

Indo-Pak series in Dec-Jan?

Pakistan expect an "imminent breakthrough" in the revival of cricket ties with India, four years after they were severed, a senior cricket official said on Wednesday. Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) chairman Zaka Ashraf and chief operating officer Subhan Ahmed held talks with their counterparts during a visit to India to watch the Indian Premier League final on Sunday. "We held positive discussions on the revival of bilateral ties and expect a breakthrough very soon," Ahmed told AFP, without confirming reports in Indian and Pakistani media that a short series is expected as early as December-January. India broke off diplomatic and sporting ties with its neighbour after the 2008 attacks on Mumbai which left 166 people dead and were blamed on militants based in Pakistan. But the visit last month of Pakistan President Asif Ali Zardari to India has raised hopes the nuclear-armed rivals are eager to revive ties in sports, trade and travel. Cricket, the major sport in both countries, was discussed between Zardari and Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, with Singh passing the information on to the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI). As a result, the BCCI gave the green light to Pakistan's domestic Twenty20 champions Sialkot Stallions' participation in October's Champions League.

Players FROM PAGE 16 Hasan however advised the newly elected committee to work with the players putting all doubts behind and hold more tournaments to see players in action. In the last two-and-a-half year, the ad-hoc committee could not run the chess smoothly as they could not even hold any Grandmasters or International Masters tournaments in their tenure. Rather they lost sponsors like Standard Chartered Bank, Mercantile Bank who had a long association with the chess.

India hails FROM PAGE 16 nationwide celebrations. Prime Minister Manmohan Singh said Anand's retention of the world title was a "monumental achievement", while ruling Congress party chief Sonia Gandhi described it as "stupendous". Chess is not a central part of Indian culture, but newspapers devoted extensive coverage to Anand's win with the Times of India saying he had disproved critics who had "ridiculed him and said he had lost his flair". The Mail Today cleared its front page to celebrate the news, using a photograph of Anand hunched over the board on his way to victory. "He has brought laurels to the country and I thank him for that," sports minister Ajay Maken said. "He is the best sportsperson the country has." Indian chess federation president Prabhakar called for the country's highest civilian award, the Bharat Ratna, to be conferred on Anand.

Big wins FROM PAGE 16 players of Mohammedan adopted different ways to snatch the penalty corners and they finally came out successful through their first penalty corner. Chayan found the back of the net through a penalty corner with a combination of Sheikh Mohammad Nannu and Moshirul Rahma Biplob before the national defender doubled the margin in the 27th minute through another corner. However, Mohammedan were clearly the better side in the second half and struck six more goals against the upstarts. Chayan struck a hattrick in the second half scoring in the 64th, 69th and 70th minute while Nannu scored two and Manik scored one goal for Mohammedan.

Rafa cruises into Rd 3



AFP, Paris Andy Murray and defending champion Rafael Nadal both reached the third round of the French Open on Thursday, but their manner of going through could not have been more different. The British fourth seed defeated Jarkko Nieminen 1-6, 6-4, 6-1, 6-2, but he had looked down and out in the first few games of the match as he struggled to shake off back spasms and pain in his left leg. In stark contrast Nadal took his Roland Garros match record to 47-1 with a straightforward 6-2, 6-2, 6-0 win over Denis Istomin of Uzbekistan. Elsewhere, fifth seed Jo-Wilfried Tsonga completed a 6-2, 4-6, 6-2, 6-1 win over German qualifier Cedrik-Marcel Stebe in a match interrupted by rain late Wednesday, while sixth seed David Ferrer of Spain coasted past Benoit Paire of France 6-3, 6-3, 6-2. Murray's next opponent in the third round will be Colombian Santiago Giraldo who defeated Australian 25th seed Bernard Tomic 6-4, 6-1, 6-3. Another South American claycourter to make it through was 13th seed Juan Monaco of Argentina who stopped Lukas Rosol of the Czech Republic 7-6 (7/4), 6-0, 7-6 (7/5). Rising Canadian player Milos Raonic defeated qualifier Jesse Levine 6-4, 7-5, 6-2 meaning that five days into the tournament

John Isner is the only surviving American player. Defending champion Li Na of China reached third round on Thursday with an easy 6-0, 6-2 win over France's Stephanie Foretz Gacon. Li, 30, the seventh seed and Asia's first and only Grand Slam singles winner, took the hometown crowd out of the match by immediately breaking Foretz Gacon in the first game with aggressive baseline play. The second break came courtesy of a double fault by the French woman, ranked 86th in the world. Former world number one Caroline Wozniacki stayed on course for a Roland Garros showdown with Maria Sharapova on Thursday in a quarter of the draw blown wide open by Serena Williams' shock exit. Wozniacki, seeded nine this year and a quarter-finalist in 2010, breezed past Jarmila Gajdosova 6-1, 6-4 for a sixth win in six meetings against the Australian. Czech fourth seed Petra Kvitova reached the French Open third round on Thursday with a 6-1, 6-3 win over Poland's Urszula Radwanska. Wimbledon champion Kvitova will face either Russia's Nina Bratchikova or Claire Feuerstein of France for a place in the last 16. Venus Williams playing her 15th Roland Garros, was no match for third seeded Radwanska, falling 6-2, 6-3 to complete a miserable 24 hours for the Williams family.

Roach to return home



AFP, Leicester Fast bowler Kumar Roach has been ruled out of the remainder of the West Indies' tour of the United Kingdom team West Indies Cricket Board sources said Wednesday. Roach has been sidelined with shin muscle soreness and will return home to Barbados to allow this to heal before starting a bowling programme again. West Indies team physiotherapist CJ Clark said Roach's workload has led to muscle soreness due to the repeated strain of bowling at high velocities. "Kumar has been carrying this soreness for the last two matches, and in view of our upcoming schedule, we would like him to have the time to recover and prevent the onset of more serious injury," said Clark. "It is always important to balance workload with the body's ability to repair, and I think it judicious to protect Kumar at this time." West Indies later announced they have drafted in spinner Sunil Narine, to date uncapped at Test level. The 24-year-old Narine has bagged 14 wickets in eight one-dayers and also tasted Indian Premier League success with Kolkata Knight Riders. Roach has been West Indies' most effective bowler in the two Tests played in England, taking eight wickets at 34.25 apiece. But he did not travel with the rest of the squad on Wednesday to Leicester, where

West Indies face Leicestershire in a two-day, tour match at Grace Road, starting on Saturday. Instead, he returned to the UK capital of London and departed for home. West Indies coach Ottis Gibson said Roach was a major loss, but the decision was taken in the best interest of the fast bowler. "We still have an awful lot of cricket to play this year and we did not want to risk losing as valuable a player as Kumar for a long period," said Gibson. "He has been outstanding with the ball for us so far this year and we are all gutted by his departure." "Kumar made a lot of improvements, after enduring a tough time last year, and gave us some World-class performances during the Digicel 2012 Series against Australia and here in England." West Indies trail 0-2 against England in the Test series, but Gibson indicated Tino Best and Fidel Edwards were chomping at the bit to play, and felt the two fast bowlers were more than enough firepower on the ground to replace Roach. "We believe that a very excited Tino and a fit-again Fidel will be able to provide us with the spark that we will miss from Roach's absence," said Gibson. "We still have an awful lot for which to play in the final Test, and Tino and Fidel can give us the cutting edge to our bowling if they play." Best is yet to play a match on tour. He arrived as an injury replacement for Shannon Gabriel, who made his debut in the first Test at Lord's, but subsequently returned home with a back injury.

Shakib steers Victoria

FROM PAGE 16 teammate Shakib and Mosharrif Hossain helped Victoria wrap up Abahani's innings for 192 runs. One down batsman Marshal Ayub helped the defending champions take his team to a respectable position as the right-hander made 66 off 93 with seven boundaries while captain Mahmudullah Riyad added 30 off 44 balls with four boundaries and a six before being trapped in front by Sharif Ullah. In reply, all Victoria's top batsmen got off to a start but could not continue to a big one. It was Shakib who took charge to take the team to safety as the left-hander stuck two fours and as many sixes during his 57-ball 58. Shakib however was lucky as Saqlain Sajib dropped him at mid-off off Forhad Reza's bowling when the team score was 132 for four. SCORES IN BRIEF ABAHANI: 192 all out in 49.2 overs (Mahela Udath 18, Marshal 66, Riyad 30, Rabbi 24, Forhad Reza 21, extras 15; Al-Amin 2-30, Sharif Ullah 1-41, Abdulla 2-32, Mosharrif 2-40, Shakib 2-26) VICTORIA: 195-5 in 40.1 overs (Tamim 21, Saykat 26, Soumya 22, Jahurul 31, Shakib 58, Sabbir 19 not out, Mosharrif 7 not out, Sunny 2-56, Riyad 2-47, Saqlain 1-24)

Ashraful, Junaed back

FROM PAGE 16 is a very good option for T20 cricket," explained Akram. The former national skipper also said that the arrival of young Anamul Haque forced them to keep Jahurul Islam in the stand-by list while they also believed that Imrul is not suited to the shortest form of the game. "I would say that Omi (Jahurul Islam) is unlucky because as a back-up wicketkeeper batsman Bijoy (Anamul Haque) impressed us most. Bijoy has been in good touch and performed well in all levels of domestic cricket. He is a good prospect. On the other hand Imrul is no doubt a good opening batsman but he is more suited to the 50-over game," said Akram. Bangladesh will start their campaign in the tri-nation tournament by taking on Zimbabwe Select on June 15. The BCB also confirmed the tour of Ireland and the Netherlands as the last leg of the three-stage T20 expedition. Besides a practice match, the Tigers will play three T20s against Ireland in Ireland, and one T20 each against Scotland and the Netherlands in the Netherlands. SQUAD Mushfiqur Rahim (Captain), Mahmudullah Riyad (Vice Captain), Tamim Iqbal, Junaed Siddiqui, Anamul Haque, Mohammad Ashraful, Shakib Al Hasan, Nasir Hossain, Abdur Razzak, Mohammad Elias, Mashrafe Bin Mortaza, Forhad Reza, Nazmul Hossain, Ziaur Rahman, Abul Hasan Stand-by: Imrul Kayes, Jahurul Islam, Naeeem Islam, Al Amin.

Majeed's plea rejected

AFP, London Mazhar Majeed, the agent behind the Pakistan cricket betting scam that rocked the sport, on Thursday lost a legal challenge against his conviction. British-based Majeed, 36, was sentenced in November to two years and eight months in jail after pleading guilty to conspiracy to cheat and conspiracy to make corrupt payments. Former Pakistan Test captain Salman Butt, and fast bowlers Mohammad Aamer and Mohammad Asif were also jailed for their roles in fixing elements of the August 2010 Test match against England at Lord's. The Lord Chief Justice of England and Wales, Igor Judge, sitting with two other judges at the Court of Appeal in London, rejected the challenge. Former Essex county player Mervyn Westfield also lost an unrelated separate challenge against his conviction. The appeals were heard together as they raised the same point in law: that the offences the men were charged with did not reflect the facts alleged. Westfield, 24 -- the first county cricketer in England to be prosecuted for spot-fixing -- was sentenced to four months in prison in February and has since been released. He had admitted a charge of accepting or obtaining a corrupt payment to bowl in a way that would allow the scoring of runs, relating to a match between Durham and Essex in September 2009.

Ryder's NZ career in doubt

AFP, Wellington Troubled New Zealand batsman Jesse Ryder's international career is in doubt after cricket organisers said he would not receive a central contract for the coming season. New Zealand Cricket (NZC) said no contract for the 2012-13 season was offered to Ryder, who has been involved in a string of alcohol-fuelled incidents, after discussion with his management and the players' association. Ryder announced he was taking a break from cricket in March, when he was dropped from the Black Caps after becoming involved in a row in a Napier pub, with his manager saying he needed time to sort out personal issues. The 27-year-old was not selected for New Zealand's tour of the West Indies in March but did travel to India to play with the Pune Warriors in the IPL. NZC chief executive David White said Ryder wanted to work on personal goals without the pressure that accompanied being a contracted player. "All of the evidence shows that Jesse is on the right track, both on and off the field, but we're aware that there are still steps to be made," he said in a statement late Wednesday. "While cricket remains an important part of his life, it is his health and well-being that need to be the primary focus." An NZC spokesman said Ryder was still available for selection even without a central contract. Black Caps vice-captain Brendon McCullum said he believed the big-hitting batsman would eventually return to international cricket as a better player. "He's got a tremendous amount of talent and everyone wants him back on the park," he told Radio Sport. "He's just got a couple of blemishes he's got to iron out. I'm sure if he can do that then New Zealand Cricket and Jesse are both going to benefit from it."

Eagles win again SPORTS REPORTER Eagles registered a 62-40 win over Rangers in the Citycell Premier Division Basketball League at the Dhanmondi Basketball Gymnasium yesterday. Eagles led the first half 27-13. Mizan and Shaheen caged 18 and 13 for the winners while Mahmudul made 11 points for losers. On Wednesday Eagles defeated Hornets 95-56 after leading the first half 38-25.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer ACROSS 1 Columns' crossers 5 Head of st. 8 Despot 12 Turkish peninsula region 14 Crosby's pal 15 Predict 16 Parks at a bus stop? 17 Bowling target 18 Danish money 20 Covers a present 23 Actress Cannon 24 Roll call reply 25 Skill for an identity thief 28 Longing 29 "Sesame Street" Muppet 30 Lummax 32 "Wheel of ..." 34 Staff 35 Operatic solo 36 Rouse 37 Hedge shrub 40 Listener 41 Jeans-maker Strauss 42 Strong 47 Alda or Thicke 48 Become a band of workers 49 Zilch 50 CSA leader 51 Branch of advanced math DOWN 1 U.K. fliers Solution time: 24 mins.

Pietersen calls time on limited-overs cricket

AFP, London England star Kevin Pietersen retired from all forms of international limited-overs cricket on Thursday, a decision which took the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) by surprise. Pietersen, who will continue to be available for Test selection, said in a statement he wished to step aside in order to give the next generation of players a chance

to bed in before the 2015 World Cup. "After a great deal of thought and deliberation, I am today announcing my retirement from international one-day cricket," said Pietersen, who turns 32 next month. "With the intensity of the international schedule and the increasing demands on my body, approaching 32, I think it is the right time to step aside and let the next generation of players come through to gain

experience for the ICC World Cup in 2015," added Pietersen, who has scored 4,184 runs at an average of 42 in one-day internationals and averages 38 in international T20 cricket. Pietersen's decision comes less than four months before England are due to launch the defence of their Twenty20 World Cup crown in September. The South Africa-born batsman was man-of-the-tournament when England won the title in the West Indies in 2010, and had indicated a willingness to remain part of the T20 squad in Sri Lanka this year. However ECB rules dictate that centrally-contracted players must make themselves available for all forms of limited-overs cricket. "I am immensely proud of my achievements in the one-day game, and still wish to be considered for selection for England in Test cricket," Pietersen said. "For the record, were the selection criteria not in place, I would have readily played for England in the upcoming ICC World Twenty20." However Pietersen's decision was greeted with dismay by ECB managing director Hugh Morris. "The ECB is disappointed by the timing of Kevin's decision less than four months before we defend our ICC World Twenty20

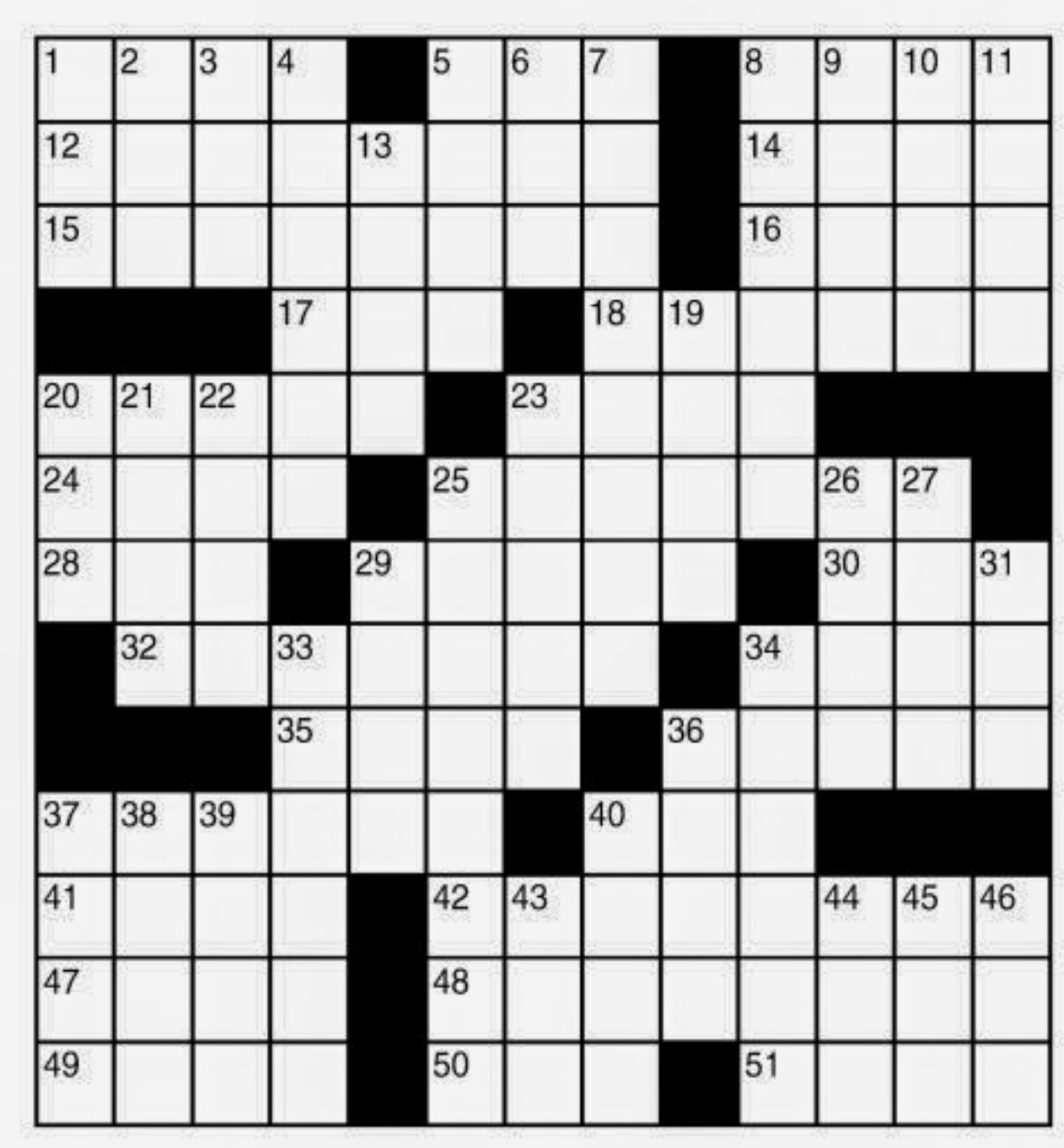


Kevin Pietersen ODI Batting and Bowling statistics table including columns for M, I, NO, R, HS, Ave, BF, SR, 100, 50, 4s, 6s, Ct, St.

A test of strengths

First SL-Pak T20 today AFP, Hambantota Sri Lanka and Pakistan will test each other's strengths ahead of the World Twenty20 tournament later this year when they clash in a two-match series starting on Friday. The Twenty20 games in southern Hambantota on Friday and Sunday are a prelude to the fourth edition of the world event that will be played in Sri Lanka in September-October. "With the World T20 coming up in a few months, this series against Pakistan is very important for us," Sri Lanka's veteran captain Mahela Jayawardene said on Thursday. "We're using these two games to find the right combination so we will mix and match. We need to make a statement in this series." The absence of Pakistani players from the Indian Premier League (IPL) could give Sri Lanka the initial advantage at the start of the tour that also includes five one-day internationals and three Test matches. Several Sri Lankan stars like Jayawardene, Tillakaratne Dilshan, Kumar Sangakkara and Lasith Malinga played in the cash-rich Twenty20 event in India that ended last Sunday. But the Pakistanis, who won the World Twenty20 title in England in 2009, have been kept out of the IPL after the inaugural edition in 2008 reportedly over security fears. Pakistan played their last Twenty20 inter-

national in February when they lost a three-match series 2-1 to England in the United Arab Emirates, and they then played in the one-day Asia Cup in Bangladesh in March. All-rounder Mohammad Hafeez, who replaced Misbah-ul-Haq as Twenty20 captain, said his team was prepared to face the challenge of tackling Sri Lanka in their own backyard. "Sri Lanka are always a tough opponent, especially at home, but we are well-prepared despite not having played international cricket recently," said Hafeez. "The boys have worked really hard on their game in the last few weeks and are confident of doing well." The rivals have played seven Twenty20 internationals so far, with Pakistan winning five and Sri Lanka two. TEAMS SRI LANKA (from): Mahela Jayawardene (captain), Tillakaratne Dilshan, Kumar Sangakkara, Dinesh Chandimal, Angelo Mathews, Lahiru Thirimanne, Kaushal Lokuarachchi, Thisara Perera, Nuwan Kulasekera, Sachithra Senanayake, Lasith Malinga, Chamara Kapugedera, Upul Tharanga, Isuru Udana. PAKISTAN (from): Mohammad Hafeez (captain), Khalid Latif, Ahmed Shehzad, Shoaib Malik, Umar Akmal, Shakeel Ansar, Shahid Afridi, Yasir Arafat, Umar Gul, Sohail Tanveer, Saeed Ajmal, Raza Hasan, Haris Sohail, Mohammad Sami, Hammad Azam.



CRYPTOQUIP Q V V C O O D O N L Z V L T B F Q W Q, H T O Z E L X V C O D Y R B V W L R X F O Q T L R X N Q W W X H F C V V O W W H X F Z L T X O Q Y L E O B. Saturday's Cryptiquip: EPIC POEM EXPOUNDING ON THE FAILURE TO RECALL A SELF-CONTRADICTION STATEMENT: "PARADOX LOST." Today's Cryptiquip Clue: W equals L