

## Muktijoddha booters call to end sufferings

SPORTS REPORTER

The footballers of B. League's struggling giants Muktijoddha Sangsad yesterday appealed to Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) and the central command of Muktijoddha Sangsad to relieve them off further sufferings.

In a media briefing at the BFF Bhaban lawn, the footballers led by captain Feroz Mahmud Titu said they will not keep any relation with the football team's present management, which has deprived them of salaries.

Muktijoddha players have not received any salary for five months and despite the club got over Tk 20 lakh from their B. League sponsors and other sources, the officials have taken most of the amount with them, alleged the booters.

"We will play for the club but don't want to keep any relation with the previous or the present management, which has cheated us," Titu told reporters.

"The footballers are spending inferior lives and the club's standard has degraded as a result."

"We want the BFF to take necessary steps to solve our problem as professional footballers and hope the Sangsad's central command will give us a committee to look after our welfare," he added.

Senior players Kanchan, Milon, Moni and others were present.



## Did U Know?

The sport of fencing is said to have originated in ancient Egypt to prepare men for war.



**Sachin Tendulkar**  
(Star Indian batsman)  
"I couldn't sleep all this time. I am numb. The images keep playing in my head. This was just not an attack on Mumbai, it is an attack on India."  
Recounts the horrors of watching the terrorist attacks on his hometown.



## Shahin takes solo lead

SPORTS REPORTER

Obaidul Islam Shahin removed Mahtabuddin Ahmed Robin as solo leader of the Prime Bank 11th International Open Rating chess tournament after the seventh round yesterday.

Shahin defeated Robin at the Chess Federation hall room to push his collection to 6.5 points while the latter remained on six points after his first defeat.

Robin was sharing the second place with Abu Sufian Shakil, Mehdi Hasan Parag and Mahfuzur Rahman Emon.



PHOTO: STAR

Rajshahi paceman Delwar Hossain, who grabbed a match haul of 10 wickets with five in each innings, follows through on a delivery on the fourth and final day of their National Cricket League match against Dhaka at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

## Let's do it for India, urges Pietersen

Cricket

AFP, London

Kevin Pietersen said Thursday he was "very confident" England will play their scheduled Test matches in India but admitted a final decision will not be taken until Sunday on whether to resume a tour suspended after the Mumbai terror attacks.

Two hours before England flew out to a training camp in Abu Dhabi, Pietersen held a press conference at London's Heathrow airport that he and his players wanted to stand "shoulder to shoulder" with the Indian people.

But he also stressed that the team would wait for a final report from security chief Reg Dickason before finally deciding whether to travel on to India early next week.

A bomb alert in Chennai, where England are scheduled to play the first of two Tests from December 11, further confused the situation as the England players boarded their flight.

Pietersen said: "We have to buy ourselves some more time in Abu Dhabi. It's fantastic we have a bunch of players who went to India initially and now want to go back and play some cricket."

"It's very important that we go shoulder to shoulder with the Indian people in their time of need and go and demonstrate in India what we want to do and show our support. Hopefully

we'll play some Test match cricket."

Pietersen had hinted earlier this week that England's players would be reluctant to return, admitting that he had himself been unable to sleep after watching the horrific events in Mumbai unfold on Indian television.

But he acknowledged that pulling out of England's commitments would have serious repercussions for the sport.

"Definitely the impact on world cricket was at the back of my mind," he said. "It's something you think about. But at the end of the day safety and security is paramount. That's the most important thing in this situation and that's what we'll be getting on Sunday from the security team."

"As it stands at the moment the boys are focused on playing some red ball cricket in Abu Dhabi to start a Test match hopefully on Thursday in Chennai."

A number of players had been understood to be extremely doubtful about returning to India.

Andrew Flintoff and Steve Harmison publicly stated their concerns but all the original squad, apart from the injured Ryan Sidebottom and Stuart Broad, have agreed to travel, at least as far as Abu Dhabi.

Pietersen said: "I didn't persuade anybody. I respect everybody's individual concern. I respect all their decisions and everything they have to go through."

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## ECB looks out for airport alerts

Cricket

CRICINFO, undated

A nervous England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) is to keep tabs on the developing security situation at India's airports as the England squad fly out to Abu Dhabi to prepare for their two Tests in Chennai and Mohali.

Major airports in Mumbai, Delhi, Bangalore and Chennai have been put on high alert after reports they had received threats of attacks by hijacked aircraft, adding to the tense atmosphere surrounding the future of the tour.

"Obviously we're concerned, but what we need to do is find out the information," said Hugh Morris, the managing director of England cricket, at Heathrow airport ahead of the squad's departure for the Middle East. "I've spoken to the security team in Chennai this morning already to find out exactly what the situation is with the alerts. When we get that information

it'll be fed back to me, to the board and form part of the security audit that we're undertaking."

"We feel as though going to Abu Dhabi provides us with practice before the first Test match, and it also gives us

some more time to implement our security plans on the ground -- they are in Chennai at the moment -- and that is how we're proceeding."

Kevin Pietersen, the England captain, said he'd

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PHOTO: AFP

England cricket captain Kevin Pietersen (L) and Hugh Morris, England cricket's managing director, take questions from the media during a press conference at the Renaissance Hotel near Heathrow Airport prior to flying out to Abu Dhabi and then onward to India yesterday.

## Rajshahi topple Barisal

SPORTS REPORTER



Rajshahi's nine-wicket win over Dhaka at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday took them to the top of the National Cricket League points table.

Gaining 14 points from this their fifth victory, Rajshahi move to ninety, two ahead of Barisal who drew their eighth round game against Sylhet yesterday. The draw only fetched the southerners just seven points and at this late stage of the tournament, Rajshahi could easily run away with the four-day title.

Khulna also moved up the table after their 35-run win over Chittagong. They are now in fourth place with 62 points.

### DHAKA-RAJSHAHI

The hosts added only five runs before being bowled out for 257 in their second innings. Delwar Hossain took the last two Dhaka wickets to ensure a 10-wicket haul in the match that earned him the man-of-the-match award.

But before Delwar, fellow paceman Shafiu Islam removed dangerous Ararat Sunny, who was caught behind for 45.

Rajshahi's quick work made sure openers Jahurul Islam and Hamidul Islam

had the easy task of chasing 116 runs and the two made it home in style, adding 108 for the first wicket.

Jahurul struck 68 off 74 balls with eleven boundaries and a six while wicketkeeper-batsman Hamidul made 40.

### SYLHET-BARISAL

Imtiaz Hossain, who rocketed to 74 on the third day, was caught behind off left-arm spinner Saju Dutta after the right-hander had added eight to his overnight total.

But Rajin Saleh, the other overnight batsman, stuck to the crease and ground out 71 off 188 balls with nine boundaries and a six.

He added 86 for the fourth wicket with man-of-the-match Golam Rahman before being dismissed in the 75th over, by which time Sylhet were leading Barisal by 298 runs.

The visitors were later set an improbable target of 348 runs from 53 overs. Sylhet

POINTS TABLE						
Team	M	W	L	T	D	Pts
Rajshahi	8	5	1	0	2	90
Barisal	8	4	0	0	4	88
Dhaka	8	2	2	0	4	71
Khulna	8	2	3	0	3	62
Chittagong	8	1	3	0	4	59
Sylhet	8	0	5	0	3	50

made early inroads with Taposh Ghosh taking three for 50. But Nasir Hossain slammed 60 off just 51 balls with eight fours and three sixes and captain Imran Ahmed shepherded his side with a 132-ball 40.

Imran remained not out in the end with Shahin Hossain, who has recovered fully from a facial injury he sustained in the off-season.

But the result would not help Barisal's cause as they slipped to second place. Sylhet had a favourable outing however, collecting 12 points.

### BRIEF SCORES

**DHAKA:** First innings 142 and second innings 256 all out in 100.5 overs (Riyad 105, Shamsur 49; Delwar 5-60, Shafiu 2-17, Shuvo 2-81).

**RAJSHAHI:** First innings 283 all out and second innings 117-1 in 24 overs (Jahurul 68\*, Hamidul 40; Shamsur 1-9).

**Result:** Rajshahi won by nine wickets.

**Man-of-the-match:** Delwar Hossain.

**SYLHET:** First innings 366-9 dec. and second innings 251-7 dec. in 77 overs (Imtiaz 82, Rajin 71; Saju 3-54, Ararat 2-24, Talha 1-42).

**BARISAL:** First innings 270 and second innings 178-6 in 53 overs (Nasir 60, Rony 48; Taposh 3-50).

**Result:** Match drawn.

**Man-of-the-match:** Golam Rahman.

## Mohammedans fire blank

SPORTS REPORTER



Touring Chittagong Mohammedan held their more illustrious namesakes from Dhaka to a goalless draw in the Citycell B. League at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

Dhaka Mohammedan were forced to field an understrength side but still, they fluffed a golden chance when Egyptian midfielder Hazem Mahmud failed to score from a second half penalty.

It was the second time in three matches that the Dhaka giants wasted a spotkick after Alamu Bukola's miss against Rahmatganj when Mohammedan lost 1-0.

The local side, who managed a last-gasp 2-1 come-from-behind victory against Farashganj in the previous round, missed defenders Hassan Al Mamun, Rajani, and midfielders Arman Aziz, Faisal Mahmud due to injuries but

created two early openings.

However, Maruful Haque's side suffered further setbacks as their top scorer Bukola and young centre-back Wahid Murad limped off the ground before halftime.

The most costly damage was done when six-goal Nigerian striker Bukola walked out with a hamstring injury after just 11 minutes. Also, central defender Saikat played most of the match with a damaged arm as Mohammedan never looked comfortable.

After nine rounds, the Dhaka outfit were at third place with 16 points while the visitors climbed to fourth position with 14 points.

The draw, Dhaka Mohammedan's fourth, ensured that the Federation Cup champions -- who have one match in hand in the first leg -- will not finish in pole position at the end of the first half of the competition with defending champions Abahani and Sheikh Russel sitting on 19 and 17 points respectively.

Leaders Abahani, also struggling with injury problems, will clash Russel, who

have two games in hand, in today's crucial match.

In an otherwise calm affair, Bukola set a good chance Robin from the right but the forward placed his short just wide of the post after nine minutes.

Bukola's last action of the match came inside two minutes when he got possession after Chittagong goalkeeper Mamun Khan stopped Robin's header. The Nigerian once again passed the rebound to Robin, whose effort did not have enough bite to beat an alert Mamun.

Liberian midfielder Anthony Doe then forced a fine save by Aminul at the Dhaka goal in the 20th minute as the visitors showed signs of aggression. They had their best opportunity seven minutes from the break when Guinean Rafael Sagnon's header on a corner by skipper Kaiser hit the crossbar. Kamal cleared the ball half-heartedly from the line but Ridon, the Chittagong fullback who was roaring at the far post, miskicked his chance before an open goal from two yards.

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PHOTO: STAR

Hazem Mahmud (second from right), who missed a penalty for Dhaka Mohammedan, watches a midfield tussle between teammate Sharif (R) and Chittagong Mohammedan's Camara during their Citycell B. League match at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

## Bird's Nest on sale!

AFP, Beijing

Beijing has started selling souvenir sets of left-over grass and steel from its famed Bird's Nest Olympic stadium for 2,900 yuan (420 dollars) each, Chinese media reported Thursday.

The packs include grass cut on the night of the Games' closing ceremony, preserved in a clear box, and model Olympic torches made of steel that was not used for construction of the National Stadium, the Beijing News said.

There are 10,000 souvenir sets available for sale inside the Bird's Nest, as well as various department stores around Beijing and online, the report said.

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## Windies replace SL

Cricket

CRICINFO, undated

The England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) has confirmed West Indies will tour England for two Tests and three one-day internationals in April and May next year. This means Sri Lanka's proposed visit is off, the first instance of the Indian Premier League (IPL) taking precedence over a Test series.

Sri Lanka had been lined up for a tour, and dates had been agreed, following the British government's decision to cut bilateral ties with

Zimbabwe, who were scheduled to play three ODIs. However, 13 leading Sri Lanka players with IPL contracts made it clear they wouldn't be available as the trip clashed with the league's second season in India and the ECB was not keen on hosting a second-string side.

"Sri Lanka's tour of England next year is off," Duleep Mendis, the SLC chief executive said. "We informed the ECB that that we are not on a position to go there next year."

West Indies were the favourites to take their place after offering their services to the ECB even though some of their players, including Chris Gayle, Shivnarine Chanderpaul and Ramnaresh Sarwan, also have IPL deals.

They will play two Tests, the first at Lord's starting on May 6 following by one at Chester-le-Street from May 14. Those will be followed by three one-day internationals ahead of the World Twenty20 in June.

"The ECB is delighted that West Indies will replace Zimbabwe for the 2009 tour," ECB chief executive David Collier said. "West Indies are

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FIXTURES		
May 6-10	1st Test, Lord's	
May 14-18	2nd Test, Chester-le-Street	
May 21	1st ODI, Headingley	
May 24	2nd ODI, Bristol	
May 26	3rd ODI, Edgbaston	