



PHOTO: STAR
Mohammedan's new Nigerian recruit John Goodwin (2nd from L) scores the opening goal of their Citycell Super Cup match against Brothers Union at the Bangabandhu National Stadium.

Kabir closer to title

SPORTS REPORTER

Sirajul Kabir closed in on the title of the Metropolitan Selection Chess Tournament with seven points after he drew with Ibrahim Hossain in the eighth round at the Bangladesh Chess Federation hall room yesterday.

Ibrahim, Shamim Khan, Habibur Rahman Sohel were chasing the leader closely with 6.5 points with one round remaining.

In other 8th round matches, Shamin drew with Sheikh Anwar, Shain drew

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Did U Know?

USA won their first volleyball medals at the Olympics in Los Angeles in 1984. Their men won the gold, and the women the silver.



ESPN
Sportscentre India
Sports News
Live from 8:30pm



Rafael Benitez
(Liverpool manager)
"To beat Real [Madrid] and [Manchester] United, two of the biggest teams in Europe, in the same week and score four goals against them is fantastic."



Premier Div Cricket League
Abahani v Biman
Venue: Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium, Mirpur
Mohammedan v Gazi Tank
Venue: Fatullah Cricket Stadium

MSCs meet in semis

Abahani to clash Brothers

SPORTS REPORTER



Mohammedan set a clash against their Chittagong name-sake while Brothers Union will be pitted against hot favourites Abahani in the semifinals of the Citycell Super Cup after the group stage ended yesterday.

Mohammedan emerged group champions after their 1-1 draw with Brothers in the last match of Group B following Farashganj's 2-0 win over Chittagong Abahani at the Bangabandhu National Stadium.

Nigerian forward John Goodwin shot Mohammedan ahead on his debut but Brothers' Ghana striker Henry Quaye levelled the scores as Mohammedan finished with seven points and Brothers on five.

Farashganj (four points) and pointless Chittagong Abahani enter the consolation Plate competition where Sheikh Russel meet Chittagong Abahani and Farashganj face Rahmatganj in the semis.

Brothers' place in the last four was ensured after Farashganj collected full points with goals either side of halftime from Khokon Das and Ugandan Idris Mutubi in the day's first match.

Mohammedan and Brothers were engaged in a battle to win the group and avoid Abahani in the knockout phase and in the end, Maruful Haque's side succeeded but had to pay a heavy price.

Key midfielder Enamul Haque Sharif, who committed a clumsy challenge on Brothers' Matur Munnna to get the marching order in the final minute of the game for his second bookable offence, will miss Mohammedan's first-leg of the semifinals against Chittagong Mohammedan on March 20.

Although the first half was a treat to watch, it

was all muscles after the break that frustrated the crowd who came to witness the two giants.

Wasim Iqbal's side got the first real chance after two minutes but Henry fired wide after hard work by Shakil at the left wing.

Mohammedan did not take too long to reassert and went ahead in the seventh minute. Alamu Bukola was denied by the post when the Nigerian headed a curling freekick by captain Arman Aziz but Goodwin, making his maiden appearance in Dhaka, rifled the rebound into the roof of the net to spark wild celebrations.

The delight lasted little time as Henry struck the equaliser within eight minutes.

Oranges' inspirational midfielder Zahid Hossain drove the ball from the edge of the area after one of his defence splitting runs but the ball deflected off rival centre-back Saikat to Henry, whose magnificent side volley gave Aminul no chance at the Mohammedan goal.

Brothers took control after hitting back at the Black and Whites, who survived a few close calls before halftime under constant threat.

Henry nodded a cross by Mishu over the bar while Saikat's sliding tackle stopped Rikto from taking the final shot

Both sides got physical after resumption and referee Azad Rahman had to put Brothers' midfielder duo Munna and Rikto on his book before cautioning Arman Aziz.

The heat also crossed the line and Brothers manager Amer Khan added fuel by showing agitation, sparking the Gopibagh outfit fans to hurl chairs and missiles to the ground.

As Brothers kept missing chance after chance, Mohammedan sat back to hold on to a draw that was enough for them to win the group. After the match, Mohammedan coach Maruf admitted his team's poor show.

"Brothers Union looked like a very charged unit and dominated the game. Overall, we

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Former Japan booter arrives today

SPORTS REPORTER

Former Japanese international footballer Tsuyoshi Kitazawa will arrive in Dhaka today for a five-day visit to observe JICA (Japan International Cooperation Agency) activities in Bangladesh.

An official supporter of JICA, Kitazawa won 58 caps for the Japan national football team scoring three goals.

The Kawasaki Verdy star, who played for Japan from 1991-99 will visit the Solid Waste Management Project under Dhaka City Corporation, the Multiple Cyclone Shelter Project under LGED in Chittagong and activities of some Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers assigned to the country.

He will also meet Bangladesh Football Federation president Kazi Salahuddin during his stay.

Pair bridge from Mar 19

SPORTS REPORTER

The 'Pair of the year 2008' Bridge Championship, organised by Dhaka metropolis Bridge Association, will be held at the Bangladesh Bank Club from March 19-21.

Interested pairs have been requested to send their entries (fee Tk 200) before 5.30 pm on the opening day. However, teams outside from the capital do not have to pay entry fees.

PAKISTAN'S TOUR BCB knows govt decision today

SPORTS REPORTER

With the wait over, Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) makes a final decision about the postponed limited-overs home series against Pakistan today.

"Tomorrow [Tuesday] it is the cut off time for us and we are expecting a decision from the government on this issue, be it a yes or no," said BCB's media committee chairman Jalal Yunus yesterday.

The board placed a revised schedule for the series after the government instruction to postpone the tour on March 6, a day before Pakistan were scheduled to arrive in Dhaka to play two Twenty20 games and five ODIs, due to security reasons.

According to the revised schedule, the board wants to stage it from March 26 to April 10. But to stage the series within that timeframe the board needs an immediate go-ahead signal because of time constraint; otherwise it would not be possible for Nimbus, which holds the TV rights, to bring in the equipment for live coverage.

"We will have to confirm Nimbus as well as the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) by tomorrow [Tuesday]. And beyond that deadline it is not possible to hold the series because of other international commitments," said Jalal.

Bangladesh captain Mohammad Ashraful and his deputy Mashrafe Bin Mortaza are scheduled to take part in the multi million-dollar

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Light penalty on Kalabagan

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Cricket Board's (BCB) disciplinary committee on Sunday suspended a Kalabagan cricketer and fined the club's manager for creating anarchy during their First Division League match against Indira Road on Friday.

The disciplinary committee fined Kalabagan manager Punnya with Tk 10,000 while slapped a one-match ban on Ashiquzzaman.

It was learnt that the disciplinary committee also cautioned match referee Morshed Alam for not taking the case into trial immediately after the match that Kalabagan won by two runs.

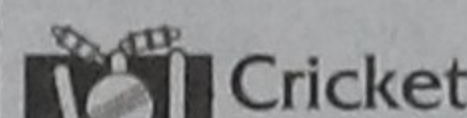
The match came under scrutiny with charges being labelled against the winning team officials for intimidating the on-field umpires in an effort to win favourable decisions at the Dhaka University ground.



PHOTO: AP
KEEPING AWAY FROM CRICKET! Master India batsman Sachin Tendulkar enjoys a game of football while training at the Seddon Park in Hamilton yesterday. The first Test between New Zealand and India begins tomorrow.

Torun march on

Hot battle for Super League places



SPORTS REPORTER

Surjo Torun maintained their fairy-tale run in the Premier Cricket League with a four-wicket victory over Young Pegasus at the BKSP in Savar yesterday.

Saqlain Sajib, with a five-wicket haul, fashioned the easy win for the lightweight-turned-title contenders. The left-arm spinner from Rajshahi took 5-37 as Pegasus were dismissed for 153 runs that Surjo Torun chased down in 46.2 overs for the loss of six wickets.

While Torun's eighth win in ten games strongly placed them in the second position with Bangladesh Biman on 16 points each, two points shy of leaders Abahani, elsewhere victories of Partex and Old DOHS heat up the race for the three remaining Super League slots.

Partex brightened their chances for a place in the six-team Super League with a comfortable seven-wicket victory over winless City Club at the Fatullah Cricket Stadium. The victory improved their tally to 12 points to share third spot with Gazi Tank.

DOHS returned to winning track with a 33-run success against Victoria at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur. DOHS raised their collection to ten points from as many matches.

With two teams tied at 12 points, Mohammedan in an embarrassing position on 11 points and DOHS breathing down their neck, it would be an interesting four-way battle for the remaining Super League slots when the last

round of the first phase starts today.

Mohammedan will have to beat Gazi Tank at Fatullah today to avoid an ignominious exit from the title race. Defending champions Abahani on the other hand will lock horns with Biman at Mirpur in a battle for the top spot.

SURJO TORUN-PEGASUS

Pegasus made a disastrous start after deciding to bat as they lost both openers for 17 runs. The resistance then came from Rahat Sadek (31), Iftekhar Nayeem (32) and Abul Bashar (28) but their effort was

not good enough to put up a fighting total on the board.

Sajib caused the main damage while Sabbir Khan took two wickets for 25 runs in 7 overs.

In reply, Surjo Torun rode on Zunaed Siddiqui's half-century to reach 157 runs for six wickets.

The Tigers opener smashed five fours and two sixes during his 94-ball 57 while Hannan Sarker made second team highest 25 off 37 balls with two fours.

PARTEX-CITY

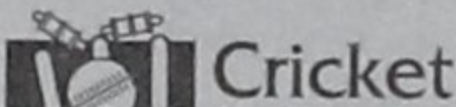
City Club continued their poor

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PHOTO: STAR
Old DOHS captain Mehrab Hossain in full swing on way to scoring an unbeaten knock of 77 against Victoria in the Premier Cricket League at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

CT in South Africa



AFP, Dubai

The International Cricket Council (ICC) on Monday officially named South Africa as the new hosts of the biennial Champions Trophy this year.

South Africa was recommended last week by cricket's governing body in the wake of incidents in Pakistan which have effectively put hosting cricket matches in that country off the agenda.

The elite eight-nation event was moved out of Pakistan after South Africa refused to tour Pakistan, while Australia, England and New Zealand also voiced concerns over touring the troubled country.

In addition, the March 3 attack in Lahore on the Sri Lankan team bus has further set back any chance of Pakistan hosting an event in the near future.

A statement by the ICC said: "With the need to minimise risk and create certainty around the event, the meeting agreed to recommend that CSA (Cricket South Africa) be sought as the alternative host, with Wanderers and Centurion as the venues, provided agreement on the financial arrangements can be reached."

"Originally planned for Pakistan, the venue for the event had to be shifted due to security concerns."

ICC President David Morgan said: "I think the Board has made a sensible decision that will give the event every chance of success. We now

have clarity on the subject and we can make firm plans for what is going to be a great spectacle of ODI cricket."

Also vying for the event had been venues in Australia, Sri Lanka and the United Arab Emirates.

Sri Lanka was ruled out as a possible host after concerns were expressed over weather conditions in Colombo during the dates set aside for the tournament.

The ICC said: "This is especially relevant given that the length of this year's ICC Champions Trophy has been reduced to a short, sharp 12 days as on that basis there would be no room for reserve days."

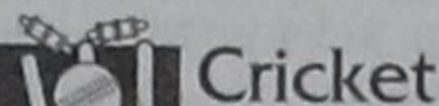
Morgan added: "I would like to thank Sri Lanka Cricket for its commitment to offer an alternative to Pakistan. And also, I want to acknowledge its willingness to step aside in this matter. I'd also like to thank CSA for putting its hand up and offering to host this event."

An "impressive" submission from the United Arab Emirates narrowly missed out, according to ICC Chief Executive Haroon Lorgat who said: "Although not successful on this occasion, I have no doubt Abu Dhabi and Dubai will be the scene for top-level international cricket in the future and I certainly would not rule out the possibility of an ICC event being hosted there at some stage."

The ICC added: "With Wanderers and Centurion, Cricket South Africa can provide two world-class venues in what is effectively one location and as we know from the ICC World Twenty20 2007, weather conditions in

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IPL still in limbo



AFP, New Delhi

Cricket's lucrative Indian Premier League (IPL) hung in the balance Monday as talks with the government on security matters failed to resolve match dates.

"There has been no decision," secretary of the Board of Control for Cricket in India N Srinivasan told reporters after a 90-minute meeting of senior IPL administrators with federal home ministry officials here.

"The home ministry conveyed its concerns and we also explained our views and the concerns of the various stakeholders. I don't want to say anything more."

Less than a month remains before the scheduled April 10 opening of the second season of the multi-million dollar Twenty20 league that features some of the world's leading cricketers.

The government last week rejected a revised IPL schedule on the grounds that it could not provide adequate security to the tournament because it overlapped with general elections.

The tournament is due to be held April 10 to May 24, while the parliamentary elections take place across the country in five phases from April 16 to May 13 with counting of votes on May 16.

The government wanted the 59-match

schedule to be adjusted in such a way that states hosting games do not have to pull out security forces on election duty to guard the tournament.

"We told them it will not be possible to provide central paramilitary forces for the IPL because of the elections," home ministry spokesman Onkarmal Kedia told local media on Monday.

"We want them to draw up a schedule after consulting state governments on the dates when they can provide security. The ministry will take a decision after receiving a new schedule."

In light of the attacks in Mumbai in November and on the Sri Lankan cricket team in Pakistan earlier this month, fears have been expressed that the IPL may also be a target for militants.

Another rejection of the schedule by the government is almost certain to lead to the tournament's cancellation this year since there is no other window for the six-week event in an overcrowded international cricket calendar.

The tournament cannot go beyond May 24 because players need time to prepare for the World Twenty20 Championships starting in England on June 5.

Although the IPL has hired a private South African security firm to liaise with local authorities, police and paramilitary forces will still be required to protect the cricketers, officials and fans.