



PHOTO: AFP

ONE BIGGIE IS GONE: Left-arm spinner Enamul Haque (2nd from L) celebrates the dismissal of Sri Lanka's wicketkeeper-batsman Kumar Sangakkara (not in the picture) with his teammates on the second day of the first Test at the Chittagong Divisional Stadium on Wednesday.



In 1905, 18 men died from injuries sustained on the football field and the then president of the United States Theodore Roosevelt stepped in and instituted safety measures to make the game safer.



**Michael Vaughan**  
(England cricket captain)  
"I'm very optimistic and enthusiastic about the game of cricket and I certainly won't rule myself out of playing cricket again in the future."  
While expressing his confidence of making a comeback from the knee injury which forced him out of the ongoing Test series against India.



**ESPN**  
Sportscenter India  
Sports News  
Live at 8:30 pm  
**STAR Sports**  
Bangladesh vs Sri Lanka  
First Test, Day Three  
Live at 9:15 am  
**Sportscenter Update**  
Sports News  
Live at 8:00 pm & 11:30 pm  
**DD National**  
India vs England  
First Test, Day Two  
Live at 10:30 am



Bangladesh vs Sri Lanka  
First Test, Day Three  
Venue: Chittagong Divisional Stadium

## Pitch surprises Bashar

BISHWAJIT ROY from Chittagong



Bangladesh captain Habibul Bashar expressed his utter surprise at the mysterious behaviour of the wicket on the second day that saw Sri Lanka wrestling back the control of the first Test after losing the top-half of their side for 178.

Mohammad Rafique and Enamul Haque bowled brilliantly on a crusty-dry surface and shared four wickets to wrap up the Sri Lanka top-order as the visitors stumbled to 178-5. But Thilan Samaraweera and Farveez Maharoof dashed the hosts' hopes of taking a first innings lead, associating in a 117-run stand for the sixth wicket.

"No doubt, Samaraweera showed sheer patience and didn't give any chance but I was really surprised the way the wicket behaved today. Spinners got turn from the first session but suddenly it turned into a flat track which is really mysterious," said Bashar.

Bashar now set his next target of restricting their opponents within 350 runs and then bat well in the second innings to set a difficult target for the opponents.

"Our main target would be to bat well in the second innings after wrapping up the Sri Lanka innings as early as possible. If we are able to put a decent total, we can even win the match. I tell you it would not be an easy task for Sri Lanka to bat in the fourth innings here," he added.

The Bangladesh captain however said that he was not worried about facing Sri Lanka's spin wizard Muttiah Muralidaran, who could prove devastating on a waning track.

"Yes, it will not be easy to handle Murali in the second innings because we are expecting turn from tomorrow. But after the first innings experience, we believe that we have the ability to face the challenge from the champion bowler," said the country's most successful batsman.

Sri Lanka captain Mahela Jayawardene, however, was looking forward to his leading wicket-taker to maintain their hundred per cent winning record against the Tigers.

"Murali can be dangerous from tomorrow afternoon. It is still a very good batting track but there is a chance that the ball would turn from the third day afternoon. Murali can turn the ball on any surface but he gets devastating with support from the pitch," said Jayawardene.

The Sri Lankan skipper said that he was disappointed with his team's batting performance.

"Some players including myself got good starts but have failed to make it big. Samaraweera played brilliantly with Maharoof. Our main target is to score another 50 to 60 runs and anything beyond that would be a bonus," he added.

"Ashrafal played a brilliant knock. But we missed some chances that ultimately cost us. In present day cricket most of the teams try to score as many runs as possible and 300 on a day is not anything new," he said commenting on the home side's first-day performance.

Meanwhile, the Sri Lankan players complained against pacer Shahadat Hossain after the tea session for making peculiar noises during his deliveries and captain Bashar had to settle the issue with the two umpires. Shahadat also faced similar complaints during Bangladesh's Sri Lanka tour in August-September.

### SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard at stumps on the second day of the first Test between

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## Day One honours India's



AFP, Nagpur

England opener Alastair Cook celebrated his debut with a half-century Wednesday but could not stop India seizing the initiative on the first day of the opening Test.

The 21-year-old left-hander hit a gutsy 60 as an injury-hit England side struggled to 246-7 at stumps after choosing to bat first on an easy-paced pitch.

All-rounder Paul Collingwood was the only other batsman to pass 50, chalking up his third Test half-century with one six and seven fours. He was 53 not out at the close, with Matthew Hoggard yet to score.

A debutant, Shanthakumaran Sreesanth, also starred for India. He bowled at a lively pace to dismiss Andrew Strauss (28) followed by Ashes hero and number four batsman Kevin Pietersen (15).

Left-arm seamer Irfan Pathan built on Sreesanth's effort with three wickets, including two late in the day.

"It's a great feeling and I think I owe something to this ground," said Sreesanth, who made his one-day debut also at this venue.

"I started enjoying from the first ball and Pietersen's was the wicket I dreamt of. He is one of my favourite batsmen in modern-day cricket. My captain was a great source of encouragement."

England, short of a pair of quality batsmen following the withdrawal of skipper Michael Vaughan and vice-captain Marcus Trescothick, were indebted to Cook for keeping the Indian attack at bay in the first two sessions.

"I was obviously nervous and did

not know what to expect but my captain was very encouraging," said Cook.

"I enjoyed the experience of playing against two world-class spinners (Anil Kumble and Harbhajan Singh) on a slow pitch. Patience was the key and I tried to play each ball on its merit. It would

have been nice if I got a hundred."

Cook put on 56 for the opening wicket with Strauss after stand-in captain Andrew Flintoff had won a good loss, but then received little support from Ian Bell (nine) and Pietersen.

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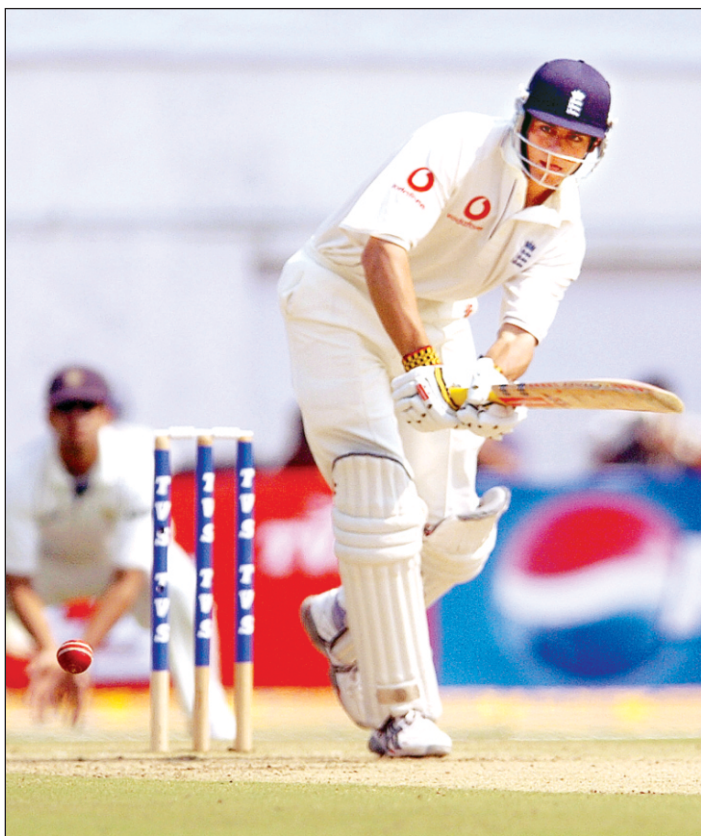


PHOTO: AFP

WORTHY DEBUTANT: England debutant Alastair Cook flicks the ball on way to scoring a fine fifty on the opening day of the first Test against India in Nagpur on Wednesday.

## Cruciani banned for rest of Asian Cup qualifiers

SPORTS REPORTER

The Asian Football Confederation (AFC) has banned Bangladesh's Argentine football coach Diego Cruciani for six matches of the 2007 Asian Cup qualifiers for his attempt to assault an Indian referee in December.

The frustrated coach tried to attack referee Rizwan Ul Haque after Bangladesh's Asian Cup pre-qualifier against Pakistan in Dhaka on December 22.

The Argentine, who was earlier slapped a two-match provisional suspension by the Asian football's governing body, has already missed out two matches and will not be able to sit at the bench during Bangladesh's remaining four Asian Cup qualifiers.

The disciplinary committee of the AFC, which took the decision on Tuesday, has also fined Cruciani 3,000 US dollars.

The penalty will not be applicable for the 41-year-old in other international matches.

## Kenya will now play four ODIs in Bangladesh

CRICINFO, undated

Bangladesh's one-day series at home to Kenya has been on Tuesday confirmed after weeks of delays caused primarily by Zimbabwe's reluctance to confirm whether they would participate in a tri-series.

Kenya will now play four ODIs on the 13-day tour which starts on March 13. They will meet Bangladesh at Bogra (March 17) and Khulna (March 20) before heading to Dhaka for two more games on March 23 and 25. The exact venue in Dhaka has yet to be confirmed.

Kenya will leave on March 26, three days before they take on the Netherlands in the ICC Intercontinental Cup in Nairobi. The tour means that the ODI which had been discussed against the Netherlands to be played on March 26 will not now happen.

The news is a great boost to Kenya, as these four games will mean that they have enough matches under their belt to qualify for a place in the ODI rankings. If they beat Zimbabwe, this might enable them to take the fourth and

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## NCL 7th round starts today

SPORTS REPORTER

The seventh round of the Ispahani Seventh National Cricket League will begin today with one-day leaders Rajshahi taking on fourth-placed Khulna at the Rajshahi Divisional Stadium in the limited-overs match.

Bottom-table Barisal host second-placed Dhaka while Chittagong are pitted against Sylhet in the other match at the Dhanmondi Cricket Stadium.

## Reefat, Rajib in good form

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladeshi International Masters Reefat Bin Sattar and Enamul Hossain Rajib collected four points each after the end of the fifth round games in the ONGC Cup International Open Grandmasters Chess Tournament at Hyderabad, India.

Grand Master Niaz Murshed earned 3.5 points while GM Ziaur Rahman and IM Abdullah Al Rakib were level on three points.

Rashed Dinayet and Shameem earned two points each while Mahbub Afzal and Shiblu 1.5 points.

In the fifth round, Reefat beat Gurpreet, Rajib beat Anil Kumar, Zia beat Shameem. Niaz lost to GM Surya Sekhar Ganguly and Rakib lost to WGM Meenakshi.

About 200 chess players from 18 countries are taking part in the meet being held at the KVBR Indoor Stadium. The winner will pocket US dollars 4,500 as prize money.

## Exhibition football

SPORTS REPORTER

The Dhaka Mohammedan Sporting Club veterans will take on visiting Pakistan Sonali Ot in an exhibition football friendly at the Bangabandhu National Stadium.

The match will kick off at 4.30pm.



At the end of the second day's play Sri Lanka looked the likely team to win the Test match. It's true that the Lankans were yet to cross the Bangladesh total, but they are certainly in a position to take a first innings lead with plenty of wickets in hand. Muttiah Muralidaran might not have been at his best in the first innings, but the champion bowler could prove dangerous tomorrow because he will get some assistance from the wicket.

I think if Bangladesh had got some more runs in their total it could have been a different story for them

## AKRAM INSWINGER

on the second day, but they unfortunately missed that opportunity. They got their share of chances to tighten the noose on Sri Lanka's neck when they made an early breakthrough and then picked up the important wickets of Mahela Jayawardene and Kumar Sangakkara.

Mahela and Sangakkara batted brilliantly to repair the innings after the dismissals of their openers but I must say the Sri Lankan captain played a silly shot to walk to the pavilion in a very important stage of the game.

I think his Bangladesh counterpart Habibul Bashar was also responsible for failing to hit the visitors hard when they were in a dicey situation. His negative captaincy was another reason behind Bangladesh's failure to keep the pressure on the opponents. Bashar was little bit negative before and after the tea session when his team was in a very good position following the departures of Sri Lankans top batsmen.

But by saying this I must congratulate Bangladesh for the way they came back into the match and credit should go to their two left-arm spinners Mohammad Rafique and Enamul Haque. Enamul got turn and put pressure on the opponent batsmen while experienced Rafique bowled straight and fast. But Rafique should have given more

flight to his deliveries to be more effective.

I was really impressed by the bowling of Syed Rasel, who gave the early breakthrough, as the young guy showed some maturity on this kind of surface, pitching the ball in the right area, but inexperience got the better of another new ball bowler Shahadat Hossain.

Sri Lanka were in a spot of bother when they lost five wickets for 178 runs but Bangladesh failed to take the advantage. I think tiredness was an issue in the Bangladesh bowling attack which was exposed in the later part of the day. The bowlers looked tired in the final session. I think they desperately felt the absence of a genuine bowling all-rounder in the team. If there was a genuine bowling all-rounder -- be it a spinner or a paceman -- it would have lessened the workload on the main bowlers.

Alok Kapali bowled only one over while Mohammad Ashraful got three. So, you can't brand them as bowling all-rounders in the team.

It was however nice to see that Bangladeshi bowlers finally got back their rhythm and break the partnership of Samaraweera and Maharoof, who actually took the match away from Bangladesh's grip.

## Hong Kong edge hosts



SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh's hopes to win their first home match in three years was dashed when they went down to Hong Kong 1-0 in the second round Group F 2007 Asian Cup qualifier yesterday.

Super-sub Siu Ki Chan headed home the match winner before a mere 1,000 spectators at the Bangabandhu National Stadium seven minutes from time as Bangladesh were dumped to the bottom of the group after two losses

in as many games.

Chan, who came on to the pitch in place of Ho Man Chan on the hour, leapt high above Bangladeshi defenders Rajani and Titu to meet a long ball from the middle of the pitch and headed the ball past hapless goalkeeper Biplab who was otherwise brilliant in the game.

Both sides came to the game on the back first round defeats and Bangladesh, looking forward to wipe bitter memories of their last week's 5-0 drubbing in Uzbekistan, expectedly made two changes with Biplab replacing Aminul and Farhad starting as the striking partner of Alfaz in place of rookie Emily.

Bangladesh, who last won a home game against India in the SAFF Championship semifinal, got the first real chance but veteran Alfaz, set with a quickly taken freekick by skipper Joy, curved his left-footer wide at the far post.

Hong Kong made a slow start on a very hot day but threatened to take the lead five minutes later but their Cameroon-born midfielder Guy Ambassa rattled the crossbar inside from the box.

The visitors, who lost 3-0 to Qatar at home in the opening round, forced fine saves by Biplab who denied long range efforts from YL Chan and Ambassa before Bangladesh raised hopes of a comeback before a small 1,000 home fans.

Four minutes before halftime, Alfaz cut back the ball from right but hardworking Hong Kong midfielder Szeto cleared the low cross for a corner before Farhad could reach it. The corner almost broke the deadlock but Hong Kong keeper Fan pulled off a one-handed save on Arman's low drive.

Both the goalkeepers were working overtime after the break with Biplab making a reflex save on Ambassa's close-range header and his counterpart Fan flicking the ball over after Arman's freekick took a wicked drop in front of him.

However, fresh legs of Law and Chan helped Hong Kong to mount heavy pressure and both the substitutes wasted chances in the 77th minute. The pressure told six minu

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PHOTO: STAR

Action from yesterday's 2007 Asian Cup qualifying match between Bangladesh and Hong Kong at Dhaka's Bangabandhu National Stadium.