

Saved by the gold

Huang Xu was a relieved man as China won gold in the men's artistic gymnastics event. Huang had promised to throw himself off a high-rise building if his team didn't win a medal in Beijing. The host nation finished well clear of the rest of the field and Huang said:

"Thank you very much for giving me the opportunity to stay here. I also won't worry about the grey hair I have after four years of worry and nightmares about winning the gold medal."





THREE IN THREE: The Chinese pair of Wang Xin (R) and Chen Roulin sets off for a perfect landing to win the gold in the women's 10m synchronised platform diving at the National Aquatics Centre in

Beijing yesterday. It was the hosts' third gold in diving.



The Olympic mascot is an animal or human figure that represents the cultural heritage of the host nation.





PTUsha (Indian track & field legend)

"Abhinav has shown the world that an Indian can also stand on the podium. It is a total result of his hard work and his family support." On Abhinav Bindra who won the men's 10m Air Rifle shooting gold medal in the Beijing Olympic Games on Monday.



Beijing Olympic Games Women's Team Gymnastics Final Live from 8:15am Men's Cycling Road Race Final Live from 12:00pm Football (Men's) Cameroon v Italy

Live from 3:00pm China v Brazil Live from 5:45pm

## Challenge Cup final today

THE-AFC.COM, New Delhi

India coach Bob Houghton believes the short break and a change in venue will work in his team's favour when they take on defending champions Tajikistan in the final of the AFC Challenge Cup today.

The showpiece clash, which kicks off at 7.30pm (Bangladesh time), was originally scheduled to be played on August 11 at the SEE PAGE 18 COL 2 defending Olympic team champi-

# China continue to shine In love, and

AFP, Beijing

an Olympic gold medal in the women's synchronised 10-

metre platform competition on Tuesday as China claimed their third straight win in the diving

Along with her 15-year-old partner Chen Roulin, Wang, who turned 16 on Monday, saw the hosts continue their dominance in the Water Cube's diving pool after victories in the men's synchronised 10m platform on Monday and the women's thre-metre synchronised springboard on Sunday.

With short haircuts and babyfaced features, the two schoolgirls look barely old enough to be allowed out unaccompanied in China's capital city, let alone able to dominate an Olympic diving event.

"It is a very happy day for me, my friends gave me a lot of presents for my birthday and now my dive partner has given me friendship and a gold medal," said Wang.

China's men's

won Olympic

gold here Tuesday

with a barn-

mance that

sparked wild

celebrations from

"We performed perfect today, point display.

Beijing 2008 storming perfor-

an adoring home crowd and was

rated "perfect" by their notoriously

world champions powered to the

Olympic team title for the second

time following victory in Sydney in

2000, making amends for a disap-

pointing fifth place in Athens four

the competition, China finished on

286.125 points, 7.25 points ahead

of arch-rival Japan on 278.875,

while an injury-weakened US team

put in a gutsy effort to take bronze

everyone was excellent," Chinese

head coach Huang Yubin said

Huang, who has drilled the team

relentlessly in the quest for gold at

his home Olympics, joked that his

hair had gone white under the

pressure of preparing the squad for

was a lot of pressure to perform at

the final, China was paired with

it's being held in China, so there mark.

through an interpreter.

the Beijing Games.

our best, "he said.

A Chinese team boasting three

demanding coach.

years ago.

on 275.85.

AFP, Beijing

The teenagers have their daily scheduled planned meticulously by coaches who have drilled them to treat every competition the same even an Olympics.

"We have a whole programme planned for us which includes what time we get up and when we train," said Wang. "This is all decided by our

coaches, we were told we shouldn't give too much focus on the Olympics, just treat it like any other competition and be relaxed." But when the pair were asked by a

Chinese journalist about their matching boy-like haircuts, Wang swiftly clarified their appearance for him.

"I can assure you, we are still girls," she replied sharply.

Despite their tender years, their technical diving dominated the field and continued China's bid for a clean-sweep as they now have three gold medals from the eight diving events.

Wang changed her name from the Chinese for 'weakness' recently, but the pair have forged into a strong partnership after barely a year together.

Chen won the gold at the 2007 World Championships in Melbourne with her former partner Jia Tong before teaming up with

through the six men's apparatus.

Led by world champion individ-

ual title holder Yang Wei, the

Chinese came out to a deafening

roar in the 18,000 capacity National

Indoor Stadium, where the flag-

ingless than gold.

the third of six rounds.

Justin Spring had chants of "U-S-A,

Perfect gold for hosts

### in sync Wang in 2007 and the duo have already won several titles including

the World Cup in February this year.

Chinese divers have now domi-

nated the women's synchronised

10m platform event since it was

introduced at the Sydney 2000

from the first of the five dives, building

a huge lead to finish nearly 30 points

ahead of silver medallists Briony Cole

with 363.54 points, Australia's Cole

and Wu took silver with 335.16 and

Mexico's Paola Espinosa and

Tatiana Ortiz grabbed bronze with

Having picked up a single per-

fect 10 score from the nine judges

for both their first and second dives

- the only two full-mark scores

awarded in the competition - the

Cole, who won silver in front of

their home crowd at the 2007 World

Championships, moved into sec-

ond place after the third round and

retained their grip on that position

Proudly wearing his bronze

"I wish more people believed in

medal, Jonathan Horton admitted

his team had been stung by the

criticism and had a point to prove.

stamping and cheering in stands.

from there on in.

ons Japan as the squads went U-S-A" ringing around the sta-

The Australian pair of Wu and

Chinese were never threatened.

The Chinese claimed the gold

and Melissa Wu of Australia.

In Beijing, Wang and Chen led

Olympic Games.

CHINA DAILY

They began their matches at the same time, had similar scorelines and finished their matches just two seconds apart.

The magic of love, indeed.

China's top badminton couple Lin Dan and Xie Xingfang began their singles title quests in similar imperious fashion yesterday.

Both matches started minutes after 7pm, and both raced to early leads - Lin against Hong Kong's Ng Wei, and Xie against Belarus' Olga Konon.

The couple quickly finished their first games, both winning by

In the second game, Lin got a little behind Xie at first, but caught

up quickly. They reached match points at

the same time and wrapped up the match just two seconds apart, Lin taking out Ng 21-13 and Xie beating Konon 21-15. While everyone at the courtside

enjoyed this magic moment, Lin said he was too focused on his match to notice his girlfriend, who was practically meters away from him. "No! No! I didn't know about her Oval Monday.

game," he waved away the question from reporters. "Oh, it was not us who drew up the schedule! Ask the technical staff," said Xie, laughing.

Even their answers were identical.

## FEDERATION CUP

## Remaining matches at BNS, Gazipur

these matches will be played during the month of Ramjan," added Babul.

## Nafees out, Nazim in Tigers leave for Down Under tonight

Cricket

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) was forced to make an eleventh hour change in the 15member squad for the Australia tour as Shahriar Nafees opted out of the trip to focus on his studies.

Nazimuddin will now fly with the team tonight after midnight as the national selectors have decided to replace left-handed opening batsman Nafees, a BBA student of announcement of his university the Dhaka University, with the exam schedules. May be he could uled for August 30, September 3 and right-hander from Chittagong.

"I have already lost one and half years of my studies because of the busy international schedule. That's why I have decided to complete it this time. I am already three semesters behind from my classmates and I always give importance of my academic career," said Nafees, who made the request in a letter to the board yesterday.

me and I don't think I could have

taken the decision before the selec- explained Rafiq. tion of the team. Actually it would be very difficult for me to complete my exam in future if I skip it this time because we have a number of series after the Australia tour," he number one team. replied when asked whether it was possible for him to take the deci- agement will decide on Tamim sion earlier.

Chief selector Rafiqul Alam also emphasised on the academic career.

"I think it's very important for anybody to complete his academic exams. We have been informed that he opted out due to the sudden have requested it earlier to the 6in Darwin. board," said Rafigul.

On the other hand, Nazimuddin was initially dropped from the squad as the selectors thought that he had got enough chance but failed to perform up to the mark.

"We have no choice other than picking up Nazimuddin. No other opener is available as Zunaed Siddiqui is also out of form. Also "It was not an easy decision for Nazim's performance in England with the A team was not that bad,"

Mohammad Ashraful's men will play five practice matches before going into the three-match oneday series against the world's

Iqbal's opening partner after watching the performance of Mehrab Hossain and Nazimuddin in the warm ups.

Rafiq said that the team man-

"The selection is wide open now," said the former national cricketer.

The one-day matches are sched-

### SQUAD

Mohammad Ashraful (captain), Mashrafe Bin Mortaza (vicecaptain), Nazimuddin, Tamim Iqbal, Rokibul Hasan, Shakib Al Hasan, Alok Kapali, Dhiman Ghosh (wicketkeeper), Mahmudullah Riyad, Abdur Razzak, Shahadat Hossain, Forhad Reza, Mehrab Hossain, Nazmul Hossain and Dollar Mahmud.

## One Mendis fells India

Cricket

AFP, Colombo

India, reflecting on their Test series loss to Sri Lanka, have reason to believe they were beaten not so much by their hosts as by unorthodox spinner Ajantha Mendis, who remained an unfathomable mystery.

The 23-year-old army officer badly bruised India's batting pride during his team's 2-1 victory in the series that ended here on Monday, capturing 26 wickets.

debut three-Test series, surpassing Englishman Alec Bedser's 24wicket haul against India at home in 1946.

Sri Lanka kept up non-stop pressure on the clueless Indian batsmen, with Mendis showcasing his variations from one end and wily veteran off-spinner Muttiah Muralidaran (21 wickets) providing spinner Shane Warne or valuable support from the other.

despite having quality middleorder batsmen in Sachin Tendulkar, Rahul Dravid, Sourav Ganguly and Venkatsai Laxman, who could manage just three halfcenturies between them. "Mendis was the main differ-

ence in the series. It was not easy to pick runs when Mendis and Murali are bowling together. The pressure they created made it tough for us," said Indian skipper Anil Kumble.

Mendis was in the news even before he had bowled his first ball in Test cricket, having done remarkably well in eight one-day interna-It was the best by any bowler in a tionals since making his debut in the West Indies early this year.

> He destroyed India in the first match he played against them, grabbing six wickets for just 13 runs in a magical spell to fire his team to an emphatic victory in the Asia Cup final in Karachi last month.

Mendis is not a big turner of the ball like retired Australian leg-Muralidaran, but the key to his Dravid made 148 and Ganguly 96. In the event India choked success is the way he grips the ball

with his fingers and flicks it to bowl a variety of deliveries.

"It's important to have someone like Mendis. He creates opportunities, adds pressure and picks up wickets," said Sri Lanka captain Mahela Jayawardene.

"He has surprised a lot of us. It's an advantage to have a guy like him to back Murali and (Chaminda) Vaas. That's where we had lacked somebody, that strike option apart from those two guys."

Mendis was instrumental in ruining the Indian batsmen's reputation for playing spin better than pace as he overshadowed even Muralidaran, the world's leading wicket-taker with 756 Test scalps.

Tendulkar, who was 172 short of breaking retired West Indies captain Brian Lara's world record of 11,953 Test runs before the series, could manage just 95 in six innings without a half-century.

Laxman impressed only in patches as he scored 215 runs, while

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# KP sets sights on Ashes

## Cricket

AFP, London

New England captain Kevin Pietersen looked ahead to next year's Ashes series against Australia after his team beat South Africa by six wickets on the fifth day of the fourth and final Test at The

"If we play like we played this week we're going to beat Australia," he said. But he warned: "It's going to take a lot to do it. This is a one-off, it's a very exciting stage, but the most important thing is to turn up to every Test match like we did this week."

Pietersen said a key was to get

the structure of the team right and make sure players knew their roles long before the Australians arrived. In the meantime there were tough tours coming up to India and the West Indies. He said he wanted to continue

with a policy of picking five bowlers, with all-rounder Andrew Flintoff at number six in the batting order. "It's the way I definitely want to

play cricket in the future," he said. Pietersen said the England players had been "brilliant" in the way they approached the Oval Test and

he had special praise for recalled fast bowler Steve Harmison. "He is huge for us. I'm definitely

going to get the best out of Steve." He had even spoken to Harmison about reconsidering his decision to retire from one-day international South African captain Graeme

Smith praised England for the way they had played but admitted that his team had not been on top of their game after clinching the series in the third Test at Edgbaston. "The emotion we felt after

Edgbaston was always going to be difficult to re-invent," he said. "We'd play well for an hour and then lose our way a bit. Even though we almost got ourselves back into the game a few times we were just lacking that oomph we had in the other games."

South Africa's 2-1 series win put them in second place in the official Test rankings behind Australia.

South Africa tour Australia at the end of the year and Smith said a successful tour there would be a

SEE PAGE 18 COL 2 **CHAMPIONS TROPHY** 

## Rawalpindi excluded

AGENCIES, undated

Rawalpindi has been dropped as the third city for next month's Champions Trophy, according to a provisional International Cricket Council (ICC) schedule sent to member boards.

A copy of the schedule released to Reuters said the eight-nation tournament scheduled over September 12-28 will now be restricted to Lahore and Karachi.

The event was due to start on September 11, the anniversary of the devastating terrorist attacks on America in 2001.

ICC chief executive Haroon Lorgat told reporters on Monday that Rawalpindi might be dropped for security reasons because it had not been used during the Asia Cup. "That didn't provide us with the

opportunity to test the security arrangements. We will explore whether we would only use Karachi and Lahore," he said during a visit to Pakistan by an ICC task force. Australia, India, Pakistan and

West Indies will play in Group A and New Zealand, South Africa, England and Sri Lanka in Group B.

### waving crowd was expecting nothus," he said. "It felt like the only people that believed in us was us." An early hiccup when Chen But whenever their rivals threat-SPORTS REPORTER Yibing stumbled on the final run of ened to rein them in, the Chinese his floor exercise routine left China lifted, with Li Xiopeng pulling off a The Citycell Federation Cup will trailing Japan by half a point at the 16.775 vault to put China 1.575 resume next Sunday at two venues, end of the first round but did not points ahead at the end of the Bangladesh Football Federation disrupt the team's momentum. fourth round. (BFF) announced yesterday. There were then boos from the The hosts extended their lead in The second phase of the compestands after Huang Xu received a the next after US gymnast Joey tition was postponed for a week disappointing 14.75 on pommel Hagerty stumbled, then landed due to incessant rain as the only horse before the world champion heavily, on the floor exercise. venue -- the Bangabandhu on the apparatus Xaio Qin stepped Heading into the final round, National Stadium (BNS) -- became up to put the hosts 0.4 points ahead the Chinese looked unbeatable, unplayable after ten matches. Red-hot favourites going into of Japan at the end of round two. leading the United States by 5.2 After a meeting with the clubs. China's depth of talent allowed points and Japan by 6.9, huge the BFF got the nod to use one them to call on the rings world margins under the new gymnastics more venue -- the Gazipur Stadium champion Chen Yibing to extend scoring system, where routines are -- to avoid further delay. However, the lead in the next round, when he no longer marked out of 10. the top five B. League clubs will whipped the crowd into a frenzy The United States were in silver . play their matches in the capital, pumping his fists after a 16.575 medal position but poor pommel confirmed tournament coordinahorse routines from Kei Wen Tan tor and BFF member Fazlur However, the injury-weekend and Raj Bhavsar allowed Japan to Rahman Babul. US team showed it would not be a finish second after a strong team "We will hold one match per day walkover for the Chinese when it performance on the high bar. and the match in Dhaka will start at took the overall lead at the end of Japanese coach Koji Gushiken 6pm. The Gazipur match will kick said his team had produced some off at 4.30pm," told Babul. Written off as medal prospects beautiful gymnastics but needed to "We will provide logistic supin the absence of Athens individual close the gap with CHina. port to the clubs who will travel to champion Paul Hamm and his "We will learn from the Chinese Gazipur. brother Morgan, the US led China and we will be up for the next chal-"All the clubs were present in "This is a big competition and by 0.825 points at the halfway lenge," he said. the meeting and agreed to our China's dominance was such propositions but they have The Amercian men then built on that the last gymnast to perform on refused to play the semifinals and their momentum when they took high bar, Zou Kai, needed only the final after the Eidul Fitr. So With eight nations contesting to the high bar, where a spectacular 8.725 to clinch the gold. He scored one-handed swinging rotation by 15.975 to set off a round of foot-

ICC chief executive Haroon Lorgat (L) and ICC taskforce personnel visit the Gaddafi Stadium in Lahore on Monday.