



PHOTOS: AFP

IT'S PARTY TIME: Bangladesh players (L) take part in the march past while players of the sixteen teams (R) participating in the World Cup enjoy the fireworks display during the opening ceremony of the competition at Trelawny in Jamaica Sunday evening.

## What to WATCH

### BTV & SET Max

ICC World Cup 2007  
West Indies v Pakistan  
Opening Match  
Live at 8:30 pm



**Dav Whatmore**  
(Bangladesh cricket coach)  
"It's important for Bangladesh to win as many (matches) as we can. Against a good opposition like New Zealand, the win was terrific for us."



**B.League**  
Mohammedan v Sheikh Russel (5:00 pm)  
Venue: Bangabandhu National Stadium  
National Cricket League  
Day Two (Four-Day)  
Rajshahi v Chittagong  
Venue: Chittagong Divisional Stadium  
Dhaka v Khulna  
Venue: Fatullah Cricket Stadium

# And the show begins

AFP, Daniel Town



The 2007 Cricket World Cup, the first to be held in the Caribbean, was opened here on Sunday in a three-hour, 2-million-dollar opening ceremony.

Sir Garfield Sobers, arguably the greatest player the game has ever known, declared the 16-team, 49-day, 51-match tournament open.

"On behalf of the West Indies, it is my honour and privilege to declare the ninth ICC Cricket World Cup officially open," said Sobers.

Chris Dehring, the chief executive of the organising committee, said the Caribbean was the ideal place to host the event which has cost in the region of 400 million dollars to stage.

"The world will see the best cricketers competing against the backdrop of one of the most blessed places on the planet," he said.

"They will see exciting cricket inspired by the rhythm and soul of the West Indies."

He added that the tournament was the reward for years of "sweat and tears, hard work and sacrifice".

Ricky Ponting, the skipper of defending champions Australia, said he was keen to get the action underway.

"This is a huge night," he said. "Our preparations have been really good and now we are looking forward to getting the tournament underway."

The three-hour ceremony at the Trelawny Stadium featured a host of Caribbean entertainers including reggae legend Jimmy Cliff and Shaggy.

Titled West Indian Energy, the two-million-dollar event also involved around more than 2,000 singers, dancers and performers.

In all, 16 teams will play a total of 51 matches at grounds spread around nine different Caribbean nations, with the final in Barbados on April 28.

International Cricket Council (ICC) president Percy Sonn told the crowd: "All cricket lovers know about the riches the players from the West Indies have brought to this marvellous game."

"It is more than appropriate that

the World Cup is staged here for the first time.

"In as much as the West Indies represents unity and diversity, so do the countries taking part with all drawn from the five continents. The tie that binds us is the one we call the spirit of cricket."

"We will honour the ethics of the game under all circumstances."

Son added that throughout the tournament, players will wear ribbons to show their support for AIDS awareness as well as their backing for UNICEF.

Record-breaking West Indies skipper Brian Lara read the players' pledge.

There was loud applause for Grenada premier Keith Mitchell, whose country will host matches two years after being ravaged by a second hurricane, as well as for Jamaica prime minister Portia Simpson Miller and Jamaican reggae singer Sean Paul.

All 16 competing teams took part in a parade around the stadium.

Despite the optimism of the ceremony, the tournament has been dogged by problems in the build-up with many stadiums facing construction delays while some hotel

operators have been accused of profiteering by trebling rates.

Around 250 million dollars has been spent on building new or refurbishing existing stadiums mostly in partnership with foreign governments and with the Chinese heavily involved.

Venue development director Don Lockerbie said Sunday that not all grounds were 100-percent ready although he was confident that the shortcomings would not effect the event which runs until April 28.

"I think a lot of the venues have waited to the very last to get some of the final bits of construction in and, as a perfectionist, I'm a little disappointed that I don't see all the landscaping full out and the roads all paved and things around the stadiums finished," said Lockerbie.

"Construction is very difficult in this part of the world, but I will say we are ready. I will say we can put on a fabulous World Cup in these venues and I look for them maybe to mature in the future."

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## Crazy!

REUTERS, Jamshedpur

A cricket-crazy Indian is threatening to kill himself if he is not allowed to sell a kidney to fund a trip to the World Cup in the Caribbean.

Taran Sharma, 23, told Reuters on Monday he would set himself on fire later this week if no one came forward to help him sell the organ.

"I will kill myself if I am denied a chance to watch the Indians play in the West Indies," Sharma said.

"Anybody can survive with one kidney but you will never get the opportunity to watch India win the Cup in the West Indies."

The World Cup begins on Tuesday, while 1983 winners India open their campaign on March 17 with a Group B match against Bangladesh.

Selling body organs is banned by law and only family members can donate organs to their relatives after obtaining approval from authorities.

Officials said they would not allow Sharma to sell a kidney and indicated he could be prosecuted.

"We are keeping a constant watch on the situation," FKN Kujur, a senior police official said.

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# Cracking opener on the cards

AFP, Kingston



Hosts West Indies and unpredictable Pakistan, two teams equally blessed with the same explosive potential,

fittingly open the 2007 World Cup here on Tuesday at Sabina Park.

The two sides have fought some epic battles in the past, including twice being involved in one-wicket victories -- in 1975 when West Indies won, and in 1987 when the Pakistanis triumphed.

No two players demonstrate the volatility of the two sides like the two captains -- Brian Lara of West Indies and Inzamamul Haq of Pakistan -- both of whom made their debut appearances in World Cup cricket in the same year.

It was 1992, and while Pakistan emerged champions, West Indies bowed out early which is something Lara hopes will not happen this year, although he acknowledges the unpredictable nature of his side.

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"This is a team that over the past few years has beaten everyone else and we have played some very good cricket, but we have been unpredictable," he told reporters on the eve of the opening ceremony.

"I don't think people should be so sarcastic about this team."

The unpredictability reared its ugly head as recently as Friday, when India dismissed the hosts for 85 and clinched a morale-boosting nine-wicket win in their final warm-up.

"We talked about getting our act together," Lara said. "We tend to be unpredictable, this was not a one-off, and it is something we are trying to stamp out."

"I'd prefer it if we were very consistent and not unpredictable, but the pressure of the situation sometimes gets to the team."

Pakistan won both their warm-up matches this week, but Inzamamul is not reading too much into those successes.

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# Battle for top spot



### SPORTS REPORTER

Today's mouth watering B. League clash could well turn into a battle of Africans when Mohammedan Sporting Club host Sheikh Russel Krira Chakra at the Bangabandhu National Stadium.

Channel i will telecast the match live from 4.45pm.

Mohammedan and Russel, the only teams not to have dropped points in the league so far, will field

eight African footballers in total with Nigerians donning the famous black and white strip against Russell's Moroccans.

The winners will jump two points clear to the top of the table but both teams need improvement after sluggish show in the first round.

However, foreign players are not everything, believed Mohammedan coach Shafiqul Islam Manik.

"Yes, the foreigners played crucial role in our last match but the match winner came from a local guy," Manik said referring to Zahid Hossain's goal in a 1-0 win over Arambagh.

"Everyone will have to work hard for a good result because it's not a game of four or five players. We have a strong opposition tomorrow

but every match is a big match for us," the home coach said after yesterday's practice.

The former national fullback is expected to retain the same side although the arrival of experienced players like Senthil and Asad after the break against Arambagh visibly sharpened the attack of black and whites whose local collection is weakest in decades.

His rival at the Russel camp, an ex-national winger Wajed Gazi, however, believed that his foreign imports will be the key to victory.

"Our footballers looked rusty after missing one full season and so far, the Moroccans have proved better in the field. Our first match was a proof of that and I believe the foreigners will make the difference," Gazi told adding that every team would be dependent on foreign imports.

"With all the giants like Abahani, Muktijoddha and Brothers losing points, this match

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## Molla and co trying to stay

### SPORTS REPORTER

The urge to bring real sports organisations to sports federations and associations was ignored when Dhaka Divisional Sports Association included politically motivated persons in its ad-hoc committee.

A 15-member committee headed by the divisional commissioner, the ex-officio, was formed and sent to the National Sports Council (NSC) yesterday, according to sources.

Controversial organiser Golam Rasul Molla, the so-called 'Forum' leader who allegedly traded in votes and also gained places for himself in two most important sports federations -- football and cricket -- apart from holding the post of general secretary of the Dhaka Divisional Sports Association, has been named member-secretary.

Molla, a vice-president of Bangladesh Cricket Board and an executive body member of the Bangladesh Football Federation,

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# It's a mad world!

AFP, Bridgetown



It's cost thousands of dollars to get here and, when they arrive, hotel prices have tripled, traffic doesn't move and telephones have a mind of their own.

You don't have to be barmy to be a World Cup fan, but it helps.

"If it cost me a million pounds I'd have come," said 64-year-old Keith Campbell, Jamaican-born, but living in Britain and who has spent 8000 US dollars to reach the Caribbean.

"If I were married and my wife said she'd divorce me if I came, I would still come. This is the first World Cup in the Caribbean and at my age I don't think I will ever see it in the West Indies again."

Matches at the seven-week long tournament won't lack for colour or noise.

England has its Barmy Army,

while India boasts a Bharat Army. The West Indies can boast the Trini posse, the Mound Massive and even a Bajan posse.

It was the Australian media who gave England followers their name in 1994 after doubting the sanity of fans who supported such a losing cause on a tour which saw England loose to the Australian second XI as well as the Aussie youth team.

But what started as a motley crew is now almost a major business.

"I spoke with Richard Branson in 2003 about putting a Virgin logo on a union flag. But he wasn't interested," co-founder Paul Burnham told the Daily Telegraph after the Ashes tour to Australia this year.

"It's believed that around 30,000 English fans made the trip to Australia, spending on average 10,000 dollars each, and with a mailing list of 30,000, there are business opportunities to exploit.

Barmy Army shirts are sponsored by a mobile phone company while an online betting company backs the group's travelling trum-

per.

Fans of all teams have become vital, not just in terms of filling seats, but for selling goods -- from telephones, cable TV and even beer.

Scantily-clad girls at Caribbean grounds are a common sight.

They make pretty pictures for live television and are a dream vehicle for companies.

In Trinidad, the Trini Posse, co-founded by dentist Nigel Camacho, combines cricket and carnival and woe betide those fielders marooned on the boundary where the noise is non-stop during long, hot afternoons.

"In 1992, all we had was a little yellow music box and we just sat there with our cooler and played music all day having the grandest time," said Camacho.

"We had a passion for the game which coupled with being young and having a good time just naturally progressed into the Trini

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