



WELCOME BACK: England all-rounder Andrew Flintoff (L) follows through on a delivery during his comeback match for Lancashire against Surrey in their County Championship game at The Brit Oval in London yesterday.

## LOCAL SNIPPETS

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh national women's handball team will leave for India tomorrow to participate in the third SAF women's handball championship to be held in Lucknow from April 23.

In India, Pakistan, Nepal, Afghanistan and Bangladesh will take part in the four-day-meet.

In the second SAF Handball Championship in 2000 in Dhaka, India emerged champions and host Bangladesh finished runners-up in both men's and women's groups.

### NATIONAL CHESS

The final phase of the 34th National Chess Championship will begin from April 20.

Fourteen players will participate in the competition, to be played in round robin league format. The event is a Grand Master tournament where GM norm and International Master norm is possible.

Defending champions GM Abdullah Al Rakib, GM Ziaur Rahman, GM Reefat Bin Sattar, GM Niaz Moshref, IM Enamul Hossain Rajib, FIDE Master Mohammad Javed, FM Syed Mahfuzur Rahman, GM Mohammad Abdul Malek, FM Nasir Ahmed, FM Minhajuddin Ahmed Sagar, Monir Hossain and Sohel Chowdhury will take part in the meet.

**GAIBANDHA VOLLEYBALL**  
Our Correspondent: Sunrise Sporting Club moved into the semifinals of the Nazia Fashion Volleyball league when they beat Nabaran Kiara Chakra 3-1 at the local stadium yesterday.

They will meet Uttaron Kiara Chakra in the final on April 20 at the same venue.

Uttaron edged past Jumbo Sangs 3-2 in the second semifinal.

### DIVII CRICKET

Ekaton Sabuj Sangha registered a four-wicket win over Udayachal Club in the Second Division Cricket League at the Jagannath Hall ground yesterday.

Battling first after winning the toss, Udayachal were all out for only 130 in 37.5 overs with Rana scoring 29 runs. Tutul grabbed four wickets for 43 runs.

In reply, Ekaton reached their target in 26.1 overs with Aslam contributing 31 runs. Imran claimed three wickets for 25 runs.

In the day's other match, Green Leaf (182-9) defeated Rayer Bazar by (121-10) by 61 runs at the City Club ground.

**AIRGUN CHAMPIONSHIP**  
The first-ever National Airgun Championship will be held in Sylhet from April 24 to April 26.

A total of four events – men's and women's air rifle and match air pistol – will take place during the three-day competition which is sponsored by Golden Harvest.

Maximum three players will be able to compete for one team in the one event and two shooters will be eligible to take part in the team's event.

**Lehmann to cover for Smith**

AFP, Sydney

Australian veteran Darren Lehmann will stage a shock comeback in the Indian Premier League (IPL) after answering a call from former teammate Shane Warne, a report said Wednesday.

Lehmann, 38, will fill in for South African skipper Graeme Smith in Jaipur-based IPL franchise the Rajasthan Royals' opening matches, the Adelaide Advertiser said on its website.

The batsman, who retired from first-class cricket last November, said he was surprised to receive a call from Warne asking him play until Smith is available.

"It's all happened so quickly," he said. "They needed someone as cover for Graeme Smith so I didn't hesitate to put my hand up. It will be good playing in the same side as Warne."

## Vaughan wants Flintoff

### Cricket

AFP, London

England captain Michael Vaughan has made it clear he wants star all-rounder Andrew Flintoff back in international cricket as soon as possible, ideally during the upcoming series against New Zealand.

He also said dropped new-ball duo Stephen Harmison and Matthew Hoggard could force their way back into the Test side while he himself was contemplating a return to number three in the batting order.

Flintoff, who is due to play for Lancashire in their County Championship opener against Surrey at The Oval on Wednesday, missed England's pre-Christmas tour of Sri Lanka and their recent campaign in New Zealand as he recovered from a fourth operation on his left ankle.

Whether Flintoff's troublesome joint can stand up to the rigours of the 30-year-old's hard-charging approach to pace bowling remains to be seen.

Flintoff hasn't played a Test since captaining England, in Vaughan's injury-induced absence, in the climax of their 5-0 Ashes series thrashing by Australia in Sydney in January last year while

his last one-day international was in September against India. His return, and the attempts by Harmison and Hoggard to re-establish themselves at Test level, promise to help sustain interests in the early weeks of a Championship season in danger of being overshadowed completely by events in the inaugural Indian Premier League (IPL), which starts on Friday.

"It is so important you listen to your body and know yourself," said Harmison.

Turning to Yorkshire teammate Hoggard, Vaughan said: "With him you know he is going to try to take wickets over the next month to make it hard for the selectors."

"Harmy has been given a harder time and I wouldn't want to be a county batsman over the next month having to face him because I think he has got a bit of a bee in his bonnet and a point to prove."

"That is exactly what I want -- I certainly don't think it is the end of their careers yet."

Vaughan had a mediocre tour of New Zealand with the bat, averaging under 21 in the three Tests, although England won the series 2-1.

But he now expects to swap places with Andrew Strauss, the Middlesex left-hander reverting to the opening berth where he made his name as a Test match batsman.

"I wouldn't say I would carry on opening for England, no."

"We just want him right, whether that means he misses the first game, second game and comes back for the third."

"I just want him back fit and ready; whether it's first or third, it's a better team."

"He wants to be there," added Vaughan. "He is the only one who knows what his ankle feels like."

"He hasn't bowled 18 to 20 overs in a day yet and had to go out and bowl five or six the next day yet, so hopefully he will get through that."

"We just want him right, whether that means he misses the first game, second game and comes back for the third."

"I just want him back fit and ready; whether it's first or third, it's a better team."

## IPL keeps Cricinfo out

### Cricket

CRICINFO, undated

Editorial operations of cricket websites, including Cricinfo, in covering the Indian Premier League (IPL) will be severely restricted despite a considerable climbdown by the league on its accreditation guidelines for the print media and news agencies.

A revised set of guidelines issued by the IPL on Tuesday offered major concessions to the print media and agencies but barred cricket websites from covering matches from the ground and using pictures that would normally be sold to them by photo agencies.

Instead, Cricinfo, the world's largest cricket website with nearly ten million regular users, will have to buy images from a syndication service that will be provided by the "American company" that has bought the portal rights for the IPL, said Lalit Modi, the IPL commissioner. No conditions have been specified yet for this service.

Sambit Bal, the editor of Cricinfo, described the restrictions as discriminatory and unjust. "We are a legitimate cricket media organisation with unmatched global credibility and we are asking no special favours," he said. "We cover cricket with journalistic rigour and integrity. We are being denied our basic rights to cover a cricket event in a professional manner."

However, Bal said Cricinfo's editorial commitment to the tournament would not be affected. "Boycotting the IPL is not an option for us. Our commitment to cover cricket is absolute, as is our obligation to the reader. We are not bound to the significance of the IPL, which could be a seminal event in cricket. We will try to cover every game with the same rigour and depth expected of us."

The News Media Coalition (NMC), the umbrella body that has under its wings global news and photograph agencies Reuters, Associated Press, Agence France Presse and Getty Images, slammed the IPL over its restrictions on cricket websites.

"Loyal and genuine cricket fans will be the victims of the decision by the Indian Premier League to restrict editorial coverage of the tournament on certain websites in an attempt to commercialise news coverage," an NMC release said. "It

is an attack on freedom of choice and on press freedom to force controls on the media which mean news pictures of the tournament will not be seen on cricket fans' favourite websites.

"It is ironic and gravely worrying to the media and fans alike that websites which have provided general cricket news to a worldwide fan-base should no longer be able to provide full coverage. Devoted cricket fans should be the full beneficiaries of the same freedom and plurality of the media as anyone else interested in the news and should not be forced away from their choice of websites devoted to cricket. It is a sad day when a sporting body attacks its fans and media partners in this toadie."

The IPL issued the fresh set of guidelines after discussions with representatives of the Indian media over the last 10 days and revised the clause that gives the league the right to demand and use free of charge, all photographs taken by all those accredited to cover the tournament -- the IPL can now use the images only for the "promotion of cricket" and not "commercial purposes". The IPL also offered to revise the limit of photographs that can be used by websites linked to newspapers from six to a "reasonable number".

Besides, in case of any breach of rules, the IPL will now "make all reasonable efforts to resolve the dispute" with the "accredited party" before initiating proceedings to withdraw accreditation.

## NCA suffer

FROM PAGE 17

49.4 overs (Johurul 4, Nasiruddin 17, Shuvo 0, Mushfiqur 10, Mehrab 4, Nasir 36, Sohrawardi 26, Dollar 0, Delwar 26, Nazmul 28, Robin 0 not out; Aamer 4-21, Azharul 2-34, Anwar 2-40, Imad 1-32, Azhar 1-21) PAKISTAN ACADEMY: 180-1 in 38.4 overs (Shehzad 18, Khurram 68 not out, Khalid 84 not out; Robin 1-35)

Result: Pakistan Academy won by nine wickets.

Man-of-the-match: Mohammad Aamer.

## Rain keeps

FROM PAGE 17

Samuels not out 3  
Extras: (w-1, nb-1) 2  
Total: (For 2 wkts in 18.2 overs) 81  
Did not bat: Gayle, Bravo, Pollard, Randin, Sammy, Powell.

Fall of wickets: 1-54, 2-77.

Bowler O M R W  
Kulasekera 6 1 33 0  
Vaas 7 0 36 1  
Thusara 5.2 1 12 1

Result: No result.

West Indies won three-match series 2-0.

Toss: West Indies.

## Sachin out of torch relay

AFP, New Delhi

Indian cricket star Sachin Tendulkar on Wednesday pulled out of the Olympic torch relay to avoid aggravating a groin injury, a source close to him said.

Tendulkar, 35, was expected to be one of the star runners during the Indian leg of the relay here on Thursday, but opted out on the advice of his doctors.

"Sachin has been advised not to take part in the relay as a precautionary measure," the source said. "He has not fully recovered from the groin injury."

Indian Olympic Association chief Suresh Kalmadi said he was unaware the cricketer had pulled out.

"I have just heard these reports, I have not received any communication from him," said Kalmadi.

India's football captain Baichung Bhutia had earlier this month withdrawn from the relay in support of Tibetan groups protesting against China's crackdown on their homeland.

Tendulkar did not play in the second and third Tests of the recent home series against South Africa due to the same problem, but was fit to be fit for the Indian Premier League starting on Friday.

Tendulkar needs 172 runs to overtake West Indian Brian Lara as Test cricket's leading run-scorer, a feat he could achieve on the tour of Sri Lanka in July-August.

Tendulkar has 11,782 runs from 147 Tests, second behind Lara's record tally of 11,953 runs.

The prolific Indian is already the top one-day batsman with 16,361 runs and holds the world record of 39 Test and 42 one-day centuries.

Jahangir set to light cauldron

AFP, Islamabad

Squash legend Jahangir Khan Wednesday said he hoped the Olympic torch relay would spark greater interest in sports among Pakistan's youth and help raise

falling standards.

Jahangir, regarded as the greatest sportsmen in Pakistani history, is set to light the cauldron at the end of the relay later Wednesday at a ceremony attended by President Pervez Musharraf and Prime Minister Youssaf Raza Gilani.

Pakistan, who simultaneously held the world titles in cricket, squash, hockey and snooker in 1994, have suffered a serious slide in sporting achievement as not even the hockey team have any hopes of winning a medal at the Beijing Olympics.

It will also be the first time no boxer will represent Pakistan as all failed in the qualifying competitions.

Jahangir, who won a world

## Olympic torch relay starts in Pakistan

Jahangir set to light cauldron

AFP, Islamabad

record 10 British Open titles between 1982 to 1991, said

Olympic torch should serve as an

inspiration to Pakistani sportsmen.

"Olympic torch coming to

Pakistan is a historic occasion and I

hope youth of our country and

government officials take inspiration

from this prestigious honour and

raise our falling standards,"

Jahangir told AFP.

Jahangir said the new prime

minister should help stop the rot.

"Gone are the days when sports

and sportsmen were Pakistan's

identity and my heart weeps at

that. I will request the new prime

minister to take strict measures to

stop this slide."

"We have come to a point where

hockey has no chance of winning a

medal because we are losing to

smaller nations and the blame goes

to sports authorities and players

who are unwilling to work hard,"

said Jahangir, also a six-time world

hockey champion.

Pakistan's last Olympic medal

came in Los Angeles in 1984 when

the hockey team struck gold.

Pakistan also won gold medals