

DPL awaits a new champ

SPORTS REPORTER



While the whole nation will have some breathing space for next couple of days after being confined mostly indoors, experiencing a five-day political horror show, sports fans can have the full value of pure entertainment on Friday, the first of the two weekend days.

At the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur, a new champion will be decided in the country's lone 50-over competition when Prime Doleshwar face off Gazi Tank. One can still plan an evening football show after that at the Bangabandhu National Stadium where Mohammedan will take on Sheikh Jamal Dhanmondi Club in the first Federation Cup quarterfinal.

At Mirpur, Prime Doleshwar and Gazi Tank, both having 20 points each, will battle it out in an unofficial final of what was also the final round of the Dhaka Premier League. The match will commence at 9am.

It was not unexpected that the two minimalist clubs finally lock horns for the glory this season thanks mainly to the new recruitment system of 'players by choice' that has provided equal opportunity for all the 12 participating clubs.

A good show at Mirpur between the teams from across the Buriganga today will be a fitting finish for this year's league,

which saw some real competition among the teams.

A record number of foreign cricketers took part this season but refreshingly local cricketers also came up with the big contributions so far. Gazi will desperately want league's highest scorer Imrul Kayes and in-form Rokibul Hasan to fire as well as hope their English batsman Eoin Morgan join the party at least in the last game and the Dutchman Ryan ten Doeschate continue his good form.

"We are in a good shape but we are not taking our opponents lightly as they played good cricket so far. Hope it will be a good match," said Gazi Tank skipper Mahmudullah Riyad, who hit a hundred in the penultimate round though his innings went in vain against Mohammedan.

On the other hand Prime Doleshwar skipper Forhad Reza was also confident to clinch a maiden title.

"It's for the first time we played the Super League. Gazi Tank is favourite but we are confident. We go into the match with some inspiration of defeating them in the first round. I hope it will be a good game," said the all-rounder, who is the second highest wicket-taker with 28 scalps after Gazi's left-arm spinner Arafat Sunny who has 29 wickets under his belt.

The other final round matches, Sheikh Jamal Dhanmondi will take on Kalabagan Cricket Academy and Mohammedan Sporting face Prime Bank Cricket Club.



Mominul Haque hones his batting skills at the BCB Academy ground yesterday, ahead of his side Prime Doleshwar's league deciding match against Gazi Tank at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium today.

INDONESIAN OPEN
Poor start for Siddikur again

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Bangladesh's ace golfer Siddikur Rahman brought his poor luck of the World Cup of Golf into the Indonesian Open as he finished the first round at 51st position after playing an even par 71 at the Pantai Indah Kapuk in Jakarta yesterday.

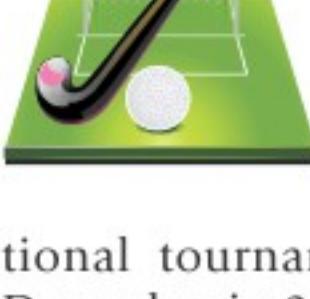
Siddikur had a good start after playing birdies in the first and fourth holes before finding himself on the wrong way to play three bogies in the ninth, 11th and 13th holes.

The 29-year-old golfer, however, made amends to play birdie in the next hole of 14th and finished the remaining four holes at even par to finish on 71.

Indian Gaganjeet Bhullar was on top of the leaderboard after playing seven under par 64 followed by six players -- Atiwit Janewattananon of Thailand, Anthony Kang of the USA, Mo Joong-kyung of South Korea, Nicholas Fung of Malaysia, Berry Henson of the USA and Shaaban Hussin of Malaysia -- who all played five-under-par 66.

Busy 2014

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Bangladesh will have a busy calendar at home next year as they will be hosting three international tournaments -- the Asian Games Qualifiers, World Hockey League (Round-1) and the AHF U-21 tournament.

"We are going to host three international tournaments on home soil from March to December in 2014. The Asian Games Qualifiers will get underway on March 15 while the World Hockey League will be held in September though it is yet to be approved by International Hockey Federation (IHF). Then, we will host the AHF U-21 tournament in November-December," said Bangladesh Hockey Federation (BHF) general secretary Rahmatullah.

He said the number of participating countries in the Asian Games Qualifiers has not been confirmed yet, but seven teams -- Brunei, Singapore, Hong Kong, Sri Lanka, Chinese Taipei, Uzbekistan and the hosts -- will participate in the World Hockey League as per the recommendation of the IHF.

The BHF had previously hosted the Asian Games Qualifiers in 2010 and Bangladesh earned their tickets to the Guangzhou Asian Games as the fifth qualifiers, but this time it is yet to be decided how many teams will qualify for the 2014 Incheon Asian Games in South Korea.

With an eye on the Asian Games Qualifiers, the BHF has decided to start the national camp in the first week of December after consulting the clubs, who are set to take part in the Club Cup tournament and the Premier Division League. The new hockey season will get underway through the Victory Day Cup from December 5, Rahmatullah added.

Sports chief to help solve hockey crisis

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State Minister for Youth and Sports Mujibul Haque Chunnu expressed his desire to sit with the two feuding parties of hockey to find a solution to the ongoing crisis. The minister said this after meeting the executive committee members of Bangladesh Hockey Federation (BHF).

"We had a meeting with the sports minister today [Thursday] at his office. We informed him all the details, starting from how it started to the current situation," said BHF general secretary Rahmatullah.

Although the minister did not give any time frame, Rahmatullah said that he wanted to sit with both parties as soon as possible.

Hockey officials and players also met the country's sports boss on Tuesday to press their demand for an ad-hoc committee by dissolving the existing BHF committee.

Akram's time to prove

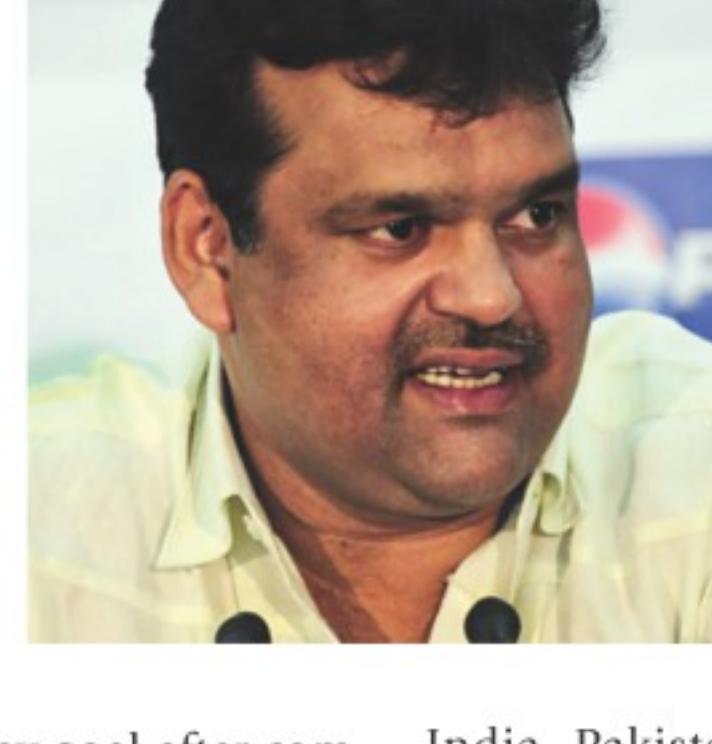
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The onus is now on Akram Khan to show his mettle as an organiser after the fulfilment of his desire. The former national captain and chief selector was chosen as the chairman of the cricket operations committee of Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) on Wednesday and everybody will be looking forward to see how he carries out his job on the most important committee of the board.

And the obvious question to him yesterday was: What are your plans?

Akram, who had worked in this committee for more than six years as a selector, however has yet to make any concrete plan or set any goal. Rather he said: "My first goal is to bring some people on the committee with cricketing background. As a selector I worked under this committee for more than six years and I learnt many things from that and observed many things. I will set my goal after completing the committee," said Akram.

"But what I personally feel is that we need cooperation between cricket committee, development committee and tournament committee. Any lack of coordination among these committees actually hinders the progress of cricket. I will definitely focus on this issue seriously," he continued.



As a former cricketer he also wants to create a comfortable atmosphere for the cricketers. "The committee worked brilliantly under [Enayet Hossain] Siraj bhai and I want to carry on his good job. But in my observation, there are some small things which need to be addressed properly. My aim would be to create a comfortable atmosphere for the cricketers so that they can only focus on their performance," said Akram.

Bangladesh's efforts for getting matches from the world's bigger teams have always been questioned; especially the question about when the Tigers will get the invitation from their big neighbours India to play a full-fledged tour has put BCB in a spot of bother. Question has always been there whether the cricket committee did their best in terms of communications to confirm their shares from the other member countries.

Akram also believes that only proper communications can help the cause of the BCB.

"We got a lot of support from India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka in our early days. So, still I believe we can get maximum support from them. But to do that case we need to keep in touch with every board, especially we need to keep in touch with the Indian board always, so that we get regular visits of our A and under-19 teams and therefore we can address the demand of the national team's tour," observed Akram.

BFF cancels qtrs at last minute

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Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) yesterday postponed the first quarterfinal of the Federation Cup between Sheikh Jamal DC and Mohammedan SC after failing to ensure security at the Bangabandhu National Stadium.

The match was scheduled to get underway at 5:00pm amidst the ongoing nationwide blockade imposed by opposition parties, but the BFF only cancelled the match a few hours before the kickoff.

"We were forced to postpone the match and shifted it to Friday after police refused to ensure security today [Thursday]," said BFF general secretary Abu Nayem Shohag.

However, it has been learnt that there was negligence from the BFF officials, who allegedly asked for police protection just five hours before the start time of the match, and the Paltan Zone police declined to provide adequate policemen to ensure the safety at the gallery.

The BFF's failure to make a prior announcement about the postponement of the game saw few hundred spectators, especially Mohammedan supporters, turn up at the stadium before the scheduled time and leave the area after being informed about the postponement of the game.

HK, Netherlands complete the line-up

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Hong Kong and the Netherlands have completed the six-team line-up for the associates in next year's ICC Twenty20 World Cup to be held in Bangladesh.

Hong Kong survived an early scare to beat Papua New Guinea by a comfortable 29-run margin to take the fifth spot at Sheikh Zayed Cricket Stadium in Abu Dhabi on Thursday.

The Netherlands (149-2) successfully chased down a steep target against Scotland (146-6) to secure a return to the ICC World Twenty20 for the first time since they upset England at the tournament opener in 2009.

Earlier, Afghanistan, Ireland, Nepal and UAE have confirmed their berths in the mega competition.

The six teams will now compete in a complex fixture to determine the standings before joining in the eight-team first phase of the main event, where Zimbabwe will lead one group and hosts Bangladesh will form the other. However, it is yet to be confirmed how the two groups would be decided.

BCB names U-19 squad

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The Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) yesterday announced a 14-member Bangladesh Under-19 squad for next month's home series against the West Indies Under-19s.

West Indies youths will arrive in Dhaka on December 2 to play seven one-day matches against their Bangladesh counterparts in Chittagong, Cox's Bazar, Feni and Mirpur.

The selected cricketers have been asked to report to the SAHARA-BCB National Cricket Academy today at 5pm.

SQUAD: Mehidy Hassan Miraz (captain), Jasim Uddin (vice-captain/wicketkeeper), Shadman Islam, Nazmul Hossain, Yasir Ali Chowdhury, Musaddek Hossain, Saeed Sarkar, Joyraj Sheik, Abu Hider, Rifat Pradhan, Mustafizur Rahman, Nihad-Uzzaman, Jubair Hossain and Rahat Ferdous.

Lyon urges Oz to attack

AFP, Sydney



Australia spinner Nathan Lyon is expecting England to bounce back from their first Test mauling in Adelaide next week and warned Thursday that aggressive tactics will again be needed.

England were left bruised and battered by their 381-run Ashes hammering in Brisbane, a Test in which Australia ramped up the sledging to try to get a psychological advantage.

Lyon said England will be fired up for revenge in the second Test starting on December 5 and Australia cannot afford to relax.

"It's England and it's a Test match, they're going to bounce back, we know that," he told reporters.

"Test match cricket is the hardest format going around. We're not expecting anyone to roll over. We know the quality of the England cricket side."

"We're going to have to stand

up... and start that fight again. That's the way Australia play their best cricket. We know where the line is and we don't step over it. We're going to continue to play aggressive, hard cricket."

The new drop-in wicket at Adelaide Oval has proven difficult for bowlers so far in the current domestic Sheffield Shield season, and of biggest concern to Australia will be managing their in-form pace attack.

Lyon said he expected selectors to again go into the match with just one specialist spinner -- himself.

"Fingers crossed there's a little bit more spin down there and we'll see how we go," said Lyon, who helped spark English batting collapses in both innings of the Gabba Test.

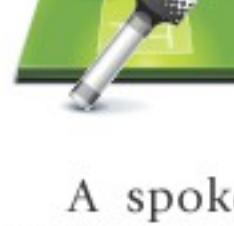
"Steve Smith, Michael Clarke -- they're pretty capable of bowling a few overs."

"In saying that if the bowling group does our job they [part-time spinners] won't have to bowl."

"I'm more than happy to take on the responsibility of being the number one spinner and hopefully get a few overs under my belt."

'Don't praise Sachin'

AFP, Lahore



The Pakistani Taliban have warned their country's media to stop praising Indian cricket legend Sachin Tendulkar, who retired this month after a glittering 24-year career.

A spokesman for the militants said Pakistanis should get behind their embattled captain Misbahul Haq, even though he was a "substandard and low-level player".

Newspapers and TV stations across South Asia have been plastered with tributes to master batsman Tendulkar, who bowed out on November 16 as the world's leading run-scorer in both Test and one-day cricket.

Pakistan and India share one of the fiercest rivalries in world sport and the near-universal outpouring of praise for Tendulkar, the only man to score 100 international centuries, was a rare moment of agreement.

But Shahidullah Shahid, the main spokesman for the Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) said it was time for Pakistanis to shut up



about the "Little Master".

"There is an Indian cricket player called Tendulkar. He has been exceedingly praised by Pakistani media and also praised by a lot of Pakistanis," Shahid said in a video message, flanked by two masked men with AK-47s.

"Now someone should tell Pakistani media and other Pakistanis that no matter how good Tendulkar is, they should not praise him, it is against Pakistani nationalism and against loyalty to the country."

Misbah regularly comes under fire for his conservative tactics as captain and sedate batting style, which has earned him the nickname "Tuk-tuk".

Shahid told media to rein in their criticism -- though he scarcely gave a ringing endorsement of Misbah's leadership.

"No matter that Misbahul Haq is a sub-standard and low-level player, Pakistani media should praise him because he is a Pakistani," Shahid said in the video published online at the weekend.

Shahid on Thursday confirmed the authenticity of the video to AFP by telephone from an undisclosed location.