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Rakib, Zia win on

SPORTS REPORTER

International Master (IM) Abdullah Al Rakib head the points table of the Bengal Peerless DIFE Rating Chess competition after his sixth round win against Nasir in Kolkata yesterday.

Rakib now has 5.5 points in his six rounds while in other matches, Grand Master Ziaur Rahman and IM Enamul Hossain Rajib won their respective matches.

Zia is now on 5 points while Rajib and FIDE Master Sheikh Nasir Ahmed earned 4.5 points after six rounds of matches.

Akhtar flies out to SA

AFP, Islamabad

Paceman Shaheen Akhtar has been included in the Pakistan team against South Africa after fast bowler Umar Gul was injured ahead of the first test, officials said Monday.

Akhtar, 31, was originally left out of the 17-man party after selectors felt he lagged match fitness.

But he bowled 21 overs in a first-class match and took five wickets to earn his space in the team.

"Akhtar will fly out on the first available flight to South Africa as a back-up for fast bowler Gul, who was injured during a tour game," Pakistan Cricket Board spokesman Aamir Bilal told AFP.

The first of three tests between Pakistan and South Africa starts on Thursday.

Akhtar has not played for Pakistan since a one-day match against England four months ago. He was banned for two years, and fellow paceman Mohammad Asif for one year, in November after both tested positive for the banned steroid nandrolone in October.

However, a Pakistan Cricket Board appellate committee overturned the bans last month on the grounds that neither player took the banned substances knowingly.

The World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) has challenged the decision and the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS) said last week that it will likely rule on the appeal against the lifting of bans within four months.

Yousuf may miss two Tests

AFP, Lahore

Pakistan's record-breaking batsman Mohammad Yousuf is likely to miss the first two Tests against South Africa this month due to surgery scheduled for his pregnant wife, an official said Monday.

"Yousuf's wife has undergone some complications in her pregnancy and is due to undergo surgery on January 12," Pakistan Cricket Board director of communications, Ahsan Malik, told AFP.

Doctors have said the operation may be delayed until January 19.

"If the operation is held on January 12, he would fly to South Africa on the 14th, but if it happens on January 19 he will miss the second Test as well," Malik added.

Pakistan start the first Test against South Africa at Centurion from January 11, and Yousuf's absence will be a blow to a team already hit by injuries to fast bowler Umar Gul and all-rounder Shoaib Malik -- both suffering from ankle problems.

The second Test is scheduled for Port Elizabeth from January 19. The third Test starts in Cape Town from January 26.

Bowling coach Waqar Younis also refused to go on tour and resigned in protest over his appointment, which was only for the Tests and not for the five-match, one-day series which follows.

Yousuf, who created a world record for the most runs in a calendar year with 1,778 in 2006, was due to leave for South Africa before the first Test.

The 32-year-old, whose father died last month, has been the mainstay of Pakistan batting, having scored 6,402 runs in 73 Tests and 7,608 in 228 one-day internationals.

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