

## 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

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Kalabagan, when they meet second-from-bottom City Club, destined to play in the relegation league.

Binam play Indira Road at Mirpur Stadium while Kalabagan take on bottom-table Brothers Union at Fatullah.

## Too many

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Manik, delivered the second National Football League title to the black and whites, and 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 take 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.

We have 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

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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

Cricket

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 final place.

But Michael Vaughan will play no part because of a hamstring problem, so Andrew Flintoff will captain them.

"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 Loye 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

McClaren

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Aragones, 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 ball as soon as they received it and that was maybe the difference between the two sides."

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Samuels caught

four infamously 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."

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Rajshahi ride

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four goals including a hattrick, Parvez added two while Shakil and Mahmud scored one goal apiece. Ranpur's Parvez netted an own goal to add to their woes.

In other matches, Habiganj edged Cox's Bazar 1-0 at Comilla, Patuakhali ousted Sathkhira 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, Chaudhanga defeated Kushtia by a solitary goal at Narail and Kurigram crushed Nilphamari 3-0 at Natore.

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Indo-Lankan

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

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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

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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."

## Kenya clinch WCL

Cricket

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 Ravidru 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



PHOTO: AFP  
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.

## 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 Sirojiddinova 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 100m.

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.

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.

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, who is also taking action against the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB), believes he is being wrongfully 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 Pakistani cricketing authorities urged his suspension on the run-up to the meeting in November.

But in a statement issued from its Dubai headquarters, the ICC, cricket's world governing body and



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 Cricket Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

## ICC will fight Hair

Cricket

AFP, London

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"Given the ongoing nature of proceedings, the ICC will not be making any further comment on the issue at this stage."

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.

"It is inappropriate for me to

## BKSP prevail in opener

SPORTS REPORTER

BKSP survived a scare from Mirpur Government High School all-rounder Yuvraj Chandra in the opening match of the Standard Chartered National School Cricket tournament at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium yesterday.

BKSP won due to better run-rate after they had scored 243-9 in 47 overs. The Mirpur school were at 169-3 in 39 overs when rain stopped play in the afternoon. With Yuvraj at the crease scoring 44 off 60 balls, having struck two fours and four sixes, the rain gods emerged.

Young Yuvraj earlier took three BKSP wickets for 36 runs after his school were asked to bowl first after the match started an hour late due to wet outfield. For BKSP, Zakaria Masud hit an unbeaten half-century.

Earlier, Standard Chartered Bank CEO Osman Morad inaugurated the tournament on behalf of the sponsors.

## Riquelme

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