

Country gets two more Test venues

Three more cricket grounds in the country got the nod of International Cricket Council (ICC) to host international matches.

Among the three venues, Bogra's Shaheed Chandu Stadium and the Chittagong Divisional Stadium got the approval to host Test matches while the Khulna Divisional Stadium can only stage one-day internationals, the Bangladesh Cricket Control Board (BCCB) confirmed yesterday after receiving a correspondence from the cricket's world governing body.

The decisions were finalised after reports from ICC inspector Roshan Mahanama, who visited five venues earlier this month.

Two venues in the capital, Sher-e-Bangla Stadium in Mirpur and the Fatullah Stadium, were not approved because required constructions have yet to be completed.

The ICC approval confirmed that Dhaka will not stage any match during Sri Lanka's tour of Bangladesh in February-March.

A board official told yesterday that they are looking forward to host the first two one-dayers and the second and final Test in Bogra. The third and final ODI will be held at Khulna and the first Test in Chittagong.

The ICC match referee of the Bangladesh-Sri Lanka series is expected to re-inspect the venues during his stay.

Mostafa lifts jr chess title

Golam Mostafa clinched the title of the BASIC Bank 27th National Junior (Under-20) Chess Championship beating Minhazuddin Sagar in the play-off at the federation hall room yesterday.

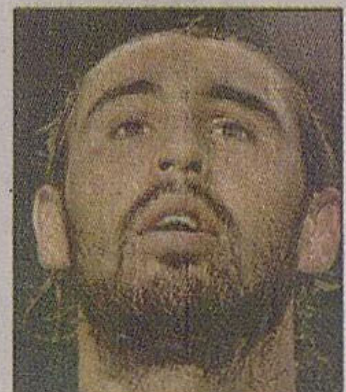
Mostafa beat his rival 2-1.

The championship fight went into the play-off after both the players finished on eight points each after the ninth and final round on Sunday.



Did U Know?

Margaret Court won the most (21) Australian Open tennis titles: the women's singles 11 times (1960/66, 1969/71, and 1973), the women's doubles eight times (1961-63, 1965, 1969-71, and 1973), and the mixed doubles twice (1963 and 1964).



Marcos Baghdatis
(Cypriot tennis star)
"It's just been a fantastic two weeks... it's a dream come true, I'm in the final, I lost, it's just amazing."
After losing the Australian Open final to Roger Federer.



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DOHS can celebrate now

SPORTS REPORTER

Old DOHS all but confirmed lifting their second successive Premier Cricket League title when the new powerhouse of local cricket buried Mohammedan Sporting Club under tons of runs in a Super Six match at BKSP yesterday.

The massive 121-run victory gave the holders an unassailable lead with 24 points and there is only a mathematical chance for Sonargaon Cricketers to come level if the holders lose their remaining matches against Bangladesh Biman and Victoria Sporting Club.

Young batsman Farhad Reza might have missed a deserved hundred for six runs, but the right-hander returned to his belligerent best with an 86-ball 94 that powered DOHS to amass 319-7 in the stipulated 50 overs.

The highest total in the meet, which enabled the Akram Khan-led side to recover from their six-wicket defeat against Sonargaon in the previous match, not only killed Mohammedaq's hopes to avenge

their three-run defeat in the first leg but also their last shot at the title.

Habibul Bashar's men, now a distant third in the table, made a meek surrender when they were bundled out for 198 in 41.1 overs.

"We were handed over an advantage which was unexpected. Mohammedan invited us to bat first after winning the toss on a pitch where you could post a big total to put pressure on the opponents," said an excited Akram, who wants to start celebrations only after triumphs in the remaining matches.

"You can say we have confirmed the title because we have a superior run-rate than our nearest contenders. But I am excited with the fact that we are all set to enjoy our second success. We have a strong team as well as a good management," he added.

Talented all-rounder Farhad, who was almost unnoticed in the competition after a brilliant showing in the National Cricket League, smote ten fours and two massive sixes in his scintillating innings before being holed to Manjurul Islam at long on off Monirul Islam.

But he left his side in a com-

mendable position of 230-4 after sharing a 114-run partnership with Kenyan Steve Tikolo, who hammered a run-a-ball 43 that produced three fours and a six.

Opener Nazimuddin played another strokeful knock as the right-hander smashed eight fours to hit 55 off 63 balls.

DOHS lost two quick wickets in the middle when Akram departed for 24 following Khaled Mahmud's dismissal that slowed down their staggering run-rate. But Manjurul Islam (34 not out off 31 balls) and Abdur Razzak (20 off 14 balls) did the fireworks in the latter stage to help the side cross the 300-mark.

Mohammedan got off to a perfect start when Hannan Sarker (34 off 38 balls) and Indian Sandeep Sharma (22 off 14 balls) tore apart the rival attack but veteran pacesman Khaled Mahmud removed both the openers after they had put on 53 runs in six overs.

Aftab Ahmed played his first match after recovering from jaundice but scored only five that reduced his side to 70-4 but Mohammedan were still alive when national captain Bashar and his deputy Khaled Masud were in the middle.

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DOWN AND OUT: Mohammedan captain Habibul Bashar trudges back to the dressing room after being dismissed by DOHS left-arm spinner Enamul Haque in their Aktel Premier League Super Six match at BKSP on Monday.

Al Shahriar keeps scoring

SPORTS REPORTER

A sparkling 63 by Al Shahriar and solid top-order batting kept Sonargaon Cricketers' slim title hopes alive with an exciting three-wicket victory over Brothers Union in the Aktel Premier Cricket League yesterday.

Newcomers Sonargaon snatched the Super-Six match at the Fatullah Stadium with one ball to spare when Tapash Baisya lofted spinner Arafat Sunny over mid-off for a boundary and take the total to 253-7 in reply to Brothers' challenging 249.

Although the DOHS-Mohammedan match was an embarrassingly one-sided affair, the day's other match went down to the wire with Victoria Sporting Club running away with a one-wicket win over Bangladesh Biman

in a last-ball thriller at the Dhanmondi Cricket Stadium.

Opener Nazmus Sadat became the first batsman to score two centuries in the league but Biman failed to capitalise on the young batsman's back-to-back hundred.

With DOHS comfortably topping the table with a four-point cushion, Sonargaon remain the only side with a chance to finish level with the leaders provided the holders lose their both games and Sonargaon win their two.

However difficult the prospect of pocketing the title looks for Sonargaon on debut, they stayed on course for the runners-up finish

with 20 points. Mohammedan and Victoria, both out of the title chase, follow them with 18 points each.

SONARGAON-BROTHERS
Al Shahriar's rich vein of form since the former national cricketer's removal as captain saw him score a run-a-ball 63 to set the tone for Sonargaon's difficult chase. Before being trapped lbw by man-of-the-match Rashed Hanif, the opener had cracked ten boundaries.

Indian cricketer Manvinder Singh Visla (35 off 31 balls) and skipper Mohammad Ashraf (43 off 59 balls) added 90 runs for the fourth wicket but the departure of the two set batsmen in the space of five deliveries called for trouble.

Anisur Rahman Sanchay and Sazzad Ahmed managed to repair the damages and they needed five runs to win from the last over which came from the bat of Tapash, who remained not out on five.

Earlier, the Brothers total was

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Team	Points	Wickets	Runs
DOHS	14	12	2
Sonargaon	14	10	4
MSC	14	9	5
Victoria	14	9	5
Biman	14	8	6
BU	14	6	8

Crucial SA-SL tie today

AFP, Perth

South Africa and Sri Lanka are bracing for a make-or-break encounter when they clash in Tuesday's triangular series limited-overs match in Perth with Australia already sewing-up one of the two finals berths.

South African skipper Graeme Smith said Monday that his team were treating the match as their most important of the tour.

"It's important for us to make sure that tomorrow's game is the most important game on the tour for us and if we get through that one then we move on to Friday and we will (also) make sure that one counts," he told reporters.

"With the young team, it's important not to look too far

ahead. It's (important) to concentrate game by game and improve on everything game by game."

Australia beat Sri Lanka by six wickets at the Western Australian Cricket Association ground on Sunday, the same venue as Tuesday's match, sealing a place in the best-of-three finals series.

South Africa, on eight points, are one point adrift of Sri Lanka but are in the box seat, having played two fewer games.

Including Tuesday's encounter, they have four left to play while Sri Lanka have two and either team could qualify.

"The sums just mean that we need to win," Smith said.

"Obviously Australia's win last night has left them in a pretty solid position in the competition."

"We've got three or four games this week, starting tomorrow, so we want to make them count."

Batsman Justin Kemp was injured after being hit above the knee during nets practice on Monday but Smith said it was not a major concern.

"Team management says it doesn't look serious and we'll see how he responds to treatment tonight," he said.

Smith, who's own form has been poor throughout the series, said the early stages of the match were vital for either side.

"I think those first 15 overs whether we bowl or bat are going to be crucial to the game," he said.

Australian openers Adam Gilchrist and Simon Katich made a mockery of the Sri Lankan attack on the bouncy wicket on Sunday with a partnership of 191 runs.

Gilchrist took the leading role, smacking 116 runs off 105 balls while Katich made 82 from 110.

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Rahim and co off to Lanka

SPORTS REPORTER

The Mushfiqur Rahim-led Bangladesh cricket team left Dhaka yesterday for Colombo to take part in the ICC Under-19 World Cup which starts from February 5.

Bangladesh, the plate champions of the last meet, have been pencilled in Group A along with New Zealand, Pakistan and Uganda in the 16-nation event.

Bangladesh will play two build-up matches against USA and Zimbabwe before taking on New Zealand in one of the four opening day matches on February 5 at P Saravanamuthu Stadium.

Their second match against Pakistan will be held on February 8 at Nondescripts Cricket Ground while the last group match against Uganda is on the day after at the Sinhalese Sports Club ground.

SQUAD
Mushfiqur Rahim (captain), Shamsur Rahman, Tamim Iqbal, Mehdi Hasan, Mehrib Hossain, Sakib Al Hasan, Raquibul Hasan, Rezaul Islam, Sirajjullah Khadem, Sohraward Shuvo, Dollar Mahmud, Ishraq Sonnet, Kamrul Islam and Nabil Samad.

Pakistan edge ahead

Cricket

Pakistan's young guns outperformed India's star-studded tourists to help the hosts seize the advantage in the third and final cricket Test here on Monday.

Pakistan ended the second day's play leading by 180 runs with eight wickets in hand and well-placed to call the shots in the series decider at the National Stadium.

Seamer Mohammad Asif claimed four wickets and Abdul Razaq took three as India, replying to Pakistan's first innings total of 245, were bowled out for 238 midway through the afternoon session.

Pakistan ended the day on 173-2 in their second knock following half-centuries from Salman Butt (53) and Imran Farhat (57) during a first-wicket stand of 109.

Both openers fell within the space of 23 runs, but stand-in captain Younis Khan (25 not out) and Mohammad Yousuf (30 not out) ensured Pakistan did not let the initiative slip away.

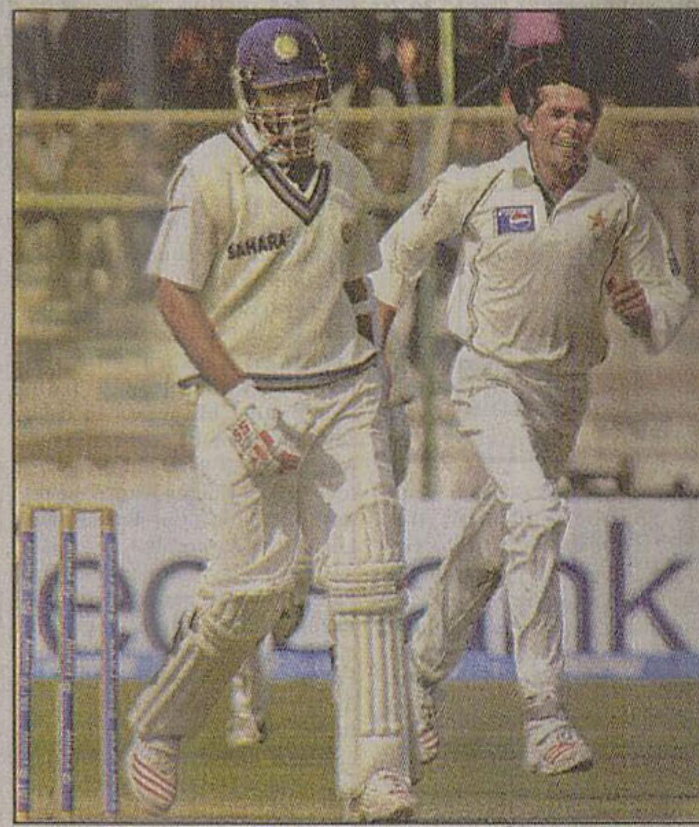
"I think it is still an open game because 180 is not much of a lead," said Asif, the 23-year-old seamer playing only his third Test match.

"The wicket has eased out a lot and it will be good for batting for the rest of the game. So we need a real big score to put the Indians under pressure."

Pakistan, without their inspirational skipper Inzamamul Haq due to a back injury, still played the better cricket when it mattered most to gain the upper hand.

India's famed batting line-up was destroyed by Asif, who finished with 4-78. Razaq had figures of 3-67 while pace spearhead Shoib Akhtar took 2-70 from 16 overs.

India, who started the day on 74-4, lost three key wickets in the



Pakistan pacer Mohammad Asif (R) is elated after seeing the back of India's Zaheer Khan on the second day of the third Test in Karachi on Monday.

CRICKET UPDATE

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PCB to ask for 6-day Tests during winter

Cricket

Pakistan cricket authorities will ask the International Cricket Council (ICC) to allow six-day Tests to be played in winter to reduce the impact of bad light and poor weather on play.

Pakistan would also start experimenting with orange cricket balls in domestic matches to combat the problem of poor light, Shaharyar Khan, chairman of the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB), told a news conference on Monday.

"We want clearance to have six-day Tests between November 15 and January 15 every year when bad light and poor weather usually badly affect tests," he said.

Shaharyar also said Pakistan would ask the ICC to review its policy on playing Tests under

lights.

"From the experience we have had, even when the lights have been switched on in Tests play has been stopped by the umpires for bad light as the lighting has not been good enough," he said.

"We are going to ask the ICC to increase the international requirements of lighting power for Test matches."

Pakistan, who's last home series against England at the end of 2005 was badly affected by bad light and weather, would also start experimenting with an orange ball in a domestic tournament from February 1.

"The idea is if players can't sight the red or white balls under lights properly in Tests, then why can't the ICC experiment with orange-coloured balls?"

"We are going to experiment with them ourselves in day and

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MSC football camp from tomorrow

SPORTS REPORTER

Mohammedan Sporting Club's football camp for the preparation of AFC Cup will start tomorrow under coach Shafiqul Islam Manik.

Mohammedan, drawn with Al Whidat of Jordan and Dhofar of Oman, qualified for the Asian club competition as National Football League champions.

All the booters of the club have been requested to report to the coach today at the club tent by 4pm with their gear and passports.

Mohammedan will take on Dhofar at home on March 7 in their opening game.

Federation Cup winners Brothers Union are the other team to represent Bangladesh in the competition.

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