



Two Chittagong Mohammedan players try to contain Rahmatganj MFS's Ghanaian striker Raphael Sagno (C) during their Federation Cup clash at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

Rahmatganj shine on return

SPORTS REPORTER

Thankfully the rain that loomed large stayed away and the Citycell Federation Cup resumed after a 14-day break under brilliant sunshine at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

With the heavyweight still holidaying it was a day that belonged to the lightweights. Rahmatganj Muslim Friends Society, better known as a boggy of big teams, were back to business with a 3-1 thrashing of Chittagong Mohammedan Sporting Club. The victory of the old town outfit by a margin that they had scripted in their first game against Arambagh brightened their chances of playing the quarterfinals of the season's curtain-raiser from Group B.

In the other match at the same venue newcomers Shukhtara Jubo Sangsad of Narayanganj tasted first victory when they handed Arambagh a 2-1 defeat. The defeat certainly served a deadly blow for Arambagh coach Wazed Gazi, who promised a lot on his return to his former club but after two defeats in a row faces early elimination from the competition.

In the day's second match, Rahmatganj's Ghanaian recruit Raphael Sagno, Ugandan Idris Kasirye and local boy Mamun put their names in the score sheet while Akber Hossain Ridon struck the consolation goal for the losers.

Rahmatganj's coach Mir Mohammad Faruque employed five defenders like he did in the first game against Arambagh. But the defence had little to do in a match where Rahmatganj were in a rampant mood with their African striking duo of Idris and Raphael in full fury.

The margin could have been bigger had not Chittagong Mohammedan goalkeeper Uttam Borua made some brilliant saves.

Rahmatganj created huge pressure in the first 15 minutes and went close to taking the lead thrice, but Uttam denied them twice while Mamun drove miles off the target from a vantage position.

Uttam's resistance was finally broken when Idris nodded a Raphael header home inside the eight-yard box in the 29th minute and seven minutes later Raphael doubled the margin against his former club with a soft touch after being freed by Choumrin Rakhine.

Chittagong Mohammedan rarely threatened the Rahmatganj territory. Ridon, who struck twice against Shukhtara, however pulled one back five minutes before the break with a spectacular shot from the top of the box.

Rahmatganj made the contest all but over when Mamun struck the third from a rebound five minutes into the second half after a Raphael header came off the sidebar.

Chittagong staged a late rally but after a Farhad header rattled the crossbar and goalkeeper Himel saved a close-range shot from substitute Kamrul Islam Pavel a defeat was written in the wall.

Rahmatganj now need a draw in their last match against Shukhtara Jubo Sangsad to advance in the knockout stage.

In the day's first match, Mehdi Hasan Tapu gave Shukhtara an 18th minute lead but their joy lasted only eight minutes as veteran striker Alfaz Ahmed, capitalizing on a terrible defensive error, blasted home the equalizer.

After the resumption, Saiful Islam Khokon sealed the fate of the match with a spectacular side volley.

PCB chief's wish irks BCB

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) yesterday reacted sharply to Pakistan cricket chief's desire to host the 2014 World Twenty20, the event that has already been awarded to Bangladesh by the game's governing body, the International Cricket Council.

"It's really funny because this event has already been given to Bangladesh. Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) bid for the meet and got the right way back in 2006. I think the Pakistan cricket chief was unaware about the fact," responded Jalal Yunus, BCB's director and media committee chairman.

"We are really surprised by the comments of Pakistan cricket chief," he added.

Speaking to South Africa's English-language newspaper the News in Johannesburg, Pakistan Cricket Board chairman Ijaz Butt said that they would bid to host the 2014 World Twenty20 Championship and vowed to revive international cricket in the troubled nation.

BD A draw 3-dayer

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh A drew the three-day warm-up match with Maharashtra Cricket Association U-22 side at Nasik in Maharashtra yesterday.

Chasing a victory target of 248 on the last day, the tourists managed 207 for the loss of eight wickets when time was called for the match. Imran Ahmed was the mainstay of the batting for the visitors in their second attempt as he remained unbeaten on 41 playing 127 balls and was ably supported by Dollar Mahmud, who contributed an unbeaten 32. Imrul Kayes (40) and Hannan Sarkar (31) gave the visitors a rollicking start in the second knock but a middle-order collapse put paid to their efforts of overhauling the target.

Earlier, the hosts had declared their second innings on 179 for 9 to set up an enthralling final few hours of the game. Kaustaubh Patel was the top-scorer for MCA U-22 in their second innings with 44 runs. Talha Jubair bagged three wickets while Ziaur Rahman and Suhrawardi Shuvo chipped in with two wickets each. Kishor Bhikane of the MCA U-22 was adjudged man-of-the-match for his five-for in the first innings.

B. League's name may change

SPORTS REPORTER

The executive committee of the Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) yesterday brought a proposal to change the name of B. League, the professional football league, to Bangladesh League to avoid confusion abroad.

BFF president Kazi Salahuddin made the proposal to change the name from existing B. League into Bangladesh League and the members of the committee, having accepted the proposal, referred it to the B. League committee.

"It is just a proposal from the president and nothing has yet been finalised. Everything will be fixed after further discussion," said BFF general secretary Al Musabbir Sadi after a three-hour meeting at the BFF House yesterday.

The meeting also discussed

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DAY'S EVENT
Federation Cup Football
Sk Russell v Beanibazar (3:00pm)
Venue: Bangabandhu National Stadium
Farashganj v Bangladesh Army (5:00pm)
Venue: Bangabandhu National Stadium

'Dull' market opens

Cricket

SPORTS REPORTER

Defending champions Abahani and Bangladesh Biman completed their mere official formalities on the first day of the three-day inter-club players' transfers for the Premier Division Cricket League at Bangladesh Cricket Board's (BCB) office at the Bangabandhu National Stadium.

This year's bourse however lost all its gloss after the country's two most popular clubs -- Abahani and Mohammedan -- set a new trend by signing up their desired players much earlier than the official registration date.

There was hardly any chance for last moment drama in the market as most of the leading clubs already disclosed the names of their players. And that's why it was a simple job for Bangladesh vice-captain Shakib Al Hasan to put pen to the paper for Abahani and for wicketkeeper batsman Mushfiqur Rahim to sign up for Biman.

"It's true that everything was over well before the opening of the window as most of the clubs, especially Abahani and Mohammedan, finished everything with festivity long ago which was something new," said Shakib, the highly paid cricketer who was at the centre of attraction on the opening day.

"Abahani and Mohammedan simply made it a mundane affair," responded Biman's long-serving cricketer Sanwar Hossain, who however

expressed his disappointment as the world's number one all-rounder in one-day rankings Shakib didn't give any chance to his old club before switching to Abahani.

In the dull affair there was however no short of excitement for Mushfiqur as the Bogra lad, who played for Partex in the last season, for the first time in his career signed up for a top club.

"I'm excited and looking forward to playing for a leading club in this season. I want to make my present felt in this season," said Mushfiqur.

Shakib apart, Abahani also signed up Hamidul Islam, Robiul Islam and Jupiter Ghosh while Biman registered Mehrab Hossain, who played

for Old DOHS in the last season, Tushar Imran, Zahirul Islam, Mohammad Saifullah, Shafiqul Islam, Avishek Mitra, and Elias Sunny.

National middle-order batsman Rokibul Hasan also turned up on the opening day to sign up for Kalabagan, which also confirmed the services of out-of-favour opener Javed Omar along with Enamul Haque, Jubair Ahmed, Aminul Al Hamim, Fariduddin, Murad Khan, Nazmus Sadat, Samul Azim, Shafiqul Islam, Ashiqul Islam, Raseel Al Mamun, Ariful Haque and Shahriar Rubayet.

Surjo Torun, Partex, Cricket Coaching School and promotees Khelaghar SKS were the other clubs who also appeared with few players.



National all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan puts his signature for Abahani at the Bangabandhu National Stadium on the opening day of inter-club cricketers' transfers yesterday.

India walking tightrope

AFP, Johannesburg



India go into their crucial Champions Trophy match against an under-strength West Indies today requiring little short of a miracle to avoid elimination.

Mahendra Singh Dhoni's team are forced to rely as much on other sides' performances as their own after having earned just one point in two matches in the four-team Group A.

India's slim hopes rest first on a Pakistan victory over formidable Australia in a day match at Centurion today and then beating the West Indies in a day-night game just hours later.

Australia have lost just one of their last nine one-dayers.

Pakistan have already made it to the semifinals after securing four points from two wins, while defending champions Australia are strongly placed to join them in the last-four with three points from two games.

The West Indies are already out of the competition with no points after two matches. The top two sides advance to the semifinals.

Even if Australia lose to Pakistan and India beat the West Indies, the second semifinals will be decided on net run-rate. Australia (+1.000) are currently well ahead of India (-1.080) on net run-rate.

Dhoni said India would be keeping an eye

on the Pakistan-Australia match before deciding the team combination.

"They are playing a day game and we are playing a day-nighter. By the time we start our game, we will be knowing where we stand and what we actually need to do. Accordingly, we will decide the playing eleven," said Dhoni.

"This is one of those games where you have to achieve everything. First of all, you want Pakistan to win and Australia to lose. Then you want to win against the West Indies and you have to better your run-rate."

India can blame a below-par bowling performance, especially against Pakistan in the opening match, for their present plight. Their batsmen were always under pressure after the bowlers had conceded 302 runs.

After losing to Pakistan by 54 runs, India shared points with Australia in the second match which was abandoned due to rain at Centurion on Monday, but their bowlers again performed much below expectations.

Australia were on course for a big total before the play was called off, having posted 234-4 in 42.3 overs following impressive half-centuries from Michael Hussey (67), skipper Ricky Ponting (65) and Tim Paine (56).

"Overall, I think we have not bowled that well. That's one thing we need to admit. We have bowled twice and what we have seen is

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Emiliano Insua (Liverpool's Argentine fullback)

"Everyone knows how good Maradona was as a player, so it will be fantastic for me to play under him as a coach. I hope we can make it to South Africa and would love to play my part." After being named in the national squad.



ESPN
Sportscenter India
Sports News
Live from 5:30pm
ICC Champions Trophy
India v West Indies
Live from 7:15pm
STAR Cricket
ICC Champions Trophy
Australia v Pakistan
Live from 2:15pm
SuperSport3
UEFA Champions League
Man United v Wolfsburg
Live from 1:45am (Thursday)
SuperSport7
UEFA Champions League
Real Madrid v Marseille
Live from 1:45am (Thursday)

Pakistan through after Indo-Aussie washout

AFP, Centurion



Pakistan qualified for the Champions Trophy semifinals after the India-Australia match was abandoned due to rain on Monday.

Pakistan have already secured four points after winning both of their matches in the four-team Group A, while Australia have three points and India one after two games. The West Indies have lost both of their games.

Defending champions Australia were on course for a big total before the play was called off due to heavy rain in the day-night match.

They posted 234-4 in 42.3

overs after winning the toss on a good batting track, with Michael Hussey (67), skipper Ricky Ponting (65) and Tim Paine (56) all making the most of a mediocre Indian attack.

Cameron White was unbeaten on 35 and Callum Ferguson on two.

India, needing a win to boost their hopes of making it to the last-four, bowled inconsistently, failing to keep pressure on Paine, Ponting and Hussey.

Australia lost an early wicket when Shane Watson pulled left-arm seamer Ashish Nehra to Harbhajan Singh at mid-wicket.

Ponting and Paine then steadied the innings with an 84-run stand for the second

wicket, gathering runs comfortably against both pace and spin.

Paine was more aggressive than his captain, once pulling seamer Ishant Sharma for a six and also hitting seven fours in his 58-ball knock. His flourish ended when he was caught by Harbhajan off leg-spinner Amit Mishra.

But there was no respite for India as Hussey and Ponting consolidated their team's position with an 88-run partnership for the third wicket.

Ponting was caught short of the crease while going for a second run, with Gautam Gambhir hitting the stumps from the deep at the non-striker's end. He hit one six and

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India Pak supporter!

AFP, Karachi



While relations between nuclear-armed neighbours Pakistan and India are tense off pitch, some fans and cricket greats hope the Champions Trophy will bring the nations closer.

Today Indians will be cheering for a Pakistan win against Australia in the Group A clash of the Champions Trophy in South Africa, a victory that could also propel India to the semifinals.

If Pakistan wins at Centurion, arch-rivals India -- currently third in their group -- may sneak through to the semifinal on points.

"It is interesting. The whole of India will be praying for a Pakistan win for a change," said former Pakistan captain Ramiz Raja.

"I think it's a God-given opportunity for both the countries and with Indian fans praying for a Pakistan win, I hope that both the countries take this opportunity to come close to each other."

Pakistan, who have never won the biennial Champions Trophy, qualified for the semifinals

after beating the West Indies by five wickets and India by 54 runs in victories that sparked jubilation across Pakistan.

India, who shared the Trophy with Sri Lanka in 2002, are battling to remain in the tournament after their important match against Australia was rained off at Centurion on Monday, resulting in a draw.

Australia, the defending champions, have three points to India's one.

While Raja remains positive, some of his country's fans may be hoping for a Pakistan loss to deny India a run at the championship, while others are itching for the excitement of a potential India-Pakistan final.

"I wish Pakistan beat Australia and then we have an Indo-Pak final and we beat our rivals once again," said fan Arsal Siddiqui.

Former paceman Sarfraz Nawaz hopes Pakistan do not go easy on Australia.

"It's India's fate and I would celebrate if India goes out of the event," said Nawaz. "But Pakistan must beat Australia to carry a winning momentum."

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New Zealand pacer Shane Bond (L) celebrates the dismissal of England's Owais Shah during their Champions Trophy match at the Wanderers in Johannesburg yesterday.