

## Ganguly coming

### India pick four rookies

**Cricket**  
PALLAB BHATTACHARYA, from New Delhi

India have included four uncapped players in their 15-man squad for next week's triangular tournament in Bangladesh after five World Cup stars pulled out.

Five senior players-- batting maestro Sachin Tendulkar, vice captain and wicketkeeper Rahul Dravid, Javagal Srinath, Anil Kumble and Ashish Nehra-- have been kept out of the team for injuries and personal reasons, Indian cricket board secretary S K Nair told reporters in Bombay yesterday.

Tendulkar and Dravid both have hand injuries. Paceman Nehra is awaiting ankle surgery, and veteran bowlers Javagal Srinath and Anil Kumble asked to rest.

Saurav Ganguly remains captain, and John Wright coach after the board extended his contract by two months, Nair said.

Batsmen Gautam Gambhir and Abhijit Kale, medium-pace Avishkar Salvi and leg-spinner Amit Mishra are all included for the first time.

And off-spinner Sarandeep Singh has been recalled. Wicket-keeper

Parthiv Patel will be called into action in place of Dravid, who is getting married to a doctor in Nagpur next month.

The new comers were selected for their impressive performance in the recent tour of West Indies with India A as well as in domestic competitions.

Delhi opener Gambhir starred on the tour of India A, where they took part



SAURAV GANGULY

in the domestic first-class championship, scoring 617 runs at an average of 89.11.

But it is unlikely for Gambhir to open the innings in Dhaka as skipper Ganguly and stand-in vice-captain

Virender Sehwag are set to fill in opening slot.

Salvi is set to share the new ball. The 21-year-old quick from Bombay had an outstanding Windies tour, taking 29 wickets, and was singled out for special praise by coach Ashok Malhotra. He was immensely successful at home also, taking 23 wickets from four only matches.

Leg-spinner Amit Mishra also proved his mettle in the Caribbean where he took 26 wickets from six matches with the best figures of five for 30. But how he performs on the batting-friendly pitch at the Bangabandhu National Stadium is matter to be seen. In fact, it will be a toss-up between leggie Mishra and left-arm spinner Murali Karthik.

Besides Mishra, the two other spinners in the Indian team are Harbhajan Singh and Sarandeep Singh.

World Cup all-rounders Agit Agarkar and Sanjay Bangar will hope for playing time after both were denied the chance in South Africa.

The tournament, also involving South Africa, begins in Dhaka on 11 April.

The Indian team will leave for Dhaka from Calcutta on April 9 and play their first match against

## SA minus Kallis

REUTERS, Cape Town

South African all-rounder Jacques Kallis has withdrawn from the tour of Bangladesh because of an illness in his family.

Although Kallis was not immediately available for comment, it is known that his father has been ill for some time.

"Our thoughts are with Jacques at this difficult time and we wish him well," United Cricket Board of South Africa chief executive Gerald Majola said in a media statement on Wednesday.

"Should his circumstances allow it and he wishes to join up with the team later in the tour, he will be welcome to."

South Africa confirmed on Tuesday the tour would go ahead after receiving assurances over the team's security. The war in Iraq had prompted speculation it might be cancelled.

South Africa are due to play a triangular one-day tournament, which also includes India, and two Tests against Bangladesh. The one-day series begins on April 11.

The South Africans pulled out of this week's Sharjah tournament a week ago following the outbreak of war in Iraq.



'DISCIPLINE IS THE KEY TO SUCCESS': Newly appointed Bangladesh cricket team manager Col. (ret) MA Latif Khan (L) tells something to captain Khaled Mahmud during nets at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

## Cricket time in Sharjah

AFP, Sharjah

New-look Pakistan lead a bunch of World Cup losers attempting to get back on track during the 150,000-dollar Sharjah Cup which opens on Thursday.

Sri Lanka, Zimbabwe and Kenya are the other teams in the fray over the next eight days in the first international cricket event since the World Cup ended in South Africa on March 23.

Sri Lanka and Kenya were unconvincing semi-finalists at cricket's four-yearly showpiece, Zimbabwe fared poorly in the Super Sixes while Pakistan were knocked out in the preliminary round.

Pakistan, finalists four years ago, responded to the embarrassing exit by sacking eight senior players, including the legendary Wasim Akram and captain Waqar Younis, and handing the reins to seasoned wicketkeeper Rashid Latif.

They also brought back former captain Javed Miandad as coach after South Africa-based Englishman Richard Pybus quit in disgust, saying he was frustrated at the inability of unnamed senior players to adjust to new ideas.

Sri Lanka, meanwhile, persuaded a reluctant Sanath Jayasuriya to continue as captain, but lost the services of

batting great Aravinda De Silva, who retired after the World Cup to become a national selector.

Mahela Jayawardena, who averaged a meagre three runs in the World Cup, and fellow middle-order specialist Russel Arnold, were omitted for the Sharjah event, but both are expected to play in the two-Test home series against New Zealand later this month. Zimbabwe, led once again by Heath Streak, have been hit by the retirement of four stalwarts, Andy



RASHID LATIF

Flower, Henry Olonga, Guy Whittall and Alistair Campbell.

Flower and Olonga opted to leave Zimbabwe after winning acclaim for their protests against the Robert Mugabe government during the

World Cup. Whittall said he had played long enough while Campbell quit after being ignored for Sharjah.

Kenya, the first non-Test playing nation to make the World Cup semi-finals, retained their ageing squad, but are still looking for a coach after Sandeep Patil opted to seek new pastures in his native India.

Sympathetic Sharjah hosts persuaded another former Indian Test star Abid Ali, who coaches the United Arab Emirates cricket team, to take charge of Kenya for the tournament.

Most attention, however, will be focused on Pakistan's new management duo of Latif and Miandad, who have been given the task of grooming the youngsters.

"I was planning to retire after the World Cup but I've decided to put it on hold to help my country in the re-building process," said the 34-year-old Latif.

"It may not be easy to establish ourselves as a top team quickly. They need time to get the feel of international cricket."

"The more matches they play the better they will become."

In Thursday's opener, Pakistan take on Zimbabwe, who like Kenya were brought in at the last minute after South Africa backed out due to the war in Iraq.

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## Nayeem, Tarek day's heroes

Cricket

SPORTS REPORTER

A magnificent hundred from opener Wasim Nayeem helped defending champions Victoria Sporting Club earn four valuable points from the opening GreenPhone Premier Cricket Super League clash against Brothers Union Club.

Victoria earned the points for having a first innings lead as the rain interrupted match ended in a draw at the BKSP ground in Savar yesterday.

On the fourth and final day, Wasim scored 121 off 198 balls to take Victoria, who resumed the day on 70 for 1 in reply to Brothers First innings of 265, to 277 for 9 in 91 overs at close of the day. The match lost almost two days to rain.

Nayeem smote one six and 20 boundaries in his 276-minute stay at the crease.

Middle order Manzarul Islam and Mushfiqur Rahman gave Nayeem good support with 46 and 30 runs respectively.

With that lead, Victoria added four

points to their previous 56 points to take their tally to 60 from 13 matches.

On the other hand, Brothers remained at the bottom of the six-team Super League with 32 points.

In the other match, City Club handed Uttara Sporting Club an innings and 114 runs defeat at the Dhanmondi Cricket Stadium thanks to a fantastic display of pace bowling from right arm paceman Tarek Aziz Khan.

Tarek took seven wickets for 41 to bundle out Uttara for only 122 in their second innings. Uttara scored only 93 runs in their first innings while City Club piled up a mammoth 329 for 5 in their first innings.

Tareq, who also took three wickets in the first innings, finished the match with ten for 64.

With that win, City Club remained second in the table with 56 points from 13 matches while Uttara have 32 points.

SCOREBOARDS  
Scoreboards on the third day of the two GreenPhone Premier Division Super League matches at different venues yesterday.

VICTORIA SC v BROTHERS UNION  
Venue: BKSP  
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## Virus-struck AFC!

AFP, Kuala Lumpur

The Asian Football Confederation (AFC) has postponed two Athens 2004 Olympic first round qualifying matches due to the outbreak of a killer pneumonia which has caused a global health alert.

The games affected by the mysterious Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS), which has claimed more than 60 lives and infected nearly 2,000 people worldwide, are Chinese Taipei versus Singapore and Hong Kong versus Sri Lanka.

The postponement makes it three matches in the Asian zone to be postponed after the AFC on Monday postponed the Iraq versus Vietnam match, scheduled for April 5, because of the war in Iraq.

The first leg of the Chinese Taipei and Singapore clash was supposed to be played on April 5 at the Chungshan Stadium in Taipei with the return leg played on April 19 at the Jalan Besar Stadium in Singapore.

The Hong Kong versus Sri Lanka matches were scheduled for April 12 at the Mongkok Stadium and April 19 at the Sugathadasa Stadium in Colombo.

The decision to postpone the games was made in consultation with FIFA on the latest information  
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## Woolmer rejects Lankan offer

Cricket

INTERNET, undated

Bob Woolmer has declined an offer to coach Sri Lanka to continue his consultant role for the International



BOB WOOLMER

Cricket Council (ICC).

Woolmer told the BBC Sport website: "They did ask me but I turned them down."

New Zealand are due to arrive in Sri

Lanka at the end of the month for a two-Test series and one-day triangular tournament, also involving Pakistan.

And it is unclear whether current incumbent Day Whatmore, whose contract finishes at the end of May, will stay on for the series.

Whatmore was surprised to hear on Monday that his contract would not be renewed but he remains in charge for this week's Sharjah Cup.

English-born Woolmer had been interviewed for a similar post with the West Indies side a month ago, although they opted for Australian Bennett King.

And in an exclusive interview with BBC Sport he revealed he had successfully negotiated with the ICC to stay on as high performance director after signing a fresh two-year contract.

His initial contract, to help Canada, Holland, Kenya and Namibia with their World Cup preparations, has ended, but he believes he can continue that role in a different vein.

Woolmer said: "There was a phone call from Sri Lanka asking me if I was interested, but I have put my target on the ICC role for the associate nations."

The 54-year-old played for  
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## 'Pardon us, King'

Cricket

AFP, Sydney

The West Indies Cricket Board on Wednesday apologised to Australian Cricket Academy head coach Bennett King for prematurely announcing he had been appointed to take charge of its national team.

King applied for the position last December and, after an interview in early March, was on Tuesday told the job was his and the media had been informed.

But no official appointment offer had been made and no terms and conditions agreed with King.

"I spoke to them this morning by phone about my disappointment regarding some of the processes and another couple of issues that are a little more personal and that may come to light later," King said on Wednesday.

"They apologised for the confusion and expressed regret for using the word 'appointed' in their announcement."

The WICB also promised a correction on its website.

King is highly regarded in Australia, having guided Queensland to three consecutive Sheffield Shield champion-

ships from the 1999-2000 season after succeeding John Buchanan when he took over the Australian team.

King said the Windies board wanted him to start the job in the Caribbean in early July.

He said the Australian Cricket Board had been kept informed of his application and talks from the start and was supportive.

He planned to discuss it with his wife and three school-aged children this weekend.

"Any adventure is initially exciting, particularly with up and moving, but I know there will be a lot of

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## Resume Indo-Pak cricket: Amitabh

AFP, New Delhi

India's top film star Amitabh Bachchan on Wednesday called for resumption of cricket matches between India and Pakistan, saying the game should not be a victim of politics.

"Sports and art should not become a prey to political compulsions," Bachchan said at a function where Saurav Ganguly's World Cup squad was presented with seven-star luxury apartments by the team sponsors.

"But if the government feels that we should not play Pakistan now, we should obey that," Bachchan added.

Arch-rivals India and Pakistan had on Saturday called off forthcoming cricket tours of each other's countries.

The Indian government has banned bilateral cricket with Pakistan since 1999 in protest against Islamabad's alleged support to Islamic militants in the disputed region of Kashmir.

## Three share lead

SPORTS REPORTER

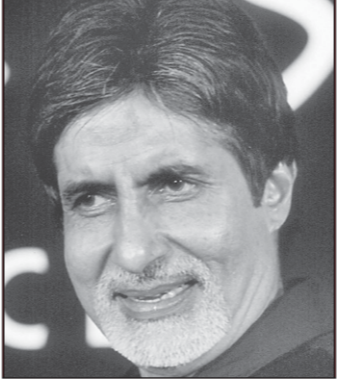
Grand Master Niaz Murshed, International Masters Reefat bin Sattar and Enamul Hossain Rajib jointly led the points table with 6 points each after the seventh round games in the final phase of the Professor Abdur Razzak 29th National Championship at the Bangladesh Chess Federation Auditorium yesterday.

In the day's round, Niaz beat Sawkat Hossain Pallab, Rajib drew with Fide Master Taibur Rahman and Reefat got bye.

Pakistan denies the allegations.

The teams, however, clash in multi-nation events like the recent World Cup where India defeated Pakistan by six wickets in the preliminary round.

Team sponsors Sahara India gave all 15 members of the World Cup team, and the support staff led by coach John Wright, luxury apartments despite India's 125-run defeat in the final



AMITABH BACHCHAN

against Australia.

"Our team won other matches convincingly and our players put up some of the most fabulous performances in the World Cup," Sahara India chairman Subrata Roy said.

Roy said the apartment complex in the western state of Maharashtra, worth more than 4.7 million dollars, will be named the 'World Cup Enclave' when it is ready later this year.

"This gift is just a token of our appreciation for the team. We are sure our team will perform even better in the future," said Roy.

## McGrath going back home

AFP, Sydney

Fast bowler Glenn McGrath is to return home from Australia's tour of the West Indies to be with his ill wife, the Australian Cricket Board (ACB) said on Wednesday.

The ACB said McGrath was granted leave to return home after he received medical advice about his wife, Jane, on Wednesday.

His wife had breast cancer four years ago.

The ACB said it could not yet say how long McGrath would be home and whether a replacement player would be required.

The board said more details were expected to be known within the next 48 hours.

McGrath, 33, was scheduled to leave London on Wednesday for Australia and said through the ACB that he would not be available to speak to the media upon his arrival in Sydney on Thursday.

McGrath is the second-highest Australian Test wicket-taker behind Shane Warne with 422 wickets in 91 Tests at 21.45 and is regarded as world cricket's leading fast bowler.

The Australian team leaves London on Wednesday and is scheduled to arrive in Georgetown, Guyana, late Wednesday local time.

Australia play four Tests and seven one-dayers against West Indies.

The World Cup winners' first match is a three-day game against a President's XI in Georgetown, starting on Saturday.

## McMillan left out of Lankan party

Cricket

REUTERS, Auckland

Batsman Craig McMillan has been dropped for New Zealand's tour of Sri Lanka, the chairman of selectors Sir Richard Hadlee announced on Tuesday.

McMillan had a wretched domestic summer but retained his place in the recent World Cup, where he continued to fail and his omission has opened the way for Matthew Horne to return to the squad.

Off-spinner Paul Wiseman has also been recalled to back-up left-armed Daniel Vettori on the spin-friendly pitches for the two-Test tour.

Hadlee said that Wiseman had previously toured Sri Lanka with success and went on to explain McMillan's exclusion.

"Craig is a talented batsman who is currently out of form. We are confident he will work through this blip in his career and come back to make significant contributions."

Meanwhile, Nathan Astle is unavailable to tour due to a knee injury and Chris Cairns will only play in the triangular one-day series also involving Pakistan.

Horne last appeared for New Zealand against Bangladesh in late 2001 and missed that season's tour of England and subsequent trips to Pakistan and West Indies last year.

He also missed the home series against India before the World Cup. A newcomer to the 14-man Test squad is Wellington batsman Richard Jones, a consistent performer domestically who regularly appears near the top of the country's averages.

New Zealand lies third in the ICC World Test rankings and Hadlee said the tour was a chance to consolidate that position.

"Sri Lanka will be a formidable Test opponent in their own conditions, so the challenge is a tough one," he said.

In the one-day squad, wicketkeeper batsman Chris Nevin returns to open the batting, a position in which New Zealand suffered during the World Cup when the selectors were criticised for not including the hard-hitting Wellingtonian.

The first Test begins in Colombo on April 25. An additional player will be added after the Test series. The first one-day international is against Pakistan on May 11.

SQUADS  
TEST: Stephen Fleming (captain), Shane Bond, Ian Butler, Robbie Hart, Matthew Horne, Richard Jones, Jacob Oram, Mark Richardson, Mathew Sinclair, Scott Styris, Daryl Tuffey, Daniel Vettori, Lou Vincent, Paul Wiseman.

ONE-DAY: Fleming (captain), Andre Adams, Bond, Chris Cairns, Chris Harris, Horne, Brendon McCullum, Kyle Mills, Chris Nevin, Oram, Styris, Tuffey, Vettori.



Mehdi Hasan Parag makes his move against FIDE Master Sheikh Nasir Ahmed during their 7th round game of the Professor Abdur Razzak 29th National Chess Championship yesterday.