# SPORT

#### BHF eye Asian hockey meet

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Hockey Federation (BHF) is keen to win the bid to host next year's 8th Asia Cup.

"We have already expressed our desire to the Asian Hockey Federation (AHF) to hold the meet and the executive committee gave a go-ahead signal during a meeting on Saturday," informed BHF general secretary Sajed Adel yesterday.

He also said that AHF are looking forward to arrange the mega Asian hockey event in a low-ranked nation in a bid to stimulate hockey among the least developed countries.

The final decision would be taken at the AHF councillors' meeting in Singapore during the qualifiers of the Asian Hockey Championship from July 14 to 22.

The BHF general secretary said that apart from Bangladesh, Iran, Brunei and Macau have expressed their willingness to host the meet as six top teams of Asia have been discouraged to host the meet.

Cup qualifying round from where top four teams will qualify for the 10-team competition.

The meeting has appointed Mahbub Haroon as chief coach of the national team for the qualifiers while Barkatullah Chapal will act as his deputy.

The meeting also decided to send Bangladesh Krira Shikkha Protisthan (BKSP) to participate in the 6th men's Asia Cup (under-21) championship to be held from July 8 to 18 in Hyderabad in India this year.

It was also decided that some five to six players outside BKSP will be in the 21-squad.

#### Vaughan vows Ashes return

AFP, London

Michael Vaughan has warned Australia that England now have the strength in depth to win back the Ashes next year.

Vaughan's side are about to embark on a three-Test series against New Zealand but the England captain is already looking ahead towards the 2009 visit of Australia.

He believes the injury struggles of Andrew Flintoff and Simon Jones, who have barely played since taking key roles in England's 2005 Ashes triumph, have been a blessing in disguise as they have allowed the team to test out younger bowlers good enough to beat Australia.

Stuart Board, James Anderson and Ryan Sidebottom played well enough that even Flintoff's latest injury -- a side strain that will rule him out of England's first two Tests against the Kiwis -- shouldn't be a major blow to Vaughan and company.

"A year before 2005 me and Fletch (former England coach Duncan Fletcher) sat down and said that might be a year too early for the team, "Vaughan said.

"As I sit here now I honestly think England have got a very, very good chance next year.

"I think we are in a better position now than we were a year before '05. There are a lot of good players around and a lot of good things happening with the England set-up."

#### Glory gets Red FROM PAGE 17

and Marcus Bent providing a mus cular, awkward threat up front.

The enigmatic Jason Koumas also started, and soon set about peppering Edwin van der Sar's goal with 30-yard shots.

The second half saw United playing impossibly nervy football, particularly after news filtered through that Chelsea were beating

Chris Kirkland kept Wigan in the game with brilliant saves to deny Wayne Rooney - a surprise starter following his hip injury - Carlos Tevez and Ronaldo.

Meanwhile Scholes was denied what looked a clear penalty when Bramble tripped him with a rash

sliding tackle. At the other end Emile Heskey headed narrowly over but Wigan proved unable to capitalise on their

opponents' jitters. It was all over 10 minutes from time when Giggs, a man who has played a part in all of Sir Alex Ferguson's title-winning sides, found himself in acres of space at

the edge of the penalty area. Rooney found him with a simple pass, and the Welshman found the corner of the net. Cue wild celebrations from the away fans.

At 34, Giggs's skills might be on the wane, but he still has an eye for the big occasion and capped off a glorious season in fitting fashion.

#### Usha win

FROM PAGE 17 minutes to ensure their fifth consecutive victory.

With the win, Usha improved their tally to 15 points while Abahani followed them with 12 points from four matches and Mohammedan and Sonali both have 10 points.

Mohammedan meet Sadharan Bima at 2:30 pm and Abahani take on Ajax Sporting Club at 4:00pm in today's matches at the same venue.



PHOTO: INTERNET

Members of the Indian women's cricket team celebrate their Asia Cup triumph in Kurunegala yesterday.

### Bangladesh will play the Asia up qualifying round from where up qualifying round from where pop four teams will qualify for the Think local, act global



CRICINFO, undated

By the end of this Indian Premier League season, Yusuf Pathan should have an identity of his own. He strikes the ball cleanly and with breathtaking power, a lot like his brother really. The Deccan Chargers were destroyed by his strokeplay at the top of the order on Friday night, and with Shane Warne giving him license to express himself; they might not be the last to suffer.

The progress made by Pathan, Ravindra Jadeja, Siddharth Trivedi and the pint-sized Swapnil Asnodkar is a slap in the face for those teams that put all their best eggs in the foreign-player basket. More than halfway through the inaugural season, two of the most expensive franchises are sinking quicker than a torpedoed submarine. Bangalore's travails are not entirely unexpected given the rather bizarre composition of the squad, but Hyderabad will wonder how an envied collection of heavy hitters have performed like peashooters under pressure.

With the mercury soaring and limbs tired from the constant travel and play, bench strength will become even more important as the tournament nears its conclusion. If the opening three weeks have taught us anything, it's rewards team work. Sprinklings of stardust can bring in the crowds, but if you have too many weak links, they tend to be ruthlessly exposed. Those teams that have

built from the bottom have been rewarded, while those with mediocre Indian contingents prop up the table.

For Bangalore, the failure of Jacques Kallis, Shivnarine Chanderpaul and Cameron White will be the subject of much heartburn. Rahul Dravid worked on the assumption that quality would prevail no matter what the format. It hasn't, and the South Africans, the charged-up Dale Steyn apart, have exhibited the lethargy that you'd expect from men who've just played marathon international

The local backup has been nonexistent. The Chennai Super Kings can boast of special talents like S Badrinath and Suresh Raina, while even a struggling Mumbai side has unearthed gems like Abhishek Nayar, Dhawal Kulkarni and Rohan Raje. For the Royal Challengers, B Akhil, Bharat Chipli and Vinay Kumar have all looked short on quality, while Sunil Joshi resembles someone who wandered in expecting a veteran's game.

The fielding of the Indians, Virat Kohli apart, has been diabolical, and contributed in no small measure to three narrow defeats. The only silver lining from the loss in Kolkata was the batting of J Arunkumar, a Karnataka exile who was perhaps unlucky not to be capped in the late 1990s.

The Chargers' plight is as pitiable. VVS Laxman has played a couple of fine innings, but more often than not, he has looked as much of a misfit as Leonardo might that even the abbreviated format have in an Andy Warhol world. But with him missing games through injury, they have been reduced to a two-card trick. When Adam Gilchrist and Rohit Sharma don't score, the game is as good as over.

Scott Styris and Herschelle Gibbs have been shown up for what they are, old stagers whose halcyon years are long gone.

Shahid Afridi has been more bust-bust than boom-boom, and while Pragyan Ojha has shown flashes of inspiration, you can't seriously expect a side fielding D Kalyankrishna and Arjun Yadav to be challengers. Yadav's presence in the squad is merely proof that India's who-you-are-and-whoyou-know culture is alive and well. You can only wonder how much more successful they would have been with someone like Ambati Rayudu, an ICL 'rebel', in the picture.

Even an erratic Kolkata team has done well in the local stakes, with Ashok Dinda, Wriddhiman Saha and Laxmi Ratan Shukla all impressing at various times. Bangalore haven't even managed to squeeze much out of Kohli's undoubted talent. The batting line-up has gone through more changes than Cher's face, and he's had no opportunity to get into any sort of groove. Contrast his fortunes with those of his great friend, Shikhar Dhawan, in the Delhi side. Dhawan has excelled at No.3, and the Daredevils have piled on the runs largely as a result

of a settled top order. It's probably too late for the Royal Challengers and the Chargers to revive their seasons now. Those that make the tough decisions will learn from this though. No matter how many flamboyant (or not, in the case of Bangalore) cowboys you bring in, you're only as good as the weakest Indian in the ranks. It's time for the talent scouts to earn their corn and discover a Manpreet Gony or two.

### Ganguly all around

FROM PAGE 17 length and served up a series of full

tosses -- was carved over midwicket.

Hussey joined in on the fun too, gauging the pace of the pitch immediately and striking it cleanly from the get-go. After spanking Vaas for ten off two deliveries, he turned his attention to RP, whose attempts at yorkers were either too short or too full. Twenty came off the 18th over, all courtesy Hussey, who bludgeoned a couple of leg-side sixes as the last seven overs leaked 115.

Deccan didn't help their cause in the field either: apart from Herschelle Gibbs, the rest put in a woeful display. There were misfields galore, Vaas muffed a sitter late in the innings to reprieve Tatenda Taibu, while the last ball of the innings encapsulated the day's performance, as RP's attempt to throw down the stumps missed the

mark and resulted in four overthrows.

far too much to do.

Ganguly, who took the catch to dismiss Gibbs, was in the thick of things in the field as well, bowling four economical overs, and taking two wickets, including that of Styris, another big name who has done little. Rohit Sharma offered a glimmer of hope with a couple of typically classy sixes off Ganguly, but, quite fittingly, Ganguly had the

last laugh, snaffling him at midwicket.

form so far, that will be a miracle. **SCORES IN BRIEF** 

KOLKATA KNIGHT RIDERS: 204 for 4 20 overs (Butt 4, Chopra 24, Taibu 9, Shukla 14 not out; Vaas 1-36, Vijaykumar 1-21, RP

Singh 1-59) DECCAN CHARGERS: 181 for 7 in 20 overs (Gilchrist 24, Gibbs 4, Teja 10, Sharma 33, Styris 5, Rao 71 not out, Bangar 2, Vaas 9, RP Singh 6 not out; Dinda 3-33, Gul 1-43, Ganguly 2-25, Shukla 1-16)

Result: Kolkata Knight Riders won by 23 runs. Man-of-the-match: Sourav

Umpires: IL Howell (South Africa) and AM Saheba Toss: Kolkata Knight Riders.

### **Aussies off**

REUTERS, Sydney

Australia's cricketers flew out of Sydney on Saturday bracing themselves for a tough tour of the West

The Australians are overwhelming favourites to win the three Tests and five one-day internationals but captain Ricky Ponting said the players were not expecting an easy

"I think they are starting to turn things around there a little bit better at the moment," Ponting told reporters at Sydney Airport.

"Their bowling attack probably in particular is definitely a lot stronger than the last time we played them in Test cricket."

WOMEN'S ASIA CUP

#### India's 4th title in a row

PTI, Colombo

India clinched their fourth successive women's cricket Asia Cup title by thrashing Sri Lanka by a massive 117 runs in the final at the Welagedara Stadium in Kurunegala yesterday.

The two teams clashed in the final for the fourth successive time and once again it was the Indians who came out trumps.

Player of the match Asha Rawat fell short of a well-deserved hundred by three runs, while skipper Mithali Raj once again starred with a 66-run knock to help India put on 260 for seven in their quota of 50 overs.

The defending champions then bundled out the hosts for 83 in 35.2 overs with Pujare Seema and Neetu David picking up three wickets apiece.

Electing to bat after winning the toss, the Indians were dealt an early blow with opener Jaya Sharma departing in the second over without scoring a run.

Rawat then joined Kavita Jain (28) to steady the innings before the latter was also sent back by S de Alwis with the scoreboard reading 75. Mithali and Rawat then made sure there were no further hiccups until the 38th over as the two steered the Indians towards a big score.

While Rawat struck 12 fours and a six in her 114-ball knock Mithali hit six fours in her 72-ball stay at the crease.

Amita Sharma also chipped in with a quickfire 31-ball 50 to take India to what eventually turned out a winning score.

#### Mike surprised by IPL century

PTI, Melbourne

Not known as a big hitter in the league of his IPL teammates Matthew Hayden and Mahendra Singh Dhoni, Michael Hussey said he was surprised by his hundred for Chennai Super Kings in an IPL match which, he claimed, earned him more adulation than the Australian opener or the India ODI captain.

"I was a little surprised to hit a hundred. I didn't think I could ever score a hundred in Twenty20 cricket. I thought that was out of my capabilities, so it was really enjoyable to do that. It was quite a good bowling attack, too, Hussey was quoted as saying by 'The Sun-Herald'

"After that I became a lot more of a focus. We had Hayden and MS Dhoni, who were attracting a lot of attention. After that innings, though, there were hundreds of people in the hotel lobby, journalists ringing my room every 10 minutes, things like that. It was certainly a different experience to what I was used to," added Hussey who made 116 not out off just 54 balls against Kings XI Punjab.

### G-Team lift sixes title

SPORTS REPORTER

G-Team clinched the WECCA six-aside cricket tournament beating Cavaliers by two wickets at the Jagannath Hall ground on Saturday.

Chasing 61 to win in the final, former Premier League star Azam Iqbal struck an unbeaten 32 although Sajal Chowdhury, another former national player, took two wickets conceding no runs in his single over.

Earlier, Cavaliers' competitive 60-2 in five overs was built around Palash's 32. Sajjad Ahmed took two wickets.

Apart from the two finalists, a total of nine teams -- Ramblers, Josephites, FUCC, Cricketeers, Renegades and Sri Lankan Cricket Club -- participated in the two-day competition in which several former national cricketers took part.

Former captains Faruque Ahmed and Naimur Rahman, Khaled Mahmud and former national players Jahangir Alam, Enamul Haq and two former Sri Lankan players Ruwan Kalpage and Champaka Ramanayake, who are coaches in the National Cricket Academy, took part in the meet.

Former BCB general secretary Mahbub Anam was present during the final and distributed prizes.

#### Jamie meets

FROM PAGE 17

platform to overcome this perennial problem," he observed.

Ashraful also believed that there is nothing better than playing matches ahead of any international tournament.

"If someone spent three hours at the middle it would be equal to seven days of net practice. Nothing is better than playing matches," said Ashraful who made matchwinning unbeaten 70 against Surjo

more runs and I am hopeful because my main target is to spend time in the middle," he promised.

## Return of Hoggard

Cricket

AFP, London

Yorkshire seamer Matthew Hoggard has been recalled by England for this week's first Test against New Zealand at Lord's.

Hoggard, who was dropped for the final two Tests of England's series win in New Zealand earlier in the year, benefits from the unavailability of Andrew Flintoff, who has been ruled out of the first two matches of the three-Test series through injury.

Paul Collingwood in the squad despite doubts over the allrounder's fitness.

Collingwood, 31, is receiving treatment for a shoulder problem but the selectors have not identified hard with the Lancashire medical a standby player as cover for team and be back in contention in England's one-day captain.

"At this stage it's too early to say whether he will definitely play as he third Test against the Black Caps, at will be reassessed in the lead up to Thursday," said Geoff Miller, the

national selector.

"I know Paul and the England medical team will be doing everything to ensure he's given the best chance of taking his place in the side but should he not be fit to play we

have options available." cricket in over a year, had been hoping to make his long-awaited international comeback against New Zealand following the fourth

ankle operation of his career. But the all-rounder, who has been bowling well for Lancashire but struggling for form with the bat, was ruled out on Saturday after The selectors have also included suffering a side strain playing for Lancashire.

> "Andrew Flintoff was obviously unavailable for selection, which is a shame for Andrew and for England but I know he'll continue to work due course," Miller added.

Flintoff could be ready for the

Nottingham from June 7. While Hoggard has done enough

for Yorkshire to win a recall, fast bowler Stephen Harmison, who was also dropped after the first Test in New Zealand, remains out in the cold having failed to impress with

his performances for Durham. "The selection of this squad main-Flintoff, who has not played Test tains a position of continuity from the winter following a series win against

NewZealand," Millersaid. "We're expecting an equally tough series here at home and believe we have a squad capable of building on the success stemming

from last winter. "The decision to leave the likes of Stephen Harmison out of the squad was a difficult one but we've no doubt that Stephen, along with several other players, will continue to fight every inch of the way to stake a claim for England selection.

SQUAD Michael Vaughan (captain), Tim Ambrose, James Anderson, Ian Bell, Stuart Broad, Paul Collingwood, Alastair Cook, Matthew Hoggard, Monty Panesar, Kevin Pietersen, Ryan Sidebottom, Andrew Strauss.

Cricket

INTERNET, undated

A batsman wouldn't normally stand out in a Test touring party simply by being talented. But as it is New Zealand who are playing in the first Test at Lord's on Thursday, Ross Taylor does stand out. He has scored a Test century, making him the only one of their five specialist batsmen who has reached that batting base camp.

Aged 24, Luteru Ross Poutoa Lote Taylor, born in New Zealand, will become the first Pacific Islander to play Test cricket at Lord's -- and over the years New Zealand's batting has lacked a certain something. Dogged, yes. Dour, often. They have traditionally been the best in the world at blocking out the last day for a draw. Talented? Not always.

Their white community of European -- mainly lowland Scots -ancestry has produced only a handful of top-class batsmen: this in itself accounts for New Zealand's lamentable total of four wins in England in 47 Tests dating back to 1931. Elite athletes are channelled into rugby, except if they are like Sir Richard Hadlee, Chris Cairns or Brendon McCullum and have a cricketplaying father.

Blessed with a role model in Taylor, New Zealand can now spread cricket far more quickly among the one-third of their population which is not of European ancestry. To date, out of the handful of non-white Test cricketers they have had, only the wicketkeeper on their last tour of Bridge. Their lower order will scrap England, Adam Parore, can be said to out some runs, they will fight to save have had a fair go.

Auckland Test of 2002, 15 of their wickets were taken by Daryl Tuffey and Andre Adams. Yet Tuffey played little there-after while for Adams, who took six wickets at 17

CROSSWORD

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each, it was his only Test. Labelled New Zealand in the first place? a free spirit, he went off and Indigent cousins have to be looked became an impact all-rounder with Essex and Nottinghamshire until the end of June is too much of a instead. It may say a bit about New Zealand's former integration policies that Tuffey, Adams and Parore all joined the "rebel" Indian Cricket League.

As recently as February, while England were losing the one-day series 3-1 in New Zealand, Martin Crowe -- one of that handful of topclass batsmen -- was saying on television that two players who had set up that home victory would be dropped for the Test series: Taylor and Jesse Ryder, the Maori opening batsman. Eventually Taylor made the cut, while Ryder cut his wrist in a late-night incident in a bar and ruled himself out. While bumming around the

world as Kiwis do, Taylor once worked at Lord's and is remembered for his friendliness. While fielding at slip in the Napier Test in March he took a catch of the finest athleticism. But the harsh reality remains that New Zealand's specialist batsmen are so raw. In the last two years they have reached 200 in an away Test only twice, due to lack of opportunity as well as skill. Since November 2004 they have scored 200 only five times in away Tests, and that includes twice in Zimbabwe.

This is why there will be something seriously wrong with England, or the weather, if the hosts do not win this series 3-0. New Zealand will be overwhelmed by the occasion at Lord's, by the pace and bounce at Old Trafford and by the swing at Trent every run in the field and they will When England lost the makethemostofwhattheyhave. But ultimately their batting is deficient, and for England to have played Andrew Flintoff would have been to take a sledgehammer to a nut.

Why on earth are England playing

after, but to play them from February bad thing. To contest the Ashes next summer England now need opposition far more fibrous.

It is time for the committee who speak far and away the most sense in the cricket world to have some influence on fixture-making. The new cricket committee of the International Cricket Council are based on the revolutionary principle of merit, consisting of the best people for the job, including an active player in Kumar Sangakkara, not one representative from each country motivated only by selfinterest. The world committee of MCC, consisting of former players, probably has something to say as well, but its pronouncements are drowned out by MCC's clamouring for more and more matches to be

staged at Lord's. Officialdom's reaction to the 20over leagues in India has been to pile another load of competitions on to the fixture list, which is shorttermism leading to overkill. The ICC cricket committee last week recommended balance and structure, but as they are only advisory,

nobody will listen Certainly not the ECB. For Australia to play seven one-day internationals next summer after the five-Test Ashes series, which follows the 20-over World Cup in England, is excessive. For everything to be squeezed in, England have to start the first Test of next summer on May 7, far earlier than ever before, which is not an objection in itself. But over-

loading English cricketers is. Then the Australians are due to fly back to England the following summer for a five-match one-day series. Saturation; overkill; an obsession with quantity at the expense of quality. Most is not

always best.



Players and organisers of the WECCA Sixes tournament pose after the final at the Jagannath Hall ground on Saturday.

By Eugene Sheffer

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UYUWPYH UJRUCPYH Yesterday's Cryptoquip: IF A PIANO STUDENT EXECUTES FINGER EXERCISES PERFECTLY.

MIGHT YOU SAY HE'S A SCALE MODEL?

Today's Cryptoquip Clue: J equals E

# Balaji swings out 5

lofted one towards long-off for an easy catch, and the hat-trick was completed when VRV Singh managed to back away and topedge one straight to Mahendra Singh Dhoni.

Badrinath, a local boy like Balaji, and Dhoni had earlier threatened to take the game away as Michael Hussey had done in the previous encounter between Chennai Super Kings and Kings XI Punjab, but Punjab's bowlers did well to restrict the flow of runs in the final five overs of the innings.

Dhoni, Chennai's adopted hero and captain, sent the crowd into raptures soon after his arrival by clobbering Chawla for three sixes; the first two sailed into the leg-side stands, while the third was hit flat over the bowler's head. Yuvraj soon went in for damage control, bringing on Pathan, his side's leading wicket-taker, for his second spell as early as the 13th over. Badrinath took two sixes off Pathan and brought up his fifty off 37 deliveries. The two had added 80 off 49 deliveries, and a final flourish was

on the cards. Punjab came back well to rein in

After such a battering in the field, Deccan's only hope was for Adam Gilchrist to fire -- especially since Shahid Afridi wasn't in the line-up -- but he only managed 24 before miscuing a pull off the impressive Ashok Dinda. The outof-sorts Gibbs, who has now scored 45 in five innings, had already fallen in Dinda's second over, leaving the rest of the batsmen with

the rampaging batsmen. Sreesanth had bowled a good first spell in which he removed Chennai's openers and his final one -- the

16th of the innings -- went for just

five, James Hopes and VRV took the

cue and targeted the blockhole,

and the run-scoring abated.

Chennai got 181, but will be disap-

pointed at not having been able to go past the 200-run mark, which looked likely at one stage. **SCORES IN BRIEF** CHENNAI SUPER KINGS: 181 for 4 in 20 overs (Vidyut 8, Fleming 1, Raina 26, Badrinath 64, Dhoni 60 not out, Morkel 7 not out; Sreesanth 2-29, VRV Singh 1-35,

Chawla 1-36) KINGS XI PUNJAB: 163 for 9 in 20 overs (Marsh 58, Hopes 14, Goel 1, Sarwan 20, Yuvraj 2, Jayawardene 8, Pathan 40, Chawla 17; Gony 1-38, Morkel 1-25, Amarnath 1-35, Muralidaran 1-32, Balaji 5-24) Result: Chennai Super Kings won by 18 runs.

Man-of-the-match Lakshmipathy Balaji. Umpires: AV Jayaprakash and BG Jerling (South Africa) Toss: Kings XI Punjab.

Venugopal Rao played a brave

hand with a 42-ball 71 and spoilt the figures of Murali Kartik by smashing three sixes in an over, but that only ensured the margin of defeat wasn't an embarrassing one. With four wins from eight games, Kolkata are back in the reckoning for a semi-final berth. Deccan still have a mathematical chance of making the top four, but given their

Ganguly 91, Hussey 57 not out,

to Windies

Torun in the first game. "I am looking forward to scoring