



## Thousands gather for eclipse

AFP, Beijing

Thousands of people gathered in northern China on Friday to watch the first solar eclipse in the country this century, state media reported, a week ahead of the Olympic Games.

Around 10,000 people gathered in Yiwu, a small town 500 kilometres (310 miles) east of Urumqi, the capital of northwest Xinjiang province, the official Xinhua news agency said.

The weather there was favourable for the eclipse, experts said, and there was a 76 percent chance of seeing the natural phenomenon, Xinhua quoted Wang Keming, deputy director of the Beijing Astronomical Observatory, as saying.

In Xian, the capital of northern Shaanxi province, where the eclipse was due to end, the weather was cloudy, leading to doubts over whether it would be seen, the Xian Evening News reported.

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## Academy boys lose to seniors

SPORTS REPORTER

The South Africa-bound GP-BCB National Cricket Academy team failed to impress in the limited-overs practice match against Mohammad Ashraful men's at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

The senior side won the match by seven wickets with former national skipper Habibul Bashar making 49 while opener Mehrab Hossain added 34 and captain Ashraful made 12 runs in reply to the academy's 122 in 36.3 overs.

The team management asked

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## Did U Know?

A record 202 countries participated in the 2004 Olympic Games in Athens.



### TEN Sports

Sri Lanka v India

Second Test, Day Three

Live from 10:45am

### STAR Cricket

England v South Africa

Third Test, Day Four

Live from 4:00pm

### ESPN

AFC Challenge Cup

Sri Lanka v Myanmar

Live from 4:25pm

Nepal v South Korea

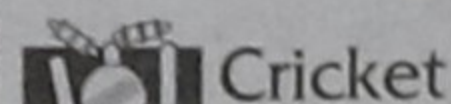
Live from 6:55pm



### Ronaldinho

(Brazil football superstar)  
"We have let many chances (of gold) slip. Many good teams have played the Olympics and we have never managed to win it. Now we have the opportunity - we have a very good team."

# BCB plans more longer-version



SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) are looking forward to make domestic competitions more meaningful and they are all set to bring changes in the calendar.

The country's governing body for cricket have prepared a draft calendar for the upcoming season, which will start with a Premier Division under-18 tournament in September.

The most significant changes being brought into the Premier Cricket League, which is the country's most coveted domestic one-day competition, would be the two-day tournament. But on top of everything, the main question is whether it would be possible to maintain this calendar.

"The calendar is yet to be approved and definitely there would be a lot more discussions and the board members would also give their opinion before it is approved. I think it's not an impos-

sible task to maintain a calendar if everybody is sincere about it," said Gazi Ashraf Hossain, chairman of the cricket operations committee and vice-chairman of the tournament committee.

"The clubs may raise questions about the timing of the Premier League as they played last May but I think everybody must think about the greater interest of the game," said the former CCMD (Cricket Committee of Dhaka Metropolitan) chairman.

According to the draft calendar, the Premier League will kick off in the last week of December this year with its Twenty20 version and the inter-club players transfer is scheduled for December 12-14.

The premier division's two-day, the re-introduced format with each 90 overs being played on each day, will start from January 10 next year and will be completed on March 25.

After completion of the two-day, the top six teams will take part in the four-dayers that are scheduled for March 27 to April 30 next year and the board are planning to appeal to the International

Cricket Council (ICC) for first-class recognition of the competition.

Ashraf explained the reasons behind the re-introduction of the longer-version format in the Premier League by saying that players desperately need to improve their temperament and ball selection to survive at the international level.

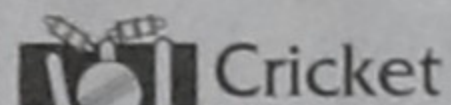
"Everybody knows where our problem lies in the international circuit. Our batsmen struggle at the highest level because of temperament and ball selection and I think the two-day league could be a good solution for us. Not only the batsmen but our pace bowling will also improve by this format," observed the former national skipper.

"And this competition ensures the maximum participation of our national cricketers, so this change definitely would be helpful for our cricket. There are many technical things which we can improve," he added.

It was learnt that the CCMD got positive response regarding the changes of the format of the

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# KP revives England



AFP, Birmingham

Kevin Pietersen kept England's hopes alive after his fellow top order batsmen failed on the third day of the third Test against South Africa at Edgbaston on Friday.

England were 126 for four in their second innings at tea, a slender lead of 43. Pietersen was unbeaten on 42.

South Africa eked out a first innings lead of 83 before their bowlers put them in sight of their first Test series win in England since 1965.

England's slide started when Alastair Cook top-edged a pull

against Makhaya Ntini and wicketkeeper Mark Boucher ran 25m towards square leg to hold the catch.

England captain Michael Vaughan failed again when he was out for 17 and he was followed by Andrew Strauss and Ian Bell in an extended afternoon session.

Vaughan, under pressure after making only 23 runs in his first four innings in the series, batted aggressively and struck four solid boundaries in an 18-ball innings before a drive against Andre Nel was held by a diving Hashim Amla low down at mid-off.

Strauss batted confidently for his 25 before he was caught at second slip off Morne Morkel, bowling around the wicket.

Bell looked disgusted with himself when he top-edged a hook against Ntini to offer a simple catch to Boucher, running towards fine leg, after making 20.

Pietersen meanwhile batted with unusual restraint for almost two hours, facing 83 balls and hitting four boundaries.

Earlier, Boucher made 40 as South Africa stretched their first innings total to 314 before he was last man out.

Rain started falling almost immediately after the end of the innings. An early lunch was taken before England could start their second innings.

South Africa suffered an early blow when Ashwell Prince, who

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A scene from yesterday's Citycell Federation Cup qualifying round match between Bangladesh Police and Diganta Prasari held at the Army Stadium.

# Sharapova pulls out

AFP, Singapore

A despondent Maria Sharapova pulled out of the Beijing Olympics on Friday with a shoulder injury, depriving the Games of one of its biggest stars.

The glamorous Russian withdrew from the WTA Rogers Cup in Montreal on Wednesday after a marathon second-round win over Marta Domachowska, and a scan revealed two small tears in her right shoulder.

"I'm currently packing up real quick to hop on a plane to New York for a second opinion but I wanted to let you all know first that there is no chance of me competing in Beijing," she said on her official website.

"The timing is so unfortunate and this makes me more sad than anything."

The world number three's match against Domachowska was her first since her disappointing performance at Wimbledon, where she was dumped out by fellow

Russian Alla Kudryavtseva in the second round.

"After Wednesday's match I knew there was something seriously wrong with my shoulder," she added on the website.



MARIA SHARAPOVA

"After taking a few different exams and MRI's, the doctors found two small tears in the tendons of my shoulder."

"There are so many mixed feelings because on Wednesday night they were almost positive there was something wrong with

my nerve, which could have ultimately been much more serious."

"But after Thursday morning's tests, for the first time in a while, they were able to give me a different answer and a different problem."

"This is something that needs a lot of time to heal. It really hurts me to say I have to miss the Olympics," she said.

The injury also throws into doubt whether she will be fit for the US Open, which starts on August 25 in New York.

The 21-year-old has already suffered wear and tear this year, pulling out of her scheduled Italian Open semi-final in May against Jelena Jankovic because of a calf strain.

Sharapova joins a growing list of Beijing casualties, including former world number one and Athens Olympic silver medalist Amelie Mauresmo and fellow French star Mary Pierce.

While many other top names remain in the draw, Sharapova's exit will be a big blow for Olympic organisers.

The pin-up attracts huge media interest and her name recognition

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WELL BEHAVED AND WELL BOWLED: Indian off-spinner Harbhajan Singh (C) celebrates with teammates after dismissing Sri Lankan batsman Thilan Samaraweera (L) during the second day of the second Test at the Galle International Cricket Stadium on Friday.

## Ton-up Rokibul

SPORTS REPORTER

Rokibul Hasan cracked an unbeaten century as Bangladesh A posted 275 for six against Marylebone Cricket Club at the Racecourse in Durham University grounds yesterday.

In reply, the MCC were 29 for 1 after seven overs.

Rokibul, the right-handed batsman, smacked a six and eight boundaries in his 112 off 124 balls after he came into the crease with his side in trouble at 17 for two.

Rajin Saleh (five off 23 balls) was the next man out after both openers Tamim Iqbal (11) and Nazimuddin (one) fell early.

Then, Rokibul and Shakib Al Hassan (41) shared 71 for the fourth wicket before the left-hander was clean bowled by paceman Faisal Shahid.

Another 51 was added between Rokibul and Nayeem Islam (25) for the fifth wicket but the real fireworks started when Dhiman Ghosh joined Rokibul with the score on 149.

Dhiman smashed 55 off 40 balls including four boundaries and two towering sixes as Bangladesh A moved past the 250 mark.

John Miles and Will Gidman took two wickets each for the world's most influential cricket club.

## BKSP, Jatrabari through

SPORTS REPORTER

A goalless draw gave BKSP and Jatrabari Kira Chakra their tickets to the final round of the Citycell Federation Cup football tournament at the Gazipur Stadium yesterday.

After both teams had won their previous two games, the draw was all the two teams needed to move ahead in the competition.

Both BKSP and Jatrabari ended with five points from three respective matches.

At the Army Stadium, Mohammad Alam's first-half strike gave Diganta Prasari a consolation victory over Bangladesh Police in another group A match.

Alam struck for the Rajshahi side in the 22nd minute and the visitors did not falter in keeping the 1-0 scoreline intact.

With the win, Diganta Prasari secured four points, while Bangladesh Police remained at one point from three matches as both teams took their bow from the tournament.

Victoria Sporting Club are in a must-win situation against Bangladesh Navy today at the Army Stadium while the same is true for Dhaka Wanderers, who take on Bangladesh Air Force at the Bangabandhu National Stadium.

In the other match today, Sunrise Sporting Club face Bangladesh Customs.

## Pioneer football

UNB, Dhaka

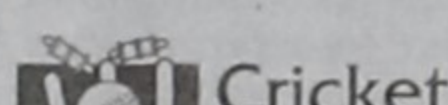
Noakhali Football Academy beat Arambagh Juniors 2-0 in a second phase match of the Dhaka City Corporation Pioneer Football League at the Bir Shreshtha Shaheed Sepoy Mohammad Mostafa Stadium at Kamalapur yesterday.

Uzzal and Mahub scored for the winners in the 3rd and 33rd minutes respectively.

In the day's other match, Tangail Football Academy edged past Mir Hajir Bagh by a solitary goal scored by Jagannath in the 51st minute.

In today's matches, Maghbarar are up against Surjosenia while Rampura face Mansoor Sporting Club.

# Bhajji leads fightback



AFP, Galle

Harbhajan Singh bagged four quick wickets in a magnificent spell to put Sri Lanka under pressure in the second Test against India here on Friday.

The off-spinner (4-71) removed well-set Kumar Sangakkara and Malinda Warnapura in successive overs before Sri Lanka struggled to reach 215-5 in their first innings at stumps in reply to India's 329 on the second day.

Sangakkara (68) and Warnapura (66) helped Sri Lanka overcome the third-ball dismissal of Michael Vandort with a 133-run stand for the second wicket before Harbhajan struck to restore India's fortunes on a spinners' day.

Skipper Mahela Jayawardene was unbeaten on 46 and Prasanna Jayawardene on five not out at the close of play.

"We are in a good position to control the match tomorrow," said Harbhajan.

"We have to repeat our performance, take catches and bowl in the right areas as we did today. If we take a couple of early wickets, the tail will start."

"We are happy with our efforts today, but it would have been nice to get more runs in the first innings."

India were bowled out on the

stroke of lunch after resuming at 214-4, with explosive opener Virender Sehwag (201 not out) becoming only the second Indian after Sunil Gavaskar to carry his bat through the innings.

Sehwag also became the 10th Indian to complete 5,000 Test runs during his fifth score of 200 and more, including two triple centuries. He hit four sixes and 22

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## BATSMEN CARRYING THEIR BAT THROUGH AN INNINGS

(LAST 10 INSTANCES)	PLAYERS	SCORE	OPPOSITION	VENUE	YEAR
	MH Dekker (Zim)	68*	Pakistan	Rawalpindi	1993
	MA Atherton (Eng)	94*	New Zealand	Christchurch	1997
	G Kirsten (SA)	100*	Pakistan	Faisalabad	1997
	M Taylor (Aus)	169*	South Africa	Adelaide	1998
	G Flower (Zim)	156*	Pakistan	Bulawayo	1998
	S Anwar (Pak)	188*	India	Kolkata	1999
	MA Pathan (SL)	216*	Zimbabwe	Bulawayo	1999
	R Arnold (SL)	104*	Zimbabwe	Harare	1999
	J Omar (BD)	85*	Zimbabwe	Bulawayo	2001
	V Sehwag (Ind)	201*	Sri Lanka	Galle	2008

# Un-happily ever after?

AFP, Paris



Olympic Games medalists don't always live happily ever after.

Jesse Owens, who famously won four golds at Hitler's 1936 Olympics in Berlin, endured tough times after his Games glory, even racing against horses and working as a petrol pump attendant to make ends meet.

But when he died from lung cancer at the age of 66 in 1980, Owens, the grandson of slaves, refused to be bitter.

"When I came back from Berlin I couldn't live where I wanted," said Owens, aware of the contradiction between dominating an Olympiad

planned as a showcase for Aryan might and the treatment of his own people in the United States.

"I wasn't invited to shake hands with Hitler, but I wasn't invited to the White House to shake hands with the President, either."

The 1936 Games were the last before the Second World War.

Around 20 of the Polish team were to die in the fighting as were around 25 German medal winners including Lutz Long who, despite Nazi discomfort, played his part in Owens's achievements by helping the American avoid missing qualification for the long jump final.

Long, who won silver behind Owens, died during the Allied invasion of Sicily in 1943.

"You can melt down all the medals and cups I have and they wouldn't be a plating on the twenty-four carat friendship that I

felt for Lutz Long," said Owens.

New Zealand's Jack Lovelock, who won the 1500m in Berlin, survived the war and moved to the United States where he worked as a doctor.

But the aftermath of a horse-riding accident was to account for his death just eight days before his 40th birthday.

On December 28, 1949, he complained of feeling dizzy as he stood waiting at a New York subway station before suddenly falling onto the track and into the path of an oncoming train.

Polish-American sprinter Stella Walsh also endured a bitter legacy from Berlin.

Walsh was second to America's Helen Stephens in the 100m final.

Many of her supporters tried to undermine Stephens by suggesting

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Canadian women's football team players Candace Chapman (L) and Stephanie Labbe pose in front of a decorative display of the Olympic Rings in the international zone of the athletes village in Beijing on Friday.