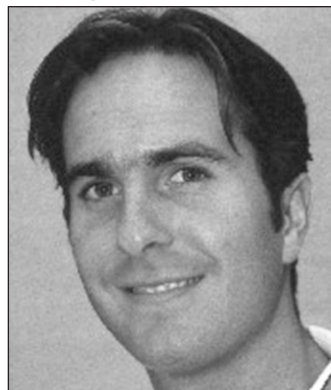




Did U Know?

Brazil has won the World Cup football the most with 4 trophies. Their most recent victory was in 1994 when the tournament was held in the United States.



Michael Vaughan

(England cricketer)
"The ball was not going on to the stumps, I was trying to pass it on to the fielder. I was bemused by the whole thing. The law says I was out, but I don't think it was in the spirit of the game."

After he was dismissed for handling the ball in the third Test against India.



What to WATCH

- ### ESPN
- Bolton v Chelsea
 - English Premiership Repeat at 3:30 pm
 - Arsenal v Liverpool
 - English Premiership Repeat at 5:30 pm
 - Sportscenter Hindi
 - Sports News
 - Live at 8:30 pm
 - Champions Trophy
 - Sharjah, 6th ODI
 - Highlights at 12:00 am
 - Man United v Southampton
 - English Premiership Repeat at 1:00 am
 - Leeds United v Newcastle
 - English Premiership Repeat at 3:00 am
- ### STAR Sports
- Sportsline Today
 - Sports News
 - Live at 7:30 am
 - Mallorca v Real Madrid
 - Primera Liga
 - Repeat at 8:30 am
 - Super Selector
 - Cricket Programming
 - January Launch
 - Repeat at 5:30 pm
 - Sportsline Tonight
 - Sports News
 - Live at 8:00 pm
 - Harsha Online
 - Cricket Talk Show
 - Repeat at 11:00 pm
 - India v Zimbabwe
 - Coca-Cola Cup, 2nd ODI
 - Highlights at 12:30 am

Star WHIZZ KID COMPETITION 163

Tick the Correct Answers Post to The Daily Star Win attractive prizes

Competition closes at 8 pm Jan 4, 2002 and draw shortly afterwards

1. Who became FIFA's World Player of the Year?	Beckham	Figo	Raul
2. Which team scored the lowest one-day international total?	Bangladesh/Zimbabwe/West Indies		
3. How many wickets did Chaminda Vaas take in a one-day match to set a new world record?	Seven	Eight	Nine
4. In how many Test did Anil Kumble take 300 wickets?	88 6676		
5. Who won the Sri Lanka tri-series?	West Indies/Sri Lanka/Zimbabwe		

Name:
Class: Roll No.
School Address:
Phone: (If any)

SAFF fears Indo-Pak wave

Football

SPORTS REPORTER

Either India or Pakistan might pull out of the next month's third South Asian Football Federation (SAFF) championship because of the growing political tension between the two neighbouring states, feared organisers BFF (Bangladesh Football Federation).

BFF president SA Sultan at an introductory press conference of his newly formed ad-hoc committee at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday also felt the need of a back-up fixture minus one country from the seven-nation meet.

Ironically, the regional football carnival is supposed to begin with India taking on Pakistan on January 26 at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur.

Speaking to a crowded press corps, Sultan disclosed that India's stance on severing cricket and hockey ties with Pakistan does not give the organisers any positive signal for a seven-nation meet. "That is why it would be wise of us to count either India or Pakistan out of the meet in advance," the BNP lawmaker said.

Tension has mounted between the two nuclear-armed rivals since December 13 when Indian parliament was attacked by five suicide gunmen.

Although the tournament sponsor AFC Marketing Limited has already made the draw and fixture public in Kuala Lumpur last month, Sultan said he would seek suggestion from the SAFF about what to do if any country pulls out.

"I think the matter would be finalised in next two weeks," said Sultan, adding that his new committee's first priority would be to host the tournament successfully.

Sultan's three vice-presidents -- Zakaria Pintoo, Abdur Rahim and Khairul Anwar Piaru, two joint-secretaries -- Col Obayedullah Khan (ret'd) and Sayeed Hasan Kanan and former football star Kazi Salahuddin, who is a member in the 31-member ad-hoc committee formed by National Sports Council last Thursday, were also present among others.

Sultan also assured that the championship would go on as per schedule come what may.

"We are going to contact each of the seven participating nations very soon to get a bearing on the situation," Sultan said.

He also said that the formation of the new ad-hoc committee in place of an elected body was essential to rescue the ailing football, a game that had once enjoyed number one status in Bangladesh.

"The Prime Minister is very much aware of the present condition of the game. She has personally asked me to take care of the sport," he confided.

When asked how BFF is going to defend its discarding of an elected committee to the FIFA and the AFC, Sultan said that they have already given AFC a hint in advance last week that the committee would be reorganised with the change of government.

"Hopefully everything would be all right," said Sultan, adding that they might not be able to hold any election in three months because of the SAFF Championship. "We might extend the duration of the committee for another month to hold the election."

In response to another question, Sultan revealed that they have not received any instruction from the NSC to submit the report on BFF expenses for the last five years.



Bangladesh Football Federation president SA Sultan talks to newsmen during a press conference at the BFF office at Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

No more play at Bangalore

Cricket

REUTERS, Bangalore

India won the series 1-0 when the third and final Test against England ended in a draw after the fifth day was washed out by rain on Sunday without a ball being bowled.

A wet ground caused by heavy overnight rain delayed the start and the umpires decided to call off the day's play at around 1100 local time (0530 GMT) as persistent drizzle fell.

India had won the first Test in Mohali by 10 wickets and the second Test in Ahmedabad was drawn.

England were in command when rain also forced play to be called off early on Saturday. The tourists were 33 for no wicket in their second innings, a lead of 131 runs.



Dark clouds hang over the Chinnaswamy Stadium in Bangalore on Sunday morning.

Sourav lauds negative Nasser

Cricket

REUTERS/AFP, Bangalore

England's cricket captain Nasser Hussain on Sunday brushed aside criticism of his team's negative tactics in the Test series in India, saying the plan worked wonders.

"We may have lost the series, but I think we return home satisfied at the way we played," Hussain told reporters after the rain-hit third and final cricket Test ended in a draw without a ball being bowled on the fifth day here.

The draw gave India the series 1-0 after the 10-wicket win in the first Test at Mohali. The second and third Tests were drawn.

The tourists were slammed in both the Indian and British media for ordering left-arm spinner Ashley Giles to bowl outside the leg-stump to Indian batsmen, especially Sachin Tendulkar.

"I am not bothered about what the media writes," Hussain said. "We

Just over an hour of play was possible on the fourth day after rain and bad light had restricted play to 43 overs on Friday.

England pace bowler Andrew Flintoff was named man-of-the-match for his return of four for 50, including all three of India's top-order batsmen, to give his side the upper hand by restricting India to 238 in reply to England's 336.

"I didn't expect that I'd bowl so well, I'm very pleased," Flintoff said later.

The 24-year-old Lancashire all-rounder joined the team after England's opening tour match to strengthen the side in the absence of first-choice pacemen Andy Caddick and Darren Gough.

Sachin Tendulkar, India's premier batsman, was voted man-of-the-series for his aggregate of 307 runs, including one hundred and two fifties at an average of 76.75.

But Tendulkar, who scored 90 at Bangalore before being stumped for the first time in his 12-year career after left-arm spinner Ashley Giles frustrated him with a persistent leg-stump attack, was disappointed at missing out on two more Test hundreds.

He had to settle for 88 in Mohali but made 103, his 27th Test century, at Ahmedabad.

"I'm disappointed at how I missed the hundred in Bangalore, I thought I had it in my pocket," he said.

Indian captain Sourav Ganguly praised England for their strong fightback in the three-Test series.

"The Englishmen came back well in the series. They played good cricket, both at Ahmedabad and here in Bangalore," he said.

SEE PAGE 15

Hastings match referee for BD-Pak series

SPORTS REPORTER

Former New Zealand captain Brian Hastings will be the match referee during Bangladesh's home series against Pakistan next month.

This was disclosed by Bangladesh Cricket Board director Syed Ashraf ul-Haq on Sunday.

Pakistan will arrive in the capital on January 2 to play two Tests and three one-day internationals.

Talking to The Daily Star Sport, Ashraf ul-Haq also revealed that John Hampshire of England and Russell Tiffin of Zimbabwe would officiate in the first and second Tests.

It would be second trip to Bangladesh for both Hampshire and Tiffin.

Hampshire accompanied the Marylebone Cricket Club team during their tour of Bangladesh two years ago. Tiffin officiated in the three-nation Independence Cup in Dhaka in January 1998.

Salahuddin back in soccer

SPORTS REPORTER

Legendary footballer Kazi Salahuddin believes that it's better late than never to have a role to play in the sport.

The ex-Abahani and Bangladesh mercurial striker, finally get to work as an organiser under new Bangladesh Football Federation.

Salahuddin was full of energy when he walked into the BFF office yesterday to announce that he would be working with the new executive committee of SA Sultan.

The former national captain and arguably one of the best strikers the country ever produced, he said that in the past he had turned down several offers to be involved in football's local body.

"But when Sultan bhai asked me to join his committee, I could not say no. I hope to enjoy the freedom to work for the good of the game," he said.

The first Bangladeshi to play in professional league in abroad, Salahuddin never showed active interest to join the BFF since retiring in 1984.

He played for Hong Kong's Hilton Club in 1976.

Div II cricket starts Jan 6

BSS, Dhaka

The Second Division Cricket League will begin on January 6, according to Bangladesh Cricket Board sources.

It is likely that 28 teams will take part in the meet. Besides, the inter-club players' transfers will take place on December 26 and 27.

Pabna soccer

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

Jagarani Sangha defeated Sarkar and Sons Chetmohor 2-1 in the Randhuni Second Division Football League at the local stadium yesterday.

Donald's foot isn't fine

AFP, Sydney

Key paceman Allan Donald was suffering from a foot injury he sustained in Perth two weeks ago, South African captain Shaun Pollock said Sunday.

"He's still battling with his foot," said Proteas captain Pollock.

Pollock was coy about Donald's prospects of forcing his way into the Boxing Day Test line-up against Australia in the second Test at the Melbourne Cricket Ground starting on Wednesday.

"It would have been nice if he came through pain-free," he said.

Ignominy for Zimbabwe

AFP, Colombo

Zimbabwe suffered a surprise five-wicket defeat in their only tour match before the first cricket Test against Sri Lanka here on Sunday.

Chamara Silva scripted the Sri Lankan Board team's victory over the tourists as he smashed a 118-ball 127 net out after a pair of sporting declarations on the third and final day.

The home team, needing 220 in 42 overs, reached 223-5 to win with four balls to spare as Silva struck one six and 15 fours in his fourth first-class century.

The hosts had conceded a 50-run lead after declaring their first innings closed at the overnight total of 269-4.

The tourists, preparing for the opening Test starting here on Thursday, then scored 169-5 declared for an overall lead of 219.

Rules relaxed for League

Cricket

SPORTS REPORTER

Three of the six participating teams have yet to announce their squads for the Ispahani Tea Third National Cricket League, which begins on Wednesday.

The last date for the submission of team list was on December 12. The defaulting teams are Sylhet, Khulna and Rajshahi.

The secretary of tournament committee Ehteshamul Alam however said that they have extended the deadline in view of the Eid holidays.

The lone first-class tournament of the country commences at the MA Aziz Stadium with Chittagong hosting Dhaka.

Both Dhaka and Chittagong have released their lists of 20 probables. Barisal is the other team who announced their team.

While Chittagong once again decided to keep their faith in the magic of former national captain Minhazul Abedin, Dhaka will rely on a host of star cricketers to win their maiden title.

The port city team clinched the inaugural edition while Bangladesh Biman, who have been controversially axed along with Dhaka Metropolis from this edition, lifted

the title last year.

Dhaka boast of being the strongest side on paper but they would have to struggle to field their best eleven as majority of their players are now touring New Zealand with the national team.

The six key players who will be absent are -- Aminul Islam, Mohammad Ashraf, Al-Shahriar, Javed Omar, Khaled Mahmud and Sanwar Hossain.

Barring any last minute injury, Chittagong meanwhile will be able to field a full strength side. They will only miss the service of slow left-arm bowler Enamul Hoque.

The battle for title is expected to be fought by the two teams since the rests hardly have any star performers.

The organisers meanwhile relaxed the rules so that other teams could rope in quality players, who failed to be a part in their respective divisional teams.

"Apart from the listed 20 the six teams are free to choose an additional ten cricketers," said Alam Chowdhury.

The secretary of the Grounds Committee assured that the competition this time would have good wickets. There were complaints of under-prepared pitches at different venues last year.

Matches will be played at six different venues this year. The format of

this year's competition includes a home and away four-day game followed by a limited-overs contest.

SQUADS

CHITTAGONG: Minhazul Abedin, Akram Khan, Azam Iqbal, Ehsanul Huq, Anisul Hakim, Tariq Aziz, Masum-ud-dola, Ahsanullah Hasan, Sabbir Khan, Golam Mortuza, Safiuddin Ahmed, Alamgir, Suman Barua, Jasimuddin, Faisal Hossain, Nazif Iqbal, Aftab Ahmed, Wasaluddin, Enamul Hoque, Sharif, Debabrata and Suja Erfan.

DHAKA: Naimur Rahman, Mehrab Hossain, Sharif, Saiful Islam, Fahim Muntasir, Rashedul Huq, Mazharul Huq, Anwar, Neeyamur Rashid, Mosadek Hossain, Sajjad Hossain, Halim Shah, Bikkash, Ashraf, Al-Shahriar, Javed Omar, Aminul Islam, Khaled Mahmud, Tareq Aziz and Shahriar Hossain.

EXTRAS: Sanwar Hossain, Sajjad Kadir, Jahangir Alam and Biplob Sarker.

BARISAL: Hannan Sarker, Awlad Hossain, Shaheen, Moin, Rajat, Tasriqui, Deen Mohammed, Moshed, Shafaitul Islam, Moshur, Nayan, Nayan, Kazi Azizur Rahman, Illias Miah, Sayem, Moniruzzaman, Shahnewaz Kabir, Masudur Rahman, Mofizul Islam, and Towhid Hossain.

Making it Wright

Cricket

AFP, Bangalore

India's cricket chiefs on Sunday bowed to the demands of senior players and retained New Zealand coach John Wright as national coach till the World Cup in 2003.

Jagmohan Dalmiya, president of the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI), confirmed Wright's appointment soon after the drawn final Test against England gave

and the national news agency, Press Trust of India, reported last week that Wright was set to be replaced after the England series.

Dalmiya said the BCCI's decision to retain Wright and Leipus was taken after a brainstorming session with the duo, senior players and national selectors here on Saturday.

"We discussed how Indian cricket can improve further," said Dalmiya.

"India is the world under-15 champions, the under-19 champions, but when it comes to Test rankings, we are eighth out of 10, ahead of only lowly Zimbabwe and Bangladesh."

"We have asked the players to be more consistent in their performances. I want the players to be accountable, so also the coach, the physio and the selectors.

BCCI sources said Dalmiya took the advice of senior players like captain Sourav Ganguly, master batsman Sachin Tendulkar and spinner Anil Kumble before agreeing to retain Wright.

"The players wanted Wright to continue. There was also no other suitable candidate," the sources said.

Wright, whose one year contract expired last month, said he was delighted to continue with Indian cricket.

"I have enjoyed my job and am looking forward to the coming year," Wright told AFP.

"India has some very good players and if the team is consistent on the field, it will do very well."

India is scheduled to play a home series against Zimbabwe in February, followed by tours of the West Indies in March and England in June.

Wright, a former New Zealand captain who made his mark as coach of English county side Kent, was inducted as India's first foreign coach with much fanfare last November.

He was India's sixth coach in the last five years, the job having been rotated among Ajit Wadekar, Sandeep Patil, Madan Lal, Anshuman Gaekwad and Kapil Dev since 1996.

SEE PAGE 15



India coach John Wright speaks to reporters in Bangalore on December 23. The New Zealander was retained as India coach earlier in the day.

Shoaib crosses his fingers

Cricket

AFP, Karachi

Pakistani pacer Shoaib Akhtar said Sunday he hoped his international career would not be halted again over his controversial bowling action.

"I hope that my bowling action would be cleared by the International Cricket Council (ICC) after the rulings of Western Australian University experts," Akhtar told this news agency.

Dubbed the "Rawalpindi Express", Akhtar is under scrutiny from the ICC after his action was questioned for a third time in a short career of four years.

He was reported in Australia in 1999 but was cleared by an ICC ruling in March 2000.

Umpires in New Zealand reported his action for a second time in March this year but Akhtar was subsequently given the all clear by a home review panel in April on the basis of the Western Australian

University report.

Last month however, an ICC match referee questioned the legality of his action during the final of the Sharjah tri-series.

But once again Western Australian University experts said Akhtar has hyper mobility in his bowling arm which makes it appear

as if he is throwing the ball.

"I hope that ICC forms a medical board and gives the university report due consideration.

"Challenging my action would be challenging the experts of the Western Australian University," he said.

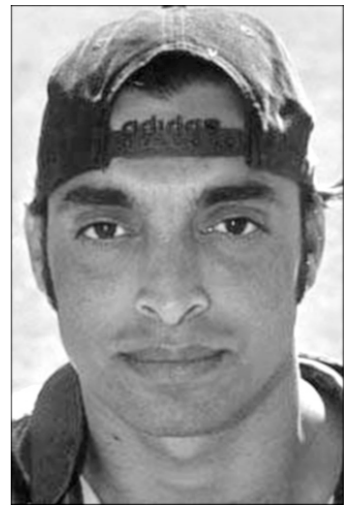
Akhtar returned from Australia Saturday to join the Pakistan team camp gearing up for next month's tour of Bangladesh.

"Everybody is convinced on the legality of my action, from Australian great Dennis Lillee, to Jeff Thomson to Pakistan's Imran Khan. Everyone told me that I have a legal action," he said.

The Pakistan Cricket Board has included Akhtar's name in the 16-member squad for the tour of Bangladesh.

"I am keen to play in Bangladesh because I have heard a lot about the craze of the game there," he said.

If Akhtar's action is reported again while in Bangladesh, the ICC's bowling review panel could, under the stage three of the examination process, ban him for a year.



SHOAIB AKHTAR