

## Champions Trophy to kick off without opening ceremony



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LAHORE: The ICC Champions Trophy 2025 in Pakistan will commence without an opening ceremony, primarily due to the late arrival of England and Australian squads. Additionally, no warm-up matches will be played in the prestigious eight-nation tournament.

According to sources, England is scheduled to land in Lahore on February 18, just a day before the tournament opener between defending champions Pakistan and New Zealand in Karachi.

Australia, set to play their first match against England on February 22, will arrive on February 19.

“The delay in team arrivals has led to the cancellation of the traditional opening ceremony featuring participating teams and captains,” a source confirmed. However, the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) is exploring options to organize an alternative event to mark the tournament’s launch.

Political tensions have also influenced the tournament’s logistics. Reports suggest the Indian team and captain may not have attended an opening ceremony in Pakistan due to strained bilateral relations. India’s matches, including potential semi-finals and finals, will be played in Dubai under the ICC’s hybrid model.

Meanwhile, South Africa, Pakistan, and New Zealand will participate in a short ODI tri-series from February 8-14 in Lahore and Karachi, eliminating the need for warm-up fixtures.

Afghanistan, arriving on February 12, will also be without a warm-up match, as India and Bangladesh will head directly to Dubai for their first game on February 20.

The Champions Trophy will officially arrive in Pakistan on January 31 for a promotional tour across cities not covered in its previous visit.

### **Gaddafi Stadium Renovations Near Completion**

Preparations at Lahore's Gaddafi Stadium are nearing completion, with the final installation of chairs in enclosures set to finish by Thursday night. A PCB spokesperson confirmed that pavilion and office renovations have been completed, and new furniture is being installed, ensuring the venue is ready to host the high-profile tournament