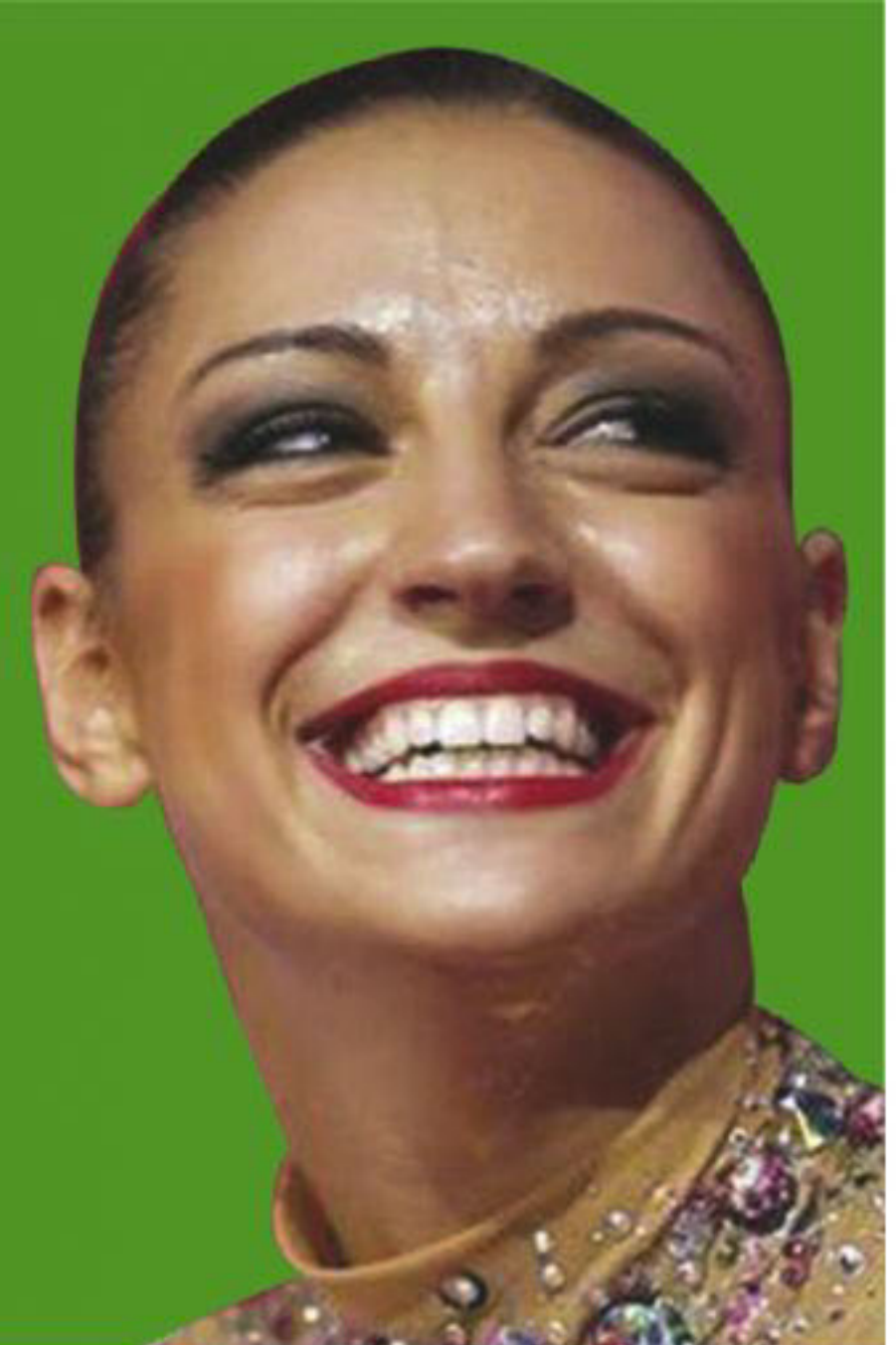


## Rhythmic queen ends career

Double Olympic champion Evgeniya Kanaeva has decided to end her competitive career in rhythmic gymnastics although she will still play an active role in her sport, the Russian Rhythmic Gymnastics Federation (VFRG) announced on Tuesday. The 22-year-old Siberian claimed her second Olympic title in London last August when she became the first rhythmic gymnast to win back-to-back individual Olympic all-around gold medals. Kanaeva, who also won 17 world titles including three all-around crowns, has dominated her sport since leading Russia to the 2007 World Championship gold in the team competition at the age of 17.



## BPL sans Pak players?

SPORTS REPORTER

The cloud over the Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) T20 grew more ominous as till late yesterday the participation of Pakistani players, who form a substantial part of each franchise's roster, was still unlikely. The BPL governing council however remained bullish about the tournament starting on time on January 18, with or without Pakistani participation.

Having waited most of yesterday for an official reply from the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) on the issue, the BPL governing council handed the PCB a deadline through e-mail, urging them to provide an official reply to the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) with regards to the participation of Pakistani players in the BPL by 10 am today.

"We didn't receive any information from Pakistan. We sent them an e-mail. We'll wait till 10 am on Wednesday and that is the deadline," said Afzalur Rahman Sinha, chairman of the BPL governing council.

Relations with the PCB, once among the BCB's strongest allies, have seen a recent downturn as a proposed Bangladesh tour to

Pakistan was stopped in its tracks twice over the last year. No international team has toured Pakistan since the March 2009 terrorist attack on the Sri Lankan team bus in Lahore, which left Pakistan to host its home matches in offshore venues.

In April 2012, Bangladesh were supposed to be the first team to tour since the attack to play a T20I and an ODI, but the trip was postponed because of a High Court stay order. The second postponement of the tour, which was supposed to take place in mid-January 2013, was on December 30 when the BCB decided not to send a team to Pakistan because of security concerns.

The latest decision met the ire of

No response from PCB regarding Pakistani players' participation.

PCB asked to provide official response by 10 am today.

Governing council says that BPL will go on with or without Pakistani players.

Governing council is not ready to yield

the PCB chairman Zaka Ashraf, and although there was no official correspondence with the BCB, various media reports in Pakistan quoted Ashraf as saying that the board would not release its players for the BPL until the BCB confirms its schedule with regards to a tour to Pakistan.

"What the BCB president [Nazmul Hassan Papon] told the PCB chairman [Zaka Ashraf] in Delhi, that will happen -- a security team will visit Pakistan, and the decision will be based on their assessment. We are not ready to pledge anything beyond that, and if anyone has told them [PCB] otherwise, then it's their responsibility," Sinha asserted sternly.

"We had sent them an e-mail with all these factors mentioned a couple of days ago. But they didn't send any reply. If the PCB doesn't want to send their players for the BPL then they should inform us directly. They didn't do that. They went to the media and we heard everything from the media. This is unprofessional and we won't bow down," added Sinha.

"Yesterday, we contacted the franchises and were waiting for updates about the Pakistani players. What most of them told us was that the

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Young Indian swing bowler Bhuvneshwar Kumar exults after disturbing England batsman Kevin Pietersen's furniture. His three early wickets gave India a massive 127-run win in the second ODI at Kochi yesterday.

PHOTO: INTERNET

## AFC Challenge Cup A week's preparation planned

SPORTS REPORTER

The ongoing Bangladesh Premier League will remain suspended from February 21 to March 8 in order to give the national team at least a week's time to prepare for the AFC Challenge Cup Qualifiers which will be held from March 2 to 8 in Nepal. The decision was taken at a meeting of the BFF professional football league committee yesterday which also decided to start the Bangladesh Championship League, the second-tier professional football league, from February 1.

Meanwhile the qualifying round of the second edition of Independence Cup will start between March 10 and 12. It was also decided that and U-16 football tournament of professional clubs will be held in the third week of February.



Hard-hitting batsman Ziaur Rahman (R) can be an exciting exponent for Duronto Rajshahi in the second BPL that starts on Friday.

PHOTO: STAR

## 8 Bangladeshis in Chennai chess

SPORTS REPORTER

Eight Bangladeshi players are taking part in the Chennai Super Kings 5th International Grandmasters Chess Tournament which started in Chennai yesterday.

GM Niaz Murshed and GM Ziaur Rahman were playing against India's Rajasurya and Hemanth Raam respectively when this report was filed.

Apart from Niaz and Zia, other Bangladeshi players are Saif Uddin, Jamal Uddin, Kazi Taherul Islam, Anisuzzaman Jewel, SM Sharon and Rana Chowdhury.

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## India back on track

Cricket

PTI, Kochi

India finally found their winning touch as they relied on a brilliant all-round display to thrash England by an emphatic 127 runs in the second one-dayer here on Tuesday.

India first posted a competitive 285, riding on captain Mahendra Singh Dhoni's 72 and Ravindra Jadeja's 61, before the bowlers skittled out the visitors for a paltry 158 in just 36 overs to level the five-match series 1-1.

It was a convincing and morale-boosting victory for the Indians who have struggled of late even in home conditions, losing the ODI series to arch-rivals Pakistan and the Test series against England.

The hosts did well in all departments of the game, though the batting of the top-order continued to be a concern with

Gautam Gambhir (8) and Ajinkya Rahane (4) failing to deliver while the form of Virat Kohli remained patchy though he scored 37.

It was Dhoni's 66-ball 72 and Jadeja's blistering unbeaten knock of 61 in just 37 balls which provided the late flourish to the Indian innings. Suresh Raina (55) and Yuvraj Singh (32), who was distinctly unlucky to be given lbw, were the other notable contributors.

With the Nehru Stadium providing ample assistance to the bowlers in the second half, the Indians exploited the conditions to the hilt to bundle out the visitors with Kevin Pietersen being the top-scorer with a 58-ball 42.

Bhuvneshwar Kumar (3/29), Ashwin (3/39) and Jadeja (2/12) were the pick of the Indian bowlers to give the hosts a resounding victory in front of a capacity crowd.

The two teams will now travel to Ranchi

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## NAT'L BADMINTON CHAMPIONSHIP Railway a force again

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Railway are gradually increasing their involvement in sports as they roped in top shuttlers for the 32nd National Badminton Championship which started at the Shaheed Tajuddin Ahmed Indoor Stadium yesterday.

Railway used to have mentionable presence in different sports such as football, cricket, hockey, cycling, volleyball and badminton in past, but had phased out their sports teams from most of those arenas in the last two decades. However, they are now looking to re-organising their sports wing and increasing involvement in sports.

"If we can do well in the national badminton championships, we will allocate a big budget for next championships. Even the budget this time has been raised from the

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## SOUTH ASIAN BASKETBALL Hosts, Pakistan favourites

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh are targeting the final of the Citycell 2nd South Asian Basketball Championship which starts in Dhaka tomorrow. The second edition of the South Asian basketball extravaganza will feature only five teams -- Nepal, Bhutan, Maldives, Pakistan and hosts Bangladesh -- as the other three teams of the region, including defending champions India, have communicated their inability to participate. In the absence of India, Pakistan are being considered as the strongest side along with Bangladesh.

"I think Pakistan are the strongest side

and we have never beaten them. But we have definitely improved in recent times. Let's see what we can do," said Bangladesh's coach-cum-manager Mahbubur Rahman Bulbul during a press conference at the Bangladesh Olympic Association auditorium yesterday. Bulbul also informed that the squad, which has been trimmed from 22 to 12 members, have been practising for one month.

The first edition of the championship was held in Assam, India in 2002 where the hosts won the title. This will be the biggest tournament of its kind in the country since the Sheikh Kamal International

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Bangladesh Basketball Federation general secretary AK Sarker (2nd from L) addresses a press conference in connection with the second Citycell SABA (South Asian Basketball Association) Championship that starts on Thursday.

PHOTO: STAR



### OPENING CEREMONY

১৭ই জানুয়ারি, ২০১৩ সময়: বিকেল ৪.৩০ মিনিট  
শের-ই-বাংলা জাতীয় ক্রিকেট স্টেডিয়াম, মিরপুর

উন্মোচিত হচ্ছে বিপিএল ২০১৩-এর মহা উৎসব।

জমকালো এই আয়োজনে গানে আর নাচে মাতিয়ে দেবেন দেশ এবং দেশের বাইরের খ্যাতিমান সব শিল্পীরা। সেই সাথে বিপিএল-এর বর্ণাঢ্য এই আয়োজনে প্রথমবারের মতো ঢাকা নাতাবে বিশ্বখ্যাত চীনা এ্যাকোব্যট দল।

ক্রিকেটের এই জমকালো আসরের উন্মাদনা এখন আপনার অপেক্ষায়।