

## INDEPENDENCE DAY SOCCER

### Abahani in last four

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

Abahani set up a semifinal clash against Muktiyoddha Sangsad when they came from a goal down to thrash Farashganj Sporting Club 4-2 in the Independence Day football tournament at the Rajshahi Stadium here yesterday.

Farashganj skipper Walid put some 10,000 Abahani supporters on the edge of despair when he headed home a freekick by Johnny in the 21st minute.

But backed by a whistling and cheering crowd, the Dhaka giants equalised three minutes later when centre-back Shipon nodded in a left-flank corner kick by Ujjal. The defender used another flagkick by winger Farvez to score his second goal of the match in similar style and put the Sky-Blues ahead in the 37th minute.

The indefatigable Abahani youngster was adjudged man-of-the-match.

The Farashganj backline failed to stop a barrage of attacks and substitute Farhad found the net from a goalmouth scramble five minutes after the break.

Abahani skipper Joy failed to pounce on a rebound in the 62nd minute but the national midfielder made no mistake to seal the victory in the 70th minute when he reacted quick to beat the rival keeper with a powerful header on a cross by Ujjal.

The three-goal cushion inspired Abahani to relax in the second half, allowing Farashganj enjoy superior

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## East Bengal arrive today

SPORTS REPORTER



The bottom team in AFC Cup's Group A India's East Bengal arrive today in Dhaka to take on Muktiyoddha Sangsad.

The two teams will only have academic interest in Wednesday's match at the Banga-bandhu National Stadium as both are out of reckoning for a berth in the next phase.

The Indian giants began the tournament with high hopes and underestimated Dhaka Federation Cup champions Muktiyoddha when they met in the opening game in Kolkata on March 9. But the hosts escaped with a goalless draw against a combative Muktiyoddha at the Salt Lake Stadium.

After the draw in Kolkata, East Bengal coach Subhash Bhowmik termed the result as an upset saying Muktiyoddha was a 'small side' but his boys failed to prove their much hyped profile, courtesy of a loyal local media, by losing their next

three matches.

East Bengal suffered their biggest loss when they crashed 5-0 to Al Faysaly of Jordan and are also struggling in the ongoing Indian National League. They are on the verge of being dethroned as the defending champions in that competition.

Muktiyoddha, on the other hand, recorded an impressive away win at Nebitchi of Turkmenistan but failed to take that form in home games. On four points, the Reds who won the Independence Day Gold Cup in Dhaka last month, will now play for pride only.

The Muktis are due to play in the semifinal of the Independence Day football tournament in Rajshahi tomorrow. They have decided to send a second-string team to Rajshahi considering their AFC Cup commitments.

East Bengal are coming without star player Baichung Bhutia who is suspended for the match following two yellow cards.

Al Faysaly top the group with ten points, followed by Turkmenistan's Nebitchi on seven.

### GROUP A TABLE

Teams	M	W	D	L	GF	GA	P
Al Faysali	4	3	1	0	10	1	10
Nebitchi	4	2	1	1	6	5	7
Muktiyoddha	4	1	1	2	2	5	4
East Bengal	4	0	1	3	2	9	1

## U-17 CRICKET FINAL Challenging target for Dhaka

SPORTS REPORTER

Rajshahi set up a challenging target for Dhaka at the end of the second day of their three-day Phase-II Under-17 Age-group cricket development tournament final at the Dhanmondi Cricket Stadium yesterday.

Dhaka will begin their second innings today with a 228-run winning target. The home team fell nine runs short in their first innings when they were bundled out for 182 resuming the day on 111-5 in reply to Rajshahi's 191.

Rajshahi were all out for 218 in their second innings.

## NATIONAL TABLE TENNIS

### Bappi clinches boys' title

SPORTS REPORTER

Bappi of Narail clinched the boys' (under-12) singles title in the Meril 27th National Table Tennis Championships yesterday.

Bappi, who had eliminated Auntu in the semifinals, came from a set down to beat Sabuj 3-11, 12-10, 11-6, 15-13 and 11-5 in an all-Narail final at the Shaheed Suhrawardy National Indoor Stadium in Mirpur.

The girls' (U-12) single trophy also went to Narail with Snigdhya recording a comfortable 14-12, 11-3, 11-3, 11-4 win over Jessore's Jhumpa.

Also on yesterday, women's team event favourites Bangladesh Ansar and Bangladesh Biman emerged as their respective group champions. Biman blanked Rajshahi 3-0 while Ansars defeated Gaibandha by same margin.

## WC 2007 strikes insurance deal

BBC ONLINE, undated

World Cup organisers are celebrating after securing an insurance package worth 53 million pounds for the 2007 event to be staged in the Caribbean.

Chris Dehning, managing director of the tournament, said all eight host nations were involved in the single policy.

He went on: "Some of the countries now realise that they could do everything their contract tells them." "But if another country doesn't deliver, this event could be taken away and we would have all fallen down."

Dehning, speaking at a new conference in Kingston, Jamaica, added: "The good news is that our plan has allowed us to replace the entire event insurance internationally."

"At least the international insurance market is saying that (they) believe the event is going to take place." "The progress that is being made against these plans gives [them] confidence to accept the risk that this event is not going to be moved from the Caribbean."

Some people in the region remain sceptical about the organisers' ability to pull off the World Cup in 22 months time.

Saturday's announcement was intended to silence those doubters.

## Skipper Smith steers SA



AFP, Kingston

South Africa captain Graeme Smith hit his fourth one-day international hundred to lead his side to a comfortable eight-wicket victory in the first match of their series against West Indies on Saturday.

Chasing 254 to win from 50 overs mostly under overcast skies, South Africa hit the jackpot in the 45th over, when Jacques Kallis hit Dwayne Bravo for the last of his two boundaries straight to give the visitors a 1-0 lead in the best-of-five series.

Smith emerged from a circumspect start to top score with 103 at better than a run-a-ball and shared 131 for the first wicket with Boeta Dippenaar, who struck seven fours and one six in 56 from 68 balls, and added 59 for the second wicket with Kallis to put the South Africans on course for victory.

The South Africans, led by the indefatigable Makhaya Ntini, bowled with purpose to dismiss West Indies for 253 in 48.5 overs.

Ntini, one of the two bowling thorns in the West Indies side during the preceding four-Test series, was the most successful South African bowler with four wickets for 46 runs from 10 overs.

Charl Langveldt and Andre Nel supported him with two wickets apiece, after West Indies chose to bat on a hard, true Sabina Park pitch under clear, blue skies.

Former vice-captain Ramnaresh Sarwan was the top scorer for West Indies with three fours and one six in 72 from 111 balls.

He added 106 for the fourth wicket with West Indies captain Shivnarine Chanderpaul, who hit four fours and one six in 49 from 56 balls.

Dwayne Smith, making his return to the West Indies side since the NatWest Series last year in Britain, also provided some pyrotechnics with 46 from 36 balls that contained four fours and two sixes.

The two West Indies new-ball bowlers, left-arm medium-fast bowlers Pedro Collins and Ian

Bradshaw, troubled Smith at the top of his innings.

They attacked him in his weak area outside the off-stump with balls moving away.

On 17, Smith edged Collins just wide of slip for four, and grew in confidence from this point onwards. He pounced on anything loose,

particularly in his favourite area on the leg-side.

He and Dippenaar, who played some breathtaking strokes, especially through the off-side, carved up the West Indies attack to give the South Africans a confident start.

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MAN-OF-THE-MATCH: South Africa captain Graeme Smith in full flow in the first one-day international against West Indies on Saturday.

## Akram asks Inzy, Shoaib to sort out differences



AFP, Karachi

Pakistan captain Inzamam-ul-Haq and pacer Shoaib Akhtar must sort out their differences for the betterment of cricket in the country, former skipper Wasim Akram said Sunday.

"Inzamam and Akhtar are grown-up guys and they must sort their differences out by talking with each other. Pakistan cricket needs this badly," Akram, the former great pacer and ex-Pakistan captain, told AFP.

Akhtar, 29, was left out of the 17-man squad for Pakistan's tour of the West Indies where they are to play three one-day games and two Tests starting May 18. The team leaves for the Caribbean tour on Tuesday.

Pakistan Cricket Board last week said Akhtar lacked match fitness. Inzamam also lashed out at

negative impact on other players also," Inzamam has said.

But Akram said dropping Akhtar was unjustified.

"Inzamam sought my advice last month and I told him to handle Akhtar properly. It's injustice. You can't sit someone out because he doesn't listen," said Akram.

Akram retired in 2003 after taking 414 Tests and a world record of 502 one-day wickets.

He said Akhtar looked fitter than two months ago when he had to pull out of the India tour due to a hamstring injury.

"When a fast bowler comes back from injury he tends to put some weight. I have been through it a lot and that's why Imran Khan used to take me on tours to get me fit," said Akram.

"You get fit after one match. I am not happy with all those medical

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## Did U Know?

Under Graeme Smith's captaincy, South Africa have won five Test matches out of the eight played against West Indies -- the remaining three failed to produce results.



### Jose Mourinho (Chelsea manager)

"I know what the club want for the future and we want the same. We all know that this season was a good start -- not the end, but the start." After signing a fresh five-year contract.



### ESPN

Brazilian Football Corinthians vs Sao Paulo Same Day Delay at 5:30 pm Sportscenter Live at 8:30 pm

### STAR Sports Sportsline

## INDIA CRICKET COACH

### Amarnath & Patil also on list with Chappell, Moody

PTI/REUTERS, Kolkata

World Cup winning hero Mohinder Amarnath and former Test player Sandeep Patil emerged as the latest contenders as the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) on Sunday shortlisted four candidates for the post of national team's coach.

The board also announced that the final decision would be made by June 15. The two others on the list are Australians Greg Chappell and his compatriot Tom Moody.

BCCI president Ranbir Singh Mahendra, however, announced that efforts were on to get in touch with 2-3 other former internationalists, all from abroad, before the final selection was made.

"You will get to know the name of the new coach by June 15. He will be (there) for at least the 2007 World Cup," he said while briefing newsmen on the deliberations at the two-hour meeting of the six-member committee formed to finalise a name for the top job.

The maiden meeting of the six-member committee was held at a five-star hotel here, with Mahendra in the chair, to consider a successor to John Wright, who ended his 4-1/2-year term as India's first foreign coach last month.

But the BCCI chief refused to divulge the names of the other internationalists the board was planning to sound out before making its final choice.

The candidates would be called for an interview, the date of which would be finalised after considering their availability, he said.

The high-profile committee also comprised former Indian captains Sunil Gavaskar, Srinivas Venkatraghavan, Ravi Shastri and ex-president of BCCI Jagmohan Dalmiya, with board secretary SK Nair as the convener.

Patil inspired a Kenyan charge to the semifinals of the World Cup in 2003, and had also enjoyed success in charge of the India A team. Amarnath's coaching resume includes a stint in Bangladesh.

India's next series is a tri-nation one-day tournament in Sri Lanka in August.

## Arjuna fears for SL sport



AFP, Colombo

Power-hungry administrators and a lack of bench strength has left Sri Lanka's cricketing future in a mess, according to the country's celebrated former captain Arjuna Ranatunga.

Ranatunga, who became a household name after leading Sri Lanka to the World Cup title in 1996, says drastic measures are needed to ensure the sport flourishes in the cricket-crazy island nation.

"Not many people outside Sri Lanka realise how bad the situation is," Ranatunga, 41, told AFP.

"The talent is there but it is not being harnessed properly. The way things have gone over the past few years we could soon be at the bottom of the pile."

Ranatunga said the current Sri Lankan team, captained by Marvan Atapattu, was a top-class side capable of taking on the best in the world.

But the future looked bleak because few talented junior players are rising from the ranks.

"You can't expect seniors like Atapattu, Chaminda Vaas, Sanath Jayasuriya and Muttiah Muralitharan to go on forever," he said.

"They have been the backbone of the side for a long time, even when I was playing."

"But what after them? Mahela Jayawardena, Kumar Sangakkara and Thilan Samaraweera are young and very talented but they will have to be around for a long time to keep

the team afloat.

"Soon we may not be able to defeat anyone."

Ranatunga, who played in Sri Lanka's inaugural Test against England in 1982 aged 18, quit cricket in August 2000 to follow his father into politics.

Now the junior minister for tourism, Ranatunga blamed the current mess in Sri Lanka cricket on officials who sought power without responsibility.

"I have said it many times before, our World Cup victory in 1996 came with a lot of unnecessary baggage," he said.

"As money came into cricket, it attracted a lot of unwanted people who were more concerned about themselves than the good of the sport."

"We are paying for it now." Ranatunga supported the government's recent move to take over the administration of Sri Lanka Cricket (SLC).

"It should have happened a long time ago, but better late than never," he said.

In a dramatic coup that stunned world cricket in March, sports minister Jeewan Kumaratunga sacked the elected representatives of SLC and appointed an interim committee in its place.

SLC president Thilanga Sumathipala, who was then attending a meeting of the International Cricket Council (ICC) in New Delhi, was ejected from the meeting and replaced by a government nominee.

Sumathipala responded by locking the SLC's headquarters in downtown Colombo and sent the staff on paid leave to prevent the

interim committee from taking charge.

Matters came to a head last Tuesday when armed officers of the Criminal Investigation Department raided the SLC headquarters and installed the government nominees headed by businessman Jayantha Dharmadasa.

Former Test captain Duleep Mendis, who served as the SLC's paid chief executive, quit his post in disgust but was persuaded by the interim committee to continue.

Sumathipala has moved court against his dismissal, but for now the government-appointed committee appears in control of the SLC.

Ranatunga hopes the new bosses will put cricket back on track and was himself willing to contribute towards it.

"I will always have time for cricket," he said. "I stood aside earlier because I felt the people running the game were very dubious."

"But if the interim committee is serious about cricket, I will willingly help. Sri Lankan cricket needs all the support it can."

## Windies 44/4

STAR SPORT DESK

West Indies were 44 for 4 in 17 overs after being sent in to bat in the second one-day international against South Africa at Kingston in Jamaica on Sunday.

Captain Shivnarine Chanderpaul was batting on 5 while Dwayne Bravo was on 3.



REDEMPTION! Real Madrid captain Raul acknowledges the applause from the fans after his second goal against Racing Santander at the Santiago Bernabeu stadium in Madrid on Saturday.

## PRIMERA LIGA

# The best of Real



REUTERS, Madrid

Real Madrid kept up the pressure on leaders Barcelona by notching up their seventh win in a row with a crushing 5-0 victory at home to lowly Racing Santander on Saturday.

A neatly worked goal from Michael Owen and a Ronaldo penalty set Real on the way in the first half.

Skipper Raul capped his best performance of the season after the break with a double and Ronaldo completed an emphatic win with a fine solo effort in stoppage time.

The victory left Real three points behind Barcelona with three games to play after this weekend's matches.

The Catalans have the additional advantage of knowing that if the teams finish level on points at the end of the season they will win the title thanks to a better head-to-head record.

Barca do not play until Sunday but have a tough away match against last season's champions Valencia who need a win to boost their chances of earning a Champions League place.

Sevilla missed the chance to pull clear of their rivals for a place in Europe when they lost 1-0 at arch-rivals Real Betis in a typically passionate and bad-tempered city derby.

Brazilian striker Ricardo Oliveira scored his 19th goal of the season with a sharp shot from 22 metres after seven minutes to give his side their first home win over their neighbours in 10 years.

Despite their defeat Sevilla remain third with 58 points, but are now only three ahead of Betis and fifth-placed Villarreal who travel to Malaga on Sunday.

Real Mallorca's hopes of avoiding relegation were dealt a serious blow when a late header from striker Savo Milosevic allowed Osasuna to

snatch a 1-1 draw at El Sadar.

The result left Mallorca three points behind Levante, who are just above the relegation zone and play fellow strugglers Albacete on Sunday.

Athletic Bilbao boosted their hopes of claiming a place in the UEFA Cup with a 2-0 home win over Real Zaragoza that pushed the Basque side up to eighth in the table.

Real took the lead against a timid-looking Racing when they completed a lightning break with a slickly worked goal just before the half hour.

Raul raced through the midfield, lofted the ball over the Racing defence to Ronaldo who cut a first-time pass back towards Owen and the England striker scored his 12th goal of the season when he guided the ball home with the outside of his foot.

Five minutes later Real were awarded a controversial penalty as referee Eduardo Irujo penalised Racing's Aouate after the keeper palmed the ball away from Ronaldo and collided with the Brazilian striker who had gone in with his foot high.

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### TOP SIX

Spanish football league table after Saturday's matches (played, won, drawn, lost, goals for, goals against, points):

Barcelona	34	24	6	4	67	25	78
Real	35	24	3	8	66	29	75
Sevilla	35	17	7	11	42	37	58
Villarreal	34	15	10	9	59	33	55
Valencia	34	13	14	7	51	35	53
Espanyol	34	15	8	11	46	43	53