

Afg to host Tigers in UAE after Asia Cup

SPORTS REPORTER

The Afghanistan Cricket Board (ACB) yesterday confirmed that it will host Bangladesh for a white-ball series, consisting of three ODIs and as many T20Is, from October 2 to 14 in the UAE.

The series will begin with its T20I leg and will see the two teams go head-to-head in the first T20I scheduled for October 2, while the remaining two T20Is will be held on October 4 and 6 respectively.

The T20I series will be followed by three ODIs, which are scheduled to be played on October 9, 11 and 14.

The venues for the series have not been revealed by the ACB.

The two teams will begin the series after the Asia Cup, also scheduled in the UAE from September 9-28, in which both sides will compete in Group B alongside Sri Lanka and Hong Kong.

Last year Bangladesh were hosted by Afghanistan in a three-match ODI series in Sharjah, which Afghanistan won by 2-1 margin.



PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

A Bangladesh Police Handball Club player goes airborne and aims for goal against Dinajpur District Sports Association during a 43-07 victory on the opening day of Ruchi 36th National Women's Handball Competition at the Shaheed M Mansur Ali National Handball Stadium yesterday. A total 19 teams are participating in the 10-day competition, which will conclude on August 25.

World Cup calls Jessy

SPORTS REPORTER

Shathira Jakir Jessy is set to become Bangladesh's first woman umpire at a senior World Cup, after being named to officiate in the upcoming ICC Women's World Cup in India and Sri Lanka.

The 34-year-old previously officiated in the Women's Asia Cup, while she also officiated in the ICC Women's World Cup Qualifiers held in Pakistan in April, where she worked alongside fellow Bangladesh umpire Masudur Rahman Mukul.

The former Bangladesh international recently stood in Bangladesh emerging team's home series against South Africa.

A Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) source confirmed the news to The Daily Star, adding that the International Cricket Council (ICC) will soon announce the full list of umpires for the eight-team tournament from September 30 to November 2.

Bangladesh, featuring for the second time in a row, will open their campaign against Pakistan on October 2 in Colombo before facing England in Guwahati on October 7. Their seventh and final league match will be against India on October 26 in Bengaluru.

The top four teams from the league format will qualify for the semis, scheduled on October 29 and 30, while the final is slated for November 2.



SAARC signings spark nostalgia, concerns for locals

SPORTS REPORTER

For those who experienced the golden era of Bangladeshi football in the 1980s and '90s, names like Ganesh Thapa and Raju Sakya of Nepal, or Sri Lanka's Pakeer Ali and Prem Lal, evoke a strong sense of nostalgia. These foreign stars were as beloved by local fans as homegrown legends like Ashrafuddin Ahmed Chunnunor Monem Munna. More than just their skills, they brought a spirit of camaraderie among South Asian footballing nations -- a sentiment that faded over the past two decades.

Since the launch of the professional league in 2007, players from the SAARC region have been largely absent in the domestic football scene.

However, the 2025-26 transfer window, which closed on Thursday night, marks a significant shift. A newly introduced rule now allows clubs to register and field up to four SAARC players as locals -- in addition to the three foreign players permitted on the pitch from a pool of five registered foreigners.

As a result, five of the 10 top-tier BPL clubs have signed 11 players from SAARC nations: eight from Nepal, and one each from Sri Lanka, Bhutan, and India. Notably, the traditional powerhouses -- Mohammedan, Abahani, and Bashundhara Kings -- have chosen not to capitalise on this new rule. Instead, it is the mid- and lower-table clubs, many operating under tight budgets, that have embraced the opportunity to bolster their squads affordably.

Brothers Union have made the boldest move, bringing in four players from the Nepal national team, including star forward Anjan Bista. Speaking to The Daily Star, manager Amer Khan admitted to some reservations about the policy but

acknowledged its practical value.

"We can get top Nepalese or Maldivian players for one-third of what we pay top local players. So, obviously, it's very lucrative," Amer said. "We remember how popular players like Pakeer Ali, Prem Lal, Chandra Siri, or Ganesh Thapa were. This rule gives fans a taste of that again. But the decision should've been made with more consensus from the clubs. It will

Mohammedan manager Imtiaz Ahmed Nakib voiced his frustration: "This rule will make it difficult to select players for the national team. We might have to look to the Championship League to find local talent."

Not all SAARC signings have been of high calibre. Arambagh KS, who were relegated two divisions in 2021 due to a match-fixing scandal involving several



We can get top Nepalese or Maldivian players for one-third of what we pay top local players. So, obviously, it's very lucrative.

Brothers Union manager Amer Khan

Total foreign players: 37 from 12 countries (maximum 9 from Ghana)

Total SAARC players: 11 (Nepalese: 8; Sri Lankan: 1; Bhutanese: 1; Indian: 1)

New registration rules:

Maximum 5 foreigners for registration, maximum 3 on the pitch

Maximum 4 SAARC players for registration, all 4 eligible to play

Five age-level local players in the squad, one must feature in playing eleven

undoubtedly hurt our local talents."

Brothers Union have also utilised their full foreign quota -- three African players and two from South America -- meaning they could potentially field seven non-Bangladeshi players in their starting XI.

In total, BPL clubs have registered 37 foreign players from outside the SAARC region, with 11 SAARC recruits bringing the total number of international players to 48 this season. While foreign players add technical quality to teams, coaches and officials are concerned that their growing presence will limit opportunities for emerging Bangladeshi talents.

Indian staff, have raised eyebrows by signing a player from India's fifth tier under the SAARC provision. It's a move that underscores how some clubs -- under severe financial strain -- may exploit the rule simply to fill squad spots on a budget.

In the post-August 5 landscape, with most clubs drastically reducing budgets to survive, the new SAARC rule offers a cost-effective lifeline. But as the new season approaches, it also raises important questions about the long-term development of Bangladeshi football and the future of local players striving to break through.



1936-2025

Australian legend Bob Simpson passes away

AFP, Sydney

Former Australian cricket captain and coach Bob Simpson has died aged 89.

Cricket Australia confirmed his death in Sydney in a statement on Saturday.

Simpson played 62 Test matches, captaining Australia in 39, at an average of 46.81.

He grew up in Sydney and first toured with Australia in 1957, becoming one of the best all-round cricketers to play for the country.

He retired after the 1967 series, but made a comeback a decade later, aged 41, during the World Series Cricket era.

Simpson became Australia's first full-time coach in the 1980s, leading the team's re-emergence and overseeing several top players, including Shane Warne.



CWAB election roadmap finalised

SPORTS REPORTER

The roadmap for the upcoming election of the Cricketers Welfare Association of Bangladesh's (CWAB) was finalised on Friday after an informal get-together at a restaurant in Dhaka, a programme arranged by Tamim Iqbal, and attended by many current and former cricketers.

"It wasn't a CWAB-related programme. Tamim invited us for tea, all who were available attended," CWAB's ad-hoc committee member Neeyamur Rashid Rahul told The Daily Star yesterday.

Neeyamur said over 100 former and current players have completed membership subscription so far and explained the election schedule.

"We will continue membership subscription until August 21. We will sort it out on August 24. Nomination forms can be bought on August 25-26 and have to be submitted by August 28. Nomination withdrawal will have to be done by August 30. Final list of candidates will be issued on September 1. On September 4, we will hold the AGM which will be followed by the election."

Cricketer Rumana Ahmed and umpire Shathira Jakir Jessy attended the event, as Tamim and Co. tried to make amends for ignoring women's cricketers in recent CWAB meetings.

"The invitation came on behalf of Tamim bhai," said Rumana, who along with captain Nigar Sultana Joty had expressed dissatisfaction on social media at being ignored by CWAB.

"They said it happened mistakenly. They told us that CWAB will work for both male and female cricketers... There will be a dedicated position for women in the committee. Current and former women's cricketers can run for any other position as well," Rumana said.

BATTLE OF NO. 9S as Man Utd host Arsenal

STAR SPORTS DESK

It's not just Arsenal versus Manchester United at Old Trafford on Sunday. It's Viktor Gyokeres against Benjamin Sesko -- a clash of two blockbuster summer signings who could define the Premier League's new season for their respective sides.

For Arsenal, Mikel Arteta has finally landed the cutting edge his side desperately lacked.

In comes Gyokeres, the £66 million powerhouse from Sporting Lisbon who plundered 97 goals in just 102 appearances in Portugal, much of which came under United's current manager Ruben Amorim. His pace, power and ruthlessness in front of goal are designed to end Arsenal's 20-year title drought and may finally be the missing key to Arteta's puzzle.

Across the dugout, United manager Amorim is banking



everything on Sesko. Signed from RB Leipzig for £73.7 million, the 22-year-old towering Slovenian, who has scored 39 times in 87 games for the German side, has already drawn comparisons to Erling Haaland with his height, movement and finishing.

"I don't need to tell Ben, 'Ben, this is Manchester United, a lot of pressure. Every game is like do or die,'" Amorim said.

"He is always thinking about football. He's really obsessed about that."

Arsenal, stung by a hat-trick of second-placed finishes in the

past three seasons, have turned to Gyokeres to prevent another collapse.

Injuries to Bukayo Saka, Martin Odegaard and Gabriel Jesus exposed their lack of firepower last season, as they drew 14 matches and finished 10 points off Liverpool. This time, Arteta insists his squad has "versatility" and "different qualities" to finally strike gold.

The Gunners were dead in the air, scoring 17 goals from set-pieces last season -- the most in the league -- and having Gyokeres now only adds to that strength.

Meanwhile, United, desperate to bury the memory of last season's 15th-place disaster, have launched a spending spree. Alongside Sesko, they've splashed out on Bryan Mbeumo and Matheus Cunha in a £200 million attacking overhaul to get a shot at feeling former glory.

There's an extra twist. Gyokeres and Sesko were both on Arsenal's radar before the Gunners chose the Swede, while United swooped in for the one who was not chosen.

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