

## A sterile Cup

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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

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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

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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 Venkataraghavan, 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.



PHOTO: AFP  
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 Dilshara 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 Charles 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."

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.

"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."

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.

## Media weighing

FROM PAGE 20  
Chittagong Abahani: Kamal, Gobinda, Sohel, Dhiman, Mintu, Nurul Islam (Sadhan), Khokan Das, Setu, Jahangir, Jitu and Abraham (Asad).

CTG MSC WIN  
Our Sports Reporter adds: Although the sky-blues from the port-city suffered their fourth loss in five outings, their archrivals Chittagong Mohomedan 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.

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.

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 Apur'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.

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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.

## Abahani climb up

FROM PAGE 20  
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Although the home side looked to fight neck and neck early at the Bangabandhu National Stadium, the tourists turned on the style with

## 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 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, has 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

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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 Manzoor Islam Rana played his last match before he died in a tragic accident.

## SA don't worry

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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 forever. 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.

## Keep it

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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 was too 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 33rd 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.

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 (GCC) crushed Madhupara Krira Chakra by a massive margin of 175 runs at the local stadium.

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.

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## GAIBANDHA CRICK