

PCL gearing up big time

UNB, Chittagong

Preparations are in full swing to host the country's first-ever high budgeted competition -- Habib Group Port City League (PCL) Twenty20 -- beginning here on May 2 in the smash-and-grab style of the IPL.

Eight teams, split into two groups, will compete in the Tk 2.40 crore Twenty20 tournament at the MA Aziz Stadium.

The participating teams are Chittagong Abahani, Chittagong Mohammmedan, Chittagong Brothers Union, Ispahani Sporting Club, Pirates of Chittagong, Dada Warriors, Top Sports and DSCTigers.

PCL chairman AZM Nasiruddin told UNB: "Our main objective in organising the country's first Twenty20 cricket league from our own resources to revive the port city's past glory and rich tradition in sports. (It is) also to stake our claim to host at least two World Cup cricket matches in Chittagong."

Satellite TV channel ATN Bangla is expected to telecast four matches live including the opening ceremony and the opening match, two semifinals and the final, informed PCL vice-chairman Ali Abbas.

PCL coordinator and BCB director Alamgir Mohammad Sirajuddin said that the gala opening ceremony on May 2 will feature colourful fireworks for about 15 minutes, a laser show and cultural programme.

The organisers are now busy arranging the much-awaited cricketers auction on to be held on Saturday at the Chittagong Club auditorium.

Forty-eight leading cricketers of the country, in five groups, go under the hammer with per match floor price of Tk 30,000 for Grade A+ cricketers, Tk 20,000 for Grade A, Tk 15,000 for Grade A-, Tk 10,000 for Grade B+, and Tk 8,000 for Grade B.

The participating teams will be entitled to recruit two foreign players, two national players, four Dhaka Premier League players and three players from Chittagong Division.

The champions will receive Tk 15 lakh as prize money and the runners-up Tk 5 lakh. Man of the match will get Tk 10,000 while league's best player will get Tk 25,000 and highest scorer and highest wicket-taker Tk 15,000 each.



PHOTO: AFP

Delhi Daredevils' AB de Villiers slams one over the bowlers' head during his magical 54-ball 105 against Chennai Super Kings in their IPL match at Kingsmead in Durban yesterday. The South African became the first batsman to score a century in this year's competition.

De Villiers drives Delhi

AFP, Durban



AB de Villiers won the battle of the master blasters against Matthew Hayden on Thursday to give Delhi Daredevils a nine-run win over Chennai Super Kings in an Indian Premier League thriller.

South African de Villiers rode his luck to finish unbeaten on 105 as Delhi made 189-5 in their 20 overs and Australian Hayden hit 57 as he triggered a heroic run chase that ended at 180-9 after a late collapse at Kingsmead.

Victory maintained the 100 percent record of Delhi while Chennai suffered their second loss in three matches in a tournament switched to South Africa because a clash with Indian general elections created security concerns.

"I kept it simple, hit the ball and enjoyed myself. I really had to work hard for my first 50 as my timing was a bit off, but the runs flowed from then on," De Villiers said after the first ton of the 59-match tournament.

Delhi teammate Paul Collingwood of England

branded the De Villiers innings "perfect" and recently retired Test batsman Hayden called it a "magnificent, patient and methodical" stand.

Daredevils lost their openers inside the first two overs and needed a hero.

Enter De Villiers to gradually subdue his opponents and hit six sixes and five fours in a 54-ball masterclass.

He did have a moment of luck after reaching 50 when compatriot Albie Morkel was guilty of sloppy fielding at the boundary to drop a simple opportunity of sending De Villiers packing.

Hayden made a quickfire 57 in a reply that was on track until former England skipper Andrew Flintoff was caught by substitute David Warner to leave Chennai on 156-5 and two last-over run-outs settled the outcome.

SCORES IN BRIEF

DELHI: 189-5 in 20 overs (De Villiers 105 not out, Dilshan 50, Karthik 18; Balaji 3-19)

CHENNAI: 180-9 in 20 overs (Hayden 57, Raina 41, Patel 16, Flintoff 16; Sangwan 3-28, Vettori 2-29)

Result: Delhi Daredevils won by nine runs.

Man-of-the-match: AB de Villiers.

Outsiders rule IPL'

AFP, New Delhi

The Indian Premier League may have brought money and fame for many, but the glitz Twenty20 tournament is proving a bitter pill for many home-grown players.

Organisers insist the IPL is a domestic Indian tournament with teams allowed to field only four foreign players per match, but local cricketers are already feeling the pinch in the event's second season.

All eight teams are coached by foreigners and only four sides are captained by Indian players.

The fascination with international stars does not end there. Among those cricketers bought at IPL auctions, seven of the top 10 earners were foreigners.

"This whole talk of IPL being a domestic Indian tournament is a joke," former India captain Ajit Wadekar told AFP.

"It is Indian money, our country's money on which foreigners are thriving. But they do not think twice before sacking an Indian."

India star Mohammad Kaif, 28, was shown the door by Rajasthan Royals two days before the IPL's second season started in South Africa because skipper Shane Warne said "he did not fit into the scheme of things".

The removal of Kaif, who has played 13 Tests and 125 one-day internationals, left many fuming.

"It has exposed the complete ruthlessness of the owners," said Sharda Ugra, sports editor of the respected India Today magazine.

"Eventually for them it's business first. Unfortunately the Indians seem to be losing out, even the great players."

SEE PAGE 18 COL 5



PHOTO: STAR

National women's champion Sharmin Sultana Shirin (L) makes a move against Tahmina Akter Tisha during their Prime Bank 4th International Rating Women Chess Tournament engagement at the hall room of Bangladesh Chess Federation yesterday.

Chandimal stands in Munna's way

SPORTS REPORTER

Sri Lanka Under-19 captain Dinesh Chandimal played a lone hand with an imperious unbeaten 179 on a day when Noor Hossain Munna grabbed four wickets at the Fatullah Cricket Stadium yesterday.

As the Sri Lankans reached 286-8 at stumps on the second day, the right-handed Chandimal batted the entire day to strike as many as 27 boundaries in his 302-ball knock.

He added 129 in the opening stand with Udara Jayasundara, who struck 55. But once their partnership was broken via a run-out, the leg-spinner Munna worked his way through the middle-order, keeping the visitors in check.

He picked up four wickets for 70 runs from his 20 overs while Tajul Islam had two.

But Munna, who took a record 47 wickets in this season's First Division for Bandhara Dazzlers, failed to break Chandimal's defences as the opener stood firm.

On the first day, Bangladesh Under-19 made 316 in their first innings. They now lead by 30 runs going into the final day today.

Women's h'ball from today

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rangamati

Hosts Rangamati take on Bandarban in the opening match of the Exim Bank 20th National Women's Handball competition at the Rajbari Stadium in Rangamati today.

A total of ten teams including Feni, Dhaka, Chittagong Division, Rangamati, Bandarban, Sunamganj, Brahmanbaria, Chandpur, Chittagong Metropolitan, Comilla and Feni will participate in the tournament.

The final match will be held on April 25 at the same venue.

This was disclosed at a press conference in Rangamati jointly organised by Bangladesh Handball Federation (BHF) and District Sport Association of Rangamati, at the DSA's conference room yesterday.

Sourendra Nath Chakrabarty, deputy commissioner of Rangamati, will inaugurate the opening match today.

Nurul Islam, assistant general secretary of BHF, Nirupa Dewan, convenor of Handball Sub-Committee of Rangamati and local journalists attended the press conference.

Women's rating chess begins

SPORTS REPORTER

Eight players won their respective matches in the opening day of the Prime Bank 4th International Rating Women's Chess Championship at the Bangladesh Chess Federation hall room yesterday.

IWM Rani Hamid, Shamima Akhtar Liza, Sharmin Sultana Shirin, Nazrana Khan Eva, Zakiya Sultana, Jahanara Haq Runu, Aheli Sarkar and Mehnaz Ahmed Mithila were the winners.

The tournament will be held in the seven-round Swiss-league format with cash prizes given to the winners.

DIV II CRICKET North Bengal shock Wari

SPORTS REPORTER

North Bengal Cricket Academy upset the Second Division appalcart with a three-wicket win over strong Wari Club at the Dhanmondi Cricket Stadium yesterday.

North Bengal's Maksud grabbed five wickets for 21 runs as Wari were bowled out for 110 runs in 25.1 overs. Akhtar slammed 51 for the venerable Old Dhaka club.

In reply, the Rajshahi-based academy reached the target in 33.1 overs with runs from Monirul (30) and Ashiq (28).

SEE PAGE 18 COL 1

Nokia renews BFF sponsorship

Football

SPORTS REPORTER

Cell phone giants Nokia renewed their sponsorship deal with the Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) for a second year at the BFF headquarters in Motijheel yesterday.

Under the renewed deal, Nokia will sponsor the national team shirts and also BFF's youth development programme, which will be called the Nokia-BFF Youth Development Programme. The Finland based mobile phone manufacturers have previously sponsored the national team in last year's Asian Football Confederation (AFC) Challenge Cup qualifiers in Kyrgyzstan, South Asian Football Federation (SAFF) Championships in Colombo and in the Grand Royal Challenge Cup in Myanmar.

BFF boss Kazi Salahuddin along with Managing Director of Nokia Bangladesh Prem Chand informed reporters in a joint press conference that the new contract gives football a new dimension and will take the sport forward in the long run.

"Nokia has been our partner for a year now and today they have agreed to take the partnership forward for the next year. Part of the sponsorship will be towards the national team and part of it will be to our youth development programme. I have not sat down and categorized as to how the money will be apportioned but as long as it goes into football we are happy," said Salahuddin.

The Bangladeshi national football team will now sport Nokia shirts in the upcoming AFC Challenge Cup Qualifiers for Group A, which starts this Sunday and for all matches at home and abroad.

Nokia Bangladesh Managing Director Prem Chand trusted that this collaboration will develop Bangladeshi football from its grassroots.

"Through this programme, football in Bangladesh will develop from its roots. Young and talented players will be scouted and trained by BFF coaches. We also need to ensure that youngsters are taking a keen interest in the game and for that we need to nurture and

SEE PAGE 18 COL 5



Prem Chand (L), managing director of Nokia Bangladesh, addresses a press conference while Bangladesh Football Federation president Kazi Salahuddin looks on at the BFF Bhaban yesterday.

'Runs over wickets'

Cricket

AFP, Dubai

Pakistan all-rounder Shahid Afridi said Thursday said he preferred scoring runs to taking wickets, as his fans liked him more for hitting boundaries than dismissing batsmen.

The 29-year-old leg-spinner took a career best 6-38 in his 10 mesmeric overs against Australia Wednesday before hitting a fiery 16-ball 24 to help Pakistan win by four wickets in the first of five one-day matches.

Afridi, assisted by off-spinner Saeed Ajmal (2-19) triggered a middle-order collapse as Australia were bowled out for 168. Pakistan achieved the target in the 45th over for the loss of six wickets.

It was the best bowling by a Pakistani bowler in one-day cricket against Australia, bettering the 6-59 by pacer Waqar Younis at Leeds in 2001. Afridi's previous best of 5-11 was against Kenya at Birmingham in 2004.

Despite the feat, Afridi said he would like to come good with the bat.

"My fans like me for my batting, hitting fours and sixes," Afridi told AFP. "I would love to score

more runs because this is my trademark and people want me to hit more fours and sixes."

Afridi is the most popular player in the United Arab Emirates, where the expatriates from Pakistan adore him as they also come from the same North West Frontier Province as the all-rounder does.

"I like these people and want to entertain them. Whenever I have played in the Emirates, people have given me the kind of adoration which is very unique and heart-warming," said Afridi.

The hard-hitting batsman -- who holds the record for the fastest one-day century, against Sri Lanka in Nairobi in 1997 off just 37 balls -- has been under pressure for not performing with the bat of late.

His selection for the current series is seen as a trial before the Twenty20 World Cup to be held in England in June.

Afridi said he would love to help Pakistan win this series and then the Twenty20 World Cup.

"Doing well against Australia is great because they are a very good team, so I hope to continue with that and then focus my attention on the Twenty20 World Cup, because last time we lost the final," said Afridi.

Pakistan finished runners-up to arch-rivals

SEE PAGE 18 COL 2



PHOTO: INTERNET
Australia captain Michael Clarke takes a gulp of Gatorade after a hit at the nets during training at the Dubai Sports City yesterday.

2ND ODI TODAY Injured Marsh returns home

CRICINFO, undated

Shaun Marsh, the Australian opening batsman, will return home to Australia after injuring his left hamstring during the first ODI against Pakistan in Dubai on Wednesday. Marcus North, the Western Australia batsman who is currently with Hampshire, will replace Marsh for the remainder of the series which includes four more ODIs and a Twenty20.

Marsh was on 4 when he attempted a sharp single to mid-on and pulled his left hamstring while diving at the crease. He resumed his innings with Nathan Hauritz as a runner before falling for 16. The injury was to the same troublesome hamstring that kept him out of the recent tour of South Africa.

"Shaun has undergone scans this morning in Dubai which have shown a recurrence of the left hamstring injury he suffered during the Australian summer," Trevor James, the Australian team doctor, said. "The injury means Shaun is unavailable for selection in any of the

SEE PAGE 18 COL 1

Sachin Tendulkar

(Mumbai Indians captain)

Yes, I think the strategy breaks

are hampering the momentum