

## It's BCB who's at fault

**Cricket**

BISHWAJIT ROY

When Sri Lanka arrive in Dhaka on Friday to play two Tests and three one-day internationals it is not unlikely for Marvan Atapattu's men to come across some small yet significant protest rallies by cricket fans of the capital.

Do doubt that the fans in the capital will be chanting slogans, "Why is there no match in Dhaka?"

The sentiment is already running high since the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB), having failed to prepare two prospective city venues in time, opted to hold the first two ODIs and the second Test in Bogra while third ODI and the first Test at Chittagong.

It is good news indeed that Bogra got the unique opportunity of hosting both Test and one-day matches after winning ICC approval along with two more venues in the country recently.

Nobody would also mind to see international matches being played at different parts of the country but the way Dhaka has been ignored since the board had decided to forfeit its claim on the Bangabandhu National Stadium for a new home at Mirpur's Sher-e-Bangla Stadium, raised a few eyebrows.

## Injured Sehwan, Harbhajan to fly home

AFP, Lahore

Indian opener Virender Sehwan and off-spinner Harbhajan Singh are set to return home after injuries ruled them out of the ongoing one-day series against Pakistan, officials said Monday.

"Sehwan has a left posterior shoulder muscle injury which was re-aggravated whilst batting in the second one-day match on Saturday and he has been advised two weeks rest," chief selector Kiran More said.

More said Sehwan needs to rest before India's three-match Test and seven-match one-day series at home against England next month.

Sehwan hit 67 in India's seven-wicket win in the second one-dayer against Pakistan at Rawalpindi. The five-match series is now level at 1-1 and the third one-dayer was being played Monday in Lahore.

Harbhajan, who failed to get a wicket in the preceding two Tests, injured his finger in the third and final Test in Karachi. He missed the first two one-day matches.

"Harbhajan's index finger injury of the right hand still has swelling and he has been advised seven to 10 days rest," said More.

Harbhajan is seen as the key to India's plans in the home series against England.

## Indian fans' tough time in Lahore

AFP, Lahore

Indian cricket fans complained Monday that they had to overcome ticketing and immigration problems to watch the third one-day international between Pakistan and India in Lahore.

Around 4,500 fans crossed the border on Sunday then had to wait several hours to pick up tickets they had booked on the Internet -- and some missed the first half of the match because they were still waiting on Monday.

Three people were also injured on Sunday as thousands tried to rush across the border at Wagah, near Lahore, to see the match between the long-time South Asian rivals.

"I got my ticket after 18 hours of struggle and it was a bitter experience," said Manish Kumar, who came from Rohtak in Haryana, India.

Fans criticised Pakistani authorities for only giving three-day visas for the game at Gaddafi Stadium.

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ESPN

Australia vs Sri Lanka  
VB Series Third Final  
Live at 9:30 am  
Sportscentre  
Live at 10:30 pm

STAR Sports

English Premier Football League  
Liverpool vs Arsenal  
Live at 1:55 am (Wednesday)

The board for an unimpeachable time blamed the National Sports Council (NSC), which is the custodian of all sporting structures of the country, for a go-slow approach of renovating both the Mirpur Stadium and the Fatullah Cricket Stadium before the final inspection of ICC inspector Roshan Mahanani last month.

But the NSC, which has created a record of some sort by completing the construction of the Bogra Stadium in nine months, hit back at the BCB hate campaign. Not only that, the regulatory body blamed the BCB for a lost opportunity of holding at least one match at the new home of cricket.

An NSC official preferring anonymity even questioned BCB's sincerity of completing the renovation work of the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium, which the board got exclusively in October 2004.

"If I'm not mistaken the board started the renovation work in February last year at their own expenses that included ground, grand stand, media centre and shifting of a few shops. They had also appointed their nominated construction firm," said the NSC official.

"Their chosen firm was supposed to complete the renovation work before the Sri Lanka series but suddenly the board made a U-turn two months ago. And the most unfortunate thing was that a few board officials shifted the blame on us," he said.

He also refuted the claim that the NSC was not persuasive enough to sanction a grant from the government to complete the unfinished works at Mirpur.

"If the NSC can build an international standard stadium in Bogra within nine months then the completion of renovation work at Mirpur was no big deal for us. We are also well aware how popular cricket is now in our country. And honestly speaking nobody would even dare to disregard the wish of our cricket officials," he said.

Interestingly, although the board officials blamed the NSC in one breath, they were seen shouting in the January 28 executive committee meeting to get the approval of Tk one crore for the construction of a temporary media box, installation of an electronic scoreboard and other facilities at Mirpur.

The government to complete the unfinished works at Mirpur.

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## Jayawardene says sorry to Ponting

CRICINFO, undated

Mahela Jayawardene has apologised to Ricky Ponting for claiming he caught the batsman's cut shot during Sunday night's second final at Sydney.

Jayawardene was convinced he had taken the low-down chance, but Ponting, who has been trying to forge a code of fielding honesty in controversial decisions, stood his ground despite the disbelief of the Sri Lankans, and was given not out by the umpire Peter Parker.

"Their fielders in the close proximity both thought that it did carry, but I got an apology from Mahela out on the ground," Ponting, who was 57 at the time, said in the Australian.

"He came up to me a few overs later, a message must have come from inside (the dressing-room) after watching the replay and he apologised and said: 'I'm really sorry, I didn't know that it bounced short of me.'"

Ponting accepted the apology and went on to make 124 in an Australian-record partnership of 237 with Andrew Symonds. At last year's ICC captains' conference Ponting pushed for an honour system where batsmen would take the word of fielders in close catches if it is agreed on by the captains before the series.

The leaders said no and Ponting last night benefited as his side pushed the contest to a third final at Brisbane on Tuesday.

"If you saw my face, I looked at the fielder and then turned straight to the bowler and said 'I'm 100% sure that didn't carry'," Ponting said. "Otherwise I would have been off straight away."

Tom Moody, the Sri Lanka coach, said it was obvious after watching the incident on television that it was not a catch. "It was quite clear on the replay that it hit half ground, half finger," Moody said.

Symonds was also involved in an incident at the end of his 151 when

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## India punish Pakistan

**Cricket**

AFP, Lahore

Top Indian batsman Sachin Tendulkar scored a brilliant 95 as India beat Pakistan by five wickets in the third one-day international at the Gaddafi Stadium here on Monday.

Yuvraj Singh also notched 79 while Mahendra Dhoni smashed a quickfire 46-ball 72 not out as the tourists reached the 289 target with 14 deliveries to spare to take a 2-1 lead in the five-match series.

Pakistan, missing pace spearhead Shoaib Akhtar who was ruled out of the series with an ankle injury, failed to contain the powerful Indian batting, led by Tendulkar and powered by Yuvraj and Dhoni.

Tendulkar, dropped on 36 when Kamran Akmal failed to get a leg-side glance off Umar Gul, took India to 189 before cutting Abdul Razaq straight to substitute Imran Frahat at point.

Tendulkar hit 16 boundaries and a six during his 104-ball knock. Dhoni, who hit 13 fours, helped Yuvraj continue the good work during an unfinished 102-run stand for the sixth wicket which came off just 79 deliveries.

Yuvraj, who hit 82 not out in India's win in the second match at Rawalpindi, smashed ten boundaries during his 87-ball knock.

India got off to a disappointing start when Pakistan pacesman Mohammad Asif dismissed Gautam Gambhir (two) and Irfan Pathan (nought) in the third over.

Tendulkar then steadied the innings with a 70-run third wicket stand with skipper Rahul Dravid (22) and added another 105 for the fourth wicket with Yuvraj to put India on the road to victory.

Pakistan's innings was built around Malik's fifth one-day hundred. He led Pakistan's recovery from a precarious 128-5 after Pakistan were sent into bat in good bowling conditions.

The 23-year-old right-hander made a fighting 86-run stand for

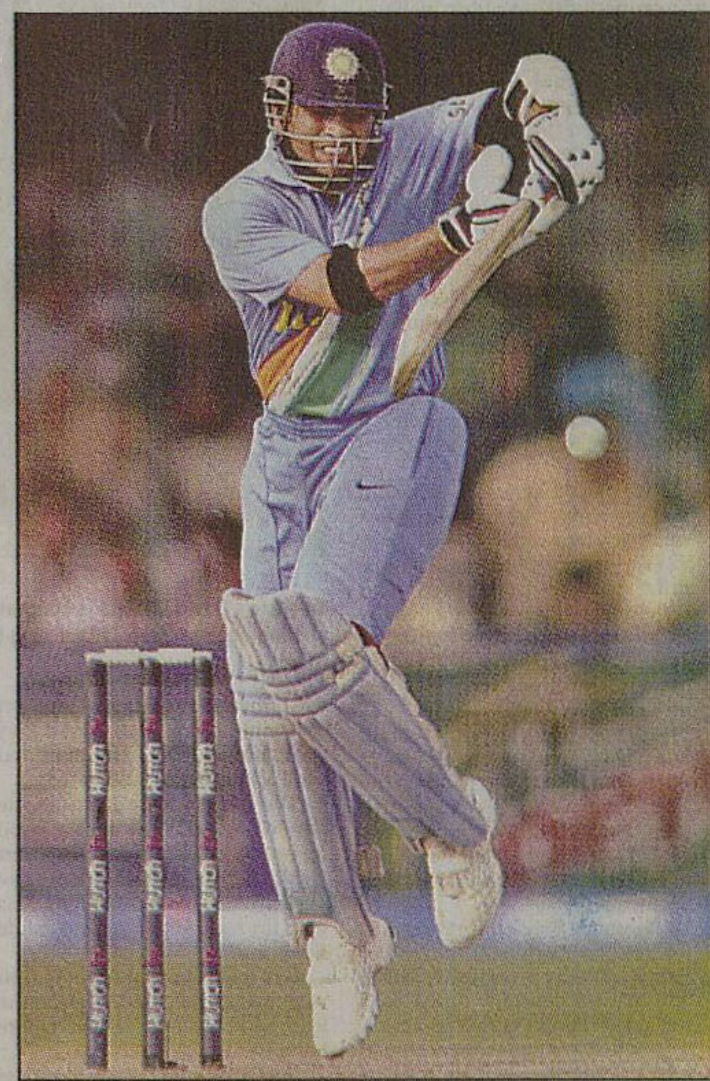
the seventh wicket with Abdul Razaq (64 not out). Malik's 120-ball knock was studded with eleven boundaries and a six.

Malik, who survived a chance on 12 when Gautam Gambhir dropped him off pacesman Sri Sreesanth, held the innings after left-arm fast bowlers Pathan (3-49)

and Rudra Pratap Singh (3-51) caused the early damage.

Pathan removed opener Salman Butt (nought) with a sharp outswinger off the second ball of the innings and then had dangerous-looking Shahid Afridi (19) in his fourth over.

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India's batting maestro Sachin Tendulkar jumps to flick a rising delivery in the third ODI against Pakistan at the Gaddafi Stadium in Lahore on Monday.

## Two transfers proposed

**Football**

SPORTS REPORTER

The leagues co-ordination committee of the Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) has suggested separate players' transfers for the Professional League and the Dhaka League.

The five-member committee headed by BFF vice-president Kazi Salahuddin, which was given the responsibility to chalk out a plan for the next season, finalised its recommendations in a meeting on Sunday night. The BFF will discuss the recommendations in its next executive committee meeting.

The committee's main concern was to set a date for the transfer as the footballers, who had last participated in the bourse 16 months earlier, have been repeatedly demanding for a transfer date.

The booters even went as far as boycotting practice at the national camp but they were calmed by the promise of a solution by mid-

February.

The committee has proposed to start the month-long Pro-League transfer after the conclusion of the AFC Challenge Cup, which will be held in Bangladesh from March 25-April 9.

"We want to start the Pro-League transfer in the middle of April and the Dhaka League transfer will begin seven days after that. Pro-League players would not be allowed to play in any other league, but if the professional clubs want to compete in the Dhaka League, they will be welcomed," said BFF deputy general secretary Manzoor Hossain Malu, also a member of the co-ordinating committee.

Even though the transfer is scheduled for April-May, footballers will have to wait five more months to kick the ball in a competition. The season will roll with the Federation Cup in July. The Pro-League and the Dhaka League -- which would be turned into a combined Senior Division League with Premier and First Division clubs of the capital -- will begin

simultaneously in September, providing the renovation of the ground at the Bangabandhu National Stadium finishes in time.

The Pro-League, with a 15-day mid-season transfer, will be played on home-and-away basis two days every week while the Senior Division will occupy the remaining days. The players would be open for transfer in the first season.

"We are looking forward to at least ten teams. But even if the number is less, we will start the Pro-League. Three clubs from Chittagong and one from Khulna sounded positive and we will invite all the ten Premier League clubs," Malu said.

"It is a new concept. We also have problems with the ground. So we will take the Federation Cup outside Dhaka. It would be an invitational tournament. There was a proposal that only professional clubs should play in the Fed Cup.

"Our duty would be to motivate the clubs to join the system. We will need their confirmation before

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## England arrive in India

**Cricket**

AFP, Mumbai

A 16-member England cricket team arrived in India on Monday for a two-month tour described by captain Michael Vaughan as the "hardest of them all".

Vaughan's men will play three Tests and seven one-day internationals in the cricket-mad country where England have not won a Test series since David Gower's tourists won 2-1 in 1985.

"I think it's one of the toughest tours around," Vaughan was quoted as saying on the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) website before the team's departure from London.

"If you look at tours around the world, I think Australia and India are the two toughest you can go on.

"With the conditions you get in India and the heat and their record on their home soil, you could even argue it's the hardest of them all."

India has lost just three of the last 25 Test series played at home on traditionally slow, dusty wickets suited for spin bowling.

Rahul Dravid's Indians are currently touring Pakistan where they lost the Test series 1-0 but defeated Sri Lanka 2-0 at home earlier in the season.



England captain Michael Vaughan upon his arrival at the airport in Mumbai on Monday.

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