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## Open letter to Bush

AFP, Los Angeles

Douglas Logan, the new chief executive of USA Track and Field, on Tuesday urged US President George W. Bush to turn a deaf ear to Marion Jones's request that her perjury sentence be commuted.

In an open letter to the US president, posted on the USA Track and Field website, Logan said he "couldn't believe it" when he read media reports that Jones was among hundreds of convicted felons who have applied for presidential pardons or sentence commutations.

"She lied to federal agents. She took steroids. She made false statements in a bank fraud investigation - not necessarily in that order," Logan wrote. "She admitted it. And now she apparently wants to be let off."

Jones was sentenced in January to six months in jail after pleading guilty to lying to federal investigators about her use of performance-enhancing drugs and about a

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## Bangladesh A stay in contention

SPORTS REPORTER

Tamim Iqbal hit a blazing half-century to keep Bangladesh A's chances to win a first-class match in the tour of England against Derbyshire on the third and final day at the County ground in Derby yesterday.

Chasing an improbable winning target of 285, the second-string Bangladesh side raced to 218 for five after tea with Mushfiqur Rahim (25) and Dhiman Ghosh (20) at the crease.

Tamim and captain Zunaed Siddique got off to a confident start by associating in an 85-run opening stand but off-spinner Jake

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## Did U Know?

When choosing locations for the Olympic Games, the International Olympic Committee specifically gives the honour of holding the Games to a city rather than a country.



**TEN Sports**  
Sri Lanka v India  
First Test, Day Two  
Live from 10:45am



**TALK TURKEY**



### Michael Essien

(Chelsea's Ghanaian midfielder) "I'm very happy here - we have a great team and fantastic fans who have always made me welcome. With the addition of the new manager, I am feeling very positive about the season ahead." After signing a fresh five-year deal with the Premiership club on Tuesday.

## TEAM FOCUS: MUKTIJODDHA

# Battling all the way



AL MUSABBIR SADI

They will take the field as runners-up of the last Federation Cup held in 2005. But the latest crop of Muktiyoddha Sangsad is unlikely to repeat a similar performance when the season starts next month.

Once local giants, Muktiyoddha ventured into mediocrity after their parent organisation has washed the hands off the famous football team.

A group of footballers, led by recent-past national footballer Feroz Mahmud Titu, took great risk by forming a team after more than one year of football-less-ness despite the uncertainty of getting any remuneration for the coming season.

Things have bettered after 19 brave footballers signed for the Reds on the last day of transfer in June as the Sangsad central command finally gave its nod to provide fund for running the team.

And after two weeks of training in unfamiliar circumstances -- they

used to get maximum facility including a good ground and rich accommodation -- of the uneven BG Press ground and its adjacent ordinary housing, coach Al Asghar Nasir believes they are set to break all barriers.

"The short time we've got is not enough for reaching pick of fitness. But fitness level is not all. I have to think about competition and also have to work on skill, strategy and other things to prepare the team for the Federation Cup which is very close," Nasir told The Daily Star yesterday.

"I am happy at what we've achieved so far but that's far from being 100 percent. The reality is that my players have accepted my manual and I am satisfied with that," said the bearded coach, who was highly praised for presenting Khulna Abahani's lively brand of football in the inaugural B. League last year.

Nasir, who has to cope with the loss of stars like Aminul, Rajani, Hassan Al Mamun, Arman Aziz and Matur Munna, said he wants to prove that Muktiyoddha have the material to play good and rhythmic football.

"The Federation Cup is actually

not our target but we will be there to entertain the crowd for sure. If the final round is delayed by two weeks as we've heard (due to the Olympic Games), we would become a fully fit and very competitive team but can't promise result."

"It's certain that Muktiyoddha have lost their strength and unless we get some quality foreigners, we can't say we would reach the semi-finals."

The Reds have two foreigners, defender Michael and midfielder Victor, in their squad and Moroccan midfielder Ighir Mohamed, who played for Sheikh Russel in the last two seasons, is expected to arrive soon but the coach did not sound optimistic about their presence.

"Michael is not bad but he has been suffering from fever like two more local defenders. So we can't go into matches at this moment," Nasir said adding that he hopes to play at least 3-4 practice matches before the competition starts.

Both the Reds imports have yet to get clearance certificates and if available, they are expected to play in the Federation Cup.

"The duo has made some sort of

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PHOTO: STAR

Muktiyoddha Sangsad footballers exercise before the eyes of their coach Al Asghar Ali Nasir (R) at the BG Press ground yesterday.

## Nat'l women's kabaddi

SPORTS REPORTER

Faridpur, Jhenaidah, Narail and Jamalpur became zonal champions to book final round berths of the Spectra Group National Women's Kabaddi Championship yesterday.

The seven-team finals will be held in Dhaka at the Outer Stadium kabaddi ground from July 27-30 with champions and runners-up of Dhaka Zone and Bangladesh Ansar joining the four zonal champions.

Seven teams -- Dhaka, Mymensingh, Munshiganj, Narayanganj, Rajshahi, Gaibandha and Rangamati -- will compete in the Dhaka zone matches on July 25-26.

In yesterday's finals, Jessore were the only hosts to lose, going 52-42 down to Narail.

In other matches, Faridpur outclassed Shariatpur 50-16, Jamalpur edged past Kishoreganj 48-41 and hosts Jhenaidah defeated Magura 26-24.

## Finals before Aug 10

Qualifiers at 3 venues



SPORTS REPORTER

Only the opening match of the Citycell Federation Cup qualifying rounds, which kicks off the domestic season on Saturday, will be held at the Bangladesh National Stadium.

Jatrabari Kira Chakra take on Diganta Prasari of Rajshahi in a Group A match at 4pm at the national number one stadium while the rest of the 11-team qualifiers takes place at two venues, the Army Stadium in Banani and the Gazipur Stadium.

Two teams each from groups A and B and one team from the three-team Group C will join 11 automatic qualifiers from the B. League in the

final round, due to start by August 10.

The 15 matches of the qualifying round will conclude on August 3.

Bangladesh Football Federation's (BFF) senior vice-president Abdus Salam Murshed is expected to raise the curtain on the season.

All the participating teams except services teams Bangladesh Army, Bangladesh Navy, Bangladesh Air Force and Bangladesh Police and sports institute BKSP will receive Tk 25,000 each as participation money.

The teams outside from the capital will be given logistic support for food, accommodation and transport.

### TEAMS IN QUALIFIERS

Group A: Jatrabari, BKSP, Police and Diganta Prasari.

Group B: Victoria, Navy, Dhaka Wanderers, Air Force.

Group C: Sunrise, Bangladesh Customs, Army.

# India beside Pakistan

CRICINFO, undated

The International Cricket Council board's discussion -- via a teleconference on Thursday -- on the issue of Pakistan hosting the Champions Trophy is likely to see India resist any move to change the venue, though there is a growing fear of top players from non-Asian countries pulling out.

The ICC will take a final decision which, if it cannot be reached via consensus, needs a 7-3 vote.

The Board of Control for Cricket in India sees "no harm" in Pakistan hosting the tournament in September, Niranjan Shah, the BCCI secretary, said on Wednesday.

"We are supporting Pakistan as the venue of the Champions Trophy,"

Shah told Cricinfo.

"Our Indian team had taken part in the Asia Cup without any incident. Besides, the report of the ICC's security consultants, which was presented during the briefing in Dubai (on Sunday) was positive. So the BCCI sees no harm in Pakistan hosting the tournament."

While players' associations from England, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa have warned of a pullout by cricketers who fear for their safety in Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh are learnt to be firmly behind the official host, which also seems to have gained the support of Cricket South Africa.

"We must give Pakistan every opportunity to host the tournament to the best of their ability," Norman Arendse, the president of Cricket South Africa (CSA) told Independent

Online. "I'm inclined to support Pakistan's hosting of the tournament. I know it might sound easy for us as administrators to make such decisions as we stay home while the players go to Pakistan, but I assure you it is not so."

However, Tony Irish, the chief executive of the South Africa Cricketers' Association (SACA), said that there was a possibility of top players from his country pulling out of the tournament if it went ahead as scheduled (from September 11) in Pakistan. "I can't confirm this, but yes, there could be some players pulling out," Irish told Cricinfo.

Irish said that the players reiterated their concern at touring Pakistan after the SACA reported back to them on the ICC's security briefing in Dubai, which Irish

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PHOTO: AFP

India paceman Ishant Sharma (top) celebrates the dismissal of Sri Lanka opener Michael Vandort (not in picture) with teammates on the rain-hit opening day of the first Test in Colombo yesterday.

## Rasel's England tour over

SPORTS REPORTER

Left-arm pacer Syed Rasel's England tour with the Bangladesh A team was over due to constant backpain.

The national paceman, who had missed the Asia Cup in Pakistan due to injury, is expected to be out of action for the next three months.

"The preliminary diagnosis suggested that he needs to rest for quite sometime to recover from injury. At the very beginning of the ongoing trip, Rasel complained about the pain and that's why he was dropped from the first game. He played the second match but complained about his discomfort," informed Gazi Ashraf Hossain, chairman of Bangladesh Cricket Board's cricket operations committee.

"We have asked him to take guidance from local physicians and after that we will take the decision when he would be brought back home," he added.

## Ishtiaque resigns from BCB

SPORTS REPORTER

Ishtiaque Ahmed confirmed yesterday that he has tendered his resignation as an ad-hoc executive member of the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB).

"Yes, I submitted my resignation letter and the reason behind this is my professional business," Ishtiaque told over telephone.

It was the second instance inside a month as Lt Col (ret'd) MA Latif had resigned in last month. And interestingly, both were involved in one of the important wings, the development committee of the board.

Latif was chairman while Ishtiaque vice-chairman of the development committee, which has been recently rearranged with the inclusion of Shakil Kasem as chief and Gazi Ashraf Hossain as one of the vice-chairmen.

Many observed that the activities of the development committee has become stagnant in its effort.

One of eleven executive committee members, Ishtiaque headed the disciplinary committee as well as being the vice-chairman of media and communication committee.

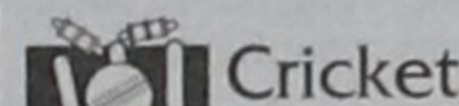
"I learnt from other sources about his (Ishtiaque Ahmed) resignation but we have yet to get anything official," said Ahmed Sajjadul Alam, chairman of the media and communication committee.

There is whispering that Ishtiaque tendered his resignation following a dispute over the extension of a Sri Lankan development coach's job in addition of the appointment of two more development coaches from Sri Lanka.

"I am very happy and satisfied at what I have done so far at the development committee. I think the appointment of two Sri Lankans was the most successful event during my time. Many questioned about their high salaries but I can't understand why," said Ishtiaque.

"I am really happy that I got an opportunity to work under a dynamic president (Maj Gen Sina Ibn Jamali) at the board," he said.

# Rain hits Colombo



AGENCIES, Colombo

Sri Lankan opener Malinda Warnapura defied India's attack with an unbeaten half-century on the opening day of the rain-hit first Test at the Sinhalese Sports Club ground here on Wednesday.

The hosts lost two wickets cheaply after electing to bat in overcast conditions, but left-handed Warnapura (50 not out) helped his team reach 85-2 in the first innings at stumps.

Skipper Mahela Jayawardene was the other not out batsman on 16 when play was called off due to bad light with 20 overs remaining. No play was possible before tea because of the rain.

Indian fast bowlers Ishant Sharma and Zaheer Khan shared the wickets.

Sri Lanka made a shaky start, losing Michael Vandort in the fourth over. The batsman was caught behind while chasing a Sharma delivery, with Dinesh Karthik taking a high catch to his left.

Warnapura added 50 runs for the

second wicket with experienced Kumar Sangakkara, the world's number one batsman coming into this test series, before left-arm seamer Zaheer struck a vital blow in the 13th over.

Zaheer had Sangakkara (12) caught by former captain Rahul Dravid, who held a low catch at first slip.

Warnapura started shakily but scored quickly after playing himself in, hitting six boundaries in his 74-ball innings and executed handsome shots on both sides of the wicket during his third Test half-century in five matches. He punished Sharma early in the innings, hitting three fours in an over.

India captain Anil Kumble also pressed Sourav Ganguly and off-spinner Harbhajan Singh into the attack in a bid to get one more wicket, but Warnapura and Jayawardene batted sensibly.

Harbhajan, who recently served a ban for five one-day internationals for slapping India teammate Shanthakumaran Sreesanth during a domestic Twenty20 match in April, bowled just one over before play was called off.

Sri Lanka's latest spin sensation Ajantha Mendis made his Test

debut, just a few weeks after leading his side to victory with a six-wicket haul against India in the Asia Cup final in Karachi early this month.

### SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard at stumps on the opening day of the first Test between India and Sri Lanka in Colombo on Wednesday.

**SRI LANKA: First innings**

Vandort c Karthik b Sharma 3  
Warnapura not out 50  
Sangakkara c Dravid b Zaheer 12  
M Jayawardene not out 16  
Extras (lb-1, nb-3) 4  
Total: (For 2 wickets in 22 overs) 85  
Fall of wickets: 1-7, 3-57

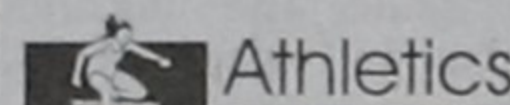
To bat: Samaraweera, Dilshan, P Jayawardene, Vaas, Muralidaran, Mendis, Kulasekara

**Bowler** O M R W  
Zaheer 9 0 42 1  
Sharma 7 2 21 1  
Ganguly 5 1 14 0  
Harbhajan 1 0 7 0

**INDIA: Kumble, Sehwa, Gambhir, Dravid, Tendulkar, Ganguly, Laxman, Karthik, Harbhajan, Zaheer, Sharma**

**Toss: Sri Lanka.**  
**Umpires: Mark Benson and Billy Doctrove.**

# Powell takes revenge



AFP, Stockholm

Jamaica's 100 metres former world record holder Asafa Powell beat compatriot and present record holder Usain Bolt here at the IAAF Grand Prix meeting on Tuesday.

Powell, 25, timed 9.88 seconds to just see off a late challenge by 21-year-old Bolt, who made a dreadful start and trailed his elder rival by two metres after a third of the race.

Whilst Bolt, who timed 9.72sec to break Powell's record at the end of May in New York, did make up ground on Powell he never threatened to beat him.

Bolt, who could well attempt the 100/200m double at the Olympics next month in Beijing, had easily won their first ever confrontation at the national championships in June, timing 9.85sec to Powell's 9.97sec, though the latter was returning from injury.

"My objective was simply to win," said Powell, who is the reigning Commonwealth champion but still has to undergo questions about his big race temperament.

"I got a good start and I managed to maintain my speed to the end."

Bolt for his part shrugged off the defeat. "That doesn't change anything," said Bolt.

"Am I going to do the double in Beijing? It is my coach Glen Mills who will decide," added Bolt for the umpteenth time.

While their duel was the most eagerly anticipated event of the evening, there were other memorable moments.

Ethiopia's women's Olympic 5000m champion Meseret Defar failed by just under a second to break compatriot Tirunesh Dibaba's world record, recording a

time of 14min 12.32sec.

The 24-year-old's time was even more remarkable given she ran the last 300m on her own, whereas Dibaba was aided by her sister Ejagayehu in her recordbreaking run in Oslo in June.

Sudanese prodigy Abubaker Kaki once again showed he is a real danger to reigning 800m Olympic

champion Yury Borzakovsky in Beijing as the 19-year-old recently crowned world junior champion at the distance recorded the fastest time in the world this year over 1000m, though, with the windy conditions he never threatened to break Noah Ngeny's world record.

Another Olympic gold medal

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PHOTO: AFP

Jamaican former world record holder Asafa Powell (L) crosses the finish line ahead of compatriot and present record holder Usain Bolt during the men's 100m race of the IAAF Grand Prix meeting at the Olympic Stadium in Stockholm on Tuesday.