



2 DAYS
TO GO

Pakistan feel at home

AFP, Port of Spain

Pakistan leg-spinner Danish Kaneria and his teammates stunned passers-by with their calm reaction their evacuation from the plush Trinidad Hilton on Wednesday.

"We were not scared about anything. We come from Pakistan and this type of thing happens regularly at home," said Kaneria.

The Pakistan and South Africa teams were evacuated from the hotel at breakfast time along with other guests and staff.

Reports of a fire on the eighth floor were dismissed by local security chiefs. It's believed that a gas leak may have caused the alert.

Symonds recovering

CRICINFO, undated

Australia's concern over Andrew Symonds continues to ease after he began throwing for the first time since tearing a biceps in Sydney last month. Symonds' mood-lifting week of activities started with hitting tennis balls and he got through another examination with some fielding drills while Australia beat Zimbabwe by 106 runs in St Vincent.

Symonds used a cricket ball for 12 light throws, according to The Australian, and he appears to be on track to fulfil his goal of playing in the group game against South Africa in St Kitts on March 24. The rehabilitation will continue as the team prepares to face England in their final warm-up game on Friday. Matthew Hayden, who is recovering from a broken toe, will miss the match but is still confident of

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Did U Know?

Gul Mohammad, Amir Elahi and Abdul Kardar played Test cricket for India and Pakistan before and after independence respectively.



Ctg Abahani v Khulna Abahani (3:45 pm)
Venue: MA Aziz Stadium, Chittagong

Farashganj SC v Brothers Union (5:00 pm)
Venue: Bangabandhu National Stadium



Bishan Singh Bedi

(Indian cricket legend)

"I have a gut feeling that one of the white countries is going to grab the Cup. Apart from Australia, the Kiwis, the Proteas and the Poms have an equal chance of making it a grand reality."

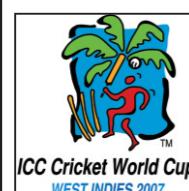
His predictions on the World Cup.



PHOTO: AFP
Bangladesh paceman Mashrafe Bin Mortaza (L) appeals for an lbw against Scotland batsman Fraser Watts during their WC warm-up match at Bridgetown, Barbados yesterday.

Lara keen on mind game

INTERNET, undated



ICC Cricket World Cup
WEST INDIES 2007

West Indies captain Brian Lara is depending on Friday's warm-up match against India here to regain some psychological advantage after his side lost the four-match one-day series against India in India 1-3 this January.

Lara told reporters that, if everything goes well, India and the West Indies are going to meet in the second round of the ICC World Cup 2007, which is why "if we can produce a win here on Friday, I think it gives the guys the psychological advantage back after our disappointing tour of India."

India are placed in Group B along with Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and Bermuda, while West Indies are in Group D with Pakistan, Zimbabwe and Ireland.

Friday's match is the last warm-

up match before the inaugural ceremony of the 2007 edition of cricket's biggest event to be held at the newly built Trelawny Multi-Purpose Stadium here.

"None of the teams want to lose tomorrow, so we're going to play with the intensity to win, but at the end of the day we want to come out with 15 players still fully fit and looking forward to the tournament," Lara said.

Stating that Friday's game was important, Lara said that he wanted all his players to get some form and pointed to newcomer Kieron Pollard, who is going to make his international debut in the World Cup, as an example.

Indian skipper Rahul Dravid has, however, downplayed the implications of a result in Friday's match, preferring instead to emphasise on the exposure that the game will give to the Indians.

"I don't know how much we can read into a game of 13 players playing against each other," Dravid told reporters.

The relaxed conditions for the

warm-up games allow both sides to play with 13 players but only 11 can bat.

"India and the West Indies, we've played each other a lot over the past year and, like I said earlier, it's a warm-up game," the Indian captain said.

Stating that both teams would like to win Friday, Dravid said, "It's an opportunity for some of our players who haven't much of a hit to get a chance to bat and give them a chance to get into the swing of things for the group stages of the tournament."

He said that both India and West Indies had some pretty close games in the recent past and are pretty well matched up.

"I think in five close games they had the better of us in the West Indies, we've had the better of them in India," he said referring to the series in the West Indies in May last year which India lost 1-4 and the one in India this January which the West Indies lost 1-3.

The relaxed conditions for the

Arnos Vale pitch has made strokeplay difficult and the surface could provide a guide for things to come at this World Cup, even though the nine highest totals by a team winning after batting second in limited overs international history have all been achieved since the turn of the century.

"Scores are becoming increasingly more and more and it's mind-blowing, some of the batting that's going on," Gilchrist told reporters during Australia's net session at Sion Hill here Wednesday.

"Bowlers across the world are coping a pounding for it. I don't know where it will end. Anything is possible but I am not sure we will see 500 just yet."

In February, New Zealand provided further evidence of the growing dominance of bat over ball when they scored 340 for five and 350 for nine in successive one-dayers against Australia.

That followed South Africa's extraordinary record chase, also against Australia, in March last year when they scored 438 for nine in Johannesburg Wanderers after the visitors had posted a seemingly impregnable 434 for four.

But Gilchrist, a World Cup winner in 1999 and 2003, insisted bowlers would have a chance at this tournament.

"It's been nice to have that little

evidence here, bowlers will come into it, particularly slow bowlers taking the pace off which is what we've become accustomed to over the last 10 years of one-day cricket."

If Gilchrist is right, that could mean Andrew Symonds, Australia's off-spinning all-rounder, could have just as much a role with the ball as his dashing strokeplay gives him with the bat.

Symonds is currently out with an arm problem but could be fit to face England and Gilchrist said: "He's very important to us full stop, no matter what aspect of the game we look at, bat or field."

Australia's other injury doubt is Hayden, sidelined with a toe injury.

"Matty is very confident he will be fine, whether or not he plays on Friday when I suspect he might be rested again to make sure nothing can happen before the main event," Gilchrist explained.

The 35-year-old Western Australia keeper missed the 3-0 one-day series defeat in New Zealand following their shock 2-0 reverse at home to England in the tri-series one-day finals.

Nevertheless, Gilchrist said he'd been grateful for a break which allowed him to see the birth of his son Archie.

"It's been nice to have that little

Flipside of World Cup

AFP, London

The Cricket World Cup, due to start next week and last almost two months, could hit Britain's economic productivity by 270 million pounds (397 million euros, 521 million dollars), according to an independent study published Saturday.

"Although it will not grab the international imagination to the same extent as the soccer World Cup it remains the case that, even to those only half interested, watching cricket is one of the best ways of avoiding working known to man," said the study by the Centre for Economics and Business Research (CEBR).

"Two of England's matches, against New Zealand on 16 March and against Pakistan on 30 March, are on Friday afternoons and will be very tempting to those who feel inclined to stay on in the pub after lunch," said CEBR chief executive

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Jamil stars in Jatrabari win

SPORTS REPORTER

A five-wicket haul by Hasan Jamil gave Jatrabari KC their second win in four matches when they defeated CCS by 56 runs in the Kai-Altech First Division Cricket League yesterday.

Left-arm spinner Jamil bagged 5-15 as Jatrabari, defending 204-9, bowled out CCS for 148 at the Dharmundi Cricket Stadium.

Surjo Torun thumped Young Pegasus B by seven wickets to cruise to their third victory in four matches when a 47-ball 51 by Rasheedur guided them to 137-3 in just 21 overs in reply to the opponents' paltry 136 all out. Rijon captured 4-21 and Apurbo 3-21 for Surjo Torun at the Dhaka University ground.

At BKSP, half centuries by Adil (73) and Asif (65) helped Lalmatia Club (252-9) beat Prantic KC (175) by 77 runs.

Abahani clash today

Argentine booters' ITCs arrive



SPORTS REPORTER

The second week of the B. League starts today with an interesting clash in Chittagong where two Abahani -- from Khulna and the local boys -- are pitted against each other.

This would be the first match between two teams from outside the capital, which has eight clubs in the 11-team inaugural professional league.

Khulna Abahani impressed in their opener when they blanked Rahmatganj 2-0 at home but Chittagong Abahani lost their opening battle when they went 3-0 down away to Dhaka giants Brothers Union. Having failed to secure any foreign contract, both sides will rely on local players.

Also today, Farashganj Sporting

Club, who could be paired in the first week, open their league campaign when the riverside club take on table-toppers Brothers on the Bangabandhu National Stadium.

The MAAziz Stadium will also be busy tomorrow after no matches being held in the port city when local Mohammedan host heavyweights MuktiJiddha Sangsad, who drew their opener 0-0 with the season's biggest budgeted side Abahani of Dhaka.

It would be a tricky fixture for the Reds as Chittagong Mohammedan had put on a spirited display in a 2-1 defeat to Sheikh Russel KC when

they travelled Dhaka.

After a two-day break, a mouth watering clash is due on Tuesday with at least eight players from Africa set to compete with Dhaka Mohammedan pinning hopes on four Nigerians and Russel set to field four from Morocco.

Mohammedan need to improve after edging Arambagh 1-0 while Russel will be boosted by the inclusion of Bourdif Mohammed, the captain who missed their first match due to a suspension. His presence will give more solidity to a rather inexperienced backline that showed signs of nerves under pressure.

The week will be rounded off with bottom-table pair Arambagh and Rahmatganj looking to win their first point on Wednesday.

Abahani will be resting this week but there was good news for the Dharmundi outfit, who have secured the International Transfer Certificates (ITC) of Argentine

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Dhaka catch Rajshahi

SPORTS REPORTER

Rajshahi on 36 points.

It was the first time Rajshahi, the only undefeated team in the six-team fray, had to share the top position after staying ahead throughout the first-class competition.

Chittagong are a distant third with 28 points, followed by Barisal (24) Sylhet (22) and Khulna (14).

Resuming on 177-3 on the final day, Sylhet's batting bonanza continued as overnight pair Alok Kapali and Golam Mawla, both of whom were dismissed in the 40s in the first innings, frustrated the rival attack to approach their respective hundreds during a 147-run fourth wicket partnership.

Dhaka, who enjoyed a vital 20-run first-inning lead, went on to collect four points to come level with

Sylhet captain Kapali, however, had the luck shine on him as he made 104 off 174 deliveries. The man-of-the-match, who scored 41 in the first essay, hit 13 boundaries in his four-hour knock.

For Mawla, it was rather disappointing as he was trapped lbw by left-arm spinner Mosharraf Hossain for 96, made in 221 balls with help of ten fours.

Sylhet's declaration on 311-6 halfway through the second session set the home side an improbable 292-run target and both captains decided it was enough an hour after tea with Dhaka reaching 110-3 at close of play. Opener Rashedul

Discarded national cricketer and

SEE PAGE 22 COL 5

Ad

Gilchrist backs bowlers

AFP, Kingstown



ICC Cricket World Cup
WEST INDIES 2007

Adam Gilchrist believes aggressive batsmen like himself won't have it all their own way at the World Cup despite fellow Australia opener Matthew Hayden's prediction that a landmark score of 500 runs in a one-day international innings is now in sight.

Australia wicket-keeper Gilchrist, one of the most dynamic batsmen in the modern one-day game, only arrived in the West Indies on Monday following the birth of his third child.

But having been a spectator for world champions Australia's first warm-up match, a 106-run win over Zimbabwe, Gilchrist is now set to face old rivals England in his side's second and final practice match here Friday.

The ground is typical of many that will be used in the tournament proper in that its short boundaries are an open invitation to renowned hitters such as Gilchrist, who in 257 one-day internationals has scored 8,585 runs, including 14 hundreds, at an average of nearly 35.62.

However, the slow, low pace of the Arnos Vale pitch has made strokeplay difficult and the surface could provide a guide for things to come at this World Cup, even though the nine highest totals by a team winning after batting second in limited overs international history have all been achieved since the turn of the century.

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