

## Batsmen keep struggling

### Cricket

#### SPORTS REPORTER

Batsmen found themselves wanting also on the second day of the four-day matches in the Ispahani Mirzapore Tea 8th National Cricket League as the seamers continued their dominance in the first round.

National pacesman Shahadat Hossain and out-of-favour Mohammad Sharif combined to shoot Barisal out for 154 to ensure Dhaka's 19-run slender first innings lead at the Fatullah Cricket Stadium yesterday.

At the Rajshahi Divisional Stadium, Mohammad Shahjada and Shafaq Ali Jabir were on fire as the hosts took a nine-run advantage after reducing Khulna to 118 for nine at close of play.

The batting scenario was, however, better at the Chittagong Divisional Stadium when the play started after the entire opening day was washed out with the home side managing 268 before being bundled out in 89.4 overs.

**DHAKA v BARISAL**  
Dhaka bounced back after a fragile batting show when Sharif claimed four wickets and Shahadat picked up three to dismiss Barisal for 154 in their defence of a 173-run first innings total.

Dhaka tightened their grip when they scored 63 for one in their second essay before bad light stopped

play, taking their overall lead to 82 runs with Javed Omar (18) and Anwar Hossain (8) a crease.

Resuming the day on 59-2, the visitors lost their two overnight batsmen - Nasiruddin Faruque (10) and Mehdi Hasan (0) - quickly as ace left-arm spinner Mohammad Rafique, who bagged two wickets for 28 runs, gave an early breakthrough removing Faruque.

Barisal could not recover from the damage although Ishtaq Sonnet, who had taken four wickets on the first day, fought a lone battle with an unbeaten 92-ball 46.

On the other hand, off-spinner Ali Arman Rajan had the lone success for Barisal he took a return catch to dismiss Mehrab Hossain Jr for 28.

**RAJSHAH v KHULNA**  
Shahjada was on fire after his new-ball partner Shafaq started the carnage as star-studded Khulna, playing sans national skipper Habibul Bashar, put on a pathetic batting performance to struggle to 118-9 in 45 overs before rain stopped the second day's play.

Lanky seamer Shafaq added another scalp to his overnight two wickets and then Shahjada captured four for 31 to rattle the batting line of Khulna, which resumed on 40 for 2.

Rajshahi skittled out for 127 in their first innings where tearaway Mashrafe had inflicted the main damage taking 4-27.

**CHITTAGONG v SYLHET**

Top order batsmen got the starts after Chittagong were put into bat first but they failed to convert them into big ones as the home team were all out shortly before close of play.

Gazi Salahuddin and Tamim Iqbal made a confident start before the 49-run opening partnership was broken by Rezaul Haque, who had Tamim (11) caught by Enamul Haque.

Then Nazimuddin (38 off 67 balls), Aftab Ahmed (44 off 83 balls) and captain Ehsanul (21 off 84 balls) all looked good in the middle but only ensured small partnerships, which were not enough to see the side at least cross the 300-mark.

Salahuddin was the top scorer with 48 from 77 deliveries that featured seven boundaries while inform Aftab smashed five fours and a six.

Tapash Baisya and Rezaul shared six wickets between them.

**SCORES IN BRIEF**  
**RAJSHAH:** First innings- 127;  
**KHULNA:** First innings- 118-9 in 45 overs (Sadat 2, Sajjadul 25, Sahagir 6, Sakib 17, Tushar 0, Manzarul 24 batting, Jamal 22, Mashrafe 6, Razzak 9, Ziaur 0, Rasel 0 batting, extras 7, Shahjada 4-31, Shafaq 3-49, Musheriq 2-22).

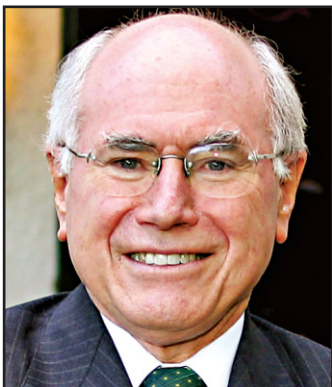
**DHAKA:** First innings- 173 and  
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Chittagong's national star Aftab Ahmed hits a boundary over mid-on during the second day of their four-day National League clash against Sylhet at the Chittagong Divisional Stadium yesterday.



The first Test match was played at the Melbourne Cricket Ground between England and Australia from March 15-19, 1877.



**John Howard**  
(Australian Prime Minister)  
*"I expect Australia to regain the Ashes. I'm not only hopeful but I'm confident."*

## Abahani on course

### Hockey

#### SPORTS REPORTER

Abahani got off to an auspicious start in the Green Delta Premier Hockey League Super Five when they handed a 3-1 defeat to Sonali Bank yesterday.

Abahani, who bounced back in the title race with a 2-0 win over holders Usha Kirra Chakra on the previous day, stayed on course for regaining the title after one season with goals from Russell Mahmud Jimmy and Indian recruits Prakash Chalke and Ronald Kiran.

Bottom-table Sonali Bank pulled back a late goal through Zahid Bin Talib Shuva.

The sky-blues extended their tally to 24 points after nine rounds, meaning Usha who also started the super league on 21 points, must beat Mohammedan Sporting Club today to stay on top jointly with Abahani.

Abahani, who turned out at the Maulana Bhasani National Hockey Stadium to play for the third successive day -- it took a couple of days to settle their match against Usha -- took early control with Dhanraj Pillay being inspirational in shaping Abahani's eighth victory.

The former Indian international and hockey superstar Pillay, who set both the goals against Usha, put on an indefatigable performance as he was found at defence and attack. But he was most impressive with inch-perfect passes that unsettled the rival

defence to create both first half goals.

The first one came after six minutes when league top scorer Jimmy, with a ball from Pillay, exchanged passes with Khokon to invade the rival box and hit the ball past goalkeeper Rakib for his 14th goal. Six minutes later, Pillay picked Prakash and the unmarked forward made no mistake to slam the ball home.

Abahani, who wasted three penalty corners, relaxed on the two-goal cushion and Kiran sealed three points from a 47-minute penalty corner.

The bankers, who stuck to 12 points, reduced the arrears when Shuva celebrated his call-up to the national team for the Asiad with a field goal seven minutes from time.

## Nafees ties the knot

### SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh cricket vice-captain Shahriar Nafees tied the knot with Jamie, a law student, in a simple ceremony last night.

The 20-year old left-hander, who is also a student (business administration), was determined to settle the issue ahead of this month's home series against Zimbabwe after a long courtship.

The wedding reception is expected to be held after next year's World Cup in West Indies in March-April.

It was an eventful year for the opening batsman, who has so far played six Tests and 28 ODIs, as he was named deputy of Habibul Bashar following his consistent performance, which also brought him the best player and batsman of the year awards by the Bangladesh Cricket Board.

## Bans boost Windies

### First Test from today

### Cricket

#### AFP, Lahore

Brian Lara says the West Indies will try to cash in on Pakistan's loss of dope-tainted Shoaib Akhtar and Mohammad Asif as his team bid to win their first series here for a quarter-century.

"Our aim is to put pressure on Pakistan and they can crack under pressure with two of their key bowlers absent," captain Lara said ahead of the first Test starting here from Saturday.

The West Indies are making their first tour of Pakistan for nine years and last won a Test series in Pakistan in 1980. But their recent one-day form and Pakistan's depleted bowling attack raise their hopes of an upset.

On November 1 a Pakistani tribunal banned leading fast bowler Akhtar for two years and new ball partner Asif for one year after both tested positive for the banned steroid nandrolone.

Their appeals against the bans will be reviewed next week.

Lara, whose side have won just one of their last 14 Tests, warned his team need to be at their best.

"Pakistan has done well recently

and it would be great to pull off a series win after so many years, but to do that we will have to be at our best," said Lara, who along with Shivnarine Chanderpaul is the only West Indian to have toured Pakistan before.

Both were part of the West Indies last tour in 1997 when Pakistan whitewashed them 3-0.

Pakistan beat the West Indies 2-0 at the neutral venue of Sharjah in the United Arab Emirates in 2002 after West Indies refused to tour Pakistan because of post-September 11 security fears.

Lara was confident his side would switch well to Test mode after recent one-day successes. They finished runners-up to Australia in a tri-series in Malaysia and again in the Champions Trophy held in India.

"I hope the confidence gained in the one-day arena will be transformed to Tests and this is very important series for us before the World Cup," said the 37-year-old master batsman from Trinidad, who holds the record highest Test score of 400.

Lara said dashing opener Chris Gayle and Chanderpaul have recovered from stomach bugs which forced them to miss the two-day tour opener which ended here in a draw on Thursday.

Allrounder Dwayne Bravo hit a

brilliant hundred but other key batsman Ramnaresh Sarwan managed just 29 and Lara did not bat at all.

"I am getting along well and am running without any discomfort," said Lara, who suffered lower back problems recently.

Lara said the Gaddafi stadium pitch would deteriorate and would be low and slow, which might help the spinners.

Pakistan captain Inzamam-ul-Haq agreed that Pakistan's run-up to the series had been difficult.

"The situation for us has not been ideal, we have lost two key bowlers and a lot has happened recently but I know if we play good cricket we can win," said Inzamam, who missed Champions Trophy due to a four-match ban.

Inzamam, who will also miss the first of five one-day matches against the tourists which follows the Tests, was banned for bringing the game into disrepute in August's Oval Test against England.

"I am happy that I am playing now and hope I do well to help my team win," said Inzamam.

The Pakistan captain was hopeful the Lahore pitch would turn.

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## NAT'L CHAMPIONSHIP Shawkat ton goes in vain

### SPORTS REPORTER

The qualifying rounds of the National Cricket Championship got under way across the country yesterday with BKSP recording the biggest victory of the day at their home ground.

BKSP knocked out Moulvibazar by 132 runs after scoring 242-6 at the BKSP ground, thanks to half centuries by Sumon (56) and Hasan (60) and a five-wicket haul by Riad who conceded just 14 runs in a very tight spell. Nadim topscored with 28 for Moulvibazar, who were all out for 110 in 43 overs.

Also at BKSP, a blazing century by Narsingdi batsman Shawkat went in vain as they crashed to a six-wicket loss to Dhaka University. Shawkat smashed four fours and six sixes in an explosive 110 not out off 112 balls that helped Narsingdi score 209-6 in the stipulated 48. The match was reduced due to a late start due to morning fog.

The modest total did not worry Dhaka University as Sabbir's 81 and a fine 52 by Deep steered them to 212-4 with four overs to spare.

In low scoring matches, home teams had contrasting fortunes. At Mymensingh, Olive's 46 inspired Gazipur (146-9) to oust the home team (116) by 30 runs while hosts Natore (80-8) snatched a thrilling two-wicket victory against Joypurhat (76).

Two more hosts fell down in the first round as Faridpur (114) conceded a three-wicket defeat to Manikganj (117-7) and Patuakhali stole a penultimate-ball victory (112-6) by four wickets against Barguna (111-8).

## Gaibandha beat Kurigram

### OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gaibandha

Gaibandha managed a 4-wicket victory over Kurigram in the Young Tigers National Cricket Tournament (U-14) at the local stadium yesterday.

Maju claimed six wickets as the hosts shot the visitors out for 140 in 41 overs.

Gaibandha reached the target of 144 for six in 46 overs with Ibrahim making team highest 37.



Abahani and former Indian star Dhanraj Pillay races past the Sonali Bank defenders during their Super Five match of the Premier Hockey League at the Maulana Bhasani National Hockey Stadium yesterday.

## Lara's mind on team success

### Cricket

#### AFP, London

West Indies captain and record-setting batsman Brian Lara has admitted in a Cricinfo interview that the one thing missing from his career is West Indian success.

Lara holds the world record for most runs in a Test innings with 400 not out against England in 2004, while his 501 not out against Durham is also a first-class record.

With five months to go before the start of the Cricket World Cup in the Windies, Lara said he would give up all his personal accolades if it meant seeing West Indies return to the top echelons of cricket.

There have been a few signs of

that in recent times after years of slump as the Windies reached the last two Champions Trophy finals, winning the first and missing out to Australia in the latest.

Although the Windies reached the Champions Trophy final earlier this month and entered the competition as holders, they still had to qualify as they were ranked outside the world's top six one-day nations.

And that, rather than winning trophies, is what Lara is most keen to change.

"I'd give anything, any of my records, just to be a part of a team that's ranked in the top two or three in the world," he said in the Cricinfo magazine November edition.

"That's what it's all about. It's a team sport and you can't go out there and bat without someone at the other end. You can't bowl and

not depend on your fielders."

West Indies are about to play Pakistan in a test series but have won only one of their last 14 Tests.

"I'd have loved to have experienced a better ride during my career, but to each his own," added Lara.

"West Indies had a very successful period in the late 70s, 80s and early 90s but that came to an end and now we have to go through this rough period."

But it has not been all gloom for Lara.

"For me to be part of it still means that I'm part of history. Just the fact that I've played for West Indies for so long is, to me, a lifelong dream come true."

But Lara is an outspoken critic  
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## Dravid expects tough tour

### PTI, Bangalore

Captain Rahul Dravid today said Team India was looking forward to play good cricket on their upcoming tour of South Africa.

"It's going to be important series for us. South Africa has been a very good tour to play good cricket. It's going to be good, tough cricket. As a team, we are looking forward to it," Dravid said.

India will play five one-day internationals and three Test matches in South Africa. The team leaves on November 13. The first limited overs match is to be played at the Wanderers in Johannesburg on November 19.

## Inzamam rubbishes retirement talks

### Cricket

#### PTI, Karachi

Pakistan captain Inzamamul Haq today made it clear that he had no intentions of retiring after next year's World Cup.

Asked if this would be his last home series at a press conference ahead of the first Test against the West Indies in Lahore, Inzamam said: "When I played my last home series people asked me the same question. I intend to carry on till I am fit and playing well," he said.

Speculations have been rife that the experienced batsman may call it a day after the World Cup next April and some Pakistan Cricket Board officials have even started planning for the scenario without Inzamam.

"I am enjoying playing the game, so I see no reason at this stage to say this would be my last home series. If we can beat West Indies then we will make amends for our poor show in the Champions Trophy," he said.

At 37, West Indian captain Brian Lara and Australian leg spinner Shane Warne are the oldest players on the Test circuit followed by Inzamam, who is 36 years of age.

Inzamam, however, conceded that things had not been good for Pakistan cricket in recent months and the latest allegation of Shoaib Akhtar slapping coach Bob Woolmer was damaging for the

team's morale.  
"The dope offence and bans on Shoaib Akhtar and Mohammad Asif have not helped us at all before such a big series and the allega-

tions by the Indian officer have put pressure on us. But we have the calibre to come back and perform well," he said.



West Indies captain Brian Lara (R) and Pakistan counterpart Inzamamul Haq hold up the trophy of their upcoming Test series during a ceremony in Lahore on Friday.