

**B. League starts Apr 15, transfer Mar 15-Apr 14**

SPORTS REPORTER

Sunrise Kira Chakra of Noakhali have shown their interest to participate in the second B. League, which is expected to kick off on April 15.

The league committee in its meeting on Sunday decided to stick to its original date of transfers from March 15-April 14.

Sunrise's appeal was discussed in the meeting but it would take longer to come to a decision, informed Bangladesh Football Federation's professional league manager Abu Nayeem Sohag last night.

"The clubs asked for seven days' time to give us their decision on the transfer date. Since they haven't objected about the period, we presume they are ready. Farshganj officially told us about a few problems but have been solved," said Sohag.

He hinted at a few changes although nothing has been finalised. Unlike the inaugural version where games were played on four matchdays every week, the league this year is likely to be played every day.

The transfer windows would only be applicable for local players and the clubs would be able to recruit foreigners throughout any time with some restrictions.

**Indo-Bangla Games briefs**

SPORTS REPORTER

The heating system at the National Swimming Complex in Mirpur has finally become workable after being out of order for nearly 18 years.

With the second edition of the Indo-Bangladesh Bangla Games beginning this month, the Bangladesh Olympic Association (BOA) and National Sports Council (NSC) completed the repair works of the heating machine a couple of days earlier.

The touch pad of the swimming pool and digital boards have also been renovated while six lanes are now ready for competition, confirmed the BOA yesterday. The remaining lanes are expected to be prepared before the Games kick off on February 22 in the capital.

Meanwhile, the national women's football team which will compete against West Bengal in the Games, crashed 2-0 to Narayanganj in a practice match at the Narayanganj Osmani Stadium.

The kabaddi men's beat Bangladesh Army 40-23 in the last preparatory match at the Outer Stadium kabaddi court.

The men's volleyball team will face a Bangladesh Volleyball Federation XI today in the third game of a five-match preparation series, which is locked 1-1.

**Rakib becomes 55th in Moscow**

SPORTS REPORTER

Grand Master Abdullah Al Rakib came out 55th in the International Chess Festival in Moscow on Sunday.

Rakib secured five points in the competition after his win over International Master Nikolai Peregodov of Kazakhstan in the ninth round.

International Master Enamul Hossain Rajib became 139th with four points and FIDE Master Nasir Ahmed finished 194th, also with four points.

Rajib drew with Chudinovskih, Alexander of Russia and Nasir lost to FIDE Master Dmitry Lavrik of Russia. Rakib increased his position 10th rating from this event while Rajib lost 15 rating and Nasir lost 13 rating.

Rakib, Rajib and Nasir will now participate in the world's highest open chess event, Aeroflot Open Chess Festival, beginning on Wednesday.

**Sultan returns!**

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"He had a meeting with us and submitted a letter saying he wants to resume duties as president," confirmed Manzoor Hossain Malu.

Acting president Monir Ahmed was surprised to hear the news and said he was not sure about Sultan's objectives.

Reportedly, the government sought Sultan's help to convince FIFA and AFC to reform the football association constitutions but it wants him to work outside from the organisation. It is one of the reasons the meeting called by Sultan has been cancelled.

**Trapattoni set**

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assistant manager, the newspaper said.

Ireland's next scheduled match is a friendly at home to Serbia on May 24 but an away friendly may also be arranged for March.

Trapattoni won six Serie A titles with Juventus and one with Inter Milan, while he also won league titles with Bayern Munich, Benfica and Salzburg last season.

However, his time with the Italian national team between 2000 and 2004 was not a success and he was often criticised for his defensive tactics.



An action from yesterday's Senior Division Football League match between table-toppers Victoria and Jatrabari at the Birshreshtha Shaheed Mostafa Kamal Stadium in Kamalapur.

PHOTO: STAR

**Victoria cross major hurdle**

SPORTS REPORTER

Victoria Sporting Club opened up a comfortable three-point lead atop the Senior Division Football League table when they defeated contenders Jatrabari Kira Chakra 2-1 yesterday.

The top-of-the-table clash at the Birshreshtha Shaheed Mostafa Kamal Stadium in Kamalapur came alive after a scoreless first half when Dalim put Victoria ahead five minutes after resumption.

Turjo sealed three points for Victoria in the 78th minute while Jatrabari, who suffered only their second loss in eight appearances, reduced the arrears ten minutes later through Shariful.

After six wins, Victoria -- still undefeated in nine outings -- pushed their collection to 21 points, three ahead of Jatrabari.

In the day's other match, Agrani Bank routed second-from-bottom Dipali Juba Sangha 4-1 with braces from Pashbon and Chandrim Rakhayin.

Agrani, who led the first half 1-0, scored three goals inside eight minutes in the later part of the second session.

Agrani moved to ten points after eight rounds while Dipali remained on three points after seven matches.

**Ganguly makes peace with ODI omission**

PTI, Kolkata

Breaking his silence over his omission from India's ODI team, Sourav Ganguly on Monday said that it was "disappointing" because his one-day record is next best after Sachin Tendulkar, but he had "accepted" the selectors' decision.

A reticent former Indian captain was unwilling to be drawn into any discussion on his being ignored but even then his hurt shows.

"I am disappointed just like any other cricketer in not being a part of the one-day side as I had a great year last year and my one-day record is probably the next best after Sachin. It is disappointing but then I have accepted it," he told PTI in an interview.

Ganguly refused to answer questions about reports that he and Rahul Dravid were left out of the ODI team on the insistence of skipper Mahendra Singh Dhoni. "I do not want to talk about it," he said.

Following are the other points made by the elegant left-hander who was named along with Sachin Tendulkar as the BCCI's "players for the period October 07 to January 08" for their exploits in the Test series against Pakistan at home and against Australia.

**Junior tennis qualifiers**

UNB, Dhaka

Indian player Tirumorti Vishwajit defeated Bangladesh's Rakibul Alam 6-3, 6-0 in a qualifying match of the ITF Junior Tennis World Ranking (Group-3) at the National Tennis Complex in Ramna yesterday.

In the day's other matches, Shahbaz Khan beat Donghunoh 6-0, 6-1 Paul Brown beat Cheng Lin Chan 6-3, 6-1, Naveen Sai beat Ramesh Karki 6-4, 6-2, Lee Yung Jun beat Kuo Tzu Ming 6-1, 4-6, 6-0, Jaya Prakash Mohit beat Park Chang Jun 6-1, 6-3, Sankar Saney beat Hsieh Cheng Ju 6-1, 6-4, Ahuja Sagar beat Vasanth Venkatesh 3-6, 6-4, 6-3, Lee Geon beat Ho Jen Chih 7-5, 6-1, Haris Aditya beat Kim Young Beom 6-1, 6-1, Lert Chai Kongpoo beat Hsu Chin 7-5, 6-4 and Oh Su Bin beat Ho Yu Jun 6-7, 6-2, 7-5.

**NAT'L BADMINTON Double crown for Parash**

SPORTS REPORTER

Parash clinched double crown in the Islami Bank 28th National Badminton Championships, claiming the men's singles and double titles at the Woodenfloor Gymnasium yesterday.

Parash, who defeated Rais 22-10, 21-10 in the singles final, paired with Sumon to win the men's doubles with a 21-15, 21-14 victory against Javed and Hannan.

The women's singles title went to Shapla who beat Kanika 21-18, 21-17.

Kanika, however, was successful in both her doubles events. She won the women's doubles final 21-9, 22-23, 21-19 pairing with Seema while in the mixed-doubles final, Kanika and Sumon edged Seema-Parash duo 21-17, 21-19.

Bangladesh Olympic Association's acting secretary-general Kutubuddin Ahmed distributed prizes as chief guest.

National Sports Council secretary Akbar Hossain, Islami Bank's executive vice-president Shamsul Haque and Bangladesh Badminton Federation president Kamaluddin Ahmed were also present.

**'We're still the best'**

Cricket

AFP, Canberra

Fast bowler Stuart Clark Monday said Australia were desperate to show they were still the world's best after taunts from tri-series rivals India and Sri Lanka.

Opener Virender Sehwag claimed Australia were "scared" ahead of their loss to India on Sunday, while Sri Lanka captain Mahela Jayawardene said other teams were finally catching up.

"I keep reading that certain members of their (India's) team say we are scared and things like that and I find that pretty much laughable," said Clark.

"They can think whatever they want and they've made some bold statements.

"India are playing good cricket, but the guys are keen to show everyone that we are still the best team in the world."

Australia are entering a new era following the retirements of Shane Warne, Glenn McGrath, Justin

Langer and Damien Martyn in the last 18 months, with Adam Gilchrist also about to hang up his pads.

"They're not dominating world cricket at the moment... they're playing some good cricket, but on and off," Jayawardene said in an interview.

"On any day, if we are not on our game, any team can beat us and if we don't play cricket to our level then we can get beaten," he said.

Clark, who said he was looking to become more unpredictable with his bowling to nail down a spot in the one-day side, also backed captain Ricky Ponting to emerge from his current form slump.

The usually prolific Ponting has scored just 18 runs at 6.00 in the tri-series and also struggled for form for most of the narrow 2-1 Test series win against India.

However, Clark said Ponting's class would prevail.

"He's probably the best player in the world," he said.

"There was going to be a period where he didn't do as well as he's been doing for so long. Hopefully that changes and you'd be a brave man to back against him."

Australia's next match in the tri-series is against Sri Lanka here on Friday.

**'Ishant a fast learner'**

Cricket

PTI, Melbourne

Former Australian captain Ian Chappell has lauded India for matching up to Ricky Ponting's world champion side in the ongoing one-day series, saying the visitors have spiced up the tri-nation tournament with their competitiveness.

India beat Australia by five wickets on Sunday to go on top of the points table in the series also involving Sri Lanka and Chappell was all praise for the effort.

"...It was a tough win for India but a very good one... I think the message that they have also sent to Australia, if they were not aware of it before they certainly are now, that India really do believe that they can beat this Australian side and I think that it has set up, once again, a very competitive series between these two teams," Chappell said.

Chappell described the Indian bowling as "magnificent" at the MCG and appreciated Ishant Sharma's never-say-diespirit.

"I thought that the Indian bowling, particularly the three main quick bowlers were magnificent. Ishant Sharma, he is a very fast learner, and the good thing about Sunday's performance was the fact that he took a bit of stick from Matthew Hayden early on -- couple of those shots were a bit lucky, they were edged over the top of the slips.

**Pharaohs remain kings**

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Hadary, man of the match against Ivory Coast, was up to the job of denying a 30m freekick special from Geremi before Kameni produced an acrobatic dive to keep out Moteab's dangerous strike.

Samuel Eto'o took on the Egyptian defence single-handedly approaching the break only for his shot to edge wide of the far post.

Egypt looked the more likely to score in the opening 45 minutes but captain Rigobert Song, Kameni and the rest of the Cameroon defence were holding tight.

The only surprise was that neither country had been able to add to their 14 goal haul since battle commenced three weeks ago.

Eto'o, the competition's all time top scorer, had the Egyptians scampering around on the hour mark

with a lightning run down the left. Cameroon coach Otto Pfister then introduced striker Mohamadou Idrissou for a midfielder, Achille Emana, as he sought the keys to unlock the Egyptians with Shehata swapping Moteab for Hamburg striker Mohamed Zidan.

Zidan scored twice in Egypt's win over Cameroon earlier in the tournament and he was instrumental in putting them into a 77nd minute lead.

He robbed the tiring Rigobert Song and his slide rule pass from the left found the unmarked Aboutaika who calmly struck low and hard past Kameni.

That was the Al Ahly midfielder's fourth goal, and it set up a fraught final quarter of an hour as Cameroon frantically tried to get back into the match but the

defending champions held on to take the continental cup back to Cairo.

In the Egyptian capital, the victory brought joy and relief. Crowds of people wearing the national flag colours of red, black and white poured into the streets as the final whistle blew.

"Finally something joyous happens to us," said Mohammed Said, sporting an Egyptian flag instead of his traditional galabaya robe.

"With the government we have everything is sad, the prices, the boats sink and trains crash, this is the only thing that gives us joy."

Coptic Christian Adel Zaki added: "It's one of the rare occasions when there are no Muslims and Copts and we are only Egyptians. We feel united and it is the only thing we celebrate together."

**India's daring assault**

Cricket

PETER ROEBUCK

India dared to attack the Australians and it produced the tussle of the season. The hosts met blow with blow, creating a gripping contest between two committed and well-matched pugilists.

Except when India's part-timers were bowling, every run was hotly contested and every cricketer stretched to his limit. Until the last few runs came in a hurry, the result was beyond prediction. Slogathons are not nearly as entertaining. Even the pitch played its part, providing a fair surface that assisted the bowlers without unduly restricting capable batsmen.

Australia's innings was a thing of shreds and patches. Throughout its course the Indians played with conviction, making positive moves at every opportunity and sustaining their assault even as their hosts rallied.

Much could be gleaned from Mahendra Dhoni's handling of tyro paceman Ishant Sharma. Noticing that the MCG had provided a firm surface, he asked his raw youngsters to let rip. The message was clear. He believed in his bowlers and expected them to take wickets. Never mind that the opposing openers had been belting the ball around for a decade.

As might be expected from a novice, Sharma held nothing back, charging to the crease and mixing corks with wides and no-balls. Youth knows nothing of mortality let alone fear. In his enthusiasm, he over-pitched and suffered as Matthew Hayden drove sumptuously. His first two overs cost 24 runs and the scoreboard was rattling along.

Now Dhoni faced his most important decision of the day. A lesser man might have withdrawn Sharma until his blood had cooled.

ing contribution that spoke of his competitive character.

Harbhajan Singh, too, was impressive. The tumble of wickets gave him a chance to attack and he produced a testing spell. It took a seasoned knock from Michael Hussey to hold the innings together.

Between innings, the Indians must have fancied their chances of romping to victory. But the hosts regrouped and worked to a plan of their own devising: keeping a disciplined length just outside off stump and placing a tight field.

Moreover, Ponting had an extra pace bowler at his disposal, so the batsmen had to fight for every run. Mitchell Johnson beat the bat repeatedly, and with his comrades straining every muscle, the result remained in doubt until deep into the night. It was a fascinating contest between an established champion and a forthright contender.

Clearly the Indians have learnt how to handle these opponents. It is not a matter of words or gestures but conviction. The Aussies were stretched by a group of young, proud and sometimes hot-headed Indians prepared to stand their ground. In recent months Steenath and Harbhajan, especially, have let passion rule their heads. It is the fire within that counts.

Dhoni made a couple of mistakes, spreading the field for weaker bowlers and disrupting the batting order, but his fast bowlers were outstanding and eventually India found two warriors with the bat to take them to victory. The Australians worked well as a team and Hussey played the innings of a Test match with the vigour of these one-day capers.

(Columnist Peter Roebuck wrote this article on the Sydney Morning Herald website).

**India have the edge**

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be a profitable exercise. Harbhajan believes the team has more belief after every win and the hunger is increasing each day.

"We have young guys who are all raring to go," he said. "We played very well on Sunday and we will stick to the same sort of the rhythm in the next game and try to win every game from here onwards."

"Every game is different. It doesn't matter what Sri Lanka did in the last game. It's going to be a good challenge for both sides and we'll put up our best show."

Jayawardene, however believes the competition is wide open now and says a Sri Lankan win on Tuesday will even things out. "The challenge for them is to be consistent and the challenge for us is to challenge ourselves."

The match is also a special occasion for the locals given that international cricket is returning to Canberra after a 16-year hiatus. However, visiting teams have stopped over for the traditional contests against the Prime Minister's XI, just like India did before the Perth Test this season.

**TEAMS**  
India (likely): Virender Sehwag, Sachin Tendulkar, Gautam Gambhir, Yuvraj Singh, Rohit Sharma, Mahendra Singh Dhoni, Robin Uthappa, Irfan Pathan, Harbhajan Singh, Shanthakumaran Sreesanth, Ishant Sharma.

Sri Lanka (likely): Upul Tharanga, Sanath Jayasuriya, Kumar Sangakkara, Mahela Jayawardene, Chamara Kapugedera, Chaminda Silva, Farveez Maharoof, Chaminda Vaas, Lasith Malinga, Ishara Amerasinghe, Muttiah Muralidaran.

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**Tough reply expected**

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high," Collingwood said.

"We were hammered in the first game and we came back strongly to win the series after adapting to the conditions.

"It's still early days for us -- we all know it was a poor performance (in Wellington), but it's just one game. We believe we've still got the momentum."

New Zealand, meanwhile, have their enthusiasm back, with the win over England a valuable tonic after substantial losses to Australia and South Africa late last year.

"If we get 2-0 up we've got a good chance to finish the series off," Vettori said before adding: "I still think it will be incredibly tight."

"I'm sure they'll go back to the drawing board and look to respond like we did after the Twenty20s. We know they'll come hard at us."

Vettori believed the Hamilton wicket would offer more pace than Westpac Stadium in Wellington.

New Zealand may add an extra seamer at the expense of Jeetan Patel, who cleaned up the tail in the first game.



National badminton women's singles champion Shapla and men's singles winner Parash pose for a photograph at the Woodenfloor Gymnasium yesterday after conclusion of the meet.

**Arthur calls**

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appointed by Cricket SA.

This was in direct contradiction to Arendse and the council who ruled Saturday that only the three appointed selectors would make the decision.

Arthur said while the row with Arendse was carrying on last week that he wanted consistency of selection with tours of India, England and Australia following the relatively undemanding challenge of Bangladesh.

The final squad shows only two changes from that which won a Test series in Pakistan last October. McKenzie replaces Gibbs, while off-spinner Johan Botha was selected in place of retired all-rounder Shaun Pollock.

**Warid steps**

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cricket series in Bangladesh and its association with the game will continue in days ahead," said Zeeshan Kingshuk Huq, senior marketing manager of the sponsors.

BCB accepted a much-lessened offer from their floor price for the sponsorship right under three packages.

"The amount was much less than our target but Axiom won the right as the highest bidder and bought all three packages," informed Zulfikar Ahmed, BCB's commercial committee member.

The winning team of a Test match in 'Warid Telecom Series' will get a prize money of 2,500 dollars, man-of-the-match 1,500 dollars and man-of-the-series 2,500 dollars. For winning an ODI, a team will receive 2,500 dollars, man-of-the-match 1,000 dollars and man-of-the-series 2,000 dollars.

The first Test will start on February 22 at the Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium in Mirpur while the second Test will be held in Chittagong from February 29.

The first one-day match will be played on March 9 at Chittagong the second and third ODI will be held in Mirpur on March 12 and 14.

BCB's media committee's vice-chairman Ishtiaque Ahmed and Rizwan Bin Farouq, managing director of Riz Events, also spoke on the occasion.

"We have technique and pace, but with Benjani in our team we are even better because he has technique and pace in abundance," Eriksson said.

"He will be extremely important for us because he is the perfect player for how we play football."

"With him and Martin Petrov, we were able to play some wonderful football and make some terrific counter-attacks."

"I hope that Benjani can help us qualify for Europe. He played virtually every game for Portsmouth and scored a lot of goals, but he is a great player with a great attitude."

**Carrick**

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City's victory reignited their bid to claim a Champions League spot this season and manager Eriksson believes that Benjani, a 3.7 million pounds deadline day buy from Portsmouth, could prove key to his team's European ambitions.

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