



Bangladesh take on India in their Champions Trophy opener in Dubai today. Scan the QR code to watch a podcast on how the match could unfold.

India have a significant advantage over Bangladesh in head-to-head contests in ODIs, with the Men in Blue boasting 32 wins in 41 meetings in contrast to the Tigers' eight. One meeting between the sides ended in a No Result.

Bangladesh, however, hold the upper hand in their last five meetings with India, winning three, including a victory in the 2023 Asia Cup, compared to India's two.

At the Dubai International Cricket Stadium – the venue for the contest – the two sides met twice, both in the 2018 Asia Cup. India won both encounters, including the final.

Virat Kohli has the most runs in India-Bangladesh contests, amassing 910 runs in 16 matches at an average of 75.83 and a strike-rate of 101.78. The maestro boasts five hundreds and three half-centuries against the Tigers. India skipper Rohit Sharma seconds that list with 786 runs in 17 matches. All his three centuries against the Tigers have come in ICC events (2015 World Cup, 2017 Champions Trophy, and the 2019 World Cup).

Amongst active Bangladesh players, Mushfiqur Rahim has the most runs against India, scoring 703 runs in 26 matches at an average of 31.95. He has also played the most India-Bangladesh matches amongst players from both sides.

With the ball, Mustafizur Rahman has the most wickets in India-Bangladesh contests amongst active players – 25 scalps in 12 matches.

## Kohli excited for CT campaign

AGENCIES

India superstar Virat Kohli said he has always liked the ICC Champions Trophy because of the urgency teams have to start the tournament on a high in order to qualify for the next round.

"The tournament is happening after a long time. I have always liked this tournament. It represents consistency as you have to be in the top 8 of the rankings (to qualify). The level of competition is always good," Kohli said yesterday.

"In ODI format, it creates the pressure of a T20 World Cup. There also you have three or four games in the league stage. If you don't start well, you are under pressure. The pressure is from the first game itself and that is why I like it, you have to be at your best from game one."

Kohli has played three editions of the tournament (2009, 2013, 2017) and is set to start his fourth when India take on Bangladesh at the Dubai International Cricket Stadium today. He won the 2013 edition and will be aiming to have a tournament to remember, especially because of the speculations over his retirement.

The 36-year-old has been mired in long lean patches in Tests and have already retired from T20 cricket



following last year's World Cup triumph.

In his last 22 Test knocks since the start of January 2024, Kohli has managed to hit just a solitary ton and a single fifty. In the five ODIs he has played since the 2023 World Cup, he has managed to score one half-century. Despite intense conjecture about his future, India head coach Gautam Gambhir said the stalwart will have a "massive role" to play at the Champions Trophy.

AFP, Karachi

Pakistan's largest city was abuzz with anticipation and apprehension Wednesday as the hosts played the opening match of the nation's first major international cricket tournament in three decades.

The eight-team Champions Trophy launched in the southern city of Karachi with the home side facing New Zealand at a sell-out 29,300 National Bank Stadium.

Pakistan, a cricket-mad nation where the sport is played on almost every street corner, are the defending champions.

"Pakistan are unpredictable, they can surprise anytime," said 24-year-old Kashif Khan, queuing in the morning with his 5,000 rupee (\$18) ticket.

Long lines snaked outside the stadium four hours before the match, with a smattering of New Zealand fans outnumbered by hordes of chanting and flag-waving Pakistanis.

The Champions Trophy will take place in three cities in Pakistan, while India will play their fixtures in Dubai after refusing to visit its neighbouring archrival.

Among Karachi's population of more than 20 million, fans were adamant India would have been welcomed.

"If India were here I would arrange a trail of rose petals leading them to the stadium," Khan said. "We love



the Indian team in the same way that we love the Pakistani team – because it's all about cricket."

Pakistan last held a major international tournament as World Cup co-hosts with India and Sri Lanka in 1996.

Sofia Babar, 45, was in the stands in Karachi during that tournament. Queueing on Wednesday, she said: "I want my daughter to experience what I did all those years ago."

Security concerns in the years following the 9/11 attacks kept away

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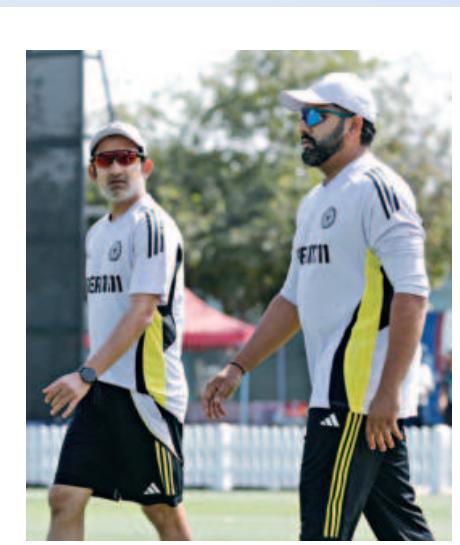
More than 6,000 police officers and paramilitary Rangers were deployed around the stadium -- in addition to 1,000 traffic police -- senior police official Muhammad Anwar Khetran told AFP.

The officer overseeing security at the front gate said fans went through three checks -- on roads leading to the stadium, at the stand entrance, and at each enclosure.

Although militancy is still a threat in Pakistan, the violence is nearly entirely limited to the remote border regions from north to south, far away from the stadiums in Karachi, Lahore, and Rawalpindi.

Cricket is deeply entwined in Pakistan's sense of pride and the return of a big tournament promises to boost the national mood.

"We want to show the world that Pakistan is safe," said 53-year-old Asif Majeed, a third generation Pakistani migrant who travelled from his home in Britain to watch the match. "Win or lose, this event will do wonders for Pakistan's image globally."



The Champions Trophy is set to be Nahid Rana's first major ICC event but the 22-year-old quick, known to reach 150kph at times, is already being considered as one of the most crucial elements to Bangladesh's plans in the tournament. The Tigers will take on title contenders India, led by skipper Rohit Sharma and head coach Gautam Gambhir, in their first game of the competition in Dubai today, and hopes will be pinned on Rana to come through for the Tigers.

PHOTO: ICC

## New Zealand spoil historic day for Pakistan

AFP, Karachi

New Zealand rode on brilliant hundreds from Tom Latham and Will Young to beat Pakistan by 60 runs in the Champions Trophy opener on Wednesday, spoiling the country's historic return to hosting global events after three decades.

President Asif Zardari joined thousands of fans at the National Stadium in Karachi as Pakistan hosted its first International Cricket Council event since 1996.

But a poor performance from the home team left a packed 29,300 crowd disappointed as Pakistan were dismissed for 260 in 42 overs in reply to New Zealand's 320-5 in 50 overs.

Pakistan were never in the chase even after a late flourish from Khushdil Shah, who top scored with a fiery 49-ball 69 including 10 boundaries and a six. Babar Azam scored a more sedate 64 from 90 balls that had a six and six boundaries.

"We tried, but they played very smartly and that's why they got to that total. The pitch was not easy to bat early on, but Will Young and Latham's innings were crucial," said Pakistan skipper Mohammad Rizwan after the game.

Pacer Will O'Rourke finished with 3-47 while skipper Mitchell Santner took 3-66 for as New Zealand.

For all the hype and expectation before the game surrounding Pakistan, it was New Zealand who made the better start as Young and Latham clocked the first centuries of the tournament.

Sent in to bat, opener Young responded with



107 from 113 balls while Latham smashed an unbeaten 104-ball 118 on a flat National Stadium pitch.

Young and Latham revived the innings from 73-3 with a 118-run fourth wicket stand.

"The way Young and Latham rotated the strike and got the odd boundary really set us up. We were thinking 260-280, but it shows what you can do if you have a platform and wickets in hand," New Zealand skipper Santner also credited the Latham-Young duo, like Rizwan.

Young hit 12 boundaries and a six in his fourth ODI century before holing out to Naseem Shah in the 38th over.

Latham and Glenn Phillips, who made an aggressive 39-ball 61, gave the innings more impetus as New Zealand smashed 113 in the last 10 overs and 64 in the last five.

Latham hit 10 boundaries and three sixes in his eighth one-day hundred while Phillips' robust knock had four sixes and three boundaries.

Fast bowler Naseem Shah was the best Pakistan bowler with 2-63.

The defeat leaves Pakistan in a difficult position in Group A as they face archrivals India in Dubai on Sunday and Bangladesh in Rawalpindi on February 27.

## Chance for Rana to live up to the hype

SPORTS REPORTER from Dubai

Bangladesh are going into their Champions Trophy opener against India in Dubai today hoping that their fastest bowler Nahid Rana, who is set to make his first appearance in an ICC event, unleashes his full fury.

The Tigers are without ace all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan and in the stalwart's absence, it is Rana who is garnering all the attention. Even during Bangladesh skipper Najmul Hossain Shanto's pre-match press conference yesterday, questions from the Indian media contingent also centered around Rana's raw pace.

Shanto was optimistic about the vibe Rana creates in the Tigers' dressing room. If the Tigers are to make headway into the tournament and upset the bigger sides, they would need Rana to be at the top of his game.

"I think in the last few matches, he bowled really well and bowled fast, as you mentioned. When we see bowling like this, it helps our whole bowling unit. And it's motivated us to think about how we can challenge our opponents."

Bangladesh skipper Najmul Hossain Shanto said about Nahid Rana.

dent in India's batting lineup when he gets the chance.

It might be hard to believe that only three matches into his ODI career, Rana is creating such a buzz in a major tournament. But with 20 Test wickets to his name in six matches, Rana has turned heads fast, clocking 152 kph in Rawalpindi during his last foray in Pakistan, the hosts of the Champions Trophy. His fifer in the West Indies recently helped the Tigers to a first historic Test win since 2009.

Playing this Champions Trophy against the biggest opponents in white-ball cricket

certainly would charge up the speedster.

"The opportunity to play against the best cricketers in the world is the highest form of inspiration," Rana said in an interview with ICC.

He also argued that his time playing first-class cricket has gotten him ready for the challenges ahead.

"I am enjoying every moment of international cricket. Things have happened very fast but I'm grateful for everything. It is never easy to adapt to international cricket but I was lucky in the sense that I got to play a good number of first-class matches before my debut."

"I feel that is the best thing that could have happened as you get exposed to all sorts of different situations and conditions. But international cricket is totally on a different level," Rana added.

Rana is adamant about maintaining discipline, which would be key in the batting-friendly surfaces in the tournament.

"The team expected me to bowl fast and used me as an attacking option. I tried to repay the faith by sticking to my strengths and staying humble."

"I would rather concentrate on getting into the right rhythm and my release. But then again, when you see or hear that the pace is around 150 kph, that's a nice feeling," he said.

Rana appears to know exactly what the Tigers expect from him and it is time for him to live up to the hype that has been built surrounding him.

## Pakistan hails Champions Trophy as homecoming of cricket

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