

## BCB Academy leaves for Pakistan today

SPORTS REPORTER

With an aim to produce players for the national side, the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) National Cricket Academy team leaves Dhaka today for Pakistan.

Promising left-handed batsman Mehrob Hossain, also an useful left-arm spinner, will lead the team in two four-day and three one-day matches against the Pakistan Academy side.

The focus will definitely be on the captain as the national selectors have already spotted him as a future prospect for the country, especially after his recent impressive performances with Bangladesh in Zimbabwe.

"This is a very good opportunity for the young prospects to prove their prowess. We have no idea about our opponents but my past experience suggests that Pakistan have a very good supply of young talents. Our team will definitely face a quality pace attack during the tour," said team operations manager Khaled Mahmud.

"Our main target is to establish the academy side as a genuine second string team after the national side," the former national skipper added.

BCB made a late change in the 14-member squad as off-spinner Rezaul Islam Rajan was included in place of ailing Mahmudullah Riyadh, who has been diagnosed with dengue fever.

The BCB side will play their first four-dayer in Karachi from August 17 and the second and final four-dayer will take place in Multan from August 23.

The first one-day match will be held on August 27 at the Sheikhpura Cricket Stadium followed by the second one-dayer on August 31 at the Jinnah Stadium in Sialkot and third one-dayer on September 2 at the Bagh-e-Jinnah Stadium in Lahore.

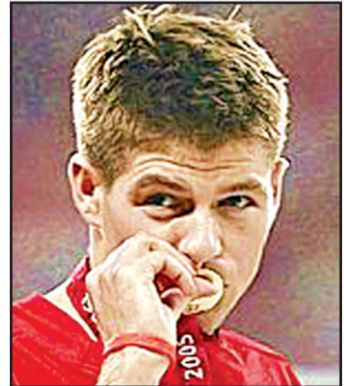
### SQUAD

Mehrob Hossain (captain), Nazmul Hossain, Zahirul Islam, Uttam Sarker, Marshall Ayub, Nadif Chowdhury, Sahagir Hossain, Rezaul Islam Rajan, Musharraf Rubel, Suhrawardy Shuvo, Ziaur Rahman, Shafaq Al Jabir, Dollar Mahmud and Nazmul Hossain.



## Did U Know?

The first American chess tournament was held in New York in 1843.



Steven Gerrard (England star midfielder)

"We are not as good as we think we are. England were guilty of over-confidence. Me and the other players constantly claimed we could win the World Cup -- it was stupid."



**BTV & Channel 1**  
Kenya v Bangladesh  
Third ODI  
Live from 1:00 pm

**TEN Sports**  
Sri Lanka v South Africa  
First ODI  
Live from 3:00 pm

# Festival kicks off quietly



AL MUSABBIR SADI from Colombo

While rain, cricket and a bomb-blast that killed at least seven people in the heart of capital Colombo yesterday gripped Sri Lanka, the islanders' preparation for another big yet less glamorous event -- the South Asian (SA) Games -- took a backseat.

As the final bout of the monsoon kept washing the city on the coast of the Indian Ocean, the news of the terrorist attack within one kilometre of President Mahinda Rajapaksa's residence only served to increase the security cordon around the hotel of the three cricket teams -- India, South Africa and hosts Sri Lanka.

But despite the bomb blast and

rain that has been a part and parcel in Lankan life, things moved on with hushed excitement.

Although roads were blocked immediately after the terror attack that targeted Pakistan's ambassador Bashir Wali Mohamed, the shock waves hardly reached other cities.

Even a foreign journalist covering the tri-nation cricket series came to know about the bomb-blast from Indian great Sachin Tendulkar while interviewing him ahead of the tournament opener.

The blast understandably cast a shadow over the tri-nation cricket tournament, but a less noticeable SA Games -- featuring seven Saarc nations and Afghanistan -- kicked off without a hiccup yesterday with three football matches.

The Games of more than 100 million people might not have drawn much attention, but the organisers were working round the clock in a bid to make the gala

opening ceremony a success and welcome about 4,000 foreign guests, including athletes.

The biennial event will be officially launched on August 18 at the Sugathadasa Stadium, the 1962-built venue named after former sports minister and chairman of National Olympic Committee Sugathadasa, which holds both football and athletics.

Thousands of school students were busy rehearsing with musical instruments while people were providing finishing touches to the renovation work at the Sugathadasa Indoor Stadium, where 11 events out of 20 will be hosted. It was originally built in 1991 when Sri Lanka hosted the then SAF Games for the first time. Although since renamed, people all around are still calling it the SAF Games.

The only new venue built for the Games is the Walisara Navy Shooting Range on the outskirts of the city.



Boys rehearsing for the opening ceremony of the South Asian Games outside the main entrance at the Sugathadasa Stadium in Colombo yesterday.

## Pakir renews love affair



AL MUSABBIR SADI from Colombo

Pakir Ali, a household name in Bangladesh in the 80s and early 90s, volunteered to become the liaison officer of the Bangladesh football team as he felt he has found a piece of his second home back for a while.

The former Sri Lankan international, arguably the best centre-back to grace football in Bangladesh while playing for Abahani, recalled the fond memories in a country where he played his game for more than a decade.

"When a friend from the football association called me, I told him I wanted to be with the Bangladesh team. And I am happy to be with them," Pakir Ali told this reporter at the lobby of the TransAsia Hotel yesterday.

"Football seems to have lost its popularity in Bangladesh as I hear from friends over there. It's really pathetic because it was a passion when I played, with great players."

the 52-year-old recalled. Pakir, who left Abahani to become coach-cum-player for Fakirerpool for a season before playing in the Maldives League, was famous for his long hair but sports a crew-cut these days.

"I am ageing. But first, I had to cut my hair due to the Maldives sports minister's orders. No one was



PAKIR ALI

allowed to have long hair, said Pakir, who coached Maldives club Eagles before returning home this year to lead Sri Lankan Premiership side Ratnam SC to win the FA Cup.

"I want to be with football," said Pakir who thinks football, in general, has been improving in the region.

"When we played, footballers had brilliant individual skill. But now, tactics and teamwork is more important. And as a team game, most of the teams have improved."

Pakir Ali, who coached Abahani and Mohammedan in the mid 90s, said he would return to Dhaka if any team invites him because coaching in Sri Lanka is enough for decent living but does not make a man rich.

"Most of my colleagues like Premal and Chandrasiri have turned into businessmen after quitting the game, but I am committed totally to football."

He has preserved all his mementos from Dhaka including paper cuttings, a best player award and medals and has even taken the initiative to organize veterans' football.

"I have so many fond memories of Dhaka but one thing that still bothers me is the incident when four footballers including (Kazi) Salahuddin was jailed for violence in a match against Mohammedan. It is a pity that a great footballer like him was treated this way. That can't happen here."

## 'Pilot error caused crash'



AFP, Cape Town

A South African judge Monday ruled that pilot negligence led to a 2002 plane crash which killed fallen cricketer icon Hansie Cronje, whose career ended after a match-fixing scandal.

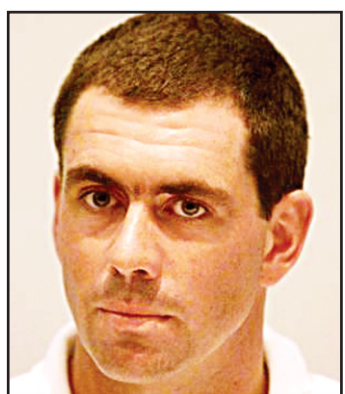
The two pilots who also perished in the crash failed to follow procedures for a "missed landing approach", Cape Town High Court Judge Siraj Desai said at the conclusion of an inquest into the crash.

"The complacency of the pilot in command was surprising and... the co-pilot failed under the circumstances to do what a reasonable pilot would have done," Desai said.

"It is the court's view that the death of the deceased Wessel Johannes (Hansie) Cronje was

brought about by an act or omission prima facie amounting to an offence on the part of pilots (Willie Meyer, 69, and Ian Noakes, 50)."

Cronje, a former national cricket captain and sporting ambassador,



HANSIE CRONJE

died at the age of 32 when a light plane in which he was travelling crashed into mountains near the coastal town of George in bad weather on June 1, 2002.

An earlier inquiry by South Africa's Civil Aviation Authority said the crash was the result of pilot error, bad weather and technical defects in the Hawker Siddeley 748.

At the time of his death, Cronje was facing possible criminal charges after having confessed before a commission of inquiry to accepting money from bookmakers and gamblers during his tenure as skipper.

The inquiry, chaired by a judge, heard that he had offered money to two teammates, Henry Williams and Herschelle Gibbs, to under-perform in one-day internationals.

Cronje consistently denied having fixed any matches, and

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Bangladesh football team players stretch before their training session ahead of their AFC Asian Cup qualifying round match against Qatar at the MA Aziz Stadium on Monday.

## Qatar booters arrive today

SPORTS REPORTER

Qatar football team arrive in Chittagong today to play their AFC Asia Cup qualifying round match against Bangladesh at the MA Aziz Stadium tomorrow.

The formidable Asian side dominate the Group F table with maximum six points following their 3-0 success against Hong Kong and 2-0 victory over Uzbekistan while non-hoppers Bangladesh, who have already reached the port city on Sunday, lost both their matches against the same opponents.

The match is scheduled to start at 4pm with state-run BTV beaming live coverage.

Bangladesh will play their away match on September 6 while their remaining two home matches against Uzbekistan and Hong Kong will be held on October 11 and November 15 respectively.

## Zia ensures full success

SPORTS REPORTER

Grand Master Ziaur Rahman became unbeaten champion in the Open FIDE Rating Chess Tournament at the Bangladesh Chess Federation conference room yesterday.

Zia and International Master Enamul Hossain Rajib both finished on same eight points after the ninth and final round but the former clinched the title on progressive score.

The lone GM in the competition Zia drew his last board against IM Abdullah Al Rakib, while Rajib beat Shakil.

Rakib, FM Syed Mahfuzur Rahman Emon and Sohel Chowdhury bagged 7.5 points each to be placed 3rd to 5th respectively.

In the day's other last round matches, Emon beat Javed, Sohel outplayed Hasan, Taibur beat Feroz, Maleq defeated Sujon, Delwar blanked Arman, Robin beat Dinayet, Main defeated Tariq, Uten beat Lavlu while Robin defeated Momin.

A total of 166 players took part in the nine-round Swiss League system meet.

## Rained off opener today

AFP, Colombo

Bad weather washed out the opening match of the limited-overs tri-series between South Africa and Sri Lanka here on Monday.

The match will be played on Tuesday, weather permitting, as a reserve day has been kept aside for all seven matches of the series also featuring India.

A heavy thunderstorm hit the Sri Lankan capital early Monday and drenched the Premadasa stadium, where the day-night international was due to be played.

It stopped raining by noon, but another wet spell just before the scheduled start at 2:30 pm (0900 GMT) prompted match referee Chris Broad of England to call off the game.

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## Tri-series in jeopardy



AFP, Colombo

The fate of the limited-overs tri-series between India, South Africa and hosts Sri Lanka hung in the balance following a blast in Colombo on Monday which killed seven people.

South Africa were apprehensive about staying on in the Sri Lankan capital despite assurances from the cricket authorities here that the tri-series should go ahead with tighter security for the teams.

A final decision will be taken on Tuesday morning after Sri Lanka Cricket (SLC) officials hold further talks with the Indian and South African team managements.

"The meeting on Tuesday will decide if the tri-series will go ahead," South African coach Mickey Arthur told reporters at the team hotel.

The blast on Monday afternoon in the same area where the teams' hotels are located targeted Pakistan's ambassador Bashir Wali Mohamed.

The ambassador was driving through the area when the blast occurred, police said, adding that a Sri Lankan military vehicle escorting him was hit by the explosion.

Four commandos guarding the diplomat were killed instantly and the other three victims were bystanders. Eight others were wounded and taken to hospital.

It was the first time in 21 years that a foreigner had been targeted in an attack in Sri Lanka's three-decades-old separatist campaign.

The attack came four days after a powerful car bomb attack on a government Tamil politician in Colombo. The politician escaped but his bodyguard and two bystanders were killed.

Arthur said his team was "seriously worried and uncomfortable" despite being assured by local cricket authorities of their safety.

"They tried to explain how a cricket event or the teams were least likely to be targeted," Arthur said.

"But this was quite close to home and we're pretty worried. It's fair to say that if we hadn't been playing today (Monday), a lot of our boys might have been over at Liberty Plaza (the shopping arcade near the blast site).

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Mashrafe Bin Mortaza (R) and Abdur Razzak are unable to hide their happiness inside the dressing-room after taking Bangladesh to victory in the second one-day international against Kenya at the Nairobi Gymkhana ground on Sunday.

## Asif, Naved Eng-bound

REUTERS, Karachi

Pakistan bowlers Mohammad Asif and Navedul Hasan have been cleared to join the tour squad in England and could be considered for the final Test at The Oval starting on Thursday, chief selector Wasim Bari said on Monday.

Bari told Reuters that both would leave for England on Monday after the team management agreed they should join the team.

Asif had returned home before the first Test at Lord's with an elbow injury while Naved was ruled out with a groin problem.

Asif, who has taken 25 wickets in five Tests, was initially scheduled to leave earlier for England but was held back after the team management said they did not require him for the Oval Test.

But a board official said they had now had a change of mind.

The absence of Asif, Naved and fast bowler Shoaib Akhtar was felt by Pakistan which lost the second and third Tests by big margins.

"Naved bowled eight overs on Sunday under the supervision of

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