



## Did U Know?

India, after almost 22 years, have won two matches in a row against Pakistan in India. India had last won two matches in succession against Pakistan in India in 1983.

## What to WATCH

**ESPN**  
Football Crazy  
Live at 5:00 pm  
Sportscentre  
Live at 8:30 pm  
New Zealand vs Sri Lanka  
First Test, Day Five  
Live at 4:30 am (Friday)  
**STAR Sports**  
Sportsline  
Live at 8:00 pm



## Serena Williams

(American tennis star)  
"You can't really beat that (winning an Oscar). You can always win Wimbledon."  
While comparing movie accolades to tennis triumphs.

## DAY'S EVENT

**Ispahani Nat'l Cricket League**  
(Four-day, Day Three)  
Sylhet vs Chittagong  
Venue: Sylhet Stadium  
Rajshahi vs Khulna  
Venue: Rajshahi Stadium  
Barisal vs Dhaka  
Venue: Barisal Stadium

## BFF moves to its Bhaban

April 10

### SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) is all set to move to the newly constructed BFF Bhaban on April 10.

Asian Football Confederation (AFC) president Mohammed Bin Hammam will inaugurate the building that has been constructed with FIFA fund.

The BFF had to defer the inauguration ceremony four times to get the nod from FIFA president Sepp Blatter who finally could not make time to visit Bangladesh.

The preparation and a daylong programme will cost BFF around Tk 15 lakh which includes local hospitality to 22 foreign guests.

The invitees include AFC general secretary Peter Velappan, AFC vice-president Monil Fernando, president of Nepal FA Ganesh Thapa, Thailand FA general secretary Worawi Makudi, general secretaries of Bhutan and Sri Lankan federations apart from Japanese and Indian officials.

A total of 500 guests are expected to attend the function which is scheduled to start at 11.30am. The football governing body of the country has also invited all national footballers since 1972 to grace the occasion.

The BFF will also launch its website immediately after the opening ceremony and honour ten footballers for their services to the country. A committee has already submitted a list of 25 players to the BFF.

Although the country's football headquarters will move to the Arambagh structure, it will keep its office at the Bangabandhu National Stadium.

## Batsmen make merry



### SPORTS REPORTER

Bowlers continued to toil for the second day running in round eight matches of the National Cricket League yesterday with Dhaka, Rajshahi and Sylhet putting up big firstinnings totals.

Former national opener Mehrab Hossain and another Tigers' discard Fahim Muntasir scored centuries as league leaders Dhaka, playing without key players, amassed 574 – the highest total of the season – at Barisal. Parvez Ahmed of Sylhet and Khulna opener Sajjadul Hassan also reached the magical three-figures as Rajshahi and Sylhet posted 400-plus scores at home.

### BARISAL-DHAKA

Mehrab hammered 168 (286 balls, 4x22) – his second century of the season and fifth career first class ton while Muntasir made a breezy 106 (135 balls, 4x16, 6x1) to put Dhaka in total control.

Mehrab, who was dismissed just one shy of his personal, lost overnight partner Adil Ahmed early in the morning when the visitors resumed on 263-3. They lost two more quick wickets and were 345-6 before

Mehrab, who began the day on 66, cut loose in company of Muntasir.

The two experienced campaigners shared 172 for the seventh wicket. Both were dismissed by Barisal leg-spinner Towhid Hossain, who was pick of the hosts' attack with 4-47 from 12 overs.

At close Barisal were 26-1.

### RAJSHAH-KHULNA

An explosive 158-run opening stand between Sahagir Hossain and Sajjadul Hassan spearheaded Khulna's solid reply against Rajshahi at the Rajshahi Divisional Stadium.

Sahagir hit a quickfire 90 off 104 balls with a dozen fours and one six. Sajjadul remained unbeaten on 105 (181 balls, 4x16) as the tourists reached 265-3 in just 65 overs before close.

Earlier, Rajshahi added 93 runs to their overnight 336-5 to finish with 425. Forhad Reza, who was 171 on the previous day could make just another six runs while Anisur Rahman Sanchay, who began on 53, missed a deserved hundred by eight runs.

### SYLHET-CHITTAGONG

A 120-run partnership between Golam Mawla (86) and national league debutant Zakwan Ahmed (65) for the last wicket gave Sylhet an imposing firstinnings total of 448

at the Sylhet Stadium.

Parvez Ahmed completed his hundred after resuming on 89 but gave a return catch to left-arm spinner Ilias Sunny on 102. Sunny who ended with 5-98, helped Chittagong capture four wickets in the space of 40 runs before the last pair defied the visitors.

Chittagong got off to a fine start in their innings, scoring 80 without loss. Gazi Salahuddin with 40 and Masumuddinowlah (29) were at the crease.

### SCORES IN BREIF

**BARISAL-DHAKA**  
Dhaka firstinnings: 574 all out in 158.4 overs (Rashedul 68, Anwar 84, Mehrab Jr 6, Mehrob 168, Adil 43, Neeyamur 10, Halim 7, Muntasir 106, Sunny 9, Masudur 13, Ashraf 0, extras 20, Sharif 3-132, Tariqul 2-111, Rajan 1-120, Towhid 4-47).  
Barisal firstinnings: 26-1 in 19 overs (Imran 20 batting, Bikash 4, Sonnet 0 batting, extras 2).

**RAJSHAH-KHULNA**  
Rajshahi firstinnings: 425 all out in 113 overs (Jahurul 2, Rakibul 20, Reza 177, Naeem 16, Mushfiq 28, Rosel 27, Anisur 8)  
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Bangladesh cricket team, which won the Test and one-day international series against Zimbabwe in January, was accorded a reception by Prime Minister Khaleda Zia at her office yesterday.

## Atapattu completes full century circle



### REUTERS, Napier

Sri Lanka captain Marvan Atapattu posted a century in the opening Test against New Zealand in Napier on Wednesday to become the fourth player to score hundreds against all nine Test opponents.

Atapattu made a chanceless 127 while his teammate Mahela Jayawardene blazed an unbeaten 118 to help Sri Lanka reach 351 for three when bad light ended play early on the third day at McLean Park.

The tourists were still 210 behind New Zealand's massive firstinnings total of 561 but with only two days remaining on a placid pitch that offers little encouragement to the bowlers, a draw is already the most

likely outcome.

"The pitch isn't going to break up, it's going to be a flat surface for five days," New Zealand paceman Chris Martin said.

"To get a result on it will need either some sensational cricket or some very average cricket."

Sri Lanka began the day 48 without loss and suffered an early setback when Martin removed opener Sanath Jayasuriya and wicketkeeper Kumar Sangakkara before lunch.

Jayasuriya fell two runs short of a half-century when he was trapped leg before wicket with the total on 95 then Martin added the scalp of Sangakkara (5) with the first ball of his next over when he played on.

Martin's double-strike brought Atapattu and Jayawardene together and the pair quickly set about balancing the ledger with a partnership of 184, setting a Sri Lankan record

for the third wicket against New Zealand.

Jayawardene made a flying start to his innings, reaching his half-century at almost a run a ball then went on to register his 13th Test hundred from 157 deliveries and survive the day with his wicket intact.

Atapattu, cautious but elegant, crawled to his half-century in 119 deliveries but accelerated after lunch, reaching his hundred off 196 balls in 255 minutes when he pulled Kyle Mills to the rope for his 17th boundary.

The Sri Lankan skipper raised his bat in triumph as he recalled his inauspicious start to Test career, when he managed only one run from his first six innings.

He was dropped for three years but forced his way back in and has

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PHOTO: AFP

**HI THERE:** Sri Lanka captain acknowledges the crowd's applause while being congratulated by teammate Mahela Jayawardene, who also scored a century, on reaching his hundred against New Zealand on the third day of the first Test at Napier yesterday.

## Ganguly looks to lady luck

### AFP, Visakhapatnam

**S**ourav Ganguly on Wednesday counting on luck to help him emerge from a

terrible loss of form with the bat that has threatened to cut short the career of India's most successful cricket captain.

Critics and former players alike are baying for Ganguly's blood after runs dried up for the stylish left-hand batsman during the ongoing contests against Pakistan.

He managed just 48 runs in five Testinnings against the arch-rivals, was then bowled for a first-ball duck in the opening one-day international at Cochin and again found his stumps shattered in the second match here on Tuesday after making nine.

Ganguly conceded the small target of 55, which will make him only the third batsman in the world after compatriot Sachin Tendulkar and Inzamam-ul-Haq of Pakistan to score 10,000 one-day runs, seemed light years away at the moment.

"It looks a long way off," he said after leading India to a 2-0 lead in the six-match series.

"I need to get some runs. That is what I am trying to do for the last one month. I am concentrating hard on it and I am practicing."

"I am hitting the ball well. Unfortunately I am not spending enough time at the wicket."

"I think I need a bit of luck. A bit of luck here and there where I am able to get some 30-40 runs. Then I can carry on from there."

Ganguly, who boasts an Indian record of 19 Test wins as captain, has not scored a Test century since a brilliant 144 against Australia in

Brisbane in November 2003.

A one-day hundred has eluded him since the World Cup semi-final against Kenya in Durban, South Africa in March the same year.

Ganguly's best scores against major teams after that have been 77 against Pakistan in the Rawalpindi Test in April last year and 90 in a one-dayer against England in September.

More than the lack of runs, it is the manner in which Ganguly has been dismissed that is worrying critics and fans alike.

His dislike for short-pitched deliveries, which he has fended awkwardly to close-in fielders, is well known. But in the last three outings against Pakistan, Ganguly has failed to spot the turning ball or the seaming delivery and found himself clean-bowled.

"It is not a pleasing sight to see

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## PM's RECEPTION

### Cricketers may get plots too

### UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia yesterday said that remarkable and continuous successes in sports could help enhance Bangladesh's dignity and image abroad.

"Players can work as successful goodwill ambassadors. They can make significant contributions to building friendship with other countries," she told at a reception to Bangladesh national cricket team for their Test and ODI series victories against Zimbabwe at her office.

The prime minister distributed gold medals and cheques among 17 national team players as well as its coach Dav Whatmore, captain Habibur Bashar, team operation manager, fitness advisor and computer analyst.

State Minister for Youth and Sports Fazlur Rahman and Bangladesh Cricket Board president Ali Asghar presented the prime minister with the first of 226 bats containing autographs of Bangladesh and Zimbabwe cricketers. Some 226 souvenir bats have been made, marking Bangladesh's 226-run win in the first Test.

Youth and Sports Secretary Syed Sajjadul Ahmed and former national cricket captains were also present at the function.

Responding to a demand for allocating plots to national cricket team players, she assured them of providing plots as given to SAFF Championship winning footballers.

## Australia to help build cricket academy

### SPORTS REPORTER

Australia will extend all-out support to establish a cricket academy in Bangladesh, said Australian High Commissioner to Dhaka Lorraine Barker yesterday.

During a courtesy call, she assured State Minister for Youth and Sports Fazlur Rahman of her country's co-operation.

The Australian envoy also showed interest in providing efficient coaches for the development of cricket, swimming and hockey.

## Mixed day for local GMs

### SPORTS REPORTER

It was a contrasting second round for the country's two Grand Masters as Ziaur Rahman continued his winning run while Niaz Murshed lost his board in the seventh United Insurance Grand Masters chess tournament at the NSC hall-room yesterday.

Zia beat Indian International Master Saptarshi Roy Chowdhury and Niaz lost to compatriot FIDE Master Abu Sufian Shakil.

The leaders secured maximum two points and shared the lead with compatriot IMs Reefat Bin Sattar and Abdullah Al-Rakib, Russian GM Alexander Fomin, WGM Vijayalakshmi and IM Prathamesh Sunil Mokal of India.

In other matches, Fomin beat Saptarshi Roy, Reefat beat IM Atanu Lahiri, Rakib beat Rahul Sangma, Vijayalakshmi beat Omer Hirawan and Mehdi Hasan Parag drew with Indian IM Sriram Jha.

## Dhoni's perfect riposte

### REUTERS, Visakhapatnam



When Mahendra Dhoni went out to bat against Pakistan in the second one-day international he knew he had everything to lose.

Having scored just 22 runs in four innings at an average of 7.33, the big-hitting wicketkeeper could easily have been overlooked by the Indian selectors for the next match.

But the 23-year-old cracked an explosive 148 on Tuesday, including 16 fours and four big sixes, helping India to their highest-ever total against Pakistan and a 58-run victory.

In the process, he may have helped India find the missing piece of the jigsaw that the one-day side has been long searching for.

"I knew it was an important game for me," Dhoni said.

"I had played four matches and not even scored 15, let alone 50. There were a lot of expectations from me and I needed to deliver."

Vice-captain Rahul Dravid reluctantly kept wicket for almost two years, including at the 2003 World Cup, in the absence of a genuine all-rounder or wicketkeeper who could bat.

It is too early to jump to conclusions, but Dhoni's emergence

comes as a relief to the team management.

"We've been looking for a wicketkeeper who can bat for a long time," Indian coach John Wright told this news agency on Wednesday.

"Rahul had to keep wicket because we couldn't find anyone. It's a good sign that Dhoni has finally made his presence felt. And what a way to do it."

If he had failed again, however,



MAHENDRA DHONI

things may have looked bleak for Dhoni.

India have given few chances to players who have not made good starts to their international careers and Test wicketkeeper Dinesh

Karthik recorded a career-best 93 in the second match against Pakistan in Kolkata.

"It was a good opportunity for me to bat up the order and I'm glad I grabbed the chance," Dhoni said. "The knock will give me a big confidence boost for the future."

Dhoni, a soccer goalkeeper in school, started his first-class career as a 19-year-old in 2001 but it was not until last year that he became a contender for the national team after a string of swashbuckling innings.

He smashed a rapid match-winning century as East Zone won the 2004 one-day Deodhar Trophy and a 47-ball 60 in the Duleep Trophy final in March 2004.

Dhoni followed up with two centuries against Pakistan A in a triangular tournament in Kenya and another fiery hundred in front of the selection panel at Mumbai's Wankhede Stadium in a Challenger tournament earlier this year.

On his debut against Bangladesh at Chittagong in January, he looked scratchy batting at number seven. His highest score from four games was a shaky 12 in Dhaka.

However, just as critics hinted that he wilted under the pressures of international cricket, Dhoni silenced them emphatically.

## Let down by Juve fans



### REUTERS, Milan

Italy's media praised Liverpool supporters for their tributes to the victims of the Heysel tragedy while criticising the behaviour of a section of Juventus fans at Tuesday's Champions League quarter-final at Anfield.

Liverpool and Juventus met for the first time since the Heysel Stadium tragedy 20 years ago in which 39 fans, mainly Italian, were killed when a wall collapsed following crowd trouble at the European Cup final in Brussels.

A pre-game ceremony on Tuesday featured Liverpool fans taking a banner to the Juve supporters with the message "in memory and friendship".

Fans from both clubs staged a football match in the city before kickoff while there was a stirring rendition of Liverpool's anthem "You'll Never Walk Alone".

However, a section of Juventus fans turned their backs on the ceremony and whistles and boos were heard. There were also unpleasant incidents at the airport.

The Turin-based daily La Stampa headlined its report on the Heysel tributes: "At the festival of friendship, ignorance wins".

The efforts of the home club were praised but it was reported that Juve supporters had insulted the mayor of Liverpool when he greeted them at the city's airport.

"It was to be the festival of friendship, a giant eraser to rub out the sins of the English at Heysel. The tribute of Liverpool to the Juventus fans became a diplomatic incident,



PHOTO: AFP

**TOO GOOD EVEN FOR THE BEST!** Juventus' goalkeeper Gianluigi Buffon, regarded as the world's best custodian, fails to prevent the volley by Liverpool's Luis Garcia from entering the net at Anfield in Liverpool on April 5.

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