

Horse race to welcome 1417

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Tangail

The sporting fraternity of Tangail celebrated Pahela Baishakh, the Bengali New Year 1417, in a traditional yet spectacular way by holding a horse race on Wednesday.

Tangail Municipality organised the popular competition for the second successive year on the runway of the abandoned airport at Ballukandi area in the district town.

A total of 92 horses from Tangail, Jamalpur, Sherpur, Mymensingh, Gazipur, Pabna and Sirajganj took part in the competition split into two categories -- one called Jhapat (run fast) and the other Kadam (walk fast).

The riders from Sakhipur upazila of Tangail, Kapasia upazila in Gazipur and Sarishabari upazila of Jamalpur won the first prizes -- a 21-inch colour television each -- in three different events for large, medium and small horses.

Deputy Commissioner of Tangail M Bazlul Karim Chowdhury and Police Super Mizanur Rahman distributed prizes among the winners.

Earlier, Tangail Mayor Jamilur Rahman Miron inaugurated the competition which was enjoyed by thousands of local people including women and children.

Saif unbeaten champion

SPORTS REPORTER

Abdullah Al Saif became unbeaten champion in the Bangla New Year Rapid Chess tournament on Wednesday at the Bangladesh Chess Federation hall room.

Saif earned seven points while FM Mohammad Javed became runner-up with six points.

Masum Hossain, FM Minhazuddin Ahmed Sagar, Nasim Hossain Bhuiyan and Nasiruddin Apu finished third, fourth, fifth and sixth through tie-breakers after all of them secured 5.5 points each.

A total of 86 players including three FIDE Masters and one WIM participated in the seven-round Swiss League tournament.

Chanderpaul clobbers Canada

AFP, Kingston

A fine century knock by veteran Shivnarine Chanderpaul saw hosts West Indies -- who were without captain Chris Gayle -- ease to a 208-run victory over Canada in their one-day international here on Tuesday.

The 35-year-old hit 101 off 120 balls including six fours and a six -- his 11th international one day century -- as West Indies racked up a total of 316 for 4 off their 50 overs in what is a warm-up for the World Twenty20 which gets underway later this month in the Caribbean.

Dwayne Bravo also contributed 74 off 75 balls including two sixes whilst the match featured the return of class batsman Ramnaresh Sarwan for the first time since he returned home from the tour of Australia late last year with a back problem.

Veena files

FROM PAGE 17 Rehman Malik also called up Veena after she made an appeal to the government to look into her case.

"Rehman Malik has asked me to send him all relevant documents of the case and has promised me security and justice," Veena said.

Onus on MSC

FROM PAGE 17 Good players who can change the fate of the game and I think our tactics will play a key role in winning the game as all players of both sides know each others' weakness and strengths," said Jamal hinting that he would have instructions to kill off their opponents' moves in the first 35 minutes of play.

Jamal, however, was a bit worried about Mohammedan's Jimmy and Chayan and plans to adopt a counterattacking strategy.

He has pinned his hopes on experienced on striking duo of Moududur Rahman Shuvo and Krishna Kumar, who was instrumental in their semifinal triumph over Abahani.



Participants compete during a traditional horse race in Tangail to mark the Bengali New Year 1417 on Wednesday.

PHOTO: STAR

Bangalore rout Rajasthan

CRICINFO, undated



without much fuss to win a crucial encounter of the Indian Premier League at the Sai Mansingh Stadium in Jaipur on Wednesday. With this crushing win, Bangalore now move to second position in the points table.

It was a disciplined performance from Bangalore who kept things simple and let Rajasthan's top order collapse under the pressure of setting a target. Shane Warne said at the toss that he reckoned 165-170 was a par total and perhaps, the attempt to set a big target did them in. The pitch too, certainly, played its part and they lost their way.

The chase was over in a blink, with Kevin Pietersen taking complete control of the innings with an entertaining and aggressive knock. He looted 18 runs in the fourth over, bowled by Kamran Khan, with the help of four boundaries -- a slapped four, a muscled hit over mid-off, a scorching off-drive and a pulled six. When he collected three more boundaries in the sixth, bowled by Adam Voges, Bangalore were comfortably on course. The only hope left for Rajasthan was whether Warne could produce any magic but Pietersen and Robin Uthappa went after him in style to deliver the killer blow.

Though their bowling lacked bite, it was the batsmen who let down Rajasthan today. Things went wrong right from the start when Michael Lumb was run out trying to steal a single to backward point. The new batsman Amit Paunikar fell for a first-ball duck, edging an attempted hook to the keeper. The worst shot from a top-order batsman, though, was from Naman Ojha who heaved a back-of-length delivery from outside off to mid-on. In a blink, Rajasthan had slipped to 21 for 3 in 3.2 overs and though Shane Watson attempted a repair job, there was never a phase of play where Rajasthan dominated.

Once the top order collapsed and Abhishek

Jhunjhunwala, who likes to stay beside the line and thread the off side, struggled to pierce a packed off-side field, it was obvious that the responsibility of scoring runs would fall on Watson and Yusuf Pathan. And they seemed to have a plan. Jhunjhunwala would try to hit out while Watson would drop anchor, but with Jhunjhunwala failing to get any momentum, Watson tried to force the pace, and fell. He pulled Jacques Kallis low to the right of square leg where Pietersen took a sharp catch to leave Rajasthan wobbling at 53 for 4.

Much depended on Yusuf at that stage but he was kept quiet by a barrage of short-pitched deliveries. Some kicked up shoulder high, some reared towards his chest and some jumped just above his waist but, collectively, it was enough to keep him in check. He edged the pull shots, was late on attempted hooks, couldn't connect with his upper cuts and his mode of dismissal showed his mindset. When Dale Steyn, who turned in yet another impressive spell of pace bowling, came on to bowl at him, Yusuf expected a short delivery first up and retreated well inside the crease. However, Steyn surprised him with a full delivery that curved away gently and Yusuf, rooted to his crease, couldn't get bat to ball. It could have been worse for Rajasthan, who were struggling at 72 for 6, but Adam Voges played a calm hand, along with Abhishek Raut, to ensure they crossed 100.

For Bangalore, each bowler impressed with his discipline: Pankaj Singh hit the full length and varied his pace, Vinay Kumar hit the back of length, Steyn troubled with his pace and variations in length, Kallis used his offcutters to good effect and Kumble was, well, his typical nagging self. They kept Rajasthan down to an under-par score, and Pietersen finished them off.

SCORES IN BRIEF

RAJASTHAN ROYALS: 130 for 6 (Watson 22, Voges 28 not out, Raut 32 not out; Pankaj 2-27)
ROYAL CHALLENGERS BANGALORE: 132 for 5 (Pietersen 62, Uthappa 26; Trivedi 2-32)
Result: Royal Challengers Bangalore won by 5 wickets.
Man-of-the-match: Kevin Pietersen.

Clarke clinches Wisden award

AFP, London

Australia vice-captain Michael Clarke has been named as one of the Wisden Almanack's Five Cricketers of the Year in the 2010 edition of cricket's 'bible'.

The stylish batsman, 29, was Australia's leading run-scorer in last year's Ashes with 448 runs at 64 but suffered the disappointment of finishing on the losing side as hosts England triumphed 2-1 in an intriguing series.

Clarke is joined in winning the accolade this year, an award a player can only receive once in his career and which is in the sole gift of the Wisden editor, by England Ashes heroes Stuart Broad, Graham Onions, Matt Prior and Graeme Swann.

Meanwhile India batsman Virender Sehwag becomes the first player to retain Wisden's Leading Cricketer in the World award since it was inaugurated six years ago.

"In 2009, Sehwag broke Test cricket's sound barrier by scoring at more than a run a ball," explained Wisden editor Scyld Berry.

Sehwag also opens in Wisden's 2009 Test XI, led by his India captain, Mahendra Singh Dhoni in a side also containing five players who featured in the 2009 Ashes.

But Australia captain Ricky Ponting, England batsman Kevin Pietersen and South Africa skipper Graeme Smith were among those 'dropped' from the Wisden XI.

This year marks the 147th edition of Wisden which has been published continuously since 1864.

Modis in IPL

FROM PAGE 17 he put pressure on the IPL Commissioner to bring a team to Ahmedabad.

"We were told that we won't be allowed to work. The Adani Group and Narendra Modi had a stake in the Ahmedabad IPL bid.

ICC stands by Pakistan



AFP, Karachi

Cricket's world governing body pledged support for Pakistan on Wednesday and expressed hope that the isolated country will play as much international cricket as possible, even at neutral venues.

Haroon Lorgat, chief executive of the International Cricket Council (ICC), was to visit Karachi on Thursday to unveil the World Twenty20 trophy and support Pakistan, left without international cricket at home due to security problems.

"It's a great pleasure to be heading back to Pakistan. We are always assured of a warm welcome there," Lorgat said in a statement.

His will be the first visit by a top ICC official to Pakistan since Islamist militants attacked the Sri Lankan cricket team on March 3, 2009.

The attacks in Pakistan's eastern city of Lahore killed eight people and wounded seven Sri Lankan players and their assistant coach. It severed any chance of Pakistan hosting international cricket in the near future.

The ICC was forced to strip Pakistan of its share of 14 matches in the World Cup 2011, leaving a big question mark over the country's future as an international sporting venue.

Pakistan were left to play their home series in the United Arab Emirates and will also play two Tests and two Twenty20 games against Australia in England later this year.

Malik appeals ban



AFP, Lahore

Newly-wed former Pakistan captain Shoaib Malik has appealed a ban and heavy fine imposed on him by cricket authorities, barely two days before the deadline, an official said Wednesday.

"Malik's counsel Ahmed Hussain has sent his appeal against the fine and ban and now an independent arbitrator will deal with the case," Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) legal adviser Tafazzul Rizvi told AFP.

Last month the PCB imposed heavy fines and penalties on seven top players following on- and off-field problems during tours of the United Arab Emirates, New Zealand and Australia.

Malik, who wedded Indian tennis star Sania Mirza on Monday in Hyderabad, was banned for one year and fined two million rupees (24,000 dollars) for violation of players' code of conduct.

All-rounder Rana Navedul Hasan, who appealed earlier this month, was handed the same fine and punishment, while former captain Yousuf Khan and Mohammad Yousuf were banned for an indefinite period for "infighting which let the team down". Shahid Afridi, Kamran Akmal and Umar Akmal were also heavily fined.

The penalties came after a month-long

"Pakistan has plenty of international cricket coming up in all three formats of the game over the next few months," said Lorgat.

"That is hugely important considering it is not possible for the national team to play on home soil at present.

"The international cricket that is planned shows that Pakistan has not been isolated by the unfortunate circumstances at home. It is vital that the team continues to play regularly, even if that is at a neutral venue," said Lorgat.

The former South African player expressed hope that Pakistan can live up to their reputation in the World Twenty20, due to start in the West Indies from April 30.

"Pakistan is the defending ICC World Twenty20 champion, so I have no doubt Shahid Afridi and his team will be working hard to retain the title they deservedly won in England last year," said Lorgat.

Pakistan, led by Afridi, will fly out to the Caribbean on April 24. They are placed in Group A along with Australia and Bangladesh.

"There is a real excitement building in the West Indies now and it looks like it's going to be a tournament to remember and for those who cannot travel to the Caribbean, there is a good television coverage," said Lorgat.

Pakistan Cricket Board chief operating officer Wasim Bari praised the ICC for having Lorgat come to the country.

"Although it's a small step, it's encouraging for us that ICC is hosting a function in Pakistan and show its commitment towards us," Bari told AFP.

inquiry by a committee set up to investigate Pakistan's dismal performance on the tour of Australia, where they lost all three Tests, five one-day matches and a Twenty20 international.

The Akmal brothers lodged appeals last week, while Afridi and Younus did so on Wednesday.

With Malik's move, six out of the seven penalised players have appealed, leaving Yousof the only one not to have done so. The deadline to appeal is April 16.

In protest at his treatment, Yousof announced his retirement from international cricket last month.

The PCB last month appointed two retired Supreme Court judges -- Muneer Sheikh and Jamshed Ali Shah -- and former high court judge Irfan Qadir to deal with the appeals.

One of the judges will hear the appeals, said Rizvi.

Commenting on a demand by Younus's lawyer that the appeal process be held in public, Rizvi said that was a decision for the arbitrator.

"Usually in-house tribunal proceedings are never held in public, but it will be up to the arbitrator to regulate the procedure, which will be decided after the deadline of the appeal."

Pakistan's next assignment is to defend their World Twenty20 title in the West Indies, starting from April 30.

Afridi will lead the team, which also includes the Akmal brothers.



Spaniard Rafael Nadal slices towards opponent Dutchman Thiemo de Bakker during their Monte Carlo Masters Series in Monaco on Wednesday.

PHOTO: AFP

Nadal storms into quarters



AFP, Monte Carlo

Rafael Nadal moved closer to perfection for a second day in succession Thursday, with the five-time champion completing another 6-1, 6-0 rout to roar into the quarterfinals of the Monte Carlo Masters.

Less than 24 hours after crushing Dutchman Thiemo de Bakker by the identical score, world number three Nadal repeated his clay power-play, with German Michael Berrer the day's victim at the Country Club.

Nadal polished his record at the event which he has owned as champion for the last five years to an overwhelming 29 straight victories as the four-time Roland Garros champion continues a bid for history and a sixth consecutive title.

Berrer, ranked 51st, stood zero chance in the onslaught. The German could do little more than watch as Nadal sent over 28 winners, converted on five of six break point chances and made a mere eight unforced errors in 53 minutes.

The second seed behind Novak Djokovic will play Friday against either French favourite Jo-Wilfried Tsonga, seeded fifth, and Spain's two-time champion here Juan Carlos Ferrero.

Three more Spanish seeds followed Nadal's winning example with Alberto Montanes' 6-4, 6-4 upset of fourth seed Marin Cilic leading the way on another sunny, chilly afternoon.

Russel keep

FROM PAGE 17 converting the resultant spot kick and taking himself to the top of the scorers list with 13 goals in 16 matches.

Sheikh Russel with their 12th win in 16 matches lifted their point tally to 39, three less than second-placed Mohammedan Sporting Club. Chittagong Abahani with their seventh loss in 16 matches stuck to 17 points to stay fifth.

Dynamites

FROM PAGE 17 Earlier, the Dynamites' spinners put a stranglehold on the Khulna batsmen, with Mohammad Rafique again taking the lead. He picked up two key wickets at the top of the order, removing Mithun and Shakib in the space of four balls.

Only opener Mahela Udawatte forced the pace with two sixes and a boundary in his 19-ball 33. But after he gave his wicket away to Ashrafal, the Kings fell apart.

Ashrafal, who has so far failed to do anything with the bat in the Twenty20 competition, shone with the ball however with two more wickets to finish with figures of 3 for 20 from four overs. He was later adjudged man-of-the-match.

Dhaka completed their third win in a row in the tournament while Khulna are on two points from three outings.

SCORES IN BRIEF
KINGS OF KHULNA: 124-8 in 20 overs (Udawatte 33, Farhad 24, Zoysa 21; Ashrafal 3-20, Rafique 2-7).
DHAKA DYNAMITES: 127-3 in 18.5 overs (Shamsur 51*, Mendis 44; Shakib 1-15).
Result: Dhaka Dynamites won by seven wickets.
Man-of-the-match: Mohammad Ashrafal.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

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