



Did U Know?

The oldest player to play in the UEFA Champions League is Lazio's Marco Ballotta. He set the record while playing against Real Madrid in December 2007 at the age of 43 years and 168 days.



What to Watch

ESPN

English Premier League
Sunderland v Middlesbrough
Live from 5:40pm
Liverpool v Stoke City
Live from 7:55pm
Blackburn v Fulham
Delayed from 10:30pm
Primera Liga
Atletico Madrid v Recreativo
Live from 1:55am (Sunday)

STAR Sports

English Premier League
West Ham v Newcastle
Live from 7:55pm
Bolton v Arsenal
Live from 10:25pm



Sachin Tendulkar

(India batting superstar)
"I don't think much about records. I want to enjoy my game. If players focus on their performance, records automatically fall into place."



Reefat shares lead with Shakil, Nasir

SPORTS REPORTER

Minhazuddin Ahmed Sagar's first defeat in the Destiny 2000 3rd Open FIDE Rating chess tournament cost him the lead after seven rounds yesterday.

Grandmaster Reefat Bin Sattar defeated Sagar at the Chess Federation hall-room to join FIDE Master Abu Sufian Shakil and FM Sheikh Nasir Ahmed atop the table with six points each.

Sagar and nine other players shared the second position with 5.5 points.

DEAR READERS

Please accept my sincere thanks for the overwhelming response to our request for 'sharing your views.' The topic of the player exodus was one close to your heart as the volume of letters suggested. However due to the lack of space we were forced to be selective and therefore apologise to the many who could not see their names in print. Today's letters are the last that will be printed. But we look forward to your continued co-operation in the future when any such pressing issues rear their head. You are however still free to share your views at any time with us. Thank You.

Sports Editor

Abul rescues Abahani

SPORTS REPORTER



Abahani put their wretched start in the Citycell B. League behind yesterday with a scrappy 1-0 away win against Farashganj at the Birshreshtha Matur Rahman Stadium in Narshingdi.

Abul Hossain fired the winner three minutes before halftime of the second round game for the defending champions, who suffered a shock 2-1 defeat to Rahmatganj in the opening match of the professional league's second edition last week.

With stalwarts Joy, Pradeep, Siraji and Mamun still nursing injuries, the Sky-blues hardly looked comfortable on a bumpy pitch at the Narshingdi Stadium, which made its B. League debut as old-Dhaka outfit Farashganj's home ground.

With the battle containing mostly in the middle throughout the first half, Abahani made most of a defensive lapse to seal the victory when Farashganj central defender Abu Faisal headed a cross by Abahani captain Nazrul -- the centre-back who had to play as rightback -- towards the top of their area.

A half-hearted clearance

reached Abul just inside the penalty box and the Abahani midfielder smashed a low drive into the far corner to separate the twosides.

Abahani's second chance almost put the visitors 2-0 up in the first-half stoppage time but Nigerian midfielder Emeka nodded a cross by Ibrahim just wide.

After the resumption, the two sides failed to ignite the 4,000-strong crowd -- who came despite heavy showers shortly before the match -- but Abahani came alive in the last ten minutes to produce a series of chances.

Instead of trying to just hold onto the slim lead, Amalesh Sen sent fresh legs of Zahed Parvez, a half-fit Mamun and Tipu in the latter part of the game to keep Farashganj on the defensive.

However, Zahed headed a chance wide while veteran Tipu also failed to keep his shot on target. In the dying moment, Emily set Zahed with a sitter but the young winger missed the mark for inches as the heavyweights had to remain satisfied with a slender victory.

It was Abahani's second win against Farashganj this season after a 2-1 success in last month's Federation Cup semifinal.

On the other hand, Federation Cup's surprise pack Farashganj -- who lost 3-2 to Sheikh Russel in their league opener in Dhaka,

remained pointless after two defeats in as many matches.

"I admit that my boys have not played well since we lost the Federation Cup semifinal to Abahani. We were unlucky to lose against Russel to a last minute penalty. Today, it was Faisal's fault. Otherwise we looked set to win at least one point," said home coach Kamal Babu, who will be pitted against fellow old-Dhaka rivals Rahmatganj in the next round in the capital.

Abahani's old guard Amalesh said he was not able to field a full-strength side.

"We have three major injuries and Mamun is also not hundred percent fit. And the players were a bit shaky after a first round loss," said Amalesh adding that he withdrew Ghanaian striker Ibrahim as he was getting aggressive towards the end.

"He could have had a card any time, so I replaced him. In fact, my midfield was not up to the mark. Still, we wasted a few good chances in the last minutes."

Abahani manager Satyajit Das Rupu complained that the ground was not well prepared.

"It did not get enough time to prepare for top level football and players were at injury risks. We had also expected a lot more spectators," said Rupu, whose side host

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Farashganj defender Abu Faisal tries to stop a run by Abahani striker Emily (R) during their Citycell B. League match at the Birshreshtha Matur Rahman Stadium in Narshingdi yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

Jankovic, Dementieva out

Tennis

AFP, Tokyo

Former world number one Jelena Jankovic and Beijing Olympic gold medalist Elena Dementieva both suffered upset losses in the quarterfinals at the Pan Pacific Open tennis tournament on Friday.

Serbian top seed Jankovic, who was hoping to regain the number one ranking by winning in Tokyo, crashed to a 2-6, 7-5, 7-5 defeat to the 2004 US Open champion Svetlana Kuznetsova of Russia, fifth seed.

The second-seeded Dementieva, the winner here in 2006, failed to keep an early lead before going down to qualifier Katarina Srebotnik of Slovenia 6-3, 6-4.

Sixth seed Agnieszka Radwanska of Poland was also beaten by Russia's Nadia Petrova 6-3, 6-0, while fourth seed Dina Safina of Russia was the best-ranked player to remain after beating qualifier Kaia Kanepi of Estonia 6-4, 6-7, 6-2.

Kuznetsova, ranked seventh against Jankovic's second, broke the opening game and then missed six break opportunities before losing the first set.

Jankovic had to crawl back from a break down in each set and at 5-5 in the second set she hit her sixth double fault on an advantage point for Kuznetsova before the Russian held her own to even the score.

Jankovic came back from a break down three times in the final set, but again hit a double-fault at 30-40 in the 11th game to go down 5-6.

Kuznetsova, who avenged her Olympic loss to China's Li Na in the first round, made no mistakes in the following game, hitting a backhand passing shot at 40-30 to finish off the two-hour-26-minute battle.

"It was a tough match for me. I had my opportunities. I wanted to win, of course, it just wasn't my day," said Jankovic, 23, who became the world number one for

just one week during the Beijing Olympics.

"She played really solid tennis today. It was very close, unfortunately it went her way.

"The percentage of my serve was getting lower and lower, then in the third set I made a lot of double-faults. I don't know why, maybe because I was a little bit tired."

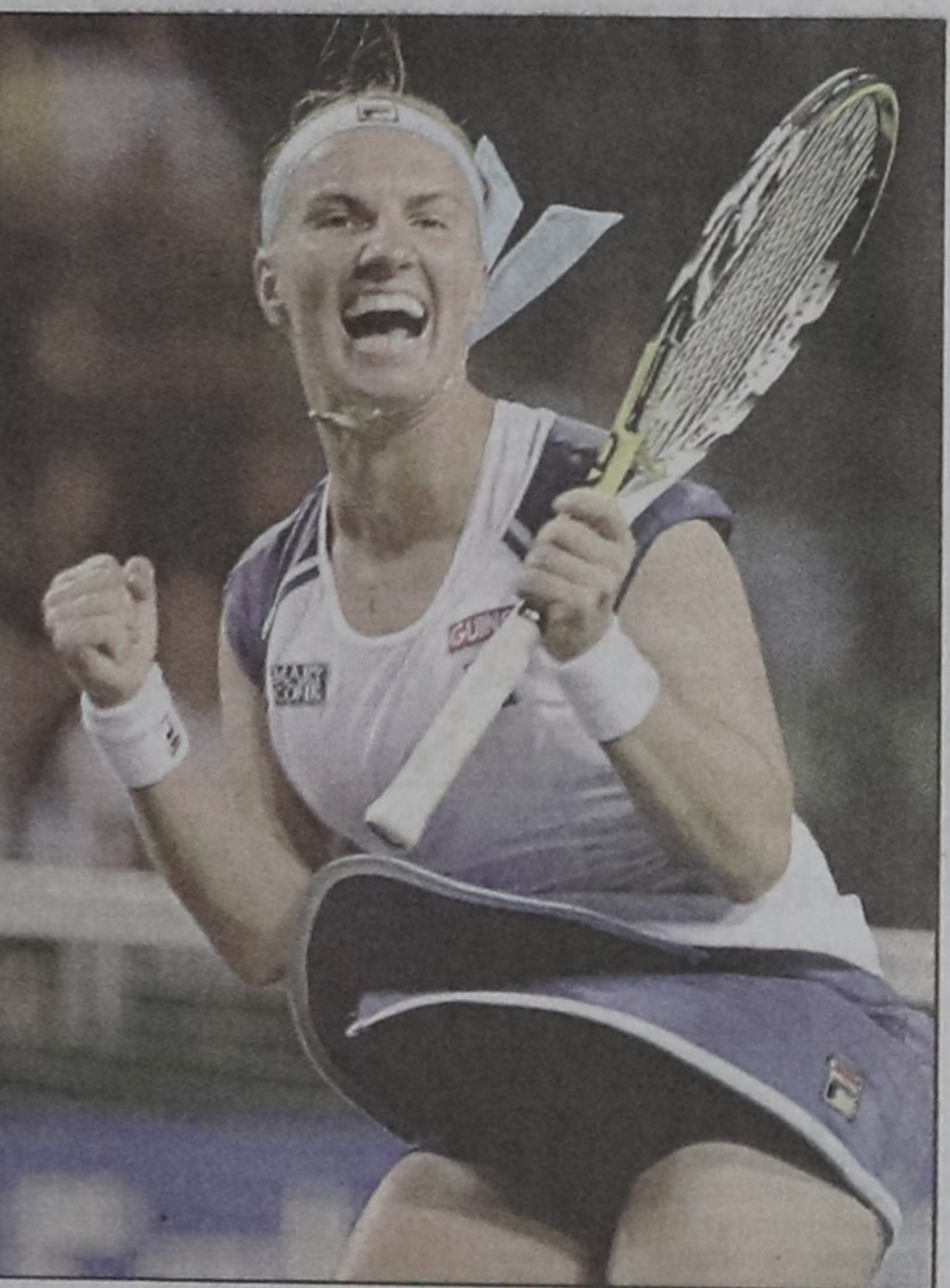
Kuznetsova said: "She was the most consistent this year, she played very good. It's never easy

because she brings all the balls back. I'm very happy with my performance, the way I was attacking all the time."

It was the first time since 2000 Srebotnik has reached the semifinals here.

"Of course, I was very happy. It's a big win for me. Elena is playing in very, very good form lately, she won the gold medal, so I knew she is really one of the hot players at the

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Russian Svetlana Kuznetsova celebrates her victory against Serbian Jelena Jankovic in the quarterfinals of the Pan Pacific Open in Tokyo yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

Academy lose four-dayer

CRICINFO, undated

Jeewan Mendis scored his second century of the match, and Akalanka Gangama and Ranesh Perera ran through the GP-BCB National Cricket Academy line-up as Sri Lanka Academy made a strong comeback to win the third and final four-day game in Colombo.

Sri Lanka had conceded a 69-run first-innings lead, and began the final day 143 runs ahead with five wickets remaining in their second. Mendis, the Sri Lankan captain, added 45 runs to his overnight score of 93 as Sri Lanka pushed their second-innings total to 285. Wicketkeeper Gihan De Silva gave Mendis support with his 24, but Nasir Hossain took four lower-order wickets with his offspin to leave Mendis stranded. Mendis was the last man out, making 138, two more than his first-innings score.

Chasing 217, Bangladesh had a shaky start as Gangama removed three batsmen with the new ball. Bangladesh's batsmen struggle to go past single figures, with only Shamsur Rahman and Marshall Ayub scoring more than ten among the top eight.

Shamsur fell for 23 to medium-pacer Chaminda Vidanapathirana, before Perera triggered a collapse with his five-for. Four of his wickets came in the space of 4.3 overs as Bangladesh were reduced to 75 for 8. Mahbul Alam, the No. 9 batsman, led a resistance from the tailenders. He scored 53, and took his side to 112 along with Ziaur Rahman, who made 17. Perera got his fifth wicket as he had Rahman caught by Mendis, and Bangladesh's innings folded up on 151 when Mendis finally dismissed Alam for 53.

The two teams will now face off in three one-dayers, with the first one on September 21.

'Countries will regret pulling out of Trophy'

AGENCIES, undated

Denying a rift between the Asian bloc and the western world, International Cricket Council (ICC) chief executive Haroon Lorgat believes a misconstrued picture by security experts hired by various boards to assess the situation in Pakistan led to the postponement of the Champions Trophy.

Speaking to Business Day, Lorgat said that countries that opted out of playing in Pakistan may look back and "think they made the wrong decision in deciding not to go."

Last month five of the eight participating nations -- England, New Zealand, Australia, South Africa and West Indies -- confirmed

during a teleconference that they would not send their teams for the event due to security concerns.

"The problem was that each country had its own security teams involved and they came up with differing views," Lorgat said. "I would like to look at ways of consolidating our security activities, so that there is only one security team involved in assessing these risks. Bob Nichols and his security team, which the ICC uses, are based in Pakistan and they thought the environment was safe enough. But others did not. However, I still believe they might now think they got it wrong."

Lorgat sought to play down talk of a divide in the cricketing world. "I was very wary of this whole thing when I came to Dubai to take up my post. So much had been made of the big divide in cricket that I was prepared to tread very warily," he said. "But since I have been here, I have not seen any sign of it. I have seen India and England take sides on some issues; I have seen England and New Zealand take

HAROON LORGAT

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A Cricketer and A Maiden

AFP, Mumbai

Showbusiness and cricket have long been passions in India. Now the two are joining forces in a new television show that pairs well-known stars with their sporting counterparts in a dance contest.

"Ek Khiladi Ek Haseena", loosely translated as A Cricketer and A Maiden, follows a similar format to the popular British variety show "Strictly Come Dancing", where celebrities team up with ballroom dancing professionals.

Former England opening batsman Mark Ramprakash and fast bowler Darren Gough have both won that series, showing nifty footwork and a previously hidden talent for the Tango, Foxtrot and Cha Cha Cha.

Attempting to do something

similar are fast bowler Shanthakumar Sreesanth, spinner Harbhajan Singh, swing bowler Irfan Pathan, wicketkeeper Dinesh Karthik, former slow bowler Nikhil Chopra and former batsman Vinod Kamble.

Their partners will be stars of the large and small screen Surveen Chawla, Mona Singh, Ashima Bhalla, Nigar Khan, Barkha Bisht and Shama Sikander.

But instead of ballroom, they will be swinging to popular tracks in an hour-long show from next Friday and Saturday on the cable-satellite channel Colors, in the hope of winning a 54,000-dollar top prize.

Castings a careful eye over their efforts will be former Pakistan all-rounder Wasim Akram, who with the former Miss Universe-turned-

Bollywood star Sushmita Sen and the studio audience will vote on the couples' efforts.

Television advertisements for the show have already begun running, with the cricketers, dressed in maroon silk shirts, throwing shapes with their partners.

Colors head of programmes Ashvini Yardi said in a statement: "We've all grown up idolising our cricketing heroes. I am sure that after 'Ek Khiladi Ek Haseena', we'll be practising their steps as well."

England's Gough won "Strictly Come Dancing" after being left out of the national side in 2005.

But there is no danger of Harbhajan being double-booked for the upcoming three-Test series against Australia starting early next month: the dance show is recorded.

VOX POP: Readers speak out on player exodus

Bangladesh is the most exceptional cricket team amongst the Test playing countries. We have the most exceptional winning rate and the most impressive losing rate too. And our aim in the match is also exceptional. Any other Test playing team tries to win the match but we try to play out 50 overs and score past 200. Where this amount of exceptional matters are happening so simply an exceptional mass resignation is very easily committed. Now we should not cry anymore for these players. Because they were not real match-winners. I think it is a better move for our cricket. Who knows?

Imran Ahmad

It's a disgrace that these players marooned our country just for money. I understand if Bashir, Rafique and other retired cricketers join ICL. They are at the end of their career and there is not much they can contribute. But what about Nafees, Aftab, Dhiman, Alok and Mosharraf Hossain. These players

are earning enough money already and they have so many years left in their career. I do not understand how they can justify this move except accepting the truth that they left for money.

I read that some players accused BCB and the coach for not properly treating them and some said they are not sure if their place in the team is guaranteed. Let's decipher the first accusation. When Aftab was injured or any other player for say I know BCB sends these players to Australia for proper treatment and tries to take care as much as they can. BCB has its limitation too and I agree on some instances they could have handled some situations more professionally. But that couldn't be the reason to leave your country in jeopardy. Why do we hear all these now? Why couldn't they accuse BCB before? Suddenly they all came out of the closet? Some players said their place in the team is not guaranteed and that's why they joined ICL. If your place is not guaranteed you should earn

your place by performing at the domestic level. No board will ever guarantee a place of any player. It's a fierce competition out there and you need to prove your value to the selectors. But I say it's better these players left our country. If these players don't even have the self confidence, if they don't believe in themselves, they are no good to anybody not even to themselves.

Ahmed Islam

To all the fans out there for the rebel players, I would say stop supporting them. BCB was relaxed because they never expected this from their kids and especially from our former captain Habibul Bashar. The players lack patriotism, moreover they should think that what ever they are its just for the BCB. They have formed them. They paid BCB in a good way but I will say they will suffer for what they did. Dhaka Warriors will be a disaster for sure. The rebel players lack self-confidence, which led them to do this. They went for the money

knowing its hard being a part of representing our national team in the international arena. For me they are the biggest losers. Go BCB go, accept the resignation of the betrayer and get some new talents whom we can call consistent players like Tamim, Shahadat, Roqibulctc.

Adnan

The mass resignation of the national cricketers was something that people never thought about. The cricketers should have thought about the country at least once. But the real heroes are still there. Tamim Iqbal, Shahadat Hossain, Shakib Al Hasan are only some of the examples. So I don't want to comment on the fact anymore and just wish the players who will further serve the nation the very best of luck. We believe that you people can do it. So don't be afraid and go ahead.

Tanzid Nahid Mustafa

ICL has officially launched a team named "Dhaka Warriors" and the

players of that team will also represent Bangladesh in ICL world challenge. Yes, they will represent Bangladesh anyway and a lot of Bangladesh supporters are going to watch the matches as well as support the team. And why not? When ICL was launched, players from most of the cricket playing nations played but there was no Bangladeshi player. This time, players from Bangladesh are getting a chance and it is a great initiative by the organizers to involve Bangladesh in the exciting tournament where excellent players like Chris Cairns, Inzamam-ul-Haque and others play. It's not embarrassing for Bangladeshi players to join ICL. These players are called "rebel" players... Excuse me!! What rebellion did they commit? They just resigned from their job and accepted an international offer with lot better facilities where they may also make the country proud. Just because the cricket board of India ordered other nations to do something does not mean that, we

have to follow whatever they say. Just because they are rich and powerful, does not mean that they can not do whatever they wish. Even if they try to impose it on us, why should we obey that?

Shoaib

The fact that six rebel cricketers resigned from national side to join ICL is really horrendous. The players had been enjoying so many benefits from the cricket board & then they joined ICL leaving the responsibility of representing Bangladesh in the international cricket arena. It clearly shows their unprofessional attitude & greed for money.

However, as a person rather than a cricket fan, I cannot but respect their decision. I think they felt much disquiet about their position in the national squad, after their dismal performances against the Test playing nations. So, they wasted no time to accept the ludicrous offer from ICL. At least, it

assures them of a hefty amount irrespective of their performance in these matches. Who wants to undergo rigorous day long training sessions with less vacation only to get hard earned cash less than the amount offered by ICL? In ICL, they will earn crores of taka just by playing for a few months.

Ahmed Mustahid
Notre Dame College

The ex and present national cricketers who have signed for ICL should be sued under the treason law and their nationality should be scrapped.

The crime they committed is no way less than that of a Rajakars during our war of independence. Today what ever they are it is because they played in Bangladesh colours. If they never played under Bangladesh banner they would have been no one.

I feel their nationality should be rescinded.

Rustine James