



**15 DAYS TO GO**

## Bangladesh to capitalise on early arrival

AFP, St. John's

Bangladesh hope that their early arrival for the World Cup will help erase the threat of a repeat upset they suffered at the last tournament in 2003.

The Asian minnows suffered an embarrassing opening defeat to Canada at the start of their South African campaign, but they believe that by being the second of the 16 competing nations to arrive for the 2007 tournament they can avoid such horrors again.

"We are here to do as well as we can," said coach Dav Whatmore, the man who led Sri Lanka to the 1996 World Cup title.

"We are here a little early than most other countries which we think is a valuable asset to have."

Bangladesh will play fellow finalists Bermuda and Canada at the Antigua Recreation Ground from Sunday as part of their build-up.

They will then play official warm-up matches in Barbados against New Zealand and Scotland before travelling to Trinidad for their Group B matches against Sri Lanka, India and Bermuda.

Whatmore said that the recent 3-1 series win against Zimbabwe had been a timely boost for the squad's confidence although they just managed to squeeze victory in the final match of the series by one wicket.

"Our team spirit is very good," insisted the coach.

"The team has played some good cricket over the last six to eight months culminating in our first series victory abroad against a

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## Did U Know?

The Qutub board is named for the French and German words for yes -- oui and ja.



## Michael Kasprovicz

(Former Australia pace bowler)  
"My theory is that every time a batsman plays and misses he should be asked to take off one piece of protective clothing of the bowler's choice."

While taking a novel approach in the plan to contain batsmen.

DAY'S  
EVENT

**Bangladesh A v England A**  
2nd day, First Four-Dayer  
Venue: Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium  
National Cricket League  
Day Four  
**Dhaka v Chittagong**  
Venue: Fatullah Cricket Stadium  
**Barisal v Khulna**  
Venue: Khulna Divisional Stadium

# Sahagir salvages BD A



SPORTS REPORTER

Sahagir Hossain and Tushar Imran showed some resistance against a strong England A pace attack as Bangladesh A recovered from a precarious position to cross the two hundred run mark in their first innings on the first day of the four-day match at the Mirpur Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium yesterday.

The coin favoured the home team who opted to bat on a good track. But the decision turned out to be a nightmare after they lost half of their wickets in the first session before Tushar (52) and Sahagir (86) chipped in with half centuries to spare the blushes and post a decent 209 runs on the board.

The young wicketkeeper, Sahagir, who replaced Khaled Mashud in the second string side, joined his skipper with the team tottering at 45-5 and added an invaluable 84 runs for the sixth wicket to repair the damages before Tushar unnecessarily stepped out to charge spinner Alex Loudon only to hit him straight at cover where Michael Yardy was waiting for a simple catch. This was

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Sahagir Hossain cuts the ball off the back-foot during his cracking 86 as the silly mid-off takes evasive action during the first day's play against England A at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

# Rajshahi cruise along

SPORTS REPORTER



Table toppers Rajshahi established their lead with a convincing innings and four-run victory over Sylhet on the third day of the Ispahani Mirzapore Tea 8th National Cricket League at the Rajshahi Divisional Stadium yesterday.

Leading by 165 runs, the hosts bowled out Sylhet for only 161 runs in the second innings to win with a day to spare. Earlier, Rajshahi were bowled out for 365 in their first innings.

The match between Khulna and Barisal at the Khulna Divisional Stadium is heavily tilted towards the visitors who rode on young Raisul Islam's maiden first-class hundred. Khulna are two for no loss in pursuit of an improbable 379 runs for victory in the second innings.

At the Fatullah Stadium, Chittagong are in a precarious position as Dhaka's fast bowler Mahbubul Alam took two second innings wickets to reduce the visitors to 6-2. Chittagong are following on, having only scored 289 in their first innings in reply to 500 runs made by Dhaka.

## SYLHET-RAJSHAH

Sylhet struggled from the onset of their second innings as Rajshahi seamer Forhad got rid of three middle-order batsmen. Left-armers Shafaq Al Jabir also took two wickets while Mahbub Alam took 4-20.

Rajshahi consolidated their position on top with their fourth win in seven matches, accounting to 32 points.

## DHAKA-CHITTAGONG

With their overnight score on 73-3, visitors Chittagong were eyeing a recovery with Nazimuddin, Ehsanul Haque and Faisal Hossain all hitting half-centuries.

But with the three batsmen falling to left-armer Ararat Sunny, who had figures of 5-68, the Chittagong innings lost its way. They were eventually bowled out for 289, trailing by 211 runs.

The second innings also got off to a disastrous start with Elias Sunny and nightwatchman Tareq Aziz both falling to Mahbubul Alam in 2.4 overs of play.

## KHULNA-BARISAL

Barisal left-arm spinner Tariqul Islam did not add to his eight wickets as his namesake and seamer Kazi Tariqul Islam took the two remaining Khulna wickets in the first innings.

Barisal were 3 for 46 in their second innings when diminutive Raisul Islam walked in and slammed a century off 130 balls. He finished with 143 that included sixteen boundaries. Ariful Haq hit a run-a-ball 51.

## BRIEF SCORES

SYLHET: 200 and 161 all out in 59.3 overs (Rahman 9, Imtiaz 36, Saif 3, Alok 8, Mowla 30, Mabud 9, Ejaz 10, Rezaul 6, Khadem 29, Nabil 6, Nazmul 0 not out; Mahbub 4-20, Forhad 3-48, Shumon 1-21, Jabir 2-34)

RAJSHAH: First innings 365 all out in 113.2 overs (Rabiul 2, Rafiqul 69, Forhad 17, Naeem 87, Anisur 70, Mashud 4, Mushfiqur 31, Hasanuzzaman 1, Mahbub 29 not out, Shafaq 5, Shumon 0 not out, extras 50; Hasibul 3-64, Nabil 3-72, Golam 2-30, Kapali 1-33)

Result: Rajshahi won by an innings and four runs.

DHAKA: 500 all out CHITTAGONG: 289 all out in 121.1 overs (Elias 12, Nafis 13, Nadimuddin 2, Nazimuddin 67, Ehsanul 62, Faisal 60, Dhiman 5, Palash 6, Sabbir 5, Alamgir 12, Tareq

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## LOCAL SNIPPETS

SPORTS REPORTER

Aga Khan School will take on Sunnydale in the opening match of the Beximco Pharma Under-19 Girls Handball competition at the Dhanmondi Women's Complex gymnasium today.

Scholastica student's association Verdandi along with Bangladesh Handball Federation have organised the event in which six teams are participating.

## COLLEGE ANNUAL SPORTS

The annual sports meet of Shaheed Police Smriti College will be held at the college premises tomorrow.

In the event, Inspector General of Police Nur Mohammad will be present as the chief guest.

## RANGPUR SCHOOL CRICKET

Rangpur Zilla School defeated Al-Falah Institute by six wickets in the School Cricket competition at the Rangpur Cricket Garden yesterday.

Al-Falah Institute won the toss and scored only 99 runs. Rangpur Zilla School scored the required runs losing only four wickets.

## GAIBANDHA SCHOOL CRICKET

Sunderganj Government High School beat Chandipur High School by 87 runs in the School Cricket competition at the Gaibandha Stadium yesterday.

Sunderganj scored 282 in 45.3 overs. Chandipur reached 195 before being bowled out in 39.3 overs.

## NATIONAL WOMEN'S CHESS

The 28th National Womens' Chess Championship will begin at the Bangladesh Chess Federation hall room at 3.30pm today.

Interested persons can participate as the tournament is free to all and requires no fees.

## Wimbledon banishes pay gap

AFP, London

Wimbledon chiefs announced Thursday that they will pay men and women equal prize money for the first time at the prestigious tennis championships this year.

The decision overturns more than a century of deliberate inequality in pay and brings the tournament more into line with the other three annual grand slam tennis events.

"We will be paying equal prize money this year at Wimbledon, through all the rounds in both singles and doubles," said Tim Phillips, the chairman of the All England Lawn Tennis and Croquet Club, which runs Wimbledon.

He said the club's committee unanimously agreed that "the time is right to bring this subject to a logical conclusion and eliminate the difference."

Phillips said that social and marketing factors had made Wimbledon chiefs decide to do a U-turn to end the anomaly and hoped it would send out a positive message about tennis to young sports-women.

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## Down The World Cup Lane

# 1975: The Beginning

NADER RAHMAN

The very first World Cup has a lot in common with 20/20 cricket; only after the format was a success in England did it actually take the world by storm. Only after they (one-day cricket and 20/20) were proven to be domestic success in England did they really gain international acceptance. The upcoming 20/20 World Cup only serves to prove the case. By the time the first World Cup started there had only been a total 18 ODI's played around the world, but the one-day game was already a proven success in England with the ever popular Gillette Cup. To the sceptics and the purists, this new format was not to be taken seriously, the players on the other hand had different thoughts. To say it was evenly contested would not be entirely correct, there were a few one sided games, but it sure was eagerly contested.

The format was simple and uncomplicated there would be two qualifying groups of four, playing each other once in 60-over matches; top two in each

group would progress to the semifinal. The whole tournament would entail 15 matches and was to be played over exactly two weeks. The move to hold the event in the middle of June was questioned but the main view for this reasoning was the longer period of daylight in England in June when 60 overs for each side could be completed in one-day. Group A consisted of England, New Zealand, India and East Africa, while group B was West Indies, Australia, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. While there were no major complaints with the groupings, the ICC did take it upon themselves to include two the minnows Sri Lanka and East Africa into the tournament. Sri Lanka was just emerging as cricketing nation while the East African team was combination of a of club cricketers from Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia. Africa's strongest team, South Africa, had placed itself beyond the pale of international sport with its policy of racial exclusion and Rhodesia, later to become Zimbabwe, was still governed by the illegal Ian Smith regime. So it was left to the laugh-

able combination of East Africa to represent the continent. Comprised of weekend club cricketers never before exposed to such international standards, they were duly outclassed.

On the 7th of June 1975 the fun started, as England took on India, Australia faced Pakistan, New Zealand and the West Indies played the minnows East Africa and Sri Lanka respectively. Dennis Amiss was in fine form and was excellently supported by Keith Fletcher as England ran up the highest score in the country for a 60-over match. Both sides relied almost totally on seam bowlers which meant that India left out Bishen Bedi, a decision they would come to rue after going for more than 5.5 runs per over. Timing the ball perfectly, Amiss made his 137 out of 245 by the 51st over. The runs flowed so freely that finally Chris Old (two 6's and four 4's) helped himself to 51 off 28 balls in thirty-five minutes. One-day cricket was off to a great start and so was the World Cup. But apparently it only lasted one innings as India, in turn, put

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# Pakistan up against the F-factor

AFP, Karachi



WEST INDIES 2007

the World Cup in the Caribbean.

Pakistan have had a dismal build-up to their Cup campaign as question marks hang on the fitness of key bowlers Shoaib Akhtar, Mohammad Asif and Umar Gul, with fears that none could feature.

"The F-factor is crucial, the fitness of the players is concerning," said coach Bob Woolmer.

"Our attack could be excellent with Akhtar, Gul, Asif and Abdul Razzaq with Danish Kaneria, Shoaib Malik and Mohammed Hafeez as back-up bowlers."

"There is no doubt in my mind if the first three were fit together then

Pakistan would be a real force."

Akhtar is battling with a knee injury while Asif may have a recurrence of an elbow problem.

The pair are also required to clear pre-World Cup dope tests, the reports of which come on March 1. If they fail they face possible life bans.

Both were banned for doping in November after testing positive for the steroid nandrolone but they had their bans controversially lifted on appeal.

Gul, one of Pakistan's best bowlers over the last 12 months, is also racing against time as his fractured ankle needs time to heal. Pakistan has until March 2 to replace any injured player.

Paceman Sarfraz Nawaz said the chances of Akhtar and Asif featuring in the World Cup are slim.

I fear Akhtar and Asif will not play and if this happens Pakistan's attack will be below mediocre. It would be a repeat of World Cup

2003," said Nawaz, referring to Pakistan's bitter first round exit four years ago.

Captain Inzamam-ul-Haq, who was one of the fops of the last World Cup with just 19 runs in six matches, said gruelling schedules had taken their toll on the players.

"Even a batsman like me finds it hard to keep the level of fitness, so it is worse for the fast bowlers. We need to have the best and fittest players for the World Cup," said Inzamam, a member of Pakistan's only side to win the World Cup in Australia in 1992.

Without Akhtar, Pakistan struggled on their pre-World Cup tour of South Africa where they lost the Tests 2-1 and one-day series 3-1.

They showed their usual flaws of either failing to retain their intensity or succumbing to self-destructive frenzies -- both of which Woolmer hopes will not haunt them in the Caribbean.

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# B.League draw held

## Abahani- Muktijoddha open meet on March 2



SPORTS REPORTER

The much-awaited first-ever Professional Football League rolls onto the pitch on March 2 with a match between Dhaka giants Abahani and Muktijoddha Sangsada at the Bangabandhu National Stadium (BNS).

The ceremonial draw for the competition, shortly named B.League, took place at the newly built National Sports Council Tower auditorium yesterday where the logo was also unveiled in front of

stars yesteryears, Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) high-ups and the club officials.

A total of eleven clubs, including

## FIRST WEEK'S FIXTURES

**March 2:** Muktijoddha vs Dhaka Abahani at BNS  
**March 3:** Brothers vs Chittagong Abahani at BNS  
**March 3:** Khulna Abahani vs Rahmatganj at Khulna  
**March 6:** Sheikh Russel vs Chittagong Mohammedan at BNS  
**March 7:** Arambagh vs Dhaka Mohammedan at BNS

eight from Dhaka Metropolis and three from Khulna and Chittagong metropolis will participate in the meet.

Each week there will be three or four matches in Dhaka and one or two matches in Chittagong or Khulna. The matches will be held on Friday, Saturday, Tuesday and Wednesday.

The participating teams will first play their home matches for eleven weeks, then they take part in the away matches according to the tournament format.

The standing of the teams are Muktijoddha Sangsada Krira

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PHOTO: STAR

Former football greats Kaiser Hamid (2nd from R) and Sheikh Muhammad Aslam (C) pick team names during the draw ceremony of the B.League at the NSC Tower in the city yesterday.