

## Shakib passes with flying colours

SPORTS REPORTER

The results of Higher Secondary School Certificate (HSC) and its equivalent examinations 2008 under nine education boards were published yesterday and understandably there was some curiosity in the cricket arena after the announcement.

Shakib Al Hasan, who opted out of the Kiplly Cup at home and the Asia Cup in Pakistan to complete the examination, passed by scoring 3.90.

Bangladesh captain Mohammad Ashraf who along with all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan and Aftab Ahmed also appeared in this year's exam. Aftab however failed to complete the examination due to finger injury during practice.

It was however not possible to confirm the result of Ashraf, who flew to England yesterday to take a break from cricket after his captaincy and place came under scanner following his dismal show in Australia.

Ashraf's family members could not also inform his results.



BFF vice-president Abdus Salam Murshedi (M) takes help from Citycell's DGM marketing and communications Syed Tanzin Huq (L) and singer Shuvra Deb to cut a cake after unveiling the logo of the second B. League at a local hotel yesterday.

## B. League logo unveiled

### Local giants unhappy over fixture

SPORTS REPORTER



All five first round matches of the Citycell B. League will be played at the Bangabandhu National Stadium, Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) confirmed yesterday in a simple function at a local hotel where the logo of the professional league's second edition was unveiled.

B. League chairman and BFF senior vice-president Abdus Salam Murshedi cut a cake on the occasion while other officials of BFF and its sponsor Citycell were also present.

Abahani start defence of their title against last year's bottom-table Rahmatganj in Saturday's opener while runners-up Mohammedan will be pitted against visiting Chittagong Abahani on the next day.

The decision to hold the first round games in Dhaka could well act as a circuit breaker in a bid to stop foul play towards the end. According to the fixture, three of

the last year's top five teams have matches in Khulna and Chittagong while the remaining two stay in Dhaka.

This will help the BFF -- which has three venues to use -- to put the three title contenders, considering there won't be more teams in the

race by that time, at separate venues on the same day and arrange same time kick-offs.

The BFF also keeps the rights to reschedule matches in a bid to stop fixed matches.

Having maintained the traditional system for the first round fixture, BFF also introduced a new method for the rest of the rounds, guided by the Asian Football Confederation format.

However, officials of Abahani, Brothers Union and Sheikh Russel questioned the fixture, saying that it was done to favour one team.

"Mohammedan get their big matches from as early as the third round. It would give them the advantage of playing lesser teams in the latter part. This would be a big advantage for any title contenders," mentioned the three clubs officials in unison.

"We are not accustomed to this format and we should have been told earlier. They are saying that it has been done according to the AFC format but when we wanted to see, no one could show us anything on paper," the trio added.

"The AFC had given a guideline

### PARTIAL FIXTURES

- Sep 13: Abahani v Rahmatganj at BNS (3.30pm)
- Sep 14: Mohammedan v Chittagong Abahani at BNS (3.30pm)
- Sep 15: Muktiyodha v Khulna Abahani at BNS (3.30pm)
- Sep 16: Sheikh Russel v Farashganj at BNS (3.30pm)
- Sep 17: Brothers v Chittagong Mohammedan at BNS (3.30pm)
- Sep 18: Arambagh v Mohammedan at BNS (3.30pm)
- Sep 19: Farashganj v Abahani at BNS (3.30pm)
- Sep 20: Chittagong Abahani v Muktiyodha at MA Aziz Stadium, Chittagong (3.30pm)
- Sep 21: Chittagong Mohammedan v Sheikh Russel at MA Aziz Stadium, Chittagong (3.30pm)
- Sep 22: Khulna Abahani v Brothers at Khulna Stadium (3.30pm)

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## Shamsur blazes to century

SPORTS REPORTER

Shamsur Rahman slammed a splendid 125 as GP-BCB National Cricket Academy made a bright start against Sri Lanka Cricket Development XI in the first four-day in Dambulla yesterday.

The tourists were 339 for five at stumps of the first day thanks to Shamsur's brilliant hundred.

The visitors made a good start when openers Imrul Kayes (45) and Mahbulul Karim (24) added 52 before the aggressive right-hander Karim gave off-spinner Suraj an easy wicket after slamming him for a six in the previous delivery.

Shamsur went in to bat at number three and shared a 38-run partnership with Imrul Kayes before the left-hander got out in the last over before lunch break to good delivery from leg-spinner Prassana.

Skipper Nayeem Islam struck 20 from 26 balls but his careless dismissal put the team in trouble at 125 for three.

Marshall Ayub then came in and made 78 and batted well in tandem with Shamsur.

Farhad Hossain remained not out on 15 and was accompanied by Suhawardi Shuvo, who was on 15.



## Did U Know?

Eleanor Simmonds became Great Britain's youngest ever individual Paralympic gold medalist after winning the 100m freestyle final at the Beijing Games on Monday. She achieved this feat at the age of 13.



## Talk Turkey



## Greg Rusedski

(Former British tennis player)  
"Murray is the new number four in the world but he is only going to get better and better. I'm sure he will get to world number one. The future for him is Grand Slam finals."  
On Andy Murray.



## What to Watch

**Channel i**  
FIFA WC Qualifiers  
Brazil v Bolivia  
Live from 5:50am

**ESPN**  
Sportscentre India  
Sports News  
Live from 8:30pm

## 'I should've returned earlier'

CRICINFO, undated

Graeme Smith, the South Africa captain, has said he should have withdrawn from the England tour a month earlier after suffering a tennis elbow ahead of the one-day series against the hosts. The England tour, which marked the end of a tiring year for most South African players, ended on a poor note for the visitors with a 4-0 defeat in the ODIs, but it also brought them their first Test series win on English soil since 1965.

"My injury first surfaced in the IPL and gradually worsened throughout the England tour. I played with painkillers from the time we landed (in England) and it was about biting the bullet and getting out on the field. Sometimes

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## Back from exile

Cricket

AFP, London

Stephen Harmison's transformation from international exile to a key member of all England's cricket teams was confirmed when the fast bowler was included in the squad for the cash-rich clash with Allen Stanford's Superstars in Antigua in November.

As recently as last month the Durham quick, who'd announced his one-day international retirement before the 2007 World Cup, was out of the Test side after being dropped following a poor display in New Zealand earlier this year.

But he starred in the final Test against South Africa at The Oval, where Kevin Pietersen marked the start of his England captaincy with a victory against the land of his birth.

Pietersen then helped persuade Harmison to end his one-day isolation and the bowler responded by leading England's attack in a 4-0 thrashing of the Proteas.

Now the paceman has been included in the 15-man squad for arguably the most lucrative match

in the history of cricket, with the winners of the Twenty20 contest at Stanford's own ground in Antigua guaranteed an eye-watering million dollars a man each.

Even the four players who don't make the final XI will, if England win, get to share a million dollars of the Texan-born billionaire's money between them as they become the best-paid drinks waiters in the business.

Ever since he reversed his one-day retirement Harmison, who is also in the squad for the seven one-



STEPHEN HARMISON

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## 'Sourav hard done by'

Cricket

INTERNET, undated

Former India cricketer Kirti Azad feels the selectors discriminated against Sourav Ganguly by ignoring him for the Irani Trophy while retaining Sachin Tendulkar and Rahul Dravid, who were equally off-colour in the recent Sri Lanka tour.

Reacting to Ganguly's exclusion from the Rest of India squad for the Irani Trophy which put a question mark on the former captain's career, Azad said it was surprising to see the left-hander being singled out while Dravid and Tendulkar were spared the harsh treatment.

"The decision to drop Ganguly itself is not wrong as his form in recent time has not been impressive. But the question is why the same

treatment shouldn't be given to Rahul and Sachin, who are out of form as well," Azad said on the sidelines of a felicitation programme here.

Azad is also against passing on Test captaincy to Mahendra Singh Dhoni and believes Virender Sehwag should get the chance to succeed Anil Kumble.

"Dhoni is having a good run and has the capability as well. But he should not be given the responsibility in Test cricket right now.

"Though the entire thing depends on selectors, in my opinion Sehwag should be considered before thinking about Dhoni," he said.

Azad, a member of 1983 World Cup winning team, is not impressed by the umpiring review system and said, "I don't want that system. Umpires sometimes commit mistakes because they are humans. But we should respect

their authority," he said.

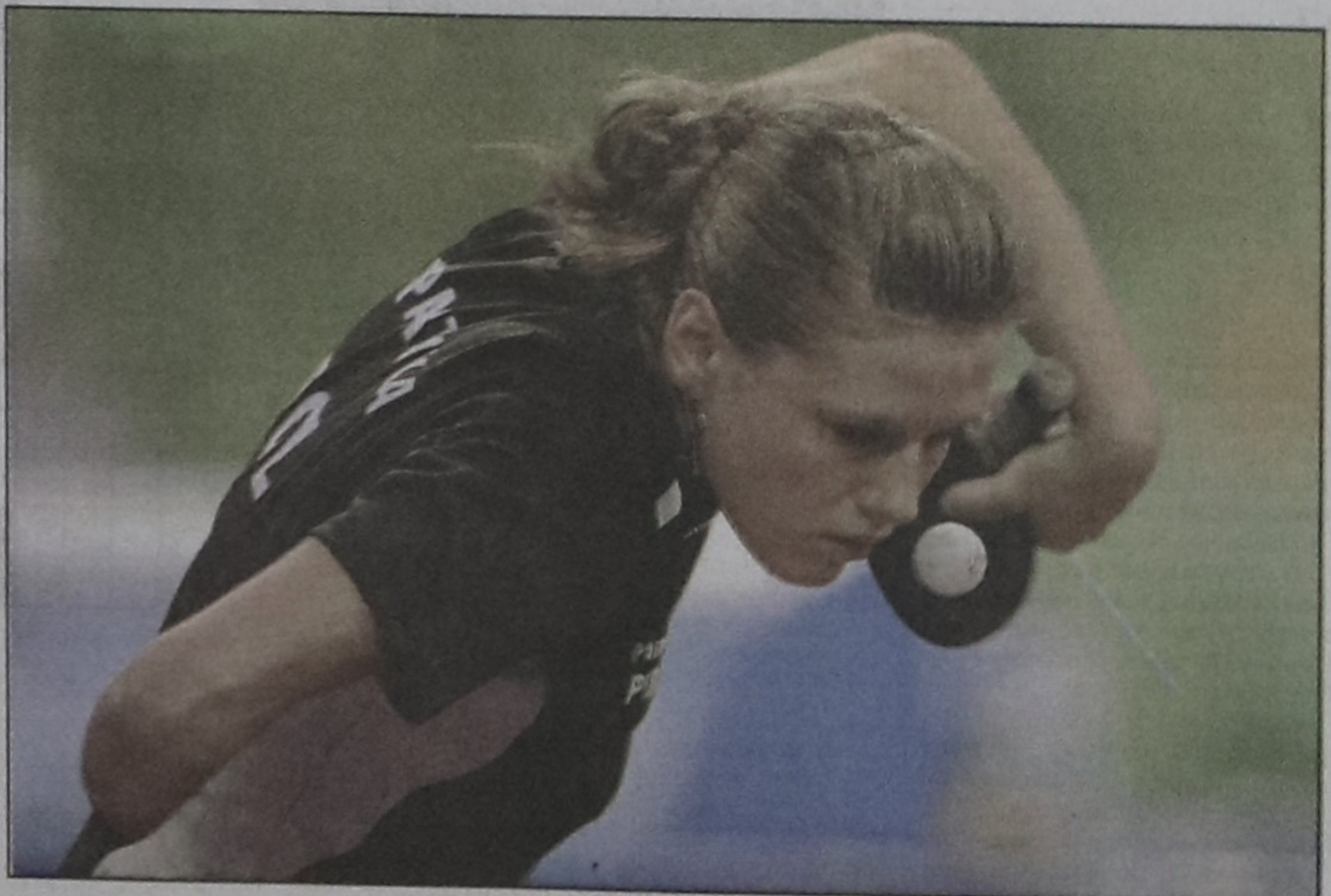
Meanwhile, the Cricket Association of Bengal (CAB) wants Sourav Ganguly to play for Bengal in the upcoming Ranji Trophy Championship and lift the team from the pits.

CAB will have a word with Ganguly as uncertainty prevails on his availability till the announcement of the Indian Test team for the home series against Australia.

Left out of the Rest of India squad for the Irani Trophy, meant to feature probabilities for the Australia series, Ganguly's chances of making it to the Test squad hence stand remote.

With retirement theory being widely speculated by many, it remains to be seen whether the sidelined Ganguly, known for making comebacks, performs his

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Natalia Partyka of Poland in action against China's Fan Lei during the table tennis final at the 2008 Paralympic Games in Beijing yesterday. Polish teenager Partyka won 11-8, 11-4, 11-9.

PHOTO: AFP

## Hasan wins it for Baridhara

SPORTS REPORTER

Hasan scored the winner as Uttar Baridhara beat East End 1-0 in the Metropolitan Second Division Football League at the Army Stadium yesterday.

The goal came in the 22 nd minute as the striker slammed home the all-important goal.

Little Friends also managed a solitary goal victory over Dhanmoudi Club at the same venue through a seventh minute strike of Shahinoor.

In the Kamalapur Stadium, Bangladesh Boys played out a one-all draw with Kawran Bazar Pragoti Sangha.

Momin scored for Pragoti Sangha in the 9th minute while Alam Nabi equalized for Boys in the 70th minute.

In another match, BG Press was involved in a goalless draw with Police AC.

## Matty, Ricky on the mend

CRICINFO, undated

Ricky Ponting and Matthew Hayden, Australia's two key injury worries for India, are on track to take part in the four-Test series starting next month. Ponting left the West Indies tour early to have surgery on his wrist while Hayden has been struggling with a lingering Achilles tendon problem.

"Everything has been progressing exactly as we liked with Haydos," Australia's coach Tim Nielsen told the Herald Sun. Hayden did not appear in a game in the West Indies and the team will be hoping he recovers in time, especially if Andrew Symonds does not make the tour due to his rehabilitation after being sent home from the one-day series in Darwin.

Ponting had a short bat at the pre-series camp in Brisbane last month and has continued to increase his workload. He visited Alex Kountouris, Australia's physiotherapist, in Sydney this week.

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## China, Britain rule the day

AFP, Beijing

China sat atop the medals table at the end of competition Wednesday, boasting 24 golds, and once again leapfrogging Britain.

On 21 golds, the British have been boosted by a remarkable 12 track cycling golds, continuing the domination of the sport they showed at the Olympics.

"We're delighted with the British performances across the sports so far and to be where we are in the medals table at this stage is fantastic," said British chef de mission Phil Lane.

In the evening's action, Polish teenager Natalia Partyka stormed to table tennis gold, just weeks after realising her dream of playing in the Olympic Games.

Partyka, the first table tennis player to compete at both the Olympics and Paralympics, beat China's Fan Lei 11-8, 11-4, 11-9 in 23 minutes to successfully defend her Athens crown in her class.

The 19-year-old is one of only two Paralympians who also competed at

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## Armstrong back on bike

Cycling

AFP, Austin

US cycling icon Lance Armstrong said on Tuesday he will return to professional cycling in 2009 and try to win an eighth Tour de France crown.

"I am happy to announce that after talking with my children, my family and my closest friends, I have decided to return to professional cycling in order to raise awareness of the global cancer burden," Armstrong said in a statement, while in an exclusive interview posted on vanityfair.com the 36-year-old cyclist says he has his sights set firmly on the Tour de France in 2009.

"I am going back to professional cycling. I'm going to try to win an eighth Tour de France," Armstrong told Vanity Fair.

Armstrong, who will turn 37 on September 18, cited 41-year-old US swimmer Dara Torres' Olympic comeback in Beijing as proof that age was no barrier to an elite sports career.

"Look at the Olympics," he said. "You have a swimmer like Dara Torres. Even in the 50m (freestyle) the 41-year-old mother proved you can do it," he told the magazine.

"The woman who won the marathon (Romanian Constantina Tomescu) was 38. Older athletes are performing very well. Ask serious sports physiologists and they'll tell you age is a wives' tale."

Armstrong said he decided to tackle the Tour again in August, while competing in the Leadville Trail 100 mountain bike race in Colorado.

Armstrong, a cancer survivor and vocal advocate for cancer patients, hopes to use his return to spread his message of support for those with the disease as well as his call for investment in cancer research.

"This year alone, nearly eight million people will die of cancer worldwide. Millions more will suffer in isolation, victims not only of the disease but of social stigma... it's now time to address cancer on a global level," he said.

Armstrong, who won seven

consecutive Tour de France titles from 1999 to 2005, has vigorously denied doping accusations that have dogged him even into retirement, and told Vanity Fair that in his comeback he plans to address the issue of doping head-on by submitting to a rigorous testing regime.

"We're going to be completely transparent and open with the press," Armstrong said. "So there is a nice element here where I can come with a really completely comprehensive program and there will be no way to cheat."

Armstrong said he would discuss details of his plans for competition in 2009 on September 24 in New York City.

On Monday, cycling website VeloNews.com reported that Armstrong was poised to join the Astana team, although an Astana spokesman denied it.

In his Vanity Fair interview, Armstrong mentions Johan Bruyneel, onetime sporting director of Armstrong's US Postal and

Discovery Channel teams who is now general manager of the Kazakh-backed, Luxembourg-based Astana.

Bruyneel himself said on Tuesday morning at the Tour of Spain that he thought reports of the cyclist's impending return were only "rumour."

However, Bruyneel seemed to leave a door open for the American. "If he were serious about a comeback... myself having a team I could not imagine him at CSC or Rabobank," Bruyneel said.

Astana didn't appear in the 2008 Tour de France, having been barred by organizers Amaury Sport Organisation in the wake of a series of doping incidents.

Armstrong told Vanity Fair that he is already preparing a back-up plan if the ASO attempts to exclude him from the Tour - taking his case to French President Nicolas Sarkozy.

"I've already put a call in to him," Armstrong said. "He has said strong things about me in the past."



LANCE ARMSTRONG

## Nasser ICC Awards host

Cricket

INTERNET, undated

Former England captain and celebrated commentator Nasser Hussain will host the LG ICC Awards at a glittering ceremony in Dubai on Wednesday.

Hussain, who led England in 45 Tests in an international career spanning 15 years, retired from international cricket in 2004 before starting his stint with television commentary with BSkyB.

Hussain's debut as an awards presenter will be in front of a grand media coverage which will reach 100 countries and territories.

ESPN STAR Sports' Alan Wilkins will work with Hussain during the evening as a reporter and interviewer, capturing the flavour of cricket's night of nights when the world's leading performers are recognised and honoured.

The LG ICC Awards is now in its fifth year but this is the first time the ceremony has taken place in

the United Arab Emirates, the home of the ICC.

Meanwhile, the International Cricket Council (ICC) has nominated Ireland's Niall O'Brien for the Associate Player of the Year Award despite the wicketkeeper-batsman being on the Indian Cricket League's payroll.

Niall, who played for Northamptonshire, had played four games for the Delhi Jets in the inaugural edition of the ICL.

But unlike other ICC Full Member nations, Ireland have not banned the players who are associated with the ICL.

The ICC, however, explained since Niall had played in the ICL before the ICC's decision on the status of the league, he had qualified for the nomination.

"We are aware that Niall O'Brien played for the ICL. But in our July annual conference all Full Member countries decided that no penalties would be imposed on any player who appeared in the ICL before the ICC framed its current stance on the league, provided they don't play anymore," ICC communications officer James Fitzgerald was quoted in the Times of India.

"We decided we would be fair. If Niall plays for the ICL again now, it will be a different story."

However, the logic behind the explanation seemed warped as players who played only in the first ICL edition should have been allowed to get back in the business at the international level.



NASSER HUSSAIN