

## Cricket dug out of BNS

SPORTS REPORTER

There were mixed emotions at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

While the Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) made their presence felt by digging up the wickets of the country's premier venue on the day they took permanent possession, some cricketers, fans and officials staged a token hunger strike outside in protest at the government decision to shift cricket to the Mirpur Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium.

According to Reuters, former Bangladesh captain Khaled Mahmud was also joined the protest in the afternoon. But the 33-year-old all-rounder denied taking part in the hunger strike.

"I went to the stadium to practice as usual and also had a few words with a group of protesters. But for obvious reasons I did not take part in the hunger strike nor did I sign anything," said Mahmud to The Daily Star Sport last night.

Mahmud is one of the cricketers on the Board's payroll.

While Mahmud showed no emotion seeing cricket's last rites being written at the venue where he started his playing career and which has hosted 17 Tests and 58 one-day internationals, another former Bangladesh captain Raquibul Hasan could not hide his frustration.

"As a cricketer it was painful to see that the pitches at the Bangabandhu National Stadium being dug up in front of my own eyes," said Raquibul, who came to the venue.

But a BFF official said they were in no hurry to excavate the pitch but

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PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

**DON'T BREAK OUR HEARTS!** (L) Workers dig into one of the cricket pitches at the Bangabandhu National Stadium as a stunned former Bangladesh captain Khaled Mahmud (R) looks on from the stands yesterday. On this very ground, Mahmud started his playing career some 17 years ago but so many like him will never play another cricket match there as the venue has been handed over permanently to the Bangladesh Football Federation. (Bottom) As if to illustrate that fact, footballers of Premier Division club Arambagh Krira Shangha lose no time in arriving for practice at the much-loved stadium.

## Hosts hold the edge

Cricket

AFP, New Delhi

Pakistan captain Inzamam-ul-Haq may be banking on "passion and enthusiasm" of his young team to tame India in their own backyard, but he requires more than just that to taste success on the arduous tour.

India had not lost at home in four years until Australia ruined their impressive record last season with a 2-1 victory in a four-match contest to clinch their first Test series here since 1969.

Pakistan are not as resourceful as world champions Australia, who have tremendous depth in batting and bowling. The Australians' mental strength to cope with pressure always helped them wriggle out of tight situations.

In contrast, Inzamam is leading a team which appears short on bowl-

ing experience, especially after the withdrawal of premier fast bowler Shoaib Akhtar due to a hamstring injury.

"The team which plays with more passion and enthusiasm will have a definite advantage in this series and I've a young team which is full of these," said Inzamam, whose side will play three Tests and six one-day internationals during the 50-day tour.

But the Pakistani skipper's major worry will be containing the Indian batsmen who have earned worldwide fame for occupying the crease for long periods on low, slow home pitches.

The Indian batting order wears a formidable look, with hard-hitting opener Virender Sehwag keen to repeat last year's awesome performance in Pakistan where he became the first Indian to hit a Test triple-century and helped India to a 2-1 win.

There will be no respite for the inexperienced Pakistani attack as

Rahul Dravid, nicknamed the 'Wall' for his rock-like defence, Sachin Tendulkar, skipper Sourav Ganguly and Venkatesh Laxman follow in the order.

Tendulkar, who is one three-figure knock away from breaking compatriot Sunil Gavaskar's world record of 34 Test centuries, is hungry as ever to prove nothing is wrong with his form and fitness after recovering from a tennis elbow injury.

A team requires a bowling attack like Australia's to rattle India at home, but Pakistan do not appear to fall into that category.

When Pakistan toured India in 1999 and won two of the three Tests, they had skilful pacemen in Wasim Akram and Waqar Younis. Both were capable of seriously testing the Indian batsmen even on slow pitches.

Supporting the duo was Akhtar, whose thunderbolts helped the

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## Wanderers hold F'ganj

SPORTS REPORTER

Dhaka Wanderers Club came from two goals down to draw 2-2 against Farashganj Sporting Club in the Green Delta First Division Hockey League at the Maulana Bhasani National Stadium yesterday.

Sumon put Farashganj ahead with a field goal and Rezaul Kabir made it double from a penalty corner.

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## Hard work for BCB bowlers

### Central Zone 248-3

Cricket

PALLAB BHATTACHARAYA, New Delhi

Bangladesh Cricket Board Eleven bowlers toiled for the second successive match in the Duleep Trophy. On the opening day of their four-day match against Central Zone at Karnail Singh Stadium yesterday, the tourists were put to the sword by century-maker Abbas Ali who plundered 122 in Central's 248 for three.

The left-hander from Madhya Pradesh rescued his side, which, after electing to bat, had lost two quick wickets for 24 runs.

Ali struck 122 in 205 balls with the help of 20 boundaries and one six. He received fine support from fellow Madhya Pradesh player Devendra Bundela, who was

unbeaten on 83 off 238 balls.

They amassed 214 for the third wicket to steer the home side to a strong position.

However, the day began well for the Mohammad Ashraf-led BCB XI, which lost its opening match to East Zone by an innings and 149 runs last week, when Anwar Hossain Munir trapped opener Amit Pagnis lbw for 12 with the score on 16. And eight runs later former Indian Test batsman Sanjay Bangar, who struggled for 70 balls in making 11 runs, fell in the same fashion to Talha Jubair.

During his innings Bangar also suffered a blow on the elbow from Talha but X-rays revealed no serious damage. But the opener continued to bat with a swollen elbow.

Bangar's dismissal brought Ali and Bundela together for their brilliant partnership.

Ali was eventually out five overs before the close when he played a tired-looking shot off leg-spinner Alok Kapali and was caught by Abdur Razaq at cover.

After the day's play Bangladesh coach Dav Whatmore thought that Central Zone had fought back well in the circumstances.

"The big partnership was a bit frustrating after we got two early wickets. The flat track also did no good to our bowlers," he said.

**SCOREBOARD**

Scoreboard on the first day of four-day Duleep Trophy match between Central Zone and Bangladesh Cricket Board XI at the Karnail Singh Stadium in Delhi yesterday:

**CENTRAL ZONE:** First innings Bangar lbw b Jubair 11 Pagnis lbw b Anwar 12

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## Aussies too strong

Cricket

AFP, Wellington

World champions Australia underscored their overwhelming dominance of the one-day game by thrashing second-ranked New Zealand by seven wickets with 16 overs to spare at Basin Reserve here Tuesday.

After dismissing New Zealand for 233 on the penultimate ball of their 50 overs, Australia captain Adam Gilchrist led a rollicking response that saw the tourists reach the target in the 34th over for the loss of just three wickets.

Gilchrist and Simon Katich opened with a 78-run partnership in 60 balls, and destroyed the morale of New Zealand's bowling attack as Australia cruised through the fourth one-day match to stay on course for a 5-0 clean sweep.

It was a timely return to form for Gilchrist who had been out of sorts earlier in the first three matches, as

he smacked 54 from 37 balls including eight fours and a six.

Not to be outdone, Damien Martyn hit an unbeaten 65 from 78 balls, and Andrew Symonds had three sixes and four fours in his 48 off 37 balls.

The rout came after New Zealand had made their best start of the series with an 84-run opening stand by Nathan Astle and Stephen Fleming.

Batting first for the first time in the series after Gilchrist won the toss, Fleming and Astle raced along at five an over in the highest opening stand against Australia by any side in the past 12 months.

But once New Zealand were reduced to 90 for two, after both openers fell within 14 balls of each other, Australia gained control and never relinquished it.

Hamish Marshall (23) and Craig McMillan (35) put on 41 for the fourth wicket, and Chris Cairns later chipped in with a meaty 36, but

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## SC stays order on BCB directors

SPORTS REPORTER

The Supreme Court yesterday stayed Saturday's High Court order that reinstated the elected directors of Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) after two and a half years.

The highest court in the country also ordered the authorities concerned to hold elections to BCB 'under the exiting law' in the shortest possible time.

The order came upon a petition filed by Rafiqul Islam Babu, a BCB councillor.

The second stay order once again throws the elected directors into uncertainty with their tenure about to expire this month.

The directors, who were elected in February 2001 for a four-year term, were thrown out following Rafiqui's first writ petition on August 11, 2002 where he challenged Clause 12 of the BCB constitution.

Since then BCB president Ali Asghar has been running the show with a council of 10 advisors.



## Did U Know?

Basketball and rugby balls are made from synthetic material. Earlier, pigs' bladders were used as rugby balls.

## What to WATCH

ESPN

Sportscentre

Live at 8:30 pm

FA Cup

Nottingham Forest vs Tottenham Hotspur

Live at 1:30 am (Thursday)

Primera Liga

Real Madrid vs Real Betis

Same Day Delay at 4:00 am (Thursday)

STAR Sports

South Africa vs Zimbabwe

Third ODI

Live at 6:27 pm

Sportslive

Live at 10:00 pm

Brazilian Cup

Fluminense vs Campinense

Live at 5:25 am (Thursday)



Jonty Rhodes

(Former South Africa Test cricketer)

"Flawed selection policy is costing South Africa dear."

## Wet start in store?

Cricket

AFP, Dharamshala

Pakistan's touring cricketers were greeted by rain and the prospect of a washout as they arrived in this scenic northern hill resort on Tuesday to kick-start their 50-day tour of India.

The tourists, due to take on the Indian board president's team in the three-day tour opener from Thursday, scrapped a scheduled practice session as incessant rain swept the area, better known as the home of Tibet's exiled leader, the Dalai Lama.

With bad weather forecast to continue till the weekend, Pakistan's lone practice match ahead of the first of three Tests starting in Mohali on March 8 threatens to be badly curtailed.

"We have the best facilities but we are helpless before nature," said Anurag Thakur, president of the host Himachal Pradesh Cricket Association, which is organising its first international match.

"You can never predict the weather in Himachal Pradesh. Everybody is keeping their fingers crossed."

The tourists, who arrived in New Delhi on Monday, took an early morning chartered flight on Tuesday to Kangra, the nearest airport to Dharamshala, before an hour-long drive to their hotel.

Pakistan manager Salim Altaf told reporters his team was delighted to spend time in the cool climate of Dharamshala, but hoped the weather would not interfere with the cricket.

"We are here to play and do not want to go into the Test series short of match practice," said Altaf. "I wish the rain would go away."

Pakistan will play three Tests and six one-day internationals on their first full tour of India since 1999.

The board president's team, led by international Mohammad Kaif, comprises young players on the fringe of Test selection.

Organisers confirmed the Dalai Lama would not inaugurate the tour opener after reports the Pakistanis

were unhappy with his attendance.

Media reports on Monday said the Pakistan Cricket Board chairman Shaharyar Khan had told Indian officials Pakistan should not be put in an embarrassing position since it enjoys very good relations with China.

A statement from the Tibetan leader's office said the Dalai Lama had decided not to accept the invita-

tion by the organisers.

Altaf declined to comment on the controversy, saying "the matter had been discussed and sorted out by the two cricket boards."

Dharamshala has hosted the Dalai Lama and his government-in-exile since he fled Tibet in 1959 amid a failed uprising against Chinese rule.



PHOTO: AFP

**HAVE A GREAT FLIGHT!** Indian kite maker Jagmohan Knojia puts the finishing touches on a kite decorated with pictures of the Indian cricket stars in Amritsar yesterday.

**DAY'S EVENT**

Federation Cup Soccer

Bangladesh Navy vs Dhaka Wanderers (3:00 pm)

Bangladesh Rifles vs Arambagh (5:00 pm)

Venue: Kamalapur Stadium