

Partex official partner of BHF

SPORTS REPORTER

Partex Beverage became the official partner of the Bangladesh Hockey Federation for next three years to provide mineral water for international and domestic competitions.

The announcement came through a press conference at the Maulana Bhasani National Hockey Stadium yesterday and the contract will be in effect for the upcoming Asian Games Qualifiers to be held on May 7-15.

Partex Beverage, who was once an official beverage partner of the Bangladesh Cricket Board, will provide approximately 46,500 bottles of water per year, informed BHF general secretary Khondoker Jamiluddin.

Akhtaruzzaman, deputy general manager of Partex Beverage, said that they felt proud of being the official partner of hockey and their association would be long term though the contract would be renewed each year.

C'wealth training from May 1

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh Olympic Association is going to start the training camp for the upcoming Commonwealth Games from next month though it has yet to receive any fund from the government.

The BOA has placed a budget of Tk 2.42 crore for preparation as well as participation in the 19th Commonwealth Games to be held in New Delhi, India this October and Bangladesh will participate in six disciplines -- athletics, archery, swimming, shooting, weightlifting and boxing.

"We are determined to start the training from May 1 whether we get fund from the government, but we are optimistic to get the fund," said BOA training committee head Mizanur Rahman Manu.

Manu informed that some 80-80 athletes selected on the performance of the recently concluded SA Games would gear up in the six months' training though 50-55 athletes will eventually take part in the meet.

The BOA initially planned to start the training from early this month, but they were forced to defer the training by a month following the lack of fund, though they repeatedly knocked the Youth and Sports Ministry to allocate the training fund, informed BOA CEO Col Wali Ullah.

Late runs

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picked up three wickets to keep the South Africans in check.

Apart from Mahmudul, leg-spinner Tanvir Haider and left-arm Saqlain Sajib took two wickets each.

Mohammad Mithun (5 not out) and NCL T20s final hero Shuvogoto Hom (6 not out) remained at the crease when the umpires called stumps.

Good news

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last group match against Australia on May 5.

An old injury was aggravated while Tamim was fielding in a recently concluded National Cricket League T20s.

Bangladesh will fly for the Caribbean on April 24.

Mashrafe

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Test cricket and that's why I need to see how things go in the shorter version of the game, after which I will decide about my Test comeback. But everything will depend on whether the team needs my service," he explained.

Mashrafe was hardly bothered with the Tigers' chances in the World Cup, rather he was looking forward to the England series.

"To me T20 is just fun. I am looking forward to the England series because we have to prove this time that we are an improving side," he said.

Mashrafe believed that the preparation for the ICC World Twenty20 would have much better if they got a sporting wicket in the just concluded NCL T20 tournament.

"It was nice that we got the opportunity to play some matches before the World Cup but it could have been much better if we got sporting wickets because we are going to play in a bouncy track in Barbados. And our batsmen also loves to play on a bouncy track," said Mashrafe.

Modi in the line of fire

AFP, New Delhi



The crisis in the Indian Premier League (IPL) gathered pace Thursday as a growing rift between cricket chiefs threatened the future of the cash-rich tournament.

At the centre of the controversy is Lalit Modi, the high-profile boss of the IPL which is facing a tax probe amid claims from the political opposition that the league was a front for money laundering and illegal betting.

The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI), which owns the IPL, has called a meeting of the tournament's governing council on Monday to discuss what the media says is the biggest crisis in the sport since a match-fixing scandal of 2000.

Modi, fearing the axe from his own tournament, on Thursday declined to attend the meeting, saying it was unauthorised and that he wanted a further five days to reply to the charges against the league.

"If the meeting does go ahead on 26th April instead of 1st of May as I have asked, it will deem to be unofficial," Modi wrote to the BCCI in an e-mail that was made public.

"I do not propose to attend any unauthorised meeting."

BCCI president Shashank Manohar, a noted lawyer, took Modi head-on, saying Monday's meeting in Mumbai would go ahead as scheduled and claimed the support of the majority in the 14-member council.

"The meeting will be held," Manohar told reporters. "If some member does not wish to attend, there is nothing we can do. But we need to take action as quickly as possible."

Modi is the driving force behind the success of the IPL, which has seen its brand value surge to 4.1 billion dollars in just three short years.

The tax probe began after junior foreign minister Shashi Tharoor was forced to resign over claims that his girlfriend was given a free stake worth 15 million dollars in a new franchise "mentored" by the minister.

Details of the ownership of the team, in the southern city of Kochi, were leaked on the microblogging website Twitter by Modi.

The IPL, which began in 2008, features the world's top cricketers playing the popular Twenty20 format of the game for eight franchises owned by India's wealthy businessmen and film stars.

Two more franchises are to be added for the 2011 season.

As the third edition of the tournament neared its finale with the second semi-final on Thursday and the final on Sunday, fears arose among the franchisees on the IPL's future.

"If the tax probe gets messier, anything is possible," a senior figure from one franchise told AFP when asked if the existence of the tournament was at stake.

"I wish I could say I am not worried, but I am very, very worried," the source said.

The IPL and its associates have been subject to nationwide tax raids over the past few days and authorities have summoned IPL officials on Friday to hand over all paperwork related to the tournament.

Many franchisees have jumped to Modi's support, saying he was responsible for the success of the IPL and should be allowed to continue.

"I am full of appreciation for what Lalit Modi has delivered through the IPL," said liquor and airline baron Vijay Mallya, who owns the Bangalore Royal Challengers franchise.

"If he has issues with the government, that's his private matter and he needs to deal with it."

Former cricketer Kirti Azad, a member of India's only World Cup winning team in 1983, hoped the government probe would not be confined to Modi.

"They are all nude in the public bath," said Azad, quoting a Hindi proverb. "The whole system needs to be cleansed."

Cricketer analyst Ayaz Memon cited a conflict of interest in BCCI secretary N. Srinivasan's company owning the Chennai Super Kings franchise.

"Srinivasan must be privy to all of Modi's dealings," said Memon. "Wonder why he did not rake up the issue earlier."

"Besides, the national chairman of selectors (Krish Srikkanth) is a brand ambassador for the Chennai Super Kings. People cannot be blamed for thinking he may be favouring players from his franchise."

Stick wielders start training



SPORTS REPORTER

The national hockey team have started their full-fledged training for the upcoming Asian Games Qualifiers after German coach Gerhard Peter Rach arrived in the capital yesterday following his flight delay over volcanic ash from Iceland in Europe.

Of the 27-preliminary squad, some 20 players joined the camp with veteran likes Isa Mia and Musa Mia skipping the training citing that the coach preferred young players rather than them.

When his attention was drawn on the players' decision, coach Rach told the reporters that it was a good decision by them and that you should compare their performance with the young players who have been picked for the camp.

Rach, however, has set his sights on the Asian Games to be held in China in November rather than the qualifiers.

"After the performance in the South Asian Games on home soil, the team is much more confident than any other time and we will definitely play to win the qualifiers and even second position will be disappointing for us," said the German, who guided Bangladesh to put up brilliant performances against India and Pakistan before finishing third in the meet.

He, however, believes they would have to fight against teams like Hong Kong, Singapore and Sri Lanka in the six-team tournament.

Rach also urged them to continue training till November to put up better performance in the Asian Games.

"We are closing the gap on other Asian teams and we should keep training and the players need more practice matches to grow, but they are not given such opportunity," said Rach.

The German coach also blasted the federation officials following the absence of newly-appointed manager KM Manzur during training and said that he had never seen such a federation in his coaching career.

Reward for SA Games winners

SPORTS REPORTER

Some Tk 2.21 crore will be disbursed among medal winners of the 11th South Asian Games as per the promise of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, said a Bangladesh Olympic Association official.

Bangladesh bagged a record of 18 gold, 23 silver and 56 bronze to finish with 97 medals, just behind second-paced Pakistan, who grabbed just a gold more than the hosts to finish second despite having secured a total of 80 medals.

Before the start of the Games, Sheikh Hasina promised the athletes that each individual gold winner would be awarded Tk 5 lakh, silver medal winner get Tk 3 lakh and bronze winner Tk 50,000.

But later, the amount for the bronze winners was increased to Tk one lakh while the gold winners in team events, particularly football and cricket, have also been increased to Tk 18 from Tk 15 lakh.

BOA chief executive officer Col Wali Ullah said that they are ready to disburse the promised cash award of the Prime Minister.

Leaders pay tribute to Samaranch

AFP, Geneva

Political leaders and the cream of the world sport's governing elite have paid tribute to Juan Antonio Samaranch, the former International Olympic Committee chief who died on Wednesday.

Samaranch, 89, displayed "extraordinary vision and talent" in unifying the Olympic movement, his successor Jacques Rogge said.

"I cannot find the words to express the distress of the Olympic Family," said Rogge, who in 2001 took over after the Spaniard has served 21 years at the helm of the most powerful organisation in sport.

"I am personally deeply saddened by the death of the man who built up the Olympic Games of the modern era, a man who inspired me, and whose knowledge of sport was truly exceptional."

He added: "We have lost a great man, a mentor and a friend who dedicated his long and fulfilled life to the Olympic movement."

Spain's King Juan Carlos and his wife Sofia sent a message of condolence to the bereaved family acknowledging his "vocation in the service of Spain, Catalonia and Olympism", the royal household said.

The royal couple will attend his funeral in Barcelona Thursday.

Russia's leaders paid their own tributes.

"Juan Antonio Samaranch was a great friend of our country and his death is a loss not only for those who were linked to the Olympic movement but for all the residents of Russia," President Dmitry Medvedev said in a telegram.

Prime Minister Vladimir Putin in a telegram paid tribute to a "brilliant, multi-talented, wonderfully good-humoured and open person."

French President Nicolas Sarkozy lauded Samaranch's attempts to reach out beyond national boundaries to make the Olympics a truly global event.

"A very big and very important figure, Mr Samaranch facilitated the growth in power of the Olympic movement by opening it up to every athlete and every country," said a statement from Sarkozy.

Lamine Diack, president of world athletics

governing body the International Association of Athletics Federations (IAAF) also paid tribute.

"Samaranch worked with great energy, intelligence and the skills of a natural diplomat to create a unified Olympic movement and to ensure that the Olympic Games became the world's most influential sporting event," said Diack.

FIFA president Sepp Blatter saluted Samaranch's "sense of commitment" and efforts "to protect sport" during a 35-years acquaintance.

"I always held him in great esteem," said Blatter.

Androulla Vassiliou, European Commissioner said: "Juan Antonio Samaranch was one of the great figures of the Olympic movement and an exceptional ambassador for the world of sport..."

"The Olympic flame burns brighter today thanks to the extraordinary leadership of Juan Antonio Samaranch."

Further tributes poured in from around the world, with Seb Coe, chairman of the 2012 London Olympics organising committee and a close friend of Samaranch, praising his leadership qualities.

"I have lost a friend, one that moulded my path through sport from my early 20s, and the world has lost an inspirational man," said Coe, who won Olympic gold in the 1500m at the 1980 Games in Moscow and the 1984 Los Angeles games.

"A man that challenged us all to fight for sport, its primacy and its autonomy, a fight he led fearlessly from the front, creating an extraordinary sporting movement that reaches millions of people around the world."

Sir Craig Reddie, the former British Olympic Association chairman and an IOC member since 1994, credited Samaranch with encouraging London to bid for the 2012 Games after previous unsuccessful bids from Birmingham and Manchester.

"He was quite clear that the only British city that would win was London," recalled Reddie.

"He used to give me a hard time over Wembley because it wasn't designed like the Stade de France (in Paris) with a running track as well."

Cricketers in hospital after robbery

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

Brothers Golam Mabud and Golam Rahman, both first-class cricketers, have been admitted to Sylhet Osmani Medical Hospital after suffering injuries during a robbery at their residence in Sylhet early morning on Wednesday.

Cricketers Welfare Association of Bangladesh (CWAB) demanded a sincere investigation into the incident and punishment to the culprits.

In a statement they said that their Sylhet branch have been giving all sorts of support to the cricketers.

Premier v'ball starts today

SPORTS REPORTER

The National Bank Dhaka Metropolis Premier Division Volleyball League starts at the Volleyball Stadium today.

Ten teams will participate in the league and three matches will be held on the opening day.

The participating teams are: Bangladesh Police, Power Development Board SC, Water Development Board, Titas Club, Wari Club, East End Club, Fire Service and Civil Defense, East End Boys, Bhai Bhai Sangha and Bangladesh Rifles.

Mahbub new boxing chief

SPORTS REPORTER

Youth and Sports secretary Mahbub Ahmed took over as the president of the Bangladesh Amateur Boxing Federation on Wednesday.

Ahmed has replaced the outgoing president General Jahangir Alam, who was in helm for nine years, said press release yesterday.

Venus to skip Fed Cup

AFP, Birmingham

Venus Williams will not compete for the United States in this weekend's Fed Cup semifinal tie against Russia because of nagging leg injuries similar to those of sister Serena.

"I waited until this moment in hopes that I would have an opportunity to play, but I am being advised by my medical support team that I will need more time to recover," Williams said in a statement Wednesday.

The elder Williams sister wore wrappings on both legs in a finals loss to Kim Clijsters earlier this month at a hardcourt event in Miami.

"She has been trying to get better," Fernandez said. "Obviously I knew it was going to be tough for her because she hurt herself at the end of the Miami tournament and couldn't hit balls until the last week or so."

"I did everything I could do to give her as much time as possible to see if she got better. She's not quite there."

Fernandez will send Melanie Oudin, Bethanie Mattek-Sands and Liezel Huber against the Russians and fill the spot she was holding open for Venus with either Sloane Stephens or Christina McHale.

Pakistan welcomes daughter-in-law

AFP, Karachi

Newlywed and hailed as cross-border peace ambassadors, Indian tennis star Sania Mirza and Pakistani cricketer Shoaib Malik arrived in Pakistan on Thursday to a frenzied reception.

Camera bulbs flashed and fans thronged to get a glimpse of the lovebirds as they landed at Karachi airport, their first visit here after their April 12 wedding that bridged the two nations' bitter sporting and political divide.

The pair are in Pakistan for a week of celebrations -- after a tough engagement and media frenzy that saw Muslim elders called in to arrange a divorce for Malik from a wife he long-denied ever having.

Hundreds of fans gathered outside Jinnah International Airport, carrying placards reading: "Welcome to Pakistan's daughter-in-law". "I am very happy for both of them and I hope their marriage helps build relations between the two countries," said well-wisher Faqir Khan, a waiter.

Mirza, in sunglasses, red trousers and a green tunic, grasped the hand of her new husband, who was wearing blue jeans and a green t-shirt.

The couple were welcomed by provincial sports minister Mohammad Ali Shah and other local government officials, but did not speak to reporters.

"I am both disappointed and happy," said labourer and sports fan Ijaz Ahmad. "I'm disappointed because I could not see a glimpse of them, but I wish them a happy future and I am very happy that they both got married."

Nuclear-armed rivals India and Pakistan have fought three wars since independence and broke off all official contact following the 2008 Mumbai attacks, which India blamed on

Pakistan-based militants.

The stand-off extended to the sporting world, with a freeze on non-tournament matches between their respective national cricket teams.

Malik and Mirza's sporting marriage is unprecedented in the perennial rivalry between the South Asian nations, and some right-wing Hindu groups in India had denounced the union, accusing Mirza of betraying her country.

Twenty-eight-year-old Malik married Mirza, 23, in the Indian city of Hyderabad on April 12 after divorcing another Indian woman, Aysha Siddiqui, who said she wed the former Pakistan cricket captain in 2002.

Siddiqui's claim, which Malik initially denied, created a huge stir before Muslim elders in Hyderabad negotiated a divorce settlement allowing the sporting pair to tie the knot, family members said.

Malik, a former Pakistan captain, is serving a one-year ban for breaches of discipline, while Mirza is recovering from a wrist injury.

Family members said the couple will later Thursday travel to Islamabad to arrange Mirza's visa. The Indian tennis star will apply for a visa to Sialkot, Malik's hometown, where a reception is planned for April 25.

Another reception will be held in the eastern city Lahore two days later, family sources said. Pakistan Prime Minister Yousuf Raza Gilani is also expected to hold a reception in the couple's honour later this month.

Pakistan's minister for population and welfare Ferdous Ashiq Awan, who also attended the wedding reception in India, said the marriage has spurred diplomacy between the two nations, allowing her to meet her Indian counterpart.

Akhtar dreams big

AFP, Karachi



Injury-plagued paceman Shoaib Akhtar said Thursday he dreams of winning the World Cup for Pakistan next year, despite a series of setbacks and scandals that have kept him out of the game.

The 34-year-old paceman, who has not played for the Pakistan national team since May last year, took 6-52 in a domestic one-day match on Wednesday night, furthering his comeback campaign.

"I am fit and bowling in rhythm," Akhtar told reporters.

"I know the problems I have faced in my career, but the dream to feature in the final of the 2011 World Cup in Mumbai is still alive and I want to help Pakistan win the World Cup in a year's time."

India, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh will host the tenth World Cup between February and April next year.

Akhtar's 13-year career has been plagued by injuries and discipline problems, the latest of which ended in a record fine of seven million rupees (83,000 dollars) in February.

He was originally banned for five years in April 2008 on charges of violating the players' code of conduct. The ban was reduced to 18 months by an appeals committee, which levied the massive financial penalty.

Akhtar appealed against the ban and fine in the Lahore High Court. The court suspended the ban, allowing him to play

again, but upheld the fine.

"I don't want to live in the past. Now I am fit and playing and have proved my fitness. My performance has never been in doubt, so it's now up to the selectors when they give me a chance," said Akhtar.

Akhtar was left out of Pakistan's World Twenty20 squad last month and was also expelled from the list of contracted players.

"I have experience which is precious and my competition is only with myself," said Akhtar, who is focusing on Pakistan's six Test matches in England between July and September this year.

"I know I have suffered fitness problems but all fast bowlers suffer with that. I am still focused and want to play for Pakistan and finish on a high."



PHOTO: AFP Pakistan pacer Shoaib Akhtar prepares to bowl during a domestic match in Karachi on Wednesday.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

Crossword puzzle grid with clues for Across and Down. Includes a solution time of 21 mins and a solution key at the bottom.

Cryptoquip puzzle grid with letters and numbers for solving words.

FK KGS GMUD' KFXSTI, Q
FDDBNSZ KGS MIS DSTXQIU
KGS PSXSTFUSD NBDK
GFXS PSSI KGS PMFTKSIZST.
Yesterday's Cryptoquip: SINCE I'M A BIG FAN OF PAYING BY CREDIT CARD, I LIKE TO THINK OF MYSELF AS A TAKE-CHARGE TYPE.
Today's Cryptoquip Clue: K equals T