

A sterile Cup

**FROM PAGE 17**  
The low attendance surprised Australia captain Ricky Ponting and disappointed his West Indies counterpart Brian Lara.  
But Gilchrist was optimistic that as the World Cup neared the final stages, so crowds would improve.  
"It's a little bit frustrating. Hopefully as it gets more to the serious end of the tournament, we'll see the big crowds and that atmosphere arrive."  
World Cup officials insisted that they have not priced local fans out of the market for tickets with the cheapest seats on offer at 25 US dollars.  
However, International Cricket Council chief executive Malcolm Speed, quoted on the Cricinfo website, said: "We had to rely on the advice of the local organising committee to establish the prices of the tickets. It is, in retrospect, a little too rich for the local palate."  
And Jack Warner, president of CONCACAF, the Caribbean and North American Football Federation, said of ticket costs: "This has been a World Cup for the organisers, the visitors and the players but certainly not for the people. "That's why the stadiums are empty and that in itself is a con job. It's the biggest con job ever passed off in this region."  
Meanwhile, the poor form of hosts West Indies and the early exits of Asian giants India and Pakistan, whose supporters officials were hoping would boost both attendances and island economies, have been a blow to the prospects of sold-out stadiums.  
Gilchrist called on World Cup chiefs to slash ticket prices in a "one-off" sale.  
"Whatever the policy is at the moment, it doesn't seem to be working. So maybe we can look at dropping the price and have a sale."

Widow happy

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best if that book never appears now. If it is going to cause upset, it is not worth publishing."  
Woolmer's death last month provoked suspicion of the role of match-fixing, but Gill Woolmer said that in e-mails she had received from her husband, "there is not even a hint in them of his being scared, or of anything to do with match-fixing."  
In the interview, she also spoke of how she was not keen on Woolmer even taking the job in the first place, telling The Times: "I said to him, 'I cannot believe you are thinking of doing this!'"  
"He knew the Pakistan side fluctuated in form, but he liked a challenge, and no one else tried to prevent him taking the job."

Lankans

**FROM PAGE 17**  
Sri Lanka has six international cricket venues, including three in Colombo.  
The Galle stadium, badly damaged by the December 2004 tsunami, is being rebuilt and there are plans to hold a Test match when England tours the island during October-November, Mathivanan said.

Five bookies

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match from you.  
"The money starts from a few hundred to millions. They can be very violent. Look how they killed Woolmer," he said.  
He also reiterated that Woolmer's planned book would have blown the whistle on match fixing, even though co-author Ivo Tennant disputed the claim.  
**The sinner**  
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you know the consequence of betrayal.  
Conclusion: Throw him out, before the lunch break. It is far better that a nation pays an individual his due rather than the ungrateful individual insults that nation.  
*The author is former Advisory Sports Editor, The Daily Star*

Greg might

**FROM PAGE 20**  
India must appoint Chappell's successor soon since India are due to tour Bangladesh in May for two Tests and three one-day internationals.  
The BCCI will also speak to seven former national captains before its influential working committee meets on Saturday to decide the future course of action.  
The ex-captains invited are Mansur Ali Khan Pataudi, Chandu Borde, Sunil Gavaskar, Kapil Dev, Srinivas Venkataraman, Ravi Shastri and Krishnamachari Srikkanth.  
Dev, India's only World Cup winning captain, suggested the BCCI should look at Gavaskar to take charge since "he was the right man for the job."  
"The Indian team does not need a coach, it needs a good man manager and there is no one better than Gavaskar to do the job," Dev told AFP.  
"Look, we did not have a coach when we won the World Cup in 1983. But we did have a good man manager in (cricket administrator) Peter Man Singh."  
Gavaskar, the first batsman in Test history to scale the 10,000-run mark, is now a television commentator and also heads the International Cricket Council's technical committee.



India captain Rahul Dravid leaves the BCCI headquarters after their much-hyped meeting in Mumbai on Friday.

Lankans toast on new heroes

**AFP, St John's**  
On the eve of the World Cup, the talk was of Muttiah Muralidaran and Chaminda Vaas.  
Now the words on Sri Lankan lips are Dilhara Fernando and Lasith Malinga.  
The 27-year-old Fernando held his nerve on Wednesday to secure his team a heart-stopping two-run win over England by bowling Ravi Bopara off the last ball of their Super Eights clash.  
The win has put Sri Lanka, the 1996 champions, in sight of the semi-finals.  
"It was a fantastic game. I never

saw a game like it before. I think I did well today (Wednesday). I think the boys are playing really well these days. The top boys are clicking with the bat so I think we can make the semi-finals," said Fernando who finished Wednesday's match with 3-41.  
"My captain said bowl (the last ball) in the block-hole, no slow ball or anything like that. Just do the basic thing. I have done well in recent times and that gave me the confidence I needed to finish the match the way I did."  
In contrast to Fernando, who now has 130 one-day wickets to his name, big guns Vaas and Muralidaran finished with 1-45 and 1-48 respectively.  
Malinga, who took 2-50, is now the World Cup's leading wicket

taker with 15 from six matches and at a average of 14.26; Muralidaran has 12 for second place along with Glenn McGrath and Charl Langeveldt.  
Malinga has already made his mark in the tournament by becoming the first man in history to take four wickets in four balls although it just wasn't enough to rescue his team against South Africa.  
"I always try to take wickets and with the old ball it reverses. I always try to bowl in-swinging yorkers towards the end of the match but it doesn't always work for me as well as it did against South Africa," said the 23-year-old.  
"We are always a fighting team. We always try to defend the runs no matter how few there are."

Whatmore issue

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mance. We set the goal of winning a place in the Super Eight and we have just won that. Definitely it was a great performance by the team and the coach," Anam said.  
Anam, a leading businessman, played a key role in persuading Whatmore to take over Bangladesh in 2003.  
"We had to chase him for months. Under him the team has grown. We are no longer the same old team," he said, adding Whatmore made "similar noises" when India picked up Chappell as its coach two years back.  
At that time, the local media reported that the BCB doubled Whatmore's salary and added more perks to keep him in Bangladesh.  
This time, however, some board officials have openly criticised Whatmore for joining the race for Indian coach midway through the Caribbean World Cup.  
"Whatmore must be held accountable for his statements,"

cricket board chief executive officer Mahmudur Rahman was quoted as saying by the Bengali newspaper Inquilab.  
The daily Jaijaidin, in a front page commentary, called Whatmore's comments "irresponsible" and said they would hit the morale of the cricket team.  
"It is beyond the code of the conduct of the board. It could now stand in the way to Bangladesh's better performance in the remaining matches of the World Cup," it said.  
"However, Whatmore is a professional and he was just doing a bit of 'politics' to raise his salary again," it added.  
Anam agreed Whatmore's reported comments could affect Bangladesh team's performance.  
"At present, we are not saying anything because we don't want any distraction in the World Cup. We still have four matches to play and we want the team to do a better job than the first two matches of the Super Eight."

Chappell, the former Australian captain, sent an e-mail to the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) on Wednesday, saying he did not want to seek an extension due to "family and personal" reasons.  
West Indian legend Vivian Richards has already offered to help India's cricketers in the aftermath of the World Cup.  
News reports have also put Australia quiet man Tom Moody, currently working with Sri Lanka, at the top of the list of candidates alongside Indian stalwarts Sunil Gavaskar and Mohinder Amarnath.  
India must find Chappell's replacement quickly since they are due to tour Bangladesh in May for two Tests and three one-day internationals.  
India, one of the pre-tournament favourites, were upset by Bangladesh in the first match and also lost to Sri Lanka to post their worst World Cup performance since 1979.

Abahani climb up

**FROM PAGE 20**  
**Chittagong Abahani:** Kamal, Gobinda, Soheli, Dhiman, Mintu, Nurul Islam (Sadhan), Khokan Das, Setu, Jahangir, Jitu and Abraham (Asad).  
**CTGM SC WIN**  
Our Sports Reporter adds: Although the sky-blues from the port-city suffered their fourth loss in five outings, their archrivals Chittagong Mohammedan maintained an impressive run with a 2-0 win over Rahmatganj in Dhaka.  
The visitors, whose only loss in the competition was a 2-1 defeat to Sheikh Russel in the first round in Dhaka, registered their first win in the capital to take their collection to eight points after five games.  
Although the home side looked to fight neck and neck early at the Bangabandhu National Stadium, the tourists turned on the style with

pouring attacks but had to remain satisfied with just two goals.  
After Dipu wasted a clear cut chance early, Camara Saifoulaye's dazzling run produced the first goal in the 26th minute when the Guinean midfielder dribbled past two rival backs and goalkeeper Apel to place the ball into an empty net.  
Rahmatganj got two good chances but Rizvi failed to finish a move on the hour mark while Apu's header on a cross by Milon was saved by Chittagong keeper Tito, who initiated a counter attack to help his side score their second in the 64th minute.  
Asif picked the ball in the midfield and the Chittagong captain set Ismail Hossain Zahid, who lobbed Apel from the edge of the penalty area to seal the victory.

Media weighing

**FROM PAGE 20**  
winning captain, suggested the BCCI should look at Gavaskar to take charge since "he was the right man for the job."  
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"Look, we did not have a coach when we won the World Cup in 1983. But we did have a good man manager in (cricket administrator) Peter Man Singh."  
Gavaskar, the first batsman in Test history to scale the 10,000-run mark, is now a television commentator and also heads the International Cricket Council's technical committee.  
BCCI sources confirmed Gavaskar, or any of the former captains, may be asked to take charge for the tour of Bangladesh in May if Chappell is not retained or a new coach not appointed before then.

Rameez tells Sachin to play Tests

**PTI, New Delhi**  
Former Pakistan captain Rameez Raza has joined the chorus calling for Sachin Tendulkar's retirement, saying the Indian star should bid adieu to one-day cricket as he has lost the extra fire power needed for playing the shorter version of the game.  
Raza said Tendulkar was past his pomp as could be seen from the fact that he had not played many match-winning knocks in one-day cricket, and as such he should focus more on Test cricket.  
"I would want to see him play regularly for India in Test matches, maybe not so in one-day cricket. You need little more fire power in one-day cricket and the youngsters can provide that fire power," Raza said.  
"Of late, his graph has been going down and though he is averaging around 50, he has not been winning matches for India for quite a few years." Tendulkar, however, had the class in him to succeed in Test cricket, Raza said.  
"You need bit of experience and class (in Test cricket) and certainly Sachin has that experience and class and maybe he will be of use to India in Test cricket," the cricketer-turned-commentator told CNN-IBN.

BTS win

**FROM PAGE 17**  
Mymensingh Stadium yesterday.  
Batting first, Anirban were bowled out for 124 runs in 40.5 overs to which BTS replied by reaching the score in 44.2 overs.  
Taposh took four wickets for 19 while Sagar top-scored with 42 runs for the Khulna outfit, which is the last club that late national cricketer Manzarul Islam Rana played his last match before he died in a tragic accident.

SA don't worry

**FROM PAGE 17**  
Hasan, one of the stars of his young team.  
Hasan notched a match-winning 53 in his team's historic five-wicket win over former champions India in the first round.  
That win became the basis of Bangladesh's surprise qualification for the Super Eights -- something Hasan will remember for the rest of his life.  
"It's a good memory and it will live for ever. I was confident that I would get runs and now I hope that I will get the big one again. That innings against India made me realise that I can score against big teams and good bowling."  
Despite his success in the Caribbean, it was football, and not cricket, which was his family sport when he was growing up as his father and a cousin both played at domestic level.  
But watching Bangladesh winning the ICC (International Cricket Council) Trophy in 1999 sparked a huge cricket interest in the boy who became the only cricketer to come from small town of Magura in the Khulna district of his country.  
Hasan rose from the Under-19 World Cup in Sri Lanka and since making his debut against Zimbabwe -- both last year -- has hit three fifties and one hundred in 25 one-day internationals with an impressive average of 49.75.  
Besides his half-century against India, Hasan played a responsible innings of 26 not out in the crucial match against Bermuda.  
In the Super Eights, he has made 25 each against Australia and New Zealand.  
"I am enjoying the World Cup a lot but we all know that there is still a lot of work to do and we hope to finish on a high note," vowed Hasan.

West Indies are capable of winning the World Cup for the first time because they believe they can do it, middle-order batsman Craig McMillan has said.  
"Probably the key this time is that there is a real belief," said McMillan, whose side have already posted five successive victories to emerge serious challengers to defending champions Australia's supremacy.  
New Zealand have beaten England, Canada and Kenya in group matches, and the West Indies and Bangladesh in the Super Eights. They now have six points and comfortably on course for the semi-finals.  
"In the previous two World Cups, the New Zealand teams wanted to win but I am not sure if they believed they could win," said McMillan, who has so far scored 4,620 runs in 192 one-day internationals.  
"There is a real confidence in the squad in that if someone gets injured, someone else will do the job well. But we are aware there are going to be huge tests against Australia and Sri Lanka. We still

Keep it

**FROM PAGE 20**  
batsman Lendl Simmons, but still lost by seven wickets.  
Ambrose said dropping a bowler was a blunder.  
"I have always been of the opinion that you should never weaken your bowling to strengthen the batting. I figure if the batsmen you have selected can't do the job, then you replace them," he said.  
"I really don't comment on selection but I am going to say 'support the guys' whichever team is playing out there."  
West Indies also lost to Sri Lanka by 113 runs -- a defeat which further hit their chances of reaching the last four.  
Ambrose said like all other West Indian fans he too was upset with events at the World Cup.  
"I can't say that I am a happy man at the moment because we are not doing too well and as a West Indian and a patriot I can't stand losing," said the fast bowling legend.  
As the host nation, the defeats have left millions of Caribbean fans disappointed, former players looking for scapegoats and organisers fearing for the financial implications of seeing even emptier stadiums for the remaining matches.  
West Indies next play world number one South Africa in Grenada on April 10 where a defeat will confirm their elimination from the tournament.

LOCAL SNIPPETS

SPORTS REPORTER

GM Ziaur Rahman was toppled from the top position in the 33 rd National Chess Championship after IM Abdullah Al Rakib defeated him in the fifth round at the NSC hall-room yesterday.  
Rakib shares the lead with GM Reefat Bin Sattar who beat FM Abu Sufian in the other big match of the day.  
GM Niaz Murshed also had a good outing as he defeated Mohammad Javed in another match.  
**UNDER-15 CRICKET**  
Rajshahi under-15 were in a precarious position as they slumped to 67 for eight in their first innings in a two-day charity match against Cricket Association of Bengal (CAB) under-15 at the Rangpur Stadium yesterday.  
Earlier, CAB under-15 were bowled out for 277 runs with Sandip Das scoring 77 runs.

DIV 1 CRICKET

CCS confirmed their place in next season's first division after their convincing seven-wicket victory over Eskaton at the Fatullah Stadium yesterday.  
In reply to Eskaton's paltry 154 runs, CCS wrapped up the target in only 32 overs with Shuvo hitting an unbeaten 53. Amit contributed with 33.  
In another relegation league match, Mariners Youngs Club defeated Prantik KC by five wickets.  
In the super league match, surprise package Sadharan Bima claimed a close three-wicket victory over Agrani Bank at the Dhanmondi Cricket Stadium.  
**GAIBANDHA CRICKET**  
Gaibandha Cricket Coaching Centre (GCCC) crushed Madhapara Krira Chakra by a massive margin of 175 runs at the local stadium.  
Madhapara were bowled out for only 37 runs in reply to GCCC's 212

scored in 42.4 overs.  
**NSU INTRA-BATCH CRICKET**  
Batch 02 batsman Nafees slammed a chancy 112 to help defeat Batch 03 by 158 runs in the North South University (NSU) Intra-Batch Cricket competition at the Banani WAPDA ground.  
Batting first, Batch 02 piled 319 runs in their stipulated 35 overs with Nafees hitting nine sixes in his knock. Tanim chipped in with 46 while Batch 03 captain Sakib took three for 51 amidst the carnage.  
Batch 03 got off to a shaky start after Tausif took a brilliant one-handed catch of Sakib but it was Rony who consolidated to restore some pride for Batch 03 with his polished 59.  
Batch 02 reached the final of the tournament with the massive win.

Viv blames organisers

**AFP, St John's**  
West Indies great Vivian Richards believes World Cup organisers are to blame for the low crowds that have dogged the tournament in his native Antigua because they've placed too many restrictions on local fans.  
Supporters used to attending matches with musical instruments and banners have found that they can only bring such items to the new Sir Vivian Richards Stadium if they have prior written permission from officials.  
The upshot, allied to complaints about the cost of ticket prices, is that most of those attending World Cup matches in Antigua have been from Australia, England and New Zealand.  
But foreign fans haven't been able to salvage crowd figures.  
For example, only 9,000 turned up at the 19,000 capacity ground for

last week's Super Eights match between hosts West Indies and reigning champions Australia.  
For former West Indies captain Richards, one of cricket's greatest batsmen, the lack of atmosphere has been a real worry.  
"Those of us who have played here know exactly what we are about, the excitement factor. We are a vibrant people," said Richards.  
"But something is seriously missing. It's a particular problem. You do have to take into consideration that we've moved into a new venue," said Richards, a hero at the old Antigua Recreation Ground.  
"It's a much larger venue, it is not as intimate as the Recreation Ground. But I personally believe we've had too many restrictions placed on us as Caribbean people."  
"We are a rather unique people," said Richards at the Stanford Ground here Thursday where he was taking part in a promotional event for World Cup sponsors Johnnie Walker.  
"We live differently to the way you do in Europe or South Africa."

"We are different in terms of our way of life. I just believe it's as if someone has held us by the throat and said 'we don't want you to shout anymore.'"  
Richards, who played in the West Indies teams that won the first two World Cup finals in 1975 and 1979 as well as appearing in the side that lost the 1983 final to India, said he'd been as disappointed as anyone by the lacklustre performances of the current side.  
Brian Lara's men must win their next game, against South Africa, to have a chance of reaching the semi-finals.  
"I feel the same way as a lot of Caribbean people. At this particular stage we are a little bit dumb-founded by the fact we have a team who haven't shown much interest in terms of the event," said Richards.  
"It's very disappointing but I have not written them off yet. I'm just hoping we can find a miracle."

McMillan hopes of final

**AFP, Georgetown**  
New Zealand are capable of winning the World Cup for the first time because they believe they can do it, middle-order batsman Craig McMillan has said.  
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"In the previous two World Cups, the New Zealand teams wanted to win but I am not sure if they believed they could win," said McMillan, who has so far scored 4,620 runs in 192 one-day internationals.  
"There is a real confidence in the squad in that if someone gets injured, someone else will do the job well. But we are aware there are going to be huge tests against Australia and Sri Lanka. We still

have some hard work to do."  
McMillan said the team's strength was that they did not rely on one or two players to win matches as they had plenty of all-rounders to do the job.  
"It's good for us we haven't so far relied on one person. Some teams rely on one or two guys and it puts pressure on rest of the team. In New Zealand, we have players from number one to eleven who can win us a game," he said.  
"We have real strength in the lower half and that's where we can maximise the last eight-ten overs. The kind of games we have seen, that probably is the key. Most games are won and lost in those last 10 overs."  
"That's one of the strengths of all-rounders batting all the way down. It will become very prevalent in the later stages of the tournament. We have been very lucky with good starts."  
McMillan has contributed richly to his team's successes in probably his last World Cup, including a half-century against 2003 semi-finalists Kenya and an unbeaten 33 against the West Indies.  
"I think as a team we have done what we needed to do," said McMillan.  
"Personally it's been a very good World Cup and probably this

is going to be my last. I am looking forward to contribute in every positive note. I hope it's going to be a special one for New Zealand."  
McMillan, in and out of the team in recent years, said he was keen to make the most of the opportunity here.  
"It's special for me because six to eight months ago I wasn't expected to be here. It's a huge opportunity to do something good in what could be a special moment for New Zealand cricket," said McMillan.  
McMillan is a hard-hitting batsman capable of dominating any attack with his exciting stroke-play. He holds the record of scoring 26 runs in an over off Pakistan's Younis Khan in the Hamilton Test in 2001.  
"I have always been an aggressive type of player and I have tried to bat that way. But probably for the last two series, I have been more consistent. That's the key for me," said McMillan.  
"I have played different roles and at times it can be difficult. I've been picked and dropped at times. If it goes well, it goes well. If it doesn't, it's not the end of the world."  
New Zealand's next match is against Ireland here on Monday.



Defending champions Commonwealth Cricket Club poses before leaving to participate in the 12th Hua Hin Six-a-side tournament which begins in Hua Hin in Thailand on April 9. The side is being sponsored by GMG Airlines for the five-day meet.