

Kaka undergoes knee operation

Real Madrid midfielder Kaka has undergone an operation on his left knee and could be ruled out for three to four months, the clinic which carried out the surgery said on Thursday. Kaka was examined by knee and sports injury specialist Marc Martens in Belgium and Martens's assistant at the clinic in Antwerp told Reuters that a half-hour arthroscopic operation was carried out on Thursday morning. "It went well," the assistant said. "The typical recovery period for this is three to four months."



Turn pro or be expelled, says Indian League

REUTERS, Kuala Lumpur

Indian League (IL) football clubs face expulsion from local and regional competitions unless they comply with Asian Football Confederation (AFC) rules.

The AFC wants to restrict the Asian Champions League to professional teams from next year while IL officials are also seeking to follow the same route with its 14 clubs.

On Thursday, the region's governing body said IL clubs must meet the requisite standards and that Asian officials would conduct inspections before a December 31 deadline.

"AFC will inform them about their shortcomings in (a) workshop on November 2," All Indian Football Federation general secretary Alberto Colaco told the AFC website.

"They will review and inspect the clubs again after the deadline. The clubs who don't meet the criteria will not be allowed to play in the 2012 edition of the I-League."

In addition to ordering clubs to conform to the rules regarding participation, the AFC also asked them to ensure IL players were not part of state league teams.

Baridhara, T&T draw

SPORTS REPORTER

Uttar Baridhara Club played out a 1-1 goal draw against Motijheel T&T Club in the Bashundhara Metropolis Senior Division Football's Super League match at the Birshreshtha Shaheed Mostafa Kamal Stadium in Kamalapur yesterday.

After a barren first half, Dulal Hasan put Uttar Baridhara ahead in the 57th minute while Nadim equalized for Motijheel in the 73rd minute.

In the relegation league match, Purbachal Parishad defeated Agrani Bank 2-1 at the same venue. Kamal and Jahirul struck one goal apiece for the winners while David pulled one goal back.

North keeps his place

AFP, Sydney

Struggling middle-order batsman Marcus North will retain his place in the Australian team for the two Tests in India in October, chairman of selectors Andrew Hilditch said on Thursday.

North's poor return of 36 runs in four innings in the recent series against Pakistan in England has him under pressure to keep his place in Ricky Ponting's side ahead of the home Ashes series with England later this year.

North, batting at number six, has been dismissed 12 times in

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TASTE OF TRADITION: Rowers paddle in a synchronised way as they speed towards the finish line during a traditional boat race competition on the River Buriganga at Basila yesterday. People of Basila have been staging the festival for the last 40 years at this time of the year when rain brings life to an otherwise waning river that is gradually shrinking due to encroachment and dying because of industrial waste.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

Second Test from today

Asif asks mates to follow Morgan

Cricket

AFP, Birmingham

Mohammad Asif has urged Pakistan's batsmen to follow the example of England's Eoin Morgan as the tourists look for a series-levelling win in the second Test that starts today here at Edgbaston.

Pakistan suffered a 354-run thrashing in last week's first of four Tests at Trent Bridge, in a match where no top four batsman on either side made a fifty in any of the four innings.

But former Ireland left-hander Morgan, batting at No 6, defied the swing-friendly conditions that saw England fast bowler James Anderson take a career-best 11 for 71, with a maiden Test century of 130 in the first innings.

Morgan's stand of 219, an England fifth-wicket record against Pakistan, with Paul Collingwood, who made 82, was the decisive partnership of the match.

Pakistan fast bowler Asif, who took five for 77 in England's first innings 354, told reporters at Edgbaston here on Wednesday: "He [Morgan] played excellently on the first day.

"He came in under pressure at 118 for four and he just left it [the ball] for one hour. Collingwood took his time too and our batsmen needed to take their time and see off the good bowlers."

Just hours after that match -- which ended with Pakistan dismissed for 80, their lowest total against England -- the tourists ended Mohammad Yousuf's international exile following an indefinite ban imposed after he led the team on their winless tour of Australia earlier this year.

They also dropped leg-spinner Danish Kaneria from their squad following poor match figures of one for 171.

Pakistan captain Salman Butt, speaking before the decision to recall Yousuf had been announced, insisted his side ought to stick with the likes of young batsmen Azhar Ali and Umar

Amin, who both made their debuts in last month's first Test against Australia at Lord's and featured in the subsequent three-wicket win over Ricky Ponting's men at Headingley.

"How many wins have Pakistan had with the people who were previously playing? Had we been winning with them in the team in the past two years then it could have been a mistake [to omit them]," Butt said.

A further complicating factor is that the 35-year-old Yousuf, who averages more than 53 in Tests, is not expected to arrive in England until Thursday -- just a day before the second Test is due to start here on Friday.

Even for a batsman with Yousuf's record, to come into a Test 'cold' is asking a lot.

It was at Edgbaston, roared on by fans from the local Asian community, where Pakistan beat Australia in two Twenty20 internationals last month.

Asif said Twenty20 was a format that came easily to Pakistan, in contrast to Test cricket.

"This is what we play in the street so this is one of our natural strengths. We were playing this when we were young -- 10, eight-over matches.

"But we need to learn how to handle the pressure over five days. We can win Tests if we win each session -- Twenty20 is just one session."

England have concerns regarding star batsman Kevin Pietersen, who has now gone 22 innings without a Test century.

But England coach Andy Flower didn't mind seeing batsmen work for their runs in Nottingham, in contrast to the recent second Test in Colombo where Sri Lanka made 642 for four declared only for India to reply with 707.

Conditions at Edgbaston could well be similar to those at Trent Bridge but Flower said: "Those types of pitches and the swinging ball make it a fascinating battle between bat and ball. I enjoyed watching it myself and the spectators must have loved it."

Once more Pakistan find themselves playing a Test against the backdrop of a national tragedy,

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C'WEALTH GAMES

Indian minister promises a success

AFP, New Delhi

India's sports minister Thursday sought to allay fears over New Delhi's preparations for the Commonwealth Games in October, which have been mired in delays and allegations of corruption.

"All venues will be ready by the end of this month," M S Gill told the upper house of parliament.

"Most of the venues have already hosted test events without glitches. I have had a look at the stadiums, they are ready. Just the finishing work remains to be done," Gill said.

"The Games are at our doorstep and we have to ensure its success," he added.

The Indian capital has been racing against the clock to finish all its projects for the October 3-14 Games.

With less than two months to go, many parts of the city still resemble a construction site, and monsoon rains have hampered efforts to accelerate the work.

An Indian anti-corruption body last week reported it had found a host of problems with construction work, including the use of poor-quality materials and dubious contracts.

Questions have also been raised about suspect sums being transferred from the organising committee to a British-based firm.

As Gill was speaking in

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Make World Cup a success: Hasina

SPORTS REPORTER



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has called upon all concerned in the country to strive to make the upcoming 2011 ICC World Cup a success.

"As a co-host of the World Cup, Bangladesh has established itself as an important part of world sports. Now I urge all to work hard to complete all the tasks to make the World Cup event a success," said Hasina during the celebration of Abahani's founder and her younger brother Sheikh Kamal's 61st birth anniversary at the club's premises in Dhanmondi yesterday.

The Prime Minister said the government has already allocated Tk 256 crore for the renovation of five stadiums where the matches will be held during the World Cup.

Bangladesh will host eight matches including two quarterfinals and also stage the opening ceremony of the extravaganza at the Bangabandhu National Stadium.

Describing sports as one of the most effective tools to protect the youth, she said the youth community would have to be involved with sports in larger numbers to gain confidence and acquire various skills.

She also said her government would do everything in a bid to ensure wholesale improvement of the country's sports as well as the athletes.

As is custom, Abahani, in the program, awarded gold medals in Sheikh Kamal's name to its players and organisers for the year. The

gold medals for this year went to Tamim Iqbal (cricket), Pranotosh Kumar (football), Puskor Khisa Mimo (hockey), Kazi Nabil Ahmed (best organizer), M Musa Mia (the best patron) and ASF Rahman (former club president).

"I believe no development will be done until there are completed tournaments. With two or three good clubs, we should not expect development of the entire sports sector. All the sporting clubs should be raised to a certain standard and I want to see the sports arena going smoothly without any political influence," said Hasina, who handed over crests to Abahani's winning members of both the champions of the Bangladesh League and the Premier Division Hockey League.

The country's premier expressed gratitude to the organizers, who kept her brother, Sheikh Kamal, memorable for long through the Abahani club. She also said that Sheikh Kamal Sports Complex would be built in the club premise soon.

Abahani chairman Salman F Rahman said that they were waiting for the documents of Dhanmondi's land and hoped to begin the work in December after getting the redesign of the complex to be built on 16-acre land.

Abahani will make a modern sport complex, which will have all facilities like gymnasium, swimming-pool, indoor sports facilities and a dormitory.

Abahani director in charge Kazi Sahed Ahmed, director Harunur Rashid, Abahani Somarthakgosthi president Mir Nazimuddin and secretary Enam-E-Khoda Julu spoke on the occasion.

Even going in Colombo

Cricket

AFP, Colombo

Defiant batting by India's tailenders and twin blows by part-time spinner Virender Sehwag left the third and final cricket Test against Sri Lanka evenly poised at the P Sara Oval here on Thursday.

India, chasing Sri Lanka's first innings total of 425, were reduced to 321-6 in the post-lunch session of the third day, before the last four wickets added 115 runs to take the total to 436.

Sehwag, who scored a century earlier in the day, then dismissed Sri Lanka's openers to leave the hosts tottering at 45-2 in their second knock, a lead of 34 runs with eight wickets in hand.

Sehwag had Tharanga Paranavithana caught behind with his fifth ball and dismissed Tillakaratne Dilshan in his next over, snapped up at short-leg by Murali Vijay.

Sri Lankan captain Kumar Sangakkara was unbeaten at close on 12 -- having completed 8,000 Test runs in his 91st Test -- while night-watcher Suraj Randiv had yet to score.

The top-ranked Indians, seeking a series-levelling victory following the 10-wicket defeat in the first Test, have two days to force a result on a pitch providing turn and bounce for the spinners.

India's total was bolstered by the eighth-wicket pair of Abhimanyu Mithun and Amit Mishra, who put on 64 runs.

The pair came to the crease at the fall of skipper Mahendra Singh Dhoni's wicket in the post-lunch session with India still 75 runs away from Sri Lanka's total.

Mithun, who matched his highest first-class score of 41 in the second Test last week, made 46 with five boundaries before he was caught in the leg-trap off Randiv.

Mishra (40) missed his second Test half-century when he holed out in the deep off Randiv, who also removed Ishant Sharma to

finish with 4-80.

Sling-arm fast bowler Lasith Malinga returned with 3-119, while unorthodox spinner Ajantha Mendis took 2-109.

India, who began the day at 180-2, were dealt two quick blows as veteran Sachin Tendulkar was dismissed in the first over and century-maker Sehwag in the sixth, both falling to reckless shots.

Tendulkar slashed at Malinga's sixth delivery and edged an easy catch to wicketkeeper Prasanna Jayawardene.

The world's leading run-getter, making a record 169th Test appearance, scored 41 in a third-wicket stand of 91 with Sehwag.

Sehwag, who was on 97 overnight, reached his 21st hundred in the second over by pulling Randiv for his 18th boundary.

But Randiv had the last laugh as Sehwag hit out against a flighted ball and top-edged the skier to Chanaka Welegedara in the covers.

Sehwag's 109 would have given him a hundred in each of his last five Tests, had he not been dismissed for 99 in the previous match at the Sinhalese Sports Club.

The robust opener made 109 in the first Test in Galle, and 165 and 109 in the two home Tests against South Africa in February.

Venkatsai Laxman and Suresh Raina hit half-centuries during a fifth-wicket stand of 105, before Mendis dismissed both batsmen in the space of three overs after lunch.

Laxman edged a catch to Mahela Jayawardene in the slips after making 56, while Raina played an uppish drive to Sangakkara at mid-wicket.

Dhoni, who was hit on the fingers by a rising ball from Malinga, made 15 when he was caught behind trying to hook the same bowler.

SCORES IN BRIEF
SRI LANKA: First innings 425 (Dilshan 41, Sangakkara 75, Jayawardene 56, Samaraweera 137 not out, Mathews 45; Ojha 4-115, Sharma 3-72)

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India captain and wicketkeeper Mahendra Singh Dhoni (L) leaps into the air as he takes a catch to dismiss Sri Lanka batsman Tharanga Paranavithana (R) on the third day of the third and final Test at the P Sara Oval in Colombo yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

SPORTS POLL
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