



## Did U Know?

Bradley Hodge (203 not out) became the seventh Australian to register a double hundred against South Africa in a Test match.



**Fifth Nitol-Tata Nat'l Football League**  
Muktijoddha vs MSC, Rangamati (3:00 pm)  
Kacharipara, Jamalpur vs Samabesh Club, Munshiganj (5:00 pm)  
Venue: Bangabandhu Nat'l Stadium

**Premier Div Cricket League**  
Old DOHS vs Indira Road  
Venue: Bogra Dist Stadium

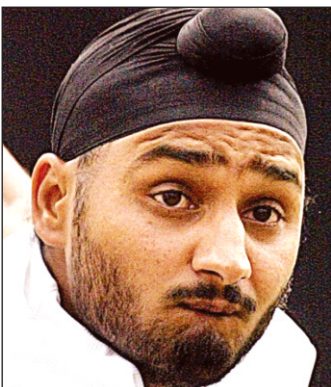
Agrani Bank vs Brothers Union  
Venue: BKSP-1

Mohammedan vs Orient SC  
Venue: BKSP-2

Abahani vs Kalabagan  
Venue: Fatullah Cricket Stadium

Biman vs Sonargaon Cricketers  
Venue: Comilla Dist Stadium

Victoria vs City Club  
Venue: Dhanmondi Cricket Stadium



**Harbhajan Singh**  
(Indian off-spinner)  
"It is always a great pleasure bowling with (Anil) Kumble. He is a great bowler. I always enjoy bowling with him and he did a very good job."

## Premier Cricket League gets a sponsor at last

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) finally got a sponsor for the ongoing Premier Division Cricket League.

Aktel, one of the leading cellular phone companies in the country, has agreed to sponsor the most exciting league midway through the competition.

The most coveted domestic meet began on December 12 without any sponsor as BCB's new marketing committee surprisingly failed to lure one.

"I personally managed this sponsor. Aktel will give us Tk 18 lakh for rest of the matches and they have also showed interest to continue. We are going to receive less amount than previous years but we are satisfied with the fact that at last we have got a sponsor," said Khondokar Jamil Uddin, chairman of the Cricket Committee of Dhaka Metropolitan (CCDM), yesterday.

## DIV I CRICKET Pegasus ride on Sharif

SPORTS REPORTER

Sharif smashed a run-a-ball 81 as Young Pegasus handed a five-wicket defeat to Dhaka Wanderers in the lone First Division Cricket League match at the Dhaka University ground yesterday.

Pegasus rode on Sharif's blazing knock to score 178 for five in 30 overs. Sharif struck ten fours and two sixes.

Captain Mohammad Lalmohan, who was the most successful bowler for his side with 3-25, made second highest 28 just from 12 balls that featured three fours and two sixes.

Earlier Wanderers were all out for a paltry 175 in 49.1 overs with Raju making highest 35.



Mohammedan striker Nakib (L) leaps to head in the equaliser against Feni Soccer Club during their National Football League clash at the Bangabandhu National Stadium on Friday.

## Mohammedan through

SPORTS REPORTER

Mohammedan Sporting Club relieved their fans when the giants came from a goal down to thrash Feni Soccer Club 4-1 yesterday and book a place in the Nitol-Tata Fifth National Football League Super Six.

The encounter at the Bangabandhu National Stadium turned out to be a knockout game for the Feni outfit who needed a win against Mohammedan to book the last berth in the final phase from Group B.

Mohammedan finished on seven points after four rounds, three behind group champions Abahani

and two ahead of Muktijoddha Sangsad, the other qualifier who have a match in hand.

Feni Soccer Club finished fourth in the five-team group with three points.

Holders Brothers Union and Bangladesh Army have already qualified for the Super Six from Group A. The remaining team will be decided after today's match between Kacharipara SC and Samabesh Club.

The visitors began lively against the mighty Mohammedan but striker Ritu volleyed the ball inches wide of the rival goal after being set up by Baten in the eighth minute. Ritu made amends in the very next minute when he headed home a right-flank cross by fullback Juku to put Soccer Club ahead.

Mohammedan, buoyed by their four hard-working Nigerians, came down hard on their opposition as the threat of elimination loomed over them. Nakib spoiled the easiest chance of the day when the skipper intercepted a backpass by a rival defender but his hesitation inside the box allowed Ramjan to snatch possession halfway through.

However, the veteran striker famous for his head-works rose to the next chance in the 25th minute and levelled the score with a glancing header on a right-side corner by Asad.

Nakib's equaliser inspired the Black and Whites to take the lead

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## 500-dollar fine slapped on Nafees

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) fined national opener Nafees Iqbal five hundred US dollars for not complying with the board's order.

After a hearing on Thursday, the board decided to fine him the match fee of a one-day international on disciplinary grounds.

The Brothers Union batsman played the Premier Division League match against Old DOHS on Wednesday ignoring the advice of physio Paul Close following an ankle injury in the previous match.

When contacted, the Chittagonian admitted that he had been penalised but said that he was helpless about the incident.

"The board has fined me the match-fee for an ODI. It is true that I breached the code of conduct as a payroll player. But I can only say that I was a victim of situation and it is personally frustrating for me that I have been disciplined for the first time," said Nafees without elaborating about the situation.

Nafees, however, said that he would not be able to play today's match against Agrani Bank as he was yet to recover from the injury.

## PREMIER CRICKET LEAGUE

## Fifth round ties today

SPORTS REPORTER

The fifth round of the Premier Cricket League will take place today at six different venues across the country.

Holders Old DOHS face unfancied Indira Road Krira Chakra in their bid to maintain the all-win record at the Shaheed Chandu Stadium in Bogra.

Victoria Sporting Club, the surprise pack of the league with also an unbeaten record, are billed for a tough challenge against runners-up City Club at the Dhan-mondi Cricket Stadium.

Another heavyweight match in this round between Bangladesh Biman and big-spending Sonargaon Cricketers will be held at the Comilla Stadium. Manvinder Singh Visla, a Delhi middle-order batsman, arrived yesterday to play for promoters Sonargaon.

Mediocre Abahani, who stunned City Club in the previous round, will take on giant-killers Kalabagan Krira Chakra at the Fatullah Cricket Stadium and title contenders Mohammedan meet Orient Sporting Club at BKSP.

Smartering from a seven-run defeat against DOHS, Brothers Union play Agrani Bank at BKSP to try to return to winning ways.

After completion of the fourth round on Wednesday, DOHS and Victoria lead the table with maximum eight points, two points ahead of second-placed Moha-mmedan. Abahani, City, Biman, Brothers and Sonargaon share the third spot with four points each.

## Booters leave for Pakistan today

### Football

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh football team make their second trip to Pakistan this month when they leave Dhaka this afternoon to play the away leg of the Asian Cup pre-qualifiers against the home side.

The Bangladesh-Pakistan second leg match will be held at the People's Sports Complex Stadium in Karachi on December 26.

It would be a tough task for the SAFF Championship runners-up to reach the qualifying rounds, especially after drawing 0-0 with Pakistan at home on Wednesday. But coach Diego Cruciani and captain Arif Khan Joy were hopeful

that they would be able to lift the team spirit and return home with a positive outcome.

Bangladesh beat Pakistan by a solitary goal in the SAFF Championship semifinal, but since the 2-0 loss to India in the final Cruciani's boys seemed yet to recover from the hangover.

Striker Shahjuddin Tipu and defender Faisal Ahmed will miss the trip as the Bangladesh team will travel with 18 players and three officials.

Manager Sayeed Hassan Kanan said on Friday that the match is very important for the national team.

"It would help our national team if we can qualify. After the 2003 SAFF Championship, we did not have a coach for two and a half years and hardly played an international

match. But now we have a foreign coach for one and half months. If we reach the qualifying stage, we can continue the national camp," Kanan told.

"We need more time and training to prepare the national team which can't avail most of the times due to lack of fund. But the chance to play more international matches would not only give the players more exposure but also keep the players busy," the former national goal-keeper added.

The team will return home on December 27.

Meanwhile, Bhutan's match

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PHOTO: STAR

**TOUGHER TEST LIES AHEAD:** Pakistan-bound Bangladesh booters watch the proceedings of Friday's NFL fixture between Mohammedan and Feni SC from the VIP gallery of the Bangabandhu National Stadium.

## Zim deeper in crisis

### Cricket

AFP, London

Fed-up Zimbabwe cricketers, who went out on strike on Thursday, desperately need help from the International Cricket Council (ICC) if they are to keep on playing.

Their representative Clive Field insisted that many players would be forced to turn their back on the game as the sport in the country goes through another depressing crisis.

"It's a financial issue - these guys are crying out for help," Field told the BBC.

"If they don't see a viable career in cricket they will have to earn a living doing something else."

"It's vital that we try to keep cricket going in Zimbabwe, but these are

professional sportsmen who have to make a living.

"I'm personally a bit upset that the ICC has not found the need to become involved by now."

The players went on strike and said they would not travel to next month's Afro-Asian A-team tournament in Bangladesh unless their demands, including the dismissal of Zimbabwe Cricket (ZC) chairman Peter Chingoka and managing director Ozias Bvute, and payment of monies owed to them were met.

The Under-23 side would also not travel to neighbouring South Africa to play in cup matches in February.

Last week, the players decided to resume training so that they would be prepared for the tournaments, but they changed their minds because of what was described as "the ongoing failure of ZC to address players concerns, both contractual and governance".

ZC shut its offices without notice a fortnight before Christmas and they are not expected to re-open until mid January.

In an earlier statement put out by Field, on behalf of the Zimbabwe Professional Cricketers Association, it was alleged match fees were paid late or not at all for series against India and New Zealand.

"In the light of the persistent and continued failure by both the Chairman and the managing director of Zimbabwe Cricket to address the legitimate concerns of their players, effective immediately no player will train or avail himself for national duty," said the statement.

Last month former Zimbabwe captain Tatenda Taibu said he would

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## Ganguly unlikely for tour of Pakistan

### Cricket

CRICINFO, undated

All things being equal Sourav Ganguly will not make the cut to the Indian squad for the tour of Pakistan. As things stand the selectors are set to leave him out of the 15- or 16-man squad they will select on Saturday.

In the absence of a specific directive from the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) insisting that he be picked, Ganguly will continue to be out of the national team, CricInfo has learned.

Till late on Thursday there was no directive from the board to the selectors but too much cannot be



SOURAV GANGULY

read into that. Sharad Pawar was anyway scheduled to meet the coach and chairman of selectors on Friday evening.

The selectors are believed to be in favour of picking four seamers, two spinners, eight batsmen and one wicketkeeper, if they pick 15, and an extra seamer if they pick 16.

This means that Murali Kartik, who did not play a part in the three-Test home series against Sri Lanka, will miss out. With a high possibility of Zaheer Khan returning, the shoot out for the last slot could be between Rudra Pratap Singh and Vikram Rajvir Singh.

Zaheer has picked 10 wickets in his last two Ranji games, apart from being the leading wicket-taker in the Duleep Trophy, and there's little more he can do to prove that the time is ripe for a recall.

With Virender Sehwag and Gautam Gambhir struggling to

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## Eng shift focus on India

### Cricket

BBC ONLINE, undated

England's cricketers have flown home from Pakistan with plenty to think about following defeats in the Test and one-day series.

They will not have much time to rest as they head to India in mid-February.

Michael Vaughan (knee), Ashley Giles (hip) and Kevin Pietersen (rib) all had to return home early from

Pakistan.

"We've just got to make sure we get everyone back as quick as possible and make sure we hit India with a fully-fit squad," Vaughan told the BBC.

"In the last couple of years we've been very successful because we've had a settled team.

"As soon as you start losing one or two components in that side, it's bound to unsettle you somewhat.

"In the Ashes series we only used 12 players in five matches. That's something that hadn't hap-

pened for a long time in an Ashes series.

"But you can't control injuries and when these injuries come about it does create opportunities for younger players to stand up and test themselves at the highest level," said Vaughan.

Batsman Andrew Strauss missed a Test in Pakistan to fly home for the birth of his son and England face a similar scenario in India with star all-rounder Andrew Flintoff's wife expecting a baby on

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