



Super Eights begin as PAK FACE NZ

New Zealand and Pakistan kick off the T20 World Cup Super Eight stage today at the R Premadasa Stadium in Colombo, with Pakistan holding a historical edge over their opponents in the tournament.

- Pakistan have a superior head-to-head record against New Zealand in T20 World Cups, winning five of their seven meetings.
- Overall in T20Is, however, the rivalry is almost even. In 49 matches, Pakistan have won 24, New Zealand 23, while two games ended with no result.
- Pakistan opener Sahibzada Farhan, the tournament's leading run-scorer with 220 runs at a strike rate of 164.17 in four matches, has struggled against the Black Caps. In three T20Is against New Zealand, he has managed just 21 runs at an average of seven.
- Babar Azam is Pakistan's most successful batter against New Zealand in T20Is, scoring 880 runs at an average of 41.9 in 26 matches.
- Mark Chapman is New Zealand's leading run-scorer against Pakistan in T20Is, with 663 runs at an average of 41.43 in 25 matches.

Will home advantage define Tigers' WC qualification bid?

SPORTS REPORTER

Having already qualified for the 2028 ICC T20 World Cup despite not featuring in the ongoing edition, Bangladesh cricket team's focus for the rest of the year will shift to 50-over assignments with the 2027 ODI World Cup qualification still on the line.

In the 14-team ODI World Cup, Full Member hosts South Africa and Zimbabwe and the eight highest ranked Full Members in the ICC ODI rankings as of March 31, 2027, will make up the 10 direct entrants. The remaining four spots will be decided through a qualifiers' event.

South Africa are currently ranked fifth, and unlikely to slip below eighth, and Zimbabwe are 11th, well adrift of the top 10. So, Bangladesh, now lagging at 10th, must climb to ninth or higher before the deadline to secure direct berth.

The Tigers have 20 ODIs lined up till the cut-off and if India's tour of Bangladesh in August happens, the number will rise to 23. The home series against Pakistan in March starts the run of key ODI assignments at home with New Zealand, Australia and India also in the agenda this year. There are also ODI series away against Ireland, South Africa and Zimbabwe.

In comparison, ninth placed West Indies, who are leading Bangladesh by one rating point, have 12 ODIs lined up in the same period till now.

Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) Game Development Committee's program coordinator Habibur Bashar feels that the Tigers can do more than the bare minimum in ODI rankings by banking on home advantage. "Pakistan, New Zealand, Australia, and India

are all absolutely top-tier teams. However, since these are home series, we will definitely have the home advantage," Bashar told The Daily Star.

"Our goal shouldn't just be to stay at No.9 to barely qualify. If we play well in these four series, since wins against top teams carry more points, we can significantly improve our ranking and move up to the 6th or 7th position," he added.

Bashar reflected that what opposition Bangladesh play will dictate what kind of wickets are used.



"We are not going to prepare seaming tracks against New Zealand and Australia, nor will we prepare turning tracks against India and Pakistan. Tailoring pitches to the opposition is a standard practice that everyone follows," he said.

The Tigers had a rough time in ODIs in the last 15 months, having lost 12 and won only three in the period. Their last ODI series was against West Indies at home, which they won 2-1, but their batters visibly struggled.

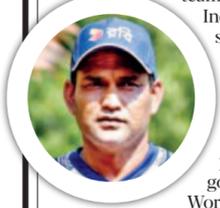
"Our primary concern is our batting... Recently, our primary focus was heavily on the T20 format because of the consecutive World Cups. We tried to change our style of play for T20s, but our adaptations to those changes were not properly executed for ODIs," he added.

Bashar also issued a warning that failing to get direct qualification and competing in a 10-team qualifiers event could prove really challenging. "Even a strong team like the West Indies failed to qualify for the World Cup through the qualifiers," he recalled.

Salahuddin slams Nazrul's 'blatant lies'

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh cricket team's senior assistant coach Mohammad Salahuddin criticised former sports adviser Asif Nazrul over his change of narrative relating to Bangladesh's T20 World Cup exclusion. "He told such blatant lies," Salahuddin told reporters on Thursday when asked to comment on Nazrul's U-turn -- after initially stating the government decided against sending the team to the ICC T20 World Cup in India before later appearing to shift responsibility onto the board and players.



After wide criticism, Nazrul had attempted another U-turn, claiming on social media that he had failed to communicate properly and that it was the government's decision to skip the World Cup.

"I myself am a teacher; teachers generally lie a bit less. That he would say such lies so openly -- I honestly can't even imagine it," Salahuddin said.

"He is a teacher, a teacher at Dhaka University. A person from the highest educational institution of my country saying such lies -- we can't accept this. He said one thing earlier and later took a U-turn," he added.

** Read The Daily Star website for full story

Mirpur to host Pakistan ODI series

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) yesterday confirmed the schedule of their upcoming three-match ODI series against Pakistan, set to be held between March 11 and 15 at the Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium in Dhaka.

SERIES SCHEDULE:

- March 9** - Pakistan arrival
- March 11** - First ODI at the SBNCs at 2:15pm
- March 13** - Second ODI at SBNCs at 2:15pm
- March 15** - Third ODI at SBNCs at 2:15pm
- March 16** - Pakistan departure

Clubs not happy with BFL resumption date

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh Premier League is set to resume on March 6, two months after the completion of the first phase of the country's top-tier football competition, but several clubs are unhappy with the revised schedule.

Following the restart of the league, the Federation Cup will also resume on March 10, after the Professional Football League Management Committee of the Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) took the decision on Thursday night.

The second phase of the league had initially been scheduled to begin before the February 12 national elections, after a month-long mid-season transfer window that closed on January 31. However, the league committee deferred the restart, citing the national elections.

There were also discussions about resuming on February 20, three days after the planned February 17 restart of the Federation Cup, but that too fell through as several clubs had not returned to training camp.

The revised calendar now means the league, originally expected to conclude in April, will instead run into May. In addition, there will be another significant pause of more than three weeks from March 15 to April 9, after the 10th and 11th rounds, due to the Bangladesh national team's AFC Asian Cup qualifying match against Singapore on March 31.

"It is good that they finally gave a resumption date," Brothers Union manager Amer Khan told The Daily Star. "The league will now end in May instead of April, increasing the burden of the players' payment and camp expenditure."

Fortis FC coach Masud Parvez

Kaiser said, "We are talking about the professionalism in football but there is no reflection of it in the league. It is not a good schedule for good football."

"Is it acceptable to decide the resumption of the league based on the training of Kings and Mohammedan?" Kaiser asked.

Rahmatganj coach Kamal Babu said, "As a small team, we are in trouble running the training camp due to financial constraints. Actually, the BFF has long been protecting the interest of big and financially solvent clubs."

Declining to criticise the decision, Abahani coach AKM Maruful Haque however said, "If other clubs don't have any problem, then we have also no problem. We will play the way the league committee will ask us."

However, coaches from several clubs have expressed concern over the mental fatigue of players, many of whom have remained in training for an extended period without clarity over the league's resumption.



PHOTO: FACEBOOK

Skipper Fahima Khatun delivered a superb all-round performance as Bangladesh Women's A stormed into the final of the Asia Cup Rising Stars Women's with a commanding 54-run win over Pakistan A in Bangkok yesterday. At the Terdthai Cricket Ground, Fahima struck an unbeaten 32-ball 40 to lift Bangladesh to 110-8 after being sent in to bat. She then claimed two wickets with her leg-spin, while left-arm spinner Sanjida Akter Meghla starred with 3-6 as Pakistan were bundled out for 56 in 16.4 overs. Bangladesh face India in the final on Sunday.

বাংলা আমার চেতনা
অগ্রগতির প্রেরণা

একুশের চেতনায় আমাদের পথচলা হোক অর্জন ও গর্বের
মহান শহিদ ও আন্তর্জাতিক মাতৃভাষা দিবসে ভাষা আন্দোলনের
সকল শহিদের প্রতি জানাই বিনম্র শ্রদ্ধা

দশকের বিশ্বাস
সবসময় আছি সাথে

আল-আরাফাহ
ইসলামী ব্যাংক পিএলসি

aib
All-Ar Rafaah Islamic Bank PLC
কলিকাতা