



## PCB seeks to stage South Africa T20s in Rawalpindi



"For them to go back [to South Africa] and come again won't be possible so we will have to see whether we can have them sit in the UAE for six or eight days and provide them the support and practice facilities or we fly them straight in here and provide all that here," the PCB chief executive continued.

Meanwhile, commenting on the inclusion of venues for holding international cricket there, Wasim said the PCB wants all fans in Pakistan to access the game.

"We want to make the game accessible to fans all over the country so they can watch their heroes in action and this [PSL] edition is going to be a catalyst for it," he remarked.

"By next year, we want to be in a position to add a couple of more venues. We are looking to develop more and more venues which provides us an opportunity to take the game around the country.

"We are looking at Peshawar, Multan, Faisalabad, which hosted the National T20 Cup and needs a little upgradation after which it can be an international venue, and Hyderabad, for which we are working with Sindh government for its upgrade."

With the fifth edition of PSL just round the corner, it is significant that for the first time all the 34 matches of the league will be played in Pakistan at four venues, including two which are being tested for the first time — Multan and Rawalpindi — for the PSL matches.

Wasim believes the upcoming PSL edition will take the game to more and more audiences in the country, which, in turn, will help in normalising the staging of top-flight cricket in Pakistan.

He admitted that the PSL played a vital role in full resumption of international cricket in the country. Former PCB chairman Najam Sethi was the real force behind starting the PSL in 2016 in the UAE and bringing its matches to Pakistan gradually.

Moreover, he said the PCB has revamped its cricket committee heading by Iqbal Qasim and claims that the body now looks more independent as more members are taken from out of the PCB.

"The issues which are being discussed in this committee are very much relevant to the people of Pakistan and to Pakistan cricket," Wasim concluded.

## India lose 1-4 to Malaysia in Badminton Asia Team Championships

**MANILA (PHILIPPINES):** Doubles specialist Satwiksairaj Rankireddy's absence proved crucial as the Indian men's team suffered a 1-4 loss against a young Malaysian side in its second group B match of the Badminton Asia Team Championships here on Thursday.

With Satwik pulling out the event due to an ankle sprain, India were forced to field two scratch pairs — MR Arjun and Chirag Shetty and Dhruv Kapila and Lakshya Sen, both of whom lost their respective ties.

Kidambi Srikanth was the only shuttler to register a win as world no. 11 B Sai Praneeth and HS Prannoy too went down in the other singles in straight games at the Rizal Memorial Sports Complex.

After this loss, India finished second in the group and will now take on Thailand in the quarterfinals on Friday.

After a 4-1 win over minnows Kazakhstan in the opening match, India locked horns with Malaysia and with Satwik missing, the onus was on Praneeth to give India a good start but the world championships bronze medallist lost 18-21 15-21 to world no. 14 Lee Zii Jia. Chirag and Arjun then lasted just 31 minutes before going down 18-21 15-21 to world no. 8 Malaysian combination of Aaron Chia and Soh Wooi Yik as India lagged 0-2.

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Tokyo governor Yuriko Koike has promised to implement "thorough measures" to protect people from the coronavirus in the run-up to the Olympics.

Japan has not seen any deaths from COVID-19 but has 28 cases on its soil, with four in serious condition in hospital.

Another 174 people, including a quarantine officer, have been infected on a cruise ship floating off the Japanese coast — the outbreak's largest single cluster.

Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's government has come under fire for its handling of the infection, especially quarantine measures seen as too lax in the early stages of the epidemic. "These struggles in turn have sparked concerns about the forthcoming Tokyo Olympics, as Japan prepares for the arrival of millions of international visitors over the summer," said Tobias Harris from Teneo Consultancy.

The mayor of the Olympic Village, Saburo Kawabuchi, told the meeting there was "still no clue as to when the virus will be resolved" and appeared to pin hopes on

# BANGLADESH declines PCB offer to play day-night Test in KARACHI



**DHAKA:** The Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) has turned down an offer from the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) to play a day-night Test match in Pakistan.

"The board understands their [team management] point of view and, after taking everything into consideration, we have decided not to play day-night Test

in Pakistan," the BCB official added.

The PCB had requested that Bangladesh play the second and final Test of the series, starting on April 5 in Karachi, under lights with the pink ball.

BCB chief executive Nizamuddin Chowdhury said the Bangladesh team management is of

the opinion that the team are not ready for a day-night Test and that the challenge should not be taken without proper preparation. "We have spoken with our team management and they are not ready to play a day-night Test at the moment, due to lack of preparation," Nizamuddin was quoted as saying by Dhaka

Tribune.

In their only day-night Test till date, Bangladesh suffered defeat at the hands of India by an innings and 46 runs at the Eden Gardens in Kolkata in November last year.

Bangladesh are currently touring Pakistan for the first time since 2008, and the experience

has not been pleasant, so far. Two legs of the three phase tour have already been completed, but the tourists are yet to taste victory.

In the third phase of the series, Bangladesh will play a lone ODI on April 3 before the second and final Test starts on April 5.

Both the games will be played at the National Stadium, Karachi.

## Security a concern everywhere, not just in Pakistan: Sangakkara

**DHAKA:** Former Sri Lanka captain and Marylebone Cricket Club (MCC) President Kumar Sangakkara on Thursday said that security is a major concern everywhere in the world, adding that the steps that have been taken in Pakistan over the past few years have instilled great confidence in cricketers.

Sangakkara will be captaining the club's 12-man squad in the Feb 13 to 19 tour during which the visitors will play both 20 and 50-over match fixtures against four teams — Lahore Qalandars, Pakistan Shaheens, Northern, and Multan Sultans. All the matches will be held in Lahore.

Addressing a press conference alongside Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) Chief Executive Wasim Khan in Lahore, the MCC president said it had been 47 years since the club last visited Pakistan and 10 years for him personally.

"The more times that international teams tour, the stronger that message becomes. The MCC is here because one of our core philosophies [...] is that the spirit of cricket transcends most barriers that sometimes keep nations and people apart.

Sangakkara also underlined the importance of holding international cricket matches on home ground, adding that that ultimately contributes towards the "global game".

"A tour to Pakistan has been under discussion for some time, but it was seeing Khan's enthusiasm, the arrangements and the improvements that have been made, that was an eye opener.

"For me personally, I have immense-

ly wonderful memories of playing in Pakistan, especially Lahore," he maintained.

"I was taken to see the name boards that underscore the hundreds that both domestic and international players have scored here and it [ultimately]



underlines the importance of cricket being played at home and in your home country.

"For a lot of Pakistani players that are becoming great in their own right [...] for them to be unable to play cricket at their home grounds, in front of their home fans and to [not] have their names go up [on boards] and be recognised is a real shame.

"But slowly cricket is coming back, Sri Lanka was one of the first teams [to come back]. As a Sri Lankan and as president of the MCC, I am so happy we are able to do our part to try and encourage countries to look at Pakistan as one of the best cricketing destinations. It has been that in the past and I am sure it will be that very soon.

"Cricket goes a long way in engaging people from different countries. In 1996, when Sri Lanka was in need of assistance, the unified front the cricketing nation showed to play in the country [...] and supporting Pakistan on its great journey back," he said. "The MCC is very competitive, we are here to play some good cricket and to win some games. It's great that we have some tough oppositions to play against," he reiterated.

"Cricket belongs to everyone. Players play and for them to have that support you need to have the fans. You need to have an underpinning of young children being inspired to take up the game. If there is no home cricket for a very long period of time, there is a danger that the hunger [for the game] might go away."

The more cricket you play at home, the more times young fans can see their players in action. That is wonderful for the game and for the country and for the global game, he stated.

"We should not lose sight of the importance. Pakistan's strength, in the big picture, is having global cricket in a healthy and strong state. The MCC tour is a part of this puzzle," he said.

## Hockey captain Manpreet becomes first Indian to win FIH Male Player of the Year award

**LAUSANNE :** National men's team captain Manpreet Singh on Thursday became the first Indian to win the International Hockey Federation's (FIH) Player of the Year award, capping a memorable 2019 season in which he led the side to Olympic qualification.

The 27-year-old midfielder, thus, became the first from the country to win the accolade since the awards were introduced in 1999.

He beat competition from Belgium's Arthur van Dorren and Lucas Villa of Argentina, who came second and third respectively.

Manpreet polled a total of 35.2 per cent of combined votes, which includes National Associations, media, fans and players.

Van Dorren, on the other hand, got combined vote share of 19.7 per cent while Villa polled 16.5 per cent in his favour.

Other players who were nominated for the award were Victor Wegnez of Belgium and Australian duo of Aran Zalewski and Eddie Ockenden.

Manpreet, who had represented India at 2012 London and 2016 Rio Olympics, has enjoyed a long career in the national team since he made his debut in 2011. He now has 260 international appearances under his belt.

Last year, Manpreet led India to victory in the FIH Olympic Qualifiers, securing their Tokyo Olympics spot.

Talking about the last season, Manpreet said: "If you look at our year, we did well in every tournament we participated in. Be it the FIH Series Finals in June or the test series in Belgium where we played the hosts as well as Spain and beat them. "Our biggest goal in 2019 was to book our berth at the Olympics."

India achieved that goal in style, beating Russia in the Olympic Qualifiers over two legs -- 4-2 and 7-2.

Manpreet dedicated the award to his teammates, saying without their support it wouldn't have been possible.

## Tokyo Olympics boss blasts 'irresponsible rumours' over virus shutdown

**TOKYO :** Tokyo Olympic organisers stressed on Thursday they are not considering scrapping the Games due to the coronavirus and blasted "irresponsible rumours" to the contrary.

With only 162 days to go until the opening ceremony, concerns have been raised about Japan's hosting of the Games with the virus spreading throughout Asia.

But Tokyo 2020 CEO Yoshiro Mori slapped down such concerns at a meeting with top International Olympic Committee officials.

"With regards to the coronavirus... there are many irresponsible rumours but I would like to make it clear again that we are not considering postponing or cancelling the Games," he said.

"We would like to coordinate with the national government and act in a calm manner," he stressed. The virus has already forced the rescheduling of a swathe of sporting events in Asia, including Olympic qualification competitions for boxing and basketball — both in China.

Formula One's Shanghai Grand Prix has been postponed from mid-April, with the

inaugural Vietnamese Grand Prix also under threat as well as the Hong Kong Sevens.

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increased humidity to kill off the disease. "We have the rainy season that could defeat the virus," he said.

In China on Thursday, hard-hit Hubei province where the virus emerged announced 242 more deaths and nearly 15,000 extra patients as authorities changed their threshold for diagnosis.