



SL-Pak opener today

AFP, Dambulla



Asia's Test-playing nations begin their preparations for next year's World Cup when they contest the region's top one-day prize from Tuesday.

Away from the global spotlight on the football World Cup in South Africa, the four-nation Asia Cup will be played in Sri Lanka over the next 10 days.

India, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh, who co-host the cricket World Cup in February-April, will be joined by Pakistan in a round-robin preliminary league with the

top two teams contesting the final on June 24.

"This is a good chance to test our strengths and weaknesses and also see how the others are faring on the way to the World Cup," Indian captain Mahendra Singh Dhoni said.

India go into the tournament in the central town of Dambulla hoping to make amends for their failure to reach the semifinals of the

FIXTURES

June 15	Sri Lanka v Pakistan
June 16	India v Bangladesh
June 18	Sri Lanka v Bangladesh
June 19	Pakistan v India
June 21	Pakistan v Bangladesh
June 22	India v Sri Lanka
June 24	Final
June 25	Reserve day

World Twenty20 in the Caribbean.

A second-string side then lost twice to hosts Zimbabwe in a recent one-day tri-series also featuring Sri Lanka, exposing a weak bench that does not augur well for the World Cup.

India, who face Bangladesh in their first match on Wednesday, are without veteran Sachin Tendulkar, the world's most prolific Test and one-day batsman, who opted to rest ahead of a busy season.

Also missing is one-day regular Yuvraj Singh, who was dropped due to poor form after scoring just 74 runs in five World Twenty20 matches. In five one-day internationals this year, the left-hander has managed only 96 runs.

Pakistan, preparing to clash with holders Sri Lanka in Tuesday's opener, have recalled mercurial fast bowler Shoaib Akhtar for the first time since May last year when he was sidelined with a knee injury.

Flamboyant all-rounder Shahid Afridi leads a talented Pakistani squad which includes three promising batsmen in Umar Amin, 21, Shahzaib Hasan, 20, and Asad Shafiq, 24.

Sri Lanka, who won the last Asia Cup in Pakistan two years ago, have left out ageing batsman Sanath Jayasuriya and unorthodox spinner Ajantha Mendis for the tournament.

Jayasuriya, who turns 41 later this month, is the most experienced one-day batsman in the world with 444 appearances and second in the leading scorers' list with 13,428 runs behind Tendulkar's 17,598.

But a woeful average of 3.75 in six matches at the World Twenty20 forced his exclusion for the Asia Cup and raised doubts over the left-hander's future ahead of the World Cup.

Bangladesh hope to regroup on the slow Dambulla wickets after being beaten by England in both Tests on seam-friendly tracks at Lord's and Old Trafford.

National Sports Awards given

SPORTS REPORTER

The government yesterday named ten sportsmen and organisers as winners of the National Sports Awards 2009 for their outstanding contributions to the development of sports both at national and international levels.

The awardees are Dewan Shafiul Arefin Tutul (football and organiser), Badal Roy (football), Shamsul Alam Manju (football), Naimur Rahman Durjoy (cricket), Anjan Chowdhury Pintu (organiser), Shahed Ashgar Chowdhury (organiser), Hamida Begum (athletic and organiser), Shamim Ara Tolee (athletic), Mohammad Mohsin (hockey) and Mostafa Kamal (volleyball).

Each award carries a gold medal, a cash prize of Tk 20,000 and a certificate.

Abahani trounce Police

SPORTS REPORTER

Abahani recorded a massive 9-2 win over newcomers Police AC in the Green Delta Premier Division Hockey League at the Maulana Bhasani National Stadium yesterday.

Abahani, who got off to a flying start with a 3-0 win over Sadharan Bima in their league opener, dominated throughout the game and went into the breather with a comfortable 4-0 lead. They then added five more to the scoreboard.

Striker Pushkor Khisa, defender Asaduzzaman Chandan and midfielders Ajit Kumar and Rubel Hossain scored two goals each while Hasan Jubair netted the other for Abahani. Rana Das Yaul Haque scored one goal apiece for the losers.

A new Germany

FROM PAGE 17

as both Miroslav Klose and Lukas Podolski bagged goals; the latter with a shot clocked at 87mph. Thomas Mueller, the Bayern Munich youth product produced a sterling show on the right wing (and took his goal superbly) and Bastian Schweinsteiger and Sami Khedira picked, harried and passed with consummate ease.

The measure of Germany's domination can be illustrated by the fact that they completed more passes in the first half alone, than South Africa, Uruguay, USA and Nigeria completed in their entire matches.

But what shone through was that this is a new Germany. Multi-cultural, brash, brave, daring, pretty and sometimes even spectacular. None are adjectives usually associated with the national stereotype but adjectives that held stead after a performance that will have made the world sit up and take notice.

Elsewhere, Africa had much to celebrate about as Ghana picked up the first victory for the continent. Ghana, contrary to popular opinion, are a strong, defensive and tactically aware side. Serbia are similar and both sides threatened to cancel each other out, until Zdravko Kuzmanovic committed an almost suicidal handball inside the area. Presented with the chance from the spot, Asamoah Gyan made little mistake blasting past Vladimir Stojkovic. John Mensah's post-match celebration with the Ghana flag held aloft, showed just how much the win meant to Africa.

Meanwhile, in the day's first game a dreadful error by Algeria 'keeper Chaouchi condemned the African's to a 1-0 defeat courtesy West Brom midfielder Robert Koren's long range strike. Neither side impressed, and it would not be a big surprise to see either bow out of the tournament in the group stages.

Algeria too had a man sent-off, which meant it was three for three as far as red card's were concerned yesterday. Tim Cahill, the final of the three to be given his marching orders could count himself a little unlucky. However Cahill did go in with both feet and from behind. Not malicious but not a good tackle either. And as FIFA stressed before the tournament, such tackles would be punished more harshly, to bolster attacking play. And based on how the tournament is transpiring so far, attacking play needs all the help it can get.



PHOTO: AFP

GERMAN INSPIRATION: A German fan cheers her team in a World Cup match against Australia at the Moses Mabhid stadium in Durban on Sunday.

Ghana toast of Africa

AFP, Pretoria

Inspired by a sense of playing for all of Africa, Ghana's Black Stars became the first Africans to win a World Cup match on their home continent by downing Serbia 1-0 in their opener Sunday.

Asamoah Gyan blasted in a penalty kick in the 84th minute after a handball by Serbian Zdravko Kuzmanovic, then joined in a dance-filled team celebration that saw even a security guard hug Gyan.

"Everyone is happy, not only in Ghana but the whole of Africa," Gyan said. "I'm so happy, not for Ghana winning but for an African team winning in the World Cup. It's not so easy."

"We knew all Africa would support us. I really drove off that."

Ghana coach Milovan Rajevac, a Serbian, was excited his team could pull off the historic triumph after the hosts, Nigeria and Algeria had failed to bring Africa a World Cup triumph in South Africa.

"This was the first time the World Cup was held on African soil and so I'm happy an African team beat a great European team and I'm happy that the whole of Africa is pleased about this win," Rajevac said.

Ghana was the only African team to reach the round of 16 at the 2006 World Cup, losing to Brazil in the knockout stage, and the victory over Serbia boosted the Black Stars'

chances to advance again in 2010.

"It was big for Africa. It means a lot. We showed we could beat them," said Ghana midfielder Andre Ayew.

"I don't know if this means we have arrived. Our dream is advancement."

While that dream is not yet secured, any notion that all six African teams might fail to advance on African soil seemed put to rest with the victory, Ghana captain John Mensah said.

"Forget what you have heard," Mensah said.

"We played with our hearts. We don't have to do anything else. It's beautiful. To win the first game out is very important. We're happy now. Tomorrow we will go back to working."

The Black Stars will need to train hard. Next up is a Saturday matchup with Group D rivals Australia at Rustenburg with the mighty Germans to follow.

For Gyan, patience was critical in beating Serbia, which in addition to the handball saw Aleksandar Lukovic red-carded after a second yellow card 10 minutes before Gyan's goal.

"We knew what the Serbians were going to do," Gyan said. "We were patient and waited for them to make mistakes and that's what happened."

"It's not the first time I have taken a penalty in front of a huge crowd. There was no

pressure on me."

Gyan said his team gives defence a greater priority than in 2006 and that has been a key to success.

"Now we make sure we defend our goal before we attack," he said. "In 2006, we were attacking more without doing that."

20 lead in nat'l chess

SPORTS REPORTER

Twenty players were sharing the lead in the preliminary phase of the 36th National Chess Championship at close of the second round games at the Bangladesh Chess Federation Hall Room yesterday.

They are FM Abu Sufian Shakil, FM Minhazuddin, Ahmed Sagar, FM Aminul Islam, FM Syed Mahfuzur Rahman Emon, FM Mehdi Hasan Parag, FM Mohammed Abdul Malek, FM Mohammad Javed, Debaraj Chatterjee, Golam Mostafa Bhuiyan, Mahtabuddin Ahmed Robin, Saif Uddin, Anichuzzaman Jewel, WIM Rani Hamid, Abdullah Al Saif, Mizanur Rahman Labu, Ghusuddin Mithu, Anwar Hossain, Obaida Nipun, Feroz Ahmed and Hasan Ali, who all won their second round games.

It's the time to Diski

REUTERS, Johannesburg

Forget famous goal celebrations such as "The Robot" by Peter Crouch and "The Dive" by Juergen Klinsmann, here comes the South African "Diski dance."

The Diski dance, which is performed through heading and kicking an imaginary ball, may be a goal celebration to watch in this World Cup.

South Africa's Siphiwe Tshabalala and his teammates displayed this distinctive dance when they celebrated his goal against Mexico in the opening World Cup game on Friday.

The dance is already popular on YouTube and many soccer fans may want to learn the moves.

Even South Africa's President Jacob Zuma has learnt the Diski dance which could surpass Cameroon Roger Milla's iconic corner flag dance celebration in the 1990 FIFA World Cup.

U.S. actor John Travolta performed the dance shortly after landing his Boeing 707 at Lanseria airport, north of Johannesburg, on Wednesday morning.

Goal celebrations are now part of the biggest sporting event and players plan them in advance just in case they find the back of the net.

The Robot goal celebration was so popular that England fans were dismayed when Crouch declared he "wouldn't be doing it any more unless England won the World Cup."

Another popular celebration is "The Snort" by Robbie Fowler reacting to claims that he was a cocaine addict by sniffing imaginary cocaine off the lines on the pitch.

The word Diski is a township slang for soccer and may also describe the local style of football which focuses on dribbling and other tricks.

Steyn guns WI down

AFP, Port Of Spain

Fast bowler Dale Steyn starred again as South Africa secured a 163-run victory over the West Indies in the opening Test on Sunday.

Steyn collected three wickets for 65 runs from 15.3 overs, as West Indies, chasing 457 for victory, were bowled out for 293, just before the rescheduled close on the fourth day at Queen's Park Oval.

The South African quick ended the match with figures of eight for 94 to earn the man-of-the-match award.

Steyn bowled Nelon Pascal off an inside edge for 10, when the West Indies tail-end tried a flamboyant one-legged pull.

SCORES IN BRIEF

SOUTH AFRICA: First innings 352 (Boucher 69; Benn 5-120)

WEST INDIES: First innings 102 (Steyn 5-29)

SOUTH AFRICA: Second innings 206 (Smith 90, Petersen 22, Kallis 40; Benn 3-74)

WEST INDIES: Second innings 293 (Gayle 73, Deonarine 23, Bravo 49, Shillingford 27, Benn 42; Steyn 3-65, Morkel 2-49)

Result: South Africa won by 163 runs.

Man-of-the-match: Dale Steyn.

Socceroos savaged back home

AFP, Sydney

Australian pundits and former Socceroos lined up Monday to sink the boot into the national team following their 4-0 humiliation by Germany in Durban.

Former Blackburn Rovers and Australia midfielder Robbie Slater, now a television pundit with Fox Sports, slammed the tactics of coach Pim Verbeek and said the Socceroos never showed any desire to win Sunday's game.

"We played with six midfielders and no recognised striker. You at least have to go out and try and win the game and we never did that," Slater said.

"You don't mind losing if you give it a shot, but we never did."

"Verbeek has done a great job getting us here and the Asia Cup, but he has to take much of the blame for this result."

Former Socceroos goalkeeper Mark Bosnich attacked captain Lucas Neill for being too negative before the match.

"This game was lost before a ball was kicked," he told Fox Sports.

"To go out before the game and make out your opposition is superior at a pretty big press conference is a self-fulfilling prophecy."

"Tonight was an embarrassing defeat."



ESPN & SuperSport3

2010 FIFA World Cup
New Zealand v Slovakia
Live from 5.30pm
Ivory Coast v Portugal
Live from 8.00pm
Brazil v North Korea
Live from 12.30am (Wednesday)



Premier Div Hockey League
Mohammedan v Bangladesh SC
Time: 2:30pm
Sonali Bank v Mariner Youngs
Time: 4:30pm
Venue: Maulana Bhasani National Hockey Stadium

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS

- 1 Amorphous mass
- 5 Soothing agent
- 9 Hoover, for one
- 12 Top-rated
- 13 Shaving cream additive
- 14 Supplement, with "out"
- 15 Romania's capital
- 17 Ever-green type
- 18 Trusty horses
- 19 Unaccompanied
- 21 "And I should care ... why?"
- 22 Shade
- 24 Skirt feature
- 27 Coach Parseghian
- 28 Took off
- 31 Barbie's companion

32 Lustrous black

33 Vast expanse

34 Tittle

36 Fool

37 Charon's water

38 Put forth

40 "I see"

41 Temptress

43 Obliterates

47 Praise in verse

48 Most gentle

51 "— Miserables"

52 "Holy mackerel!"

53 Stage presentation

54 Chow down

10 Related

11 Undorned

16 Commotion

20 Chatroom chortling

22 Top of a wave

23 Feedbag fill

24 Schuss

25 Writer Buscaglia

26 Bankbook bonus

27 Not shut tight

29 Tina of "30 Rock"

30 Levy

35 Pink-slip

37 Musical notes

39 Go in

40 Raw rock

41 Dover fish

42 Concept

43 Vortex

44 Vend

45 Birthright barterer

46 Eyelid woe

49 Swelled head

50 Historic war zone, for short

Solution time: 25 mins.

AWOL LEE SHAW

LADE IRA TECH

BROWN BAG RANI

STRIAE LOUVER

SIR EDDY

MAD LAM DEBAR

PLOT LUX LANE

HIGHS MEW GYM

GRIT ROE

PAYOLA ORNATE

ALBA MIXED BAG

COAT POE OLLA

KEGS AND FEED

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CRYPTOQUIP

B L B L P ' U M R P U U J X G R P T K
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F J M S B P T F R S S , F H U B
L K X B L K L U J Z J S S M B U G B U .

Yesterday's Cryptoquip: MOVIE ABOUT A RABID MOTORIST DRIVING VERY DANGEROUSLY ON NEVADA HIGHWAYS: "WEAVING LAS VEGAS."
Today's Cryptoquip Clue: L equals D