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Village all set for opening

AP, Beijing
Although the Olympics are two weeks away, athletes are already arriving in Beijing.

The Athletes Village, a sprawling complex of high-rise apartments that will lodge 16,000 athletes and officials, formally opens Sunday.

"We want the village to be a cozy place that makes athletes feel like they are coming home," said Deng Yaping, an Olympic table-tennis gold medalist and deputy director of the Olympic Village Department of the Beijing Organizing Committee.

Deng said 35 of the 205 delegations already had some representation in the village.

The village will contain a restaurant that can feed 5,000 people, tea houses, a barbershop, post office, its own fire station, shopping areas, library, a clinic, and coffee shops. Western and Asian

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Women's kabaddi

SPORTS REPORTER

The semifinals lineup was completed in the Dhaka Zone Spectra Group National Women's Kabaddi Championship yesterday at the Dhanmendi Women's Sports Complex gymnasium.

Dhaka meet Gaibandha in the first semifinal while Rajshahi take on Rangamati in the second match today at the same venue. The final match will be held later in the afternoon.

In the day's matches, Dhaka beat Mymensingh 34-20, Gaibandha outplayed Munshiganj 42-20 while Rangamati crushed Narayanjan 40-15 to reach into the semifinals.

Earlier Faridpur, Jhenidah, Narail and Jamalpur became zonal champions to reach the final round along with Bangladesh Ansar, who will play in the final round directly.

The seven-team final round of the national women's kabaddi meet will be held at the Kabaddi Stadium in Dhaka from July 27-30.



Did U Know?

Olympic Games have never been organized in three continents - Africa, South America and Antarctica.



Peter Shilton
(Legendary England goalkeeper) "I don't think David (Beckham) will break my record but if he did I would certainly be the first to congratulate him."



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



Spin king Muttiah Muralidaran (L) celebrates the wicket of Indian maestro Sachin Tendulkar with Sri Lankan wicketkeeper Prassana Jayawardene during the third day's play in the first Test at the Sinhalese Sports Club ground in Colombo yesterday.

Murali sinks India

Cricket

AFP, Colombo

Muttiah Muralidaran triggered India's collapse with four quick wickets to boost Sri Lanka's hopes of enforcing a follow-on in the third Test here on Friday.

The wily off-spinner grabbed 4-38 as India struggled to reach 159-6 in their first innings at stumps on the third day in reply to Sri Lanka's mammoth 600-6 declared.

The tourists now require 242 more runs to make Sri Lanka bat again, with Venkatesh Laxman (19 not out) being the only specialist batsman left. Skipper Anil Kumble was unbeaten on one when bad light stopped play.

Muralidaran was instrumental in denting India's batting reputation as he claimed four of the five wickets that fell in the closing session. Among his victims was ace batsman Sachin Tendulkar (27).

He was brilliantly supported by debutant Ajantha Mendis, the latest spin sensation who took the important wicket of former India captain Rahul Dravid in his probing 18 overs.

Sri Lanka's batting star was Tillakaratne Dilshan, who scored an attractive 125 not out to become the fourth century-maker in the innings after skipper Mahela Jayawardene, Malinda Warnapura and Thilan Samaraweera.

In contrast, India's batting failed to flourish as they lost wickets at regular intervals on an easy-paced track, with the Sri Lankan spin duo doing the maximum damage by keeping constant pressure on the batsmen.

Virender Sehwag was the first to go, mistiming an attempted pull off seamer Nuwan Kulasekera to be caught by Warnapura at deep backward square-leg after smashing five fours in his 16-ball 25.

There was no respite from spin for the tourists as both Muralidaran and Mendis kept testing the batsmen with clever variations.

Muralidaran had Gautam Gambhir (39) caught driving by Samaraweera at short cover and Mendis bowled Dravid (14) with a delivery that turned slightly to hit the off-stump.

Muralidaran struck again when he removed Tendulkar, who was bowled off an inside-edge. He then accounted for Sourav Ganguly (23) and wicketkeeper Dinesh Karthik (nine).

Mendis, who wrecked India with a six-wicket haul in the Asia Cup final in Karachi early this month, was pressed into the attack after just 10 overs.

Sri Lanka continued to show their batting might as they added 178 to their overnight total of 422-4 for the loss of just two wickets.

Middle-order batsman Dilshan, 20 overnight, hogged the limelight as he completed his fifth Test hundred in the last over of the morning

session with a four over mid-wicket off spinner Harbhajan Singh.

Dilshan made the most of the reprieve he earned on Thursday under a new experimental rule allowing players to seek a second opinion on umpiring decisions.

He was on one when given out caught behind off seamer Zaheer Khan by umpire Mark Benson of England, but asked the official to review the decision.

Benson consulted TV umpire Rudi Koertzen of South Africa before changing his decision, as the ball had not made contact with the bat.

India's first success came when Samaraweera (127) cut Zaheer straight to Laxman at gully. The batsman added 16 to his overnight score of 111, hitting 18 fours in his 224-ball knock.

Dilshan gathered runs comfortably, playing handsome shots during his 170-ball knock containing one six and 12 fours.

SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard at stumps on the third day of the first Test between India and Sri Lanka at the Sinhalese Sports Club Ground in Colombo on Friday:

SRI LANKA: First innings (overnight 422-4)	
Vandort c Karthik b Sharma	3
Warnapura c Dravid b Harbhajan	115
Sangakkara c Dravid b Zaheer	12

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Players press for pullout

CRICINFO, undated

The ICC's decision to go ahead with the Champions Trophy in Pakistan has drawn sharp criticism from players' associations in non-Asian countries, with South African cricketers leading the criticism of a decision backed by their own board. The reactions have mirrored concerns voiced at the meeting, with reports from Australia and New Zealand suggesting that their top players might not attend the tournament. The ICC, on its part, has waived penalties for player pullouts.

"The South African team are very disappointed with today's decision and remain extremely concerned about safety and security in Pakistan," Tony Irish, chief executive of the South African Cricketers' Association, told Reuters. "We hope Cricket South Africa (CSA) will sit down with us and talk to us about whether they are seriously considering sending a team to the Champions Trophy in Pakistan or not."

Paul Marsh, the Australian Cricketers' Association (ACA) chief executive, was also disappointed with the decision. "We've gone through this with a fine-tooth comb and we don't think the risk to go to Pakistan is acceptable," he said on Friday. "I am very hopeful Cricket Australia will make that

decision. It would be unfair to put that decision back on the players and it would be inconsistent to put that decision back on players given what's happened in the past."

Marsh said despite the ICC's measures, the ACA would maintain its recommendation to Australia's cricketers not to play in Pakistan.

Cricketer Australia spokesperson Peter Young told the Age: "We're not willing to send our players or team officials anywhere that is not safe. We will always reserve the right to put player welfare first."

An ECB spokesman was quoted by AFP as saying it would have "further extensive discussions" with key stakeholders -- including England players and Team England -- following which the ECB "will be in a position to make a clear decision."

Officials from Australia, New Zealand and England are believed to have informed the ICC board, which conducted a teleconference on Thursday to confirm the venue, that their players were concerned about the security situation in Pakistan and may decide to pull out of the tournament, which starts on September 11.

New Zealand Cricket (NZC) said on Friday in a press release that it "is talking" to its players about the security situation in Pakistan following the ICC board's decision to go ahead with the tournament.

"NZC is talking to the New Zealand Cricket Players' Association (NZCPA) about player

safety and security concerns following the ICC's overnight decision that the Champions Trophy remain in Pakistan," the NZC said. Justin Vaughan, the chief executive of NZC, said he would also discuss player concerns with the board as well as the safety and security reports upon which the decision was based.

NZCPA executive manager Heath Mills had earlier slammed the proposal to go ahead with the tournament in Pakistan. "We believe this is a poor ICC decision... we can't see how they have put player safety as their No. 1 priority and this is very disappointing," Mills told New Zealand-based Radio Sport. "Our recommendation to our players is not to travel to Pakistan at this point in time. There isn't one player I have spoken to who is comfortable about traveling to Pakistan at the moment."

The decision, though, was welcomed unequivocally by Pakistan's captain Shoaib Malik. "It would have been a great loss for Pakistan cricket had the Champions Trophy been taken away from here," Malik told IANS. "I'm thankful to the cricket world for taking a decision that is great for the sport in this country."

Haroon Lorgat, the ICC chief executive, said in Colombo that players opting to pull out would not be penalised, nor would their boards. He hoped the task force formed to assess the security ahead

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Proteas ride on Duminy

SPORTS REPORTER

JP Duminy led South Africa's leather hunt with a hundred against Bangladesh A on the first day of their three day match at New Road in Worcester yesterday.

The in-form South Africans, who are leading the four-match Test series against England 1-0 after a 10-wicket victory in the second Test, scored 311-2 a few overs after tea.

Left-handed Duminy, who played 28 ODIs, remained not out on 139 off 203 balls that contained twelve fours and a six while Jacques Kallis accompanied him with seven runs.

The Bangladesh A bowlers had no answers against the two openers Graeme Smith and Duminy after the Proteas decided to bat first.

Captain Zunaed Siddiqui, the occasional off-spinner, gave the much-desired breakthrough just before lunch to break the 155-run opening stand when South Africa skipper Smith was caught behind for 87.

The left-handed Smith smashed eleven boundaries and a six during his 88-ball essay.

Hashim Amla joined Duminy to bring more frustration for the second string Bangladesh bowlers and Nayeem Islam picked up the second wicket just before the tea when Amla was caught by Nazmul Hossain for a 99-ball 55 that featured four boundaries.

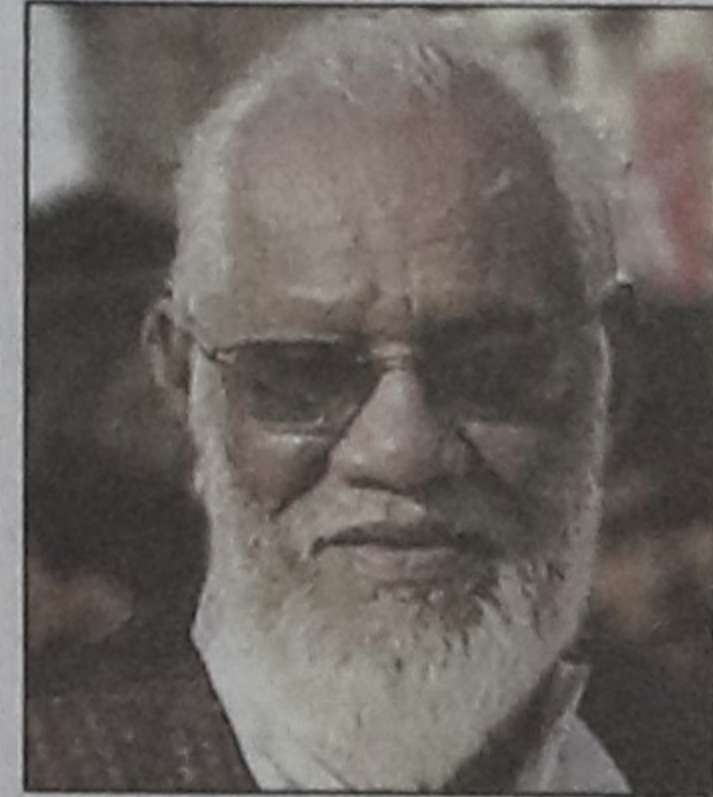
South Africa will play the third Test against England from July 30 at Birmingham.

Handball pioneer MA Hamid passes away

SPORTS REPORTER

The country lost an eminent sports personality in Lt Col (ret'd) MA Hamid, also the pioneer organiser in history of handball in Bangladesh, who died yesterday afternoon at the CMH after suffering from liver cirrhosis. He was 76.

Founder president of the Bangladesh Handball Federation (BHF), Hamid left behind his wife



MA HAMID

Rani Hamid, the only Woman International Master of chess in the country, three sons and one daughter.

His eldest son Kaiser Hamid is a former national footballer while Sohail Hamid and Bobby Hamid are also renowned sportsmen.

Hamid, who was a fine athlete in his youth, served as the BHF president for 24 years since 1984 and

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Qualifiers from today



SPORTS REPORTER

The domestic football season kicks off today with the Citycell Federation Cup qualifying rounds after a long one-year absence of top-flight football in the country.

Senior Division side Jatrabari Krira Chakra take on Rajshahi's Diganta Prasari in the opening match at 4 pm at the Bangabandhu National Stadium.

There had been no involvement of the professional league clubs in a tournament under the Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) since the conclusion of the first B. League on August 1 last year although the federation managed to organise the Senior Division Football League of the previous season.

Even the last edition -- the 20th Federation Cup -- was held in 2005 with Brothers Union winning the title beating Muktiyoddha. No

competition was played in the city in the entire 2006 when the only action had been the AFC organised Inaugural Challenge Cup.

Apart from today's opener, the remaining qualifying matches -- which ends on August 3 -- will be played at the Army Stadium in Banani and the Gazipur Stadium with a view to save the BNS pitch during the monsoon.

PARTIAL FIXTURE

(All matches kick off at 4pm)

July 28: Navy v Wanderers (Army Stadium)

July 29: Victoria v Air Force (Army Stadium)

July 29: BKSP v Diganta Prasari (Gazipur Stadium)

July 30: Jatrabari v Police (Gazipur Stadium)

July 30: Army v Customs (Army Stadium)

July 31: Navy v Air Force (Army Stadium)

July 31: Victoria v Wanderers (Gazipur Stadium)

There will be no formal inauguration today but all the BFF high-ups are expected to be present and meet the two teams.

The BFF, however, is planning a grand opening ceremony for the final round involving all the big names -- the 11 B. League clubs who are automatic qualifiers.

Five qualifiers out of 11 competitors will join the 16-team finals which is likely to start by August 10.

The 11 teams are split into three groups with the top two teams from groups A and B and only the winners of Group C making the finals.

The champions will receive Tk 3 lakh as prize money, the runners-up will pocket Tk one lakh and the Fair Play trophy winners Tk 50,000.

TEAMS

Group A: Jatrabari Krira Chakra, BKSP, Bangladesh Police and Diganta Prasari.

Group B: Victoria Sporting Club, Bangladesh Navy, Dhaka Wanderers Club and Bangladesh Air Force.

Group C: Sunrise Sporting Club, Bangladesh Customs Krira Parisad and Bangladesh Army.

China unveil huge squad

AP, Beijing



China unveiled its largest team of 639 athletes Friday for the Beijing Olympics, a squad many expect will dislodge the United States from the top of the gold-medal table.

China is likely to field the biggest team when the games open in two weeks. This Chinese contingent is much larger than Athens, when 407 athletes were named. China fielded 311 athletes in the Sydney Olympics eight years ago.

Chinese stars such as basketball player Yao Ming and defending Olympic champion hurdler Liu Xiang will be under tremendous pressure to deliver at home.

China's government hopes the highly stage-managed Olympics will show the country as a rising political and economic power. Any slip-up in medals, delivering clean

air, or controlling political protests would be seen as a failure of the Communist Party leadership.

"Only two weeks left, time is running short," Yao Ming told the state-run Xinhua news agency. "I'm recovering well and my foot is OK, but I've still got problems with my physical condition."

Foreign reporters were barred from Friday's team unveiling.

China won 32 gold medals in 2004, four fewer than the United States. The U.S. topped China by 39 medals in the overall count. Russia also won 10 more overall medals than China, but had only 27 gold.

The United States said this week it would send 596 athletes to the games although the roster could change because of unforeseen circumstances like injury or illness.

In a quest for more medals, China's fearsome state-run sports schools have been targeting relatively low-profile sports such as shooting, women's weightlifting, rowing, boxing and cycling. The Chinese are also expected to

deliver in three sports they usually dominate: diving, badminton and table tennis.

By contrast, the United States traditionally dominates two sports: swimming and track and field. The Americans have won slightly more than half of their overall medals in the last two games in swimming and athletics.

China won only four gold medals in athletics and swimming in the last two Olympics combined. One of the first head-to-head showdowns between China and the United States will come in men's basketball on Aug. 10 in an opening game in group play.

Many forecasters expect both China and the United States to win more than 40 gold medals apiece. China will get a boost from competing at home before packed venues and patriotic fans. In the last several Olympics, statistics indicate the home field advantage on average has been worth seven additional gold medals for the hosts.

The other side of athletes

AP, Fort Myers



Olympics to become one of track and field's biggest stars in the 1950s and 1960s.

Oerter died in 2007, but his final Olympic effort will be headed to the Beijing Games next month.

"Art of the Olympians," an exhibit comprised of work from some of the world's greatest athletes, is expected to open in China on Aug. 8. About 30 copies of the art were transported from the show's home in Fort Myers, where Oerter's family plans to open a permanent gallery for the works next year.

"It's going to be amazing," Oerter's wife, Cathy, said shortly before the exhibit temporarily closed in Fort Myers in June. "We're going to get wrestlers and rowers. That's going to be what's interesting trying to get every sport, every country."

"And different forms of art," Oerter's daughter, Gabrielle, said. "I would love to have musicians. We have one poet already."

"Art of the Olympians" is a multisport, multinational effort to help restore an Olympic ideal of a complete persona good citizen with a fine athletic talent, who is also in touch with his or her creative and intellectual muses, Cathy Oerter said. Shows have already been held at the United Nations, the New York Athletic Club and the National Arts Club in New York.

"It's the creative nature that's deep-seeded within your being," Cathy Oerter said. "It defines who you are. Now they do it, of course, and it shows through athletics, but they also have this creative side that shows in this beautiful artwork that lasts forever. The athletic part is momentary, but this is something they can make last forever."

A copy of a work by British javelin thrower Roald Bradstocka series of bright horizontal stripes over the silhouetted shadow of an equestrian jumper is headed to Beijing. So are copies of Australian swim-

mer Shane Gould's photographs, which show the movement of water, air and energy created by swimmers.

"Athletes have a keen sense of physics, in nature particularly," Gould said. "We're always up against the elements of gravity, air, the thickness of air. And then for swimmers, the water, all the forces in the water. That causes you to have quite a strong connection to nature. With that sensitivity to it, you have to be creative in how you use those forces."

Bradstock's work is meant to convey how the repetition of practice is a part of the sport. An image of the sport in this case, a horse and jumper is still visible, and the painting captures how the exercises and movements make an athlete better.

"Repetition is a way of showing that, and showing effort. At the same time, I try and remove and get away from individual athletes," Bradstock said. "I try and focus on the actual sport, the movement. So for the runner and swimmer, I want to get a feel of what it feels like. For me, the biggest compliment is

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An elderly Chinese woman sits down after reacting to the heat, while waiting to buy the final batch of Olympic tickets near the Olympic Stadium in Beijing on Friday.

PHOTO: AFP