

ICC AGM
in Dubai

CRICINFO, undated

The International Cricket Council (ICC) annual conference will be held in Dubai this June, ending a 99-year association with Lord's.

Cricinfo has learned that the decision to abandon London as the host venue was taken by the majority of the ICC executive board at the opening of the IPL in Bangalore last week after claims by Peter Chingoka that attempts by him to obtain a visa to enter the UK had been blocked.

Although there was no formal meeting held in Bangalore, only two or three board heads were absent, and when Chingoka flagged that he had not been successful in obtaining a visa, it was agreed to switch the get together to the ICC headquarters. A formal announcement is expected in the next few days.

A spokesman for the MCC, who host all events at Lord's, told Cricinfo the club was aware of the decision.

Yuvi, Bhajji
eager to win

PTI, Mohali

With no certain word still on Sachin Tendulkar's Indian Premier League debut on Friday, Kings XI Punjab will be eager to take the opportunity to clinch an elusive win at home turf against Mumbai Indians here.

The Yuvraj Singh-led Punjab team, having lost both its matches - against Chennai Super Kings here and Rajasthan Royals at Jaipur, is bound to be under pressure to record a victory as it will be again playing before their home crowd.

Though Yuvraj is one of the dangerous batsman in this format of the game, he is yet to unleash his real firepower for which he is known. He scored 23 and 57 in his previous two matches.

Other top batsman Mahela Jayawardene is also yet to prove himself while his compatriot Kumar Sangakkara would wish to play a big knock on Friday.

Punjab's other problem are its strike bowlers, who are yet to live up to their reputation.

Right-arm fast bowler Brett Lee finished with similar figures of 4-0-35-1 in his two matches while left-arm pacer Irfan Pathan had figures of 4-0-47-2 in his first match.

Sreesanth is yet to come good for the Punjab team as he has proved expensive in the six overs he has bowled in two matches without much success.

Campaign

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for which Salahuddin and three other players were convicted," said a written statement.

"What we are trying to now is that his panel has been abusing power by using BFF facilities for the election. They have manipulated the forming of DFAs and also now trying to use Forum in a bid to control football.

"They also once forced the ex-BFF general secretary (Harunur Rashid) to resign his post and did not let candidates to take part in the election. This was also unjust," the statement added.

Zakaria Pintoo, Harunur Rashid, Salam Mursheidi, Dewan Shafiqul Arefin Tutul and Nurul Alam Chowdhury were also present.

While the two parties tried to get at each other, the BFF at an executive committee meeting last night approved that the 14 clubs and DFAs will be able to have replacement voters in the election for the executive members of the incumbent committee.

According to Article No 21 of the BFF statutes, no EC members can resign or vote but the FIFA/AFC have given special permission to change their councillors so that the vote of the clubs/DFAs are not wasted.

Meanwhile, AFC general secretary Dato Paul Mony and vice-president Monil Fernando will arrive in Dhaka within the next two days as observers of the BFF polls.

Rosicky's injury

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"I do not want to pre-empt what the further prognosis will be, I will know that when I have started training. I still do not have a clear time frame for taking part in preparations, that will become clear in the coming days," he added.

Rosicky's state of health is being closely followed in his homeland, where he has been cleared by his club to continue his recovery.

The 27-year-old has been sidelined by a painful inflammation at the back of his knee since the end of January.

His continued absence for club and country have prompted local media and Czech football bosses to raise the question of whether Juventus star and former European footballer of the year, Pavel Nedved, should be lured back into the national squad for the European championships in Austria and Switzerland.



Grand Master Ziaur Rahman (R) makes a move against GM Niaz Murshed during their 34th National Chess Championship tie at the chess federation hall room yesterday.

Same dancers
in IPL, ICL

INTERNET, undated

The Indian Premier League (IPL) may think of the Indian Cricket League (ICL) as a rebel without a cause and the feeling may well be reciprocated but, when it comes to hiring technicians, cheerleaders and even Bollywood stars, they seem like brothers in arms.

N Sudarshan, a freelancer associated with the ICL as a TV production director, has been lapped up by IPL too. Reason: Dearth of good technicians who can work in a cricket environment or produce programmes on the spot. Sudarshan has been hired by the World Sports Group, which, along with Sony Max, produces the Extra Innings.

"There are very few technical people in India who can make cricket related programmes," said Sudarshan from Hyderabad, where he was getting ready for Thursday's Hyderabad-Jaipur match.

"I am the director of the Extra Innings programme, which is telecast before and after every IPL

match," he added.

According to Sudarshan, he isn't the only one involved with both leagues. "It is difficult to give the exact number of people, but my estimate is that there may be as many as 20 to 25 freelancers who have worked in both leagues."

Some of them are foreigners. Like Tim Fillay of Australia. Fillay was there at the ICL and is now freelancing as a director with the IPL.

Technicians aren't the only ones bridging the IPL-ICL gap. Two Russian cheerleaders, Katrina and Maria, who put on their dancing shoes for the ICL, are now busy entertaining supporters of the Jaipur IPL team.

Their choreographer, Sylvester, said: "They are freelancers, so when they were performing at the ICL, they got an offer from an IPL team. So, now you can see them performing there as well."

The same can be said of Bollywood actor Sameera Reddy, who had performed at an ICL match in Panchkula and is now showcasing her dancing skills for the Jaipur team.

Said an ICL official, who did not wish to be named, "The BCCI can ban the players and the umpires but I am sure they cannot do that with the technicians and showgirls as there is a dearth of good ones in the country."

Tendulkar turns 35

FROM PAGE 17
exemplary manner in which he conducts himself on and off the field.

"He is a wonderful guy. Naturally and exceptionally talented, affectionate and always smiling. I feel Sachin is truly great because he is disciplined, cooperative, naturally talented and a dedicated player.

"He should be allowed to continue till he wants to."

Dhoni said Tendulkar was "the special guy made by God to play cricket at its best."

"The challenges Sachin has faced over the past 19 years have been huge," said Dhoni. "It is not only about on-field performance, but also about being able to compete with the fittest individuals in the team."

"I think to be consistent throughout is phenomenal. He is a very special guy who has been made by God to play cricket at its best."

India may have found talented young batsmen in Dhoni and

Yuvraj Singh, but still rely on veteran Tendulkar to deliver in crisis.

Tendulkar was the only senior batsman to retain a place in the recent one-day series in Australia, scoring an unbeaten 117 and 91 to help his team clinch the best-of-three-finals against the hosts.

He may have curbed a few strokes of late, but remains one of the most innovative batsmen of his era. Such is his charisma that he hogs the limelight as much with his failures as with his successes.

Australia skipper Ponting recently said his bowlers had to put in an extra effort to get rid of Tendulkar because the Indian had always looked solid.

"He is in the same league as Lara, but I've always felt Sachin has a tighter technique. Because he's so solid, our bowlers have had to work hard to get him out," said Ponting.

"At different times, we've worked out different plans, but Sachin comes up with something to combat them... the sign of a truly class player."

Chennai scrape through

FROM PAGE 17
came up against old nemesis Shaun Pollock, who knowing the Australian's tendency to stand out of his crease, summoned Luke Ronchi up to the stumps. Hayden responded with a deft paddle sweep for four before smashing two fours over the bowler's head. To make matters worse, four byes came off the final delivery of the over, which cost an expensive 18 runs.

Michael Hussey, top scorer in Chennai's previous game, failed to cash in, bottom-edging one onto the stumps while giving Dhawal Kulkarni the charge, but Hayden was muscling the ball cleanly, biffing a short one from Nehra to bring up the 200th four of the tournament. He was joined by Suresh Raina, who was content with pushing the ball into the gaps for singles. Kulkarni varied his length to good effect in his first spell, and wasn't afraid to push in the occasional bouncer, including one that surprised Raina.

Harbhajan brought himself on in the eighth over and Raina, stepping out, nearly found the fielder in the deep. Dwayne Bravo, a last-minute addition to the Mumbai Indians squad, came on at the other end, and Hayden nearly

cleaned up Raina with the straight boundary. Harbhajan conceded only 14 off his two overs but Raina broke the shackles by clubbing a low full toss over long-off. The 50-partnership came off 35 balls, and Chennai were set once again for a big score.

After ten overs, they were at 82 for 2, and it soon became 112 for 2 after 12. Bravo was pulled for six over midwicket by Raina before Vikrant Yeligati gave away 16 off his only over. Pollock came on for his second spell, and this time Hayden brought out the reverse-sweep, a shot that would have surely deflated the South African. Raina cashed in as well, guiding one past through the short fine leg, and Pollock was to finish with 0 for 32 off his three overs. Of all the bowlers used by Mumbai, only Nehra bowled out his four, while Harbhajan surprisingly bowled only two.

Mumbai lost Ronchi early in their reply, and Jayasuriya, who made full use of Oram's poor control, departed trying to pull one shot too many against Manpreet Gony. A rather unknown entity, the tall Gony was excellent with his line and length, using his height to good effect. His first over was a maiden, and Dhoni bowled him through his

Popularity more
than Bollywood

PTI, New Delhi

Jaw-dropping action, nerve-wrecking thriller, high glamour quotient and song-and-dance to boot, the Indian Premier League is threatening Bollywood's popularity across the border, according to Pakistan cricket captain Shoaib Malik.

Popular Hindi movies have traditionally, and often stealthily, managed their ways to the other side of the Line of Control. But of late, the Pakistanis have discovered a new source of wholesome entertainment in the form of the ongoing IPL, said Malik.

"People there have lapped it up like movies. It's like enjoying a cinema with popcorn. The three-hour duration (of the matches) also helped to create the craze," Malik, part of the IPL Delhi Daredevils squad, said here on Thursday.

Along with the rest of the people in Pakistan, Malik and his teammates were also hooked on to IPL matches even when they were playing against Bangladesh in the just-concluded ODI series.

"Even when we were playing Bangladesh, we saw the IPL matches in the dressing room," he said.

Malik had no qualms admitting that the IPL's standard was higher than that of Pakistan's recent series against Bangladesh.

Rajshahi protests

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"We have demanded to make Rajshahi a Test venue for long and the authorities always turned a blind eye to our demand. Now they are taking away floodlights to downsize the quality of our stadium. Such move cannot be tolerated," said RTVMC convenor Liaqat Ali. "If Rajshahi is not made a Test venue for residential problems, how does the Mirpur stadium qualified for international matches without floodlights?" he asked.

Rajshahi Rakha Shangram Parasad convenor Zamat Khan said that they will go for tough movements if the steps were not cancelled immediately.

Rezaun Nabi, acting Rajshahi mayor, and all ward commissioners in a joint statement expressed deep concern at the shifting of the lights.

Rajshahi District Sports Association general secretary Imtiaz Ahmed Shamsul Huda said his association requested NCC to reconsider their decision.

Many local clubs also issued statements protesting the matter as well as demanding immediate cancellation of the decision.

Rakib shares
lead with Zia,
Sagar

SPORTS REPORTER

Grand Master Ziaur Rahman and FIDE Master Minhajuddin Ahmed Sagar joined defending champions GM Abdullah Al Rakib at the top of the points table in the 34th National Chess Championship at the federation hall-room yesterday.

After five rounds, the three players are on 4.5 points.

Rakib drew with FM Mohammad Abdul Malek while Zia beat Niaz Murshed and Sagar beat Syed Mahfuzur Rahman.

Today is the rest day of the competition.

Pioneer League
from today

UNB, Dhaka

The Dhaka City Corporation Pioneer Football League begins today at the Bangabandhu National Stadium.

President of Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) SA Sultan, in his last public appearance as BFF boss, will declare the Metropolitan Under-16 soccer league open in a colourful ceremony.

League sponsors Dhaka City Corporation will bear all expenses of the tournament, estimated at Tk 10 lakh.

Seventy teams, including 18 new clubs, split into five zones -- East, West, North, South and Central -- are taking part in the 19th version of the competition.

After the initial league basis matches, top 20 teams, four each from each zone, will play in the Super League.

Finally, two teams will earn promotion to the Metropolitan third division football league.

The league will be held in Dhanmondi Club ground, Mohammadpur Eidgah ground, Mohakhali T&T Colony ground, Basabo Tarun Sangha ground, Jagannath University College ground, Dhupkhola ground, Kamapur Stadium and Outer Stadium.

LOCAL SNIPPETS

FROM PAGE 17
eight-wicket win over Sinha Textiles at the Fatullah Cricket Stadium. Batting first, Sinha Textiles scored 185 in 44.2 overs. Samar scored 64 off 88 balls. But Sommyo's innings took North Bengal to the victory in 38.2 overs.

In another match, East End Club (213-3) beat Udit Club (210 all out) by seven wickets at the Dhaka University ground.

DIVIII CRICKET
Azad Boys snuck past Bodilene Cricket Coaching School by two runs in the Third Division Cricket League at the Dhanmondi Club ground.

Batting first, Azad scored 273 in 47.3 overs, banking on Arif's steady 90 off 114 balls. In reply, Bodilene were bowled out for 271 in the final over. Rana smashed a 64-ball 83.

In the other matches, Matuail Cricket Academy (214 all out) beat Dikusha Sporting Club (139 all out) by 75 runs at the Uttara Friends Club ground while GMCC (210 all out) beat Mirpur Boys Cricket Club (172 all out) by 38 runs at the Dhanmondi Cricket Stadium.

Women eye

FROM PAGE 17
The national women's coach, who informed that he brought pace bowlers from the under-16 boys' team to the nets to get the girls ready to face fast bowling, had a lot of faith in his charges.

"The girls are well prepared as they have been playing together for quite a while. We are hoping to do well and will not give up. I tried but could not gather video footage but I have seen some of the other teams on television. Most of the teams are strong but we have to do well," hoped Zafrul.

The women cricketers, who are the reigning Asian Cricket Council (ACC) champions, will take on India in their opening match in Weledara on the opening day of competition.

Own goal

FROM PAGE 20
contact with John Arne after the game.

"Eventually he sent me back a text message saying, 'I don't want to speak. I'm so disappointed. Give me a call back in a couple of days and we'll speak then.'"

Riise's future at Anfield was already far from certain before his gaffe and the defender admitted his hopes of earning an extension to his current contract, which runs out next year, were hardly improved on Tuesday.

Newcastle and Aston Villa have been linked with Riise, who said: "I hope and still believe in a new contract with Liverpool."

"But I cannot say definitely that I have a future here when I only have one year left of my deal and haven't heard anything from the club yet."

ECB mulls IPL model

Cricket

BBC ONLINE, undated

The England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) has begun canvassing the views of players with the aim of setting up its own version of the Indian Premier League (IPL).

BBC Sport understands intensive talks with an American backer are taking place with the full support of the Professional Cricketers' Association.

England captain Michael Vaughan said: "Even young players at Yorkshire want to talk about IPL cricket."

"We would be silly not to try to produce our own kind of competition."

And one prominent county chairman has urged the ECB to act quickly.

Hampshire's Rod Bransgrove said: "We invented Twenty20, but India reacted fastest to its commercial potential."

Vaughan, speaking ahead of the LV County Championship campaign opener against Hampshire at Headingley, added: "Whether you can throw the monies which have been thrown about in India into a league in England, I'm not sure."

"But it is on the tip of everyone's tongues."

Former England opener Marcus Trescothick also feels any English Premier League has to be considered.

"You can never rule anything out -- whatever it is, as long as it doesn't clash with the county stuff," he said.

"It's just a case of understanding what the whole set-up would be. You can't rule anything out at this stage -- money talks."

"Everyone has a right to play in ICL or IPL or whatever it might be -- and make the money they need to."

The IPL, which began last Friday, has attracted big crowds, eager to watch top international names and all India's star players competing in the game's newest and most popular format.

The action off the pitch, with Bollywood's biggest stars spotted in the stands and American cheerleaders rousing the fans, has also proved a big hit.

The ECB began talks with Sir Allen Stanford, a Texan billionaire who has his own Twenty20 tournament in the West Indies, on 15 April. Two days later it said it was "very likely" to accept his proposal to field an England side for a one-off match, in spring 2009, against a West Indies All-Stars XI.

The winner would receive 20 million dollars (10 million pound). ECB executives then flew to Bangalore for the IPL launch where they held further talks with the West Indies Cricket Board.

BBC Sport now understands the original, single Twenty20 international will develop into a full series.

Meanwhile, Stanford and the ECB have started focusing their talks on a response to the IPL.

The two sides are, considering ways of giving England's contracted players -- who are barred from accepting the IPL dollars until 2010 -- a way of improving their incomes via Twenty20.

One source said: "The players' views are being listened to."

"Sean Morris (PCA chief executive) and David Collier (ECB chief executive) are speaking on a very regular basis."

"Anything that makes the game more healthy is something the PCA

would be in favour of."

And though Bransgrove said he did not know any details of the talks between Stanford and the ECB, he said an English version of IPL would be a "fantastic idea".

Bransgrove told BBC Sport: "There is a need for dialogue between the ECB and creative entrepreneurs."

"I hope we learn more about the potential of Twenty20 cricket and sell it big-time to the public and broadcasters."

Bransgrove, a businessman who has invested millions of pounds into cricket, said it was not necessary for the ECB to copy the IPL strategy of selling team franchises to entrepreneurs and celebrities.

But he did say: "It would be nice to see more inward investment."

"We should invest in getting more international stars in the English game, rather than less."

"This is a game that needs full exploitation rather than regulation. We can learn from the commercial approach to the game that the IPL has taken."

The ECB, which released a statement on Tuesday mentioning "constructive, positive and very productive" discussions with Stanford, declined to comment further.

Stanford gave an interview to the Times in which he called the ECB "conservative".

He added: "The ECB realise they're at a crossroads. They either let the Indians do it or they step up and get a game plan."

"You want something that will have lasting value for everybody. The ECB, by my estimation, need to be the driver."

"With the IPL, when the sizzle and sparkle has gone away, what's left?"

TT ropes in AB Bank

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Table Tennis Federation (BTTF) yesterday signed a deal with AB Bank to get a handsome amount of sponsorship for the 29th National Table Tennis Championships and two training programmes.

The AB Bank will provide about Tk 22.42 lakh for the year 2008 including seven lakh for the national championships, which will be held in June.

AB Bank president and managing director Kaiser A Chowdhury signed the agreement with BTTF president Abu Solaiman Chowdhury and later handed over the cheque at a media conference at a local hotel yesterday.

The qualifiers will be held from June 2-12 at different districts while the final round will be held in Dhaka from June 24-28.

The age-group programmes, to be held twice a year, would be

aiming at improving technique and skill of paddlers as well as talent hunting.

The AB Bank will also provide gear for the event. The national team and top four national ranking men's, women's, boys' and girls' teams will wear the AB Bank logo.

"I thank AB Bank because they have come forward to sponsor us in response to NSC chairman General Moeen U Ahmed's call to the banks to help the sport federations," said Solaiman.

"This is a very significant day in the history of the federation. We have been trying to develop the game for long and we feel it's a good start."

Replying to a question, the BTTF chief admitted that during his long tenure, he had failed to give momentum to the development of the game.

Bangladesh Olympic Association vice-president Mizanur Rahman Manu said the

federation should try to create fans of the game, otherwise it would face extinction.

National Sports Council (NSC) secretary Akbar Hossain told that the NSC would try to increase the budget for training for the federation in the future.

"Table tennis has been ignored under pressure of the popular games like football and cricket. If our sponsorship brings back life to the popular indoor games, we would most happy," said Kaiser Chowdhury.

"The sport has reached the highest level in Asia but there is no international success for us in this arena. We have been involved with the game in the past but this time it is a big effort from our part and hopes succeed."

"We want to make the game more popular and bring international success. I hope this agreement will improve the players' quality and scout new talents," Kaiser added.



AB Bank president and managing director Kaiser A Chowdhury (2nd from L) hands over a cheque to BTTF president Abu Solaiman Chowdhury during a press conference at Hotel Sonargaon yesterday.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS	35 Unruly groups	2 Dine	21 Nursery bed
1 Serpents	36 Demolish	3 Expert	22 Start over
5 Was a trailblazer	37 Shrimp recipe	4 Fishing nets	23 Piglets' papas
8 Versifier	40 PI	5 Told a whopper	25 Scripture
12 Footproof	41 Follower	6 Blunder	26 Exceptional
14 Erstwhile Montreal athlete	41 Carte	7 Loses all	27 Detail, for short
15 Information you don't want too soon	42 Some poultry	8 Read	29 Hootbeat sound
16 Check	47 Smell	9 The	31 "A mouse"
17 Bow the head	48 Solon, for one	10 Grand story	33 Entomb within a wall
18 Swoop (onto)	49 Hereditary bit	11 Coloration	34 Cavort
20 Threaded nail	50 Square	13 Circulate	36 Millard Fillmore, for one
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24 Angers	DOWN	20 Round Table	38 Relinquish
25 Working class?	1 Donkey	22 Address	39 Soon, in verse
26 Disen-cumber	Solution time: 24 mins.		43 Aries
29 One-named singer/dancer			44 Gabor or Mendes
30 Gita			45 Agent, briefly
32 Water heaters			46 "No seas!" sign
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