

SPORT

Niaz 27th

SPORTS REPORTER
GM Niaz Murshed finished 27th in the Asian Continental Chess Championships after drawing against Filipino IM Bancelo Ronald in the last and ninth round held in Manila, Philippines yesterday.

Niaz earned only five points from nine games. National women's champion Sharmin Sultana Shirin finished bottom of the women's section among 40 participants with one point.

KIIT INT'L CHESS
Both GM Enamul Hossain Razib and Ziaur Rahman won their ninth-round boards in the elite category of the 5th KIIT International Chess Festival in Bhubaneswar yesterday. Razib beat Indian IM Swayams Rauf to earn six points from nine matches while Zia beat Indian Krishna Teja to collect 5.5 points.

Kings invitation

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bhutan Football Federation has invited two Bangladesh Premier League clubs to take part in the Kings Cup, starting in the last week of July.

BFF general secretary Abu Nayeem Shohag, who received the invitation on Friday night, said that he has already informed the eight clubs about the invitation.

He also informed that two clubs each from India and Pakistan were also invited to the Kings Cup in which eight clubs, two each from four countries, are supposed to take part.

Mumbai lifts maiden title

This is my last IPL: Sachin

SPORTS DESK

Mumbai Indians ended their IPL title drought in dashing style, defeating two times champions Chennai Super Kings by 23 runs yesterday. Mumbai's first-ever title was confirmed even before the match entered into its final over with Chennai needing an improbable 42 runs from the last six balls. Chennai captain MS Dhoni entertained the massive Eden Gardens crowd with a couple of lusty blows against player-of-the-final Kieron Pollard, had earlier lifted Mumbai from a hopeless 52-4 to a competitive 148-9 with a fighting 60 off 32 balls.

Most of Dhoni's 63 off 45 after the match had been lost, and only gave Mumbai an extended time on the field to celebrate the title even when the match was on.

And moments after Mumbai Indians won, Sachin Tendulkar announced he had played his last IPL. The last ball he played didn't come in the victory in the final, but a fortnight ago in a league match against Sunrisers Hyderabad. That ball was sent

over long-on for a six, but in the process he also injured himself. He retired-hurt after that, and didn't recover in time to play another Mumbai game.

"This is my last IPL," Tendulkar announced casually in a TV interview after the win. "This has been a fantastic season. I thought our third IPL season was the best before this."

"I think this is the right time to stop playing the IPL. I am 40. Got to accept it. I had decided this was my last season." Defending a modest total, the Mumbai Indians bowlers attacked their way with Lasith Malinga, who took two wickets in the first over, and Mitchell Johnson yorking and bouncing Chennai out of the game.

SCORES IN BRIEF

MUMBAI INDIANS: 148 for 9 (Pollard 60 not out, Rayudu 37; Bravo 4-42, Morkel 2-12)
CHENNAI SUPER KINGS: 125 for 9 (Dhoni 63 not out, Johnson 2-19, Harbhajan 2-14, Malinga 2-22)

Result: Mumbai Indians won the final by 23 runs.
Player-of-the-final: Pollard

SAFF tourney in early Sept

SPORTS REPORTER

The SAFF (South Asian Football Federation) Championship is set to start three weeks ahead of the original schedule to avoid a clash with two AFC-sponsored tournaments.

The tenth SAFF championship, involving the eight South Asian nations, was scheduled to be held from September 20 to October 2 in Nepal. But SAFF president Kazi Salahuddin told reporters on Sunday that the regional football carnival would now start in the first week of September.

"We have agreed in principle to start the championship in early September in a bid to avoid possible schedule-clash with two AFC tournaments," said Salahuddin, adding that he had a meeting with his general secretary Alberto Colaso at a city hotel on Saturday.

Salahuddin, who is also the president of the Bangladesh Football Federation, said a fresh date for the championship will be announced soon after taking the consent of other members of the regional organisation.

New Radiant Club of Maldives and East Bengal Club of India will take part in the AFC Cup to be held in September 17-24 while one club each from Pakistan and Nepal will play the final round of the AFC President's Cup, scheduled to be held in September 23-29. All four clubs have a numbers of national players in their ranks.

Bandarban in final

SPORTS REPORTER

Bandarban defeated Khagrachari 2-0 in tie-breaker to move into the final of the Hill Tracts Hockey Tournament at the Maulana Bhasani Hockey Stadium yesterday.

The game rolled into shootout after the regulation time ended goalless. Bandarban will play the winners of today's semifinal between Rangamati and Dinajpur in the final on Tuesday.

Riaz saves Pakistan

SPORTS DESK

Tail-ender Wahab Riaz hit an unbeaten 47 as Pakistan beat Ireland by two wickets with eight balls to spare in the second one-day international at Clontarf on Sunday to take the two-match series 1-0 after Thursday's tied game.

Riaz saved Pakistan blushes in a match where the visitors, chasing a modest Irish total of 229, were reduced to 133-7. He gave perfect support to Kamran Akmal, who hit a superb 81.



Neymar (R) will play alongside Messi at Barcelona next season. PHOTO: AFP FILE

NEYMAR chooses Barca



NEYMAR
Santos (2009-13)
Games: 224
Goals: 136

REUTERS, Rio de Janeiro

Brazil's gifted World Cup hope Neymar is moving to Spanish champions Barcelona, the striker said on Saturday, and will sign a five-year contract on Monday.

Neymar chose Barcelona over their Spanish arch-rivals Real Madrid after Santos ended three years of resisting offers for the 21-year-old forward and let him go before next year's tournament in Brazil.

"On Monday I'm signing a contract with Barcelona," Neymar said on his Instagram page and Twitter account.

Santos, on their Facebook page, and Barcelona on their website (www.fcbarcelona.es) confirmed Neymar's decision.

"My family and friends already know about my decision... I want to thank Santos' fans for these nine incredible years. My feelings for the club and the fans will never change," Neymar added.

"Titles, goals, dribbles, celebrations and the songs the fans created for me will always be in my heart."

"This is a different moment for me, sad (departure) and happy (new challenge). God bless me in my choices."

"I made a point of playing tomorrow's match in Brasilia. I want the opportunity to enter the pitch once

more with the 'mantle' (Santos shirt) and hear the fans shout my name."

Santos play Flamengo at the capital's completely refurbished World Cup stadium in their opening match of the Brazilian championship on Sunday.

The club said on Friday they had agreed to transfer Neymar, letting him choose between two offers.

Folha de Sao Paulo newspaper put the latest offer from Barcelona at 74 million Brazilian Real (\$36.12 million).

Barcelona said Neymar "stands out for his polished skills, he makes a difference and scores goals. ... He has received many accolades and the praise of the celebrated Pele, of whom he is considered his heir".

The reigning South American Player of the Year will link up at Barcelona with Argentine ace Lionel Messi, four times FIFA World Player of the Year.

Neymar has been a target of top European sides for at least three years, including Chelsea in 2010, but Santos managed to reject all offers and improve his deal with sponsorship.

However, since the middle of last year a move had become increasingly difficult for Neymar to resist while Santos lost the form that took them to their third South American Libertadores Cup title in 2011 and first since Pele's 1960s heyday.

"After rejecting a series of million-dollar offers for Neymar Jr, since the middle of 2010... against the trend in Brazilian football of selling its best talents quickly, Santos FC finally agreed on negotiations," Santos said.

"Santos FC is freeing Neymar Jr, knowing they made all the efforts to keep him in Brazil for as long as possible."

A quick fix too late?

ATIQUÉ ANAM



The stalemate in hockey is seemingly over. After days of bitter wrangling between the federation and the players, a date for the transfers (July 2 to 4) has been announced. The clubs have supported the decision and the players have expressed cautious optimism about it. But the announcement may have been made a little too late, and at the cost of some valuable practice time for the national team.

Earlier, the national players had threatened to boycott the national team's camp for August's Asia Cup, scheduled to begin on May 15, if the demand for a specific date for the transfers was not met. The move forced the federation to postpone the camp, even though they cited other reasons for their retreat. The federation later tried to convince the players by saying that the transfers would take place within a week of the

BHF Exec elections, which is yet to be scheduled, but may fall on the last week of June. So it turns out that the same time frame has been announced again, albeit in a more articulated and convincing manner this time. And subject to players' acquiescence to the decision, a new date for the camp will probably be announced soon.

But in the meantime, 12 days of practice has been lost and some more will be, to the whim of the federation and the players and the growing distrust between the parties. At a time when the Bangladesh national hockey team have been performing admirably in the international circuit, such instances do not bode well for the future of the sport.

Meanwhile, the players have been reacting with cautious optimism to the announcement as they fear that the date may be changed again after a new executive committee takes over. Let's hope there is not another twist in this crooked tale.



Serbia's Ana Ivanovic pumps her fist after beating Croatia's Petra Martic in the French Open first round match at the Roland Garros Stadium in Paris yesterday. PHOTO: REUTERS

Federer, Serena stroll

REUTERS, Paris

Roger Federer is used to ending grand slam tournaments on Sundays rather than starting them but the French Open's quirky schedule could not throw the Swiss stylist off his stride as he strolled through his Roland Garros opener in ruthless fashion.

The 31-year-old had his nose put out of joint when forced to play on opening Sunday when the French Open brought forward the start in 2006 but he was serene as he thrashed Spanish grand slam rookie Pablo Carreno-Busta 6-2 6-2 6-3 in the first round this year.

He was in good company too. Federer, winner of a record 17 grand slam titles, walked out on a chilly Philippe Chatrier court after 15-times major winner Serena Williams put down an early marker with a 51-minute drubbing of Georgia's Anna Tatishvili.

American Williams turned her match against Tatishvili into a Sunday stroll, winning

6-0 6-1 before completing the tougher task of conducting a courtside interview in French.

Serbian Ana Ivanovic, a third former French Open champion scheduled to brighten up the day's 32-match schedule, had to work a little harder to reach the second round.

The 2008 champion, who has never hit those heights again, got past Croatia's Petra Martic 6-1 3-6 6-3.

David Ferrer, seeded fourth after the withdrawal of Briton's Andy Murray, eased into the second round with a 6-4 6-3 6-4 defeat of another Australian, Marinko Matosevic, who has now lost his last nine grand slam first rounds.

Women's 11th seed Nadia Petrova of Russia became the day's highest-ranked casualty, losing to Puerto Rico's Monica Puig 3-6 7-5 6-4.

Lleyton Hewitt, like Federer a former world number one but now down at 85 in the world, put in a trademark gut-busting performance before losing a five-set thriller to French 15th seed Gilles Simon.

Khulna on top

SPORTS REPORTER

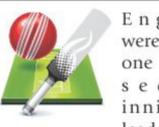
A six-wicket haul by Shaila Sharmin led Khulna to an emphatic 211-run victory over Barisal in the Women's National Cricket League at the Sylhet Divisional Stadium yesterday.

Batting first Khulna posted 271. In reply, Barisal were bundled out for just 60 runs. Khulna's Tulika Biswas top-scored with a 50-ball 38 at number eight.

As a result Khulna sit on top of the table at the end of the first round. Rangpur, Dhaka and Sylhet are the other three teams to go through to the next round.

Kiwis stumble in chase

AFP, Leeds



England were 116 for one in their second innings, a lead of 296 runs, at stumps on the third day of the second Test against New Zealand in Leeds on Sunday.

England captain Alastair Cook was 88 not out and Jonathan Trott 11 not out at Headingley.

Earlier, New Zealand were dismissed for 174 in reply to England's first innings 354 -- a deficit of 180 runs.

Although New Zealand were short of the follow-on avoidance target of 205, Cook decided against mak-

ing the tourists bat again.

Off-spinner Graeme Swann took four for 42 and fast bowler Steven Finn three for 36 as New Zealand suffered a second straight top-order collapse after being skittled out for 68 in the second innings of England's 170-run first Test win at Lord's last week.

New Zealand left-arm quick Trent Boult took five for 57 in an England first innings featuring Joe Root's maiden Test hundred.

England led the two-match series 1-0.

SCOREBOARD

ENGLAND: First innings (overnight 337-7)
Cook c Brownlie b Swann 34
Compton c Brownlie b Southee 1
Trott c McCullum b Wagner 28

Bell c McCullum b Williamson 30
Root c McCullum b Boult 104
Bairstow c McCullum b Boult 64
Prior c Taylor b Southee 39
Broad c McCullum b Boult 0
Swann not out 26
Wagner b Anderson 27
Boult not out 6
Extras: (lb-5, w-1) 24
Total: (All out in 99 overs) 354
Fall of wickets: 1-11, 2-67, 3-67, 4-146, 5-270, 6-279, 7-286, 8-345, 9-354.

NEW ZEALAND: First innings
Fulton c & b Finn 28
Rutherford c Bell b Finn 27
Williamson lbw b Swann 13
Taylor b Finn 6

Brownlie b Swann 2
Guptill b Swann 1
McCullum c Prior b Broad 20
Southee lbw b Broad 19
Bracewell c Bell b Swann 1
Wagner b Anderson 27
Boult not out 6
Extras: (lb-5, w-1) 24
Total: (All out in 43.4 overs) 174
Fall of wickets: 1-55, 2-62, 3-72, 4-79, 5-81, 6-82, 7-119, 8-122, 9-122.

Bowler O M R W
Anderson 7.4 2 34 1
Broad 15 2 57 2
Finn 12 3 36 3
Swann 9 1 42 4

England: Second innings
Cook not out 88
Compton c Rutherford b Williamson 7
Trott not out 11
Extras: (b-8, lb-1, w-1) 10
Total: (For 1 wkt in 41 overs) 116
Fall of wicket: 1-72

Bowler O M R W