

KB Rai memorial cricket kicks off today

Sports Reporter

The second KB Rai Choudhury memorial under-13 cricket tournament, organised by Kalabagan Krira Chakra and sponsored by Square Toiletries Limited, will get underway at Kalabagan this morning.

A total of 40 teams, including Shiliguri Agragami Sangha from West Bengal and three other teams from outside Dhaka, will take part in the tournament which will be held in three categories - Masters, Cup and Plate.

State Minister for Youth, Sports and Cultural Affairs Obaidul Quader will inaugurate the competition at 9.30am while Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) president Saber Hossain Chowdhury will also be present on the occasion.

A press conference was held at the BCB conference room yesterday evening. Former national cricketer and son of late KB Rai Choudhury - Dipu Rai Choudhury and his sister Ratna Sen, Kalabagan KC general secretary Alam Chowdhury were present at the briefing.

Sindh Governor Cup Double delight for Biman shuttlers

Bangladesh Biman won the women's doubles and mixed doubles titles of the Sindh Governor Cup international badminton tournament held at the Creek Club in Karachi on February 22-27, reports UNB.

The Bangladeshi national airlines team won titles of two events out of five.

Teams from hosts Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh took part in the six-day meet.

Rashel Kabir, Khurshed Alam, Mahbubur Rab, Konika Rani Adhikary and Ayesha Khatun played for Bangladesh Biman.

The Governor of Sindh Lt Gen (Retd) Moinuddin Haider was the chief guest at the closing function and distributed prizes among the winners on February 27.

JPC badminton Singles final today

The single final of the Jatiya Press Club (JPC) badminton tournament will be held today at 6 pm, reports BSS.

BD Mukherjee will take on Bakht Rana.

Mukherjee and Rana reached the final beating Mahmud Hossain Khan Dusal and Lutfur Rahman Binu in the semi-finals.

The third place play-off between Dusal and Binu will be held before.

Earlier, Mukherjee and Showkat Mahmud became champions in the doubles beating Rana and Binu in the final.

Golam Mohiuddin Khan and Shamsuddin Ahmed Charu finished third.

Graf, Huber team up for Fed Cup

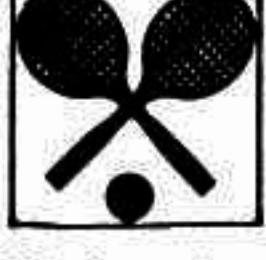
BONN, Mar 4: Germany will have their strongest team available for next month's Fed Cup World Group II tie with Japan when Steffi Graf and Anke Huber team up for the first time in almost three years, reports Xinhua.

Graf had announced her return into the team last week, and Huber also said on Tuesday: "I always like playing Fed Cup and I am looking forward to playing again." He also said: "It is our goal to return into the World Group."

This time around they said to return into the elite world group. For that they need victory over Japan in Hamburg April 24-25, and another against a first-round loser from the World Group later in the year.

Graf and Huber lifted Germany to the 1992 title in Frankfurt. Their match 4-1 in Poertschach, Austria.

Agassi going great guns



SCOTTSDALE, Arizona, Mar 4: Andre Agassi brushed Mariano Zabaleta of Argentina aside Wednesday night, winning 6-2, 6-0 to advance to the quarterfinals of the Franklin Templeton Tennis Classic for the fourth time, reports AP.

The first three times the mercurial star reached the quarterfinals in Scottsdale (1993, 1994, 1998), he went on to win.

Agassi, seeded third and ranked ninth in the world, faces a more difficult test Friday against No. 6 Cedric Pioline. The Frenchman, ranked 20th on the ATP Tour computer, beat Andrew Lle of Australia 6-1, 6-2.

Agassi overpowered Zabaleta with speed and shotmaking.

He beat Zabaleta twice in the first set and three times in the second, and won the last service point in style with a forehand that just caught the far baseline.

Agassi struggled to beat left-hander Fernando Meligeni in three sets the night before.

"I was a little unsettled. Then today I got in a nice groove with my backhand across the court and my backhand up the line," he said.

Earlier, qualifier Lleyton Hewitt defeated two-time US Open champion Patrick Rafter 6-7 (7-5), 6-1 for the second time in less than two months.

The 18-year-old Australian beat his country's best player in the first round in Sydney, Australia, on Jan. 13, then repeated the shocker in the second round at Scottsdale.

Hewitt, reaching his third quarterfinal this season, next will play Jerome Gilard of France, who was trailing 5-3 in the first set when Nicolas Lapentti of Ecuador sprained his ankle and retired.

Hewitt beat Agassi last year in Adelaide on the way to his only ATP Tour title. At the time, he was still working as an "orange boy" for Rafter — shagging equipment and towels for the Aussie star during Davis Cup matches and serving as his practice partner.

Wednesday's victory over Rafter validated January's win. "I know his game pretty well, but he knows mine pretty well, too," said Hewitt, who improved to 9-3 in 1998 matches and dropped Rafter to 4-4.

The Agassi win was huge, but to beat the No. 1 guy in your country when he's in the top five, and do it twice is great," said Hewitt, the youngest pro in the top 100 (91st). "The first time could be a little bit of a

shock, but to do it twice and win like this is just fantastic."

Rafter, No. 2 in Scottsdale and the world's fifth-ranked player, acknowledged that his game suffered from not having competed since the Australian Open in January.

"I'm playing about 60 per cent," Rafter said. "I'm playing nowhere near as well as I can especially on these (hard) courts. In Sydney, I'd just come off not playing very much either. But Lleyton is playing very well. He's playing a lot better than what he's ranked."

Rafter showed flashes of the brilliance that earned him his two Grand Slam tournament titles at Flushing Meadows in 1997 and last year. But Hewitt's quickness and tenacity seemed to unnerve him.

Rafter broke service first to go ahead 5-3 in the first set, but Hewitt broke right back when Rafter double-faulted twice in the next game. Hewitt held service twice to force the tiebreaker, which he won when Rafter smashed a forehand wide.

Hewitt broke Rafter in the fourth game of the second set — scoring three crucial points with down-the-line passing shots after charging the net to pick up drop volleys — and again in the sixth.

Several cyclists battle for position behind a pacer before a final free-for-all sprint. There are 4,300 registered Keirin racers.

Of 50 Keirin velodromes in Japan, two are all-weather multi-purpose stadiums like Green dome. They raked in 1,470 billion yen (12 billion dollars) last year despite the country's worst post-war recession.

Green dome was built in 1990 to celebrate the centenary of Maebashi, a centre of the dwindling silk industry, some 100 kilometres (60 miles) north of Tokyo.

The dome was used to host the 1990 World Cycling Championships and is also used for an annual indoor athletic meeting.

In Saudi Arabia, where women are not allowed to drive a car and must appear in public with their hair covered, the only sport available to them is in gyms where men are strictly banned.

Bahrain and the UAE have women's teams in table tennis, but they have rarely have anyone to compete against.

"I'm not in favour of competitive sports especially disciplines which call for indecent attire," admitted Latifa Rashed, a nutrition specialist at a Sharjah hospital.

But she conceded that physical exercise of some sort was a must for all, including women.

"If women realise the dangers of obesity, they will do sport even at home," she told the Al-Khaleej newspaper in January, when it carried out a rare survey into women's sport.

"Chess is the best sport for UAE women — it is compatible with tradition," said Jawaher Al-Jasmi, a chess referee.

Many UAE women who want to stay trim join a health club, where they can exercise in private.

UAE women who cannot afford a club membership can be seen jogging on the sea-front at nightfall.

With their trackuits covered in the abaya, a black robe,

thousands, no local women competed.

Local organisers hope the tournament will in future also bring teams from Saudi Arabia and Qatar.

In May 1998, Qatar scored its own first when some 50 women took part along with men in an international athletics meeting which attracted a crowd of

Jamaica hold Bolivia

GUATEMALA CITY, Mar 4: A surprisingly strong Jamaican team held tournament favorite Bolivia to a scoreless Wednesday in the first Copa de la Paz, reports AP.

Bolivia couldn't overcome the tight defense of Jamaica, which played with consistency and energy.

Rafi memorial cricket

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Former captain of Bangladesh national cricket team, Shafiqul Huq Hira, will inaugurate the tournament as the chief guest.

Prathyasha Club will face Suprabhat Club in the inaugural match.

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