



From (L-R) Christina Yap, senior manager of ESPN-Star Sports, Pakistan legend Wasim Akram, Grameenphone head of marketing Rubaba Dowla and Gavin Wong, general manager of NeuStar Asia Pacific attend a press conference at a local hotel yesterday. The press conference was held to announce a deal between ESPN-Star Sports and Grameenphone via NeuStar which would enable Grameenphone users in the country full access to all ESPN-Star Sports content and service applications in their mobile phone.

## BCCI, Nimbus at loggerheads

PTI, New Delhi

Barely a year after signing a telecast deal with the Board of Control for Cricket in India for a whopping 612 million dollars, Nimbus on Tuesday issued a notice to the BCCI threatening to pull out of the deal.

Nimbus's decision to withdraw from the deal, covering matches in India till 2010 March, comes after the Government issued on an Ordinance making it mandatory for private broadcasters to share with Prasar Bharti the live feed of sports events of national importance.

The sudden development prompted the BCCI to go into an emergency meeting at Board President Sharad Pawar's official residence here to discuss the issue.

"We have received a notice from Nimbus threatening to pull out of the deal," a top BCCI official told PTI.

## A blow

FROM PAGE 17  
fourth wicket with Golam Mawla (36 not out).

**SCORES IN BRIEF**  
RAJSHAHI: 336 and 230-5 in 85.4 overs (overnight 36-0) (Rafique 16, Farhad 42, Rabiul 23, Naeem 68, Anisur 47, Delwar 0 n.o., extras 34; Ariful 1-47, Tariqul 2-91, Raisul 1-12).

**BARISAL:** 366.  
**Result:** Match drawn.

**SYLHET:** 305 and 177-3 in 67 overs (Imtiaz 36, Rahman 21, Mabud 14, Kapali 62 n.o., Mawla 36 n.o., extras 8; Sharif 1-29, Mosharraf 2-42).

**DHAKA:** 325 all out in 103.1 overs (overnight 268-7 in 88 overs) (Uttam 87, Rashedul 48, Anwar 24, Shamsur 3, Kamrul 5, Sharifullah 74, Sajjad 12, Sharif 8, Mosharraf 23, Sunny 6, Mahbubul 13 not out, extras 24; Hasibul 3-36, Nabil 4-66, Kapali 2-121, Imtiaz 1-17).

## Hafeez scripts

FROM PAGE 17  
C with New Zealand, England and Kenya. The top two sides from each group will qualify for the Super Eight stage.

**SCORES IN BRIEF**  
**PAKISTAN:** 273 for 8 in 48 overs (Inzamam 59, Hafeez 61, Akmal 56; Cummins 2-58, Osinde 2-41)

**CANADA:** 196 all out in 46.4 overs (Barnett 28, Mulla 31, Ali 37; Itikhar 3-23, Hafeez 3-10)  
**Result:** Pakistan win by 77 runs.

## Ballack sends

FROM PAGE 20  
Robben had given warning of his intent to shoot on sight and he hit the jackpot when he tried his luck again in the 48th minute.

His 30-yard shot was tamely struck low to Helton's left, but the Brazilian keeper misjudged the bounce and let the ball bobble up off his body and into the net.

Porto struggled to recapture their momentum after that and their eccentric goalkeeper Helton was at fault again when he failed to deal with Lampard's inswinging free-kick, but Ricardo Carvalho headed over.

Chelsea were knocking on the door and they broke it down in the 79th minute.

Drogba nodded Cole's cross to Shevchenko and the Ukrainian steered a header to Ballack, who was granted acres of space 10 yards out and planted a superb volley past Helton to seal Chelsea's revival.

# LOCAL SNIPPETS

SPORTS REPORTER

Orient and Kathalagan won significant matches in the Kai-Altech First Division Cricket League yesterday.

Orient beat fellow Group B challengers Gazi Tank by eleven runs at BKSP while in an early battle to get out of the relegation zone, Kathalagan pipped Sadharan Bima by three wickets at the Dhanmondi Cricket Stadium.

Masumuddowla struck 111 off 121 balls as Orient reached 233 in 50 overs. In reply, Gazi Tank fell short by eleven runs with eight balls to spare. Manash took four wickets for 28.

Orient now stay on top of Group B with this win, just ahead of Gazi Tank and Surjo Torun who lost one match each.

At Dhanmondi, Kathalagan bowled out Bima for only 156 runs in 40.3 overs. Chanchal and Arefin took three wickets each. Then Arefin struck 40 and Shahidur scored 29 to give Kathalagan the win in 47.3 overs.

At the Dhaka University ground, Azad Sporting Club beat Rupali Bank by three wickets.

## NATIONAL

### WOMEN'S CHESS

International Women Master Rani Hamid and Sharmin Sultana jointly led the points table with three points each in the Aromatic 28th National Women's Chess Championship at the federation hall room yesterday.

Rani beat former champion Shamima Akhtar while Sharmin Masuda Begum in their third round matches.

### JFA CUP

Dhaka and BKSP won their respective matches in the JFA Cup under-15 Football Championship at the Bangladesh Army Stadium yesterday.

Shakhawat struck twice for Dhaka as they trounced Chuadanga 3-0 while Mamun, Saddam and Ghalib scored once each as BKSP beat Natore 3-1.

### FIRST DIV BADMINTON

Surjo Torun had a good day with wins in both the women's and men's section of the Fahmi Group First Division Badminton League yesterday.

The Surjo Torun men crushed Shahbag Badminton Club 5-0 while the women trounced Ahoban Badminton Club 3-0.

## Virus affects Gillespie

REUTERS, Bridgetown

New Zealand pace bowler Mark Gillespie has picked up a virus which has numbed his bowling right arm and could threaten his chances of playing in the World Cup opening games starting next week.

The problem, which New Zealand officials called acute brachial neuritis, was the result of a throat virus Gillespie suffered before leaving for the Caribbean last week.

"We don't know much more about it," captain Stephen Fleming told reporters after their surprise two-wicket warm-up defeat by Bangladesh on Tuesday in Bridgetown. "He's seeing a specialist on Friday so we'll discover more then."

Gillespie's bowling arm became numb during the day-long flight to the West Indies. It means he will almost certainly miss Friday's final warm-up against Sri Lanka.

New Zealand face England in their group C opener on March 16 in St Lucia and also play Kenya (March 20) and Canada (22) in the opening stage.

## Fire scare at team hotel

AFP, Port of Spain

Pakistan and South African players were involved in what is believed to be a fire scare and had to file out of their Hilton hotel here early Wednesday as they were having breakfast.

Irish and Canadian players however were not among those who had to leave the premises, having already left for practice. Four fire engines were at the scene but no official comment was immediately available.

Pakistan paceman Mohammad Sami told AFP he had seen a lot of smoke when evacuating the hotel.

"I was on the sixth floor when a security man came to my room and asked me to vacate the hotel," he said.

"I saw a lot of smoke coming out from the corridor so I ran down."

Pakistan captain Inzamamul Haq was unfazed by the evacuation, saying he had been told that the team had had to leave the hotel "as a precautionary measure".

Around 150 people were evacuated from the hotel and moved away to a safer location.

## Prior pushes

FROM PAGE 17  
41 by Farhad Reza from just 26 deliveries propelled them to add 82 runs in the final ten overs.

The second match will be held at the Sher-e-Bangla Mirpur Stadium in Dhaka on Saturday.

### SCORES IN BRIEF

**BANGLADESH A:** 261-8 in 50 overs (Mehrab 25, Junaid 0, Nazim 108, Tushar 16, Jahurul 10, Sahagir 8, Nadif 28, Farhad 41 no., Manzarul 5, Nazmul 8, extras 12, Broad 2-45, Gidman 1-27, Yardy 1-40, London 2-50).

**ENGLAND A:** 263-5 in 47 overs (Carberry 17, Jefferson 68, Compton 31, Prior 84 n.o., Gidman 1, Yardy 25, Davies 27 n.o., extras 10, Mehra 3-57, Manzarul 2-41).

**Result:** England A won by five wickets.

## Tikolo wants

FROM PAGE 20

"Obviously, we have another friendly game on Thursday, and we will try and give the guys who did not have a go a chance then to try and finalise our first 11.

"We bowled well at the start of their innings, but we let them get too many runs in the latter stages. I thought also that we batted well, but lost some batsmen in the middle, otherwise it would have been a different result."

Kenya face the Netherlands in their second warm-up match on Thursday at the Trelawny Multi-Purpose Complex here. The Africans contest Group C of the World Cup alongside England, New Zealand, and Canada in St. Lucia.

## Maul

FROM PAGE 20

Julio Cesar was forced into action in the Inter goal in the 12th minute, clearing a low diagonal 20-yard shot by Baraja.

Inter, with fiery Swede Ibrahimovic partnered up front by Argentinian veteran Hernan Crespo, came closest to an opener with a quarter of an hour to play in the cracking first-half.

Maicon's whipped cross was headed into the middle of the area by Stankovic at the back post but Raul Albiol hooked clear to deny Crespo a near-range attempt.

On the stroke of half-time, Villa was denied a scoring chance from a Morientes cross by a neat backheeled clearance by Colombian defender Ivan Cordoba.

Valencia's Villa saw a header deflected away by Olivier Dacourt at the start of the second period, and Cesar was also in action to save an Emiliano Moretti header.

Inter failed, however, to pull back any goals to leave Valencia booking their ticket into the last eight.

## Ferguson rules

FROM PAGE 20

"An agreement has been reached between myself, Henrik and the respective clubs. There is nothing we can do about that now, much as we would like to."

Larsson is a certain starter in Wednesday's Champions League tie against Lille, with Ferguson confirming Saha will be an absentee.

"We are not 100 per cent sure what the problem is," said the United boss.

"We have sent him for a scan to try and find out but he will not be fit for tomorrow."

Ferguson also revealed midfielder Darren Fletcher, who was initially sidelined for a fortnight after picking up an ankle knock in the FA Cup win at Reading last week, would now miss virtually the remainder of the season after the Scot's scan results were worse than initially feared.

"Darren has damaged his ankle ligaments," said Ferguson.

"He had a lot of swelling and we had to wait for it to go down before we could do the scan."

## Rahul stands by minnows

AFP, Daniel Town



India captain Rahul Dravid still believes international cricket minnows should be playing in the World Cup

despite his side demolishing the Netherlands by 182 runs in a brutally one-sided match here on Tuesday.

Dravid said the ICC Associate nations, who don't play Test matches, add a lot of character and charm to the event, and they must be rewarded for spreading the game in their countries.

"I think you have to encourage them to play, and having myself played a season in Scotland, I know the difficulties the associate nations and their players go through to play this game," said the skipper.

"What's the incentive for them to play the game with such hardships? Many of the players are amateurs, and take time off from work to play the game, and keep it alive in their countries, so I think

the International Cricket Council has to do a lot to help them, and not just give them opportunities in tournaments like this.

"The ICC has to identify four or five nations outside of the top eight or nine, and ensure that they can get them up to a standard and provide them with the facilities, training, and games to ensure that they are -- at least -- semi-professional which will help them improve their standard."

Dutch skipper Luuk van Troost was obviously glad to hear the captain of one of the World's marquee sides defending the right of the associate nations to take part in the World Cup.

"Everybody knows where Sri Lanka cricket was about 20 or so years ago, but look at where they are today," said van Troost in reference to the team which transformed itself from whipping boys to World Cup winners in 1996.

"This is our goal. We are putting a lot of time and energy into it, and we are looking at raising our game each and every time we take the field.

"We deserve to be here. We

worked hard, we qualified, and I am sure that we will show in the rest of the tournament that we have a right to be here. We were just a bit nervous in this match."

The Dutch captain agreed with one Indian journalist who likened cricket in the Netherlands to football in India, but he acknowledged the role the ICC was playing in trying to change this.

"All of the associate teams participated in the ICC High Performance programme, and we had the World Cricket League tournament a few weeks ago in Kenya, and the standard was pretty high," said van Troost.

"I am going to predict that one of the Associate teams will upset one of Test-playing nations, and when it happens, it will be fantastic and proof that we should be here, but I will be waiting to hear what people will say then."

India meet hosts West Indies in their second and final warm-up match at the Trelawny Multi-Purpose Stadium here on Friday, a day after the Dutch face World Cricket League champions Kenya.

## Viv looks on bright side

AFP, Bridgetown



Viv Richards, who played in the only two West Indies teams to win the World Cup, believes victory

in the 2007 edition could help stem the exodus of the islands' leading talent to other sports.

Many people in the game have bemoaned the crippling loss of potential West Indies cricketers to more lucrative careers such as basketball and soccer in recent years.

But Richards, part of the 1975 and 1979 World Cup-winning sides, insists that success for Brian Lara's men will halt the slide.

"Fingers crossed," he said. "It can be a guiding light to give West Indies the negotiating power in the future, especially with all the new stadiums and the refurbishing of so many old grounds."

"In my day, we had a lot of guys who were very good bowlers, some of the best we've ever seen," said Richards.

"Things have changed but it's my belief that this team, with its

ability at present, can go places. This present team does have it in them to go all the way."

Richards also shrugged off concerns over the readiness of some of the stadiums in the region where nine venues have either been built from new or refurbished.

He also pointed to the problems of London's Wembley stadium as proof that construction delays are not just exclusive to the Caribbean.

"We are very small environments," said Richards. "We've got to think a little bit bigger than the smallness that we are thinking at present. If we can accomplish these things, we are going to go places."

"Hosting anything of huge numbers, whether it's a party or a World Cup, you're going to get hiccups at some point. We are no different to any other."

Richards told www.cricinfo.com the fact that no host nation has ever won the World Cup will be an extra motivation for Lara's side.

"The World Cup means so much to us," Richards said. "I like to believe that the Caribbean is ready. Everything is looking in

place and we have the stadiums for when the tournament begins.

"An extra motivational factor is that no country who has ever hosted the World Cup has won it, so that's something I'm very excited about.

"If it does happen, I can tell you, it's going to be one of the biggest parties ever. I think it could be classified up there with the best of our carnivals. In the Caribbean you'll see something different."

"I hope Brian Lara (playing in his last World Cup) gets a magnificent send-off," said Richards.

"It would be fitting because of all the trials and tribulations that he has had during his tenure as captain."

He also believes that there is no clear favourite for the title despite Australia going for a third successive crown.

"No team is going to win the World Cup by right," he added. "There's always an element of luck involved, in business or in sport. If you get the rub of the green, if you get the breaks, that helps to take you a long way."

# 'A stepping stone'

FROM PAGE 17

they just kept coming at us. We just couldn't shake them," he said.

McCullum made 46 off 48 balls, but was run out after a rocket-like direct hit from Mortaza from the long-on fence. Bangladesh skipper Habibul Bashar praised his team for the good showing.

It was an unexpected setback for a team being touted as possible World Cup winners in the Caribbean but Fleming has a cheeky theory that New Zealand may have just improved their chances after all.

"Sometimes, when you are in a nice surrounding, you can get a little bit caught up and be too relaxed -- so this is a good waker. It puts the pressure back on us but, if anything, we are better under pressure than having any favouritism tag or being talked about as potential winners. At least this wasn't a pool match," said a phlegmatic Fleming.

On the stroke of half-time, Villa was denied a scoring chance from a Morientes cross by a neat backheeled clearance by Colombian defender Ivan Cordoba.

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## SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard in the World Cup warm-up match between New Zealand and Bangladesh at the 3Ws Oval in

Barbados on Tuesday:

### NEW ZEALAND

Vincent b Mortaza	4
Fleming c Razzak b Rasel	0
Taylor c Rahim b Mortaza	11
Styris c Ashraf b Razzak	3
Fulton lbw b Mortaza	26
Oram c Rasel b Razzak	88
McMillan c and b Razzak	8
McCullum run out	46
Vettori c Omar b Razzak	8
Franklin not out	12
Bond b Mortaza	4
Extras: (nb-7, w-4)	11
Total: (For 8 wkts in 49 overs)	230
Did not bat: Baishya, Shahadat, Rasel.	
Fall of wickets: 1-85, 2-85, 3-104, 4-133, 5-143, 6-176, 7-192, 8-199.	

Bowler	O	M	R	W
Franklin	8	0	54	2
Bond	9	0	59	1
Mason	5	0	15	0
Patel	10	0	40	1
Vettori	10	0	38	3
Oram	5	1	14	0
Styris	2	0	10	0

**Result:** Bangladesh won by two wickets.

**Toss:** New Zealand

**Umpires:** M Benson and S Davis

## 1999: Two winners

FROM PAGE 20

Elton Chigumbura leg-cutter to wicket-keeper Brendan Taylor.

Watson was missed on 66, dropped on the boundary by Anthony Ireland off Williams. But Williams did dismiss Clarke, cutting to Chigumbura at backward point. Clarke faced 89 balls with two sixes and nine fours.

Zimbabwe play Bermuda in their final warm-up match here Thursday.

### SCORES IN BRIEF

**AUSTRALIA:** 290-7 in 50 overs (Clarke 82, Watson 81)

**ZIMBABWE:** 184-7 in 50 overs.

**Result:** Australia won by 106 runs.

## Zim keep

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## India in different

FROM PAGE 17

venue, where the Netherlands meet Kenya on Thursday.

### BRIEF SCORES

**INDIA:** 300 for 9 off 50 overs (Dravid 74, Tendulkar 61, Sehwa 28, Pathan 25 not out, Dhoni 21, Uthappa 20; Ten Doeschate 5-55, Borren 2-46)

**THE NETHERLANDS:** 118 off 37.5 overs (Zuidereit 32, Ten Doeschate 31; Yuvraj 4-12, Kumble 2-14, Harbhajan 2-24)

**Result:** Bangladesh won by 2 wickets.