



PHOTO: AFP

Chelsea striker Didier Drogba blows kisses to the home crowd after scoring his second goal to hand his team a crucial win against Arsenal in their Premier League match at Stamford Bridge on Sunday.

## Bangladesh go to Pakistan on Apr 6

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) on Monday revealed the schedule for the five-match one-day series and a Twenty20 match against Pakistan next month.

The Tigers will fly out for Karachi on April 6 and play the matches in four cities -- Lahore, Faisalabad, Multan and Karachi -- under floodlights.

The first one-dayer will take place at Lahore and the series will end with a Twenty20 international in Karachi on April 20.

BCB accepted Pakistan's invitation to play the series after Australia postponed their scheduled tour in Pakistan over security fears.

There will be a very short camp for the Bangladesh team which recently played back to back home series against South Africa and Ireland as the cricketers are now playing the Premier Cricket League for their respective clubs.

Coach Jamie Siddons left Dhaka to spend holidays with his family in Australia and he will join the team on March 31.

A 15-member Bangladesh team will be announced today and there is hardly any chance to see any change from the squad that played against Ireland. Left-arm pacer Syed Raseel may be included in the team.

ITINERARY		
Apr 8	1st ODI	Lahore
Apr 11	2nd ODI	Faisalabad
Apr 13	3rd ODI	Lahore
Apr 16	4th ODI	Multan
Apr 19	5th ODI	Karachi
Apr 20	T20 Int'l	Karachi

## Nokia aces with Super Sunday

SPORTS REPORTER

Is there anything better for a football fan than being allowed to kick back with some drinks, with food close by while he watches how his favourite team fare on TV?

Anyone who has watched an English pub during matchdays wouldn't think so.

Nokia Bangladesh gave football lovers the chance to do exactly that when they hosted a special screening of two top English Premier League matches at a local cafe in

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ESPN

Sportscentre India  
Sports News  
Live at 8:30pm

SAB TV

New Zealand v England  
First Test, Day 5  
Live from 3:30am (Wednesday)

TEN Sports

West Indies v Sri Lanka  
First Test, Day 4  
Live from 8:00pm

## Drogba 2: Arsenal 1

AFP, London



Didier Drogba kept alive Chelsea's Premier League title challenge as his double strike clinched a 2-1 win against Arsenal on Sunday.

Avram Grant's side were in danger of being cast adrift in the title race when Bacary Sagna headed Arsenal into a second-half lead at Stamford Bridge.

But Drogba equalised with a superb strike before snatching the winner nine minutes from full-time to move the Blues above Arsenal into second place.

It was a much-needed victory for Grant, who finally savoured the taste of success in a genuinely big match. But while Chelsea were celebrating a result that left them five points behind Manchester United, it was Sir Alex Ferguson's leaders who were the real winners.

With Arsenal now six points adrift of United, the reigning champions are in pole position to retain their title. United still have to host

Arsenal and visit the Bridge in April and Ferguson will have been rubbing his hands in glee at Arsenal's demise.

Drogba's brace condemned the Gunners to their second league defeat this season and Arsene Wenger's team, who have gone five matches without a win, look to have lost their nerve with the finishing post in sight.

United's crushing win over Liverpool earlier Sunday left neither side with any margin for error.

Wenger's side were the last visiting team to leave the Bridge celebrating three points in the league. But the Blues had gone an English record 77 matches unbeaten since that defeat way back in February 2004.

Chelsea had made the more promising start. Michael Ballack brought Manuel Almunia into action for the first time with a free-kick.

Arsenal were tentative in the early stages. Robin van Persie found his range midway through the half but Carlo Cudicini was equal to the Dutch striker's low

shot on the turn.

Drogba had a golden opportunity to break the deadlock moments later when he beat the offside trap and raced onto John Terry's pass. A cool first touch would have allowed the striker to pull the trigger, instead he deflected the ball tamely off his knee to Almunia.

A surprisingly tepid first half briefly turned nasty when Wenger sprang to his feet to berate Ballack. The German, who had tumbled under Cesc Fabregas's challenge, responded with a volley of abuse towards the Gunners manager.

William Gallas somehow managed to hit the post from just a yard out, although a linesman's flag for offside spared his blushes.

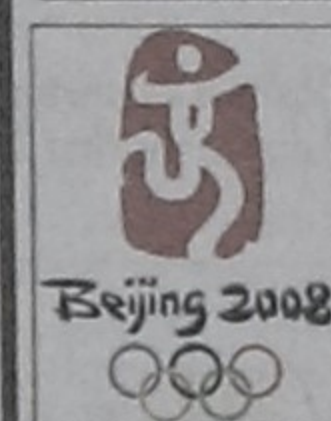
Grant's side finished the half on top and the excellent Ballack's first-time shot drew a smart stop from Almunia at his near post.

With United disappearing out of sight, Arsenal couldn't carry on being so cautious after the break. Mathieu Flamini's powerful effort from a tight angle was well blocked

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## Flame lit amidst protest

INTERNET, undated



The Beijing 2008 Olympic torch was lit by the sun's rays in ancient Olympia on Monday, amid protests by pro-Tibet demonstrators who tried to disrupt the event. Despite an over-cast sky at the ancient archaeological site, a high priestess, played by Greek actress Maria Nafpliotou, lit the torch from the sun's rays using a convex mirror in front of the Temple of Hera.

Greek athlete Alexandros

Nikolaïdis, an Athens 2004 Games taekwondo silver medalist, was the first torchbearer, starting a six-day relay throughout Greece and five-month international relay that will end with the opening of the summer Games on August 8.

Prior to the flame lighting ceremony, two pro-Tibet demonstrators ran onto the field of the stadium at Ancient Olympia carrying black flags and banners during the speech of the President of the Beijing Olympic Committee Liu Qi. The men were quickly detained by police.

Hundreds of police were stationed at the ancient site in the western Peloponnese to guard the

site after campaigners lit their own "Freedom Torch" a few weeks ago in Olympia to campaign for a free Tibet.

Apparently unperturbed by the demonstrators, Liu said: "The Olympic flame will radiate light and happiness, peace and friendship, and hope and dreams to the people of China and the whole world."

The flame will be handed over to Chinese Olympic officials on March 30 at the Kalimarmaro Stadium, the home of the first modern Olympics, in Athens.

The torch relay will travel 137,000 kilometres over 130 days

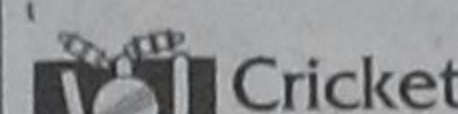
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PHOTO: AFP

Greek actress Maria Nafpliotou, in the role of an ancient Greek high priestess, carries a cauldron with the flame for the Beijing 2008 Olympics during the lighting ceremony on Monday. The priestesses were able to light the flame through the use of a polished mirror despite poor weather conditions.

## 8 months on, where we stand?



BISHWAJIT ROY

A lot was expected when the present set up of the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) took over eight months ago with a promise of a better future for the country's number one sport.

There was a checklist in hand then and the priority number one was building a National Cricket Academy, fund for which was already confirmed a year ago with the signing of a benchmark sponsorship deal with cellular giant Grameenphone. Unfortunately, nothing has transpired till today in translating that dream into reality.

Doesn't this portray a bleak picture about our game development? It does not need to be redressed how important an academy is for a growing cricket nation like Bangladesh to sustain and compete at the highest level.

On a fiercely competitive field, Bangladesh have won more criticism than hearts for the last eight months. The most disturbing aspect was their inability to deliver

in the Test front -- the real test of the game. It was not however the defeats in New Zealand and at the hands of South Africa at home that made the mock Tigers a laughing-stock both home and abroad but the manner in which they played the game.

It was also inexplicable to see the meek surrender of the Bangladesh youth team against South Africa in the quarterfinals of the ICC Under-19 World Cup and that too after a sensational win against England two days back.

Like it or loathe it, in modern day cricket the success of the team depends on good governance. There is no doubt the board has a lot of good people working tirelessly. But are we missing good professionals? Because a lot of recent events raised a few questions like: Are the incumbent officials efficiently running the show? Whether a professional management system has developed and is it functioning properly? Are we properly handling the national team and the foreign aid? Is there any definite plan to take the game a few steps forward or in other words, is there any guideline for the

development activities?

The five-year deal with Grameenphone worth Taka 5.25 crore was meant for a two-storied academy building at Mirpur. It remained in the drawing board for too long now and it was only last month that the National Sports Council (NSC) broke the ice by leasing out the venue for 10 years.

Why 10 years only for cricket board, which is very much a government organ, when clubs get better deals from the NSC?

"I don't know why they didn't agree to give the stadium to BCB for 40 years but what they (NSC) assured us is that they will renew it," was the reply from a helpless Lt Col (ret'd) M Abdul Latif Khan, chairman of the game development committee.

The shabby deal also reflected that the board lost a battle without having the knowledge (from the statement of Mr. Latif) of which law allowed the bureaucrats of the NSC to put a ceiling of 10 years. The simple logic is that if something is leased out for ten years it can also be leased out for 50 or even 100 years.

The Saber Hossain Chowdhury-

led board had laid the foundation for the future development programme in line with the recommendation of former coach Eddie Barlow and the Ali Asghar-led advisory committee continued with it. The result is evident. Most of the cricketers in the current national team came from the board's High Performance (HP) programme which is now suddenly discontinued leaving a huge vacuum in the pipeline.

Professionalism in the board has taken a backseat ever since the departure of Zimbabwean CEO Macky Dudhia. His successor Mahmudur Rahman's two-year tenure saw a gradual decline of BCB's financial flow from domestic events. The way Dudhia handled a coach like Dav Whatmore during his tenure was a perfect example of a professional, which is completely missing now. Presently the board is running without a CEO. Had there been a professional there should not have been belated action about some disciplinary cases of late.

History suggests that our board tends to give unbridled freedom whenever a foreign coach takes

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## Cash penalty for Ashrafal

SPORTS REPORTER

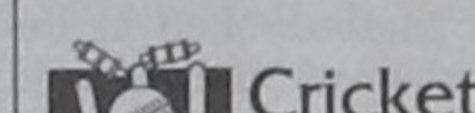
The Disciplinary Committee of Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) yesterday decided to deduct 25 per cent of Mohammad Ashrafal's current month's salary for slapping a fan last week.

After a hearing on Sunday the committee concluded that Ashrafal's involvement in the slapping incident on March 16 was a violation of BCB's code of conduct.

The 23-year-old Tigers skipper slapped a jeering fan during Bangladesh's practice session ahead of the three-match one-day

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## Easy wins for rivals



SPORTS REPORTER

Mohammedan Sporting Club remained atop the Premier Cricket League table with their seventh consecutive win yesterday while defending champions and archrivals Abahani kept the pressure with yet another big win.

Sonargaon Cricketers put an end to their losing streak after six matches while struggling Victoria Sporting Club recorded their second win in the league.

All the seventh round matches,

which saw the top cricketers joining the league after national duty, were reduced due to delayed start following overnight shower but the Biman-Kalabagan outing was washed out. It will begin today at the Fatullah Stadium.

Pakistani leg-spinner Aqeel Arshad captured four wickets for 20 and seamer Dollar Mahmud three for 11 from six overs as Mohammedan bowled out City Club for a meagre 91 on way to an eight-wicket victory at the Mirpur Stadium.

City, who tied with Biman in the previous round to remove the national airliners from the top of

the table, survived just 36 overs with only four batsmen managing to reach the two figures after man-of-the-match Dollar's exploits with the new ball.

Zunaid Siddiqui scored 53 not out with seven boundaries in 81 balls in his season's first match while captain Mohammad Ashrafal made 24 in Mohammedan's reply of 94-2.

After victories by nine and ten wickets in the last two rounds, second-placed Abahani -- who are one point behind Mohammedan (14 points) -- crushed Old DOHS by nine wickets at BKSP.

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Still from 'Mukhtir Gann' a film by Tanque & Catherine Masud

সাল ১৯৭১। মুক্তাভয়কে উপেক্ষা করে বাংলার দুঃসাহসী শিল্পীরা কণ্ঠে গান নিয়ে বেরিয়ে পড়েছিলেন পথে। চোখে বিজয়ের স্বপ্ন, বুকে অস্বাভাবিক আশা... সেইসব স্বাধীনতাকামী মানুষদের জানাই সম্রাট সালো।

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