

AFC president Mohammad bin Hammam (C) is seen alongside BFF president Kazi Salahuddin upon his arrival at the ZIA International Airport yesterday.

Hammam

FROM PAGE 17 However, the current AFC president admitted that he was also here to gain Bangladesh's support ahead of being pitted against Bahrain football federation president Salman bin Emrahim al Khalifa for the FIFA post on May 8.

"I am here to seek the support of the Bangladesh football family," said Hammam reiterating AFC's desire to continue to work with Bangladesh as closely as possible.

The AFC president's whistle-stop tour saw him fly in from Kabul late yesterday night and will see him leave early today morning for Maldives.

But he still reserved enough time to congratulate Abahani on capturing the B. League title before stating that the Super Cup showed that football was taking giant steps.

"The US\$ 150,000 tournament being held in the country shows that football is still very much alive and kicking in this country."

Which is in no small part to the efforts of current BFF president Kazi Salahuddin; a fact that Hammam made sure to touch on.

"The current leadership has definitely taken some positive steps. I am confident that they (Bangladesh) will catch-up with other South Asian rivals soon."

The Qatar has been at his post since 1996 and is commonly credited for numerous reforms including the 'Vision Asia' and the 'Goal Project'.

Kallis FROM PAGE 17 Australia, when Prince had a broken thumb. Prince, usually the vice-captain of the side under Smith, has led South Africa in two Tests.

Kallis also captained South Africa during the final Test of Australia's previous tour, again when Smith was injured.

Clean sweep

FROM PAGE 17 club advanced on away goals. At Rome, Juan scored in the ninth minute but there were no other goals through 120 minutes.

Doni saved the opening penalty kick, by Arsenal's Eduardo da Silva, but Robin van Persie, Theo Walcott, Samir Nasri, Denilson, Kolo Toure, Bacary Sagna and Abou Diaby all converted for the Gunners.

David Pizarro made the opening kick for the hosts, but Mirko Vucinic sent Roma's second penalty at goalkeeper Manuel Almunia, who parried it with his legs.

Julio Baptista, Vincenzo Montella, Francesco Totti, Alberto Aquilani and John Arne Riise then converted before Max Tonetto put Roma's eighth kick over the crossbar.

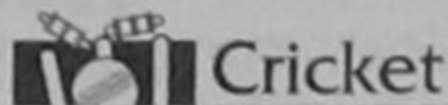
At Barcelona, Thierry Henry scored in the 25th and 27th minutes for the hosts, who also got goals from Lionel Messi (40th), Samuel Eto'o (43rd) and Seydou Keita (second-half injury time). Lyon's goals were scored by Jean Il Makoum (44th) and Juninho (48th).



Did U Know?

In the first Test in Karachi between Pakistan and Sri Lanka last month, there were three scores of 200 or more - Mahela Jayawardene 240, Thilan Samaraweera 231 and Younis Khan 313. This was the second time that such feat had been achieved.

Still a lot to play for NZ bowlers



CRICINFO, Auckland

New Zealand's bemused bowlers play a dead rubber in Auckland on Saturday that has a lot at stake for them. A win will help them restore some credibility.

It was the bowlers who made New Zealand change their preferred one-day international approach: chasing almost every time on winning the toss. The last 10 times they had won the toss before the Hamilton match, they opted to chase on eight occasions.

"I think we bowled a little bit better than we have, but it wasn't good enough to compete against him [Sehwag]," Vettori said after the last match. "It was just poor execution, and I don't think there is any excuse for the performance."

New Zealand have a young bowling attack, except for Daniel Vettori and their most experienced and best pace bowler Kyle Mills. And it is the dismantling of Mills - who has gone for 202 in his 29 overs - that has caused such alarm.

Mills did better in Hamilton, in that he provided the only test for the batsmen and went for less than six an over, but there wasn't enough support from the other end - Ewen Thompson and Iain O'Brien both went for more than 10 an over.

Clearly, the plans are not working. There has been so much talk of plans for each Indian batsman - from the captain, the coach, the bowlers themselves, and even the batsmen - that one wonders if the bowlers think instinctively at all. It has to be very difficult to plan for

Tareq wins last

FROM PAGE 17 Jayasuriya took two for 38 runs.

ABAHANI-BKSP Mashrafe followed up his unbeaten half-century with a three wicket haul as Abahani continued their winning spree to maintain the lead in the 12-team fray.

Abahani made a poor start when inform Rony Talukdar returned to the pavilion in the very first over, after being put into bat first but Imran Ahmed joined Tamim Iqbal to repair the damage by associating a 56-run stand for the second wicket.

Imran made 53 off 104 balls that comprised of eight boundaries while Tamim added 23 off 46 balls with the help of three boundaries.

It was however Mashrafe who enabled his side to put up a fighting total as the right-hander clobbered six fours and a six during his 44-ball 56.

In reply, Asif Ahmed made 51 off 102 balls but his effort was not good enough to upset the giants, as BKSP were restricted to 205-9.

Nasir Hossain was the most successful bowler with figures of four for 34.

SURJOTORUN-GAZI Former national skipper Khaled Mashud made exactly hundred and shared a 102-run partnership with Hannan Sarker for the third wicket as Surjo Torun made 236-6 in their stipulated 50 overs.

Veteran Mashud's innings saw six fours and two sixes while Hannan added 60 off 87 deliveries that featured four boundaries.

Spinner Nayeem Islam captured three wickets for 38

runs. In reply, Gazi failed to recover from their initial slow start as they were restricted to 228-9.

Indian Pravanjan Mullick and keeper Mohammad Mithun both scored 44 runs. Number seven Mahmudul Hassan tried to accelerate the run rate during his 31-ball 33 that included five fours but his effort was not good enough to take over the total.

Sanjamul Islam and Saqlain Sajib both took two wickets each for the victors.

MOHAMMEDAN: 234-8 in 49.4 overs (Faruque 38, Nadimuddin 51, Rokibul 27, Shamsur 28, Faisal 38, extras 16; Shahadat 3-38, Nabil 2-49) Result: Mohammedan won by two wickets.

ABAHANI: 230-6 in 50 overs (Tamim 23, Sahagir 53, Nasir 26, Nadif 42, Mashrafe 56 not out, extras 13; Saikat 2-29, Tanveer 2-22)

BKSP: 205-9 in 50 overs (Saikat 32, Asif 51, Imamul 28, Riaz 22, extras 15; Mashrafe 3-31, Nasir 4-34) Result: Abahani won by 25 runs.

SURJO TORUN: 236-6 in 50 overs (Hannan 60, Mashud 100 not out, Anisur 26, extras 16; Gazi 3-38)

GAZI: 228-9 in 50 overs (Pravanjan 44, Mithun 44, Hassan 33, extras 8; Sanjamul 2-36, Sajib 2-37) Result: Surjo Torun won by eight runs.

Bukola

FROM PAGE 17 doubt and pointed to the spot.

Bukola, who had had a fruitless night so far, made no mistake from the spot to give Mohammedan an undeserved lead.

The goal killed off Abahani's resistance and they failed to register any effort of note in the remaining twenty-five minutes.

In fact it was Mohammedan who came closest as captain Arman Aziz's superb curling free-kick struck the bar in the 89th minute.

Mohammedan coach Maruful Huq admitted his team failed to put up a good show. "We did not play well, we are lucky that we are returning home with a full three points," said Maruf.

Mohammed Kashem, the coach of Chitagon Abahani felt robbed. "It definitely was not a penalty, the ball hit the upper part of the hand, and we unfortunately lost the match because of it," said Kashem.

Earlier, in the day's first match played under scorching heat, Brothers were haunted by the same striking woes that had plagued them throughout the B. League as they failed to find the back of the net despite a string of presentable opportunities.

The best of those fell to midfielder Zahid whose cracking effort needed a brilliant save from Farshaganj custodian Shujon in the 81st minute.

For their part, Farshaganj themselves came close on a number of occasions, but in the end a draw was a fair result in a game in which both teams failed to get going.

Kirsten better India coach, says Wright

CRICINFO, undated

John Wright, the former India coach, has said the incumbent Gary Kirsten is "probably better" in that role than him. Since taking over last year, Kirsten has overseen India's Test victories over Australia and England at home, and several highs in ODIs as well, including the longest winning streak by an Indian side.

"He is very thoughtful and very passionate and I think he understands the importance and the privilege of coaching India," Wright told CNN-IBN. He was India's coach for five years from November 2000 during which India won a historic series against Australia in 2001 at home, won in Pakistan in 2003, and also guided the team to the finals of the 2003 World Cup.

Wright, a former New Zealand batsman, also said that adapting to the way things work in India was a key factor in being a successful India coach. "You bring some ideas from outside India but there is also an understanding of how things are best handled and getting to know your players and keeping them contented and happy and confident and being able to correct them when they need to."

Kiwis bring in rookie pacer

AFP, Wellington

New Zealand have named uncapped pace bowler Brent Arnel in their squad to face India in the first of three Tests starting on March 18.

Injury-prone all-rounder Jacob Oram has been left out due to concerns he is not fit enough for Test cricket. His place has been taken by James Franklin and opening bowler Chris Martin also returns following an injury lay-off.

Batsman Martin Guptill was called into the squad for the Hamilton Test for the first time after scoring 391 runs at an average of 48.87 in 11 one-day internationals since making his ODI debut in January.

Selection panel head Glenn Turner said Thursday that 30-year-old Arnel had earned his selection after being the best performing New Zealand A bowler in the series against the touring England Lions, the second-string Test side.

"He's bowled well consistently over a period of time, and has the advantage of having done quite a bit of bowling in recent four-day matches," Turner said.

FIRST TEST SQUAD Daniel Vettori (captain), Brent Arnel, Daniel Flynn, James Franklin, Martin Guptill, Tim McIntosh, Brendon McCullum, Chris Martin, Kyle Mills, Iain O'Brien, Jeetan Patel, Jesse Ryder, Ross Taylor.

Shakib out

FROM PAGE 17 desperately want to play when Pakistan comes here later this month," said Shakib over the phone to The Daily Star.

Biman have lost two matches in the league so far against Surjo Torun and Mohammedan respectively, and in both the matches they missed the services of their ace all-rounder. It will be a challenging task for the airmen to continue their claim for the Premier League crown without one of their key performers.

Sangakkara

FROM PAGE 17 integrity and complete trustworthiness, made him the ideal choice as vice captain," Sangakkara said.

Sangakkara is still recuperating after the Lahore attack on March 3.

Doctors in Colombo removed shards of metal and shrapnel from his arm after the team was flown home last Wednesday.

ICC clears

FROM PAGE 17 despite the fact that he has changed his bowling technique.

"I just made some adjustment in my body movement, so I don't think there is any reason to be worried with the effectiveness of my bowling," said a confident Razzak, who was also reported for a suspect act in 2004 during the Asia Cup in Pakistan.

Salahuddin also believes that Razzak will be the same bowler as he was before his suspension. "He will be more effective if he could apply a few variations in the match that he had achieved during the rehabilitation programme," he said.

LOCAL SNIPPETS

SPORTS REPORTER

Agrani Bank snatched a 73 run victory over Uttara SC in the First Division Cricket League at the Dhaka University Ground yesterday.

The winners flew high on Iftekharul (67) and Proshanto (43) to reach a competitive total of 243-8 in 50 overs. The bankers then restricted opponents Uttara to 170.

In other matches, Prime Doleshwar beat Sadharon Bima by three wickets at the Dhanmndi Cricket Stadium and Jatrabari KC defeated Khelaghar SKS also by the same margin at the City Club Ground.

METROPOLITAN CHESS

In the fourth round games of the Metropolitan Selection Chess Tournament held at the chess federation hall room, Shahin beat Abul Kashem, Mithu beat Khairul Islam, Siraj beat Golam Sarwar, Imrose beat Abdur Rauf, Amir beat Nazre Mowla, Basrul defeated Sabbir Shah, Ibrahim beat K.M.Afzal, while Anis drew with Salim and Shamim drew with Imran.

Four players are sharing the lead in the point's table with four points each after the 4th round games ended.

Obaiddul Islam Shahin of Jobs Vande, Gyuusuddin Mithu of Muktijodha KC, Sirajul Kabir of Tangaal C.P and Imrose Uddin are currently on top of the table.

In the second position, seven players are positioned with 3.5 points each. They are Anisuzzaman Mallik, Mohammad Salim, Amir Hossain, Shamim Khan, Md. Ibrahim Hossain, Badrul Alam and Qamruzzaman Imran.

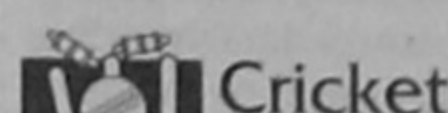
The fifth round of games will start today at 3.30pm at the same venue.

U-15 SELECTION The Under-15 cricket preparation camp is scheduled to start at the Bangladesh Kria Shikha Protisthan (BKSP) from Sunday, March 15. A 32-member squad has been drafted for the camp and the selected players have been asked to report to Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) Project Operations Logistic Officer Shahidul Islam at BKSP on March 15, by 5.30 pm. The camp will run upto March 25.

The list of players are: Salman Hossain, Abu Sayem, Al Mamun Rafsan, Md. Nayeem, Javed, Shabab Chowhan, Sajid Akter, Sha Afran Shakil, Taskin Ahmed Tajin, A.A.N Zico.

Sadman Islam Anik, Rahatul Ferdous Javed, Yasir Chowdhury Rabbi, Mehedi Hasan, Samarat Sardar, Md. Arafat Sunny, Imtiaz Ahmed, Pavel Salman Khan, Sukanto Kumar Dey, Adath Hassan Rabbi, Farid Islam, Abir Rahman, Jibon Chowdhury, Bayjid Amin, Md Rifat, Rashed Khan, Abu Haydar Rony, Omar Faruk, Mahmudur Rahman, Sunny, Shahriar Islam and Md. Nazmus Sakib.

Thankful Aussie press



AFP, Melbourne

Australia's media on Thursday praised Ricky Ponting's inexperienced side for retaining the title of the world's top Test team in South Africa, declaring their favourites for this year's Ashes.

Sydney's Daily Telegraph said the side had performed beyond expectations after pundits, including the newspaper, had written-off their chances when they recently lost a home Test series against a strong Proteas outfit.

"We had Australia 'dead and buried' as of December

31, 2008," the newspaper said, referring to one of its headlines on Australia's prospects.

"So it's hats off to Ricky Ponting and company and humble pie to the rest of us as we celebrate one of the great offshore wins in Australian cricket history."

"Pound for pound it might even be the best of the lot - for although Australia have beaten everyone, everywhere over the past decade, they have never done so with a 20-year-old opening batsman, three bowlers playing their first full series and a new number six."

The Age newspaper in Melbourne contrasted the 'victorious Australians' demeanour with that of

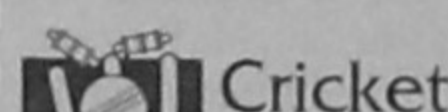
England's players after losing a Test series in the West Indies this week.

"The dejected appearance of the defeated Englishmen was the opposite of the unbridled joy and optimism sweeping the Australian camp," it said.

"We're favourites for the Ashes," trumpeted a headline in The Australian newspaper, quoting former captain Mark Taylor praising the injection of youth that has reinvigorated the Test team.

"This is an ideal situation for Australian cricket because the older blokes have to try to push the younger blokes out and that's not going to be easy," Taylor said.

India ride on Mithali



CRICINFO, Sydney

India ensured that they did not have to depend on net run-rates to qualify for the Super Six by beating Sri Lanka by 35 runs at the Bankstown Oval in Sydney on Thursday. It was India's second victory in the group stage while Sri Lanka finished without a win from three games.

India's victory was far from convincing. They once again relied on Mithali Raj for most of their runs and would have been left with a paltry total if not for her contribution. She made 59 out of 169 against England and today she scored an unbeaten 75 out of a total of 137 for 7.

Raj began her innings with India in early trouble at 11 for 2, a position which deteriorated rapidly with wickets falling regularly with hardly any addition to the score. Six of the top eight batsmen failed to score more than five but Raj remained steady through the innings. Even so, India were struggling at 78 for 7 in the 40th over before they were lifted by a quick 24 from their captain Jhulan Goswami.

Raj hit only one four in her 120-ball innings and added 59 for the seventh wicket with Goswami. Their partnership lifted India to 137, which was less than what they had managed against England. Udeshika Prabodhani, Chamari Polgampola and Suwini de Alwis picked up two wickets each for Sri Lanka.

Raj was happy that her performance came at a vital moment. "It came at the right time. We did struggle in those initial overs when we were four down for 38 runs. So there was a lot of pressure," she said. "I think our only concern would be our batting. It has really let us down against England and even today where we collapsed quite early."

Faced with a small target, Sri Lanka's openers began slowly but steadily. Dedunu Silva and Polgampola added 37 but they fell in quick succession, leaving Sri Lanka on 41 for 2. These wickets triggered a collapse and the chase never got back on track. Apart from Eshani Kaushalya who made 20, none of the others made significant contributions. Sri Lanka were dismissed in the 45th over, 35 runs short of the target. Amita Sharma played a big hand in India's win, taking three top and middle order wickets to finish with 3 for 19 in ten overs.



India wicketkeeper Anagha Deshpande (R) stumps Sri Lanka's Inoka Galagedara during their match in the ICC Women's World Cup at the Bankstown Oval in Sydney yesterday.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS 35 Haw's partner 1 Spill the beans 5 Foundation 8 Military hat 12 Volcanic outflow 13 Listening device 14 The yoke's on them 15 Leave out 16 Actress Mc-Clanahan 17 Ollie's pal 18 Hole 20 The Lion King 22 Stenling process 26 Struck the trick 29 Chinese chairman 31 Possess 32 Accomplished 33 'West Side Story' gang 34 Compass dir.

Cryptquip puzzle grid with letters and numbers. Includes text: B X R A J J X Z E I G J B G C T C F V A Y J M V Y V I C D M T V S Q O C D M F C Q O O C B . R A Q C E Z C J " E G G I T V S X V A S E G Y T I " Yesterday's Cryptquip: IF PEOPLE LOVE LIVING IN BRITISH APARTMENTS, I GUESS THAT SHOULD BE TERMED "INFLATATION." Today's Cryptquip Clue: T equals F