



India's Jibon Singh (13) heads in the only goal of the game past the Nepal goalkeeper during their match of the SAFF Championship at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

## Bangladesh look for better show

SPORTS REPORTER

Shrugging off the wobbly performance against Pakistan, hosts Bangladesh will be hoping to get back to rhythm against Sri Lanka in their crucial Group B match of the Bangabandhu SAFF Championship at the Bangabandhu National Stadium today.

Shahidur Rahman Shantoo's charges were not as impressive in their second match as they were against Bhutan and definitely the game had a lack of rhythm in the midfield that made the hosts suffer most against Pakistan. Bangladesh coach will be expecting that his midfielders would put on a better show against Sri Lanka, a side that have already advanced into the last four from Group B with two consecutive victories.

With four points from two outings, Bangladesh need only a draw against Sri Lanka to go through as the second team from this group.

But before Bangladesh take on Sri Lanka match, Pakistan will play against Bhutan to keep their semifinal hopes alive. Pakistan, who have managed only one point in their two outings, will have to win against Bhutan by at least 4-0 margin hope that Bangladesh go down 1-0 against Sri Lanka for them to qualify. However, if Pakistan lose, Bangladesh would be through even before they take to the field.

Bangladesh coach Shantoo, though, wants to win the game against Sri Lanka and not considering any other option.

"The players took too much pressure on them during the match against Pakistan. Tomorrow's (Tuesday) match is a new one and I think the boys will come right against Sri Lanka," said Shantoo.

"We are looking forward to winning the game and emerge as group champions to qualify for the semifinals and we believe that we have the ability to beat Sri Lanka."

"Though Sri Lanka are a good side, they are not better than us despite having a couple of good players like Kasun Jayasuriya and EB Channa. We certainly will have some plans for them," said Bangladesh coach.

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Bangladesh's premier striker Zahid Hasan Emily (L) shows his injured left leg, which will likely keep him out of today's crucial match of the SAFF Championship against Sri Lanka, to his teammates Wali Faisal (C) and Mamunul Islam during a training session at the BUET ground yesterday.

## Ashfaq fires Maldives

SPORTS REPORTER

A brace from Ashfaq Ali helped holders Maldives to a come from behind 3-1 win over Afghanistan in their crucial Group A encounter of the SAFF Championship at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

Apart from Ashfaq's brace, Ahmed Thoriq netted the other for Maldives, who raised their point tally to four from two outings after being held 1-1 by a spirited Nepal in the tour opener.

Their second defeat in as many matches meant Afghanistan were eliminated from the group stage and will take on Nepal in their last match which will only be of academic interest on Wednesday.

After losing points to Nepal in the previous match, holders Maldives brought two changes in their side and tried to assert the authority in the midfield against Afghanistan, who went 1-0 down to Indian despite holding the upper hand in the game.

However, Maldives launched the first attack through the right flank with Fazeel Ibrahim going close to opening the account, but his

well-judged header off a Naseer Mukhtar cross came off the sidebar to disappoint Maldives in the 18th minute before they were stunned by the Afghans.

Collecting a throw from his

fellow midfielder, Hashmattullah Barkezai drove a powerful shot from outside the box that found the back of the Maldives net on the half-hour mark though goalkeeper

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Maldives' two-goal hero Ashfaq Ali skips past a lunging Afghan defender Ali Ahmed Yarzada during their match of the Bangabandhu SAFF Championship at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

## Telegraph chess

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh's Abdullah Al Saif has earned six-and-a-half points and shares third position along with other three players after end of the eighth round games in the 21st Telegraph School Chess Championship in Kolkata, India. Ikramul Haq Siam and Tahmina Akter Tisha have five-and-a-half points each while Umme Taslima Protiva Talukder has five points and Tanzina Akter Tani has four-and-a-half points from eight games. Matches of the eighth round were held on Sunday. In this round Saif beat Sayan

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**Bangabandhu SAFF Championship**  
Pakistan v Bhutan (4:00pm)  
Bangladesh v Sri Lanka (7:00pm)  
Venue: Bangabandhu National Stadium  
**Premier Div Cricket League**  
Cricket Coaching School v Kalabagan  
Venue: Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium  
Gazi Tank v BKSP  
Venue: Fatullah Cricket Stadium  
Parlex v Old DOHS  
Venue: BKSP-2

## Rollicking Razzaq

SPORTS REPORTER

Abahani finished their first round campaign in the Premier Division Cricket League with double delight as they not only strongly bounced back, riding on a fabulous hundred from Abdul Razzaq, but also saw their archrivals Mohammedan losing their first game yesterday.

The Pakistani all-rounder was the star of the day by making a career best 185 in the limited-over game which gave Abahani a massive 165-run victory over Surjo Torun Club, the outcome forced the last year runners-up to play the relegation league, at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur.

The day was made even sweeter for the holders when they learnt that promotees Khelaghar pulled off the biggest upset in the tournament by snapping Mohammedan's all-win record. Khelaghar's four-wicket victory at the Fatullah Cricket Stadium might not have salvaged them from playing the relegation league but the outcome brought huge excitement in the league race as Abahani are now trailing the league leaders Mohammedan by just two points.

At Mirpur, it was a one-man show as Razzaq used his willow like a sword to brutally punish the Surjo Torun bowlers. The right-hander never looked back after substitute fielder Raju failed to hold a straight-forward catch when Razzaq

tried to clear the long-off.

The mesmerising batting display of the Pakistani batter where he smote 18 boundaries and seven towering sixes helped Abahani to score the highest total of 335-8 in their share of 50 overs in the competition. Surjo Torun were nowhere in chase of the mammoth target and finally they were bundled out for 170 runs in 39.5 overs.

Smarting from two consecu-

utive defeats, Abahani made a disaster start after being sent into bat first as they lost three wickets for 22 runs including the prized one of Shakib Al Hasan.

But Razzaq changed the whole scenario with the assistance of Mahbubul Karim (35) and Nadif Chowdhury (61).

Razzaq had a good chance to join his compatriot Ziaur Rahman, who smashed a double hundred in a 50-over

match in 2000 in favour of Kalabagan against Dhanmondi Club at BKSP, but he misjudged a slower delivery from national pacer Mahbubul Alam to reach at the safe hand of Indian Deepak Chougale at cover.

"I am delighted because it's my best score in the limited-over version at any level. Actually it was my day and I also got good support from

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Abahani's Pakistani all-rounder Abdul Razzaq launches one over long off during his swashbuckling knock of 185 against Surjo Torun in their Ispahani Tea Premier League match at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium yesterday.



## Did U Know?

AC Milan failed to win a single championship title from 1907-1950.



## Sachin Tendulkar

(Star Indian batsman)  
"It is fantastic to be the number one Test team. I have been waiting a long time to get to this position. Not just me, but the entire country waited for it."

## Gayle strengthens Windies grip

Cricket

CRICINFO, undated

Chris Gayle has more than his share of critics, often due to an impassive appearance that is sometimes taken for apathy, but he proved how much he cares about his team's results with a patient century in Adelaide. Gayle's first Test hundred against Australia gave West Indies a 296-run lead with a day to play and on a turning pitch Australia will have their work cut out against the spin and bounce of Sulieman Benn.

In the past century, no team has made more than 239 in the fourth innings to win an Adelaide Test and if Gayle didn't declare overnight, Australia might need to beat the all-time record of 315. West Indies finished at 8 for 284 with Gayle, who batted throughout the day, on 155 and Ravi Rampaul yet to score after Benn skied a catch in the final over off Mitchell Johnson.

A draw remains the most likely result, especially with the possibility of some final-day showers, but Gayle at least significantly slashed the odds of West Indies going 2-0 down with one match to play. Following Australia's innings victory inside three days in Brisbane, Gayle and the team management kept their players in the dressing rooms for a long discussion, during which they resolved that the same result could not be allowed to happen again.

Dwayne Bravo, Brendan Nash, Benn and Kemar Roach have all stood up in Adelaide and on the fourth day it was the captain's turn to lead from the front. A late challenge from Johnson, who snared Bravo and Denesh Ramdin in one

over on the way to 4 for 85, couldn't mask the fact that for most of the day Australia's bowling lacked bite. West Indies could have accelerated quicker in the final session to increase the pressure on the hosts but they remain in a strong position thanks to their captain.

It was an innings of uncharacteristic restraint from Gayle, who for most of the day resisted his urges to hit over the top, and instead scored most of his boundaries along the ground with well-timed straight drives or clips through the leg-side. Australia tried to tempt him early in the day with Marcus North and Nathan Hauritz bowling an outside off-stump line but he was happy to leave, and apart from trying to force a couple of shots into the turf and back past Hauritz, his patience held up.

His century came from 179 deliveries and it prompted a display of clear emotion from the usually poker-faced Gayle, who beamed towards the dressing rooms and swung his bat in joy, having never before passed 71 against Australia. Late in the day he began to suffer cramps but was still willing to sprint for singles and keep his team moving, and it wasn't until his 257th delivery that he registered a six, with a pull over midwicket off North.

Wickets gradually fell around him but nowhere near regularly enough for Australia's liking. They thought they had Gayle on 26 when they asked for a review of a leg-side take by Brad Haddin off Johnson but replays showed the ball had come off Gayle's leg. Australia had already burned a review on a caught-behind appeal against Adrian Barath and were left to rue their poor judgment when Nash later padded up to

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**BT**  
Bangabandhu SAFF Championship  
Pakistan v Bhutan  
Live from 4:00pm  
Bangladesh v Sri Lanka  
Live from 7:00pm  
**STAR Cricket**  
Australia v West Indies  
Second Test, Day 5  
Live from 7:00am  
**ESPN**  
Sportscenter India  
Sports News  
Live from 9:30pm  
**SuperSport3**  
UEFA Champions League  
Wolves v Man United  
Live from 2:45am (Wednesday)  
**SuperSport7**  
UEFA Champions League  
Zurich v AC Milan  
Live from 2:45am (Wednesday)  
**TEN Sports**  
UEFA Champions League  
Marseille v Real Madrid  
Live from 2:45am (Wednesday)

## Nadal happy with winning end

Tennis

INTERNET, undated

Spain's Davis Cup final win over Czech Republic provided Rafael Nadal with the group therapy he craved at the end of a testing year.

"This was the end to the season I needed," Nadal said after Spain completed a 5-0 whitewash of the Czechs to win the Davis Cup for the fourth time since 2000.

"Winning again is a great feeling and a major achievement, particularly considering the problems I've had."

"Being able to enjoy this with my teammates and receive all the support from the crowd has been terrific over the three days."

Victory marked a perfect end to a season that started in equally glorious fashion for Nadal, with his triumph at the Australian Open.

However, his season was spoiled by a knee injury which forced him to miss the defence of his Wimbledon crown and had commentators wondering if his career had already peaked.

Back on clay, there were signs in his win over Tomas Berdych on Friday that his confidence was returning. The winners were fizzing off his

racket once again and he looked sharp in a 6-3, 6-4 success against Jan Hajek on Sunday.

The six-times grand slam winner revelled in the warm support of the crowd at the Palau Sant Jordi and he even gave the silver salad bowl trophy a triumphant bite during the presentation.

"There have been great moments and not so great moments but I can't say this has been a bad year," the 23-year-old said.

"I won my first grand slam tournament on hardcourt, three Masters and Barcelona. At the start of the year I would have accepted that."

"Now we have the Davis Cup and we should keep in mind that it's going to be very difficult to win again."

"I've always said you have to savour the moment when you win things. One day you can just stop winning so you have to make the most of it. It's been a while since I won a trophy."

Nadal will take no more than a couple of days off before beginning his preparations for next season.

He said there were no plans to do anything differently this year and pledged to continue fighting to get back to peak form.

"You have to accept that in life there are always problems and work to overcome them," he said.