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Did U Know?

The folding chessboard was originally invented by a chess-playing priest in 1125. Since the Church banned priests to play chess, he hid his chessboard by making one that looked simply like two books lying together.



Sania Mirza
(India's tennis star)

"I have gone through great lows in the last few weeks. It has been difficult to try and stay focussed." After pulling out of next month's WTA Bangalore Open.



STAR Sports
Int'l Football Friendly
England v Switzerland
Live from 1:30am (Thursday)
ESPN
Sportscentre India
Sports News
Live at 8:30pm

Nasir wins, Rakib draws

UNB, Dhaka

Grand Master Abdullah Al Rakib secured 2.5 points after the third round matches of the International Chess Festival of Moscow Open held on Monday.

International Master Enamul Hossain Rajib and FIDE Master Nasir Ahmed earned 2 points and 1 point respectively as well.

In Monday's matches, Rakib drew with Grand Master Yuri Kuzubov of Ukraine. Rajib lost to Grand Master Efimenko Zahar of Ukraine while Nasir beat Kaljajev Vacheslav of north nation Russia.

Sachin reaches 16k ODI runs

PTI, Brisbane

Sachin Tendulkar on Tuesday became the first batsman in the history of one-day cricket to cross the 16,000-run mark, a milestone which appears to be a distant dream for any other player in near future.

Tendulkar, who scored 35 runs against Sri Lanka in the second tri-series ODI at the Gabba, now tallies 16,007 runs which is far more than Sri Lankan Sanath Jayasuriya's aggregate of 12,207, second in the list of all time top scorers.

The champion batsman from India achieved the feat when he scored his 28th run during the India innings in his 409th match. Tendulkar seems set to stay at the pinnacle for a long time as Jayasuriya and former Pakistan captain Inzamamul Haq, who is third in the list with 11,739 runs, are not anywhere near to surpass the record.

Next in the list is another Indian Sourav Ganguly (11,363) but with selectors shutting the ODI doors on him, he also does not appear a likely candidate to achieve the feat. He is followed by Australian captain Ricky Ponting (10,835) and Rahul Dravid (10,585).

Tendulkar, who has scored 11,822 runs in Test cricket, is just 172 runs away from displacing legendary Brian Lara to emerge as the highest run getter in the longer version of the game as well.

Decisions to be made

Cricket

SPORTS REPORTER

The number of major issues will be discussed in the Bangladesh Cricket Board's (BCB) ad-hoc committee meeting today.

The committee led by Maj Gen Sina Ibn Jamali is likely to confirm two major appointments in new chief executive officer and national team operations manager besides confirmation of two foreign coaches in the development programme.

There is also a chance to see some reshuffling in the posts of sub-committees and most likely a new face will be seen in the demanding post of chairman of the Cricket Committee of Dhaka Metropolis, which is now occupied by former national skipper Gazi Ashraf Hossain Lipu.

Finance committee chairman M Abdul Momen, who headed a three-member core committee to negotiate with Nimbus for a long-term TV deal, informed that the most burning issue regarding the long-term TV deal will also be

discussed in the meeting.

"We have received the Nimbus reply yesterday regarding the three-day meeting we had in the city last month. I have already handed one copy to our president and another to our lawyer. We will inform about what we have discussed with the Nimbus representatives and so far what kind of feedback we've got from them," said Momen yesterday.

"Apparently the Nimbus report has some positives but we have to scrutinise everything by our expert before reaching a conclusion," he added.

The BCB's core committee put forward some 'adjustment' proposals to the Nimbus delegation during their marathon meeting in Dhaka and Momen reiterated his demand that they would put pen to paper for the long-term deal only when BCB's interest would be protected.

"The important thing is that there are some indication in the Nimbus report about BCB's serious concern over losing money in seven series where India would not be taking part

We have to ensure one thing that we will not be the loser in the end," he said.

Momen also said that they have to make special drive for ensuring India's tour to Bangladesh as per the schedule of Future Tour Programme (FTP) of International Cricket Council (ICC).

"We are trying to make some adjustments in the series which we will play against opponents other than India. But you know our interest lies in the series involving India but there is uncertainty over India's next tour. We have to make special drive for ensure India's participation," said Momen.

Momen also explained how BCB is going to lose money in the coming home series against South Africa.

"Our budget for the tour is Tk 3.75 crore and what we are going to receive from Nimbus and other sponsors for the series would be much less. And we can't do that in every series by signing the long-term agreement without ensuring our desired adjustments," he said.

Injuries stall declaration

Cricket

SPORTS REPORTER

Injuries may hold back the announcement of the final squad for the upcoming two-match Test series against South Africa that will start from February 22 at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur.

The team was supposed to be announced today, according to an earlier decision, but chief selector Rafique Alam said yesterday that they have to wait for the final fitness report on injured opener Tamim Iqbal and pacemen Syed Rasel and Shahadat Hossain.

The three-member selection panel were rather thinking on a preliminary squad with a maximum of 20 players to start the camp after completion of the practice matches today.

Tamim injured his left thumb during the second Test in New Zealand while Rasel suffered a dislocated left collarbone while fielding at the warm-up match earlier on the tour, which forced him to come back home without playing a single match. To make

matters more complicated, lanky paceman Shahadat has been suffering from groin injury.

Rasel bowled with full vigour in the fifth practice match at Mirpur yesterday but the selectors' main concerns are with the fitness of in-form Tamim, who was exceptional in the Tiger's otherwise disaster tour of New Zealand.

"According to our physio's (Darryn Lifson) report, Tamim (Iqbal) needs two more weeks to recovery fully. But the other two players are progressing well. All three players are very important for us and as a result, we have to make sure that they are fit enough before the series," said Rafique.

"We can easily take time as it is our home series. What we feel is that it would be better to announce a practice squad. We want to bring some players in the probabilities that will play the three-day warm-up match," he added.

BCB cricket operations committee chairman Gazi Ashraf Hossain Lipu said that they would have discussion on the national squad during the board's executive committee meeting today.

The most important thing is that there is hardly any chance to

see major changes in the team from the squad that played in New Zealand. The main concern is whether the Rafique Alam-led panel would consider veteran left-arm spinner Mohammad Rafique for the home series.

It however looks apparent that any decision must come through the desires of new coach Jamie Siddons.

The team is all but confirmed, as there was none in the practice matches who pushed the selectors to give a second thought before finalising the team.

Things turned out to be worse in the fifth practice match when Team C were all out for 134 runs and then Team A scored 137 for seven in reply, although they were given a 200-run target.

Former national skipper Habibul Bashar got back to form making a 80-ball 50 after showing feeble batting in the first four games and it was important for the right-hander before the selection.

Despite recent poor form Bashar may get another chance in the home series and definitely it would be a lifeline for the country's most successful test batsman.



TARUN VETERANS: Former national captains Habibul Bashar (L) and Khaled Mashud (C) and experienced medium pacer Mohammad Sharif are hand in hand after signing for Surjo Tarun on the third and final day of the inter-club cricketers' transfer at the Conference Room of the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

Mohammedan form probe committee

SPORTS REPORTER

Mohammedan Sporting Club on Monday formed a three-member inquiry committee headed by Dr Nizamuddin Ahmed to investigate the incident during the first day of the three-day inter-club cricketers' transfer for the Premier and First Division leagues at the Bangabandhu National Stadium on Sunday.

Anwarul Haque Helal and Hanif Bhuiyan are the other members of the committee which will submit its report within three days.

Mohammedan condemned the physical assault on young cricketer Mosharrar Hossain during the bourse and they also expressed their concern over the traditional club's involvement by some print and electronics media.

Two local boys in 2nd round

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

Two out of six Bangladeshi players moved to the second round of boys' singles while only four players survived a bad day for Indians in the Grameenphone International Junior (U-16) Tennis Championships (Group-3) at the Zafar Imam Tennis Complex here yesterday.

Among the seeded players, top seed Georgian Sakhuridze Sergi managed to move up beating Korean Yong-Jun Lee 6-4, 6-4 and third-seed Russian Kovalev Egor beat local boy Robin 6-0, 6-0 while Korea's Yu-Jin Juong beat Uzbek sixth-seed Batir Sapayev in the boys' singles.

Bangladesh's Majhar reached the second round defeating Indian Prity Sivasubramaniam 6-4, 3-6, 6-3 while another local boy Ranjan Ram thrashed India's Shahbaz Khan 4-6, 6-3, 6-2.

India's Jugal Marfatia beat Bangladesh's Tajmull 3-6, 6-1, 6-2, Indian Mansingh Athare beat Bangladesh's Romel 7-5, 6-2 in boys' singles while Uzbek Vera Tverdikova beat Bangladesh's Anjum 6-0, 6-1 in the girls' singles.

A total of 27 matches, 11 in girls' singles and 16 in boys' singles, were decided on the day.

Malik denies marriage

PTI, Karachi

Pakistan captain Shoaib Malik on Tuesday denied that he had ever entered into a telephonic 'niqah' with any Indian girl and said he has been a victim of a fraud done by a family based in Hyderabad in India.

Hyderabad's MA Siddiqui has claimed that Malik had married his daughter Ayesha and pressed the cricketer to give a formal divorce.

Siddiqui had threatened his family would move court if his daughter did not get divorce, which was necessary to help her start a "new life." Malik had earlier said his long-standing relationship with the Indian girl had ended due to differences between the two families.

Malik and his brother, Imran, said at a press conference in Lahore

Tarun clinch Day 3

Rafique, Rasel settle for clubs

Cricket

SPORTS REPORTER

The three-day players' transfers for the upcoming Premier and First Division Cricket Leagues closed yesterday with Surjo Tarun signing up two former national captains and Mohammad Rafique hinting of his impending retirement.

The veteran left-arm spinner, who ultimately signed up for defending champions Abahani, said, "If I get a chance to play in this series (against South Africa), it would be my last."

After much drama which put Rafique's season in jeopardy, the Dhammondi-based club acquired his services for the Premier League. It is understood that he signed more in desperation and agreed to the same sum that was offered by Abahani.

But it was promoted side Surjo Tarun who ruled the final day, signing up their quota of national

pool players.

Experienced duo Khaled Mashud and Habibul Bashar and medium-pacer Mohammad Sharif all confirmed their services for the other Dhammondi-based club in the top division.

Mashud, the country's most experienced wicketkeeper, left Abahani for Surjo Tarun while Bashar moved from Mohammedan. Both were incidentally club captains in those two big clubs.

Apart from the trio, the First Division champions signed in-form batsman Nayeem Islam (from Abahani) and Shamsur Rahman Shuvo (from Mohammedan).

Left-arm paceman Syed Rasel, who was the last of the pool players, settled for Kalabagan after enduring a day of anxiety.

All of the pool players echoed each other's opinion upon signing with their new clubs: 'Make our new team Premier League champions'.

Gazi Tank Cricketers, nearly

men of First Division cricket in Dhaka, got their hands on successful and experienced players of that level. They now have the trio -- Apurba Milon, Salahuddin Ujjal and Habib Moballek James -- that helped Surjo Tarun gain promotion. Leading batsmen Masumuddin, Adil Ahmed and Lal Mohon Hossain have also put pen to paper for Gazi Tank, who are the favourites to gain promotion this season.

Demoted side Brothers Union roped in SM Golan Fayyaz, Nuruzzaman Nayan and Monirul Islam Taj while Indira Road, the other club downgraded to First Division, were also active at the bourse.

With the day's trade, the bourse ended with Bangladesh Biman and Surjo Tarun gaining the most. Crowd favourites Abahani and Mohammedan were not too far behind but Biman's collection of players look the most expensive in the league.

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MSC owe fans one

Semis lineup: Badda-Arambagh; Mohammedan-Abahani

Football

SPORTS REPORTER

Every team have the right to choose their opponents.

In trying to do that, tournament sponsors Mohammedan Sporting Club put their reputation at stake during the last group-stage match of the Prothi Pharma Victory Day Club Cup football tournament against Arambagh Kira Sangha.

After Victoria Sporting Club's hopes to reach the semifinals was dashed following a crushing 3-0 defeat at the hands of Youngmen's Club Fakirpool in yesterday's first match at the Bangabandhu National Stadium, Mohammedan and Arambagh's places in the semifinals were secured.

Having sealed their semifinal berth, Mohammedan apparently wanted to avoid a clash with archrivals Abahani in the last four

and looked set to concede the match.

But public reaction and wrath of the angry fans forced the black and whites to come from behind and win the match 3-1.

Mohammedan, who emerged Group A champions with seven points, will now face Group B runners-up Abahani in the second semifinal on Friday while Senior Division side and surprise pack of the tournament Badda Jagarani, who won Group B, will be pitted against B. League club Arambagh in tomorrow's first knockout game.

Mohammedan's intentions looked clear from the start as they fielded just four players from their previous game's starting lineup against their neighbours.

And when Arambagh's Kenyan striker Domenic sliced through two rival defenders without any resistance to open the scoring after 20 minutes, a 2,000-strong crowd began to stir uncomfortably in the

stands.

Shafiqul Islam Manik's boys made no effort to equalise in the rest of the first half. The booters also crossed the ball to the wrong persons whenever they had possession near the rival goal.

Domenic was substituted just after the break and Arambagh did not enjoy the situation as the Mohammedan fans started protesting vehemently, feeling cheated by their beloved team.

Jahirul Haque, a Mohammedan man throughout his life during and after a glorious playing career, admitted he was feeling ashamed too.

"People know us and when they will see this match, they will lose all respect. I feel ashamed at what I've been seeing," said Jahirul, also the chairman of the Bangladesh Football Federation's disciplinary committee, during the match.

Tournament committee chairman, former Mohammedan and

SEE PAGE 18 COL 6

England's flying start

Cricket

AFP, Auckland

England drew first blood in their cricket tour of New Zealand when they comfortably won the opening Twenty20 match by 32 runs.

Sent into bat first, England cracked 185 for eight on an ideal batting track and then had New Zealand all out in their final over for 152.

But for the heroics of Jacob Oram, who clubbed 61, the match could have finished much earlier as the New Zealand batting crumbled in the face of a well-performed England attack.

seeing New Zealand fast bowler Chris Martin take two early wickets, England were always in control with all-rounder Dmitri Mascarenhas proving too much for the hosts with bat and ball.

He arrived at the crease when the England batting momentum was slowing towards eight an over after a brisk start, and belted 31 from 14 balls including four successive sixes off spinner Jeetan Patel.

New Zealand captain Brendon McCullum had inexplicably given Patel the ball, replacing debutant Jesse Ryder who had taken the wicket of Owais Shah and conceded only two runs in his sole over.

Patel had the last word when he caught Mascarenhas off Kyle Mills in the following over but by then

the England run-scoring tempo was back around a formidable 10 an over.

Kevin Pietersen top-scored with 43 off 23 balls before being neatly caught by a diving Ross Taylor at cover.

New Zealand were tight in the field, conceding just two extras, but only Martin seriously threatened with the ball taking two for 34 off his four overs.

Mills finished with two for 43 but his wickets came in the closing log. Following his batting exploits, Mascarenhas then tied up the New Zealand batsmen with his medium pace deliveries taking two for 19 from four overs, while left-arm Ryan Sidebottom finished with

SEE PAGE 18 COL 4



India's Gautam Gambhir salutes the crowd after scoring his century against Sri Lanka during their CB Series match at the Gabba in Brisbane yesterday. The match was however abandoned due to persistent rain.