



Fans pray for 'peace'

AFP, Dubai



Fans of India and Pakistan called for "peace" and more cricket between the two Asian giants ahead of the blockbuster clash at the Twenty20 World Cup on Sunday. Matches between the two cricket-crazy nations are few and far between

with India cutting bilateral ties with its neighbours since 2007.

"We should play each other more often. It is such a treat to see these two teams on the cricket field," Mohammad Ashraf, a Pakistan national working in the United Arab Emirates, told AFP.

"Virat Kohli versus Hasan Ali, what a contest! Politicians should not spoil all this for their own gains. Let them play cricket. I pray for peace between the two nations."

There have been protests in India with calls to boycott the match in the wake of recent killings of 11 migrant workers and minority Hindus and Sikhs in Indian-administered Kashmir. There was a brief thaw in rivalry

when Pakistan toured India for five limited-over matches in 2012-13 but since then have only met in multi-nation tournaments.

"They last played at Manchester during the 50-over World Cup in 2019 and India was also urged to boycott that game."

"I brought a ticket for the game as soon as it went online. I mean you look forward to these contests, especially when you are far away from home," Pankhuri Raj Mehta, an Indian who works in Abu Dhabi since 2017, told AFP.

"I know there has always been trouble with Pakistan. But that's for the politicians to sort out. I will enjoy the game with my husband."

Tickets for the contest were sold

out just hours after they went online and many private online channels are offering resale of the entry passes at ridiculous prices.

But the international Cricket Council (ICC) said the resold tickets would be invalid.

The excitement is palpable in Dubai but some see this as inappropriate due to tensions between the nations.

"I find this exercise pointless. People are being killed in the border area and we are playing cricket," Raghuvver Singh, an Indian who is visiting Dubai for Expo 2020, told AFP.

"First stop the bloodshed and then play as much as you want."

The two countries have fought two wars over Kashmir - divided between the two nations - since their independence in 1947.



Mount playing key role, says Tuchel

REUTERS



Chelsea manager Thomas Tuchel hailed midfielder Mason Mount for his superb hat-trick in Saturday's 7-0 Premier League victory over Norwich City and stressed the importance of the England international to the team's style of play. Chelsea showed no lack of firepower despite the absence of injured forwards Romelu Lukaku and Timo Werner as they ran riot against the league's bottom side, with Mount scoring his third in added time to cap off a memorable display.

The Chelsea academy graduate's maiden treble for the club helped them stay above Manchester City at the top of the table, with 22 points from nine matches, and also quash talk of a striker crisis.

"We play in most games with three strikers and Mason is one of them," Tuchel told reporters. "You can say he's maybe between an eight and a 10, so not a real striker, so in that way we really depend on him. He plays a key role."

"The wing backs play with more freedom to help our strikers really in the last line and they feel more and more confident. It's a complex game. There's very rarely one reason why things happen like this - but we depend on Mason and we want to."

"We like his style, where he comes from, his personality and he's a top guy. So we're very happy for him."

Mount said he was delighted to make an impression with England manager Gareth Southgate in the stands.

"I just got told he was watching. It's brilliant for me and obviously to get my first goals of the season and an assist, it was a good day," Mount said.

Foden enjoying life on the wing

REUTERS



Phil Foden appeared primed to be the heir to David Silva's central midfield throne at Manchester City when the Spaniard left the club last year, but the 21-year-old is excelling in an altogether different role for his side this season.

Again deployed in a wide forward position at Brighton & Hove Albion on Saturday, Foden fired his second-ever top-flight double to help his side secure a 4-1 success, making him City's top scorer in the Premier League this season with three goals.

Stretching further back, no City player has scored more than Foden's 20 goals since the start of last season across all competitions.



Foden is still more than capable of excelling as a central midfielder playmaker, as he proved when impressing for England against Andorra in the position earlier this month, but it seems for City he can have a greater impact out wide.

"I'm enjoying it (the new position)," Foden told the BBC after his double against Brighton.

"I can drop deep and get the ball and pick the passes off. It's a new role for me and I can say I'm really enjoying it."

"It changes game-to-game. Sometimes I stay higher than normal, but this game they went man-to-man so I dropped a bit deeper and I thought we used the extra man well."

City coach Pep Guardiola was criticised for his sparing use of Foden in the early years of the youngster's career, and once again remained reluctant to heap too much praise on the midfielder-forward. "He can play left winger, which is a good position, and right winger, which is a good position for him," Guardiola said.

"Phil is a player who can play in different positions but especially up front because he has the quality and the precision. He had many chances to score in recent games but he is young and will keep improving."

However, Guardiola is managing Foden, it is paying off handsomely.



Ibrahimovic scores at both ends as Milan go top

REUTERS, BOLOGNA

AC Milan striker Zlatan Ibrahimovic scored at both ends as the visitors left it late to earn a 4-2 win over nine-man Bologna in Serie A on Saturday to return to the top of the standings.

Milan looked to be on course for a comfortable victory after Rafael Leao fired home 16 minutes in before Bologna were dealt a further blow as Adama Soumaoro was sent off for bringing Rade Krunic down when he was through on goal four minutes later.

Captain Davide Calabria hammered Milan into a 2-0 lead in the 35th minute to put them in control before Ibrahimovic, starting his first league game of the season, put through his own net to give the hosts hope four minutes after the break.

Musa Barrow's fine finish three minutes later stunned the visitors to pull the 10-men level only for Roberto Soriano's red card before the hour mark for a reckless tackle to leave the Bologna with an even more difficult task.

They dug in and looked set to earn a hard-earned point but goals from Ismael Bennacer six minutes from time and a fine 90th-minute finish from 40-year-old Ibrahimovic saw Milan home.

Milan's fifth league win in a row moved them back to the top with 25 points from nine games, a point above Napoli who visit fourth-placed AS Roma on Sunday, while Bologna stay ninth.

Spinners continue to dictate terms

SPORTS REPORTER



The second round of the 23rd National Cricket League commenced in a similar fashion to the previous round as spinners outshined once again in most of the matches while Dhaka's Abdul Mazid and national team batter Saif Hassan scored tons apiece against Rangpur at the Sylhet International Cricket Stadium yesterday.

Opener Mazid placed 110 runs off 188 balls on the board featuring ten fours and three maximums. On the other hand, skipper Saif Hassan, batting at three, was unbeaten at 102 off 185 balls, striking eight fours and two sixes. Dhaka ended the day on 293 runs for three wickets.

In contrast to the Dhaka-Rangpur match, the other three matches of NCL were dominated by spinners. Dhaka Metro's right-arm spinner Md Sharifullah, similar to his figures from the first round, bagged another fifer against Rajshahi at Cox's Bazar Academy Ground yesterday.



Rajshahi skipper Nazmul Hossain Shanto was dismissed at 67 by Dhaka Metro's left-arm spinner Rakibul Hasan, who collected a couple more in the first innings as Dhaka bowled Rajshahi out in 252 runs and trailed by three runs at the end of the day.

20 wickets fell in the match between Barishal and Chattogram on the first day as Barishal were bundled out in 146 runs in their first innings. Chattogram's spinner Hasan Murad plucked a fifer and Nayeem Hasan scalped four wickets.

However, Barishal bounced back with the ball as two five-wicket hauls from Mohammad Ashraful and Monir Hasan packed Chattogram to a total of 87. Ashraful's 13.3 overs spell featured a hat-trick, a fifer and a couple of maidens.

In the match between Khulna and Sylhet, Anamul Haque Bijoy's Khulna was bundled out in 196 runs as all bowlers of Sylhet came on the list of wicket-takers. Khulna's Mehidy Hasan Miraz grabbed a couple of wickets as Sylhet ended the first day at 30 for three.

Records galore as Navy become champions

SPORTS REPORTER

As many as 11 national records, including five in the third and final day, were set as the Bangabandhu 30th National Swimming Championships concluded at Syed Nazrul Islam Swimming Complex in Mirpur yesterday.

Of all the records, which were based on hand timings, 10 records belonged to Bangladesh Navy as they became champions with 38 gold, 23 silver and eight bronze medals while Bangladesh Army finished second with five gold, 18 silver and 19 bronze medals as well as setting up a new record.

On the concluding day, Omar Ali created history in 200m breaststroke event with a timing of 2:24.93, eclipsing the previous best of 2:27.11 made by Jahangir Alam in 2008 while Sonia Akter overtook her previous best of 30.63 seconds to produce a new record in 50m butterfly, clocking 30.07 seconds. In the 400m freestyle, Kajal Mia clocked 4:17.35 to erase Faisal Ahmed's 04:18.22 timing.

The other two records were toppled in relay and diving events with the Bangladesh Navy team breaking their own record in 4X100 men's

medley relay with a timing of 3:58.93 to eclipse the previous best of 3:59.14. Nasim Hossain also followed the footsteps of his teammates to create a new record in the 5m platform diving event.

Kajal Mia was adjudged the best male swimmer as the Bangladesh Navy swimmer bagged five gold and created three national records while his female teammate Sonia Akter grabbed six gold medals and two silver medals during which she produced a new record as well. Mariyam Akter and Juthi Akter, also from Bangladesh Navy, together bagged five gold medals by setting three new records to their credit.

