



PHOTO: STAR

Walkers fly the Bangladesh flag at the start of the historic walkathon at the Teknaf Beach Point yesterday.

LOCAL SNIPPETS

SPORTS REPORTER

Abahani organised a commemorative meeting and a milad mahfil following daylong Qurankhwani at their club tent yesterday to pay tribute to cricketers Manzarul Islam Rana and Sajjadul Hasan Shetu.

Two cricketers were killed in a road accident in Khulna on March 16.

National all-rounder Rana was a current Abahani player while opening batsman Shetu played for the giants a couple of seasons back.

Number of club officials, former players and journalists attended the programme.

DIV I CRICKET

BKSP's winning streak in the Kai-Altech First Division Cricket League was snapped by Agrani Bank at the Dhaka University ground.

The sports institute side lost their first game in eight matches when they were bundled out for 150 in 26 overs. The bankers achieved the target in 25 overs by losing seven wickets.

In the day's other matches, Rupali Bank (171-3) registered a seven-wicket victory over Dhaka Mariner Youngs Club (170-10) at the Fatullah Cricket Stadium and Azad Sporting Club (229-9) thrashed Eskaton Sabuj Sangha by 98 runs at BKSP.

NSU INTRA-BATCH CRICKET

Masud blitzed the fastest century in North South University history as his blistering 105 gave Batch 06 a thumping eight-wicket win over Batch 04 in the opening match of the intra-batch cricket tournament at the WAPDA ground in Banani.

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Sonargaon in final

SPORTS REPORTER

Sonargaon Cricketers romped to the final of the Independence Cup when they registered a 22-run victory against Victoria Sporting Club at the Dhanmondi Cricket Stadium yesterday.

The winners of today's match between Mohammedan and Victoria will meet Sonargaon in the March 26 final.

It was Fahim Muntasir who bowled Sonargaon, who outplayed Mohammedan by 52 runs in opening game, to their second success as the off-spinner captured four wickets for 24 to wrap up the Victoria innings for 226 runs.

Sonargaon thrived on two half centuries by Marshal Ayub and Elias Sunny to put on 248-9 in the stipulated 50 overs after deciding to bat.

Marshal smashed 67 off 78 balls with the help of four boundaries and then he also shone with his leg-spin to claim two wickets for 20.

Left-handed Sunny made 51 off 93 deliveries that featured four fours and he associated in a 71-run stand for the third wicket with Al

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Historic walkathon begins

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Cox's Bazar

The eagerly anticipated 100-kilometre long walkathon from Teknaf to Cox's Bazar along the world's longest unbroken sea-beach began from the Teknaf Beach Point yesterday.

Advisor for Youth and Sports Tapan Chowdhury inaugurated the walkathon entitled "Grameen-phone Activate Bangladesh -- Longest Beach Challenge 2007" at the border town of Teknaf yesterday morning.

A total of 500 youths including 30 women are taking part in the pioneer event amidst huge enthusiasm of the local people in the tourist hub of the country.

Hundreds of Army, BDR, RAB, Naval forces, Police and Ansar-VDP's members are providing security and logistical support to

the walkers with a view to making the endeavour a success. Besides, naval ships and air-force helicopters are also on constant alert.

According to organisers the four-day long walkathon is expected to conclude at Kalatali point on the afternoon of March 25, after overnight stopovers at Jahazpur, Shyamlapur, Patnatak and Inani beach. Walkers are expected to cover a distance of 3-3.5 km per hour and will walk from 7 am to 6 pm everyday.

As a sideshow, there will also be a variety of events held at Cox's Bazar beach on the occasion of Independence Day on March 26. Events include a 10-km long fun-walkathon and other sports like cricket, football, kabaddi, handball and volleyball.

Grameenphone is the title sponsor of the event while HRC, Square Group and TIM have also

co-sponsored the programme.

In his inaugural speech Tapan Chowdhury urged the youth of the nation to step forward.

"Bangladesh in on the rise now. Its time for the youth and educated sections of the society to come forward and make an active new generation with a view to a prosperous Bangladesh."

Activate Bangladesh and MAA Consortium have organised the event with Channel i, Prothom Alo, The Daily Star and Radio Today as their strategic partners.

"All the money that will be saved will go to schools and colleges for the development of sports," said Anupam Hossain, program co-ordinator of Activate Bangladesh.

Chairman of Activate Bangladesh and former director general of Bangladesh Rifles, Maj Gen (ret'd) Anwar Hossain also spoke on the occasion.

Troost given fitting bye

AFP, Basseterre



The Netherlands bid farewell to captain Luuk van Troost with a thumping eight-wicket win over Scotland in the battle of the World Cup Group A minnows on Thursday.

Van Troost dropped himself from the match because of a lack of form leaving acting-skipper Jeroen Smits to pay a glowing tribute to the 37-year-old.

"Van Troost is honest and dropped himself in the best interests of the team. He had wanted to make this his farewell appearance, but couldn't make it. He was depressed and so was I."

The Netherlands, who won the toss, elected to field first and shot their opponents out for 136 in 34.1 overs with new-ball bowler Billy Stelling grabbing with a career-best 3-12.

Ryan ten Doeschate (70 not out) and Bas Zuiderent (43 not out) then shared an unbroken 102-run stand for the third wicket to guide the Netherlands to a comfortable half of their overs in the bag.

Smits said it was a different match for his team after being thrashed by the world's top two teams Australia and South Africa.

"We were pumped up by South African captain Graeme Smith's comments who backed Scotland to win this match," he said.

"They don't know what's going on with the associate teams and we

have proved a better team by winning this match."

Scotland captain Craig Wright came down hard on his batsmen.

"I can't explain what went wrong," said the Scotland captain, for whom tail-ender Glenn Rogers top-scored with 26.

"Until the practice games our batting was not a worry, but problems seem to have resurfaced and most of the guys fell for soft dismissals which are hard to explain."

The Scotland captain, however, felt his team would lift themselves before their next assignment in the inaugural Twenty20 World Cup in South Africa in September.

"One horrendous defeat doesn't make us a bad team. It is disappointing to lose in the manner we did and now some of the guys will have to ask themselves some questions," said Wright, whose team also ended winless in the 1999 World Cup.

The Netherlands achieved their second win in the World Cup following their win over Namibia in 2003.

Australia and South Africa, the other teams in Group A, have already qualified for the next round of Super Eight. They meet each other on Saturday.

SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard of the Group A match between Scotland and the Netherlands at Warner Park in St Kitts on Thursday:

SCOTLAND

Poonia c Smits b Stelling 0
Majid b Reekers 6
Watson c and b De Leede 16
Hamilton lbw b Stelling 4
Brown lbw b Stelling 0
McCallum c Stelling b Jonkman 24

Smith b Jonkman 19
Wright not out 1
Blain not out 18
Rogers c Smits b Kashif 26
Hoffman c Ten Doeschate b Van Bunge 7
Extras: (lb-5, nb-2, w-8) 15
Total: (All out in 34.1 overs) 136
Fall of wickets: 1-0, 2-9, 3-15, 4-15, 5-39, 6-77, 7-83, 8-83, 9-117.

Bowler	O	M	R	W
Stelling	8	3	12	3
Reekers	6	0	23	1
De Leede	4	0	24	1
Jonkman	5	1	22	2
Kashif	7	2	29	2
Ten Doeschate	3	0	17	0
Van Bunge	1.1	0	4	1

NETHERLANDS
Zuiderent not out 43
Reekers c Wright b Blain 9
Szwarczynski c Smith b Blain 12
Ten Doeschate not out 70
Extras: (lb-4, w-2) 6
Total: (For 2 wkts in 23.5 overs) 140
Fall of wickets: 1-18, 2-37.

Bowler	O	M	R	W
Hoffman	4	0	26	0
Blain	5	0	29	2
Wright	4	1	17	0
Rogers	3	1	15	0
Brown	4	0	20	0
Majid	3.5	0	29	0

Result: Netherlands won by eight wickets.

Match-of-the-match: Billy Stelling.

Toss: Netherlands
Umpires: Tony Hill (NZL) and Asoka de Silva (SRI)
Match referee: Javagal Srinath (IND)

A good week: Fleming

AFP, Gros Islet

New Zealand captain Stephen Fleming was happy to reflect on a highly successful opening campaign to the World Cup after his side wrapped up a 114-run win over Canada in their third and final Group C game.

"It's been a good week, we're really happy," said Fleming, who contributed 66 to New Zealand's largest World Cup total of 363-5, to which Canada managed 249-9 in reply.

"Even today, we were put under pressure with the new ball, Lou Vincent hit some runs (101) ... and we've come through the week pretty well."

The New Zealand bowling attack was put to the sword by John Davison in its opening spell, the Canada captain racing to a half-century in just 23 balls, but Fleming was happy with the way his team stuck to the task.

"It was good for us to put up with that pressure in the first 10 overs, you can't ask anymore," he said, adding that the main challenge for his team with the Super Eights ahead was to rid itself of any niggles and last the course.

"We have to get back to full strength," he said. "We also have to try to maintain a certain level of intensity and also have a little bit of downtime, so it's a fine balance."

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Wife turned Lou around

AFP, Gros Islet

Lou Vincent said his wife had made the difference after he ended a run of noughts at the World Cup with 101 in New Zealand's comfortable win over Canada.

Victory by 114 runs meant the Black Caps had won all three of their Group C matches as they cruised into the Super Eights in fine form.

And Thursday's win was made all the sweeter for New Zealand by the sight of Vincent, who'd been out for nought in the wins over England and Kenya, finding his form at the top of the order.

Asked what had changed on Thursday, Vincent replied: "My wife's on tour."

The 28-year-old right-hander had to survive a torrid first over from Anderson Cummins before getting off the mark in style with a six off the former West Indies fast bowler over cover.

"It's been an interesting start to the tour," Vincent said.

"I really haven't enjoyed it too much. It's been good to put my hand up today and get through a tough stage and then cash in with the boys scoring at the other end which made it easier to anchor an end."

Vincent's innings was the centrepiece of a New Zealand score of 363 for five - their highest World Cup total - which also featured the

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NZ coast past Canada

AFP, Gros Islet



Lou Vincent found his form after two noughts with a hundred as New Zealand made it three World Cup wins out of three in Group C with a 114-run success against Canada at the Beausejour Cricket Ground here Thursday.

Vincent's 101 was the centrepiece of New Zealand's World Cup record score of 363 for five.

The innings also saw Brendon McCullum (52 not out) score the fastest World Cup 50 of all-time, off 20 balls with five sixes and one four, as Canada's attack wilted.

Canada captain John Davison, who four years ago scored the fastest World Cup hundred, off 67 balls, counter-attacked by making 52 before he was caught and bowled by paceman Michael Mason.

"It's been a good week, we're really happy," said New Zealand skipper Stephen Fleming, who contributed 66 to his side's largest World Cup total to which Canada managed 249-9 in reply.

"Even today, we were put under pressure with the new ball, Lou Vincent hit some runs (101) ... and we've come through the week pretty well."

New Zealand's total was also a Beausejour ground record in one-day internationals, coming just two days after they'd posted the previous best here of 331 for seven against Kenya.

Davison went on the offensive against an attack missing rested fast bowler Shane Bond.

Off the fifth ball, from Daryl Tuffey, playing his first match of the tournament, Davison pulled a six and he later weighed in with four successive fours off Mason.

Left-hander Geoff Barnett then

got in on the act with four off Tuffey.

By then Davison had been bowled off a Mason no-ball and there was further frustration for the Black Caps when Barnett, on 15, was dropped by a diving McCullum off Tuffey.

Canada's 50 came in just 30 balls before, with the score on 76, they lost their first wicket.

Going for another boundary to add to his six and 10 fours, Davison miscued the ball straight up in their air and Mason made no mistake.

Davison had faced a mere 31 balls.

The run-rate slowed and

McCullum made amends for his earlier error by holding an edged cut from Barnett (40) off left-arm spinner Daniel Vettori to leave Canada 110 for two.

Ian Billcliff, who has played for several New Zealand first-class sides, made 50 off 55 balls with four fours.

But one ball later he was bowled by medium-pacer Scott Styris and from their Canada's innings fell away.

However, their total of 249 for was their best at the World Cup, surpassing the 228 for seven they

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NEW ZEALAND V CANADA SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard of the World Cup Group C match between Canada and New Zealand at the Beausejour Cricket Ground in St Lucia on Thursday:

NEW ZEALAND	R	M	B	4s	6s
Vincent c & b Davison	101	178	117	9	1
Fleming c Billcliff b Sander	66	96	67	8	1
Fulton lbw b Sander	47	50	47	4	1
Styris c Bagai b Samad	28	12	17	6	0
McMillan c Samad b Davison	10	4	6	1	0
Oram not out	35	36	27	0	3
McCullum not out	52	27	21	1	5
Extras: (b-1, lb-5, w-17, nb-1)	24				
Total: (For 5 wickets in 50 overs)	363				
Did not bat: Vettori, Tuffey, Patel, Mason.					
Fall of wickets: 1-142, 2-222, 3-253, 4-266, 5-278.					

Bowler	O	M	R	W	Econ
Cummins	10	1	59	0	5.90
Bhatti	5.3	1	25	0	4.54
Samad	2.3	0	31	1	12.40
Osinde	4	0	45	0	11.25
Sander	10	0	58	2	5.80
Davison	10	0	67	2	6.70
Dhaniram	8	0	72	0	9.00

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Pick in awe

AFP, Gros Islet



World Cup with a 114-run defeat by New Zealand.

Although they lost all three of their matches, the North Americans never scored less than 199 and twice improved their record World Cup total, saving their best for last with 249 against New Zealand.

For a team featuring a salesman, an investment banker, a telephone technician and a forklift truck-driver and just one current first-class player in opening batsman Geoff Barnett, these were notable achievements.

Former Nottinghamshire pace bowler Pick, who has been on a one-year sabbatical from his post as coach of the England Under-19 team, praised the huge sacrifices made the Canada players had made just to be at the World Cup.

"I'm absolutely amazed. I'm in awe of the commitment of the Canadian players. This winter we've

been to Pretoria for two-and-a-half-weeks, we've been to Kenya for a month and we've been here for a month.

"For players to take that sort of time off work, some without pay, some guys lose jobs or some guys give up their family holidays for the next two years or whatever it might be, for very little recompense if any."

"They deserve days like today," Pick added after Thursday's match.

"They deserve to come and do well and take milestone away from the World Cup, to improve and to have people say 'they didn't win any games but they are better now than they were at the last World Cup and Canadian cricket is obviously moving forward'."

"They deserve all the credit for that because some of these guys go to work at 5am in the morning, finish at 5pm, drive for an hour-and-a-half, do three hours practice, go home, have something to eat, go to bed and do the same next day. And that's when it's minus 30."

"For the guys based in Canada it is a phenomenal effort."

During their first World Cup appearance, in 1979, Canada were bowled out for 45 against England. Pick said their recent performances were a measure of how far the team had come. "We expect to get 200

now, even against the Test playing teams."

"That's no longer a good day, that's the standard we should achieve," said Pick of a Canada side that went down to a more than respectable 51-run defeat against England in this World Cup.

Looking ahead, Pick said Canada could hold its own with the best of the associate or junior nations - the team play Ireland in the final of the four-day International Cricket Council (ICC) Intercontinental Cup tournament in May.

"I see Canadian cricket competing with the other associates who have professional frameworks in place and structures that develop youth talent. At the moment, Canada hasn't got that simply because of a lack of money. If and when we get some money into Canadian cricket, there's potential for growth there that there isn't in other countries."

And he said talk of 'minnow' nations devaluing the World Cup was wide of the mark.

"If the ICC are looking to expand the top group of teams, as they've done in the past with Bangladesh and Sri Lanka, it's essential we play in these competitions. That's what they want to do and all credit to them."



PHOTO: AFP

EYES ON THE BALL, LOU! New Zealand opener Lou Vincent paddles the ball down to fine-leg during his fine hundred against Canada during their Group C World Cup match at Beausejour in Gros Islet on Thursday.