

Zia takes lead

SPORTS REPORTER

Grand Master Ziaur Rahman took solo lead in the Walton 37th National Chess Championship at the close of the fourth round at the Bangladesh Chess Federation hall room yesterday. Zia defeated Monir Hossain to secure the full four points from four matches while GM Niaz Murshed, who shared the lead with Zia till the third round, slipped in the fourth round to draw with IM Abu Sufian Shakil. The country's first Grandmaster is now in second position with 3.5 points.

FM Minhazuddin Ahmed is in third position with three points after having defeated FM Mehdi Hasan while GM Reefat Bin Sattar had to be content with a draw against FM Debaraj Chatterjee.

Bhajji bets on Ponting

AFP, New Delhi

Under-performing batsman Ricky Ponting has received unexpected support from Indian spinner Harbhajan Singh, who predicted the former Australia captain will make a strong comeback.

"I do not think Ponting is finished and I think people are making a big mistake by writing him off," Harbhajan said amid calls for Ponting's removal for the upcoming Test series against India. "Guys like Ponting, Rahul Dravid and Sachin Tendulkar know what they are doing and people should stop questioning them," the off-spinner was quoted as saying by the Press Trust of India.

Harbhajan has been involved in several fiery on-field verbal spats with Ponting in the past. But he said Ponting should be respected for his achievements in the game and needed to be backed if he felt good enough to play at the top level.

"Australian fans should not put pressure on Ponting. He is only one innings away from finding his top form," said the Indian.

Ponting, who turns 37 next month, has scored 12,656 runs in 158 Tests at an average of 52.29 with 39 centuries. But he has been without a Test century since January 2010.

Harbhajan, whose 406 wickets in 98 Tests make him the most successful international bowler still playing at the top level, has not been selected for the Australian tour due to poor form.

The highly anticipated four-Test series between India and Australia opens in Melbourne on December 26.

Nikola to go

FROM PAGE 16
Abahani from Bangladesh Championship League and Bangladesh Army, Bangladesh Navy, Bangladesh Air Force and Bangladesh Krira Shikkha Protisthan from the services teams.

The coach has already enjoyed his one-month vacation in line with his agreement with the BFF, and now the federation is debating whether this will be designated as a paid leave or not, according to Shohag.

Football

FROM PAGE 16
Abahani from Bangladesh Championship League and Bangladesh Army, Bangladesh Navy, Bangladesh Air Force and Bangladesh Krira Shikkha Protisthan from the services teams.

Mohammad Ashraf, who joined DOHS (which has recently been bought by Prime Bank



South Africa fast bowler Vernon Philander bowls during the first day of the first Test against Sri Lanka at SuperSport Park in Centurion yesterday. Philander claimed five scalps as Sri Lanka folded for 180. PHOTO: AFP

Sri Lanka paced out

Cricket

AFP, Centurion

Vernon Philander claimed his third five-wicket haul in as many Test matches as South Africa dominated the first day of the first Test against Sri Lanka at SuperSport Park on Thursday.

Sri Lanka were bowled out for 180 and South Africa replied with 90 for one, with captain Graeme Smith hitting 61 before he was out eight balls before the close.

Philander took five for 53 and fellow fast bowler Dale Steyn grabbed four for 18 as Sri Lanka struggled after being sent in on a green pitch which offered bounce and movement to the South African quicks.

There were two half-century partnerships during the Sri Lankan innings, with Tharanga Paranavitana, Mahela Jayawardene, Thilan Samaraweera and Angelo Mathews all reaching 30, but the rest of the batting crumbled.

Sri Lanka lost their last six wickets for 24 runs off 32 balls.

The collapse was sparked by a burst of three wickets in five balls -- all confirmed by television reviews -- which ended a spirited fifth wicket stand of 65 off 79 balls between Samaraweera (36) and Mathews (38).

Philander broke the partnership when he had Samaraweera caught behind off a ball which bounced steeply.

The batsman was given not out by umpire Rod Tucker but the South Africans asked for a review and the hotspot technology showed that the batsman got a faint edge to the ball.

The next ball brought the wicket of Kaushal Silva, again after the batsman was given not out by umpire Tucker. The review requested by South

Africa showed that Silva gloved the ball down the legside to wicketkeeper Mark Boucher.

Three balls later new batsman Thisara Perera was caught at slip off leg-spinner Imran Tahir.

He was given out by umpire Steve Davis and television umpire Richard Kettleborough was again brought into action when Perera unsuccessfully sought a review.

Philander, who took five wickets in an innings in both his previous Tests against Australia last month, had Mathews caught at slip to achieve the feat again before Steyn bowled the last two batsmen, Chanaka Welegedara and Dilhara Fernando with successive fast, straight balls.

Steyn became the second fastest bowler in history to reach 250 Test wickets when he started Sri Lanka's troubles by having captain and opening batsman Tillekeratne Dilshan caught at mid-wicket, playing a rash shot.

Steyn achieved the milestone in his 49th Test, one match more than Australia's Dennis Lillee.

He moved ahead of Allan Donald, now the South African bowling coach, who needed 50 matches to take 250 wickets. Sri Lanka could have been in worse trouble if Samaraweera had not had a reprieve on 13 when he was caught at third slip off Morne Morkel, only for an umpire's review to show Morkel had sent down a no-ball.

The incident happened with Sri Lanka on 91 for four in the over after Mahela Jayawardene, their most experienced batsman, had been dismissed by Steyn.

Philander continued his remarkable entry into Test

cricket.

He took 14 wickets at an average of 13.92 against Australia and was quickly in the action on Thursday when he had Kumar Sangakkara caught at second slip, three balls after Steyn dismissed Dilshan.

In his second spell Philander bowled Paranavitana to end a 54-run third wicket stand with Jayawardene before his afternoon breakthroughs snuffed out Sri Lankan hopes of a sustained recovery.

Smith was the senior partner as he and Jacques Rudolph defied some lively bowling by the Sri Lankan pace bowlers.

SCOREBOARD

SRI LANKA: First innings
Dilshan c Philander b Steyn 6
Paranavitana b Philander 32
Sangakkara c Kallis b Philander 1
Jayawardene c Smith b Steyn 30
Samaraweera c Boucher b Philander 36
Mathews c Kallis b Philander 38
Silva c Boucher b Philander 0
Perera c Kallis b Tahir 1
Herath not out 14
Welegedara b Steyn 4
Fernando b Steyn 0
Extras: (b-1, lb-7, nb-6, w-4) 18
Total: (All out in 47.4 overs) 180
Fall of wickets: 1-11, 2-12, 3-66, 4-91, 5-156, 6-156, 7-157, 8-175, 9-180, 10-180.

Bowler O M R W
Steyn 10.4 3 18 4
Philander 13 2 53 5
Morkel 10 1 48 0
Kallis 8 2 31 0
Tahir 6 0 22 1

SOUTH AFRICA: First innings
Rudolph not out 27
Smith lbw b Fernando 61
Steyn not out 0
Extras: (nb-2) 2
Total: (For 1 wkt in 34 overs) 90
To bat: Amla, Kallis, De Villiers, Prince, Boucher, Philander, Morkel, Tahir.
Fall of wickets: 1-88.

Bowler O M R W
Welegedara 9 2 19 0
Perera 8 1 34 0
Mathews 3 2 4 0
Fernando 7 1 21 1
Dilshan 2 0 4 0
Herath 5 2 8 0

Squad announced

FROM PAGE 16
to go before the start of the Test. It was learnt that certain influential officials wanted the squad to be a 15-member one with uncapped batsman Mominul Haque included. If true, this is further proof to support the long-held belief that board members often interfere in selection matters.

For their part, the selectors suddenly seem to have taken exception to this interference, with the result being the panel reluctant to name the 15-man squad, while the BCB was equally averse to announcing a 14-man squad. For the moment, it seems that the selectors won the battle.

The decision to name a 14-member squad was taken after BCB president AHM Mostafa Kamal, who was returning from Singapore along with Pakistan counterpart Zaka Ashraf, gave his approval at the airport.

With Bangladesh already on the wrong side of a royal drubbing at the hands of

Pakistan, this situation is far from ideal. It is only natural that this uncertainty may have a destabilising effect on the team.

"[It is] unsettling for the boys, not knowing if the team has been declared," Law said, but added that the team were managing well despite the trouble. "We have turned up here today as a squad from the first Test. We've all practised like we were playing a Test match. So that's not an issue."

Law is expected to see the positive side, but to use his own words, that Bangladesh were practising "as a squad from the first Test" is a tacit admission that things are far from what they should be so close to an international assignment. Practising with players who might not even be in the squad, as was the case with Ashraf, can only be a hindrance to planning. Perhaps it is high time the board realises that Pakistan really do not need more help.

Shakib, Tamim biggest

FROM PAGE 16
both made it clear that their move to Victoria from Mohammedan was related to Badal's move.

In the press conference an interesting comment came from Tamim when Shakib was asked what the reason was behind his poor performance at the domestic circuit unlike his performance at the international level.

"I think I got another opportunity," replied Shakib but could not finish his answer as Tamim took away the microphone to say that: "Shakib's presence is good enough. It doesn't matter whether he performs or not."

National captain Mushfiqur was relishing the challenge of this season's coveted limited-over competition.

Limited) from Cricket Coaching School along with national pool player Shuvagoto Hom and veteran Faisal Hossain, also echoed his national captain's sentiment, adding: "It's an opportunity for me to get back my form."

Left-handed batsman Shahriar Nafees and pacer Nazmul Hossain signed up for Prime Dhaleswar who are all set to bring the in-form Pakistan all-rounder Mohammad Hafeez.

Defending champions Abahani formed a balanced team and roped in two national players in Mahmudullah Riyad and Elias Sunny while Mohammedan, which was the last club to arrive, signed Naeem Islam and Imrul Kayes as their pool players and are believed to be a mediocre side.

Surjo Tarun who signed one pool player in pacer Shaful Islam, Kalabagan with pool player Shahadat Hossain and Gazi Tank who signed all-rounders Nasir Hossain and Alok Kapali as pool players, also turned up on the last day.

It's all but confirmed that Pakistani players will pour into the league as three foreign players per team are allowed.

Poor opening day for India

AFP, Canberra

India's bowlers were hammered as front-line pacer Ishant Sharma came off with an injury on the opening day of their two-day game against a Chairman's XI at Manuka Oval in Canberra on Thursday.

Wes Robinson and Tom Cooper scored centuries to steer their selection to 398 for six declared off 86 overs.

Robinson hit 143 off 215 balls with six sixes and 13 fours, while Cooper was unbeaten on 182 off 194 balls with 24 boundaries and three sixes.

The pair shared in a 226-run stand for the third wicket.

India's preparations for the opening Boxing Day Test against Australia in Melbourne were unsettled by an ankle injury to striker bowler Ishant Sharma.

Three balls into his sixth over and nearing lunch Sharma took his hat from the umpire and walked off the ground.

India's bowlers had a torrid time against Robinson and Cooper with off-spinner Pragyanshu Ojha going for two for 149 off 25.3 overs, while Rohit Sharma went wicketless for 56 runs off eight overs.

Skipper Rahul Dravid won the toss and sent the Chairman's XI into bat but had to wait until the 10th over before pacer Umesh Yadav made the first breakthrough having Ryan Broad out caught behind for eight.

Joe Burns was bowled by Ojha for 21 before Cooper and Robinson hit out against the Indian attack.

The prolific partnership was finally broken by Ojha, with Sachin Tendulkar taking the catch to dismiss Robinson.

Alex Doolan became Yadav's second victim when he was out lbw for 29 and Yadav got his third wicket two balls later when he also trapped Glenn Maxwell leg before.

Dean Solway made just five before he was caught behind off-seamer Vinay Kumar.

Yadav finished the best among the Indian bowlers with three for 39 from 15 overs.

Following the declaration at stumps, it will be India's turn to bat on Friday's second and final day to get solid time in the middle for their Test stars Tendulkar, Rahul Dravid, Gautam Gambhir and VVS Laxman.

SCORES IN BRIEF
CHAIRMAN'S XI: First innings 398 for 6 (Robinson 143, Cooper 182 not out, Doolan 29; Yadav 3-39, Ojha 2-149)

LOCAL snippets

BD Army win 7th title

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Army retained the title of KFC Pizza Hut Victory Day Volleyball tournament with a straight 3-0 win over Titas Club at the Volleyball Stadium yesterday.

It is their third title in a row and seventh crown overall since the introduction of Victory Day tournament in 1972, according to the Bangladesh Volleyball Federation.

Army defeated Titas Club 25-18, 25-20 and 25-16 as Monir Hossain put up a superb performance to be adjudged best player of the tournament.

Meanwhile, Bangladesh Air Force became runners-up. Sukumar Ranjan MP witnessed the game and distributed prizes among the winners while BVF president Golam Kuddus Chowdhury, vice president Mostafa Kamal, tournament committee chairman Monirul Haque and secretary Advocate Fazle Rabbi were among others present.

Victory-Day Hockey

Abahani registered a comprehensive 5-2 win over Bangladesh Air Force in the UCB Victory Day Hockey tournament at the Maulana Bhasani Hockey Stadium yesterday.

Abahani led the first half 3-1 with Niloy, Chayan and Prince striking one goal each, while Shamsul Alam pulled one goal back for Air Force.

After the breather, Abahani nearly sealed off the game as striker Mimo netted two goals inside two minutes to make the margin 5-1 before Zahid Hossain reimbursed one goal for Air Force.

In the day's other two matches, Bangladesh Army defeated BKSP 2-1 with Shohag scoring two goals for Army while Salman Sadik scored the lone goal for the sports institute.

Bangladesh Navy also recorded an emphatic 4-0 win over Bangladesh Police with Shuvo, Rabanni, Bachchu and Turjo scoring one goal apiece.

Victory-Day Kabaddi

Bangladesh Police boasted their chances of making the final of the Victory Day Kabaddi Tournament after beating Bangladesh Jail 32-18 at the Kabaddi Stadium yesterday.

Bangladesh Police will now face Bangladesh Army in their last match while Bangladesh Border Guard will play against Bangladesh Fire Service in a bid to secure a final match on Saturday. On the same day, the final will also take place.

In the day's other match, Proshikkonarthi Dal defeated Bangladesh Fire Service 41-22 with two 'lonas'.

Asia Cup confirmed

FROM PAGE 16
on it. So I don't think India and Pakistan could play each other in a full series next year but they will meet in the Asia Cup [also featuring Sri Lanka besides the hosts]."

Zaka Ashraf, the PCB chairman, was also in Singapore. He was due to travel to Chennai in the first week of December to talk to Srinivasan on the mutual cricketing interests of both countries but the sudden illness of Pakistan President Asif Ali Zardari, also the PCB's chief patron, forced him to postpone of the visit.

At the ACC meeting, Pakistan also proposed hosting the 2014 Asia Cup. Ahmed said that the other ACC members showed their support and understood how essential the hosting of the event was for the country but asked the PCB to satisfy them on security concerns. "Our request has been endorsed and was not turned down. They want a full discussion on the precautionary steps that the PCB will take to ensure security. We obviously assured them the best and the case has been deferred until next meeting."



Action from the match between Abahani and Bangladesh Air Force in the UCB Victory Day Hockey Tournament at the Maulana Bhasani Hockey Stadium yesterday.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS
1 Cleo's slayer
4 Not many
8 Manufactured
12 Debtor's letters
13 Continental coin
14 Teen's skin woe
15 Tyrannize
17 "Let's Make a —"
18 Tooth coating
19 Spectra auto-maker
21 Faux —
22 Part of A.D.
26 Seethes
29 Prohibit
30 Moines lead-in
31 Bohemian
32 Festive
33 Dog bane
34 Born
35 Understood
36 Toboggans
37 "Blueberry Hill" singer

DOWN
1 Helper
2 Any minute now
3 Cougar
4 Son of Aphrodite
5 Gas, oil, et al.
6 Before 9 to-5 period, e.g.
8 Sir's counterpart
9 Expert
10 "CSI" evidence
11 Lamprey, for one
16 Suggest
20 Charged bit

39 Whatever number
40 Pie ingredient?
41 Praying bug
45 "— and Circumstance"
48 "The Two Mrs. Grenvilles"
50 Actress Falco
51 Kazakhstan's — Sea
52 Mainlander's memento
53 Healthy
54 Longings
55 Recipe meas.

23 Between jobs
24 Gotta have
25 "Handsome —..."
26 Musical combo
27 Sandwich cookie
28 Particular
29 Cudgel
32 Farewell address?
33 Swash-buckling movie star
35 Wilde-beest
36 Escargots
38 Urge on
39 Jordan's capital
42 Pinball no-no
43 Clinches
44 Omit
45 Church seating
46 Idolater's writing
47 Wire measure
49 Galena, for one

Solution time: 25 mins.

M	A	P	S	K	A	Y	O	T	O	P	
O	P	E	C	A	D	A	M	A	V	E	
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45	46	47			48	49					
50					51				52		
53					54					55	

CRYPTOQUIP

CMZZ - TVJCV IJI LQG CLJAM
ZXWQDA DJVDMWV B HMWX
EBOJNA ONAMNO QV IBWQA:
"GLM ZJTT JE ZJNHWM."

Yesterday's Cryptiquip: HELPING MY PARTNER IN THAT ROBBERY HAS LEFT ME FEELING A GREAT SENSE OF ACCOMPLICE-MENT.
Today's Cryptiquip Clue: Z equals L