

## AFC Challenge Cup from today

AGENCIES, undated

The second edition of the AFC Challenge Cup kicks off on Wednesday with the participating teams given the added incentive of knowing that the winners will also earn place in the AFC Asian Cup in 2011.

Defending champions Tajikistan open the competition when they take on Group A rivals Turkmenistan, who along with DPR Korea and Myanmar are taking part in the tournament for the first time.

Bangladesh hosted the first edition of the tournament in 2006 when Tajikistan defeated Sri Lanka in the final at the Bangabandhu National Stadium on April 16.

But the inaugural hosts failed to qualify for the competition after being held to a draw by Afghanistan and then qualifiers hosts Kyrgyzstan beat them 2-1 back in May.

Tajikistan's victory in the AFC Challenge Cup two years ago was inspired by midfielder Ibragim Rabinov but an ankle injury means that coach Pulod Kodirov will be without the inaugural tournament's Most Valuable Player, while Turkmenistan will be relying mainly on a locally-based squad despite having a number of players who ply their trade for top clubs in Uzbekistan, Russia, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, and Turkey.

Only two of Turkmenistan's foreign legion are with the squad in Hyderabad -- Vyacheslav Krendelov, who is currently with Russian side Akmar, and Guvanchmuhamed Ovekov, a midfielder with Kazakhstan's Zhetysay -- while Dovatmurad Atayev has been called up despite being without a club after leaving Uzbek outfit Shurtan.

Hosts India are also in action on Wednesday with Bob Houghton's title-hopefuls looking to build on their successful pre-tournament tour of Portugal when they take on Group A's remaining side Afghanistan, who surprisingly qualified for the final stage at the expense of Kyrgyzstan and Bangladesh.

Group B kicks-off on Thursday when a youthful DPR Korea side takes on 2006 runners-up Sri Lanka before debutants Myanmar face Nepal.

## Win gold, win jackpot

AFP, Manila

Cash incentives worth up to 237,000 US dollars await the first athlete to win an Olympic gold medal for the Philippines, sports authorities said Tuesday.

The pot is set to grow as the country's 15 Olympic athletes begin their quest in Beijing on August 8, they said.

"My fearless forecast is that they will be successful," Philippine Olympic Committee head Roberto Avenajado told reporters, declining to set specific medal targets.

The impoverished Southeast Asian nation of 90 million people has never won Olympic gold. The country's best result has been silver for boxing.

A Philippine law mandates a cash prize of five million pesos (112,000 dollars) for a Filipino who wins Olympic gold.

Monico Puentevela, a Philippines Olympic official, told reporters the cash incentives now totalled 10.5 million pesos (237,000 dollars).

Corporate sponsors, as well as a number of prominent Filipino personalities, also offered cash prizes of a million pesos (22,600 dollars) for each gold medal and lesser amounts for silver and bronze, Avenajado said.

The Filipino Olympic contingent includes a boxer, two track and field entries, two divers, five swimmers, a weightlifter, an archer, a shooter and two taekwondo jins.

## Harmison

FROM PAGE 17

come through them. I always analyse my batting and I believe in this series I've had three decent balls but there were also a couple of them that I could have done better with.

"I'm hitting the ball well and I believe I can get a big score this week if I get off to a good start. I've had a week off and I've had a good week's practice, hitting balls. In the past it's paid off and hopefully it will be the same this week."

Vaughan was unapologetic about his post-match comment that the team had been unsettled by the selection of the team for the second Test, which led to selection chairman Geoff Miller seeking clarity from the captain.

"I always try and speak honestly," he said. "I don't really regret it."

## TEAMS

ENGLAND: Michael Vaughan (captain), Andrew Strauss, Alastair Cook, Kevin Pietersen, Ian Bell, Paul Collingwood, Andrew Flintoff, Ryan Ambrose, James Anderson, Tim Latham, Monty Panesar.

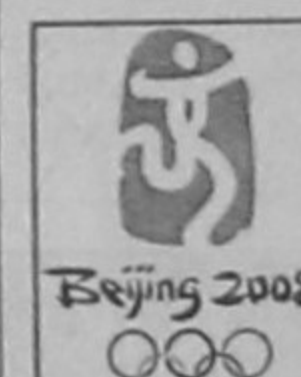
SOUTH AFRICA: Graeme Smith (captain), Neil McKenzie, Hashim Amla, Jacques Kallis, Ashwell Prince, AB de Villiers, Mark Boucher, Morne Morkel, Paul Harris, Andre Nel, Makhaya Ntini.



Hazem Khaled, an Egyptian midfielder who plied his trade at home and in Oman previously, is now in Dhaka to try his luck for giants Mohammedan Sporting Club. Hazem was pictured at the BUET ground yesterday where he took part in training with the Black and Whites. And if he can convince coach Maruful Haq, he stands a bright chance to make his Dhaka debut in the final round of the Federation Cup that is scheduled to start on August 6.

## Holden Hamm pulls out

AFP, Indianapolis



Paul Hamm won't defend his Olympic all-around gymnastics title in Beijing after all as the American said Monday he had lost his bid to come back in time from a broken hand.

Although Hamm had displayed a high enough level recently to convince US selectors to send him to Beijing, he notified USA Gymnastics on Monday that he was resigning from the team, the federation said.

"I have put my heart and soul into my comeback and done everything I could to get ready in time to compete in Beijing," Hamm said in a statement released by USA Gymnastics.

"After returning home from the preparation camp, I had a few physical setbacks, and it became clear to me that my physical preparations would not be sufficient to properly represent the United States and contribute to the team's efforts to win a medal."

Hamm made a return to competitive gymnastics in August 2007 after a nearly three-year layoff after the 2004 Games to complete his education.

This year he won the all-around title at the Winter Cup Challenge, Tyson American Cup and Pacific Rim Championships presented by Gillette Venus, but his Beijing bid was slowed when he broke his right hand in May.

He underwent surgery on May 27 and missed the US Olympic trials in June but petitioned his way onto the US Olympic squad.

On July 19, Hamm performed his routines in a special demonstration to show he was fit enough to compete in the Olympics.

Since then, however, Hamm said he had encountered further setbacks.

"I recently strained my rotator cuff and have been unable to perform all of my skills. I am very grateful to have been given the opportunity to make a comeback. At this point in time, the success of the team and fairness to the team, and the alternatives, is most important. While I am very disappointed, I feel I can wait no longer to make this decision."

"We admire Paul for making this difficult decision," said Steve Penny, president of USA Gymnastics.

"Paul's comeback this year has been phenomenal, made even more impressive following the injury to his hand. He has raised the level of determination among the entire team to put forth a medal winning effort in China."

Hamm was hoping to defend an all-around title won amid controversy in Athens.

In 2004, he fell in vaulting but rallied to win the all-around gold medal by the smallest margin in Olympic gymnastics history with South Korean Yang Tae-Young placing third.

A gold medal was barely around Hamm's neck when controversy erupted. Judges discovered they gave Yang too low a start value for his routine and that based on scores that followed, it should have been the Korean claiming the gold.

International Gymnastics Federation officials declared Hamm the winner and the Court of Arbitration for Sport denied an appeal from Yang.

The competition will be held in four events -- men's singles, men's doubles, women's singles and women's doubles.

Interested shuttlers have been asked to collect the prescribed entry form from the federation and also submit their entries by August 20.

The UN General Assembly and UN chief Ban Ki-moon on Monday called for a truce in hostilities around the world during the 2008 Olympic Games in Beijing.

Assembly President Sergio Kerim made an appeal to member states to observe an Olympic truce, following an ancient Greek tradition dating back to the eighth century BC.

Ban meanwhile said a truce would provide "a pause in which to reconsider the heavy cost of war; an opening to initiate dialogue; and a window to provide relief for suffering populations."

The Olympic Games are scheduled to take place from August 8 to 24 and the Paralympic Games from September 6 to 17.

Last October, the General Assembly unanimously adopted a resolution calling on member states to observe a truce during the Games in Beijing and help build "a peaceful and better world through sport."

The resolution urged all member states to cooperate with the International Olympic Committee "in its efforts to use sport as an instrument to promote peace, dialogue and reconciliation in areas of conflict during and beyond the Olympic Games period."

Earlier in their opening matches, BKSP edged past Bangladesh Police 1-0, while Rajshahi Diganto Prasari suffered a 2-0 defeat against Jatrabari KC.

Wednesday's matches will see Jatrabari face Bangladesh Police in Gazipur while Bangladesh Customs Krira Parisad at the Army Stadium.

Former Pakistan leg-spinner Mushtaq Ahmed said he was ready to offer advice to any international waverers.

"A player understands another player's language, so I am ready to convince players from England, Australia, New Zealand and South

Africa that it is safe to play cricket in Pakistan. No one is going to target cricket," said Mushtaq.

"I think the whole world is quite unsafe compared to maybe seven years ago. But that doesn't mean that we should stop our routine lives -- the show must go on and it is the responsibility of everyone to beat terrorism," he added.

"Some fight against it with guns and some by showing solidarity. I think to beat terrorism, you have to be a team player and that is what cricket teaches us -- team spirit and unity."

Another former captain, Moin Khan, said Pakistan should not be cast into cricketing isolation.

"Pakistan must not be left alone in this and I hope the ICC's decision would be backed by its member countries," Moin said.

The Olympic Games are scheduled to take place from August 8 to 24 and the Paralympic Games from September 6 to 17.

Last October, the General Assembly unanimously adopted a resolution calling on member states to observe a truce during the Games in Beijing and help build "a peaceful and better world through sport."

The resolution urged all member states to cooperate with the International Olympic Committee "in its efforts to use sport as an instrument to promote peace, dialogue and reconciliation in areas of conflict during and beyond the Olympic Games period."

Earlier in their opening matches, BKSP edged past Bangladesh Police 1-0, while Rajshahi Diganto Prasari suffered a 2-0 defeat against Jatrabari KC.

Wednesday's matches will see Jatrabari face Bangladesh Police in Gazipur while Bangladesh Customs Krira Parisad at the Army Stadium.

Former Pakistan leg-spinner Mushtaq Ahmed said he was ready to offer advice to any international waverers.

"A player understands another player's language, so I am ready to convince players from England, Australia, New Zealand and South

## India work on fielding

CRICINFO, undated

Robin Singh, India's fielding coach, says India's close-in catching will improve in the next Test with the team working on it in the nets. Dropped catches affected India's performance in the first Test against Sri Lanka in Colombo.

"There have been a few lapses in the past that won't be repeated," Robin said after a practice session ahead of the second Test in Galle, starting on Thursday. "Most of the people are aware of their responsibilities. I feel we had a bad day [in the last Test] but we will come back strongly in the [next] Test matches."

India lost the first Test by an innings and 239 runs and conceded 600 runs in the first innings where four Sri Lankans scored centuries. Mahela Jayawardene, the top scorer with 136, was dropped by wicketkeeper Dinesh Karthik on 55 and 96 while Thilan Samarawera, the next highest scorer with 127, was dropped by Gautam Gambhir at short leg when he was on 53.

Robin said both players had put in time for fielding practice. "Gambhir is working hard on close catches. Dinesh Karthik had a bad match. He dropped a few catches but it's a part of the game. He is working hard in the nets. We hope to come back strongly."

Robin said the team was in a better mental shape than it was after losing in Colombo. "Everyone is trying to lift their game. Everyone is prepared in their own way. If each player plays well, if we are able to get a good start, the rest can follow."

## LOCAL SNIPPETS

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Police moved into the final of the Design Zone 2nd Open Handball League crushing Prisons Directorate 44-13 in their last league match at the Outer Stadium Handball ground yesterday.

Helal scored ten while Humayun and Gopal netted eight goals each for Police, who led the first half 23-8.

Bangladesh Police will play Bangladesh Rifles in the final today at the same venue.

Director of Exim Bank and chairman of the bank's audit committee M Nurul Fazal Bulbul will be the chief guest in the final and distribute the prizes.

## WOMEN'S KABADDI

Bangladesh Ansar and Rajshahi moved into the final of the Spectra Group National Women's Kabaddi Championship at the Kabaddi Stadium to be held today.

In yesterday's semifinals, Ansar outplayed Faridpur 38-12 while Rajshahi beat Narail 24-12 in the afternoon.

The two losing semifinalists Faridpur and Narail will now share the third position in championship, according to the federation by-laws.

Secretary general of District and Divisional Sports Organisers Parishad Ashique Rahman Miku distributed prizes to the third placed teams.

President of Bangladesh Kabaddi Federation and IGP Nur Mohammad will be the chief guest in the final.

## SUMMER BADMINTON

UNB adds: The Sadat Smriti Summer Open (Ranking) badminton competition will begin at the Mirpur Shaheed Suhrawardi Indoor Stadium on August 23.

The tournament is organised by Bangladesh Badminton Federation and sponsored by Sadat Smriti Sadan.

The competition will be held in four events -- men's singles, men's doubles, women's singles and women's doubles.

Interested shuttlers have been asked to collect the prescribed entry form from the federation and also submit their entries by August 20.

## UN calls for Olympic truce

AFP, United Nations

The UN General Assembly and UN chief Ban Ki-moon on Monday called for a truce in hostilities around the world during the 2008 Olympic Games in Beijing.

Assembly President Sergio Kerim made an appeal to member states to observe an Olympic truce, following an ancient Greek tradition dating back to the eighth century BC.

Ban meanwhile said a truce would provide "a pause in which to reconsider the heavy cost of war; an opening to initiate dialogue; and a window to provide relief for suffering populations."

The Olympic Games are scheduled to take place from August 8 to 24 and the Paralympic Games from September 6 to 17.

Last October, the General Assembly unanimously adopted a resolution calling on member states to observe a truce during the Games in Beijing and help build "a peaceful and better world through sport."

The resolution urged all member states to cooperate with the International Olympic Committee "in its efforts to use sport as an instrument to promote peace, dialogue and reconciliation in areas of conflict during and beyond the Olympic Games period."

## India, Eng on warpath

Cricket

AFP, New Delhi

India and England were Tuesday embroiled in an acrimonious tug-of-war over the Inaugural Twenty20 Champions League, with both wanting to host it with or without each other.

The lucrative football-style League, featuring top Twenty20 domestic sides from around the world, is scheduled to be played between September 29 and October 8.

India insists it will host the tournament while England, which opposes the terms and conditions laid down by the Indians, wants to stage its own version in the United Arab Emirates on the same dates.

Utter chaos prevailed in cricket circles on Tuesday as both sides claimed that teams from Australia and South Africa will take part in their respective tournaments.

India, buoyed by the success of the Indian Premier League earlier this year, said it will finalise details of its tournament at a meeting in Mumbai on Wednesday with

Australian and South African chiefs.

The northern cities of New Delhi, Mohali and Jaipur have already been announced as the possible venues in the 10-million-dollar event, with half that amount going to the winners.

The England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) said the Abu Dhabi royal family had agreed to bankroll their tournament to be held in the UAE capital and the adjoining emirate of Sharjah.

"At the moment we are progressing with our plans and we have no plans to travel to Mumbai and attend Wednesday's meeting," an ECB spokesman said in London on Monday.

Who plays where is undecided, although the original plans had the top two Twenty20 teams from Australia, England, South Africa and India taking part.

Local media reports on Tuesday said India had turned down England's offer to send two teams for their event in the Gulf -- and also does not expect English sides to feature in their own tournament.

In a letter to the ECB, the Indian board wrote it "wished the ECB all

the best" with its tournament but "unfortunately, we cannot accept" the invitation, reports said.

Talks between the Indian board and the ECB failed to resolve the issues of tournament rights and the availability of players who took part in the unauthorised Indian Cricket League (ICL).

India, the sport's financial powerhouse, wanted to retain a 50 per cent stake in the tournament and would not allow teams that fielded ICL players from taking part.

Kent, one of the two teams set to represent England in the Champions League, has two ICL players in Pakistan's Azhar Mahmood and Justin Kemp of South Africa.

Indian official Lalit Modi had said last week the Champions League was being put off to a later date, but appeared to change his mind after being told England were going ahead with their own tournament.

The tournament is sandwiched in the short 11-day gap between the Champions Trophy final in Pakistan on September 28 and the first Test between Australia and India in Bangalore from October 9.

## Return of the king?

Cricket

INTERNET, undated

If Jagmohan Dalmiya wasn't the king himself, then he would at least be the kingmaker.

That script, penned in the early 1990s, read unchanged till late 2005, when Sharad Pawar thrashed Dalmiya's nominee Ranbir Singh Mahendra -- a poor choice, really -- in the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) elections.

A year earlier, Dalmiya's casting vote had denied Pawar the top position and one didn't have to be a fortune-teller to forecast that the influential union minister would, sooner rather than later, get even.

Thirteen months after Pawar's win, Dalmiya was banned from the BCCI, an act of vindictiveness which got challenged in court. Days later, he stepped down as president of the Cricket Association of Bengal (CAB).

That was in end-December 2006.

Come Tuesday and Dalmiya, who has a favourable order from the Calcutta High Court, will be in an unusual role: Of a challenger, out to unseat Prasun Mukherjee, whom he'd defeated two years ago.

Actually, Mukherjee's in the chair without winning an election. To regain even a toehold in the BCCI and again become relevant, for starters within the East Zone, it's an election Dalmiya must win.

According to well-placed sources of the Telegraph, Dalmiya is "comfortably placed". However, we've just witnessed the defiance

of whips and cross-voting on the biggest stage around -- the Lok Sabha.

While those close to Dalmiya insist he has over 70 committed votes (a figure more or less borne out by whispers on the Maidan), they also concede that everybody in his panel may not win.

Clearly, such a possibility can't be ruled out.

Eventually then it could well come to that, with a Samar Paul, an old Dalmiya-baiter for example, probably getting to retain his joint-secretary's post.

After the finalisation of the voters' list, the Dalmiya group is looking at garnering around 60 of the 92 votes from clubs, the support of 11 of the 17 districts having the right to vote at the AGM and the backing of six out of the nine 'institutional' affiliates.

For the record, the Mukherjee camp too is hopeful of getting through big. A spokesman went to the extent of saying they were assured of 68 votes, break-up being 47 from clubs, 13 from the districts and 8 'institutional' affiliates.

With two disqualifications and the Bata Sports Club representative having to report at the company's headquarter in Gurgaon, on Tuesday morning, the voting strength is down to 118.

The president, being in the chair, has a casting vote.

Getting back to 2006, Mukherjee was then the city's commissioner of police and, more important, had been handpicked by the chief minister, Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee.

He also had the support of

Bengal's favourite son, Sourav Ganguly, but the former Team India captain became a liability after an ill-timed email from England (where he was doing duty for Northants).

So, neither the Buddha-card nor the Sourav-card worked for Mukherjee.

Indications are that Sourav's threat to stop playing for Bengal if key men from the Dalmiya group didn't end what he termed as an anti-Ganguly family campaign, hasn't gone down well either.

Can't be good news for Mukherjee, who continues to enjoy Sourav's unqualified backing.

Moreover, this time, there seems to be no interference from the government. The biggest change, of course, is that Mukherjee is no more the commissioner. He was removed last October.

It's true Mukherjee couldn't swing it in 2006, despite being in that position, but it would almost surely have been different had he today been both the commissioner and the CAB president.

Perhaps, as significantly, there's no indirect involvement of the BCCI this time. Not on the face of it, at least. Back in 2006, Dalmiya was seen as a threat and the Pawar camp had gone all out to try and get him out of the CAB.

As things stand, Dalmiya can't be a threat in the near future. For, in a smart move, which was driven by the need to keep him at bay, Pawar's successor (lawyer Shashank Manohar) got picked last year itself.

## Knee troubles

FROM PAGE 17

Whatever the fact was it would be painful for the team management if this injury ultimately proved to be a serious one because the bowling is most vulnerable department right now.

The continuous injury of Syed Raseel already made things difficult and the newcomers' performance in the highest level hardly made anyone believe that they are ready to fill up any more vacuum.

## A changed

FROM PAGE 17

More than 10,000 performers are expected to take part in the ceremony on August 8 that will include the athletes' parade and the lighting of the Olympic flame.

AOC spokesman Mike Tancred said the team saw the late place as an advantage, as it would mean the athletes would not be standing in the stadium for so long.

## CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS	37 Travesty	2 Gremlin	21 Bean
1 Christmas	38 Like some	adult	curd
5 Oom	41 Conger,	3 Young	42 Arabian
8 Coaster	for one	fellow	Sea
12 Word-of-	42 Grand-	4 Evening	sultanate
mouth	scale tale	hour	23 See to
13 Equal	(Pref.)	5 Meer-	24 Play-
14 Tortoise's	43 Fudge at	schau-	wright
opponent	bridge,	e.g.	Cherkov
15 Support	maybe	6 -- was	26 Push
17 Velhalla	48 -- it	saying,	skyward
VIP	Roman-	7 Melon	27 Kishred
18 Compete	49 Droop	variety	28 Ear-
19 Result	50 Language	8 Rosh	related
21 Family	of	Hashanah	29 Ticket-
emblem	Pakistan	trumpet	sales
24 "Clan of	51 Trawler	9 Store	total
the Cave	equipment	10 Idle or	31 NY
Bear"	52 "Love --	Roberts	Yankee
25 Portent	neighbor"	11 Body-	nickname
26 Likely	53 Average	shop	34 Ousts
lesser	1 Ad-	case	35 Bushy
30 Enthusi-	dressed-	20 Took off	mustache
31 "Coal	21 Coal	38 Harness	compari-
Miner's	Daughter"	39 Church	son
director	Michael		