA board and executive are set to hold a meeting in Sydney on Sunday where they will consider the players' response to the lapse of the agreement.

CA's updated offer, made last Friday, was rejected by the ACA which remains staunchly opposed to any move away from a revenue-sharing model.

The players' union released its own proposal last March under which the definition of revenue is broadened and players receive a smaller (22.5 percent) share.

That was rejected by CA, which said it retained the "inflexible", income-based revenue model. Since then, negotiations have remained at a virtual standstill.

Tough Japan tour also a fruitful one

ANISUR RAHMAN

The Bangladesh U-16 women's football team will be back to business today following their Eid vacation after a week-long trip to Japan as part of their preparation for the AFC U-16 Women's Championship to be held in Thailand in September.

The U-16 girls, who shot to national fame after qualifying for the finals of the AFC U-16 Women's Championship last year, have been travelling to different Asian countries to prepare for the final challenge in Thailand where Bangladesh will play against North Korea, Japan and Australia in the eight-team event.

The girls have already visited Japan, China and Singapore and they are supposed to travel to South Korea and Vietnam before September's finals. They returned hours before Eid-ul-Fitr on the night of June 25 night from Japan, where they suffered

formation as Bangladesh are going to face the strongest opponents in the final round of the AFC U-16 Women's Championship.

"Our players are generally used to playing in a single position but this time we tried to play them in different positions. Sanjida [Akter] used to play in right-forward but she played in right-back to right-attack in Japan. Striker Krishna [Rani Sarker] played as the midfielder. Central-back Akhi Khatun played as mid-fielder," explained Choton. "We wanted to see whether the players could play the positions they are not used to. Now we know who can play and who can't play in different positions and we can use them in future if needed."

Having lost the first match 2-4 to Sakai Academy U-18, Choton's charges played in a 3-4-3 formation in the second match against the Sakai U-16 team but they suffered a 5-0 defeat to the home team, who also handed an 8-0 defeat to the visiting China U-16 team at the Sakai Football Academy ground.

They then notched a 3-1 win in their



The Bangladesh U-16 women's football team gained valuable experience from their recently concluded tour of Japan.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

defeats in the first two practice matches before notching up a consolation win in the last game. The girls had also participated in a football festival in Japan earlier this year.

"Our aim to visit Japan was accomplished as we trained intensively and rectified mistakes made in practice matches. We had also experimented with formation, positional changes of the players in all three 90-minute matches and the girls improved match by match," said coach Golam Rabbani Choton yesterday.

Choton explained the thinking behind the players' positional changes as well as the

third and final match against the Seisho High School U-18 team.

"We played against the team whose national women's team were world champions, so the standard of Japanese age-level teams are much, much better than Bangladesh."

"Due to [striker Sirat Jahan] Swapna's absence, who sustained an injury during the first match, our attacking lineup was weakened and our backline was put under pressure. So, we had to negotiate with the forwards of the opponents, but we fought toe-to-toe throughout the match," Choton added.

Faf to be back for first Test?

AFP, London

South Africa captain Faf du Plessis could return to England in time to lead the side for next week's first Test at Lord's after the birth of his first child.

Du Plessis had returned home to be with his wife, Imari, putting a question mark against his participation in the first of a four-Test series that starts on July 6.

But Thursday saw du Plessis announce the birth of their child by tweeting: "Our biggest blessing yet came in a small package. So very grateful."

Opening batsman Dean Elgar led South Africa in their three-day warm-up match against the second-string England Lions in Worcester which started on Thursday.

If du Plessis does return in time for the first Test, opener Heino Kuhn, who replaced Stephen Cook in the squad, would like to be South Africa's lone debutant at Lord's.

South Africa made 58 for one on a first day at Worcester where rain meant only 20 overs' play was possible.

Elgar fell for five, caught behind by Sam Billings off George Garton. Kuhn was 30 not out and Hashim Amla unbeaten on 16.

Before play started, experienced South Africa paceman Vernon Philander was ruled out with the right ankle injury he suffered while playing for English county Sussex two weeks ago.

Nevertheless, a South Africa statement said Philander was making "satisfactory progress".

Mire leads historic rout of Lankans

AFP, Galle

Solomon Mire smashed his maiden one-day century on Friday to take Zimbabwe to a historic six wicket win over Sri Lanka and pile pressure on the beleaguered Asian nation.

Mire hit 112 off 96 balls as Zimbabwe reached 322-4 to pass Sri Lanka's 316-5 with more than two overs to spare. It was the first time in more than 200 one day internationals in Sri Lanka that a visiting team has scored more than a 300 run target to get a victory.

Sri Lanka have been criticised in recent days by the country's sports minister for being overweight and unfit. Captain Angelo Mathews also laid into his players after the defeat.

"Having 315 on the board, I thought it was enough," he said. "Our bowling was poor and our fielding was pathetic. It was a good batting effort by them."

Mire, known for his quickfire hitting, was twice dropped as Sri Lanka virtually gave the game away.

RANKING BOOST FOR TIGERS

Zimbabwe's stunning win in Galle means that Bangladesh, sitting pretty on 94 rating points in the ODI team rankings, cannot be overtaken by their Sri Lankan counterparts - who are eighth -- even if the Islanders win all four of the next matches. Their loss today took the hosts to 91 rating points. Four wins in the next four matches would see them gain only one point and move to 92, two points behind Bangladesh.



Zimbabwe's Solomon Mire hit a 96-ball 112 with the help of 14 boundaries as the visitors became the first team in history to chase down a 300-plus total in Sri Lanka.

Sikandar Raza hit an unbeaten 67 and Sean Williams 65 as Zimbabwe stunned the home side in the first ODI to be held in Galle for 17 years.

The day did not start badly for the hosts. Kusal Mendis blasted 86 off 80 balls as Sri Lanka plundered runs off the Zimbabwe attack on a slow pitch. Upul Tharanga hit 79 and Danushka Gunathilaka 60 after Mathews won the toss and chose to bat.

From there, Zimbabwe went off script.

Mire, who also bowled seven overs before coming out as opening batsman, hit 14 fours and his third-wicket stand of 161 with Williams put the African side well on the way to victory.

Raza claimed the winning runs with a six to compound the humiliation. Raza praised Zimbabwe's selectors for keeping faith with the squad.

"A lot of cricket behind us has helped us pull off this fantastic win," he said. "I kept telling myself that this had to be for Solomon. For someone to play in this kind of heat after bowling his heart out, that was sensational. I wanted to do it for him."

Zimbabwe captain Graeme Cremer said the win was a huge confidence booster.

"To chase down a score like that, to post our first win here was amazing."

Cremer called Mire "a real asset to

the team, not just with the bat but also with the ball. He's lovely to watch."

Zimbabwe still have four one day internationals and a Test to face in Sri Lanka, who have faced increasing jibes over recent performances.

"We just want to take it one game at a time," said Cremer. "We can hopefully carry this confidence forward."

SCORES IN BRIEF

SRI LANKA: 316 for 5 (Gunathilaka 60, Mendis 86, Tharanga 79 not out; Chatra 2-49)

ZIMBABWE: 322 for 4 in 47.4 overs (Mire 112, Williams 65, Raza 67 not out; Waller 40 not out; Gunaratne 2-45)

Result: Zimbabwe won by 6 wickets.

Player-of-the-match: SF Mire.

PHOTO: AFP

Jadhav takes India to 251

AFP, North Sound

Kedar Jadhav triggered a late run explosion in partnership with Mahendra Singh Dhoni as India reached 251 for four batting first against the West Indies at the Sir Vivian Richards Stadium in Antigua on Friday.

Dhoni top-scored in the third fixture of a five-match One-Day International series with an unbeaten 78 off 79 balls on a sluggish pitch.

However, the real impetus came from Jadhav, who blazed 40 off 26 balls in an unbroken fifth-wicket stand of 81 runs off just 46 deliveries.

Ajinkya Rahane had earlier held the innings together after the loss of early wickets with 72 off 112 balls, his third consecutive score over 50 in the Caribbean.

Comprehensively beaten by 105 runs in the second match in Trinidad five days earlier following a rain-ruined no-result to start the series, West Indies took early advantage of the pitch conditions which made free scoring difficult.

Miguel Cummins removed Shikhar Dhawan in just the third over of the match to a catch at third man while Jason Holder justified his decision to field first on winning the toss when he claimed the prized scalp of Virat Kohli, his Indian counterpart being brilliantly caught by Kyle Hope at gully.

Hope, elder brother of wicketkeeper-batsman Shai Hope, is one of two ODI debutants in the West Indies team, the other being fast bowler Kesrick Williams.

From 34 for two in the tenth over, Rahane found a reliable partner in Yuvraj Singh, the pair putting on 66 for the third wicket before Devendra Bishoo trapped Yuvraj leg-before for 39, the original not out' decision on the field being overturned on review. Dhoni then joined Rahane in another important stand of 70, although both found the spinners especially hard to get away on the turgid surface.

Bishoo and off-spinner Ashley Nurse completed a combined 20 overs at a cost of just 72 runs.

However, the acceleration finally came with the arrival of Jadhav at the crease in the 43rd over when Rahane became Cummins' second wicket of the innings.

Both batsmen took on the faster bowlers with gusto and rattled a West Indies team that looked on course to keep the Indians well below the 250-run mark.

SCORES IN BRIEF

INDIA: 251 for 4 (Dhoni 78 not out, Rahane 72, Jadhav 40 not out; Cummins 2-56, Bishoo 1-38)