

## U-15s face Dutch in opener

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh take on Holland in their opening knockout match of the Clico International Under-15 Cricket World Championships in Barbados on April 19.

The young Tigers, currently touring West Bengal, would face hosts West Indies at the Queen's Park Oval in Trinidad on April 26 in their first match of the tournament proper.

Apart from the hosts, Kenya and Ireland are the other teams in Bangladesh's group.

Pakistan, Zimbabwe, Holland and the International Cricket Council (ICC) Americas team comprising players from Bermuda, Canada, Cayman Islands and The Bahamas in Group 2.

Test-playing countries England, New Zealand and Australia will be missing from the tournament.

"England have told us that the period of the tournament clashes with their school exams, while Australia and New Zealand have both indicated to us that they don't play competitively at the under-15 level," said All Sports Director Bruce Amensen during a press conference at the Queen's Park Oval.

The final of the tournament will be played at the Queen's Park Oval in Trinidad on May 4.



Abahani batsman Shahriar Nafees pushes the ball for a single during his match-winning 57 against archrivals Mohammedan Sporting Club at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

## A dismal derby

### Abahani beat Mohammedan

Cricket

SPORTS REPORTER

Abahani survived a late scare to manage a two-wicket victory against archrivals Mohammedan in a low-scoring match at the Mirpur Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium yesterday to bounce back in the Premier Cricket League title race.

In an otherwise dull affair between the two traditional rivals, nervous moments suddenly crept in the dying stage when Abahani lost four wickets in the space of 34 runs after a crucial 60-run fifth wicket stand between Shahriar Nafees and Nadif Chowdhury took the side to 125-4.

Nafees struck a well-composed 57 with four boundaries in 111 balls and man-of-the-match Nadif chipped in with 41 off 88 deliveries as defending champions Abahani posted 164 for eight in 46.4 overs in reply to Mohammedan's 162 all out to open the door for second-placed Biman to finish the first-leg atop.

Biman are on 17 points with a match in hand while Mohammedan and Abahani have 18 and 17 points respectively after completion of all their 11 matches.

Only a few supporters turned up to watch the game under scorching heat and it was a painful experience for everybody to see poor cricket all around despite the fact that as many as seven current national cricketers were part of it including captain Mohammad Ashraful.

Ashraful's men were lucky enough that days of repercussion after bad performances are gone in this time.

Everybody was surprised how it was possible for a team (Mohammedan) to score 162 when they have four top-order batsmen of the national team in their ranks. There was, however, no need to think more about the reasons behind when their prized batsman Ashraful played an unnecessary slog-sweep against left-arm spinner Arafat Sunny to be bowled in a crucial situation.

The most disappointed man after the match was none other than Mohammedan coach Minhajul Abedin, one of the finest batsmen the country has ever produced, who is also highly praised for his true professional attitude during a prolific career.

"The reality is that they (national players) have hardly any commitment. You have to be hun-

gry for runs and you have to play for yourself first. A national player should show his class in domestic circuit but unfortunately, none could do it. It's funny that out of four, not a single batsman scored a fifty," said Minhajul.

"And it seems that they have appeared at the ground for the roll-call. If one national player can't make more than five fifties in ten matches, then how we would differentiate him from an average cricketer?" questioned the frustrated former national skipper.

Another ex-Bangladesh captain turned coach Aminul Islam, in charge of defending champions Abahani for the second year, was not so harsh but he was also critical of the approaches of the national stars.

"It was really frustrating the way our national players played in this match and I have doubt about their seriousness," said Aminul.

He praised Nafees for a brilliant innings that turned the match in their favour but was not fully satisfied about the left-hander's efforts.

"I must say Nafees played sensibly to win the match for us but the question is why he and Nadif failed to finish the job. It could have been a different story after they threw

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## Biman look to last round

### Partex lose despite Tariq's hat-trick

Cricket

SPORTS REPORTER

There was no change in Premier Cricket League standings after yesterday's five matches but second-placed Bangladesh Biman, who were not in action on the penultimate day of the competition's first-leg, had their chances of going atop ahead of the Super League brightened.

After holders Abahani won over top-of-the-table Mohammedan, Biman now need to beat BKSP tomorrow to finish the 11-round first-leg above all.

City Club's hopes of retaining their sixth position and book a place in the Super League, however, was heavily dashed when they crashed to hapless Young Pegasus by five wickets at BKSP.

On nine points, City meet Victoria in a must-win situation for both the sides for the sixth and final slot of the Super League.

Victoria's two-wicket loss to Surjo Torun at BKSP ensured the latter's place in the top half with

man-of-the-match Nayeem Islam's brilliant all-round display (86 not out and 3-21) while BKSP also consolidated their position with an eight-wicket win against Old DOHS at the Dhanmondi Cricket Stadium.

In the most exciting match of the day, Shahbaz Butt throttled Kalabagan Krira Chakra to a thrilling one-wicket victory against Partex SC, who lost the rain-curtailed match despite Rafiqul Islam's century and a hat-trick by left-arm spinner Tariqul Islam.

POINTS TABLE					
Teams	P	W	L	T/A	Pts
Mohammedan	11	9	2	-	18
Biman	10	8	1	1	17
Abahani	11	8	2	1	17
BKSP	10	7	2	1	15
Surjo Torun	10	6	4	-	12
City Club	10	4	5	1	9
DOHS	10	4	6	-	8
Victoria	10	4	6	-	8
Kalabagan	10	3	7	-	6
Partex	10	2	8	-	4
Sonargaon	10	2	8	-	4
Pegasus	10	2	8	-	4

Rafiqul made 105 off 129 balls and Rashed Hanif 63 from 77 deliveries as Partex scored a fighting 256-8 at the Fatullah Stadium. Rain intervened the Kalabagan innings after three deliveries and they were set a revised target of 188.

Pakistani batsman Butt, who shared 82 runs with fellow opener Nazmus Sadat, smashed a run-a-ball 69 to guide the side to 189-9 with three deliveries remaining.

Tariqul, who dismissed man-of-the-match Butt in the second ball of the 26th over with the rival total on 164, removed Syed Rasel and Hannan Sarker with his next two deliveries to complete the hat-trick.

Partex captured four more wickets in the space of ten runs but Faridudin's 5-ball 10 not out secured Kalabagan's third win in the fray.

**BRIEF SCORES**  
CITY CLUB: 215-9 in 50 overs (Rasel 18, Rabiul 37, Zahoor 23, Khadem 39, Arafat 57\*, Rashed 10, extras 10, Muktar 2-25, Nazmul 4-29).

YOUNG PEGASUS: 219-5 in 48.2 overs (Rabiul 39, Sumon 44,

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## Cubs ride on Rakin

SPORTS REPORTER

Touring Bangladesh Under-15 cricket team maintained their winning run, when they beat Cricket Association of Bengal (CAB) U-15s by 55 runs in the second one-day match at Malda yesterday.

Batting first after winning the toss, Bangladesh posted 207-10 in 48.3 overs with Rakin top-scoring 78 runs while Didar made 24.

Abhimanyu claimed three wickets for 22 runs.

Nasum captured four wickets for 21 runs while Shihab took three for 36 as CAB were dismissed for 152 in 40.2 overs.

Abhishek scored 38 runs for the hosts.

Earlier, Bangladesh U-15 team registered a 65-run win in the first one-day match at Balurghat after winning the first two-day match by five wickets in Coochbehar.

Bangladesh U-15 team will play the 3rd and last one-day match against CAB U-15 team on Thursday at Burdwan and the last 2-day match against the same side on April 5.

## Zia wins in ninth round

SPORTS REPORTER

Grandmaster Ziaur Rahman beat Indian International Master Konguvel Ponnuswamy in the ninth round of the 3rd Kolkata Open Grandmasters Chess Tournament at Gorky Sadan in Kolkata yesterday.

Zia improved his tally to 6.5 points to share the third place along with six other players while GM Abdullah Al Rakib, who lost his board to Rolando Nolte, and IM Enamul Hossain Rajib secured 5.5 points each. Rajib drew with Arghyadip Das of India.

Another Bangladeshi GM Niaz Murshed lost to GM David Alberto of Luxembourg to remain on five points while FM Sheikh Nasir Ahmed also secured five points after beating Arun Karthik of India.

GM Krishnan Sasikiran of India and GM Viktor Laznicka of Czech Republic were jointly leading the table with 7.5 points each.

In the ninth round, Taibur beat Laishram Imocha of India, Sagar beat KK Chatterjee of India and Parag beat Swamyas Mishra of India while Javed lost against Bitan Banerjee of India and Ali lost to IM Balasubramaniam of India.

## Akhtar to fight in court

AFP, Islamabad

Pakistan paceman Shoaib Akhtar said Tuesday he will fight a five-year ban imposed on him by the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) for violating the players' code of conduct.

"I am deeply disappointed and hurt. I will go to court and fight against the ban," Akhtar told AFP minutes after a disciplinary committee imposed the ban.

The 32-year-old Akhtar appeared before the committee earlier Tuesday, charged with publicly criticising the country's board in January for reducing his contract status.

He was already on two-years

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## Shoaib banned for 5 yrs

Cricket

AFP, Islamabad

Pakistan banned maverick paceman Shoaib Akhtar from playing cricket for five years on Tuesday for violating the players' code of conduct, the country's cricket chief said.

The 32-year-old Akhtar appeared before a disciplinary committee earlier Tuesday charged with publicly criticising the country's board. He was already on two years' probation for hitting a teammate with a bat.

The ban effectively ends the controversial eleven-year career of the world's fastest bowler, which has been plagued by injuries, discipline problems and a doping scandal in 2007.

"The committee has recommended a five year-ban on Shoaib Akhtar. He will be ineligible to play in Pakistan or to play for Pakistan anywhere else in the world," PCB chairman Nasim Ashraf told reporters.

"The board has lost confidence in Shoaib Akhtar and therefore felt that his presence in the field was damaging to the Pakistan team, for Pakistan players and for the image of Pakistan cricket," Ashraf added.

However the PCB chief said that Akhtar would still be able to play for other teams around the world, clearing the fast bowler to play for the lucrative Indian Premier League next month.

Ashraf added that it was a "sad day for me and for Shoaib Akhtar. He is such a talented player."

The PCB chairman said Akhtar had the right to appeal the decision.

Because he was already on probation, Akhtar faced a theoretical life ban for slamming the PCB for dual standards on awarding central contracts in January this year.

In October last year, Akhtar was fined 3.4 million rupees (52,000 dollars) and banned for 13 matches for hitting fellow paceman Mohammad Asif with a bat, just days before the start of the Twenty20 World Championships in South Africa.

Spinner Danish Kaneria, who also faced a charge of criticising the PCB, was severely reprimanded, Ashraf said.

Kaneria had criticised his demotion from category "B" to "C" in the central contract in an online column. He later blamed a newspaper for publishing his column out of context.

"Since this was Kaneria's first

offense on discipline, he has been severely reprimanded and barred from issuing any press statements," Ashraf said.

Akhtar was dropped from Pakistan's list of 15 contracted players in January after the paceman had another disappointing year, plagued by injuries and discipline problems.

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NOW WHAT? Banned Pakistani fast bowler Shoaib Akhtar walks off after his disciplinary hearing in Islamabad on Tuesday.

## Bhutia won't carry torch

AFP, New Delhi

India's football captain Bhaichung Bhutia on Tuesday refused to carry the Olympic torch when it arrives here this month in protest against China's crackdown in Tibet.

Bhutia, a Buddhist from north-eastern Sikkim state, nestled between India, China and Nepal, wrote to the Indian Olympic Association (IOA) saying he wanted to "show my solidarity" with Tibetans.

"I sympathise with the Tibetans and their cause. I have sent a letter to the IOA refusing to carry the torch," the 31-year-old Bhutia said in a statement.

"I have many friends in Sikkim who follow Buddhism. This is my

way of standing by the people of Tibet and their struggle," he later told reporters in Kolkata.

"I feel what's happening in Tibet is not right and in my small way I should show my solidarity," he said, adding his decision was "absolutely personal."

Indian Olympic officials said

they had not received any communication from Bhutia.

"I have learned from someone that Bhutia has turned down our invitation," IOA secretary general Randhir Singh said. "Since we have not received any letter from him, I would not like to comment on it."

Three other Indian athletes invited to join the relay -- Milkha Singh, GS Randhawa and PT Usha - said they would participate.

"I feel sports and politics should not be mixed. And I'll surely take part in the relay," Singh told the Press Trust of India.

Randhawa, a hurdler, said participating was a "matter of great pride and honour for me and I'll be there in the relay."

The India-based Tibetan government-in-exile hailed Bhutia's decision but said it will not try to influence other athletes.

"We appreciate Bhutia's gesture and welcome it," Thubten Samphel,

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## Did U Know?

Women's football was included in the Olympic programme at the 1996 Atlanta Games.



## Ramon Calderon

(Real Madrid president)

"Raul is a symbol of the club and an extraordinary player. I am thrilled for him and he deserves all the credit that comes his way."

On Raul Gonzalez, who stands joint second along with Carlos Alonso Santillana in the club's all-time scorer list after scoring his 290th goal for the club in their 3-1 win over Sevilla on Sunday.



## TEN Sports

UEFA Champions League Arsenal v Liverpool Live from 12:45am (Thursday)

## ZEE Sports

UEFA Champions League Fenerbahce v Chelsea Live from 12:45am (Thursday)

## ESPN

Sportscentre India Sports News Live at 8:30pm

## 11 nat'l hockey players open for transfer

SPORTS REPORTER

The 11 players who resigned from the national team after failing to secure contracts with any team during the Premier Hockey League transfers, have been released from the national pool.

The Bangladesh Hockey Federation (BHF) took the decision on Monday night after a marathon five-hour meeting.

Any team will be eligible to

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EASY PICKINGS: South Africa captain Graeme Smith (below) lifts wicketkeeper Mark Boucher in a strength exercise drill during training in Ahmedabad on Tuesday.

PHOTO: AFP