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DAYS TO GO

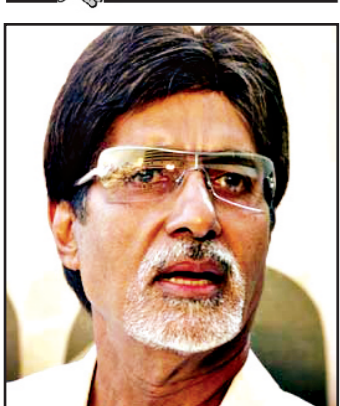
WORLD CUP SPECIAL
Star sport
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FIFA WORLD CUP GERMANY 2006

I'm not a soccer fan
"When I was young, I did not see a single soccer match. Where I came from, football wasn't played. The sport simply did not exist. Therefore there is a whole generation of Americans who are not really football fans."
AFP, Berlin

Did U Know?

The first player to score a hat-trick in a World Cup match was USA's Bart Patenaude. He achieved the feat against Paraguay in the 1930 edition.

TALK TURKEY



Amitabh Bachchan
(Indian movie legend)
"I am your die-hard fan. I was desperate to meet you."
After finally meeting up with Indian sensation Mahendra Singh Dhoni.

IHF to donate \$15,000
UNB, Dhaka

International Hockey Federation (IHF) will donate 15,000 dollars to Bangladesh Hockey Federation if Bangladesh can qualify for the 15th Asian Games after playing the qualifying round beginning here on May 11.
Bangladesh Hockey Federation general secretary Shamsul Bari disclosed this to newsmen at the SEE PAGE 18 COL 2

Unwanted break

Football
SPORTS REPORTER

With the burnout issue becoming louder in world cricket during this time, Bangladesh are facing a different problem with the fact that they have to take a one-year break to resume their Test campaign.
After completion of the two-match Test series against mighty Australia at home last month, Bangladesh captain Habibur Bashar had expressed his utter frustration over the long break and he still believes that it could be a big problem for his side.
As per ICC's (International Cricket Council) six-year future tour programme (FTP) the Tigers will restart their Test campaign against India at home in May next year and by this time they will play only one-day internationals including the ICC Champions Trophy and the World Cup.
"A lot of star players are complaining against too much cricket right at the moment but we are not in a position to join the party. Rather the long break in Test cricket is a real concern for us. I think it is always good for an improving side like

Bangladesh to play as much Test cricket as possible," said Bashar on Sunday.
"It is really a frustrating situation for us because we have just gone around to showing our gradual improvement in this level. We were just grasping over the finer points of Test cricket which will definitely be hampered when we resume the campaign after a year," he added.
The question could be raised whether Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) is concerned about the seriousness of the matter.
Reliable sources however said that BCB has sent a proposal to West Indies Cricket Board (WICB) to visit Bangladesh before their away series against Pakistan this year but the WICB was yet to respond to Bangladesh's desire.
When contacted BCB's chief executive officer Mahmudur Rahman admitted that they sent a proposal to WICB but it was only for a five-match one-day series.
"It is true that we expressed our desire to play some one-day matches against West Indies and we are hopeful about a positive response from them. Actually we are focusing on one-day cricket right at the moment because of the upcoming Champions Trophy and

next years World Cup," informed Rahman.
But he said that the board is looking for a slot to minimise the gap in Test cricket.
"The BCB high-ups have already talked about the matter and we are really concerned about the long-break in Test cricket. But finding a slot is a real problem. We are working to find a slot for Bangladesh to play at least one Test series within the break," he added.
While the authorities have emphasised the focus on the one-day game right at the moment, the 33-year old Bangladesh skipper Bashar said that their main challenge lies in the longer-version game.
"Yes, there is lot of one-day cricket in the pipeline for us but you all know Test cricket is a totally different ball game. Even I believe that we can't make up the loss by playing four-day and National Cricket League matches during that time. No doubt, all kind of matches are important for us but everybody should understand that our main challenge lies in Test cricket," he added.

Warne at it again!

Cricket
AFP, London

Australian cricket legend Shane Warne, no stranger to off-field shenanigans, was caught out again on Sunday when he was pictured in a British newspaper allegedly romping with a pair of models.
The News of the World tabloid published pictures of Warne standing in his underpants while a blonde and a brunette, both topless, fooled around with a blow-up sex toy.
The weekly tabloid also ran explicit text messages allegedly from the spin bowling ace, who is facing an expensive divorce battle with his wife Simone.
The threesome allegedly happened on Thursday night in a plush London flat—before the 36-year-old raked up some more impressive figures the following morning, taking seven for 99 against Middlesex, his

best performance yet for Hampshire.
"I've known him for years but nothing happened before because I knew he was married," said Coralie Eichholz, the New Zealand-born brunette.
"But since his split he's been texting like mad. He even sent me one during a match."
Blonde television presenter Emma Kearney, also 25, said Warne had likewise bowled her over.
The leg spinner has taken responsibility for the failure of his marriage which has been blamed on a string of dalliances with young women which reportedly occurred since he moved to England to play county cricket last year.
Meanwhile, Warne has said it is possible he could still be a Test match cricketer when Australia return to England for the 2009 Ashes series.
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Quiet debut for Ashraful

Cricket
SPORTS REPORTER

Mohammad Ashraful made an inauspicious debut at English club side Rainhill Cricket Club in the Merseyside and Southport Cricket Alliance First Division at the club ground on Saturday, according to the club's website.
Coming into bat against Norley Cricket Club, the out of sorts batsman from Dhaka, made just 18 runs before falling to a brilliant catch. He also bowled ten overs and took a wicket, giving away 30 runs.
Ashraful left for Dhaka last week to play club cricket in England for the first time in his career.
He had an indifferent home season this year when he was successful against the Sri Lankans, against whom he scored a Test hundred as well as a couple of half-centuries but failed to score against Australia, much highlighted by poor shots and cries of mental fatigue.



A young supporter shows Ronaldinho his trademark gesture before the Primera Liga match against Espanyol at Nou Camp on Saturday. PHOTO: AP

Of a dog and dribble

Cricket
AP, Sao Paulo

He learned his first moves with the help of a mixed-breed dog named Bombom. Today he is the best soccer player in the world, praised by Pele and Diego Maradona.
All eyes will be on Ronaldinho when the 2006 World Cup begins next month.
No other player will attract as much attention as the Brazilian midfielder during the month long tournament in Germany—thanks to his nifty skills and dazzling moves, and to Bombom.
"He loved to play with me," Ronaldinho said. "When all my friends got bored, I would go play with him. We would stay battling for the ball all day. I had to work

hard on my moves to keep him from getting the ball."
Bombom—and a soccer ball—were by Ronaldinho's side at all times as he grew up in a poor family in the southern Brazilian city of Porto Alegre, at a time when he didn't even dream of playing in a World Cup.
"We were inseparable, he was my great companion," Ronaldinho said of Bombom, which means "chocolate candy" in Portuguese.
When Bombom wasn't available, Ronaldinho would find other opponents to test his skills.
"When it was raining, I would stay inside the house dribbling past chairs and tables," he said. "I always spent most of my time as a kid with a soccer ball. That helped me become good at it."
Now 26 and in his prime, Ronaldinho will enter the World Cup as the tournament's biggest star.

He has won the last two FIFA player of the year awards, and has led FC Barcelona to two consecutive Spanish league titles and to the Champions League final.
Few dispute his status as the best player in the world.
Maradona said recently that Ronaldinho is in a different class from other players, that it's "fun to watch him play."
Pele celebrates his countryman just as highly, saying Ronaldinho is the player who gives fans "the most joy."
Ronaldinho enchants everyone with his impressive skills and nifty tricks—from the no-look pass to the "elastic" dribble, in which he fakes moving the ball in one direction and suddenly pulls it back the other way.
"I'm always trying to invent new things," he said recently. "But my goal is to win the World Cup again. I really don't care about giving a

show or scoring a lot of goals."
Ronaldinho will be the focal point as the Brazilians go for a second consecutive world title—and sixth overall. No other country has more than three.
He was a member of the squad that won the 2002 World Cup in Japan and South Korea, playing five matches and scoring two goals, including a spectacular free kick against England in the quarterfinals.
It was Ronaldinho's first World Cup, before he moved to Barcelona and into the elite of world soccer. He knows everyone will be expecting more from him.
"It's normal, everyone's responsibility has increased because Brazil is the defending champion," Ronaldinho said.
Ronaldinho has 46 goals in 86 matches in Brazil's jersey, including a record 16 with the country's pre-Olympic team.
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Double-double for Bayern

Football
AFP, Kaiserslautern

Bayern Munich clinched their 20th German title on Saturday after a 1-1 draw with Kaiserslautern as they became the first team to win the league and cup double in consecutive seasons.
Victory would have guaranteed Bayern the title but as it turned out their result proved irrelevant as second-placed SV Hamburg lost 4-2 against ten-man Hertha Berlin leaving them six points behind Bayern heading into the final game of the season.
It was Bayern's sixth league title in eight seasons and added to their recent 1-0 cup final triumph over Eintracht Frankfurt.
"It was difficult but we have a lot of experience in title battles and

used it," explained captain Oliver Kahn.
"We have dominated the league this season and deserve to win the title. You need to come up with the big points at the right time and we did that."
Felix Magath's Bayern won the title with a 4-0 win at Kaiserslautern last season and their travelling fans were hoping for a repeat but the champions were given a shock on 26 minutes when they fell behind.
Michael Ballack, back from suspension, surrendered possession and the ball broke to Turkish international Halli Altintop who netted his 19th goal of the season with a scuffed chip that crept over goalkeeper Oliver Kahn.
Kaiserslautern then hit the crossbar and with Hamburg 2-1 up against Hertha the title race looked set to go down to the final day of the season.
Hamburg's loss against Hertha

meant they must win their final match to secure second and direct entry to the Champions League.
"Congratulations to Bayern on their title win," said Hamburg coach Thomas Doll. "They were the best team and deserved to finish top. We just need to focus on our achieving our aims now."
Werder Bremen can steal second spot after moving one point behind Hamburg after a 6-0 demolition of FC Cologne on Saturday.
Another twist sees Bremen travel to Hamburg on the final day of the season.
"We are focused for the final game against Hamburg and go there to win," said Bremen coach Thomas Schaaf.
German international Miroslav Klose scored twice to take his season's tally to 24 and he is on course
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Hamburg's loss against Hertha

Goals galore in school soccer

Cricket
SPORTS REPORTER

Faridpur High School sunk Rajoir Gopalganj KJS Pilot High School by 11-0 goals in the bangalink tiger trophy National School Football Championship at the Faridpur Stadium yesterday.
In the day's other match at the same venue, Shariatpur Shaheed Samad High School beat Madaripur Public Institute by 3-1 goals.
At the Nilphamari Stadium, Gaibandha Islamia High School thrashed Chaparhat High School of Lalmonirhat by 7-0 goals while Nilphamari Laxmanpur High School beat Rangpur Zilla School by 3-2 goals.
At the Pabna Stadium, Jhenidha Baliadanga MS Secondary School earned an emphatic 5-1 victory
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Smith steers SA home

Cricket
AFP, Johannesburg

Graeme Smith hit his second half-century of a low-scoring match as South Africa beat New Zealand by four wickets on the third day of the third and final Test against New Zealand at the Wanderers Stadium Sunday.
South Africa needed only 47.3 overs to reach a victory target of 217 and clinch a 2-0 series win, which takes them to fifth place on the International Cricket Council's ranking list, swopping positions with New Zealand.
South Africa had to overcome stubborn resistance by New Zealand's lower order batsmen before they could start their run chase.
It took South Africa 95 minutes to take the last four New Zealand

wickets, with the left-handed Daniel Vettori hitting 60 as the Black Caps added 69 runs to their overnight total of 214 for six.
Smith and Boeta Dippenaar batted aggressively, putting on 69 in the first 14 overs before Dippenaar was caught behind off Chris Martin. Smith went on to make 68 off 80 balls with nine fours and a six.
After a poor season in which he had not made a half-century in eight previous Tests, Smith made 63 in the first innings in a match which yielded only four scores over 50.
Smith was clearly intent on finishing the match with two days to spare, reaching his fifty off 72 balls.
Hashim Amla and Jacques Kallis both fell shortly before tea, while AB de Villiers was bowled by Franklin soon after the interval to give New Zealand a glimmer of

hope.
But Ashwell Prince and Shaun Pollock took South Africa through to only their second win in nine Tests in an extended season. They lost five out of six Tests against Australia before taking on New Zealand.
Vettori and Jacob Oram took their seventh wicket stand to 49 before Oram mistimed a drive against Dale Steyn and was caught by Dippenaar diving forward at mid-off.
James Franklin provided more frustration for the bowlers as he and Vettori added 44 for the eighth wicket before the innings ended in a rush, with the last three wickets falling for no runs in six balls.
Chris Martin was out first ball when he paddled a bouncer from Hall to Amla at backward square leg.
South Africa won the first Test in
SEE PAGE 18 COL 5



Bayern Munich players celebrate their second successive Bundesliga title triumph at Kaiserslautern on Saturday. They confirmed the championship with a match in hand. PHOTO: AFP

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