

# Rokibul desires to return

**Cricket**

SPORTS REPORTER

Rokibul Hasan took another step yesterday in his bid to return to competitive cricket. The retired cricketer has submitted a letter in this regard to the Bangladesh team's operations manager Shafiqul Haque, informed a Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) director.

"Yes he has submitted a letter," confirmed Enayet Hussain Siraj, the BCB's cricket operations committee chairman.

Though the nature of the letter could not immediately be known, but according to sources, Rokibul has admitted that his sudden retirement was a mistake. He apologised to the cricket board and said he wanted to return to cricket.

It is now widely expected that Rokibul awaits severe punishment from the cricket board who will take a dual view of the whole incident.

Merely a week earlier, the right-handed batsman took a flight out of Chittagong just two days ahead of the first Test against England. He had broken the news of his retirement to his shocked Tigers teammates who tried to talk him out of it.

Rokibul's latest initiative came two days after the batsman met BCB president AHM Mustafa Kamal at his office. There was speculation on Monday that Rokibul was going to submit an apologetic letter to the chief, but the letter came BCB's way only yesterday.

The cricket board had earlier given him an ultimatum of seven days to reverse his decision.

His appeal will be discussed in a meeting by BCB's



ROKIBUL HASAN

evaluation and technical committee today. Members of the committee Siraj, Gazi Ashraf Hossain, Dewan Shafiqul Arefin and Jalal Yunus will deliberate the letter and give their recommendations in a BCB meeting to be held tomorrow.

The cricket board is set to consider two things during the March 19 meeting. Firstly, they would consider the batsman's career. Since he's only twenty-two, some of the BCB directors could take a lighter stance against him with only financial repercussions.

But the BCB also has to look at the wider angle - Bangladesh cricket. And as such, the punishment could be exemplary. Some have suggested that Rokibul be given a two-year ban and a substantial fine.

Rokibul, in his first statement to the media, said that he retired out of spite with the cricket board after he was dropped for the Test match in New Zealand, the one-day series against England and the 30-man World Twenty20s preliminary squad. The Jamalpur lad said that his plan was to get into the side first and then retire, in an apparent bid to take stance against the board for dropping him.

The day after Rokibul had announced his retirement, Bangladesh captain Shakib Al Hasan came out strongly and questioned whether the board would take action against Rokibul's 'emotional' decision.

Shakib referred to two previous occurrences that could have prompted Rokibul into the action. Shahrar Nafees had withdrawn from a tour to Australia in 2008 citing a university exam before skipping off to the rebel Indian Cricket League. Mashrafe Bin Mortaza had also left the team hotel in Dhaka after the first one-dayer against England after an alleged fall-out with team high-ups.

# Mundane season plays out

SPORTS REPORTER

After a day's break, the Bangladesh League resumes today with three matches to be held outside the capital. Beanibazar SC host Rahmatganj MFS in Sylhet, Feni Soccer Club take on Chittagong Abahani at home while Shuktara Jubo Sangsad play against Arambagh KS in Narayanganj.

All six teams have been battling to secure a place in the upcoming Super Cup rather than keeping their eyes on the prestigious professional football league title.

Before the start of the Bangladesh League, it was expected that the title race of the league would be a three-way affair among defending champions Abahani, Mohammedan Sporting Club and Sheikh Russel Krira Chakra and the prediction has all but turned true before the

end of the first-leg matches of the third edition, virtually killing all the excitement in the middle of the league.

Minnows like Rahmatganj, Farashganj and Arambagh could not still show their claws against the giants like they did at the start of last season to make the league much more exciting, but this time no one can expect any stunning results from them, especially in the way they have been playing against the giants.

To be honest, the league has become more mundane as it progresses in front of almost empty stadiums in all matches and the discontinuation of the league following the national team's commitment is also blamed for the poor turnout at the Big Bowl.

It is evident that the point difference between third-placed Mohammedan and fourth-placed Feni Soccer is thirteen points though the latter played a match less than their

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# Yousuf allowed to play in PCL

CRICINFO, undated

Pakistan batsman Mohammad Yousuf who was last week banned by the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) from playing for the country, has been permitted to play in Bangladesh's Port City League (PCL) that will be held in Sharjah over March 26-April 2.

This comes on a day when the board reiterated that players need its permission for taking part in foreign competitions.

"PCB firmly conveys to all concerned that no player is allowed to play cricket outside Pakistan without having prior approval from the board in this regard," the PCB statement said. "Any player interested to play cricket in any part of the world should apply

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# GRANDMASTERS CHESS

## Four share lead

SPORTS REPORTER

Four players shared the lead in the Six Seasons Grandmasters chess tournament at the close of the second round at the Tulip Lounge of Uttara Club in Uttara yesterday.

GM Niaz Murshed, Indian IM Saptarshi Roy and Praveen Kumar caught up with Russian Ildachev Saidali after winning their respective boards while Saidali was forced to end in a draw in his second round match after getting off to a

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PHOTO: COURTESY

Grand Master Niaz Murshed (R) and FM Minhazuddin Ahmed during their Six Seasons Grandmasters chess tournament meeting at the Tulip Hall of Uttara Club yesterday.



**SuperSport2**  
Indian Premier League  
Bangalore Royal Challengers v Rajasthan Royals  
Live from 8:30pm  
New Zealand v Australia  
First Test, Day 1  
Live from 3:30am (Friday)

**SuperSport3**  
UEFA Europa League  
Fulham v Juventus  
Live from 11:30pm  
Liverpool v Lille  
Live from 2:00am (Friday)

**SuperSport7**  
UEFA Europa League  
Marseille v Benfica  
Live from 11:30pm  
Sporting v Atletico  
Live from 2:00am (Friday)

**DAY'S EVENT**

**Bangladesh League**  
Feni Soccer Club v Ctg Abahani  
Time: 3:30pm  
Venue: Feni Stadium  
Shuktara v Arambagh  
Time: 3:30pm  
Venue: Narayanganj Stadium  
Beanibazar v Rahmatganj  
Time: 5:00pm  
Venue: Sylhet Stadium

# NEW ZEALAND V AUSTRALIA, 1ST TEST, WELLINGTON

## Clarke clears the air

**Cricket**

CRICINFO, undated

Michael Clarke has spoken publicly for the first time since his sudden departure from Australia's tour and his subsequent break-up with Lara Bingle. Clarke fronted a packed media conference at Wellington's Westpac Stadium, where he mentioned the support he had received from Shane Warne and insisted the media frenzy following him and his former fiancée would not affect the focus on his cricket.

"I have spoken to Warne," Clarke said. "I've spoken to a lot of my friends and my family. He's been a wonderful friend of mine for a long time and he was excited to see me back in New Zealand and wished me all the best for Friday's Test match."

Clarke made a hasty exit during Australia's one-day series when he flew back to Sydney to deal with his relationship issues, which were followed intensely by the Australian tabloid press. About 30 members of the media, some of whom will return home before the Test begins, surrounded Clarke but he said he was solely concentrating on preparing for the game.

"I made the decision firstly to go home but then to come back to New Zealand knowing that there was a big Test match starting on Friday," he said. "I knew I'd be capable to get up for that. Preparation has been very important to me throughout my whole career and it's no

different now. Yesterday it was important to get back in the nets and have a good bat, see that red ball."

Being back in the team environment will no doubt be a welcome change for Clarke, who over the past week and a half has woken to see photographers and TV cameras trained in on his Sydney apartment, waiting for any glimpse of him or Bingle. Clarke said he never expected there would be so much interest in his personal life but accepted it was an inevitable part of being a high-profile sportsman.

"It's part of what we do," Clarke said. "Being a professional athlete it's not just about what you do on the field it's what you do off the field as well. We have to accept that and for me it was important to do what I had to do in my personal life and it's important for me now to be back with my team-mates and make sure I'm concentrating on playing a Test match for Australia."

"[Going home] was obviously something that I thought was very important and needed to be done and I did that. My team-mates were fantastic and very supportive. Cricket Australia, the ACA, all my friends and family have been wonderful. That's obviously why I'm back here now, trying to get out there on Friday and perform in Australia."

Clarke said he would "have to wait and see" if his opponents tried to distract him from the game with a few personal sledges come Friday.

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MICHAEL CLARKE



Inter Milan striker Samuel Eto'o (R) fights for the ball with Chelsea midfielder John Obi Mikel during their Champions League tie at Stamford Bridge on Tuesday.

PHOTO: AFP

# Mourinho's sweet revenge

## Inter finish off Chelsea

AFP, London



Inter Milan manager Jose Mourinho got his revenge on Chelsea as a late goal from Samuel Eto'o sealed a 1-0 last 16 second leg victory over his former club at Stamford Bridge on Tuesday for a 3-1 aggregate victory.

Mourinho was back at Chelsea for the first time since being sacked in September 2007 following a power struggle with Blues owner Roman Abramovich and he showed the Russian what he had let go by devising the perfect game-plan to eliminate his former team.

The Portuguese coach once criticised Tottenham for "parking the bus" after Chelsea were shut out by their defensive London rivals, but Mourinho borrowed a trick or two from that scheme to keep Carlo Ancelotti's side at bay before Eto'o's strike secured victory.

Chelsea, who had Didier Drogba sent

**Chelsea 0 - 1 Inter Milan**  
Eto'o 78  
Inter Milan win 3-1 on aggregate

**CHELSEA:** Ross Turnbull, Branislav Ivanovic, John Terry, Alex, Frank Lampard, John Obi Mikel, Michael Ballack (Joe Cole, 62), Florent Malouda, Yuri Zhirkov (Salomon Kalou, 74), Didier Drogba, Nicolas Anelka  
**INTERMILAN:** Julio Cesar, Lucio, Maicon, Walter Samuel, Javier Zanetti, Thiago Motta (Marco Materazzi, 90), Wesley Sneijder (Mariga, 85), Esteban Matias Cambiasso, Samuel Eto'o, Diego Milito, Goran Pandev (Dejan Stankovic, 75)  
Red Card: Didier Drogba

off in the final moments, hadn't been held without a goal at home for 11 months, yet they rarely threatened to find a way through an Inter defence superbly marshalled by Lucio and Walter Samuel.

It was a classic Mourinho display as

Inter ground the life out of Chelsea and then delivered the killer blow in clinical fashion.

At last Mourinho, who disappeared down the tunnel quickly at the end, had his moment of vindication.

Mourinho seemed to enjoy himself from the moment he arrived at the stadium as he signed autographs for Chelsea fans and chatted briefly with Ancelotti before emerging to take up his unfamiliar position on the away bench.

He was greeted with respectful applause from the home supporters but it was hardly the rapturous reception many, including Mourinho, had predicted.

Inter needed only a draw to go through and the visitors were content to defend in numbers.

The onus was on Chelsea to set the tempo and Ancelotti's team created what few openings there were in a frantic first half.

Florent Malouda appealed in vain for a penalty when his incisive run was ended by an uncompromising block from Lucio,

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# Rahim just behind Dhoni

## Now the 2nd ranked keeper-batsman

**Cricket**

ICC MEDIA RELEASE

Despite defeat in the first Test in Chittagong, there is some positive and encouraging news for Bangladesh. Captain Shakib Al Hasan climbed to fifteenth position by improving his ranking by three places following his match figures of 5-195 and Mushfiqur Rahim became the second highest-ranked wicketkeeper-batsman after India's Mahendra Singh Dhoni in the Reliance Mobile ICC Player Rankings for Test batsmen.

Mushfiqur, who scored 79 and 95 in a lost cause, has rocketed 12 places to jump to a career-best 34th position, seven places and 78 ratings points behind the India captain.

The 21-year-old from Bogra is, however, ahead of more experienced and established wicketkeeper-batsmen in the likes of New Zealander Brendon McCullum and Australia's Brad Haddin, who share 35th spot, Pakistan's Kamran Akmal (38th), South Africa's Mark Boucher (39th), England's Matt Prior (43rd), Sri Lanka's Prasanna Jayawardena (57th) and the West Indies' Denesh Ramdin (69th).

Besides Mushfiqur, opener Tamim Iqbal has climbed three places to 37th spot after scores of 86 and four while middle-order batsman Junaed Siddiqui has vaulted 12 places to 60th position

# INDIAN PREMIER LEAGUE

## Mumbai win big

STAR SPORT DESK

Half-centuries from Sachin Tendulkar and Saurabh Tiwary followed by some tight bowling from their bowlers helped Mumbai Indians post a massive 98-run win over Delhi Daredevils in the Indian Premier League at the Feroz Shah Kotla, Delhi yesterday.

Daredevils collapsed to 120 in 16.3 overs in reply to Mumbai Indians' 218 for 7 in the stipulated 20 overs. Sanath Jayasuriya, Harbhajan Singh, Dwayne Bravo caused the Daredevils' damage taking two wickets each.

# SCORES IN BRIEF

**MUMBAI INDIANS:** 218 for 7 (Tendulkar 62, Tiwary 61, Rayudu 34; Maharooof 2-50)

**DELHI DAREDEVILS:** 120 (Dilshan 17, Sehwa 26, Maharooof 28, Karthik 16; Bravo 2-11, Jayasuriya 2-17)

**Result:** Mumbai Indians won by 98 runs.  
**Man-of-the-match:** Sachin Tendulkar.



Scene from the inaugural match of the DC Cup inter-upazila volleyball tournament at the Central High School ground in Bogra yesterday. Sonatola and Shahjahanpur played the match which the former won by 25-22, 25-18 and 25-17.

PHOTO: STAR

# BOA faces credit crunch

SPORTS REPORTER

The Ministry of Youth and Sports has advised the Bangladesh Olympic Association to send the Bangladesh contingent to the Indo-Bangladesh Bangla Games at own cost.

The BOA initially submitted a budget of Tk 2.2 crore for the preparation as well as participation in the third edition of the meet in Kolkata, but they later reduced it to Tk 1.5 crore and started the preparation early this month for the four-day meet, scheduled for March 24 to 27.

"We just came to know it on Tuesday and it will be not possible to participate in the Games if the government does not sanction money," said BOA chief executive officer ret'd Col Wali Ullah.

He, however, said that the

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