

Cricketers on AIDS Mission

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Cricketers have always been ambassadors for human causes. With the games' most high profile event taking place in a region that has its fair share of socio-economic problems, the cricket World Cup has provided the International Cricket Council (ICC) with an opportunity to address one of the most significant threats to the present generation, the spread of HIV/AIDS.

And who better than the cricketers of different countries, hero-worshipped across the globe, to come to your doorsteps with the message 'let's bowl out AIDS'? The Bangladesh team did not have training in the morning on Thursday. They don't normally practice in the morning after a match day but skipper Habibur Bashar and his deputy Shahriar Nafees had a different job to do. They went on a Cricket World Cup field visit to the Aranguez government secondary school in Port of Spain to participate in an AIDS awareness programme accompanied by local officials of the UNAIDS and UNICEF.

The arrival of the Bangladesh and Bermuda team representatives to the school was greeted with excitement and fanfare.

"There is a wonderful world out there so go for it," said Bashar while speaking briefly on the occasion.

A school student asked Nafees how cricketers could help fight AIDS.

"We are seen as role models to millions of people around the world. There is a pretty good chance that our voice will be heard when we speak of something good and people will follow us if we do the positive things and lead a healthy life," said the smart vice-captain.

Bashar and Nafees were surrounded by the students for autographs. Some of them have become the latest members of a growing fan base of the Bangladesh team and the programme had to be held up for a few minutes to allow the children their time with the Bangladesh stars.

In the beautiful Caribbean islands, there are over 250,000 reported cases of HIV infected people and 15,000 of them are between the ages of 0-14 years. Put the numbers into perspective. Trinidad has a population of 1.4 million.

Amid this backdrop the ICC has joined forces with UNICEF, UNAIDS and the Caribbean Broadcast Media Partnership (CBMP) in dedicating the World Cup 2007 to children and young people affected by AIDS.