

## Laos stun SAFF champs

**Football**

INTERNET, Hong Kong

Any hopes that 2003 South Asian Football Federation (SAFF) Championship winners Bangladesh harboured about reaching the qualifying stage for the 2004 Asian Cup suffered a potentially fatal blow when they went down 2-1 to Laos in their Preliminary Round Group D encounter in Hong Kong's Mong Kok Stadium on Thursday.

Laos, who are 21 places below the South Asian champions in the FIFA Coca-Cola World Ranking, took the lead in the 30th minute through Kholadet Phomphachan.

After scoring Laos' consolation in their 5-1 loss to hosts Hong Kong, Visay Phaphouvanin got his second goal in as many games to double the ASEAN side's advantage seven minutes later.

While striker Ariful Kabir pulled

one back for Bangladesh in second half injury time it was to be the Laotians day, although the team that is celebrating the most is probably Hong Kong.

Laos' win means that the former British colony can approach the final match on Sunday knowing that Bangladesh must win by five goals to reach Qualifying Round Group A, which consists of Uzbekistan, Thailand, and Tajikistan.

Bangladesh, whose football administration failed to respond to the countrywide euphoria following the SAFF triumph, were desperately short on preparation going into the Asian Cup preliminaries.

Their SAFF Championship winning coach George Kottan left for his homeland Austria immediately after the competition and the chaotic Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) remained idle and decided to sit on the laurel.

The BFF had appointed two local coaches Hasanuzzaman and Shafiqul Haque Manik in a desper-

ate bid to carry on from where Kottan had left off but it is apparent that Kottan's method and guile was of a different level. It may be mentioned that Kottan had refused to return to Bangladesh despite the BFF's request, as he wanted a wholesale change in the domestic football structure of the country as a pre-condition.

The Qualifying Round matches for the Asian Cup will be played on a home and away basis from August 19 to February 18, 2004, with the top two sides from the seven groups set to join hosts China and defending champions Japan in the 13th and most eagerly awaited edition of the continental clash.

Meanwhile, Bangladesh's main regional rivals India fared no better in their Group G away game against DPR Korea losing 0-2 in Pyongyang. They now need to beat the North Koreans by a three goal margin in their home game on March 30 to qualify.

## Miandad's message

**Cricket**

REUTERS, Lahore

Pakistan's new cricket coach Javed Miandad is determined to take some positives from the country's failed World Cup campaign.

Pakistan failed to reach the



JAVED MIANDAD

Super Six stage at the World Cup, winning just two of their six group matches -- against minnows Namibia and Netherlands -- and losing to Australia, England and fierce rivals India.

But the 46-year-old former captain said on Wednesday he is hopeful of rebuilding the team within a year.

"The most positive message to come from this World Cup is that the players are not bigger than the game," he told a press conference in the eastern city of Lahore.

"In the past after a poor performance, it was the cricket board which used to be changed, but this time it is the senior players who have been dropped for disappointing the nation, which is a positive sign."

"The message is now clear to all players: if they perform they stay, if they don't they have no place in the side."

"No one is bigger than the game."

Miandad has been brought in as coach for the third time since 1999.

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## Kenya, Zim flying in Sharjah set to host quadrangular meet

**Cricket**

INTERNET, Nairobi

Kenya have been confirmed as a last-minute replacement for South Africa for next week's Sharjah tournament.

And Zimbabwe are also expected to take part in what would become a four-nation affair.

Kenya are an official one-day international nation although they do not have Test status.

The East Africans beat both Zimbabwe and Sri Lanka on the way to a surprise place in the World Cup semi-finals.

Organisers the Cricketers' Benefit Fund Series (CBFS) were forced to make the switch after South Africa withdrew because of safety fears over the war in Iraq.

But after holding favourable talks with Zimbabwe and Kenya about taking South Africa's place, CBFS president Qasim Noorani said there was no need for a location switch.

"Zimbabwe are awaiting sports ministry clearance but they are quite hopeful," Noorani told the BBC Sport website.

"If we get that today [Thursday] or even tomorrow then it will be a quadrangular."

The event, now due to take place from 3 to 10 April, also involves Sri Lanka and Pakistan.

Noorani said a quadrangular tournament would require teams to play each of the other teams once, with the top two sides going on to the final.

Vincent Hogg, managing director of the Zimbabwe Cricket Union, indicated Zimbabwe would have

no reservations on safety grounds about travelling to the Emirates.

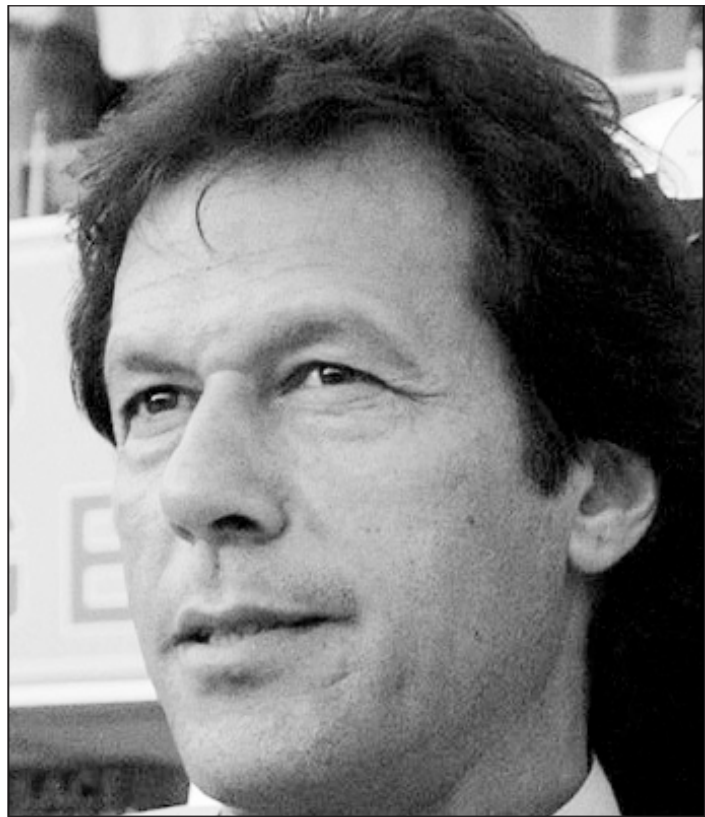
"We would be happy to go there but no decision has been made yet because we have to get approval from various places for the trip to go ahead," he said on Wednesday.

And the Pakistan Cricket Board said it was perfectly willing to fulfil the commitment, although it made clear the tournament will not be played under the Sharjah Cup banner.

"The tournament is neither part of Pakistan Cricket Board's contract with CBFS nor it will be called as Sharjah Cup," a PCB statement said.

"The PCB has accepted the proposal to play in a revised format tournament because it feels that it would provide a good opportunity to its players to have a taste of international cricket."

## Imran sings Aussie song



IMRAN KHAN

**ICC Cricket World Cup**  
SOUTH AFRICA 2003

AFP, New Delhi

Legendary former Pakistan captain Imran Khan Thursday heaped praise on Cricket World Cup champions Australia, saying their juggernaut would continue to roll on.

"Such was their depth and bench-strength that I feel if Australia had sent another team to the World Cup, the final could well have been between two Australian teams," Imran wrote in his column in the Times of India.

Australia thrashed India by 125 runs in the one-sided final at Johannesburg in South Africa on Sunday to retain the World Cup, also extending their unbeaten run to a world record 17 matches in the process.

"This World Cup proved without a doubt that the Australians are head and shoulders above the rest of world cricket," said Imran, who led Pakistan to their only World Cup title in 1992 in Australia.

"They (Australia) have been so since the 1999 World Cup and with the emergence of young exciting players like Brett Lee (fast bowler), their supremacy may last for many more years," he said.

Imran said it was a tribute to the current Australian team's greatness that it had retained the title without Steve Waugh, Shane Warne and Jason Gillespie.

"Such excellence and professionalism is not achieved without hard work," said Imran, who retired in 1992 after playing 88 Tests and 175 one-dayers.

"Now that the World Cup is done and dusted, a few worrying trends have emerged. With the notable exception of Australia, all the teams have deteriorated since the time I played," he said.

Imran lashed out at India skipper Sourav Ganguly for playing an unchanged side in the final and then electing to field after winning the toss.

"I have two criticisms of Ganguly in the final. Firstly, what is this nonsense about superstitions as far as changing the team is concerned?" he said.

"When you are taking on the best in the world, it would be pragmatic to choose your best team rather than stick to an unchanged one so as to not break the winning habit."

Imran said Indian leg-spinner Anil Kumble would have played a

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## Nat'l Chess Zia, Niaz lose

**SPORTS REPORTER**

Grand Masters Ziaur Rahman and Niaz Murshed both lost their first round games when the final phase of the Professor Abdur Razzak 29th National Championship began yesterday.

International Master Abdullah-Al-Rakib upset Zia and IM Reefat-Bin-Sattar defeated Niaz.

In other results, IM Enamul Hossain Rajib beat Sawkat Hossain Pallab, Syed Mahfuzur Rahman Emon of Ansar beat FIDE Master Master Rezaul Haque, Mohammad Monjur Alam beat Mohammad Javed, FIDE Master Sheikh Nasir Ahmed drew with Khandakar Aminul Islam.

## Schools hockey begins tomorrow

BSS, Dhaka

The final round of the Metro Group National Schools Hockey Tournament begins at Maulana Bhasani National Stadium tomorrow.

A total of 24 teams, including nine teams from the capital, took

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Mayor of Kolkata Subrata Mukherjee (L) presents Indian cricket captain Saurav Ganguly with a bouquet during a visit to Ganguly's residence on March 26.

PHOTO: AFP

## No pay-out for Pakistan

**Cricket**

INTERNET, Wellington

New Zealand will not be forced to pay compensation to Pakistan for cancelling a cricket tour following the September 11 atrocities, and for aborting another series after a bomb blast.

The Black Caps were en route to Pakistan when the terrorist attacks on New York took place, and were ordered home.

They also flew home from their rescheduled tour in May 2002 after an explosion outside their hotel on the morning of the second Test, which left 14 people dead.

The International Cricket Council (ICC) disputes committee ruled it was not unreasonable for New Zealand Cricket (NZC) to

cancel its original tour.

"The situation in the world generally, and particularly in the region which includes Pakistan, was highly volatile and unpredictable," the panel said in a statement on Thursday.

"Given the proximity of the Karachi bomb-blast and the deaths caused by it, we find that NZC's cancellation of the rescheduled tour in May 2002 was also acceptable."

NZC chief executive Martin Snedden said he was pleased with the decision.

"I am now working with the Pakistan Cricket Board to reschedule the cricket that was not played because of the terrorist disruptions," Snedden said.

Pakistan say they have lost millions of dollars in revenue because of cancelled or relocated series since September 11.

Australia and West Indies have both opted to play Test series in neutral venues in the last year.

And India have been prevented by their government from going ahead with a Test tour in April.

But South Africa and Bangladesh have both agreed to series between September and November.

In a separate statement, Snedden said it was not unreasonable for the ICC to withhold \$2.5m (£1.59m) of NZC's World Cup payment until contract disputes are resolved.

New Zealand refused to play a match in Kenya because of security concerns.

"I am confident that our decision not to play in Nairobi was correct and that our position is sound," Snedden said.

## Otieno to play in England

REUTERS, Nairobi

Kenyan opening batsman and wicketkeeper Kennedy Otieno and captain Steve Tikolo are set to sign contracts with foreign clubs after helping their country to the semi-finals of the cricket World Cup, officials said on Wednesday.

Otieno will play for British American Tobacco in the Southampton League in Hampshire, England, from next month.

Tikolo has offers from two South African clubs -- Langa of Cape Town and Soweto in Gauteng -- but said negotiations are still ongoing.

Otieno, eldest of the three Obuya brothers who represented Kenya at the World Cup in South Africa, will be returning to the English club for which he played in 2000.

"We have agreed on the terms and I will be playing for BAT for one season which starts in April and ends in September," Otieno, 31, told Reuters.

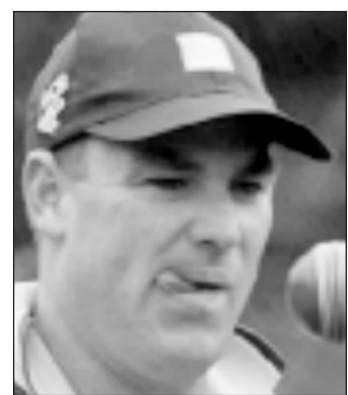
Otieno scored 60 runs as Kenya pulled off one of the shocks of the tournament by beating Sri Lanka by 53 runs. He also scored 79 against India in Group B defeat.

## Warne not missing out on WC pie

**ICC Cricket World Cup**  
SOUTH AFRICA 2003

AFP, Melbourne

Disgraced spin bowler Shane Warne will receive up to 15,000 dollars (9,000 USD) as his share of prize money allocation even



SHANE WARNE

though he didn't bowl a ball in Australia's World Cup win.

Warne was sent home on the morning of Australia's opening match against Pakistan after returning a positive drug test to a banned diuretic.

He was subsequently banned from cricket for a year by an Australian Cricket Board anti-doping panel in a case which damaged his reputation.

Australia's greatest Test wicket-taker was in South Africa for 11 days and will reportedly collect the cash through a pro-rata system adopted by the players for the 55-day tournament.

His allocation - believed to be between 10,000 and 15,000 dollars - has come under fire from Australian cricketers great Neil Harvey and is likely to anger large sections of the sporting public.

ACB public affairs general manager Peter Young said the Australian team wanted the payment system and adopted it especially for the World Cup.

Young said on Wednesday each of the Australian players were paid

the same "day rate" for every day they took part in the successful cup campaign.

But Warne's manager Jason Warne said his banned brother deserved his share of Australia's 3.36 million dollar (2.01 million USD) windfall.

"From my own point of view it's a tough one, but how far back do you go? Jason Warne said on Wednesday.

"He's already been punished enough as it is, but do you go back and make it retrospective?"

Warne said his brother's input into Australia's victory could not be quantified.

But he said it was a "bit harsh" to strip Warne of his stake given his involvement in team planning and training and World Cup promotions.

"He is already missing out on income for the next 12 months and you've got to draw the line somewhere," Jason Warne said.

"The (anti-doping) committee drew the line in the sand when the suspension was started from February 10.

"You can only go by what's done and what the players decide."

"How can you say he didn't have any input into the games?"

"He was there to help (spinner) Brad Hogg bowl in the nets and he was there for the structuring of the team plans which is an important part of it, so I suppose he has earned his stake in the money."

"You can't shift back his suspension and ping him both ways. That's a bit harsh."

Warne is not the only member of the squad to benefit despite playing no games.

His replacement Nathan Hauritz will also profit immensely, as will fast bowler Nathan Bracken, who replaced the injured Jason Gillespie, who played four World Cup matches.

Young said he could not say how much each player would receive.

But The Daily Telegraph newspaper reported on Wednesday that Hauritz would earn about 270,000 Australian dollars, Bracken about 130,000 dollars and Gillespie 180,000 dollars.



The namaj-e-janaza of former national cricketer and noted organiser Tanvir Haider (inset) was held at the Mohammedan Sporting Club premises in Dhaka yesterday. Haider, 54, passed away on Wednesday.

PHOTO: STAR

## WC 2007 party begins

**Cricket**

INTERNET, Johannesburg

The Caribbean culture, cuisine and cricket, received wide exposure internationally when the Windies World Cup 2007 delegation hosted a major event in Johannesburg, South Africa, on March 9 to invite the world to the next Cricket World Cup.

The event dubbed "the Windies Comes to Johannesburg" attracted about 250 South African and international media and cricket officials as well as tour operators, business people and entertainment personalities from Johannesburg to the Saints Entertainment Complex, where a Caribbean environment was tastefully recreated... palm trees, waterfalls and all.

Chris Dehring, WWC 2007 Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer, promised the guests that this was just a taste of what the Caribbean had to offer, but the "real thing" would be on offer when the Windies hosted the Cricket World Cup in four years time, and it will be the best ever!

Dehring said that "the Windies Comes to Johannesburg" event would set the tone for the massive effort that would be undertaken to ensure that the region's tourism industry obtained maximum benefit from the West Indies' hosting of the CWC 2007.

Chef Athlone Mc Collin, who was sent to South Africa by the Elegant Hotels Group specially for the event, expressed great satisfaction

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## Ponting all pumped up

**Cricket**

REUTERS, Perth

Test specialists Steve Waugh and Justin Langer will add enthusiasm to Australia's squad for the four-Test tour of West Indies starting next week, World Cup-winning skipper Ricky Ponting says.

Ponting, who will be Steve Waugh's vice-captain in the Test series, returned with his triumphant one-day squad to Perth airport on Tuesday after an unbeaten run at the World Cup in southern Africa which culminated in a 125-run win over India in the final.

The Australians have been playing international cricket almost non-stop for seven months

and have less than a week's break before heading to the Caribbean on Monday for four Tests and seven



RICKY PONTING

one-day internationals.

"There is no doubt that everyone here would like to have a few more days at least at home to see their families and friends," Ponting told reporters on Tuesday.

The West Indies tour of 1999 was Waugh's first series as Test captain and ended in a 2-2 draw.

"We probably went over there expecting to win pretty comfortably last time and we were really tested in a couple of games by (Brian) Lara," Ponting said.

"He really changed the course of the whole series last time."

"So I'm sure Steve is looking forward to playing again and Justin (Langer) has had a few weeks off as well, so those guys coming back into the side will drag all the rest of u

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