



1 DAY TO GO

Cup dented in India

AFP, New Delhi

The expensive silverware to be awarded to the winner of cricket's World Cup in the Caribbean has been damaged while on display in India, organisers said on Friday.

A gold ring below the coins depicting previous winners of the sport's biggest prize got detached from the wooden base of the 11-kilogram (24-pound) trophy, made in England at an estimated cost of 80,000 dollars.

The damage was discovered when the trophy, brought to India by one of the global sponsors of the International Cricket Council (ICC), was displayed in the eastern city of Kolkata on Thursday.

The trophy was immediately removed from public gaze and is being shipped for repairs to England before being taken to the Caribbean where the World Cup opens on Sunday.

A statement from the sponsors claimed the gold ring came unstuck when the trophy was handed over by the ICC earlier this week.

"The lower gold ring of the World Cup was detached from the wooden base when the trophy was received from the ICC," the statement said.



Did U Know?

Sixteen teams are participating in this year's World Cup, two more than the 2003 edition in South Africa and eight more than the first World Cup of 1975.

What to WATCH

STAR Sports
FA Cup
Middlesbrough v Man United
Live at 11:25 pm
Primera Liga
Barcelona v Real Madrid
Live at 2:55 am (Sunday)

DAY'S EVENT

B.League
Ctg Mohammedan v Mukti Jiddha
Sangsad (3:45 pm)
Venue: MA Aziz Stadium, Chittagong

TALK TURKEY

Tony Cozier
(West Indian cricket commentator)
"And Ryan ten Doeschate all of a sudden becomes Ryan fifteen Doeschate"
After the South Africa-born Dutch player took five wickets against India in their World Cup warm-up game on Tuesday.

Tigers' prep perfect

Injury worry for Aftab

SPORTS REPORTER



Nothing could have been better than the way Bangladesh cricket team completed their build-up to the Cricket World Cup when they pulled off an emphatic seven-wicket victory against Scotland in the second and final official warm-up match on Thursday at the 3Ws Oval in Barbados.

The spirits would be definitely high when the Tigers go into the main event with hopes of making a second round berth as they have hundred percent success in their preparation games including a stunning two-wicket victory against New Zealand in the Caribbean.

Habibul Bashar's men play their first match in Group B against India on March 17 in Trinidad before meeting Sri Lanka and Bermuda.

Understandably, Bangladesh skipper Bashar was highly satisfied with his team preparations.

"I have to say I am very satisfied with our preparation. We bowled and fielded well today and the batting has been impressive throughout. We did lose two early wickets but once again the middle-order never allowed any pressure to set in," said Bashar, who led the way to secure seven-wicket victory against Scotland with an unbeaten 57 (87 balls; 6x4), to TigerCricket.com.

"Shakib and I again had a fine partnership and then Ashraful (23 not out off 20, 5x4) got us home quickly. Aftab was also batting beautifully before he got injured. Everyone is in touch and that gives me a lot of confidence. The World Cup matches will be a different ball game but if we can continue doing what we are doing at the moment then we can be a pretty tough opposition for any team," he added.

"Before we came here for the World Cup nobody gave us a chance. That's fine for people to say, but we are looking at getting to the second round. With Tamim (Iqbal) and Mortaza (Mashrafe Bin) playing so well, this is a great boost for the World Cup. Their contributions were brilliant. We will do one

thing, that is play positive cricket," Bashar was quoted by a local newspaper while talking about his side's surprising two-wicket victory against formidable New Zealand in the first warm-up game.

Bangladesh started their preparation in the Caribbean with a three-nation tournament in Antigua where they outclassed Bermuda (by 8 wickets) and Canada (by 13 runs).

Bangladesh cruised past Scotland by seven wickets in their last World Cup warm-up game but the victory was somewhat marred by concerns surrounding key batsman Aftab Ahmed who suffered a muscle injury in the waist while batting.

Aftab had gone in after Bangladesh had lost opener Shahriar Nafees for a duck with the score on seven while chasing 153 to win. Before another run had been scored the other opener Tamim Iqbal (seven off 17) was also walking back to the dressing room.

Aftab, however steadied the innings with the ever-dependable

SEE PAGE 18 COL 6



PHOTO: AFP
Bangladesh batsman Aftab Ahmed is being stretchered from the ground for treatment on his injured waist during a World Cup warm-up game against Scotland at the 3Ws Oval in Bridgetown on Thursday.

Hosts' happy hunting



SPORTS REPORTER

First round winners Brothers Union and Khulna Abahani both stumbled in the second week of the B. League yesterday.

Table-toppers Brothers, who blanked Chittagong Abahani 3-0 in the opening round, shared points with Farashganj Sporting Club in a goalless draw but Khulna Abahani, 2-0 winners at home against Rahmatganj in their earlier game, crashed 2-0 to their Chittagong namesake in the southern port city.

Chittagong Abahani utilised home advantage at the MA Aziz

Stadium to recover from their first round mauling and dominated the whole show but spoiled a series of chances in the first half hour.

The pressure told after 40 minutes but actually, the hosts were fortunate to go ahead. It was midfielder Dhirman Barua who sent a cross from the left flank but rival goalkeeper Iran Sheikh, blinded by the sunlight, lost the high ball through his grip to concede the lead.

Chittagong Abahani got their second in the 66th minute when midfielder Khokon Das headed in a freekick by Nurul Islam to seal three points.

TEAMS
Chittagong Abahani: Kamal, Gobinda, Narayan, Sohel, Mintu, Dhirman, Nurul Islam, Johnny (Jahangir), Khokon, Towhidul (Anwar) and Jitu (Asad).
Khulna Abahani: Iran,

SEE PAGE 18 COL 4



PHOTO: STAR
Chittagong Abahani midfielder Johnny (L) wins an aerial challenge against a Khulna Abahani player during their B. League match at the MA Aziz Stadium in Chittagong yesterday.

Sean shines for Zim

AFP, Kingstown



Sean Williams' unbeaten 72 saw Zimbabwe to a six-wicket win against Bermuda in their final World Cup warm-up match here Thursday.

Zimbabwe, far the more experienced of these two 'minnows', slumped to five for two inside two overs as they chased a modest target of 137.

But left-hander Williams, who'd impressed while making 44 in a 106-run defeat against world champions Australia on Tuesday, ensured the Africans won with 21 overs to spare as they finished on 137 for four.

Stuart Matsikyeri was 21 not out.

Williams faced 85 balls, with two sixes and three fours.

Together with Chamu Chibhabha

(30) he put on 73 for the third wicket to put Zimbabwe in sight of victory.

"We lost two quick wickets so I thought to myself, chasing 137, I've got a lot of time to bat," the 20-year-old Williams told reporters. "So I might as well try to bat through the whole innings."

Williams, still coming to terms with his knock against Australia, added: "That was awesome. Against the best bowling attack in the world I was really trying to value my wicket but I ended up giving it away and I should have got another five."

Zimbabwe's match-winner was on the verge of giving up at international level before a spell playing for Newcastle-based club side Claravale in north-east England revived his enthusiasm.

"I am glad I stuck with it. I went to England and got a lot of experience and then I came back and continued from where I left off."

Zimbabwe captain Prosper Utseya added: "It seems we are

moving in the right direction even though we lost to Australia."

Bermuda skipper Irving Romaine, whose side were skittled out for 45 against England on Monday, was once more left bemoaning his team's batting.

"Once again, we just didn't score enough runs at this level."

"If we had batted through to 190 it would have been a decent total. But we were 50 runs short."

"We have to put a decent total on the board to gain some respect."

Williams's innings was an assured display. When giant spinner Dwayne Leverock, who made headlines all round the world after taking two for 32 against England on Monday, came on Williams lofted him for six over mid-wicket. Earlier, Janeiro Tucker's 52 was

SEE PAGE 18 COL 1

SEE PAGE 18 COL 5

Al Amin guides Mariners

SPORTS REPORTER

Al Amin grabbed five wickets as Dhaka Mariners earned a two-wicket victory against Eskaton Sabuj Sangha in the Kai-Altech First Division Cricket League at the Dhaka University ground yesterday.

Despite Rahjee's 135-ball 73, Eskaton were bundled out for 194 in 49.5 overs. Mariners raced to 196-8 in 46.1 overs with Fayaz making 44.

BKSP rode on Mominul's unbeaten 50 and Mithun's 49 to score 199-8 and then dismissed Bangladeshi Boys to 119 to secure an 80-run victory at the Dhanmondi Cricket Stadium.

Away at BKSP, Sohag smashed 63 as Dhaka Wanderers (205-7) defeated Agrani Bank (204-9).

Iqra, Manarat win

SPORTS REPORTER

Iqra Model School rode on a massive total to secure a 58-run victory against Shaheed Police Smriti School in the Standard Chartered Young Tigers National School Cricket tournament at the East End Club ground yesterday.

Haidar Ali hit 74 and Jahirul chipped in with 58 as Iqra amassed 309-10 in 37.4 overs. Shaheed Police School were all out for 251 in 45.3 overs.

At the Dhanmondi Club ground, Manarat Dhaka International (171-6) beat Sabuj Biddiyapith (170) by four wickets.

LOCAL SNIPPETS

SPORTS REPORTER

Natore blanked Chuadanga 3-0 in a final phase match of the JFA Cup Under-16 Football Championship at the Banani Army Stadium yesterday.

Imran Mirza, Sadhan and Sumon scored for the winners, who led the first 1-0. In the day's other match, Dhaka played to a 1-1 draw with BKSP at the same venue. Raju put BKSP ahead in the eighth minute while Saddam Hossain restored parity for BKSP in the 23rd minute.

Alex Gidman scripted the tourist's six-wicket victory as the lanky paceman returned with figures of five for 42 to wrap up the home

innings for 177 runs in 45.5 overs. Nick Compton then guided his side to 180-4 in 36.5 overs with an 84-ball 64 during which he hit four boundaries and an over boundary off left-arm spinner Manzurul Islam.

England A won the first game by

Nazimuddin made 58 off 69 balls with the help of nine boundaries while Tushar contributed 43 off 70 balls that saw four boundaries.

They finally reached to 177 after a middle-order collapse, thanks to Manzurul (20) and Dollar Mahmud's (12) late effort.

England A also wobbled in the start when Dollar trapped Michael Carrberry (0) in the third ball but Will Jefferson and Nick Compton took the game away from the local side.

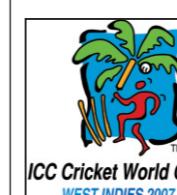
A towering Jefferson was aggressive by hitting six boundaries and a six off Dollar over mid-wicket for his 34-ball 40 while Matt Prior added 34 off 51 balls that featured five fours.

"We said that we had won the match by lunch when they were bundled out for only 177," said a jubilant England skipper Michael

SEE PAGE 18 COL 1

Tamim 'faces the ball'

AFP, Bridgetown



Their combined ages still make them younger than Brian Lara, but if Kieron Pollard and Tamim Iqbal

can have even half the career the great West Indian has enjoyed, they'll be happy.

As the likes of Lara, Sachin Tendulkar, Glenn McGrath and Sanath Jayasuriya prepare for their last World Cup, its players such as 19-year-old West Indian Pollard and Bangladeshi Tamim, just 17, who will look to carve out similar careers.

Pollard's call-up to the West Indies 15-man World Cup squad stunned many in the game. The Trinidadian has never played a Test or a one-day international and has just six first class matches under his belt.

But his lack of experience hasn't dampened his ambition and he has his sights set on starting the World Cup opener against Pakistan at Sabina Park on Tuesday.

"My first goal at the tournament is to make the final eleven, and if I achieve that in the first game, I want to perform at my best, in whatever situation I go into," Pollard told reporters.

"I make goals in the short term and when I achieve them I make another one."

Pollard made 14 in the West Indies warm-up victory over Kenya on Monday and is keen to get among the runs.

"A couple of 50s or even a hun-

draed according to the situation," he said.

Pollard knows how to score runs and how to do it quickly.

At a Twenty20 match in 2006 in Antigua, he hit 83 off 38 balls before making a century against Barbados in the West Indies domestic championship.

Tamim Iqbal, who won't be 18 until March 20, already has four ODIs under his belt but is feeling his way gently with a modest 57 runs in his four innings.

The left-hander is regarded as an exciting prospect and has cricket in the blood, being the younger brother of Bangladesh international Nafis Iqbal Khan and nephew of former national side skipper Akram Khan.

He announced himself at the end of 2005 when he hit 112 from just 71 balls to help Bangladesh to victory in an Under-19 international against England.

On Tuesday, the Chittagong teenager faced down one of the

SEE PAGE 18 COL 2

Eng A win one-day series too

Cricket

SPORTS REPORTER

England A also clinched the one-day series against their Bangladeshi counterparts with one match in hand when they took an unassailable 2-0 lead in the three-match series by convincingly winning the second game at the Mirpur Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium yesterday.

Alex Gidman scripted the tourist's six-wicket victory as the lanky paceman returned with figures of five for 42 to wrap up the