



# 10TH ASIAN CLUB CUP FOOTBALL CHAMPIONSHIP, DHAKA



## Good luck Mohammedans!

by Sabir Mustafa

The 10th Asian Club Cup Football championship beginning here in Dhaka today provides another opportunity for Bangladesh to measure itself against other footballing nations of the region. Naturally, football-follower in this country are hoping for, if not expecting, victory for local idols Mohammedans Sporting Club (MSC). But it would be wrong, indeed a folly, to presume that anything other than an MSC victory would be a waste of time. Emotions apart, what we have to look out for is how our top-range players shape-up against their foreign counterparts — in terms of footballing skills, techniques, physical stamina, temperament and character including the ability to soak up pressure and fight back, and of course, ability to play as a team rather than as a

collection of wayward individuals.

There is a tendency in this country to be complacent, to be smugly satisfied that what we have is, if not the best in the world, then somewhere very close to it. That is a sure recipe for stagnation and eventual decay. It is only by watching our boys on the same turf as the best from other countries can we truly judge our progress. Simultaneously, the players and coaches themselves can become aware of their shortcomings. The benefit of such experiences is an enormous one, outweighing any momentary joy or disappointment that comes from lifting the trophy or not.

There is little doubt that our footballing standards have improved immensely over the past 20 years, but not quite

enough to place us among the top 10 of Asia. But if the current trend, exemplified by the under-23 Olympic squad's quite reasonable performance in the Asia zone qualifying rounds, continues then it should not be long before Bangladesh can seriously challenge the likes of Korea, China and the UAE for one of Asia's two World Cup slots. The very idea of a World Cup berth would have drawn derisive laughter a decade or so ago. Today, while achievement of that feat may still be somewhat off, it is not viewed as an impossibility. Ambition is creeping in, and public confidence is growing in proportion to the gradual rise in footballing standards.

Few things work as effectively to improve a player's techniques as constant expo-

sure to higher standards. Over the years, foreign players in the local league here not only helped bring success to their adopted clubs, but more importantly, contributed a great deal to the development of individual local talent.

Non-Bengalee players, popularly known as 'Makranis,' such as Jabbar Ali, Omar, Musa, Mowla Bux, Ali Newaz and others did just that from 1962 up to independence in 1971. One such non-local star, Chahfor Baloch, remained here, took up Bangladeshi citizenship and subsequently helped build up Brothers Union into the formidable force it is today.

The impact of foreign players in post-independence Bangladesh has been even greater. Players from countries as far apart as Sri Lanka, Nigeria, Malaysia, Iraq and Iran have brought a wealth of varied skills and experiences which have helped local youngsters as well as veterans to upgrade and refine their existing ability.

Unfortunately, this momentum of development was rudely interrupted by a decision taken in 1989 by the then chairman of the Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) Maj Gen Mahmudul Hassan (currently GOC 24 Division in Chittagong). Gen Hassan's decision to ban foreign players from the football league had more to do with inter-club politics than any grand strategy.

The Chima Okerie affair, which precipitated the ban, nearly threatened to derail the train of football in this country. The Nigerian striker reneged on a contract he had signed with one club, and joined their bitter rivals, and the former eventually took up the matter with football's world governing body FIFA. The BFF's handling of the dispute, during which Gen Hassan had even reportedly threatened to defy FIFA's jurisdiction regarding the matter, nearly led to a severance of relations between BFF and the world body. It does not need stating that, had such a breakdown taken place, it would have been disastrous for football in Bangladesh, at least for decades to come. In the end, instead of punishing Chima or the club that hijacked him, BFF banned all foreign players, the logic of which still eludes football lovers in this country. As it is, the suspension of the NBL Senior Division football for two seasons on the trot has caused immense harm to the game. Fortunately, the ban is no longer in force, and players and spectators alike can enrich their skills and enjoyment with the presence of three overseas players per team.

At the same time, professionalisation of football in Bangladesh has now become a pressing need. For all practical purposes, most players are already professionals, in that they earn a living from the game. But on paper they are still amateurs. A handful of players earn quite an exorbitant amount, which has led to creation of a massive gap in income between a select few and the rest.

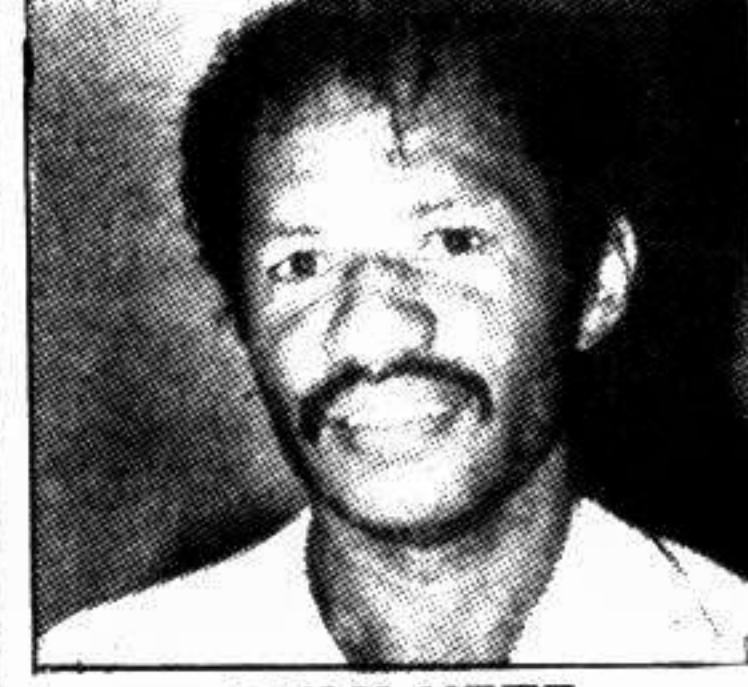
Professionalisation and a rational bargaining structure would not only narrow that gap, it would also help attract promising youngsters into the game, who could then view football as a proper career. At present many shy away from the game because of the inevitable impression of corruption and racketeering that non-documented cash transactions can give. Such a system does not give players any protection at all. Even apart from that, professionalisation would also bring a greater sense of responsibility, therefore commitment, on the part of the players towards their clubs, and lead to an overall improvement in the standard of the game itself.

## Pelita Jaya... seeking revenge

— Biplab Zaman —

Pelita Jaya is representing Indonesia for the second time in the Asian Club Cup championship, having lost the 1989 final to defending champions Liaoning provincial team of China.

Their 26-member squad, which arrived July 16, is headed by Rahim Sukasah, the team manager. There are 18 players, seven officials and a journalist.



RULY NERE

Based in the capital Jakarta, the club boasts seven national team players who have represented their country in the last South East Asian Federation (SEA) Games. The club has also taken part in several regional meets, including the inter-city football tournament held in the Malaysian capital Kuala Lumpur.

Last year and the year before Pelita Jaya won the semi-professional Indonesian league championship.

For Rully Nere, one of the more experienced players in the squad, it's his second trip to Dhaka, having earlier played in the President Gold Cup tournament for in 1985.

Benny Dolo is the coach with Mundari Karya as his assistant.

Donny Latuperissa, Listyanto Rahaarjo and Harry Susanto are the three goalkeepers in the side.

Pelita Jaya are grouped together in Group A with Liaoning FC and as Rahim Sukasah said on arrival at the airport, his boys will try their best to take sweet revenge over their Chinese conquerors of two years ago.

He also said that the standard of Indonesian football had improved markedly compared to two years ago.

## Esteghlal, the team to beat

Sports Reporter

Esteghlal Club are the Iranian representatives in the Asian Club Cup soccer championship.

There is the largest contingent among the seven participating teams comprising 27 members of whom 22 are players. The team reached Dhaka Wednesday, a day ahead of the original flight schedule, determined to win the championship.

Iran are the Asian Games soccer champions and seven of that gold winning combination that beat North Korea in the Beijing Games final last October, are members of the Esteghlal Club side. There are four other players who play for the national second eleven.

So, at least on paper, Esteghlal, which means independence, looks like the team to beat, along with defending champions Liaoning FC of China.

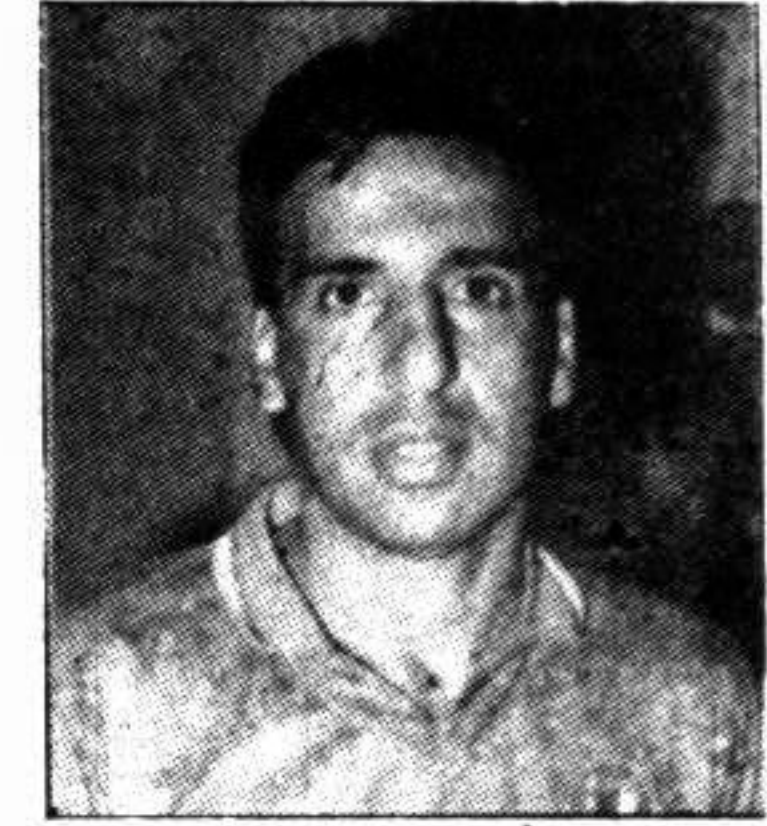
More than 35 years old, Esteghlal is the legal successor to the former Taj Club which ruled the roost in Iranian soccer until the downfall of Reza Shah Pahlavi in February 1979.

Esteghlal Club are the reigning champions in every league and tournament in Iran for the past two years. In 1989 they made their first trip to the subcontinent when they won the prestigious DCM Trophy in Delhi beating Dhaka Mohammedan Sporting in the semifinals. The same year they clashed with Dhaka Mohammedans, only to beat them in the final of the Bordoloi Gold Cup in Guwahati, Assam. Once again the teams find their paths crossing by be-

ing placed in the same group of the 10th Asian Club Cup.

Esteghlal and Mohammedans also have some things in common. One of the key players in the present Esteghlal party — Golam Reza Nalzegar — has donned the famous black-and-white Mohammedan jersey for a few years in the late eighties and played a vital part in the successes of the local giants, along with several other Iranians.

Besides, Mohammedan



SHAHIN BAYANI

coach Nasser Hegazi, who due to reach Dhaka yesterday to take charge of the squad before the start of the meet, was a former player of the Taj Club.

Team leader Aliyari told newsmen at a briefing yesterday morning that his team was confident of winning the championship.

For the record, the then Taj Club won the Asian Cup championship in 1970, the year in which Iran had represented Asia in the Mexico World Cup and they placed third the following year.

## Football feast

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amount from gate receipts, TV rights fees, souvenir, ground publicity and donations. However, with Dhaka Mohammedans demanding an appearance fee in order to tide over its financial crisis and the BFF agreeing to concede to the demand to a certain extent, and the non-participation of Al-Ramatha is now likely to alter the original calculations.

At a press conference on the eve of the meet yesterday evening, attended by BFF chief Siddiqur Rahman, general secretary Harunur Rashid, AFC Secretary Peter Velappan, tournament disciplinary committee chairman AR Khaleel of India, referees' in-charge Rustom Baker of Qatar and AFC representative N Chandran of Malaysia, as well as other concerned BFF and tournament officials, it was disclosed that efforts would be made to involve both the Asian and African champions to play in the World Cup Cup champions, known as the Toyota Cup, which is held annually in Japan between the European and Latin American champions.

Peter Velappan expressed the AFC's gratitude to the BFF for accepting the responsibility of hosting the meet at such short notice and also despite the recent calamitous cyclone of April 29.

He promised the ardent soccer fans of Dhaka a feast of quality football over the next few days.

Bangladesh Television and Radio Bangladesh will cover all the matches live from the Dhaka Stadium. BITV is paying BFF Taka 50,000 per match as royalty.

### দশম এশিয়ান ক্লাব কাপ ফুটবল চ্যাম্পিয়ানশীপ

এখনো শেখবে

সময়মত ঋণ পরিশোধ করে ব্যাংকের ঋণদান কর্মসূচীকে অব্যাহত রাখতে সহায়তা করুন



- ব্যাংক পছন্দ জনমানের আদানতই হচ্ছে যে কোন ব্যাংক ঋণের উৎস।
- অনাদায়ী ঋণ ব্যাংকের সম্পদ পরিস্থিতির উপর বিরূপ প্রতিক্রিয়ার সৃষ্টি করে এবং এর ফলশ্রুতিতে ব্যাংকের নতুন ঋণদান কার্যক্রম ব্যাহত হয়।
- সময়মত ঋণ পরিশোধ করলে ঋণ গ্রহীতাকে পুনরায় ঋণ প্রদান সহ নতুন প্রকল্পে ঋণ প্রদানে ব্যাংক উৎসাহিত হয়।
- সময়মত ঋণ পরিশোধ না করলে অপরিশোধিত ঋণের উপর দণ্ড সুদ সহ নানাবিধ জরিমানা প্রদান করতে হয়।
- দেশের আর্থ-সামাজিক ব্যবস্থার সার্বিক উন্নয়নে ব্যাংকিং কর্মকাণ্ডকে আরও অর্ধবহ ও যুগোপযোগী করার প্রয়োজনে সময়মত ঋণ পরিশোধ করে ব্যাংকের ঋণদান কর্মসূচীকে অব্যাহত রাখতে সহায়তা করুন।



দেশের অর্থনৈতিক কর্মকাণ্ডে ব্যাংকের অবদান নিশ্চিত করুন

রূপালী ব্যাংক লিমিটেড  
উত্তম সেবার নিশ্চয়তা

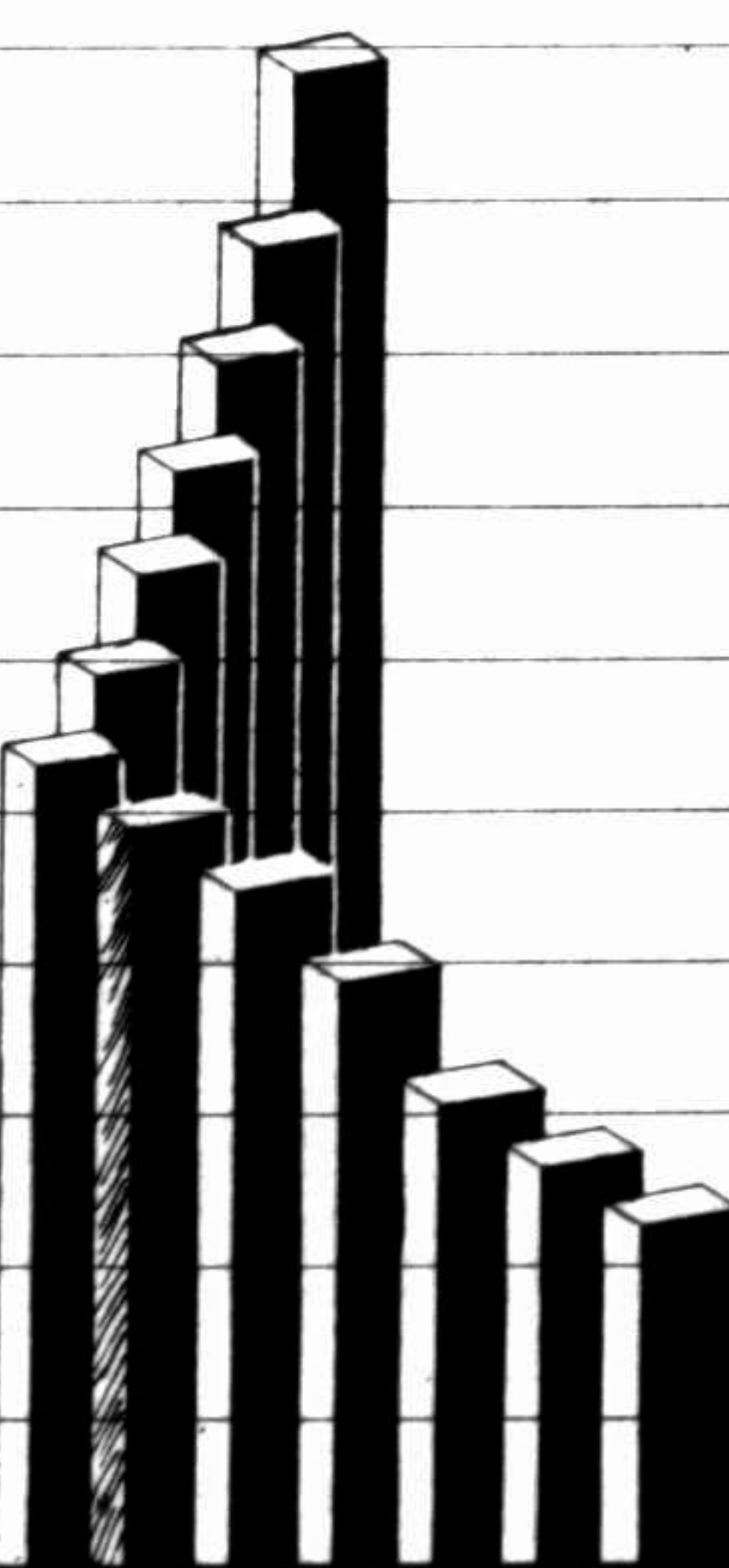
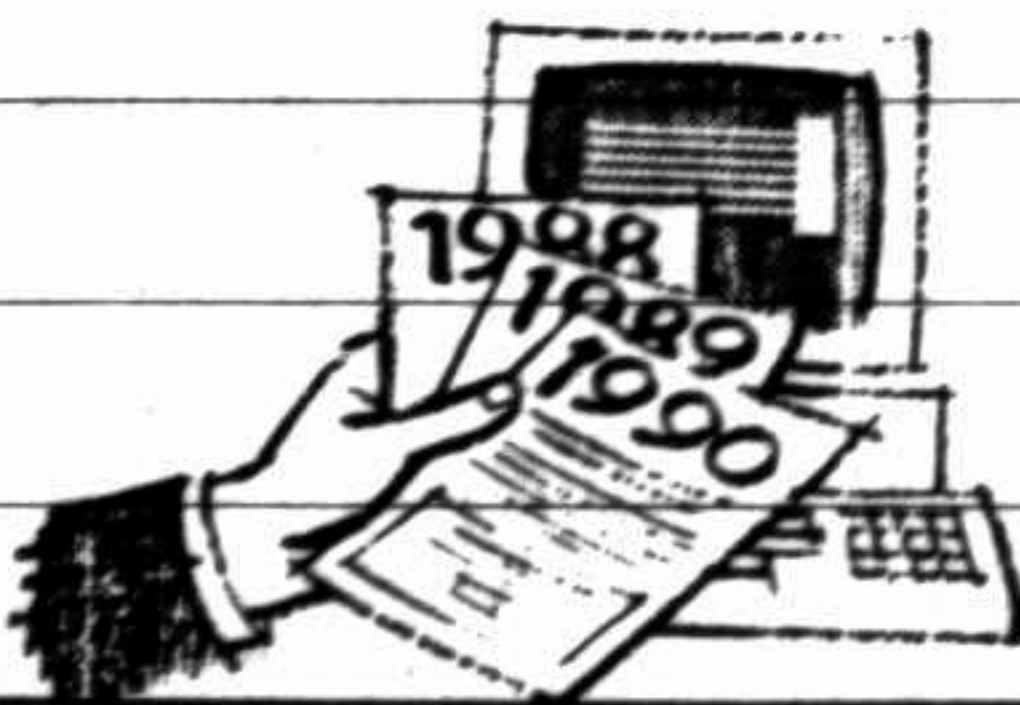
Every year there are some achievements

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### RATES OF TICKETS

Galleries (Daily)

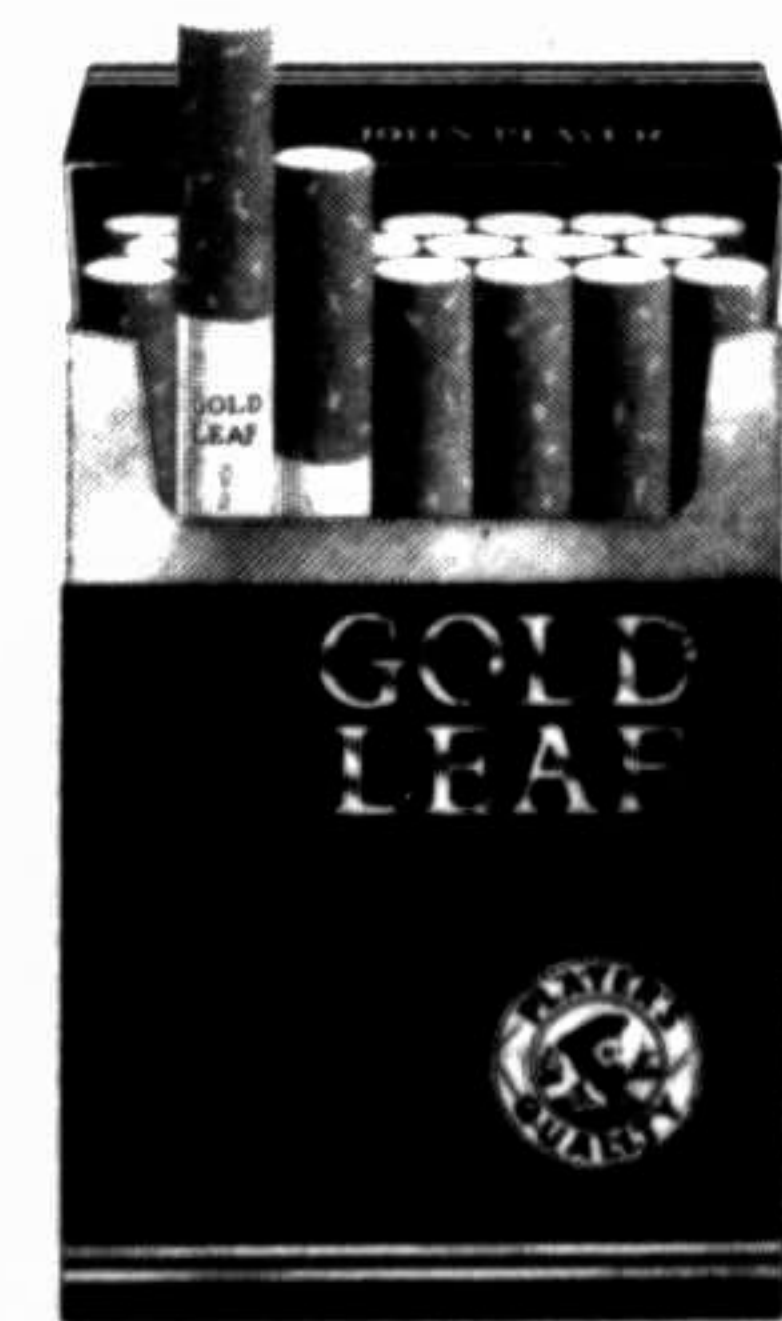
Robin League — (two matches daily) — Taka 20 : Semifinals (one match daily) — Taka 20 : Final (and third place decider) — Taka 25  
Season tickets  
VIP (Gate No-1) — Taka 400; Taka 350 (for club officials) : VIP (Gate No-2) — Taka 300; Taka 250 (for club officials)  
VIP (Gate No-3/A) — Taka 250; Taka 200 (for club officials) : VIP (Gate No-3/B) — Taka 200; Taka 150 (for club officials) : Gate No-21 — Taka 100 (for players) : Galleries — Taka 100 : VIP 3/A — Taka 150 (for former players); Hawkers — Taka 250

The next step was to send out applications for the research fellowship. And believe me it took some doing.

Hunting for addresses.

Electric-typing each application. Photocopying all the certificates. And stamps, stamps, stamps. Posted each envelope personally. Settled down to a long wait. The postman became Man of the Year. But every evening found an empty mailbox. Until a moment ago. "It's Harvard, no less!" I think I deserve a Gold Leaf now.

If you don't deserve it, who does?



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