



## Torch touring Sichuan

AFP, Beijing

The Olympic torch relay made its way through southwest Sichuan province on Sunday, three months after the area was devastated by a huge earthquake, state media said. The torch passed through the village of Guang'an, the home of former Chinese leader Deng Xiaoping, who instigated many of the economic reforms that sparked the country's economic boom, the Xinhua news agency reported.

The 90-minute leg of the relay started after a minute's silence in memory of the victims of the 8.0-magnitude quake, which left close to 90,000 people dead or missing. The leg was started by female policewoman Jiang Min, who took part in the rescue effort after the May 12 quake and who lost 10 relatives in the disaster, Xinhua said.

Originally the torch was scheduled to pass through Sichuan between 15-18 June, but the quake forced a change of plan. The torch will stay in the province until Tuesday, when it heads to Beijing. During its Sichuan leg it will pass through Mianyang, one of the towns worst hit by the quake.

## Zia stays in lead

SPORTS REPORTER

Grand Master Ziaur Rahman drew his sixth round board with Indian International Master Himanshu Sharma but still kept the top spot along with two others in the 8th United Insurance & United Leasing International Masters Chess tournament yesterday.

Zia improved his tally to 4.5 points to share the lead with Himanshu and IM Dinesh Kumar of India, who beat Imran Ali Elin at the federation hall-room.

FIDE Master Abu Sufian Shakil, FM Mehdi Hasan Parag, FM Minhazuddin Ahmed Sagar, FM Taibur Rahman, Saifuddin Lavlu and IM Mahmood Lodhi of Pakistan followed the leaders with four points each.

In the other sixth round matches, Shakil drew with Parag, Sagar drew with Lodhi, Taibur beat Delwar Hossain, Lavlu beat IM Shahzad Mirza of Pakistan, Bitan

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## Did U Know?

Host Greece won the most medals (47) at the first modern Olympic Games in 1896.



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Live from 6:55pm



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Rafael Nadal  
(Spanish tennis star)  
"I'm so happy to be getting number one. I fought hard to get here." After dethroning Swiss Roger Federer from world No. 1 spot.



Rafael Nadal (Spanish tennis star) "I'm so happy to be getting number one. I fought hard to get here." After dethroning Swiss Roger Federer from world No. 1 spot.



Popular actor Sadia Islam Mou (2nd from R) announces the name of Mukti Jodha Sangsad during the final round draw of the Citycell Federation Cup at a local hotel yesterday.

## India level thru' Ishant

Cricket

AFP, Galle

Teenager Ishant Sharma gave a superb display of fast bowling to help India square the series with a 170-run victory over Sri Lanka in the second Test here on Sunday.

Sharma finished with 3-20 off 15 testing overs as Sri Lanka were shot out for 136 in their second innings in the closing session on the fourth day chasing a challenging 307-run target.

India lost the opening match of the three-Test series by an innings and 239 runs. The final match starts in Colombo on August 8.

Off-spinner Harbhajan Singh (4-51) and leg-spinner (2-41) built on Sharma's effort to help their team win with more than a day to spare.

Harbhajan, who took six wickets in the first innings, completed his fifth haul of 10 or more wickets in a Test.

"I always had faith in my team. We knew we could come back as we have done it in the past. There is no doubt there is enough quality in the team," said India skipper Kumble.

"The (90-run) start given by openers Virender Sehwag and Gautam Gambhir in the second innings was crucial. Then Sharma and Zaheer bowled brilliantly today (Sunday)."

The 19-year-old Sharma wrecked Sri Lanka's top order with two quick wickets in a sharp opening spell before returning to break a stubborn partnership in his second spell.

Sri Lanka were on the backfoot following Sharma's double-strike before collapsing against spin late in the day. The hosts lost their last five wickets for just six runs, with Harbhajan taking three and Kumble two.

"I think 307 was a good total to chase, but the loss of early wickets put us under pressure. Sharma has shown that questions can be asked from batsmen if you bowl in (the) right areas," said Sri Lanka captain Mahela Jayawardene.

"They (India) played really good cricket as they knew it was a crucial game for them. Our bowlers kept us in the game, but batting let us

down. We now need to come back strongly in the final Test."

The hosts began the chase on a disastrous note as they lost three wickets for a meagre 10 runs in the opening four overs, with Sharma taking two and left-arm seamer Zaheer Khan one.

India's spinners were expected to call the shots on a wearing track but the tourists seized the advantage through their fast bowlers as Sharma unsettled the batsmen with his pace and bounce and

Zaheer with his movement.

Thilan Samaraweera (67 not out) and Tillakaratne Dilshan (38) alone defied the Indian pace combination with a 76-run stand for the fifth wicket.

Sharma broke the stand immediately after the tea break when he had Dilshan caught by wicketkeeper Dinesh Karthik. Harbhajan had Prasanna Jayawardene caught by Sourav Ganguly, who took a well-judged catch at square-leg.

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PHOTO: AFP

India fast bowler Ishant Sharma appeals successfully to get rid of Sri Lanka batsman Tillakaratne Dilshan during the fourth day of the second Test at the Galle International Stadium on Sunday.

## Rubel keeps hopes alive

SPORTS REPORTER

A three-wicket burst from Rubel Hossain could help Bangladesh A an unlikely victory over Durham in a low-scoring affair at the Riverside ground in Chester Le Street yesterday.

Rubel, who bowls at good pace with a slinging action, removed Gary Park, Will Gidman and Gareth Brees as the hosts collapsed to 67 for 6 in 19 overs, in reply to the paltry 117 made by Bangladesh A in 39.5 overs.

But it was left-arm Sajidul Islam who took the first two wickets -- Mark Stoneman and Uzair Mahmood -- with the score on 26.

Dollar Mahmud took the other wicket that fell, that of Kyle Coetzer.

Earlier, Mosharraf Hossain top-scored with 26 off 63 balls with a four and a six as the visitors were poor in their approach. Only Tamim Iqbal (18) and Dhiman Ghosh (24) reached double figure among the batsmen.

## CA to give two practice games

SPORTS REPORTER

Cricket Australia has agreed in principle to arrange two one-day practice matches for Tigers before the start of the three-match one-day series in Darwin.

There were four tour matches in the initial schedule but it had been changed due to the four-nation Twenty20 tournament in Canada involving Bangladesh, Pakistan, West Indies and Canada.

And it was scheduled that Bangladesh will fly for Australia on August 20 but suddenly the Canada tournament, which was scheduled to be held from August 14 to 17, had been adjourned till October.

"CA in principle has agreed to arrange two additional practice matches and everything will be finalised tomorrow," informed Nizamuddin Chowdhury, acting CEO of Bangladesh Cricket Board.

The board is yet to finalise when the team will fly for Australia.

The first one-day international of the three-match series will be held on August 31 at the Marrara Cricket Ground in Darwin while the second match is scheduled for September 3 and final game on September 6 at the same ground.

## Academy go to SA today

SPORTS REPORTER

GP-BCB National Academy team will fly today for South Africa to play two four-day and three one-day matches during their three-week stay.

The Suhrwardi Shuvo-led BCB academy side will launch their campaign against their South African counterparts with the first four-day match to be held from August 8 at Pretoria.

The second and final four-day match will be also held at Pretoria from August 14 while the one-day matches are scheduled for August 20 (Johannesburg), August 22 (Pretoria) and August 24 (Johannesburg).

## SQUAD

Suhrwardi Shuvo (captain), Sahagir Hossain (vice-captain), Farhad Hossain, Shamsur Rahman, Marshall Ayub, Nadif Chowdhury, Imrul Kayes, Jahurul Islam, Nasir Hossain, Raihanuddin Arafat, Mahbubul Alam, Shafaq Al Jabir, Ziaur Rahman and Delwar Hossain.

## Abahani face early heat



SPORTS REPORTER

Abahani has been placed in a slightly tough group when a draw for the final round of the Citycell Federation Cup was held at a local hotel yesterday.

The giants from Dhaka were included in group B along with two B. League teams Chittagong's Mohammedan and Abahani, while Jatrabari Krira Chakra is the other team.

Their traditional rivals Mohammedan were pitted in group D along with Arambagh Krira Sangha, Rahmatganj and Sunrise Sporting Club while the other Dhaka giants Brothers Union and Sheikh Russel were in group C with Victoria Sporting Club and BKSP.

Muktijoddha are in group A with Farashganj Sporting Club, Khulna Abahani and Dhaka Wanderers.

The final round of the season's curtain-raiser tournament will kick off on August 6 with Abahani taking on Jatrabari Krira Chakra in the opening game at the Bangabandhu National Stadium at 5pm. After the inaugural game there will be two matches every day in the fixture.

A draw for the eleven B. League teams who got direct entries and five qualifiers, was held at a local hotel where top four teams of the inaugural B. League -- Abahani, Mohammedan, Muktijoddha and Russel -- were chosen to head the groups.

Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) didn't consider the last Federation Cup outcomes as it was held almost three years back where Brothers Union became champions and Muktijoddha were runners-up.

Top two teams from each group will qualify for the quarterfinals.

Famed television star Sadia Islam Mou and her celebrated actor husband Jahid Hasan were the main attractions in the ceremonial draw and they picked the tokens of the first two clubs,

Muktijoddha and Abahani, to lead group A and B respectively.

Captain of Swadhin Bangla football team Zakaria Pintoo and star booter cum hockey player Pratap Sankar Hazra picked up the tokens for Sheikh Russel and Mohammedan to lead group C and D respectively.

Long-serving national custodian Shahidur Rahman Shantu, Sultan Ahmed, Shahiduddin Ahmed Selim, Mosabbir Hossain, Kazi Jashimuddin Joshi, Elias Hossain, Mohammad Kaikobad, Bashir Ahmed, Kaiser Hamid, Abu Yousuf, Shafiqul Islam Manik and Ajmat Ali also drew the tokens of participating clubs.

"We have started to fulfill our commitment which we made before election that we want to take the game to the field," said BFF senior vice-president Salam Murshedi during the brief draw ceremony.

"We know that expectations are high on this committee led by Kazi Salahuddin and we are very focused on our job," added the former international.

## Grand Smith

Cricket

CRICINFO, undated

The curse is finally lifted, and the identity of the man who has delivered South Africa's first series win in England for 43 years comes as no surprise whatsoever. Graeme Smith's irrepressible willpower was first demonstrated to the English public way back in 2003, when -- as the most mature 22-year-old imaginable -- he scored back-to-back double-centuries, at Edgbaston then at Lord's, to announce a new chapter in his country's sporting history.

On Saturday, however, he finally closed that chapter and looked forward to the next, after producing the innings that he declared, without equivocation, as his greatest yet. "I've had some really meaningful innings in my life, and the double-hundreds here last time have to go down among my greatest achievements," he said. "But ever since readmission, we have really strived for victory in England and have always been disappointed. It's bigger than just us, this victory, and so I have to say it's my best."

The importance of a South African victory in England cannot be overstated. When the coach, Mickey Arthur, declared on Friday evening that his side was "desperate" to win, he was speaking not only for the eleven men on the field, but those back home in South Africa who recognised that, almost two decades on from their readmission to international cricket, the time was nigh for closure. For Smith, it was as if he had set his agenda on his maiden tour five years ago, and was now ready to cement his ambitions.

"If you taken the whole bigger picture," said Smith, "of all the players who've come before us, those who've come here and given it their all and had the disappointment, as well as the many who haven't had the opportunity in the many years past, as well as the fans back home who can imagine what it's like. For us this was bigger than a cricket game, it was a huge moment and something we're really proud of."

South Africa's transformation since apartheid has been a long and often traumatic process, and the country's cricketers misfortunes have often been seen as a part of the healing. But under Smith the team has achieved a rare unity and consistency that, for the

first time ever, has transcended racial politics. Their current series record reads seven wins and a draw in India, a run that ranks among the very best of all time.

What is more, it has been delivered by a team that can no longer be accused of tokenism. From Ashwell Prince to Hashim Amla, via the fading but unyielding Makhaya Ntini, and all the way to the young white stars, AB de Villiers, Dale Steyn and Morne Morkel -- all have been worthy members of a team whose next major assignment is a mouth-watering trip to Australia in December, where further ghosts await exorcism. It would have been unjust for them to fail, especially when you consider the turbulence that afflicted the England camp

after their rout at Headingley.

And yet, for all the magnificence of the current South African team, their efforts would have come to naught had it not been for their imperturbable captain. The day began as the previous one had finished, with England in the ascendancy, stretching their lead through the efforts of Paul Collingwood and Ryan Sidebottom and then, after a relatively calm opening stand of 65, instigating a chaotic collapse of four wickets for 28 runs.

Neil McKenzie and a steamed-up Jacques Kallis failed to pick Andrew Flintoff's full length against the problematic pavilion sightscreen, and as the Edgbaston

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PHOTO: INTERNET

South Africa captain Graeme Smith raises his arms to celebrate his magnificent hundred against England on the fourth day of the third Test at Edgbaston in Birmingham on Saturday.

## Vaughan steps down

### Collingwood follows suit

Cricket

AFP, London

Michael Vaughan and Paul Collingwood announced on Sunday they were stepping down as England's Test and one-day captains.

Vaughan's decision comes after Saturday's five-wicket defeat against South Africa in the third Test at Edgbaston which gave the Proteas an unassailable 2-0 lead in the four-match series and their first series win in England since 1965.

It meant the 33-year-old batsman had overseen three series losses against top-class opposition since returning from a career-threatening knee injury.

His announcement was followed by that of 32-year-old

Durham all-rounder Collingwood, who said in a statement that his game had suffered as a result of taking on the one-day captaincy.

"I've made the decision to stand

down as England captain," a tearful Vaughan told a press conference. "It's the hardest decision I've ever had to make but also the easiest."

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MICHAEL VAUGHAN



PAUL COLLINGWOOD

## Weather the main concern

AFP, Beijing



head Jacques Rogge fended off the IOC's own dark clouds.

Blue skies broke out for a third consecutive day, dissipating worries that Beijing's normal blanket of heavy smog would disrupt endurance events, as weather officials said strong anti-pollution measures had helped clear the air.

But any relief from the haze was replaced by concerns that storms would hit the city on the day of the opening ceremony, when world leaders will join crowds at the National Stadium to welcome the athletes and light the Olympic flame.

Organisers have repeatedly said rain was their biggest worry for the ceremony, which will feature more than 10,000 performers and a massive fireworks display.

But top officials from the Beijing Meteorological Bureau confirmed Sunday that bad weather was certain for August 8, although they held out hope that the skies may clear by the time the evening ceremony begins.

"Specifically on the 8th, the weather in Beijing will be cloudy and overcast and we will see some rain showers and thunder showers," said Wang Jianjie, deputy director of the bureau.

Wang also warned that co-host cities, such as Hong Kong, Shanghai and Qingdao, could be hit by typhoons heading in from the Pacific Ocean during the August 8-24 Games.

The clear skies above Beijing faded in the afternoon as a light haze fell over the city, but Wang said

the recent improvement was a result of favourable weather conditions and drastic high-profile anti-pollution measures.

"Good weather has a great deal to do with the natural conditions but whether this can be maintained has a lot to do with our pollution control measures because they also have a lot to do with the improvement," she told reporters.

One million of the city's 3.3 million cars have been taken off the roads and more than 100 heavily polluting factories and building sites closed down in recent weeks as Beijing tries to prevent any cancellation of endurance events.

Chinese premier Wen Jiabao said Sunday the city would enjoy long-lasting benefits from hosting the Olympics.

"We will not only host a quality and unique Games, but build a more scenic, greener and more civilised city in a sustainable manner," Wen

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