

Aktel to go cricket

SPORTS REPORTER

Aktel is all set to join the prestigious sponsorship list of Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) for the first time.

The cellular operator house is expected to be the title sponsors of the forthcoming Bangladesh-Zimbabwe one-day series after being the highest bidder, according to a reliable source.

It was learned that Aktel's offer is over Tk 1.10-crore, which beat a Tk one-crore bid by GrameenPhone, who was the sponsor of the last home series against Australia for two Tests and three one-day internationals.

For five ODIs against Zimbabwe, who have decided not to play Test cricket till November 2007, the offer seems really handsome as the series against world champions Australia had cost GrameenPhone Tk 65 lakh.

Two other cellular companies, banglalink and CityCell, have also been title sponsors for the Tigers' in the past. Banglalink, who sponsored the series against Kenya, was also interested this time but stepped aside earlier.



Did U Know?

The ancient American Indian game of lacrosse involved teams of up to 1,000 players.



Imran Khan

(Pakistan's cricket legend)

"Rahul Dravid is a more aggressive player with good leadership qualities. I prefer him as the captain of a combined India-Pakistan team ahead of Inzamamul Haq."

Zia, Reefat hold Biman lead

SPORTS REPORTER

Grand Master (GM) Ziaur Rahman, GM Reefat Bin Sattar, FIDE Master (FM) Mehdi Hasan and FM Rezaul Haque all won to give Bangladesh Biman the solo lead in the Dutch-Bangla Bank 1st Division Chess League at the Bangladesh Chess Federation hall-room yesterday.

Biman now head the points table with 42 points after the end of thirteen rounds after they trounced Sonali Bank 4-0.

Zia beat Hasan, Reefat defeated Shantanu, Mehdi outplayed Saidul

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Wunderkinder

AFP, New Delhi

A pair of Indian schoolboys did the unthinkable when they put on a "world record" 721 for the opening wicket off 40 overs in a one-day cricket match, the Times of India reported Thursday.

Shaibaz Tumbi and Manoj Kumar achieved the feat on Wednesday playing for St. Peter's High School against St. Philips High School in an under-13 inter-school match at Secunderabad in southern India.

Tumbi hammered 324 off just 116 balls and Kumar 320 off 127 deliveries in an eye-defying display of aggressive batting. The pair smashed 103 fours during their stand but not a single six at the huge Parade ground.

Their feat also eclipsed the previous best stand, in any form of cricket, of 664 between Indian batting superstar Sachin Tendulkar and former Test batsman Vinod Kambli in an inter-school match in Mumbai in February 1988.

"We feel nice to have broken the Tendulkar-Kambli record. We knew our individual scores and

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Ace batsman Mohammad Ashraful follows through on a sweep shot during his 121 against Barisal on the first day of the Ispahani Mirzapore 8th National Cricket League at the Dhanmondi Cricket Stadium yesterday.

Dhaka ride on Ashraful

Razzaq brings back Khulna

Cricket

SPORTS REPORTER

Star batsman Mohammad Ashraful struck one of three hundreds on the day as Dhaka took charge against Barisal in the Ispahani Mirzapore 8th National Cricket League at the Dhanmondi Cricket Stadium yesterday.

Dhaka piled on the runs despite a five-wicket haul from Barisal pacesman Sajidul Islam as they ended the first day at 304 for seven after their encounter started a day late.

Away at the Chittagong Divisional Stadium, Faisal Hossain struck his first hundred of the season as Chittagong replied in earnest to Sylhet's 305 all out that featured Tapash Baisya's maiden first-class hundred. At stumps on the second day, Chittagong were 215 for four in 76 overs.

Meanwhile, openers Nazmus Sadat and Sajjadul Hasan cut down Khulna's first innings deficit to six

runs as both remained unbeaten in their second innings after Rajshahi were bowled out for 265 in the first innings, thanks mainly to Tigers left-arm Abdul Razzaq's five-for. Khulna's riposte now puts the match at the Rajshahi Divisional Stadium in perfect balance.

BARISAL v DHAKA

Left-arm seamer Sajidul Islam continued his fine form as he took the wickets of opener Javed Omar (19) and Anwar Hossain (24) early on to put Dhaka in a spot of bother. Hannan Sarkar, bowling his part-time seam, also caused some damage as he had the other opener Mehrab Hossain (20) caught behind by Mohammad Shahin.

Ashraful then walked in and with some aplomb took charge along with his captain Al Shahriar. The two most attractive batsman of the country put together a 93-run stand to take Dhaka out of strife. Al Shahriar fell to Sajidul in the middle session for 55 which included two sixes and five boundaries. Ashraful, in the meantime, put together

another useful stand of 72 runs with Nadif Chowdhury (33) who typically, struck a couple of sixes in his 51-ball stint.

Ashraful, who was dismissed for 121 runs by Sajidul, almost waged a lone battle as he struck 19 boundaries in an innings that spanned more than three hours. The score should give the ace batsman some confidence ahead of the Zimbabwe series that begins this month.

Sajidul, who took 4-56 a week ago against the same opponents, ended the day with an impressive 5-47. Hannan and off-spinner Ali Arman took a wicket each.

SYLHET v CHITTAGONG

Tapash Baisya appropriately stayed long enough to score his century but soon after was dismissed by spinner Sabbir Khan for 112. Sylhet only added 24 runs to their overnight score (265 for seven) before being bowled out. Tareq Aziz, who took the final wicket of Nazmul Hossain, was the best bowler for Chittagong with figures of 4-6-1.

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Mariners give walkover too

SPORTS REPORTER

Mariner Young Club followed in the footsteps of Mohammedan Sporting Club when they gave walkover in the Super Five stage of the Premier Hockey league yesterday.

According to the announcement of the Bangladesh Hockey Federation (BHF), the league was due to resume yesterday with the Mariners-Sonali Bank match after end of the countrywide blockade.

The BHF had sent a letter to Mariners on Wednesday afternoon regarding this but Mariners did not turn out at the Maulana Bhasani National Hockey Stadium, where the umpires waited for 25 minutes before blowing the final whistle.

Earlier, Mohammedan forfeited their game against Usha Kirra Chakra.

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BFF to stage U-12 meet

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) will organise an under-12 football tournament to form a juvenile team which will play in the Danone Nations Cup 2007 in France.

The eighth edition of the regular event organised by the French food manufacturer, involving 32 countries across from the world, will be held in June.

Danone Foods chairman and CEO Franck Riboud made the announcement last week during soccer great Zinedine Zidane's brief trip to Dhaka.

French legend and three-time FIFA World Footballer of the Year Zidane is an ambassador of the event, the biggest football meet for kids which brings children from all over the world together. Like the previous three years, Zidane will be present at the final at the Stade Gerland in Lyon.

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Aussies increase pace

Cricket

AFP, Sydney

Australia have included fast bowlers Stuart Clark, Mitchell Johnson and Shaun Tait in a 13-man squad to keep England guessing ahead of next week's opening Ashes cricket Test in Brisbane.

The trio is contesting the third fast bowling spot behind established new-ball pair Glenn McGrath and Brett Lee for the Gabba Test, starting on November 23.

The Australians also named all-rounder Shane Watson, opening the possibility that the home team may unleash four fast bowlers on the England batsmen in the first of five Tests on the lively Gabba wicket.

"The inclusion of extra pacemen in the squad reflects one of the strongest starts to the domestic season of young talent in recent memory," chairman of selectors Andrew Hilditch said in a Cricket Australia statement Thursday.

"It reflects the development of Mitchell Johnson in the past 12 months, some eye-catching fast bowling from Shaun Tait and the performance of Stuart Clark in South Africa and since his return from injury domestically."

Clark said he was unsure if he would get the final call-up, but he liked the thought of playing his first home Test at the pace-friendly Gabba.

"My Pura Cup (Shield) form's not all that bad (there)," Clark said. "I'm looking forward to getting out there, it's not a bad place for a fast bowler, it's better than Sydney."

Queensland left-arm Johnson said: "It would be an absolute dream come true if it (Test debut) happened (on his home pitch) - I have played at the Gabba many times now and know the conditions."

Hilditch said the squad reflected the strength of Australian cricket.

"We've picked a very strong squad which reflects the fact that Australia has been successful at international level for some time," he said.

"We are showing faith in those players who have contributed to that success, while at the same time injecting some youth into the squad with the inclusions of Shane Watson, Mitchell Johnson and Shaun Tait."

"We believe this is a squad capable of winning back the Ashes."

Hilditch said the selection of Watson gave the Australian team the option of playing a bowling all-rounder.

"We see his inclusion to the Test squad as an exciting development for Australian cricket," he said.

"Shane has an outstanding first-class record with the bat, averaging over 45 and his bowling ability gives us the flexibility in our attack that we have been looking for."

Despite obvious comparisons with England's star all-rounder Andrew Flintoff, Watson says their

roles are poles apart.

"I am always going to be compared to him, one because he is such a great player but also because we do a very similar thing," Watson said.

"But the roles that me and him play are very different. He is a superstar in their team, whereas I am there to contribute really well within the superstars around me."

Hilditch said the selection of the final 11 players would be a tough decision and dependent on assessing the weather and pitch conditions closer to the Test.

Ricky Ponting, who holds the unwanted distinction of being the Australian skipper who lost the Ashes to England in last year's series in England, said he was excited by the bowling talent he will have at his disposal.

"We have got a well-documented experienced team going into this series but I think historically what you want in any team is a good mix of youth and experience and I think we've certainly got that," Ponting said in the statement.

"Shane Watson's cricket over the last 12 months has come along in leaps and bounds, he's got a terrific record at first-class level with the bat and his bowling has really taken off, probably since (fast bowling coach) Troy Cooley has been around the group."

"It's really exciting as far as I'm

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CHILLING: England captain Andrew Flintoff relaxes on a medicine ball during a practice session at the Adelaide Oval on Thursday.

PHOTO: INTERNET

25 new fed bosses

SPORTS REPORTER

The caretaker government yesterday named new presidents of 25 sports federations, removing the previous political appointments by the BNP-led four-party alliance government.

In a step to give the CG a clean image, the sports ministry first appointed Mohammad Abdul Aziz as the president of Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) on Tuesday.

The ex-BCB chief Ali Asghar submitted his resignation on the same day, which was followed by stepping down of four more presidents from different federations in the last two days. It was learned that Bangladesh Shooting Federation's controversial chief Mueyed Chowdhury sent a late resignation to the ministry, shortly before being sacked.

The sports ministry accepted all five resignations and relieved 21 others bosses of their duties.

Bangladesh Football Federation president SA Sultan, an ex-BNP MP, survived the axe as an elected chief. The other federation presidents to stay are: Air Vice Marshal Fakhru Azam (hockey), Rear Admiral M Hassan Ali Khan (swimming), Abu Solaiman Chowdhury (table tennis), Akber Akhtar (judo) and Maj Gen

AM Siraj (boxing).

The new appointments are: Planning commission secretary Zafar Ahmed (wrestling), textiles and jute secretary Mahbubur Rahman (kho kho), DG of BDR Maj Gen Shakil Ahmed (weightlifting), internal resources secretary Abdul Karim (karate), information secretary Kamaluddin Ahmed (badminton), social welfare secretary Abdul Hai Hawladar (deaf federation), land secretary Lutfar Rahman Talukder (shooting), energy and mineral secretary AMM Nasiruddin (tennis), acting member of planning commission Kazi Aminul Islam (basketball), post and telecommunication secretary Mia Mushtaque Ahmed (volleyball), chairman of land reform board Mortuza Hossain (gymnastics), rural development and cooperative secretary AFM Matir Rahman (bodybuilding), economic relations secretary Rafiqul Islam (chess), expatriates' welfare and overseas employment acting secretary Didarul Anwar (athletics), water resources secretary Syed Mohammad Jobair (rowing), industries secretary Nurul Amin (handball), commerce secretary

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YOUNG GIANTS: Indian schoolboys Manoj Kumar (L) and Mohammed Shaibaz of the St Peters High School pose after their record-breaking 721 runs stand in Hyderabad on Thursday.

PHOTO: AFP