



5 DAYS
TO GO

Liam offered kidney to father

AFP, London

England paceman Liam Plunkett offered to put his promising international career in jeopardy by donating one of his kidneys to his sick father, the pair said Sunday.

But the 21-year-old Durham seamer's father, Alan, who suffers from a hereditary kidney disorder, turned him down, believing it would adversely affect his cricketing hopes.

The former chemical technician from Middlesbrough, north-east England, said the offer came after his health worsened and doctors said he needed either renal dialysis or a transplant.

Neither of his two brothers or sister were compatible as they all had the same condition, polycystic kidney disease.

"The only person in my family who could give me a kidney is Liam," the 49-year-old was quoted as saying by the weekly Sunday Sun regional newspaper in north-east England.

"As soon as he found out he offered me one straight away without any consideration whatsoever about his career. All he was worried about was me and my health and he simply said, 'take one of mine'."

"You could not do anything more for a parent but I said, 'thanks but no thanks'. It was an amazing thing to do but I could not accept because I'd be worried it would affect his cricket career."

"It could have set him back a long way but he was not concerned about that at all."

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Did U Know?

The first-ever Test match was played at the Melbourne Cricket Ground, between England and Australia, over March 15-19, 1877.



Tom Moody

(Sri Lanka cricket coach)

"I believe Sri Lanka has as good a chance as any other team to win this World Cup. We just have to knuckle down and take our chances and prove our worth."



B. League
Sheikh Russel KC v Ctg Mohammadan
(5:00 pm)
Venue: Bangabandhu National Stadium
National Cricket League
Day-3 (Four-Day)
Rajshahi v Barisal
Venue: Rajshahi Divisional Stadium
Chittagong v Khulna
Venue: Chittagong Divisional Stadium
Dhaka v Sylhet (Day-2)
Venue: Fatullah Cricket Stadium

NSC begins reform

SPORTS REPORTER

With a bid to reform the politicised sports bodies, the National Sports Council (NSC) has decided to abolish the executive committees of three divisional sports associations including Dhaka and 22 district sports associations (DSA).

The NSC was expected to dispatch the directive to the respective division and district administrators' offices from yesterday.

The axe would fall on the committees -- elected or ad-hoc -- which have already past their terms. The NSC will also ask the respective administrators to take steps to solve the committees fighting legal battles.

"Yes, we are sending directives to those associations whose terms have expired. There are elected bodies in the list that have been in seat long after their term. Also, ad-hoc committees that have failed to hold elections within the 90-day deadline, would be dissolved," NSC secretary Aminul Islam Khan told The Daily Star.

"We are also going to ask the respective administrators to solve the cases as soon as possible to make way for a new body," he said adding that the NSC will see that real sports organisers come to the party this time.

It was learned that the NSC is also looking forward to ban one person from being part of two major sports bodies. Currently, five DSA general secretaries are holding the

same position at national sports federations.

"I think it is difficult for a person to give equal attention to two bodies. Both organisations suffer as a process and it should be changed," opined Aminul.

It can be mentioned that Sports Adviser Tapan Chowdhury is instigating the reforms.

The DSA committees to be disbanded are Dhaka, Narayanganj, Comilla, Rangamati, Khagrachari, Sylhet, Habiganj, Bhola, Bogra (elected), Mymensingh, Narshingdi, Munshiganj, Bandarban, Sunamganj, Barisal and Sirajganj (ad-hoc). The DSAs facing legal battles are Netrokona, Madaripur, Jessore, Meherpur, Pirojpur and Rangpur.

The divisional sports association committees facing the wrath of NSC are Dhaka, Sylhet and Khulna.

With elections looming ahead at different sports federations, the move would play a big role in NSC's latest target to bring sports organisers to the fore instead of politically motivated insertions.

It would be a blow for the 'District and Divisional Sports Organisers Forum' and its self-proclaimed leader Golam Rasul Molla, the general secretary of Dhaka divisional sports association who will lose his councillorships.

It is an open secret that he was the mastermind behind the 'election engineering' during the sports federations polls during the BNP regime.

Molla, who was expelled from the Bangladesh Amateur Athletics

Federation following a sex-scandal with an athlete, came to the scene to take control of the so-called Forum after the death of sports organiser Zafar Imam.

Allegedly, he sold the 'stock votes' of Forum to contenders as well as making negotiations to become the executive committee members of the two most important federations in the country, the Bangladesh Football Federation of which he is a member, and the Bangladesh Cricket Board, of which he is a vice-president.

The NSC has yet to receive any 'go ahead' signal from the Law Ministry about holding elections at different sports federations although a press report suggests that the clearance has been given. It was learned that the NSC has not received any official letter on the issue.

The election of the Bangladesh Olympic Association is due for March 15 but it could now be held in April after the Law Ministry clearance. This will make way for elections at all the federations.

Meanwhile, the NSC has withdrawn its employees from the Ramna Tennis Complex 'players' training hostel'. They had been residing at the hostel illegally under the wings of an NSC director but the NSC resolved the problem after the Bangladesh Tennis Federation general secretary lodged an official complaint last week.



PHOTO: AFP

Indian superstar Sachin Tendulkar (R) plays keepy-uppy with his bat as teammate Sourav Ganguly looks on during a training session in Montego Bay on Sunday.

Imranul ton steers Willes

SPORTS REPORTER

Willes Little Flower School rode on Imranul's hundred to secure a massive 182-run victory over Mirpur Bangla High School in the Standard Chartered Young Tigers National School Cricket Tournament at the Jagannath University ground yesterday.

Imranul clobbered eight fours and as many sixes in his 120 as Willes piled up 312-7 in the stipulated 50 overs. Rezaul then picked up five wickets for 60 to wrap up the Mirpur innings for 130.

In the day's other matches, Lalmitia Housing Society School (123-5) earned a five-wicket victory against Uttara High School (122-10). Badda Alattunessa High School (205-10) defeated Tejgaon Govt High School (119-10) and Matuail Multilateral High School (149-7) beat Motijheel Govt Boys High School (148-10) by three wickets.

Gaibandha correspondent adds: Harisinga High School (160-10) beat Gaibandha High School (138-10) by 22 runs at the Gaibandha Stadium.

Zia atop among Bangladeshi players

SPORTS REPORTER

Grandmaster Ziaur Rahman drew his ninth round board against local International Master Girinath in the Kolkata Open Grandmaster Chess Tournament at the Gorky Sadan yesterday.

Zia improved his tally to 5.5 points while GM Niaz Murshed, IM Abdullah Al Rakib, IM Enamul Hossain Rajib, FM Abu Sufian Shakil and FM Mehdi Hasan Parag secured five points after nine rounds.

Armenian GM Tigran Petrosian took solo lead with 7.5 points.

LOCAL SNIPPETS

SPORTS REPORTER

Dhaka and BKSP got off to bright starts on the opening day of the final round in the 3rd JFA Cup Under-15 Football Championship yesterday.

A brace by Galib helped BKSP blank Chudanga 4-0 at the Army Stadium in Dhaka with Mamun and Sabu adding the rest for the winners.

In the first match, Dhaka brushed aside Natore 6-0 with Tarek, Rony, Rubel, Raju, Shahed and Rana adding one goal apiece.

FOOD AID

As part of the 'Cricket Against Hunger' partnership between the World Food Programme and England and Wales Cricket Board, the visiting England A cricket team donated 5000 pounds to the WFP, which will use the donation to fund school feeding programmes in Bangladesh.

The second string English cricketers, who completed their second and final Test against Bangladesh A at Bogra on Sunday, travelled to Gaibandha yesterday for the ceremonial handover of fortified biscuits, the first part of a consignment to feed 300 children for a whole year.

BATA HANDBALL

A total of eight matches were held on the opening day of the 16th Bata

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Lara likes slow going

AFP, Montego Bay



West Indies skipper Brian Lara said Monday that he prefers his team to start the World Cup slowly, saving ammunition to ambush their rivals in the closing stages of the tournament.

Lara, one of a number of world-class players who will be taking part

in a last World Cup, is adamant that a cautious beginning to the seven-week event is key if West Indies are to break the curse of a host nation never having won the World Cup.

"We don't want to be one of the front-runners. We want to gradually get into our stride and surprise people coming to the end," said Lara.

"One of the most important things in the tournament is to pick up momentum. It is all about the team that picks up momentum that will carry us through, not the individual," he said, aware of the criticism often

aimed at his side that it is a one-man team.

Like many others here, Lara believes that Australia's travails, which have seen them lose back-to-back series against England and New Zealand, will only serve to make the defending champions stronger.

Only a fool, he says, would write them off.

"A lot of the Test-playing nations are quite competitive and it is very hard to say any one or two countries are going to control the World Cup and win it.

"Australia will definitely start favourites because of their statistics and how they have played over the past few years."

Even if Ricky Ponting's side remain the team to beat, Lara believes that the West Indies will be in the mix in the later stages.

"I think the team that I am in charge of, we have been to almost every finals that has been available to us," he said.

"Before the 2004 ICC Champions Trophy, we went to the triangular tournament in New Zealand and got to the finals. We won the ICC tournament and two years later in the triangular tournament with Australia and India we got to the finals.

"Then in the ICC Champions Trophy in India last year, we got to the final before losing out to Australia."

The West Indies are hoping to win the World Cup for a third time having clinched the first two championships in England in 1975 and 1979.



PHOTO: AFP

West Indies captain Brian Lara addresses a press conference in Montego Bay on Sunday.

Your team counts

SPORTS REPORTER

Access Telecom, a leading ISP in the country has launched an online cricket game (Your Selection) in Bangladesh to observe World Cup cricket that will be staged in the West Indies later this month.

Adopting the idea from famous predecessors such as ESPN's Fantasy Premier League and CricInfo's Fantasy Cricket, Your Selection aims to allow cricket fans in Bangladesh a chance to create their very own World XI, selecting from all the players participating in the World Cup.

Fans have to first register using a valid e-mail address and will then be given the chance to select players of their choice. Each player will be assigned specific points and the registered user will have to select players within a specific balance.

Teams will score points based on the performance of the players they selected. Each run will earn a point while each wicket will earn twenty-five and so on.

Registration has already begun and interested participants can register up to March 13 by visiting <http://cricket.accesstel>.

Russel set to field four Moroccans



SPORTS REPORTER

Sheikh Russel Krira Chakra will use the full quota of foreign players when they field four Moroccans in their today's opening match of the B. League, which resumes after a two-day break.

Among the four, striker Khobashi is the only new face while Egir, Saad and Touati have all played previously for Russel, who face visiting Chittagong Mohammedan at the Bangabandhu National Stadium.

The home side coach Wajed Gazi said that he had yet to measure the current condition of Russel's imported players but he had the confidence that they would live up to their reputation.

Although Egir played in the last season (2005), Saad and Touati return after more than two years but the latter had showed sublime skill as a striker in 2004, guiding Russel

to finish runners-up in their maiden Premier League campaign.

"We started training at least 20 days after the others," said veteran Gazi. "So its natural that there would be some problems. But the fitness looks play to me. I hope to fill the gaps in combination soon and it can only develop when you play competitive games."

The black and whites from port city Chittagong however, will have no foreigners in their rank.

Their more illustrious partner Dhaka Mohammedan, who open their campaign tomorrow in the last match of the first week of the inaugural professional league, has named former national striker Ahmed Imtiaz Nakib as their captain and Nigerian forward Paul Nwakuchu as his deputy.

The veteran Nakib is doubtful as a regular starter but the popular club have been forced to do so due to their failure in luring big local names.

Nabodoy Housing will be the sponsor of Mohammedan, who receive five plots in Kuakata and expect to cash Tk 30 lakh from selling the piece of lands.

Captain consolidates Ctg

SPORTS REPORTER



Chittagong earned an important first-innings lead against Khulna on the second day of the four-day match of the Ispahani Mirzapore Tea 8th National Cricket League ninth round at the Chittagong Divisional Stadium yesterday.

The right-hander's 116 helped the home team enjoy a run feast as they amassed 354 in 76.5 overs in reply to Khulna's 289.

Away at the Rajshahi Divisional Stadium, Imran Ahmed remained at the crease four runs short of a hundred and his effort helped Barisal reach 173-2 at stumps after table-toppers Rajshahi were bundled out for 336 in their first essay.

The match at the Fatullah Stadium began yesterday with Sylhet scoring 293-6 against sec-

ond-placed Dhaka at close of first day's play.

KHULNA-CHITTAGONG

Last Khulna batsman Mahmuduzzaman fell victim to a run out in the fifth ball of the morning as the visitors were dismissed on their overnight 289 only to pave way for the home batsmen to dictate the day's play.

Gazi Salahuddin (52 off 54 balls) and Nafees Iqbal (24) gave the hosts a confident start by sharing 81 runs in the opening stand but Chittagong lost the way once Nafees was trapped leg before by spinner Murad Khan.

Skipper Ehsanul led from the front with a blazing century as Khulna's bowlers efforts away with a blistering 113-ball 116 that featured 15 boundaries and a six while Najimuddin and Faisal Hossain chipped in with 40 and 48 runs respectively.

Shaful Alam was the most successful Khulna bowler with 4-34.

Trailing by 65 runs, Khulna scored 19-1 before stumps were

drawn. Saju Dutta gave the breakthrough removing first innings hero Imrul Kayes.

RAJSHAHI-BARISAL

A 100-run opening partnership between Imran Ahmed and Hannan Sarker gave Barisal a bright start in pursuit of Rajshahi's 336.

Hannan was caught by Hossain off Sumon Shaha making 37 off 64 balls but Imran was not out on 96 off 148 balls with the help of 15 boundaries. Iftekar Nayeem accompanied him with nine runs.

Earlier, overnight batsman Hasanuzzaman missed a well-deserved century for nine runs but his 219-ball innings, which saw 12 fours, and an unbeaten 51 by Delwar Hossain guided Rajshahi to 336 after resuming the day on 225-5.

Delwar smashed eight fours during 97-ball essay.

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PHOTO: AFP

A mother along with her child watches the New Zealand team during a practice session at the Police Sports Club in Barbados on Sunday ahead of the warm-up matches of the World Cup Cricket 2007.