



MILAN: Cristiano Ronaldo has scored 12 goals in eight consecutive league games.

Quick Read

Chairman Peshawar Zalmi Javed Afridi calls on PM

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Imran Khan on Friday said the government was focusing on National Sports Policy and a meeting would be convened very soon in that respect.



He was talking to Chairman Peshawar Zalmi Javed Afridi who called on him here. Matters relating to sports were discussed during the meeting.

The Prime Minister expressed his pleasure over the association of Hashim Amla with Peshwar Zalmi, adding Zalmi had played an important role for the success of PSL in Pakistan. He said that the complete holding of Pakistan Super League (PSL) Season Five in the country would be a historic occasion. The Prime Minister said that Pakistan Super League had contributed in the return of international cricket to the country. —APP

Why are people hating on the new PSL anthem when it's actually pretty good?

KARACHI:

Sometimes entertainment trends in Pakistan don't make much sense. For instance, Coke Studio became more popular after Rohail Hyatt left, people loved Momina Mustehsan and Rahat Fateh Ali Khan's 'Afreen' and Meray Paas Tum Ho is doing fairly well commercially.



And therefore, the social media trolling against PSL's anthem for 2020 makes no sense either.

While in the past, Ali Zafar and Fawad Khan carried the torch (Fawad less successfully so), this year's anthem has gone full throttle with not just one but several high profile names. Produced by Zulfi, Tayyar Hain features veterans Haroon, Arif Lohar and Ali Azmat while also featuring young blood Asim Azhar. Zulfi can barely ever go wrong and he stays true to his musical aesthetic with Tayyar Hain while also remembering that this song is an anthem for a major cricket anthem. Therefore, what one hears is a brilliant musical arrangement and a song that will definitely get heartbeats racing when heard blaring at the stadium.

Add to the fact that the energy on display in the video is infectious. Can someone get us in touch with Haroon and Asim Azhar's trainer? We want to dance like that but we're afraid we'll pull a muscle, or ten. —APP

How much money the 2020 Australian Open champions will earn?

MELBOURNE: Sofia Kenin of the US and Garbine Muguruza of Spain will play for the 2020 Australian Open women's title on Saturday, Feb. 1 at Melbourne Park.

On the men's side of the draw, Serbian Novak Djokovic is through to the final round after cruising past Roger Federer in a decisive, three-set win on Thursday. He'll face either Dominic Thiem or Alexander Zverev, who play their semi-final match on Friday.



Both the men's and women's champions will collect a \$4.12 million AUD check, or about \$2.8 million USD. The runner-up will earn half that amount: \$2.065 million AUD (\$1.4 million USD).

If Zverev makes it past Thiem and then Djokovic in the final, he has pledged to donate all of his prize money to help victims of the Australia wildfires. He's already donated \$10,000 for every match he's won so far at the Grand Slam.

Alexander Zverev/Minas Panagiotakis
The Australian Open is handing out a total of \$71 million AUD (\$48 million USD), a 14% increase from 2019 and a record high for the tournament. It's not just the champions who will take home sizable paychecks. Players who made it into the main draw earned \$90,000 AUD (\$60,793 USD) just for competing in the first round. Here's the full breakdown of how much money all of the singles competitors will earn at the first Grand Slam of 2020. GP: Alexander Zverev Champion: \$4.12 million AUD (\$2.78 million USD) Runner-up: \$2.065 million AUD (\$1.39 million USD) Semifinal: \$1.04 million AUD (\$702,497 USD) Quarterfinal: \$525,000 AUD (\$354,626 USD) Round 4: \$300,000 AUD (\$202,643 USD) Round 3: \$180,000 AUD (\$121,586 USD) Round 2: \$128,000 AUD (\$86,461 USD) Round 1: \$90,000 AUD (\$60,793 USD) CNBC Make It converted AUD to USD using the OANDA conversion rate of 1 AUD to 0.67548 USD on January 30,

Coronavirus outbreak Snooker's China Open postponed

LONDON: The China Open snooker tournament became the latest sporting event to fall victim to the coronavirus outbreak on Friday after global governing body World Snooker postponed this year's edition.

"Following extensive consultation between WST, the WPBSA (World Professional Billiards and Snooker Association) and our many partners in China, we have taken the difficult decision to postpone the 2020 China Open," World Snooker said in a statement.

The tournament, which takes place annually in Beijing, is a flagship event on the snooker calendar and the last tournament in which players can earn ranking points before the start of the World Championship in April.

Snooker is hugely popular in China and three-time UK Championship winner Ding Junhui is a star in his home nation.

This year's edition was set to be held between March 30 and April 5, but World Snooker said that "considering the current health and travel situation in China our highest priority has to be the welfare of our players, staff and the many fans who travel around China and beyond". World Snooker added that it was looking for a later date for the tournament.

The postponement of the China Open comes after this month's outbreak of coronavirus that has caused global panic and killed at least 213 people.

A host of countries have limited or outright banned travel from China, while on Friday United Kingdom health officials confirmed two cases of the virus.

On Thursday the Chinese Football Association suspended all domestic football and postponed indefinitely the top-flight Chinese Super League season kick-off, due on February 22, in order to "carry out prevention and control of the pneumonia epidemic".

Other events moved or cancelled include the World Indoor Athletics Championships, the women's Olympic football qualifying and this month's men's alpine skiing World Cup event in Yanqing, which was shifted Thursday to Saalbach-Hinterglemm in Austria. —Reuters

Women's Olympic qualification dates reshuffled due to Wuhan virus

SYDNEY: Organisers of the women's Olympics football qualifying tournament that was hastily moved to Sydney following the outbreak of the deadly coronavirus have been forced to shuffle the matches due to quarantine restrictions on China's players.

The four-team tournament involving China, Australia, Taiwan and Thailand was moved from Wuhan - the centre of the outbreak of the virus - to Australia by the Asian Football Confederation.

More than 200 people in China have died from the flu-like virus with almost 6,000 affected after it emerged late last year in Wuhan in the central Hubei province.

The World Health Organization on Thursday declared the outbreak a public health emergency.



China's women's team, who arrived in Australia on Jan 29, have been placed in quarantine in Brisbane until after Feb 5. None of the players has tested positive for the virus, according to the Chinese Football Association. They had originally been

scheduled to play their first game against Thailand on Feb 3, but organisers said on Friday they would now play their first game on Feb 6.

An additional match day of Feb 12, when China play Australia, had now been scheduled, Football

Federation Australia (FFA) said in a statement on Friday.

"As always, the health of everyone involved, from players and officials to the fans and contractors, remains the number one priority," said FFA Chief Executive James Johnson.

"This new format allows us to stage these matches with that priority in mind and we now look forward to welcoming all teams and hosting a successful tournament."

Several other international sports events, including qualifying tournaments in boxing and basketball for this year's Tokyo Olympics, have been cancelled, postponed or moved from China because of the outbreak. —Reuters

Barca face tough Cup tie with Bilbao, Real host Sociedad

MADRID: Barcelona have been handed a daunting trip to Athletic Bilbao in the quarter-finals of the Copa del Rey in Friday's draw, while Real Madrid face a home game against one of the top teams in La Liga in Real Sociedad.

Holders Valencia will travel to Granada while second division Mirandes, who pulled off a shock 3-1 win over Sevilla in the last 16, will host Villarreal.

The ties will be played between Feb. 4 and Feb. 6 across one game, although the semi-final ties will be played over two legs.

The Catalans were beaten 1-0 by Athletic in their last trip to San Mames in August and were held 0-0 by the Basque side last February.

They have a strong record

against them in the Cup, however, beating them in the final in 2009, 2012 and 2015.

Barca trounced Leganes 5-0 on Thursday to reach the last eight of the competition which they have

won a record 30 times, while Real Madrid thrashed Real Zaragoza 4-0. —Reuters

Lionel Messi wins his 500th club career match

MADRID: Lionel Messi won his 500th club match in Spanish football last night. He became the first player ever to achieve this feat. He again had a major contribution in his side win. As Barcelona beat Leganes 5-0 in the last 16 of the Copa del Rey at the Camp Nou.

The Argentine international scored two goals and one assist in his side's win. As Quique Setien and his men made a comeback after last week's disappointing loss to Valencia.

Lionel Messi already has 34 goal contributions in 33 appearances this season, including 24 goals and 10 assists. This is when he's playing in a rather struggling Barcelona team. As Barcelona saw it's first mid-season managerial change in years. Though Messi has refused to let issues like these, which would otherwise hinder a player's performance, to come in his way to ultimate greatness. It only took the 32-year-old 710 matches to reach this otherwise impossible milestone. He has also scored 622 goals and provided 241 assists for his team. These are some numbers which might not be surpassed or even matched again.

In fact, the Barcelona talisman only needs 22 more goals to surpass Pele's record for the most number of goals. And with the way he's going, it might not take too long for him to conquer this feat too.

Lionel Messi won his sixth Ballon d'Or recently and with that, he surpassed his rival, Cristiano Ronaldo, who has five Ballon d'Or trophies in his cabinet.

It might not be too long that we see Lionel Messi's magic on a football field, but till the moment he is, he will surely be an absolute treat. —Reuters



COLOMBO: Sean Williams reacts as Kusal Mendis and Oshada Fernando go through for runs.

Kusal half-century frustrates Zimbabwe as Lanka eye draw

COLOMBO: Team: Sri Lanka 293 and 156 for 3 (Mendis 80*, Mumba 1-13) trail Zimbabwe 406 and 247 for 7 dec (Taylor 67, Williams 53*, Fernando 2-43) by 204 runs

A post-lunch session that had looked to be gradually slipping towards a stalemate was brought to life by some innovative captaincy from Sean Williams, who towards the latter part of the session had a short extra-cover, short over, short mid-off, short mid-on and short midwicket in place.

The unorthodox field setting secured the prized scalp of Angelo Mathews, but in a session that yielded just 51 runs for Sri Lanka - who have seven wickets in hand - a draw still looks like the most likely result.

Following a morning session that had seen some positive cricket from Oshada Fernando and Kusal Mendis to take Sri Lanka comfortably through to lunch after the early loss of Dimuth Karunaratne, the afternoon's cricket saw

Sri Lanka shut the shop down.

Despite Sikandar Raza striking with his first ball after lunch, getting one to pitch and straighten from around the wicket to trap Fernando lbw, the next hour or so was a pretty dour affair.

During that period, Sri Lanka went lengthy periods between boundaries, with both Mathews and the usually adventurous Mendis happy to just see out the overs, which was likely what brought about Williams' out of the box plan. Almost immediately Mathews fell victim as he was only able to prod a short-of-a-length delivery from Victor Nyauchi to Craig Ervine at short mid-on.

The remainder of the session saw Mendis and Dinesh Chandimal oscillate between the odd aggressive stroke and staunch defence as the hosts simply waited, hoping the pitch - which was holding up for the seamers and turning for the spinners - and the unusual field placements would provide a break-

through. Zimbabwe had earlier declared their second innings on 247 for 7 after just one ball today: an uncharacteristic leg-stump half-volley by Suranga Lakmal that Sean Williams flicked over deep square leg for six.

The shot brought up Williams' third Test fifty, but more importantly, Zimbabwe got the chance to use the heavy roller on a dry Harare deck at the start of the day. The idea presumably being to widen some of the cracks on the pitch, and give their bowlers a better chance of bowling out a team in the fourth innings of a Test for just the seventh time in their history.

Zimbabwe for their part weren't being overly aggressive with their tactics, sticking more or less to what had worked for them in the first innings - spin at one end, probing seam outside off at the other. Donald Tiripano was miserly as ever, bowling four straight maidens at the start of the innings. —Reuters