

Cricket returns after extended hiatus

National Cricket League resumes today

SPORTS REPORTER

Domestic cricket will resume today, though not in the form of the long drawn out 50-over tournament, the Dhaka Premier League.

It will be the National Cricket League, the country's much-maligned and only first-class competition that will be played out at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium and Fatullah Cricket Stadium. It will be the last two games of the tournament's second phase before the final that is scheduled for April 26.

The matches will mark the first instance of domestic cricket played since the Dhaka Premier League was suspended three weeks ago on March 28.

Frustratingly, the Bangladesh Cricket Board had not been able to resolve the crisis involving Victoria Sporting Club, Mohammedan Sporting Club and Abahani with none of the clubs moving from their earlier threats of not playing without their demands being met. It is hoped that a solution will be found by the time the NCL is over, but that too

seems unlikely in some quarters.

Hafizur Rahman Joarder, member secretary of BCB's tournament committee, said that preparations are complete for the final three games. "We are prepared for the tournament to be completed. The matches will begin on Friday and I hope it all ends properly," he said.

The Sylhet-Rajshahi game will be held in Mirpur while in Narayanganj, league leaguers Khulna will take on Dhaka Metro. Sylhet are in second position with 95.52 points while Rajshahi are third on 93.98 points, though the defending champions have more wins.

They will bank on Tigers captain Mushfiqur Rahim, who is set to appear for the first time in a first-class game in the domestic circuit this season. However, the 23-year-old is appearing for his Masters examinations so he could yet miss out. Rajshahi will therefore need to bank on heavy scorers like Farhad Hossain, Mizanur Rahman and Junaed Siddique and left-arm spinner Saqlain Sajib who has taken 43 wickets so far in this edition.

Sylhet, too, will rely on their left-arm

spinner Enamul Haque who would like to increase his wicket count in the competition which currently stands at 53 from nine games, the topmost among all bowlers. Their batting strength will be Rajin Saleh, now on 523 runs, as well as Golam Mabud and Ejaz Ahmed.

Newcomers Dhaka Metro have Asif Ahmed, the tournament's top-scorer with 744 runs, while Shamsur Rahman, Mohammad Ashraf and Mehrab Hossain Jr have in excess of 450 runs so far. The bowling seems to be a lop-sided affair as Arafat Sunny has been the lead bowler for the capital city side.

Khulna will have the services of Abdur Razzak and Imrul Kayes for their match against Dhaka Metro while still relying on their balanced bowling attack that saw Al-Amin Hossain (37 wickets), Murad Khan (34) and Dollar Mahmud (34) dominate whenever the need arose.

Tushar Imran and Anamul Haque have scored in excess of 500 runs in the competition while the side will expect Razzak to dominate with the ball and Imrul to make good use of this game.

Worcs dealt Ajmal blow

AFP, Worcester

Worcestershire's hope of seeing Saeed Ajmal return for a second spell with the English county for their domestic Twenty20 campaign have been dashed by the Pakistan spinner's international commitments.

The Midlands club, whose other overseas player is Australia batsman Phil Hughes, had hoped to have Ajmal, England's tormentor-in-chief during Pakistan's recent 3-0 Test series win in the United Arab Emirates, back at New Road.

However, the confirmation of Pakistan's tour of Sri Lanka has left the club looking for another overseas player.

"Following the recent announcement that Pakistan's tour of Sri Lanka will proceed, Saeed Ajmal will be unavailable for Worcester's T20 campaign," the county said in a statement Thursday.

"Ajmal had signed a contract to appear in Worcester's CCC's T20 run at a time when the Pakistan tour to Sri Lanka was not agreed in the ICC schedule.

"But it is now understood that it is likely to take place between late May and mid-July 2012, ruling Ajmal out of the county's T20 campaign." Worcester's director of cricket, Steve Rhodes, said: "Losing a player of Saeed's quality is a big disappointment."

LOCAL SNIPPETS

FROM PAGE 16 Amol Roy defeated Anwar Hossain in straight sets (6-2, 6-1) while Dipu Lal came from behind to beat Ranjan Ram (5-7, 7-5, 7-6) in a thrilling semifinal to confirm the final berth.

Amol Roy also teamed up with Ranjan Ram to beat the Milon Hossain and Mofazzel Hossain pair 7-5, 6-4 in the men's doubles final. Delwar Hossain Shajal and Rubel Hossain have qualified for the finals of the U-16 and U-14 groups respectively while the other matches were still ongoing when this report was filed.

Siddikur starts

FROM PAGE 16 from his third place finish at the Masters, birdied the opening three holes before turning in 31 and adding three birdies and one bogey on his homeward nine.

Siddikur was in joint 23rd position after the first round where he made three birdies and two bogeys.

Divisional

FROM PAGE 16 Deputy Chairman of the school football committee of BFE, Sheikh Mohammad Aslam, president of Manikganj and Gazipur DFA and officials of the sponsors Islami Bank Limited were present at the briefing.

KP destroys Deccan

PTI, Delhi



Kevin Pietersen produced a blistering unbeaten 103 to almost single-handedly steer Delhi Daredevils to a five-wicket victory over Deccan Chargers in an Indian Premier League match here on Thursday.

The lanky Pietersen unleashed an array of breathtaking shots as he took the responsibility after his team was struggling at 23 for three to overhaul the target of 158 with five balls to spare at the Feroz Shah Kotla.

During his sustained onslaught that saw him record his first century and highest score in Twenty20 format, Pietersen slammed a staggering nine sixes and six fours in his 64-ball knock. The star England batsman was, however, dropped thrice and he ensured that Deccan paid the price for their sloppy fielding. This was the Daredevils' fourth win from five matches in even as Deccan suffered their fourth defeat on the trot. Pietersen finished the match in style, smashing Ankit Sharma over his head for six, which also brought up his century, the second of this edition of IPL.

The highlight of Pietersen's innings was the three successive sixes off Jean-Paul Duminy and the one against leg-spinner Amit Mishra, which was probably the biggest ever at this venue. Bowling from the Delhi Gate end, Mishra was smashed straight down the ground by Pietersen, with the ball landing on the top tier of the old pavilion. As the ball disappeared, Sehwa,

sitting on the dugout with his team-mates, was seen smiling. Before that, one of the sixes against Duminy went 98 metres. And moments later, Steyn was hit over long-off for a maximum. Pietersen's onslaught started after Mishra was introduced into the attack, and there was no looking

back after that.

SCORES IN BRIEF
DECCAN CHARGERS: 157 for 8 (Pathiv 45*, Dhawan 44; Morkel 3-23, Nadeem 3-16)
DELHI DAREDEVILS: 162 for 5 (Pietersen 103*, Steyn 2-19)
Result: Delhi Daredevils won by five wickets.
Man-of-the-match: Kevin Pietersen.

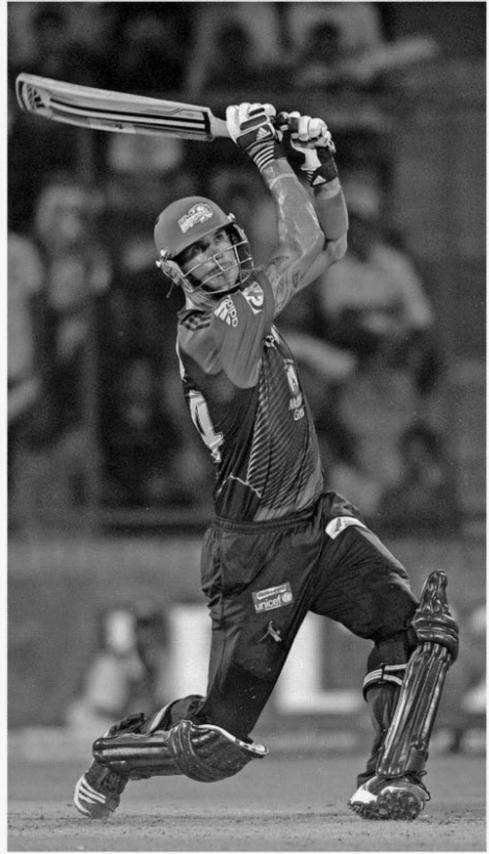


PHOTO: AFP

Delhi Daredevils batsman Kevin Pietersen hits a lofted shot on his way to an unbeaten century during their IPL Twenty20 match against Deccan Chargers at the Feroz Shah Kotla Stadium in Delhi yesterday.

Bangladesh damaged

FROM PAGE 16

That the tour of Pakistan is nothing more than a solo political stunt by the BCB boss. Players have privately expressed their reservations, as have BCB directors. The upshot has been that Bangladesh stand to suffer far greater damage than the country they will not tour.

What can only be termed Kamal's "Mission Pakistan" has landed Bangladesh in choppy waters in the cricket world, and threatens to moor them in a no man's land of cricket relations. On the one hand, their decision to tour Pakistan will in no way be taken sportingly by powerhouses such as India, England and Australia who have steadfastly refused to tour the country because of security reasons.

On the other, a cancellation of the tour will, as already declared by PCB chief Zaka Ashraf, endanger cricketing relationship between the two countries, which had become particularly strong of late.

This state of affairs has already damaged Bangladesh's reputation in the cricketing world. Our players may be respected, particularly in the aftermath of their Asia Cup heroics, but a lot of the important decisions in cricket are taken behind closed doors in boardrooms. That is where Kamal's machinations have done the most damage. The wrath of the cricketing world is now focused on the BCB and particularly its president. Yesterday the Federation of International Cricketers' Association said that the decision to tour Pakistan was made to 'enhance someone's political and other aspirations' amid 'massive conflict of interests'.

The BCB must be rescued from such a jaundiced perception, and nothing less than a change at the top, from where all the negativity seems to have originated, will do. A fresh start is needed under someone the cricketing world can trust. It is now evident, through the various, well-

documented changes of stance in the lead-up to the Pakistan tour, that Kamal is unable to occupy a position of trust. Most importantly, the dominant perception of Kamal now is as a power-broker who will not sweat over player safety to satisfy his ambition.

As it is a government-appointed post, it is time for the highest authorities to intervene. If Kamal can manoeuvre his way out of this and allowed to continue, then perceptions of the country's cricket, given such a boost by the Tigers' Asia Cup performance, will hit rock bottom.

Ratna to shoot

FROM PAGE 16 Shooting Range in Surrey, London. The four shooters had been training at the BKSP Shooting Range for four months. The London Olympic Games will be held from July 27 to August 12.



BCB president AHM Mustafa Kamal (C) is seen with the Bangladesh women's cricket team members during the cheque hand-over ceremony at the National Cricket Academy yesterday.

Chennai keep Pune in check

TNN, Chennai

Chennai Super Kings settled score of Eden Gardens' humiliation as they beat Pune Warriors by 13 runs in their IPL clash at the Chepauk Stadium on Thursday.

Chasing 165, Pune Warriors managed to score 151 for 7 in 20 overs, conceding an easy victory to the defending champions on their home ground.

Earlier, Nuwan Kulasekara got rid of both Pune openers early after Chennai posted a challenging 164 for 5. Kulasekara first got Robin Uthappa (8) caught by R Ashwin and then dismissed Jesse riders (9) to reduce Pune Warriors to 26 for 2 in four overs.

Chennai seemed to have lost the advantage of a strong start before captain Mahendra Singh Dhoni (28 not out) gave the home fans something to cheer with some lusty hits towards the end.

SCORES IN BRIEF
CHENNAI SUPER KINGS: 164 for 5 in 20 overs (Du Plessis 58, Badrinath 57, Dhoni 28 not out; Samuels 3-39, Nehra 2-23)
PUNE WARRIORS: 151 for 7 in 20 overs (Mathews 27, Samuels 26, Ganguly 24, Smith 23; Kulasekara 2-10, Bravo 2-28)
Result: Chennai Super Kings won by 13 runs.
Man-of-the-match: Nuwan Kulasekara.

Ex-cricketer

FROM PAGE 16 His first-class career spanned more than two decades before retiring three years ago and a highlight was a knock of 174 for Clive Rice-led Transvaal (now Gauteng) at Western Province in a 1988 Currie Cup match.

Rain playing foul

AFP, Port of Spain

Heavy rain and deteriorating light halted West Indies' pursuit of their 215-run victory target in the second Test against Australia at Queen's Park Oval on Thursday.

Australia skipper Michael Clarke declared his team's second innings at 160 for eight early in the afternoon, leaving West Indies with a minimum 61 overs to force a result and level the three-game series.

They had reached 53 for two off 11 overs when the umpires led the teams off as heavy rain, which restricted Wednesday's action to just 30.4 overs, returned.

In an effort to win the game, West Indies captain Darren Sammy switched his batting order, moving Kieran Powell to open and placing himself at number three.

Australia seamer Ben Hilfenhaus soon had the West Indies rocking, trapping Powell lbw for just four in his second over and the decision stood despite another wasted

review by the home side.

During the morning the unlucky Fidel Edwards finally took his first wicket of the match in his 10th over of the second innings.

A short ball to Ricky Ponting had him playing one of his favourite hook shots but he failed to keep the ball down. It went straight to Powell on the square leg boundary and Ponting was gone for 41 off 85 balls.

The highlight of the morning came in Sammy's second over. He had dropped a sitter at first slip earlier in the innings but now took an excellent catch off his own bowling to remove his opposite number Clarke.

West Indies paceman Kemar Roach took two more wickets to give him his second five wicket innings in the match as he finished with 5-41.

He became the first West Indies bowler to take 10 wickets in a match since 2005 and not since 1993 has it been achieved by the home side against Australia.

SCOREBOARD
AUSTRALIA: First innings 311 (Hussey 73, Watson 56; Roach 5-105, Shillingford 3-92)

WEST INDIES: First innings 257

(Chanderpaul 94, Deonarine 55; Lyon 5-68)
AUSTRALIA: Second innings (overnight 73-3)
Cowan lbw b Roach 20
Warner c Bravo b Edwards 17
Watson b Roach 0
Ponting c Powell b Edwards 41
Clarke c and b Sammy 15
Hussey b Roach 24
Wade not out 31
Hilfenhaus b Roach 0
Lyon c Sammy b Shillingford 3
Extras: (b-4, lb-1, w-1, nb-3) 9
Total: (For 8 wickets in 61.5 overs) 160
Fall of wickets: 1-26, 2-26, 3-57, 4-93, 5-95, 6-145, 7-149, 8-160

Bowler O M R W
Edwards 10 2 28 1
Shillingford 23.5 4 55 1
Roach 18 4 41 5
Sammy 8 0 17 1
Deonarine 2 0 14 0

WEST INDIES: Second innings
Barath c Clarke b Hilfenhaus 5
Powell lbw b Hilfenhaus 4
Sammy not out 30
Bravo not out 8
Extras: (b-6) 6
Total: (For 2 wickets in 11 overs) 53
Fall of wickets: 1-6, 2-13

Bowler O M R W
Beer 4 1 10 0
Hilfenhaus 4 0 22 2
Watson 3 1 15 0

Match situation: West Indies need 162 runs to win with 8 wickets remaining.

Murray reaches qtrs

AP, Monaco

Andy Murray reached the quarterfinals of the Monte Carlo Masters after Julien Benneteau injured his ankle Thursday and retired near the end of a hard-fought first set with the score 6-5.

Benneteau, a former French Open quarterfinalist, gave the third-seeded Murray problems throughout a set in which both players were aggressive.

The Frenchman dictated many of the rallies, troubling Murray with some big forehands and driving him back with some stinging backhands.

But Benneteau, scampering to retrieve a

shot from the baseline, slipped and rolled his right ankle. He also hurt his right wrist trying to break his fall.

Benneteau received lengthy treatment and continued briefly before retiring.

Murray next plays sixth-seeded Tomas Berdych of the Czech Republic, who recovered from a shaky first set to beat No. 12 Kei Nishikori of Japan 2-6, 6-2, 6-4.

Nishikori lost only two points on his serve in the first set and broke Berdych twice.

Murray, meanwhile, struggled to hold his opening service game and then broke Benneteau. But the Frenchman broke straight back when Murray, who had saved four break points, hit a forehand wide on the fifth.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS
1 Syringe, for short
5 TiVo, for example
8 iPhone downloads
12 Really long time
13 Midafternoon, on a sundial
14 Crooner Jerry
15 Firm adherent to a cause
17 Ontario neighbor
18 Scabbard
19 Stocking holder
21 Apiece
22 Kill
23 Swiss mountain
26 Treasure seeker's aid
28 Spry
31 Water vessel
33 "Golly!"
35 Oklahoma city

36 Hannah Montana portrayer
38 Pismire
40 Bygone Pontiac muscle car
41 Walked (on)
43 Stomach
45 Actress Headly
47 Frightened
51 Continental coin
52 Bit
54 Have coming
55 Peculiar
56 Reedy
57 Seeks restitution
58 Pivouette pivot

59 Spud's buds
16 Detail
20 Chicken — king
23 "The View" network
24 Myrna of Hollywood
25 Path-filled garden
27 Shooter ammo
29 Torched
30 Tokyo's old name
32 Strong likes
34 Fencing call
37 Bart, to Homer
39 Clump of grass
42 Station
44 Hackneyed
45 The Bee —
46 Hawaiian feast
48 Needing liniment
49 Nastase of tennis lore
50 Lairs
53 Fuss

DOWN
1 Chance occurrences
2 "Why not?"
3 Sweat outlet
4 Available
5 Symbol of limpness
6 By way of
7 "Lord of the —"
8 Par
9 Whooping it up
10 Ballet bend
11 Prognosticator

Solution time: 21 mins.

WALL VEG CLAP
ALTA IDA AIDE
VAMPIRES MEAN
ERE MEN SPURN
QUO DEF
BOGUS PRAISED
ARIA JOY ROME
TANGLED BELOW
MAT HRS
REMIX DUO EMU
HATR HOTWIRE
EATN ARC VISE
AYES MAH YEJAR

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
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15			16				17			
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51				52	53					
54				55				56		
57				58				59		

CRYPTOQUIP

H ZRFLP'E JDOYPB HPEN EZL
RHO LFLP NPL EHIL RKK
LFLPHPB . H BYLJJ H'I
ZRFHPB R KLRD-KLJJ PHBZE.

Yesterday's Cryptoquip: THE RESTLESSLY EXCITED MOTORIST SPEEDING TO EXIT THE HIGHWAY WAS CERTAINLY ON A RAMP-AGE.
Today's Cryptoquip Clue: I equals M