

Hello, class of 2004?

SPORTS REPORTER

The eyes of the cricketing world will be firmly focussed on Bangladesh for the next 25 days as the coming generation of the game's potential great go on to charm the ICC Under-19 Cricket World Cup 2004.

This evening Prime Minister Khaleda Zia will officially declare the 16-nation meet open through an opening ceremony is expected to be as glittering as the presence of the future stars from 16 nations at the Bangabandhu National Stadium. Rather befittingly, fireworks will illuminate the night sky to signal the end of the programme and the beginning of dreams oozing with youthful energy.

Dhaka is now the interim home of world cricket. International Cricket Council (ICC) president Ehsan Mani and chief executive Malcolm Speed arrived in the capital on Monday morning and will be among the impressive list of VIPs gracing the opening show.

The evening gala over, the teams, who have been split into four groups for the first round, prepare to travel to their respective zonal destinations. Each team will play practice matches before the tournament proper kicks off in eight venues across the country from February 15.

Although it took a decade for the ICC to hold the second edition of the youth extravaganza following the

inaugural World Cup in Australia in 1988, its importance was never questioned. Now, the Under-19 World Cup has become the yardstick to judge the calibre of young cricketers across continents.

If the first championship gave us world-beaters like Brian Lara, Chris Cairns and Inzamamul Haq, the '98 Cup in South Africa unveiled Indian spin sensation Harbhajan Singh. The 2000 edition was held in Sri Lanka and our own Mohammad Ashraful and Mashrafe bin Mortaza shot into prominence. Australia's Michael Clarke showed enough to suggest that he was heading for a long international career when New Zealand hosted the fourth U/19 World Cup in 2002.

The trophy of this tournament is a sterling silver and silver gilt creation called 'Tazza' weighing approximately 2.5 Kg. 'Tazza' consists of a main spun bowl mounted onto a silver column chased cricket ball and stump detail.

The logo is expected to benefit Bangladesh's cricket massively in the long run. Five new international standard venues have been built or rebuilt in Chittagong, Rajshahi, Khulna, Bogra and Narayanganj with the World Cup in mind and the facilities will boost the domestic cricket structure immensely.

However, above anything else, SEE PAGE 14 COL 6



PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

CRICKET CARNIVAL COMING TO TOWN: The Bangabandhu National Stadium and every one else are ready to host the ICC U-19 Cricket World Cup that will be inaugurated at the big bowl today. The picture shows participants of the opening ceremony go through their final drills yesterday.

Enthusiasm all over

BISHWAJIT ROY

The cream of youth cricket assembled in Bangladesh to find out who will be the best. But with the real battle still five days away the mood of the young combatants was upbeat. And anybody who visited the otherwise tranquil Hotel Purani or Hotel Isa Khan on Monday would be pleasantly surprised by the amount of enthusiasm, energy and excitement generated by the players and officials of the 16 participating teams for the ICC U-19 Cricket World Cup.

"I am really excited seeing the festive mood here. The game is not a popular one in my country but I like it anyway and love to hit the ball," said Irish batsman Gary Wilson at the lobby of Purani in the afternoon.

While Ireland, an associate member of the world cricket body, has come with a mission to have fun rather than having any serious title ambitions, defending champions Australia mean business as usual.

"Michael Clarke was the captain when we played the second youth World Cup in Sri Lanka. He is now a regular in the one-day line up. Our task here is not only to retain the title but also find some more new faces for the senior team," smiled Australian team manager Brian Freedman.

He also highlighted the fact that his team was both multi-talented and multi-cultural as well.

"Interestingly we have a Sri Lankan, a Portuguese, a Greek and Filipino-born player. Also our coach is a German and captain English by

birth. So there is a diverse cultural dimension in the squad," Freedman quipped. The witty Aussie, however, admitted that they missed the thing that symbolizes his country apart from Kangaroos -- an Aboriginal.

Australian coach Bennett King, who also heads the renowned Commonwealth Bank Cricket Academy, said that his concern was the subcontinent weather.

But Adam Crosthwaite, the lone player to have featured in the last youth World Cup in New Zealand, was determined to beat that odd like the all-conquering senior team.

"I'm confident of retaining the trophy despite the fact that it would not be suitable conditions like in New Zealand," said the top-order batsman.

But Sri Lankan coach DS De Silva felt Dhaka was a home away from home. He said that he had brought along some exciting players.

"We are carrying at least six players who have the potential to play at the highest level in future. We have undertaken an extensive preparation to win the title for the first time," said Silva.

The English players on the other hand were quick to get a feel of the Bangabandhu National Stadium, where the senior members played recently.

They were overwhelmed by the size of the big bowl and were impressed watching the dress rehearsals for the opening ceremony, which will take place today.

Brothers unstoppable

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Leaders Brothers Union Club registered their eighth consecutive win in the Western Union Premier Division Football League when they blanked Dhaka Wanderers Club 2-0 at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday night.

After a barren first half, Brothers' Ugandan substitute Francis gave

the Gopibagh outfit a deserving lead in the 58th minute while prolific Russian forward Victor Edwards secured the win with the second goal in the 72nd minute.

It was Brothers Union's ninth win in 12 matches and raised their tally to 30 points. They have a six-point lead over second placed Mukti-juddha Sangsad who however have a match in hand.

Wanderers are in danger of being relegated as they remained eighth in the table with 9 points from 12

matches.

Brothers went in front when Francis, who had replaced Iqbal a minute earlier, scored from his first touch of the ball from a Firoze Mahmud Tito corner in the 58th minute.

Victor doubled the margin in the 72nd minute placing home a Constantine pass.

It was Victor's ninth goal in the league and made him the leading

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PHOTO: STAR

Wanderers defender Jamal Hossain (R) gets in the way of a Victor right-footer during their Western Union Premier Division Football League encounter against Brothers Union at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

Indian inspectors arrive in Pakistan

Cricket

AFP, Lahore

An Indian security delegation arrived here Monday to clear the last hurdles in a planned cricket series with Pakistan, the first in this country for 14 years.

"They (Indian delegation) have arrived in Lahore to assess security and other aspects of the tour," Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) operations general manager Zakir

Khan told this news agency.

"We have already committed that we will provide the best security to the Indian cricket team," Khan said.

"It is a reconnaissance tour, and besides security they (Indians) will assess different aspects of the tour, which include ground and accommodation facilities."

The Board of Control for Cricket in India decided to send the security delegation after some players expressed concerns over security in Pakistan.

Senior police official and security expert Yashovardhan Azad heads

the delegation with Ratnakar Shetty, joint secretary of the BCCI, and Amrit Mathur, media manager and a former administrative manager of the national team.

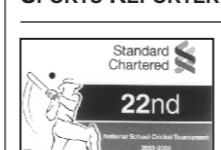
Azad, the elder brother of former cricket international Kirti Azad, was put in charge of security for the Pakistani team on its last tour of India in early 1999.

In October last year, India lifted a bilateral ban on cricket series that it imposed in 2001 and approved its

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New Provati rule

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22nd
National Schools Cricket Championship
2003-2004

The ball dominated the bat in six Dhaka Zone qualifying matches of 22nd National Schools Cricket Championship

MA LATIF: 128 all out in 24.3 overs (Belal 32, Rajib 28, Pias 23; Sohagh 2-9, Al-Amin 2-16)

BLS: 124 for nine in 30 overs (Jamal 14, Pias 3-29, Belal 3-35)

Result: MA Latif Memorial won by 4 runs.

Green Leaf International School v Paramount Kindergarten

Venue: RMS

PARAMOUNT: 159 for nine in 35 overs (Mostafa 36, Fahad 40, Rony 4-16)

GREEN LEAF: 155 for nine in 35 overs (Jainal 35, Solaiman 24; N a s i m

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Sunny coming

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Indian batting legend Sunil Gavaskar will arrive in Dhaka on February 13 to attend a two-day meeting of the International Cricket Council (ICC)'s cricket management committee (CCM).

Gavaskar, who is now a popular cricket commentator, is the chairman of CCM.

"Most of the top ICC officials will be in the city by February 13 to attend the February 14-15 meeting," said Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) president Ali Asghar.

Asghar, also the president of Asian Cricket Council (ACC), informed that they were trying to hold the next ACC board of directors meeting in Dhaka on March 4, a day before the U/19 World Cup final.

"We are hopeful of holding the ACC meeting where the forthcoming Asia Cup will be our main agenda," added Asghar.

No escaping!

REUTERS, London

Hosts England have been drawn against Zimbabwe in the opening match of this year's Champions Trophy, the International Cricket Council (ICC) announced on Monday.

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Sylhet, Khulna in command

ISPAHANI Mirzapore Tea 5th National Cricket League

SPORTS REPORTER

amassed 375 before being all out against Barisal which gave them a 182-run first-innings' lead.

Khulna began the third day on 260 for four.

Jamal hammered 13 boundaries in his 187-ball innings.

Barisal reached 67 for two when balls were drawn.

SCOREBOARD

Scorecards on the third day of the two National Cricket League four-day matches held at different venues across the country yesterday.

Chittagong still need another 291 runs on the last day to win their match against Sylhet with seven wickets in hand when they scored 130 for three chasing an enormous 421 runs at the Sylhet Stadium.

Opener Golam Rahman smashed eleven boundaries and one six in his 115 off 294 balls as the hosts declared their second innings at 278 for six after resuming the day on 166 for two.

Chittagong were booked for only 93 in their first innings.

Away at the Barisal Stadium, middle-order batsman Jamaluddin Babu hammered 113 as Khulna

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Eagles end Lions' reign

Morocco muscle past Algeria

AFP, Tunis

Nigeria ended Cameroon's four-year reign as continental champions on Sunday when they won 2-1 to reach the semifinals of the African Nations Cup.

They fought back from a goal down against the four-time winners in Monastir to book a semifinal berth with hosts Tunisia on Wednesday.

Nigeria, winners in 1980 and 1994, were joined in the semifinals by Morocco who came back from the brink of elimination to beat Algeria 3-1 after extra-time in Sfax to set up a last four showdown with Mali.

Cameroon took the lead against Nigeria after 41 minutes through Samuel Eto'o but the Super Eagles came back into the game four minutes later courtesy of skipper Austin 'Jay Jay' Okocha's sweetly

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struck free kick on the edge of the box.

John Utaka finally won the game for Nigeria when he ran at the opposing defence before coolly slotting the ball past a diving Idris Kameni in the 73rd minute.

"Cameroon's time has come and gone. With this victory everything has changed again and it is Nigeria's time to reign supreme," said Nigeria coach Christian Chukwu.

Cameroon coach Winfried Schafer said Nigerian organisation prevented his team from playing their usual game.

"I congratulate Nigeria. Sadly we conceded a goal right on half-time and just couldn't find the net in the second half or play our usual game," said the coach.

"But despite this defeat, Cameroon are still a team with great potential and the players will

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PHOTO: AFP