

### Third win for Biman

SPORTS REPORTER

Biman won their third consecutive match in the KDS Metropolis Senior Division Table Tennis League when they shrugged off Wari 3-0 at the Woodenfloor Gymnasium yesterday.

Newcomers Palolic also maintained their winning run after an identical victory against Brothers Union while Mariners blanked Engineers Club 3-0 and Armanitola defeated Ajax 3-1 in the other matches.

### PCB decision holds Asif

AFP, New Delhi

Mohammad Asif, who opted out of the Indian Premier League at his own request, must still be cleared of doping charges if he wants to play for Pakistan again, an official said on Tuesday.

The controversial fast bowler, 26, was released from his 650,000 dollar-a-year IPL contract by Delhi Daredevils late Monday after serving just one year of his three-year deal in the Twenty20 tournament.

Asif is due to appear before an IPL drugs tribunal in Mumbai on Saturday after testing positive for the banned steroid nandrolone during the tournament's opening season last April-May.

"We have released him, but I suppose Asif still needs to have his name cleared if he wants to play official cricket," Delhi Daredevils chief operating officer Amrit Mathur told AFP.

Asif was detained at Dubai airport for 19 days last June after 0.24 grams of opium were found in his wallet. After being deported to Pakistan, he was told he had also failed an IPL test.

The Pakistan Cricket Board has suspended Asif indefinitely from playing official cricket pending the IPL hearing.

The talented seamer has taken 51 wickets in 11 Tests, 36 wickets in 31 one-dayers and 12 wickets in nine Twenty20 internationals since his debut in 2005.

Asif said in a written statement released by the Delhi Daredevils that he voluntarily opted out of his IPL contract to concentrate on playing for Pakistan again.

"Due to personal reasons, I am having to take this step, and definitely it has not been easy as I still have a contract valid for another two seasons, with lucrative financial benefits," Asif said.

"I am going through a tremendous amount of pressure. My only purpose and wish is to play for my nation Pakistan again, and for that I need to disengage from any other cricket engagements."

The second edition of the lucrative eight-team, franchise-based IPL tournament, featuring many of the world's top cricketers, is to be held across India in April-May.



Pakistan pace bowler Rao Iftikhar (L) jumps for joy after dismissing Sri Lanka captain Mahela Jayawardene (R) during the first one-day international at the National Cricket Stadium in Karachi yesterday. Iftikhar took a career-best 4-42.

### Pakistan crush SL

FROM PAGE 17  
against the West Indies at Abu Dhabi last year.

Nuwan Kulasekara chipped in with a useful 24.

SCOREBOARD  
Scoreboard of the first one-day international between Pakistan and Sri Lanka at the National Stadium in Karachi on Tuesday:  
SRI LANKA  
Dilshan c Butt b Gul 42  
Jayasuriya lbw b Gul 38  
Sangakkara c Butt b Iftikhar 49  
M Jayawardene c Akmal b Iftikhar 1  
Kapugedera b Afridi 27  
Mubarak run out 8  
Maharof c Misbahul b Malik 11  
Thushara c Akmal b Iftikhar 0  
Kulasekera c Akmal b Gul 24  
Muralidaran not out 7  
Mendis b Iftikhar 1  
Extras: (lb-3, w-6, nb-2) 11  
Total: (All out in 45.2 overs) 219  
Fall of wickets: 1-71, 2-86, 3-89, 4-143, 5-170, 6-176, 7-176, 8-209, 9-211.

Bowler O M R W  
Akhtar 7 0 43 0  
Tanvir 5 0 35 0  
Iftikhar 8.2 1 42 4

Gul 9 0 30 3  
Afridi 10 1 47 1  
Malik 6 0 19 1

PAKISTAN  
Manzoor c b Muralidaran 83  
Butt not out 100  
Younis c Mendis b Maharof 20  
Malik not out 11  
Extras: (lb-4, nb-1, w-1) 6  
Total: (For two wkts in 45.5 overs) 220  
Did not bat: Misbahul, Afridi, Akmal, Tanvir, Akhtar, Gul, Iftikhar.

Fall of wickets: 1-168, 2-205.  
Bowler O M R W  
Kulasekera 8 1 35 0  
Thushara 8 0 31 0  
Maharof 7.5 0 44 1  
Muralidaran 10 1 42 1  
Mendis 7 0 41 0  
Jayasuriya 3 0 16 0  
Dilshan 2 0 7 0  
Result: Pakistan won by eight wickets.

Man-of-the-match: Salman Butt.  
Toss: Sri Lanka  
RUSSEL: Azam, Aminul, Zahirul, Hassan, Mobarak, Reda, Maric, Alfaz and Omari.  
MOHAMMEDAN: Aminul, Hassan Al Mamun, Saikat, Rajani, Ripon, Komol, Arman Aziz, Hazem, Ddogyi, Robin (Faisal and Maruf) and Bukola.

### Clarke in jeopardy

AFP, London

Giles Clarke, the chairman of the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB), will face a challenge for his job in the aftermath of the controversy that led to Kevin Pietersen being ousted as captain, the ECB confirmed Tuesday.

Clarke, who has chaired the ECB since September 2007, is being challenged for the post by businessman/politician Jonathan Marland. Chairmen of the 18 first class counties and the MCC will vote on who gets the job next month.

Marland, 52, is a member of the House of Lords and a former treasurer of the opposition Conservative party. His chances of victory are seen as depending on the extent to which the county chairmen believe Clarke mishandled the clash between former coach Peter Moores and Pietersen which resulted in Moores being dismissed and Pietersen being effectively stripped of the captaincy earlier this month.

### PCB unsure of neutral venues

CRICINFO, undated

Australia are unlikely to tour Pakistan for the scheduled one-day series in April and May, PCB chairman Ijaz Butt has said.

Australia had cancelled their tour of Pakistan in the wake of the heightened violence in March 2008, and were expected to visit the country separately for the ODI and Test series this year. However, with Australia still apprehensive over the security situation, Butt said the matches could be played at neutral venues.

"Chances of them [Australia] agreeing to play in Pakistan are slim," said Butt. "They have asked us to suggest three neutral venues where the series can be relocated."

Butt said England, Malaysia, Abu Dhabi, Sharjah and Dubai are being considered as alternatives in case the five ODIs and one Twenty20 do not take place in Pakistan. The venues will be discussed with Cricket Australia officials on the sidelines of an ICC executive board meeting later this month.

Australia have not played in Pakistan since 1998. In 2002, due to security concerns, a three Test series between the two sides in Pakistan was shifted to Colombo and Sharjah. "We want Australia to play in Pakistan but our first priority is to ensure the series is played," said Butt. "We have to be realistic, flexible and pragmatic about having this series."

### Siam new sub-junior chess champ

SPORTS REPORTER

Ikrumul Haque Sidd yesterday dethroned Abulul Al Saif as the new sub-junior chess champion of the country.

Siam, unbeaten in the 9-round Swiss League competition, drew with Sohail Arman Tarek in the final round of the 29th National Sub-junior Chess Championships at the BCF hall-room to finish with



IKRAMUL HAQUE SIAM

8.5 points. Outgoing champion Saif finished runner-up with 7.5 points after beating 8-year-old prodigy Fahad Rahman of Faridpur in on the final day.

Three players earned seven points each but after progressive score, Zoar Haque Prashan became third and was followed by Fahad Ziaur Rahman Sajal.

The girl's title went to Ahley Sarkar while Tahzina Akter Tani emerged runner-up after both collected 6.5 points.

Meanwhile, the 30th National Junior Chess Championships will begin on January 27.

### WNCL title

FROM PAGE 17  
Salma Khatun claimed 2-10 in her 10-over spell.

Rumana Ahmed and Shuktara Rahman took one wicket each.

Muhmuda Khan top scored 29.

In the day's other match, Sylhet (127-8) finished with a consolation win when they beat all-losers Barisal (93) by 34 runs at the Women's Sports Complex.

Salma Khatun of Khulna was declared player of the tournament as she scored 147 runs in five matches and also took 14 wickets.

### Tigers' acid

FROM PAGE 17  
Prosper Utseya's words on discipline and patience and added that it is totally the batsmen's responsibility to make sure a score of around 200 is reached.

"Something over 200 is always defensible in this type of pitch but to do this, the batsmen's responsibility is key to the total," added Price who is enjoying his second stint as a Zimbabwe player.

### WC dream for minnows

Cricket

AFP, Paris

Afghanistan's cricketing rollercoaster ride stops off in Argentina this week with a place in the 2011 World Cup tantalisingly within reach.

At the leafy Buenos Aires settings of the Hurlingham, Belgrano and St Albans Clubs, Afghanistan will tackle Argentina, Hong Kong, Uganda, Papua New Guinea and the Cayman Islands.

If they finish in the top two, they'll progress to April's World Cup qualifier in South Africa, the final testing ground ahead of the 2011 World Cup to be staged in India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh.

It's a prospect which would have been unthinkable just over eight years ago when the Afghanistan cricket federation wasn't even part of the International Cricket Council (ICC).

But since their entry into ICC tournaments, they have been determined to show that there is more to Afghanistan than bloodshed and roadside bombs.

They surged through Division Five and Four of the World Cricket League with successive promotions, earning desperately-needed development cash along the way as well as plaudits.

One regional Afghan governor was even reported to have given the players plots of land on which to build homes as reward for reaching the next level.

Their successes have also led to neighbours Pakistan helping in the preparations for the Division Three tournament in Argentina.

At a recent four week-training camp in Lahore, organised by the Asian Cricket Council, Shoab Akhtar, Aamir Sohail, Rashid Latif, Ijaz

Ahmed and Aaqib Javed passed on crucial tips. "We discussed a lot of cricket," Afghanistan batsman Raees Ahmadzai told www.cricinfo.com.

"The players look like complete cricketers. We worked a lot on temperament. Our fast bowlers worked on how to control the new ball and our batsmen on how we make partnerships to chase big targets."

Despite their charge up the world rankings, the troubles at home are never too far away.

The Afghanistan cricket academy is based at Kabul's notorious Ghazi Stadium where the Taliban once staged public executions while in August 2008, Rahmat Wall, who was part of the team from 2001 and 2006, was killed during fighting.

"2011 is a dream - I am very hopeful," said Afghanistan coach Kabir Ali, a former Pakistan Test player.

Despite losing to Afghanistan in the Division Four final in Tanzania last year, Hong Kong were still promoted and their coach, ex-England international Aftab Habib, is confident his side can progress when the action gets underway in Argentina on Saturday.

"It is an achievable dream and it is just a matter of putting in a lot of hard work," he said of a side who gained valuable experience by playing in the 2008 Asian Cup.

Hosts Argentina and Uganda secured promotion to Division Two in 2007 only to fall straight back down in 2008.

"It is going to be a very close tournament and there isn't going to be much between the teams," said Argentine coach Hamish Barton.

Like Hong Kong, Uganda have recently tested their ability against a higher-rated nation - Kenya, shock World Cup semi-finalists in 2003.

Despite losing two games, at one stage they had their African rivals struggling at 180-8.

### Millions wait for KP

Cricket

CRICINFO, undated

Andrew Strauss expects Kevin Pietersen, who he succeeded as the England captain, to bounce back on the tour of the West Indies after the batsman's resignation as the team's leader. Pietersen stood down on the same day the coach Peter Moores was sacked and Strauss is in the process of remoulding the squad ahead of their departure for the Caribbean on Wednesday.

"I've spoken to Kevin a few times and I've been very pleasantly surprised by his attitude," Strauss told BBC Sportsworld. "I have no doubt that he will go to the West Indies and get millions of runs."

"It is easy to use the word legend, but I think he will become a legend of the game. People like that, when their backs are against the wall, they invariably go out and perform. Kevin is clearly passionate about playing cricket for England for a long period of time."

Strauss felt the team was not divided following the upheaval. "I've been very reassured by the chaps that we have not been badly affected as a group and any divisions the press made out were in the side are not evident," he said. "The

players are excited about going to West Indies, which is a great tour. No-one likes reading these things in the press and a tour is a great way to bring people closer together."

Strauss' job has been made tougher by the fact that the team does not have a head coach. "It's been very busy," he said. "Everything is being thrust firmly at my door to get everything ready for the tour, but at the same time it's a fantastic position to be in as I've got a blank canvas to work with and it gives me an opportunity to put things in place."

Strauss, who previously served in the top job when Michael Vaughan and Andrew Flintoff were out injured, said he was looking forward to leading England in this year's Ashes, a job he was overlooked for in 2006-07 when Flintoff returned. "I've been given the opportunity to captain England and I'm fairly hopeful it is going to be a long-term appointment," he said. "That's certainly the indication I've been given from the ECB and that's the way I'm looking at it. At the moment I think the England team could do with a bit of stability at the top."

Strauss also sees himself playing some role in the selection of the new coach. "I'd be very surprised if I don't have an input into which the next coach is going to be," he said. "I don't think the captain should choose the coach, but he should have some say."

### Nadal destroys Rochus Ashraful stays

FROM PAGE 17

Germany's Kristina Barrois in three sets, while Polish ninth seed Agnieszka Radwanska became the biggest casualty so far.

Australian hope Lleyton Hewitt joined Radwanska on the scrap heap after slumping in five sets to Chilean 13th seed Fernando Gonzalez.

The experienced Serena is looking for her 10th major crown and her fourth in Melbourne.

Only a few select women, including Steffi Graf, Martina Navratilova and Chris Evert, have won more major titles than the formidable 27-year-old.

Forgoing her usual flashy outfits for a nondescript dark blue number, the American powered past Meng in just 75 minutes.

"I think I hit some pretty solid shots, sometimes I even went for some shots just to try something different," she said, downplaying the effect of the heat.

"There wasn't so much humidity out there, the dry heat is actually better than the humidity. But it was definitely extreme conditions."

Venus, who has yet to lift the Melbourne title, was untroubled by Kerber.

"For me, it's about getting to that next round," she said.

"I don't know who I'm going to play. I don't know who will win. I don't know who will lose. I've got to get there. That's really what it's all about for me."

Dementieva is widely regarded as a dark horse for the championship after already winning two titles this year.

But the Beijing Olympic gold medalist was pushed to the limit in the 7-6 (7/4), 2-6, 6-1 win, extending her win streak this year to 11 matches.

"I'm just happy to survive," she said.

Other players to progress included 2006 champion Amelie Mauresmo, who showed no signs of the thigh strain that forced her out of the Brisbane International.

On the men's side, fifth seed Jo-Wilfried Tsonga, the runner-up to Novak Djokovic last year, looked ominous in his straight sets win, as did sixth seed and fellow Frenchman Gilles Simon.

Ninth seed James Blake overcame Canadian qualifier Frank Dancevic.

FROM PAGE 17  
"My observation is that it's not an easy job to lead a team like Bangladesh. More over Ashraful has been improving day by day. We have to understand one thing that Ashraful has to lead a very young team after departure of some players to the ICL (Indian Cricket League). The cricket operations committee met with the team management yesterday ahead of the today's do-or-die game against Zimbabwe."

"What we felt that we didn't had home work on some common issues and we instructed the captain, vice-captain, coach and computer analyst to discuss about taking decisions about what to do if won the toss," he informed.

"The coach is also under our observation and we have told him we don't want to see repeated mistakes," he said when asked why batting has gradually declined despite a batting-oriented coach at the helm.

### MSC, Russel lose ground

FROM PAGE 17  
A powerful drive into Aminul's bottom left corner from the spot for his fourth goal.

The rest of the first half saw stretchers come in and out of the pitch as things got rough. The worst happened in the 38th minute when Bukola elbowed Russel's debutant Moroccan Mohamed Reda during an off-the-ball incident. The Moroccan bled and the match resumed after three minutes with the Mohammedan tent relieved as the referee only showed Bukola a yellow card instead of a regulation send-off.

Football returned after the break instead of violence and both sides created enough chances with the Black and Whites having the edge.

However, the first chance fell to Mobarak but Aminul, who rushed out of his goal, blocked the Russel right winger's effort in the 67th minute.

Komol hit back in the next minute and sacrificed a shooting chance to set Ddogyi with an open goal in front but the Korean failed to keep his shot under the bar.

Rajani's inspired defending deflected Serbian midfielder Marco Maric's powerful shot over the bar while Bukola failed to properly connect a pass by Komol two yards out of goal.

Mobarak once again got behind the Mohammedan backline, featuring Hassan Al Mamun as rightback after a long injury lay-off, but failed to beat an outwrestling Aminul.

Another quick counter attack by Mohammedan in the 75th minute should have separated the two sides but Bukola, who went round goalkeeper Azam with Hazem's long pass, put the ball into the side-netting with an open goal beckoning him.

Maruf's boys were still in the game but Komol drove the ball just wide after Bukola's hard work three minutes from time and Rajani's stunning shot from 40-yards swung inches away of the top left corner.

Both the coaches showed different views about the opposition penalties after the game.

"Mohammedan's penalty was dubious but we recovered and we have not lost hopes of championship despite this draw," said Russel coach Wajed Gazi.

Replying to a question, Gazi said they were not defensive. "We tried to break on the counter and had our chances. If Mobarak had switched the ball to Alfaz on two occasions instead of trying to score by himself, it would have been better," added the veteran whose side had five bookings on the night to be fined Tk 10,000.

Maruf on the other hand, said that Russel's negative ploy distracted his team.

"We did not play well in the first half because of their negative

attitude and also, Robin's loss was great because he usually starts the pressing," said Maruf adding that it was unfortunate to concede a penalty after Rajani's legal tackle.

"We had enough chances in the second half but the way the forwards missed is really dismal. We are now back to the position where we had started the second leg," said Maruf, whose side suffered their first draw in the return-leg after four consecutive wins.

Yellow cards: Azam, Aminul, Zahirul, Maric, Omari and Bukola, Arman (Mohammedan)

TEAMS  
RUSSEL: Azam, Aminul, Zahirul, Sohail, Hassan, Mobarak, Reda, Maric, Alfaz and Omari.  
MOHAMMEDAN: Aminul, Hassan Al Mamun, Saikat, Rajani, Ripon, Komol, Arman Aziz, Hazem, Ddogyi, Robin (Faisal and Maruf) and Bukola.

POINTS TABLE (Leg Two)

Teams	M	W	D	L	GF	GA	Pts
Abahani	15	11	2	2	31	6	35
Russel	15	9	4	2	32	15	31
Mohammedan	14	8	5	1	30	9	29
Brothers	15	7	6	2	23	14	27
Ctg MSC	14	6	5	3	17	10	23
Farashganj	14	5	4	5	20	16	19
Rahmatganj	14	5	2	7	17	19	17
Ctg Abahani	15	4	4	7	11	17	16
Arambhaj	15	2	5	8	11	24	11
Mukitjodha	14	2	3	9	5	28	9
Khulna Abahani	15	1	0	14	9	48	3

### TOP GOAL SCORERS

- 13 goals: Alfaz (Russel)
- 12 goals: Idris (RMFS), Emeka (Abahani)
- 10 goals: Enamul (Abahani), Bukola (Mohammedan)
- 9 goals: Emamul (Farashganj)
- 7 goals: Robin (Mohammedan)
- 6 goals: Henry (Brothers), Raphael (Ctg MSC)
- 5 goals: Youness (Russel), Sakawat Rony (Ctg Abahani), Nasir (Mohammedan)
- 4 goals: Divine, Zahid (Brothers), Milthon (Ctg Abahani), Towhidul (Ctg MSC), Omari (Russel)
- 3 goals: Komol (MSC), Mehdi (Khulna Abahani), Nicodemus (Arambhaj), 3/Brothers?, Johnson (Farashganj), Towhidul, Ridon (Ctg MSC), Monwar (Russel), Francis (Rahmatganj)

### CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS  
46 Stunt  
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