

# Mahmud new skipper



KHALED MAHMUD

**Cricket**  
SPORTS REPORTER

Khaled Mahmud is the new Bangladesh captain. The Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) yesterday appointed the 32-year-old all-rounder for the forthcoming triangular tournament and the home Test series against South Africa.

India is the other team that will take part in the three-nation event, starting on April 11. South Africa will also play two Tests in Dhaka and Chittagong.

The gutsy Dhaka cricketer was placed in the hot seat after wicketkeeper-batsman Khaled Mashud decided to step down after Bangladesh's disastrous World Cup campaign in South Africa, where they lost five of their six group matches.

It was however not the best of times for Mahmud, who served as Aminul Islam's deputy during Bangladesh's first World Cup campaign in England in 1999, to take up the mantle of responsibility when cricket is going through the doldrums.

"I love to take up challenges. I have gone through a lot of ups and

downs in my career. No doubt this is the toughest situation to accept the captaincy. But I can assure you of hundred per cent commitment to uphold the honour of the position," Mahmud said while giving his instant reaction to the Daily StarSport.

Mahmud was chosen ahead of Akram Khan in a two-way battle for the demanding job.

"We turned to Mahmud because he was popular choice among the players. Besides, the trainer, physio and even the outgoing manager ASM Faruque have endorsed him. We have also considered Akram seriously. But we decided against him on the grounds that the burden of captaincy might hamper his recent run of form with the bat," said BCB's media committee chairman Reazuddin-Al-Mamun while announcing Mahmud's appointment.

Reazuddin however said that the Board was yet to name a new manager in place of Faruque, whose contract expired after the World Cup.

"We are taking our time and we will let you know within a couple of days. At the moment I can tell you there are three persons in the running."

He also said that the three-member selection panel led by Alul Islam would announce the squad for the tri-nation tournament on Sunday.

Regarding the future of Mohsin Kamal, Reazuddin said that the Board would not be renewing his contract, which will end on April 30.

The under-fire Pakistani coach failed to inspire the national team since taking over from Australian Trevor Chappell last year.

"He will not be in charge of the team during the three-nation tournament and the Test series. It is also not possible for us to hire a new coach immediately. So, we will be falling back to a local coach for the interim period," said Reazuddin adding that the name of Mohsin's successor would be disclosed in a couple of days.

He also said that Mahmud was picked as a makeshift arrangement and not with the 2007 World Cup in view.

But Mahmud, who has been in and out of the team more than anybody else, wants to capitalise the opportunity to prove his leadership quality.

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PHOTO: AFP

A file photo showing Argentine football legend Diego Maradona and his wife Claudia Villafane in La Havana. Claudia has filed for divorce after 14 years of marriage.

# Maradona's wife files for divorce

**AFP, Buenos Aires**

Claudia Villafane, wife of Argentine football legend Diego Maradona, has filed for divorce after 14 years of marriage, according to television reports here Friday.

Villafane's father Coco said that the problem had been brewing for some time, with reports stating that she began legal proceedings on March 7 and is demanding custody of their two daughters Dalma and Giannina.

Maradona's agent Guillermo Coppola, however, refused to confirm or deny the report. "I won't say

yes or no. Diego knows little or nothing about this. If I can avoid worrying him all the better," said Coppola.

The 42-year-old hero of Argentina's 1986 World Cup triumph has been receiving treatment in Cuba for the past three years for drug addiction.

"If Diego lives in Cuba it's because he has found the tranquility that he does not have here. Although for that he must live far from his friends, his wife and daughters," said Coppola.

Coppola added that he believed that "the affection, the tie between

them, the feeling that unites them is indestructible."

In addition to the 1986 World Cup triumph Maradona also led the national team to the 1990 World Cup final and Napoli to two Italian League titles (1987, 1990) and UEFA Cup (1989).

He tested positive for cocaine and was suspended 15 months by FIFA in 1991, but returned to World Cup as Argentine captain in 1994 only to be kicked out of tournament after two games when doping tests found five banned substances in his urine.

# Kumble to lead India in Bangladesh

**Cricket**

**SAKYASEN MITTRA, from Kolkata**

Anil Kumble is most likely to lead an 'India A' side in the triangular series starting in Dhaka from April 11.

The side will not be called India A although it is going to include cricketers from the second string team. The selectors meet at Mumbai on April 2 to finalise the side.

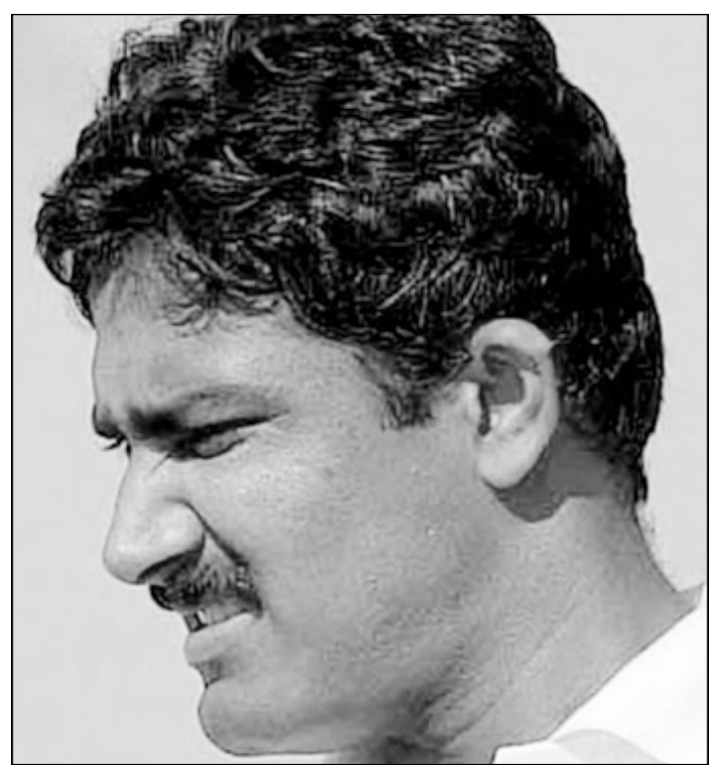
The other two countries participating in the tournament are South Africa and hosts Bangladesh.

Most of the senior cricketers have expressed their desire to stay away from the tournament. Amongst them are Sachin Tendulkar, Rahul Dravid, Ashis Nehra, Javagal Srinath, Harbhajan Singh, Zaheer Khan and even Sourav Ganguly. They requested board president Jagmohan Dalmiya to allow them to take 'rest'.

All these cricketers are also suffering from one form of nagging injury or the other. Dravid has a finger injury, both Sourav and Sachin are suffering from back problems. Nehra will have to go to London for a surgery on his left heel.

Dalmiya is urged to be seriously considering their appeals. He however wants to send a strong side to Bangladesh at the same time simply because he shares a very good rapport with the cricket officials there. He may personally request Sourav Ganguly to make the trip because of the latter's popularity in Bangladesh. Ganguly however declined to comment on the issue Friday. "If someone wants to drop out after the strenuous schedule of the World Cup then he should be allowed to do so," he remarked.

Kumble, Sanjay Bangar, Parthiv Patel, Ajit Agarkar, VVS Laxman, fast bowler Avishkar Salvi, spinner Murali Kartick are obvious selections for the tournament.



ANIL KUMBLE

# Premier Div super league begins today

**UNB, Dhaka**

The new-look super-league of the GrameenPhone Premier Division Cricket League begins today.

Holders Victoria Sporting Club take on Brothers Union at the BKSP ground while City Club face Uttara Sporting Club at the Dhammondi Cricket Stadium.

Each match is a four-day affair. Six teams - Victoria (56 points), City Club (50 points), Abahani (50 points), Mohammedan (44 points), Brothers Union (32 points) and Uttara (32 points) - will compete in the super-league.

A team will earn full six points for an outright win and four points for the team winning a first-innings lead in a drawn match where the other team will obtain rest two points. Points will be shared equally if the match is abandoned

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# Back to boycott India, Pakistan cancel tours

**Cricket**

**AFP/INTERNET, New Delhi**

Arch-rivals India and Pakistan have called off forthcoming cricket tours of each other's countries, the Press Trust of India (PTI) news agency reported Saturday.

India were scheduled to tour Pakistan next month, but cricket board president Jagmohan Dalmiya announced in Calcutta the national team would not be able to make the trip because of a government ban on bilateral series with Pakistan.

"It is known to everybody that the government is against bilateral cricket ties with Pakistan," Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) chief Dalmiya told PTI.

Board secretary SK Nair meanwhile said, "We had sought permis-

sion for the team to travel to Pakistan but have been told that the government's position remains unchanged.

"The government has informed us that the security scenario in Pakistan is not conducive for an Indian tour."

They were due to play three Tests and three one-day internationals during the tour.

Pakistan retaliated saying it would also not send its team to India for a scheduled tour next year.

"BCCI chief Jagmohan Dalmiya informed us that though they were willing to tour Pakistan, the Indian government has not given them the approval," PTI quoted a Pakistan Cricket Board spokesman as saying in Islamabad.

Spokesman Samiul Hassan said keeping in view with India's stand, Pakistan would not send its team to

India next year.

India and Pakistan are scheduled to play four series till 2010 under the 10-year Test programme of the International Cricket Council.

"India's decision has disappointed us," Samiul said. "We were expecting they would send their players to Pakistan so the region could see some thrilling cricket."

"Pakistan and India should continue to play if we want to improve cricket in Asia," he added.

The Indian government has banned bilateral cricket with Pakistan since 1999 in protest against Islamabad's alleged support to Islamic militants fighting Indian rule in the disputed region of Kashmir. Pakistan denies the allegations.

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# Sharjah goes ahead

**Cricket**

**AFP/INTERNET, Sharjah**

The Emirates Cricket Board (ECB) confirmed Friday that the Sharjah Cup will go ahead next week, with Kenya and Zimbabwe taking the place of South Africa, which pulled out because of security fears.

The April 3-10 tournament will pitch the African sides against Pakistan and Sri Lanka, ECB administrator Mazhar Khan told the news agency.

Khan also confirmed that United Arab Emirates cricket coach Abid Ali, a former Indian Test player, would take temporary charge of the Kenya team in Sharjah.

"We offered to help them out, and what better way than with Abid Ali?" Mazhar said.

The Kenyan team has had no coach since Sandeep Patil opted to return home to India after the

World Cup in South Africa.

Match referee for the tournament will be Justice Ebrahim Ahmed of Zimbabwe, while the umpires were named as Kevan Barbour of Zimbabwe, Arani Jayaprakash of India and Billy Doctrove of the West Indies.

All matches are day-night games.

Sri Lanka meanwhile dropped batsmen Mahela Jayawardene and Russel Arnold from the Sharjah squad due to poor form in the World Cup, Jayawardene scoring only 21 runs in seven innings and Arnold 92 in eight.

Seam bowler Pulasthi Gunaratne has also been left out, and veteran Aravinda de Silva has joined the selection panel after retiring from international cricket.

The side will again be captained by Sanath Jayasuriya, who was persuaded to carry on by cricket officials after initially tendering his resignation following the World Cup.

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PHOTO: AFP

Legendary Indian singer Lata Mangeshkar chats with Sachin Tendulkar about an upcoming charity match in Bombay on March 28.

# Zimbabwe offered compensation

**Cricket**

**AFP, Harare**

The England and Wales Cricket Board is to pay the Zimbabwe Cricket Union an undisclosed sum of money in compensation following the England players' boycott of their World Cup fixture, due to have been played here on February 13.

The ECB chairman David Morgan, who made a two-day visit to the Zimbabwe capital, told his counterpart Peter Chingoka that the compensation was purely a goodwill gesture and it did not imply liability by the ECB.

The money will help cover hotel expenses, catering wastage, secu-

urity, ticket sales and administrative costs, which still had to be met after England failed to show up. But the ECB may yet face a detailed claim by the ZCU.

Morgan stated that "England did not come to Zimbabwe because of safety concerns only, and there was no political agenda." The reason was the player's anxieties following a threatening letter from "Sons and Daughters of Zimbabwe."

Chingoka took the opportunity, though, of repeating to him the ZCU assertion that Harare was, and remains, a safe place to play cricket.

The ECB "goodwill" offer was clearly the beginning of a healing process between the two cricket nations ahead of a 10 week tour to England and Ireland by Zimbabwe expected to begin at the end of April.

# Next year nothing sure

**Cricket**

**REUTERS, Sydney**

Steve Waugh will lead Australia in a four-Test tour of the West Indies starting next week but said he was unsure if he would continue playing even at state level next year.

Waugh, who was unable to win a place in Australia's successful World Cup squad captained by Ricky Ponting, led New South Wales to the Australian interstate championship and one-day title double in 2002-03.

The 37-year-old won the inaugural Steve Waugh Medal overnight for the New South Wales player of the season.

"It's a huge shock. It's nice to win a trophy and have your name already on the trophy," the state captain told reporters.

"Next season is a very long way

off. I'm not sure whether I'm going to be there or not.

"If I'm there, I'll look forward to the challenge again."

Waugh equalled his former

captain Allan Border's world record of 156 test appearances when he led Australia in the fifth Ashes test against England in January.

Waugh made a century in the match at Sydney Cricket Ground, equalling Don Bradman's national record of 29 hundreds and joining Border and India's Sunil Gavaskar as the only players to score 10,000 test runs as Australia won the series 4-1.

However, he spent two months deciding if he would make himself available for the West Indies tour and only gave selectors his decision two days before the squad was announced.

Waugh scored 659 first-class runs in seven matches for New South Wales at 50.69, hitting three centuries including a double hundred against Victoria at Melbourne Cricket Ground.

The skipper also won his state's one-day award after scoring 343 runs at 49.0 in seven games.



STEVE WAUGH

and scored 88 not out off 84 balls as he and Ricky Ponting put on a record, unbeaten stand of 234.

Martyn said in the statement that he didn't want to do any long-term damage to the finger.

"I'm naturally disappointed that I won't be on the plane to the West Indies, but it's important that I allow the treatment to take its course and get things right for good."

"The World Cup final was a special moment for me and the

Australian team physiotherapist Errol Alcott said although Martyn's finger had responded well to treatment in South Africa during the World Cup, further therapy was needed for it to regain full movement.

"He will be reviewed by a hand specialist in Perth next week, after which we will have a clearer picture as to his availability for the remainder of the tour," Alcott said in the ACB statement.

Martyn played in the World Cup final with the help of pain-killers

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DAMIEN MARTYN