

Too much of India: Ponting

REUTERS, Melbourne

Australia captain Ricky Ponting has voiced fears that an overload of matches against India could leave Australia unable to play other nations on a regular basis. Ponting's comments came following news Australia and India are set to play three, and possibly five, matches in Belfast, Northern Ireland this June, in a series designed largely for Indian television consumption. Indian television's voracious appetite for broadcasting matches across the subcontinent resulted in Australia, India and the West Indies playing a tri-series in Malaysia last year. It also means Australia will play more matches against India in coming years. Ponting's side will tour India in October to play seven one-dayers, and then host the same opposition from December in four tests and a tri-series in early 2008, which also involves Sri Lanka. "From a player's point of view, you'd like to be playing all the teams around the world on a more consistent basis," Ponting told Australian news agency AAP. "But that's just the way it is. That's programming."

Crucial day

FROM PAGE 21 Kalabagan, when they meet second-from bottom City Club, destined to play in the relegation league. Birman play Indira Road at Mirpur Stadium while Kalabagan take on bottom-table Brothers Union at Fatullah.

Too many

FROM PAGE 21 Manik, delivered the second National Football League title to the black and whites, and lure big names this season left the 51-year-old club black and whites in the cold. The management, however, has been trying to make the fact - absence of a single national player in the squad for the first time - less burdensome by saying they had intended to build a young team that will serve them in future. "To have a young team was pre-planned, not our failure," said Mostaqur Rahman in defence of their activities after the popular and most successful club's history was projected on a giant screen. "A star is not born in a day. We will make stars out of these boys," he hoped.

When asked why Mohammedan, who began their preparation much earlier than the other sides and also have landed the maximum quota of five foreigners, have appealed to delay the league recently, he informed that it was done in agreement with other clubs. "We discussed this with a number of clubs before giving the federation in written. Actually, it is not about team preparation, rather the event management side. "A lot has to be done, like printing tickets, taking security measures, finalising practice venues and most of the clubs have yet to complete these. "That's why we have applied for a 15-day deferral," he added. Apart from the traditional black and whites for home, Mohammedan will use the green-black strip for away matches, it was confirmed yesterday although they have yet to name the captain. It would not be surprising if any foreign player wears the captain's armband - for the first time too - in absence of a local player whom the club can fully trust with responsibility.

Becks itching

FROM PAGE 24 former England captain was quoted as telling sports daily Marca on Thursday. "I'm desperate to play again ... I don't know if I will but I've got to keep on training. I want to leave this club on a high." Capello said Beckham would never play for Real again two days after the midfielder announced that he had signed a five-year deal with LA Galaxy worth £125million. The 31-year-old has been left out of the squad for every game since then. His last appearance for Real was when he came on as a substitute for the injured Guti in the 12th minute of their 2-0 defeat at Deportivo Coruna on Jan. 7. Club captain Raul and Guti have both come out in support of Beckham saying he should continue playing until the end of the season. Spanish media have pointed to the fact that other players such as Barcelona's Javier Saviola and Valencia's Roberto Ayala, whose contracts also terminate at the end of the season, are still playing for their respective clubs. Capello has hinted he may soften his attitude and is under pressure to change the team after back-to-back defeats in the league.

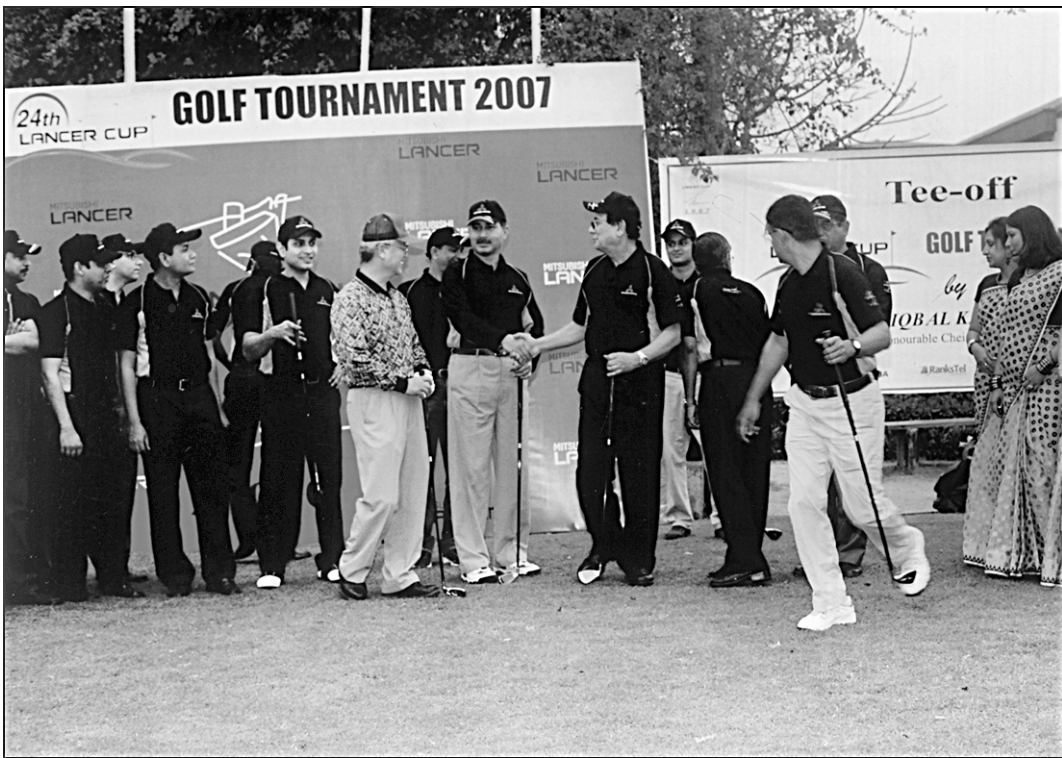


PHOTO: COURTESY

Chief of General Staff Major General Iqbal Karim Bhuiya (C) and A Rouf Chowdhury, chairman of Rangs Group, shake hands during the inaugural ceremony of the 24th Lancer Cup golf tournament at the Kurmitola Golf Club yesterday.

First final today



BBC ONLINE, undated

England will try to win three straight one-dayers for the first time since 2005 when they face Australia at the MCG in Friday's first Commonwealth Bank Series final. The tourists beat the Aussies and New Zealand to clinch their finals place. But Michael Vaughan will play no part because of a hamstring problem, so Andrew Flintoff will captain the team. "Michael is going to be a big miss but hopefully we can put in the performance we have in the last two games," all-rounder Paul Collingwood said. "Everybody is confident and now we have got an opportunity to finish a tour that hasn't gone as well as we would have liked on a real high."

Mal Loe is likely to be recalled, having been replaced by Vaughan against the Kiwis on Tuesday. Ravi Bopara is also an option but the rest of the side is expected to be the same. The last time England won three ODIs in a row was when they beat Bangladesh (twice) and Australia in June 2005. Collingwood made 106 in Brisbane after a poor run of form since making a double century in the second Ashes Test in December. "It has been a long time coming since Adelaide, it has been a tough trot," he added. "It's been great getting the runs but more important to get back to winning

ways and you have to give the boys a lot of credit for beating Australia last week." Australia are set to make changes too, with captain Ricky Ponting hinting at recalls for spinner Brad Hogg and injury-hit all-rounder Shane Watson. Ponting has taken note of England's improvements towards the end of their tour but remains unconvinced by talk from the tourists of a revival. "There's no doubt they've played some good cricket in the last two games and they will no doubt take some confidence from that. "I have noticed they've been talking themselves up a fair bit after winning two one-day games in a couple of days. "Now they have to come out and do it against us, a team that have dominated them all summer."

TEAMS AUSTRALIA (from): Ricky Ponting (captain), Adam Gilchrist, Matthew Hayden, Brad Hodge, Michael Clarke, Michael Hussey, Shane Watson, Cameron White, Nathan Bracken, Mitchell Johnson, Glenn McGrath, Brett Lee, Brad Hogg. ENGLAND (from): Andrew Flintoff (captain), Ed Joyce, Mal Loe, Ian Bell, Andrew Strauss, Paul Collingwood, Ravindra Bopara, Jamie Dalrymple, Paul Nixon, Liam Plunkett, Sajid Mahmood, Monty Panesar, Stuart Broad.

McClaren

FROM PAGE 24 Aragon, whose side are also in a far from enviable position in their Euro 2008 group, did his best to be diplomatic about England's performance but McClaren could have done without his candid observation on how easily his side created two-on-one situations when attacking the left flank of England's defence. "It surprised me how they left just one man there and that gave us a few opportunities," the veteran coach said. "England are always difficult to play against. They are a strong team but we are perhaps more technical. "Our players are good on the ball and maybe we were thinking quicker. They knew where they wanted to play the wall as soon as they received it and that was maybe the difference between the two sides."

Samuels caught

FROM PAGE 21 infamous row involving late South African captain Hansie Cronje in the year 2000. South African batsman Herschelle Gibbs was questioned by Delhi police in October last year but spinner Nicky Boje, whose name also figures in Delhi police list, is yet to present himself for interrogation. Asked if it was a match-fixing scandal involving Samuels, Kumar said, "No, it is not a match-fixing scandal but it is basically about revealing information about team details which is a violation of ICC code of conduct for players."

Kenya clinch WCL



AFP, Nairobi

Opener David Obuya struck a magnificent 93 to help Kenya post an eight-wicket victory over Scotland on Wednesday to win the World Cricket League division one title. Obuya put on 48 for the first wicket with Maurice Ouma (24) and a brisk 72 for the second wicket with Ravindu Shah (24) under the hot sun as the Kenyans sought to earn revenge for the 77-run defeat earlier in the tournament. The victory was Kenya's first major triumph and a first silverware since reaching the semifinals of the World Cup in South Africa four years ago and provides a good warm-up for the next event in the Caribbean which starts in March. Obuya was fired up after his partner Ouma was dramatically run out in the 16th over with the hosts having only made 48. Obuya responded by hitting two

huge sixes off Scottish bowlers Craig Wright and Majid Haq but was left disappointed when he fell short of his first ODI century. "I felt disappointed with myself especially after Ravindu was willing to give the chance to make a century," said Obuya. "I think I was in a rush to make the hundred. If only I took my time I would have made my first century." Kenyan skipper Steve Tikolo, however, hit three consecutive four to bring the match to an early close as the hosts overtook Scotland's 155 in 37.5 overs. Meanwhile, Canadian wicketkeeper-batsman Ashish Bagai was Wednesday named the ICC World Cricket League Player of the tournament in Kenya, boosting his confidence ahead of the World Cup in the West Indies. The 25-year-old has performed impressively throughout the tournament, scoring two centuries and one fifty at an average of 86.25, including a top of 137 not out in his side's thrilling seven-run defeat to finalists

Scotland on January 31. "It is a great thrill for me to win this award," said Bagai, who compiled eight Player of the tournament points to finish two points clear of Ireland's opening batsman William Porterfield. "I am really psyched and it is great for my confidence ahead of the Cricket World Cup." Bagai said the Canadian was looking ahead to the event in the West Indies that opens on March 13. "That is a big game for us and the one we really want to win," said Bagai, who only scored five points in Monday's World Cricket League game against Kenya which the hosts won by a crushing 158 runs. "After that we play England and New Zealand. We are not expecting to come top of the group," Bagai said. "Our goal is to put in consistently good performances against all the teams we play. As a team we are where we want to be mentally and we are really looking forward to it now."

Kenyan captain Steven Tikolo proudly holds aloft the trophy after beating Scotland to claim the ICC World Cricket League Division 1 at the Gymkhana Sports Ground in Nairobi on Wednesday.

PHOTO: AFP

Ram, Mondol ousted

SPORTS REPORTER

Ranjan Ram and Prithul Mondol were knocked out of the Dhaka Bank 21st Bangladesh International Junior Tennis competition at the Ramna Tennis complex yesterday. In the boys' singles competition, Ram lost to Korean Kim 2-6, 2-6 while Mondol was beaten by South Africa's O'Brien 2-6, 0-6. Belarus teenager Maisak defeated India's Kakhandi in straight sets while Uzbek Sirajiddinova outplayed Chinese Taipei's Cheng 6-1, 6-0.

Khagrachhari sports

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Khagrachhari

The 36th Winter Sports for high school and Madrasa's ended with a prize giving ceremony in Khagrachhari yesterday. A total of 164 high school and Madrasa players participated in 43 events all held at the Khagrachhari Government High School field. In individual events, Razina Akter was the star of the show as the student of the Khagrachhari government high school grabbed three first prizes including the coveted 100 meter individual prize. Ratan Das, a student of A.P.Bn won the boys individual 100 meter. In the group events Khagrachhari Government High School won at Cricket & Badminton, A.P.Bn High School picked up the boys Volleyball award while Khagrachhari Government Girl's High School picked up the female accolade for Volleyball. The prize giving ceremony was presided over by Deputy Commissioner Mohammad Shahadat Hossain while District Council Chairman Monindra Lal Tripura was present as Chief Guest.

DCS fracas

FROM PAGE 21 (CCDM) and necessary disciplinary actions would be taken under the tournament by-laws. Brothers are at the bottom of the league table with only two points while Partex are out of the danger zone with eight points in ten games. No date for the inquiry has been announced.

Rajshahi ride

FROM PAGE 21 four goals including a hatrick, Parvez added two while Shakil and Mahmud scored one goal apiece. Rangpur's Parag netted an own goal to add to their woes. In other matches, Habiganj edged Cox's Bazar 1-0 at Comilla, Patuakhali ousted Sathkira 1-0 at Khulna, Brahmanbaria beat Narshingdi 2-1 on penalties after a 1-1 draw at Mymensingh, hosts BKSP blanked Narayanganj 3-0 at Manikganj, Munshiganj settled for a 4-3 tiebreaker win over Madaripur at Shariatpur after a goalless draw, Chuadanga defeated Kushia by a solitary goal at Narail and Kurigram crushed Nilphamari 3-0 at Natore.

Indo-Lankan

FROM PAGE 21 two wickets in the space of five deliveries. Patel, returning to the Indian side after an ankle injury forced him to miss the preceding series against the West Indies, bowled Tharanga off the inside edge for 14 runs. He then had Sri Lankan captain Mahela Jayawardene caught at mid-on for zero before Kumar Sangakkara helped Jayasuriya put on 52 for the third wicket. Sangakkara had made 14 when he was caught behind off seamer Shanthakumaran Sreesanth. Jayasuriya hit 13 boundaries in his 62nd one-day half-century before bad weather cut short his aggressive innings. The hosts were depleted by the absence of seamers Ajit Agarkar (fever) and Irfan Pathan (sore shoulder) and middle-order batsman Yuvraj Singh (stiff back). The second game will be played in Rajkot on Sunday.

Barca deny

FROM PAGE 24 similar position to the Portugal star for the club are Ronaldinho and Lionel Messi. Questioned on whether he will add a big name to his ranks in the summer, the boss replied: "Two superstars in the same position could generate difficulties to maintain (happiness within) the squad." However, the former Holland ace admitted that he admires the flying winger.

Aragones lauds

FROM PAGE 24 below-par displays from key men, McClaren refused to pin the blame for England's first home loss since November 2003 on his players. "I don't feel the players are letting me down," he said. "The attitude and effort was there. It was the quality we lacked, especially in the final third. "Nobody is blind to the fact we lacked that final pass and cross and finish. That is what wins you football matches."



PHOTO: STAR

CEO of Standard Chartered Bangladesh Osman Morad (3rd L) releases balloons along with BCB CEO Mahmudur Rahman (2nd R) and vice president Shah Nurul Kabir Shaheen (3rd R) to inaugurate the Standard Chartered Young Tigers National School Cricket 2007 at the Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

ICC will fight Hair



AFP, London

The International Cricket Council (ICC) said Thursday it would "vigorously defend" itself in legal proceedings for alleged racial discrimination brought by Australian umpire Darrell Hair, insisting they were without merit. Hair, who is also taking action against the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB), believes he is being wrongly targeted following the ball-tampering row during the forfeited Oval Test last August between England and Pakistan. It is understood he feels the PCB was involved in inducing the ICC in action which could be described as discrimination when the Pakistan cricketing authorities urged his suspension on the run-up to a meeting in November. But in a statement issued from its Dubai headquarters, the ICC, cricket's world governing body and

Hair's employer, said: "The ICC has noted reports that umpire Darrell Hair has instructed his lawyers to issue an application to the London Central Employment Tribunal alleging racial discrimination by the International Cricket Council and the Pakistan Cricket Board. "The ICC does not believe there is merit in this claim and will vigorously defend the matter. "Given the ongoing nature of proceedings, the ICC will not be making any further comment on the issue at this stage." Hair announced Wednesday at a news conference in Nairobi, where he had been umpiring in the ICC World Cricket League for associate nations, that he would be taking legal action. "I can confirm that I have instructed my lawyers, Finers Stephens Innocent, London, to issue an application in the London Central Employment Tribunal alleging racial discrimination by the ICC and PCB," Hair said. "It is inappropriate for me to

make further comment given that this matter is yet to be determined by the tribunal," he added. This was the latest twist in a saga that began in London several months ago when Hair, together with West Indian umpire Billy Doctrove, penalised Pakistan five runs on the fourth day of the fourth Test against England at The Oval because they believed ball-tampering had taken place. So incensed were Pakistan they did not take the field after tea with the umpires, who ultimately awarded the match to England on the grounds Pakistan had forfeited the game -- the first time this had happened in Test history. Though Hair's contract as a top official runs until 2008, he is now only allowed to stand in matches between non-Test nations and it was a one-day tournament involving Kenya, Canada and Scotland last month which marked his return to action.

Scoreboard of the second one-day international between South Africa and Pakistan at Kingsmead on Wednesday: PAKISTAN Nazir lbw b Langeveldt 57 Akmal lbw b Pollock 0 Younis c Langeveldt b Smith 93 Yusuf not out 101 Inzamam run out (Gibbs) 13 Afridi not out 77 Extras: (lb-5, nb-1, w-4) 10 Total: (For 4 wickets in 50 overs) 351 Fall of wickets: 1-1, 2-80, 3-204, 4-222 Did not bat: Malik, Mahmood, Razzaq, Naved, Asif

Bowler	O	M	R	W
Pollock	10	1	53	1
Ntini	9	1	71	0
Nel	10	0	82	0
Langeveldt	9	0	61	1
Kallis	5	0	43	0
Smith	7	0	36	1

South Africa	Score
Smith c Younis b Asif	15
De Villiers c Younis b Razzaq	43
Kallis c Akmal b Razzaq	34

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS

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8 Gentle soul

12 Lotition additive

13 Response (Abbr.)

14 Chills and fever

15 Taj Mahal city

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18 This may have seven letters

20 Sty comments

21 Anderson's "High —"

22 Support system?

23 Buck-wheat porridge

26 Dud

30 Squid squirt

31 Cartesian conclusion

32 Tier

33 Sewers, maybe

36 Larynx output

38 Sort

DOWN

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2 Plankton component

3 Actress Spelling

4 Wellness

5 Army rank

6 Have — to grind

7 William Peter-son's series

8 Pertaining to the lips

9 Not "fer" name

10 Gloom

11 Hotel furniture

12 Actress Loughlin

13 Feathery accessory

14 Emmerl's interjection

15 DIY buy

16 Literary collection

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18 Mid-March date

19 Doctor's pay

20 Disappear gradually

21 Altar affirma-tive

Solution time: 21 mins.

SACK BAIT ALSO CLUE OBT DEEP ATIRY RUNS HORTS BIEPER ARENA

RUNDOWNS ERGO AGE LEGAL DNA THUS RUNABOUT GRAT BETTER

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CRYPTOQUIP

X E E Y M C Z M Q X , B C E Y M W K I F M Q W C Z E E C F Q M M E C I M X I C E Y M Q U K E Y "Y C U X Q K X B C K I F E C I K F Y E ?" Yesterday's Cryptoquip: WHEN ACTOR CHANEY IS TRIMMING HIS GRASS, DO YOU SUPPOSE HE SHOULD USE A LON MOWER? Today's Cryptoquip Clue: E equals T