



PHOTO: COURTESY

Vice-chancellor of BUET Prof. Dr. AMM Safiullah hands over the trophy to the team leader of MA Rashid Hall who won the inter-hall football title with a 2-1 victory over Suhrawardy Hall on Saturday.

# He's up when the chips are down

## Cricket

CRICINFO

Never mind what he can do to his team's fortunes. This is a man who can make prime ministers run.

Sighted around the back of the pavilion at the 2004 Sydney Test, John Howard, then premier of Australia, suddenly broke into a trot, and his six bodyguards instantly switched to light-jog mode. A few minutes after the PA system had announced that the new man in was the one he referred to as "Laxmin", Howard made his way through a strolling, slightly puzzled crowd and towards his box seat. Affairs of state were going to have to wait.

If anything about Indian cricket could make Howard crack a smile today, it would have to be the news that VVS Laxman had steered the Indians through a nervy run-chase and levelled the Test series against Sri Lanka.

If anything about Indian cricket, its hiccupping batting and revving-door bowling attack, could spark optimism again, it belonged to their No. 5 troubleshooter's troubleshotter of an innings.

That the 103 not out is his first fourth-innings hundred is merely a daunting thought, not a reflection of the man's ability in crisis.

Laxman is India's stylist in strife. Battering mostly at No. 6 has caused him to often arrive when four wickets are gone with a queasy score on the board, or when he has had to gee up the pace to beef up the innings or lead mop-up operations with the tail. Yet, regardless of requirement and demand, Laxman has always been generous with his gifts. When he bats, he allows the most hardboiled to get in touch with their soft centre. It is why prime ministers begin running.

When asked during an ODI series to pick a tune to mark his arrival at the crease, Laxman chose Robbie Williams' "Let Me Entertain You". At his most fluent, his batting makes the pragmatic burst into song. The P Sara hundred was one

example of his varied range. He may be best known for the operatic, epic-like innings but often even a short burst of stanzas is more than adequate.

At a 2001 Test in Bloemfontein, after Laxman scored a thirty, his coach of the time, John Wright, usually not given to overstatement, told him it was the best try he had ever seen. As India chased 230 in Adelaide, looking for their first Test win in Australia in two decades, the departure of Tendulkar and Ganguly within 21 runs led to a slight tremor of an implosion. Laxman arrived, creamed three boundaries in his first full over, and put up 51 runs with Rahul Dravid at 4.5 an over. When he was out, India were within



VVS LAXMAN

single digits of their target. When the ODI series for ages had to be won in Pakistan, he scored 107 in the Lahore decider through a veil of moths.

No matter how dire the situation -- and he has been on duty on some very dire days -- when Laxman takes the stage in his moment, he can conjure up the illusion that the crisis is not being tackled, it is being ignored. That fretting over it is all quite trivial. Like a genteel sorcerer pulling streams of silk out of a hat, his hands create gaps in the field that captains and bowlers cannot conceptualise, let alone attempt to cover.

Laxman can speak of his hardship

eloquently, be it the spasms in his back or selectoral brutality, but strides to the crease without strain. At the other end, men may be flailing, drowning; Laxman bats as if he were not merely in another game but another era, when cricketers wore cravats and sledging was some manner of winter sport.

Left-arm spinner Murali Kartik, Laxman's friend, colleague and competitor, tells a story about bowling to him in the nets. After Laxman languidly dispatched Kartik to an unexpected corner, he would put up his hand and apologise to the bowler in chaste Hyderabad Hindi, "Hona bol ke maara". Roughly translated, he was saying he had just needed to try out the shot, its affront was really not personal. His batsmanship may be termed "attacking" but Laxman's cricket contains no offence.

If anything, his strokes have often blinded the significance of his achievement and his numbers due to their sheer light. Except Two Eighty One, of course, which will surely turn up in his genome. In his 30s, Laxman has clocked over the numbers with digital precision. In his last 20 Tests, he has scored 12 fifties and four centuries. In his last 13 Tests, from No. 101 versus England in Chennai to P Sara's No. 113, he has produced three hundreds and eight fifties. During the gloom in Galle, he climbed ahead of Sourav Ganguly on the list of all-time Indian Test batsmen. Today he is slotted in at No. 4, behind Tendulkar, Dravid and Gavaskar. The stature will sit on him like the white shirt suits does on his stork-like, angled frame -- with the pure poise of ease.

The youngest among India's retreating golden generation of middle-order batsmen, he could leave cricket without any monumental record. Shinyraine Chanderpaul, Graeme Smith, Mohammad Yousuf and Kumara Sangakkara have more hundreds, three of them in far fewer Tests. It does not matter. His will never be a career in numbers, anyway. He has always been a batsman of imagery and imagination. VVS Laxman's records may easily be overtaken, but they cannot be replicated.

# England's maiden final

## Hockey

AFP, Moenchengladbach

England reached their first Champions Trophy final on Saturday thanks to a last-gasp 4-3 win over New Zealand and will tackle title-holders Australia in Sunday's trophy showdown.

England, whose previous best finish was fifth in 1999 and 2001, had started the day in fourth spot in the six-team table with either Germany or Spain better placed to reach the final.

But they ground out victory over New Zealand for their second win of the tournament to finish with seven points while Netherlands defeated Germany 1-0 to leave the hosts on six points.

England coach Jason Lee is building belief in his players that they can be competitive at this level.

"The players now believe they are a quality side," said Lee.

Australia finished the group stage with a perfect five from five record thanks to a 3-1 win over Spain.

England had New Zealand on the back foot from the first push back allowing James Tindall to score in the first 20 seconds, the country's fastest Champions Trophy goal.

Andrew Hayward kept New Zealand in the match, converting his first penalty corner from his third chance, after seven minutes.

Simon Mantell and Tindall scored again for England before the break.

"It's tough to come back from 1-3 down at the break," said New Zealand skipper Phillip Burrows.

Hayward converted New Zealand's sixth penalty corner and brought New Zealand back into contention at 3-3, flicking New Zealand's eighth penalty corner inside the right post with five minutes to play.

England pressed for the winning goal in the last two minutes, earning a penalty corner, converted by Richard Smith's flick.

New Zealand claimed a video referral for an infringement by England as the siren sounded. The video was inconclusive and New Zealand lost the chance to convert one last penalty corner to equalise.

"I felt we conceded goals too easily and we were on the back foot from the start because the game changes as soon as you are a goal behind," said New Zealand coach Shane McLeod.

Mink van der Weerden broke the hearts of the near-capacity crowd by converting his first penalty corner for the only score of the match to deny Germany

a place in the final.

Germany coach Markus Weise saw an intense match with missed opportunities from his team's seven failed penalty corners.

"It was not a match with great quality as both teams needed to win which usually leads to a game like this," said Weise.

Australia ensured Spain missed out on the final.

Jason Wilson celebrated his 20th birthday with Australia's first goal before Pat Quemada replied in the last seconds of the first half, deflecting in a drive from Santi Freixa.

Russell Ford and Des Abbott combined for Australia's second goal and Abbott deflected in a low penalty corner flick from Luke Doerner in the second half.

Australia coach Ric Charlesworth said that in the final he was looking for a vast improvement on the group game where his team edged England 3-2.

"We came to play in the final and now we know we are playing England we will be looking to improve on our poor performance in the pool round when we played badly in the second half," he said.

On Sunday, Germany and Netherlands meet again to play for bronze while Spain and New Zealand clash to avoid relegation from the 2011 Champions Trophy in India.

## Gul to play

FROM PAGE 17 that come our way we will be pretty well off.

"But, obviously he is a very important part of our bowling line-up and we wish he is okay quickly."

Pakistan, who held Australia to a 1-1 draw immediately prior to the England series, have been given a gruelling schedule of six Tests in seven weeks, never mind their limited overs commitments in Britain, and Butt said such a programme was almost bound to lead to injuries.

"It is very understandable because it is a lot of cricket," Butt said. "We've come straight to the World Cup [World Twenty20 in the Caribbean], gone to the Asia Cup, then come over here and played a few side games."

"The day we arrived, the next day we played and the next day we played. It's been a tough tour and the boys have done really well up to now."

Gul could also miss the remainder of this series.

The third Test starts at The Oval on August 18 and the series finale takes place at Lord's, commencing August 26.

# Kuznetsova's first final in 10 months

## Tennis

AFP, Carlsbad

Two-time Grand Slam champion Svetlana Kuznetsova beat fifth-seeded Flavia Pennetta 6-4, 6-0 Saturday to reach the final of the 700,000-dollar San Diego Open final.

The Russian will be playing in her first WTA final since a victory in Beijing last October, and she'll face the same opponent as she did then: Poland's Agnieszka Radwanska.

Radwanska, the fourth seed, defeated Slovakian Daniela Hantuchova 6-4, 6-2 to earn her first trip to a final since Beijing 10 months ago.

Unseeded after falling to number 21 in the world, Kuznetsova displayed her powerful forehand and capitalized on Pennetta's unimpressive service game to win nine of the last 10 games.

"It's good that I make it to a final, but it's not enough," Kuznetsova said. "Even winning a trophy is not enough but it's one step forward."

Kuznetsova won three times in 2009 to take her career total of titles to 12, but it has been a battle for her in 2010.

Prior to San Diego, Kuznetsova had reached only one quarterfinal this year and she fell out

of the top 20 for the first time since February 2004.

"I lost my game," she said. "It took some time to sort things out. I want to be back and be strong. I don't want to be back and be number 12 or 15, that's not my goal. I want to be higher and I believe I can do it."

Kuznetsova's victory over Pennetta is projected to move her back into the top 20.

The tight first set stayed on serve until the two traded breaks in the eighth and ninth games, Kuznetsova taking a 5-4 lead.

Kuznetsova then broke Pennetta in the final game as the Italian hit a backhand long.

Pennetta's serve deteriorated further in the second set and Kuznetsova took full advantage.

"It's not my favorite shot, of course," said Pennetta, who had beaten French Open runner-up Samantha Stosur in the quarterfinals.

"But when I am a little bit nervous and know I have to play really well with the serve, I start to get nervous and can't get one in."

Radwanska, ranked 10th in the world, got the only break of the first set in the seventh game as Hantuchova double-faulted.

Hantuchova saved seven match points in the seventh game of the second set before Radwanska was able to put her away in the next game.



PHOTO: STAR

Participants of NTC Kids Tennis Tournament pose for photographs after the presentation ceremony at the National Tennis Complex in Ramna yesterday.

## Glorious

FROM PAGE 17 the first day, I grew in confidence and took the lead on the second day before having a poor third day to share lead.

"On the fourth day, I made a dream start and went ahead by four strokes but could not keep the momentum and lost concentration on the final-72 hole. The match rolled into a play-off," described the golfer from Madaripur.

"I was confident about winning before the play-off started since I had won six to seven games from this situation earlier," he added.

Siddiqui thought the achievement came sooner than he expected, but he was willing to bask in glory for the time.

## A new-look

FROM PAGE 20 Gibbs has only nine league starts for Arsenal but his composed displays as stand-in for regular left-back Gael Clichy impressed both Gunners boss Arsene Wenger and Capello.

Capello has also brought in Bolton centre-back Gary Cahill, Everton defender Phil Jagielka and Manchester United's Wes Brown, while wingers Adam Johnson and Theo Walcott return after being axed from his provisional World Cup squad.

There is a place for Sunderland striker Darren Bent, who was left out of the World Cup party, a potential first cap for Zamora following his impressive form last season and a recall for West Ham's Carlton Cole.

# David-Marcos finale

## Tennis

AFP, Washington

David Nalbandian, in top form after nagging injuries, reached his first ATP final since January of last year on Saturday, ousting Croatian fourth seed Marin Cilic 6-2, 6-2 at the Washington Classic.

The 28-year-old veteran from Argentina took advantage of 27 unforced errors from the Australian Open semifinalist to advance and likes his chances in Sunday's hardcourt final against eighth seed Marcos Baghdatis of Cyprus.

"When I'm playing this good, I'm tough for everybody. It doesn't matter who is on the other side," Nalbandian said.

"I'm doing good things, trying to be more offensive. Win or lose, I'm playing at a good level. If it's not this week, it's going to be another week."

Nalbandian, ranked 117th, was sidelined nine months after hip surgery, made a brief return early this year, then missed two months with a sore hamstring before coming back in July to help Argentina reach the Davis Cup semifinals.

"My surgery was not an easy one. Not many players come back from that," said Nalbandian. "I never felt any pain when I was practicing back. I've had a good recovery. All the time I'm feeling good."

Baghdatis shrugged off a left ankle injury in the second set to beat Belgian Xavier Malisse 6-

2, 7-6 (7/4) in the other semifinal. The 25th-ranked Cypriot seeks a fifth career ATP title and his first since this past January at Sydney.

Nalbandian, seeking his 11th career title and first since 19 months ago at Sydney, missed the past six Grand Slam events, had not played an ATP event since April and had not made a semifinal since February 2009 at Buenos Aires.

But he outclassed the 13th-ranked player in the world with ease.

"He was really consistent and put a lot of pressure on me," Cilic said. "He was able to control a lot of points. He didn't miss many balls. I can't blame myself for too many things. He played well. He was not giving me any openings."

"He's going to be a really tough player to beat these next couple of weeks."

Nalbandian has lost three of four prior matches with Baghdatis, including a 2006 Australian Open semifinal and their most recent meeting in the third round at Wimbledon in 2007.

"David is quick on his feet, likes to open the court a lot," Baghdatis said. "He likes to move you around the court."

After an exchange of breaks to open the match, Nalbandian denied Cilic on two break points to hold in the fifth game, then broke Cilic in the sixth and eighth games on netted forehands from the European to claim the first set.

## Pak tails

FROM PAGE 17 throw at the end of an over and then half-heartedly apologised for an incident that could yet lead to disciplinary action.

England brought on Paul Collingwood in a bid to break the stand and the medium-pacer almost succeeded when a diving Alastair Cook at silly point just failed to hold a bat/pad chance offered by Aamer.

Swann had gone two whole innings without bowling, such had been the dominance of England's seamers in overcast conditions that aided swing.

But Swann, who has a habit of taking a wicket early in his spell, struck with only his third ball of the match.

From around the wicket, Swann produced a delivery that pitched outside leg-stump and clipped Imran Farhat's off stump to bowl the left-hander for 29.

Pakistan's 53 for two became 54 for three as Swann took two wickets for one run in seven balls by bowling Ali (19) with a sharply turning off-break.

Zulqarnain came in having been out for a first ball nought in Pakistan's first innings 72 -- their lowest total against England.

**SCORES IN BRIEF**  
PAKISTAN: First innings 72 (Amin 23, U Akmal 17; Anderson 4-20, S Broad 4-38, Finn 2-10)  
ENGLAND: First innings 251 (Pietersen 80, Trott 55; Ajmal 5-82)  
PAKISTAN: Second innings 150 for 6 at tea (Farhat 29, Azhar 19, Akmal 20, Zulqarnain 36 not out, Aamer 14 not out; Swann 4-23)

## CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

**ACROSS**

- Sir's partner
- Chart format
- Grand story
- Actress Jessica
- Be indisposed
- Exceptional
- Poker variety
- Pen point
- In due time
- High-speed
- 35-Across
- Home sick, maybe
- Lumberjack's need
- Prot. or Cath.
- Pumps up the volume
- Learn by heart
- Pirouette pivot
- George's brother
- Fresh
- Auto

**DOWN**

- Pal, on the streets
- Choir member
- Touch
- Port city of India
- Covering a wide area
- Mid-afternoon, maybe
- Exile isle
- Chalkboard accessory
- Wallpaper alternative
- Unyielding
- Minimal change
- Beast of burden
- Performing
- Hee-haw
- Staffer
- Harvard rival
- Multi-national coin
- Sunrise direction
- Union member's payment
- Zodiac feline

**21 Pal,** on the streets

**24 \$ dispenser** Cattle call

**26 Collar style** Historic time

**28 Historic time** Almond confection

**29 Almond confection** Last letter

**30 Last letter** Ram's mate

**31 Ram's mate** Leering folks

**36 Leering folks** Shad product

**37 Shad product** A great amount (of)

**38 A great amount (of)** Performing

**41 Performing** Hee-haw

**42 Hee-haw** Staffer

**43 Staffer** Harvard rival

**44 Harvard rival** Multi-national coin

**46 Multi-national coin** Sunrise direction

**47 Sunrise direction** Union member's payment

**48 Union member's payment** Zodiac feline

**51 Zodiac feline**

**Solution time: 25 mins.**

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PRONE	GARAGE				
	KNEW	COT			
OKAY	CASH	IDO			
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BIB	LOTS	KNOB			
	IOU	ZONE			
DITHER	INFRA				
ARJA	ADOPTION				
DOOR	COW	ODIN			
ANNA	YEN	NOLLO			

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**CRYPTOQUIP**

IES IJQ XNYNZX PEB JKFU  
 QBKYNHBFBZ SKABKQ SZESI  
 PS OKSOBKDU FJVB ONHVDBQ?  
 PEB ANDD QBKXBJZP.

**Yesterday's Cryptquip:** THE TAPE AND GLUE ONLY COMPLETE WORK AS A TEAM. THEY DECIDED THEY MUST ALWAYS STICK TOGETHER.  
 Today's Cryptquip Clue: S equals O