

Singer chess

SPORTS REPORTER

The second round of the preliminary phase Singer 30th National Chess Championship completed yesterday with 19 players were sharing the lead securing maximum points at the NSC.

They are: FM Shakil, Chanchal, Pollab, FM Amin, Lavlu, Maleq, Parag, Reza, Debaraj, Javed, Sohel, Anwar, Enayet, Nazrul, Mithu, Monir Khan, Sawpan, Naser and Bishwajit.

In this round Shakil beat Siraj, Chanchal beat Farhad, Pollab beat Main, Amin beat Apel, Lavlu beat Mahmud, Maleq beat Shamsu, Parag beat Anis, Debaraj beat Zahid, Reza beat Bisnu, Javed beat Moni, Naser beat Lipon, Sohel beat Ali, Mithu beat Rokon, Anwar beat Aslam, Enayet beat Tapu, Delu beat Janu, Monir beat Padma and Sawpan beat Emam.

StanChart school cricket

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

Donavan High School earned an exciting one-run victory over Jainkathi High School in the inaugural match of the Standard Chartered 22nd National School Cricket Championship at the local stadium yesterday.

Batting first Donavan made 88 runs. Lokman captured five wickets without conceding any run.

In reply, Jainkathi were bundled out for 87 runs.

Lokman was adjudged man-of-the-match.

Peace returns

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He failed to cleanly head in an Alfaz cross from a vantage position.

Badda, who are struggling at the bottom of the table with four points, had their lone share of opportunity in the 20th minute when Moloy fired a sudden thunderous shot. But Brothers and second choice national custodian Biplob brilliantly fisted the ball away from corner.

Yellow card: Iqbal (Brothers)

TEAMS

BROTHERS UNION: Biplob, Nazrul, Sujon, Titu, Liton, Iqbal, Monwar, Okelo (Abul), Arman (Rikta), Alfaz and Victor.

BADDA JAGORANI: Al-Amin, Hafiz, Sumon, Nazir, Arup, Benu, Jahid (Tapu), Belal, Moloy, Johnny (Milon), and Pikul (Sabuj).

Referee: R Alam.

MSC apply

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reacting.

Mohammedan captain Jewel Rana also refuted the allegation that he rushed to sideline to assault assistant referee.

"I just appealed to him to cancel the goal."

Manager Amirul Isam Babu also countered the allegation that he became incensed on Thursday night. Vice-president Aminul Haq Moni and assistant general secretary Alamgir Iqbal also spoke on the occasion.

Mixed day

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No results of the girls' singles matches were available when this report was being filed.

The International Tennis Federation approved Group 3 meet features 178 players including 67 girls.

Besides the singles events the boys' and girls' doubles will be contested during the week-long competition at the Ramna National Tennis Complex.

Michael Leon of the Solomon Islands and India's Madura Ranganathan are the respective top seeds and earned a direct entry in the main draw.

Venus very serious

Australian Open

REUTERS, Melbourne

Venus Williams did not waver for a second when asked if she was ready for next week's Australian Open.

"Yes," she said after sauntering into Melbourne Park following a six-month absence through injury looking as though she did not have a care in the world.

After an early morning practice with her male hitting partner Mark Hlawaty, the 23-year-old spoke about her spell on the sidelines.

"Oh, you know... just letting it happen," she giggled.

Wearing a white vest top and with her long hair around her shoulders, the four-times Grand Slam champion looked for all the

world like a carefree tourist down under.

She smiled and laughed as she answered questions from the media.

Well might she laugh. Even after a six-month break from the courts - she has not played a tournament since the Wimbledon final last July -- Venus is still considered a favourite to win her maiden Australian Open crown when the Grand Slam kicks off on Monday.

As at Wimbledon, Venus was runner-up to her youngest sister Serena here last year. She plans to go one better this time round.

The abdominal injury that ruined her season is now a thing of the past, Venus said: "I don't feel rusty at all -- I feel eager... I am bursting with energy.

"I started feeling ready to go about last November or early

December.

"I didn't like being away from the game, I don't like having to accept things... I am a person who usually makes things happen so I didn't like that at all.

However, once she had accepted she must rest the woman with two Wimbledon crowns and two US Open titles decided to make the most of it.

"I just took it easy, you know. Actually I was having a lot of fun. I was busier than ever.

"Then one day I looked at my tennis bag and I hadn't picked it up for months. So just putting it over my shoulder was real fun."

With a kind draw and injured second seed Kim Clijsters in her half of the draw, if third seed Venus lives up to her promise she will be having a lot more fun over the next two weeks.

record fourth-wicket partnership of 157 off 158 balls.

New Zealand were always on track for a big total after winning the toss and batting first on a surprisingly good stadium pitch.

SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard of the last five one-day matches between New Zealand and Pakistan in Wellington on Saturday:

NEW ZEALAND				
Cunningham Sami	31			
Fleming c Malik b Sami	16			
Marshall run out (Farhat/Sami)	84			
Styris c Moir b Mahmood	10			
McMillan c Shabbir b Mahmood	81			
Cairns run out	36			
McCullum b Akhtar	9			
Adams b Akhtar	5			
Oram not out	18			
Vettori not out	0			
Extras: (lb-3, w-1, nb-13)	17			
Total: (For 8 wickets in 50 overs)	307			
Fall of wickets: 1-47, 2-57, 3-73, 4-230, 5-244, 6-284, 7-288, 8-291				
Did not bat: Mills				
Bowler				
Akhtar	10	1	46	2
Shabbir	10	0	63	0
Sami	10	0	73	2
Mahmood	6	0	38	2
Malik	10	0	55	0

Azlan Shah Cup final today

AFP, Kuala Lumpur

Defending champions and favourites Pakistan know they are in for a tough final against Australia in the Azlan Shah Cup here Sunday and are likely to opt for calculated play, avoiding defence-exposing risks.

"The final is going to be tough as the Australians are peaking at the right moment," said coach Dutchman Roelant Oltmans, who has helped the Pakistanis to a recent revival of fortunes.

"The Aussies are strong mentally and my team will have to bide for the right moment to strike."

Australia held Pakistan to a 2-2 draw in the preliminary round match Thursday, when Pakistan had already booked their spot in the final.

Australian assistant coach Colin Batch said his team were ready for a good fight.

"The Pakistanis start off as the favourites in the final but we aim to make it tough for them," he said.

The Azlan Shah Cup has been held 13 times, but the two teams have only met six times, with the Australians winning four of the clashes and one match ending in a draw.

Pakistan have won the trophy three times, in 2003, 2000 and 1999. Australia won the inaugural tournament in 1983 and also in 1998, when they went on to win the Commonwealth Games gold medal.

India wait on Agarkar

BBC ONLINE, undated

Having drawn the Test series, India are looking to beat Australia for the first time in the one-day leg of their tour.

The two sides are clear favourites to reach the Victoria Bitter Series final with Zimbabwe having lost all three matches so far.

But India need to raise their game in Brisbane on Sunday after losing by 18 runs when they last met Australia in the opening match of the triangular competition.

They will not finalise their team until all-rounder Ajit Agarkar has undergone a check on a calf muscle problem.

If he is ruled out, Amit Bhandari would join Lakshmiapathy Balaji and Irfan Pathan in a seam attack with plenty of enthusiasm but desperately short of experience.

Bhandari was discarded after taking 2-75 against Pakistan in June 2000 in his debut one-day appearance, but has earned a recall after some impressive displays for India A.

TEAMS

AUSTRALIA (from): Adam Gilchrist, Matthew Hayden, Damien Martyn, Ricky Ponting, Andrew Symonds, Michael Clarke, Michael Bevan, Brad Hogg, Brett Lee, Jason Gillespie, Brad Williams, Andrew Bichel, Ian Harvey.

INDIA (from): Sachin Tendulkar, Virender Sehwag, Sourav Ganguly, VVS Laxman, Rahul Dravid, Hemang Badani, Vijay Singh, Ajit Agarkar, Anil Kumble, Lakshmiapathy Balaji, Irfan Pathan, Amit Bhandari.

Unimpressive

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while chasing such a paltry target.

They reached 91 in 21.4overs with Habibul Bashar making team highest 27 off 38 balls.

Right-arm pacer Talha Jubair, vice-captain of the Bangladesh Under-19 team for the upcoming ICC U-19 World Cup, captured two wickets conceding 18 runs in 6 overs.

The seniors also won their first practice match against the same opponents by 117 runs at the Bangabandhu National Stadium where they play another limited-overs practice match tomorrow.

SCORES IN BRIEF

BANGLADESH UNDER-19: 90 all out in 33.2 overs (Nayem 21, Dhiman 10, Aftab 14, Nazimuddin 10, Nadif 0, Ashiqur 6, Abul Bashar 2, Rubaiyet 4, Talha 1, Enamul Jr 6, Nazmul 0 not out; Mahmud 2-18, Rana 5-13, Rafique 3-10)

BANGLADESH NATIONAL TEAM: 91 for 4 in 21.4 overs (Hannan 20, Shahriar 1, Bashar 27, Rajin 12 not out, Ashraf 0, Kapali 15 not out; Rubaiyet 1-20, Talha 2-18, Enamul Jr 1-20)

Gibbs' narrow

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South Africa and the West Indies at Centurion Park on Saturday:

SOUTH AFRICA: First innings (overnight 302-1)

Smith c Jacobs b Collymore	139
Gibbs c Ganga b Sarwan	192
Rudolph b Edwards	37
Kallis not out	77
Kirsten c and b Sarwan	10
McKenzie not out	31
Extras: (b-1, lb-15, nb-9, w-6)	31
Total: (For 4 wickets in 136 overs)	517
Fall of wickets: 1-301, 2-373, 3-422, 4-446	

To bat: Boucher, Pollock, Hall, Ntini, Nel

Bowler				
Dillon	24	5	90	0
Edwards	20	2	100	1
Drakes	33	5	101	0
Collymore	26	5	91	1
Gayle	7	0	39	0
Sarwan	14	0	55	2
Smith	3	0	9	0
Ganga	9	0	16	0

WEST INDIES: Lara, Gayle, Ganga, Sarwan, Chanderpaul, Smith, Jacobs, Drakes, Dillon, Collymore, Edwards.

Ferdinand vows to fight



Football

REUTERS, London

Manchester United defender Rio Ferdinand is to appeal against his eight-month ban for missing a drugs test but will start his suspension on January 20, according to his team.

The 25-year-old England centre back received his ban in December and was fined 50,000 pounds for failing to undergo a drugs test at United's Carrington training ground on September 23.

If his appeal fails Ferdinand will miss the rest of the United's season and England's Euro 2004 campaign.

"Whilst Rio Ferdinand accepts that he missed an unannounced drugs test, and publicly apologises for that, he continues to maintain that he did not miss the test deliberately and that he did not have any reason to avoid it," United said on their website.

Ferdinand said: "I would like to apologise for my oversight in missing my drugs test.

"I do feel strongly that I have given an honest account of the circumstances which led to my mistake and I believe that the verdict and the ban are wrong.

"I want to get back playing for Manchester United and England as soon as possible and if starting the suspension now will help, then I am prepared to suffer it."

Ferdinand's ban was originally due to start on January 12 but the

deadline for him to decide whether he wished to appeal was later extended until January 19.

United's lawyers have been preparing a 30-page appeal document which they said they would submit to the Football Association on Monday.

United had described the punishment handed out by an independent commission as "savage" but chief executive David Gill struck a more conciliatory tone on Friday.

"There are lessons to be learned



RIO FERDINAND

for all of us from this episode," Gill said on the website.

"Rio recognises that he has made a serious mistake, which is why he will begin the suspension immediately rather than wait for the outcome of the appeals procedure.

Blatter in tight spot!



Football

REUTERS, London

FIFA President Sepp Blatter drew condemnation from women's sports figures on Friday for saying the future of women's football could rest with tighter shorts.

Blatter's remarks, printed on Sunday by Swiss newspaper Sonntagsblick, were translated by British broadsheet the Guardian on Friday.

"Come on, let's get women to play in different and more feminine garb than the men," Blatter told Sonntagsblick in an interview.

Asked if he meant short skirts, Blatter said: "No, but in tighter shorts for example. In volleyball women wear different clothes from the men.

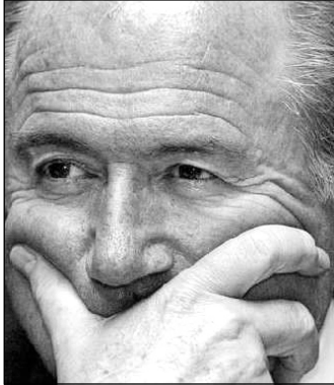
"Beautiful women play football nowadays, excuse me for saying so," he added.

Blatter said women already played with a lighter ball, making the game more feminine. "Why not in fashion?" he asked.

Helen Donohue of the Women's Sports Foundation said: "This (comment) from the most powerful man in football --

it's belittling and an awful shame.

"In the past, he's been quoted as saying 'the future is female' and he's been a great supporter of



SEPP BLATTER

the game.

"Hopefully, he'll be more than embarrassed."

England goalkeeper Pauline Cope told the Guardian: "He doesn't know what he is talking about," adding that women did not play with a lighter ball.

"It's completely irresponsible for a man in a powerful position to make comments like this."

Fulham manager Marieanne Spacey told the newspaper:

"However, after studying the detailed verdict from the commission, we are convinced the player has a strong case to challenge both the verdict and the ban given the player's full explanation to the commission of the circumstances surrounding his failure to take the drugs test.

"We recognise our own responsibilities in this matter and our important role in fighting the abuse of drugs, in football and society at large."

Ferdinand passed a doping test 36 hours after he should have taken the original one.

The FA ruled him out of England's final Euro 2004 qualifier in Turkey on October 11 after his missed test, but allowed him to keep playing for United, a decision criticised by FIFA president Sepp Blatter.

The world's most expensive defender, Ferdinand became a "cause celebre" in domestic and international football, while the FA was widely criticised for its handling of the affair.

Ferdinand's exclusion from the decisive game in Istanbul prompted threats of an unprecedented strike by his England team mates.

Without him England secured the draw they needed to qualify for Euro 2004 but Ferdinand would be sorely missed by manager Sven-Goran Eriksson in Portugal in June, and by United, who are top of the premier league and through to the second round of the Champions League.

A date for the appeal hearing has yet to be set.

"Surely it's about skill and tactical ability first and how people look second."

But FIFA spokesman Andreas Herren said the translated remarks did not capture the spirit of the original interview.

Herren said Blatter had talked about the need for women's football to attract different sponsors, possibly from the fashion and cosmetics industries, rather than depend on sponsors from the men's game.

Donohue said it was a shame that it took controversy to put women's football -- which FIFA estimates is played by 30 million worldwide -- on sports pages.

"Within the next ten years, on a global basis you'll see as many women playing football as men," Donohue said.

"That's what we want to talk about... about the technical ability and about the development of it in this country, not how tight the shorts are."

"(But) we do respect the fact that it's a commercial game. Whether you're David Beckham or Marieanne Spacey, we're not naive enough to think that it's not a factor as the game develops."

ICC-B conference calls

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Friendship Conference Centre at Sher-e-Bangla Nagar. World Trade Organization (WTO) Director General Supachai Panitchpakdi and European Union (EU) Commissioner for Trade Pascal Lamy also spoke at the session.

Khaleda said, "Globalisation does hold out promise, but with contrasts. It represents prosperity for the fortunate few, and despair for millions."

"While the world is witnessing an unprecedented wave of progress, millions are mired in extreme poverty. Today, global economic governance is generating inequitable outcomes," she told the conference.

In his keynote Thaksin Shinawatra said developing countries need to prepare for a world that is becoming ever more fiercely competitive, a world where they have to depend on themselves and on one another, a world where they need to take charge of their own destinies, individually and together.

"We are now entering a world where corporate growth may not contribute to employment but may actually come at the expense of employment. The West therefore has to come up with a new economic model to extricate itself from this dilemma," the Thai premier observed.

He said, sticking to the old East Asian economic model is fine for giants such as China and India, but smaller Asian countries such as Bangladesh and Thailand 'need to carve out their own unique niches in

the global economy.'

Shinawatra said Thailand believes that an Asian bond market within the framework of Asian Cooperation Dialogue (ACD) would be a new regional financial architecture that would help mitigate the adverse effects of global financial volatility.

He also lauded Grameen Bank's role in micro-credit sector, commenting that it is one of the few institutions in Asia which contributed to women empowerment by providing micro-credit.

Pascal Lamy said the multilateral route is not always the easy one and sometimes may have disastrous consequences as the war in Iraq or continued global warming testifies to. "I do not have any ready-made answer on how to govern our global village better. Suffice it to say that the world needs governance and, in case of trade, we have already covered a long way."

There is no magic formula for trade and development, the EU commissioner noted, adding trade policy is no longer the preserve of a small group of rich countries. The developing countries too now make their voices heard in international negotiations and they use this opportunity actively to defend their interests.

The WTO director general said in spite of great achievements there seems to be a worrying lack of urgency about the need to drive the multilateral trading system forward -- to make it more relevant to today's market realities and to extend its benefits

around the world.

Only multilateral negotiations can ensure that poor and vulnerable countries are not left out in the cold, Panichpakdi said. "We need a successful Doha Development Agenda for the greater prosperity of mankind."

In the opening session, UN ESCAP Executive Director Kim Hak-Su read out a message sent by UN Secretary General Kofi A. Annan.

The message said, "For many other people, especially in poor countries, the threats that really destabilise lives are quite different: civil wars fought with conventional, even low-tech, weapons; poverty, AIDS and environmental degradation; and a trading system that seems to deny them a fair chance to compete."

Speaking at the conference, Commerce Minister Amir Khosru Mahmud Choudhury said developed countries have been enjoying many benefits for many years, which the least developed countries (LDCs) are seeking now. "Removal of trade barriers alone will not generate growth. Rather, the LDCs should be given preferential market access for enabling them to compete with the developed countries."

Foreign Minister M. Morshed Khan, ICC Chairman Jean-Rene Fourtoun and Secretary General Maria Livanos Cattui, ICC-B President Mahbubur Rahman and Vice-President Latifur Rahman also spoke on the occasion.

Podium of protest

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will observe a token hunger strike till the arrival of Prime Minister Khaleda Zia and Leader of the Opposition Sheikh Hasina to make the commitments publicly.

Leaders of different political parties, trade unions, socio-cultural organisations, Khulna Press Club, Khulna Union of Journalists and Metropolitan Union of Journalists also appealed to the two leaders to join the token hunger strikes.

They urged people to uphold the spirit of the Pratibad Mancha.

Reports received in Dhaka from different areas of the country said all sections of people, including journalists, political activists, professionals, teachers and students, continued to condemn and protest the brutal killing of Manik Saha and demand exemplary punishment to the killers.

Rallies were held and processions were brought at different places yesterday to press the demand.

In Khulna, 22 judges and magistrates stood in silence for one minute in their courts yesterday in memory of the slain journalist.

Journalists in Chittagong at a rally demanded immediate resignation of Home Minister Altaf Hossain Chowdhury for 'failure' to ensure security to journalists as well as other people.

Chittagong Press Club and Chittagong Union of Journalists

jointly organised the rally.

They announced a three-day protest programme from yesterday.

Rajshahi journalists yesterday started a two-day programme protesting the murder of Manik.

Black flags were hoisted atop local newspaper offices and the press club, discussion meetings and rallies were held demanding immediate arrest of the killers.

Moreover, 89 teachers of Rajshahi University in a joint statement condemned the killing of the journalists and demanded stern action against the killers.

In Satkhira, journalists enforced a half-day hartal yesterday.

Bogra Union of Journalists brought out a procession Friday afternoon and later held a rally in front of the local press club.

In the capital, Communist Party of Bangladesh brought out a procession and held a rally at Muktangan protesting the killing of Manik.

FUND FOR MANIK

The Khulna Press Club has taken up a fund raising programme to help the family of Manik Saha. It has opened an account -- Savings Account No. 3400456