

The day after...

From Nizamuddin Ahmed

LONDON, June 1: The day after is always so wonderful. You can immerse in the depths of a mushy armchair and sip on a warm cup of brewed tea. You are aromatically transported to a realm thousands of miles away, where the children are about to go out to play.

Even the silence of an English countryside, that is often so killing, is so pleasant the day after. This morning you can hear clearly the drumbeats of joy in your heart. Blended in the orchestra your soul is the music of a nation that has achieved the day before.

This morning even the sun is as bright and sweet as that in Magh.

For today there cannot be a Bangalee in England who is not thinking of home. Not of the terraced houses in East London, nor of the run-down dwellings in the Black Country. Or of a pretty English cottage at the threshold of the tranquil countryside.

Today the mind rushes across the North Sea, over the Alps, touching the Mediterranean, galloping over the Arab sands, resting for a moment by the Arabian sea, hurdling over India to my abode, shouting in rapture, 'Ma! I am home!'

The trill in her voice tells me she already knows.

Suddenly with a quiver you realise that indeed the whole world knows.

The English commentator at the Northampton County Cricket ground yesterday comes into focus. He is going ecstatic on his mouthpiece as he relays in intensely rapid English to his radio listeners: This is fantastic stuff from Bangladesh. You can't believe what they are doing. They have reduced Pakistan to 29 for four. The great batsmen, they have all gone. Pakistan in sorts of trouble as 125 million back in Bangladesh remain glued to their TVs and

radio sets to hear what a marvellous day their boys are having out there. It's all happening here. And there could be more.

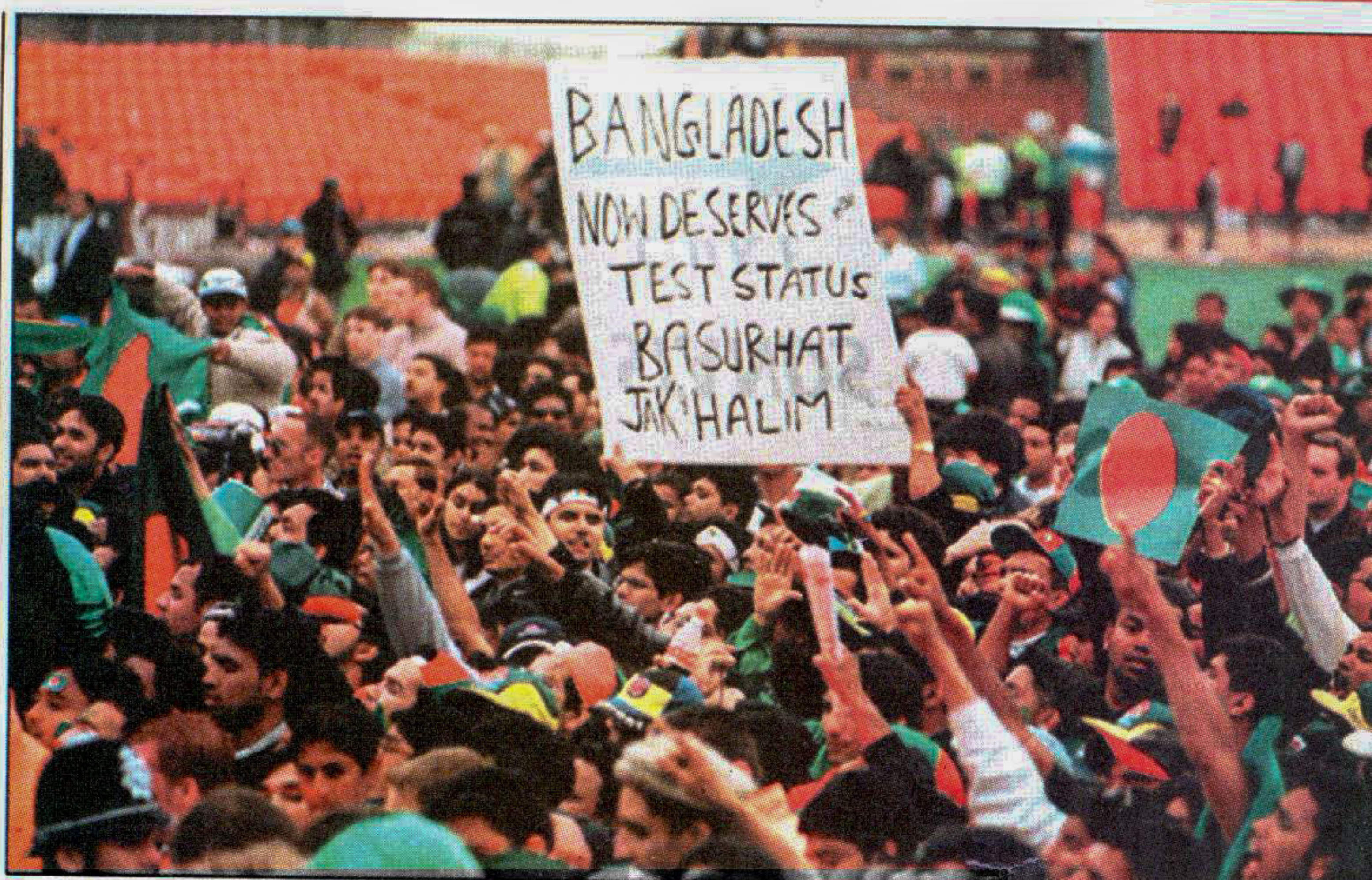
You could almost cry.

It's a wonderful feeling to have beaten Pakistan in cricket. The thought is simply out of this world. Unimaginable before the World Cup, unbelievable on the morning of the match, questionable even when they were seven wickets down, clouded even with their run-rate climbing to eleven an over. A few daredevils have toyed with the idea, only to be put off by abject insolence of those who would not think twice to wave the national flag of another country at a cricket match. They say, it is love of the game. Allow me to say, it is nonsense.

We have defeated practically the best side in the world. Imagine the ruthless manner in which they crushed in the last few months some of the other great Test-playing sides. Contemplate the ease with which they were winning hands-down trophy after trophy, compelling bookies to shorten the odds. Well, at sundown yesterday we had crushed them. Although not recommended, anyone who would have dared to put one hundred pounds on Bangladesh before yesterday's match would have been a very rich man this morning with fifty times that in his pocket. Happier he may not have been for happiness this morning is franchised only to the Bangalee.

Yesterday, we almost did nothing wrong. We could not because we were essaying the downfall of one of the best cricketing sides in history. Even had we lost, we would have perhaps recalled this morning Aminul Islam's dismissal with contempt. Khaled Mahmud's missed run-out attempt and left-handed Mohammed Rafique's return dropped catch on his right.

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NOW WE CAN AFFORD TO DREAM: Bangladesh fans show a placard demanding Test status after the historic triumph over Pakistan at Northampton on May 31. — AFP photo

Minadad BCB's next man?

LONDON, June 1: Bangladesh cricket authorities are seeking to replace sacked coach Gordon Greenidge with Javed Miandad, who quit as Pakistan's coach just before the World Cup.

The Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) has already approached Miandad and a meeting to discuss the job will take place next month, a Board official told The Associated Press.

"Miandad is one of the most shrewd cricketing brains in Asia and we shall be delighted if he accepts the offer to coach Bangladesh," the official said Tuesday.

Greenidge was given notice of the termination of his contract on the eve of Bangladesh's shock 62-run win over Pakistan on Monday in the last first-round game of the World Cup.

The BCB official rejected speculation that Miandad had already accepted Bangladesh's offer and Greenidge was sacked only after getting a commitment from Miandad.

"No, Miandad hasn't yet accepted the proposal, but we are hopeful," he said.

Bangladesh's captain Aminul Islam said he had heard that Miandad was being hired as the new coach.

"I've heard about him replacing Greenidge but nothing

more," Islam said. "Miandad is one of Asian cricket's biggest all-time stars and will surely provide us a big boost if he comes in as our coach."

"If the board seeks my opinion I'll say that we go for him," Islam said. Greenidge had played a significant role in shaping the team and the players shared their biggest triumph with him.

The BCB moved to end Greenidge's tenure because officials were convinced that the former West Indies opener had lost interest in the job.

Board president Saber Hussain Chowdhury said Greenidge will keep his main job as the BCB's coaching director but would no longer be associated with the team.

His coaching contract was due to expire on June 30. Chowdhury said the AP that a decision on a new coach will

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LONDON, June 1: Arjuna Ranatunga, captain of deposed World Cup holders Sri Lanka, said today that the major Test-playing nations should do more to help cricket's minnows, reports AFP.

Kenya and Bangladesh need to start playing against England and the top countries if they are going to expand and develop the

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A LOCAL IDOL AT LAST: Fans displaying posters of Bangladesh opener Mehrab Hossain at the Dhaka University campus yesterday. — Star photo by Anisur Rahman.

A bridge too far

LONDON, June 1 (Reuters): During the 1996 World Cup on the sub-continent Ali Bacher stressed the need to reduce the "huge imbalance" between the Test-playing countries and the associate members of the International Cricket Council (ICC).

Three years on, results in the group stage of the 1999 tournament which was completed on Monday reflect a significant gap still exists, with Bangladesh alone showing the potential to close it.

South African cricket chief Bacher's warning at the last World Cup came after ICC associate members Kenya, the United Arab Emirates and the Netherlands had an overall record between them of just two wins and 13 defeats.

Kenya pulled off one of those victories, famously toppling West Indies by 73 runs. But in the current tournament they lost all five Group A matches and finished bottom of the six-team standings, a fate suffered by fellow qualifiers Scotland in Group B.

It was left to Bangladesh to present the strongest case for

the three associate members here this time when they pulled off the biggest upset of the event with a 62-run victory on Monday over Pakistan, winners of their previous four games.

Bangladesh believe their stunning success in the last group game at Northampton could act as a springboard in their attempt to join the Test-playing elite.

Captain Aminul Islam said: "I think because of this victory the structure will change in Bangladesh. We have really to get the structure right."

The shortage of first-class cricket, let alone insufficient exposure in the international arena, was a handicap for both the Scots on their World Cup debut and the Kenyans.

There was talent in both sides. Pace howling all-rounder Gavin Hamilton consistently shone like a beacon for Scotland, at the same time showing England, for whom he is also eligible, what they might have missed.

Kenya opener Ravindu Shah carried his impressive form in

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A SIGHT TO BEHOLD: Ecstatic Bangladesh supporters invading the pitch after the fall of the last Pakistani wicket. — AFP photo

British media view

LONDON, June 1: Bangladesh cricket team today got wide coverage in the British press after Monday's remarkable and historic win against former world champions Pakistan at Northampton, reports BSS.

All the dailies gave extensive coverage to the match with special tributes to Bangladesh.

The Independent gave an 8-column headline "Bangladesh enjoy their greatest day."

The daily reported, "They were dancing in the streets of Dhaka last night — and Wantage Road at Northampton, was pretty lively, too."

As Bangladesh's irrepressibly ebullient followers celebrated what could reasonably be called the greatest day in the country's history since gaining independence from Pakistan in 1971.

"Previous victories over Kenya, to win the ICC Trophy, and Scotland last week were left in the shade by this achievement given the nature and stature of the opposition."

Regarding Pakistan's pace attack, The Independent said, "The sight of Shoaib Akhtar and Waqar Younis roaring in at the young Bangladeshi openers on a pitch offering early lift and bounce brought to mind the worlds 'lambs' and 'slaughters'."

But the lambs first grunted in defiance, then roared. Although Shoaib conceded only 11 runs in his first spell of five overs, Waqar — in his first appearance of the tournament — was more wayward, and Shahriar Hossain grew visibly in confidence after smacking him for successive boundaries."

The Times, in its six-column coverage, reported, "East is east and west is west and never the

twain shall meet." Kipling wrote, but he never envisaged the day when two countries called Pakistan and Bangladesh would play cricket against each other in a corner of England that was once of football field and produce one of the greatest upsets in the history of the World Cup.

"A win for Bangladesh, or East Pakistan as they were before emancipating themselves from their overpowering rulers in West Pakistan, triggered the most thrilling celebrations since they achieved independence in 1971," the leading English daily reported.

"And that was only in front of the pavilion at the county ground, goodness knows what the reaction was on the streets of Dhaka and Chittagong, let alone Karachi, Lahore, Islamabad."

The daily reported Wasim Akram's comments: "They (Bangladesh) just had a good day and we had a bad day. I am happy that we lost to our brothers, who will be ready for Test status in another year or so. I think we should praise them and whatever mistakes we made today, we will try to put right in the future."

The three-column story of the Daily Telegraph said, "The mantle of invincibility which Pakistan wore following four straight wins was torn from their shoulders as Bangladesh completed the biggest shock of this World Cup and claimed their first victory over a Test-playing nation."

"It was, indeed, a rather one-sided contest but it was Bangladesh who dominated and Pakistan, already assured of first place in Group B, looked like a like side already packed



THE END: Khaled Mashud, the Bangladesh wicketkeeper, effects the run out of the last Pakistan batsman on May 31. — AFP photo

Two sides of Karachi

KARACHI, June 1 (AFP/UNB): Cricket fans here were disgruntled Tuesday over Pakistan's humiliating defeat against Bangladesh in the World Cup, while thousands of Bangladeshi settlers celebrated their victory in all-night revelries.

Slogan-chanting Bangladeshis danced in Karachi's slums and distributed sweets while Pakistani cricket fans were seen venting their anger, some smashing tea cups at roadside hotels, witnesses said.

About 1.5 million Bangladeshis, mostly illegal immigrants, reside in this port city and work as house servants, maids, vendors and fishermen.

"A great victory has given us an identity here. We were known as fishermen but now we will be considered as a cricketing nation which has defeated the most powerful team in the world," said 29-year-old Meezan-ur Rehman.

"We congratulated our friends and families and we will send them gifts," he said.

"Our team has saved us from humiliation," said another Bangladeshi, Abdur Razzaq, saying the team had pulled off "a giant killing act."

Bangladesh beat Pakistan by 62 runs in the Group B match on Monday, leaving the losing side's fans shocked and disgruntled.

"How can they do it? They entered the Super Six with a bad taste," Pakistan fan Razi-ul Hasan said.

"Something has been cooked up. Match fixing or some dispute between the players. How the hell we can lose to such a team after defeating the West Indies, Australia and New Zealand," Hasan said in disbelief.

"They should learn a lesson not to relax in the future," another fan Ahmed Shah said.

However, former Test cricketer Iqbal Qasim credited Bangladesh for its "deserving" victory. "Bangladesh proved that dedication, hardwork and confidence could bring victory against any team," Qasim said.

As soon as Bangladesh earned their greatest victory in sports many people phoned to daily Dawn, Karachi, to express their deep anguish.

The prestigious daily carried a report today with reaction from people of different walks of life reflecting frustration of fans as Pakistan met the humiliating defeat after becoming Group B champions in the World Cup.

Not to surprise, it said, several of the callers suspected that the match was a fixed one and there might be something fishy.

The heads of the followers of the game were down and several arguments were being given in support of the idea that it was a bad omen for Pakistan for regaining the coveted trophy, Dawn reported.

According to the Dawn, 69-year-old Abdul Rauf Subhani was so disturbed and upset that he minced no words in saying that Pakistan team should be thrown in river Thames.

"They don't need to come back and we don't want to listen to any excuses. The penalty for losing to Bangladesh is that they all should be drowned in River Thames," he said.

Javed Bukhari who works in a private firm remarked: "Our heads are down and the team is responsible for leaving us humiliated. Defeat is part of the game but losing to Bangladesh is totally unacceptable. Wasim Akram owes an explanation to the country."

Rehan Mirza, a 54-year-old businessman, said: "The trend set by the Pakistanis in the

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Cricket means Asia

NORTHAMPTON, England, June 1 (Reuters): Bangladesh confirmed the power base of one-day cricket is now firmly entrenched in Asia with their stunning World Cup victory over Pakistan on Monday.

India's victory over West Indies in the 1983 World Cup final generated an explosion of one-day cricket in India and Pakistan.

The present Indian captain Mohammad Azharuddin, now 36, has spent around 10 months of his life playing one-day cricket with a world record 320 matches.

Sachin Tendulkar, 10 years younger than Azharuddin, has played more than 200 matches with 22 centuries, another world record.

And Pakistan captain Wasim Akram, 33, has played 270 matches, capturing a record 380 wickets.

Three years ago Sri Lanka joined the party when they beat Australia in the World Cup final and now Bangladesh, still an associate member of the International Cricket Council (ICC), have taken their place on the world stage.

Bangladesh, who arrived in England before any of the other 11 teams, spent the best part of three weeks dodging showers and looking for practice matches.

Once the tournament started they fulfilled their initial goal of beating Scotland, the other non-Test country in their group, then confounded the odds by defeating the previously unbeaten Pakistan side by 62 runs.

"Beating Pakistan or any Test country is a great achievement for us," reflected captain Aminul Islam. "In Bangladesh we have lots of young cricketers coming up."

"It will help us for our future cricket. I think because of this victory the structure will change in Bangladesh. We have really to get the

structure right."

Bangladesh now return home but they have presented a strong case to the ICC for Test status.

Sri Lanka, who beat India in the 1979 Cup, and Zimbabwe, who accounted for Australia in 1992, were promoted to full status soon after.

"We have applied to play Test cricket and this historic win will boost our chance," Islam said.

One thing Bangladesh already has in common with the remainder of the Indian sub-continent is a penchant for political intrigue.

Reports said that Bangladesh had decided to dispense with the services of their West Indian coach Gordon Greenidge came as a surprise to Islam.

"I do not have any idea about it," he said. "I don't know anything about it."

"He was with us, he came to the park and he did the training."

For an English solution

LONDON, June 1: Outgoing England coach David Lloyd said here on Tuesday that his successor simply had to be English, suggesting foreign coaches would not have the passion needed for the job, reports AFP.

"I was asked about my opinion and in my own mind, I'm absolutely certain it has to be an Englishman," he said.

"I just think that if it isn't, then it's just somebody who is drawing a salary."