

Dhaka basks in the glory of cricket

Al-Amin

The sports fraternity here will cherish the penultimate year of the millennium, not because of any mouthful of achievements by our sportsmen, but for being an important part of the hurly-burly world of international cricket.

Although the World Cup of football had its profound impact in June-July, it was the cricket bandwagon that caught the imagination of the country.

The year started with an international cricket tournament in January followed by a series of tours of the national cricket team to different parts of the world.

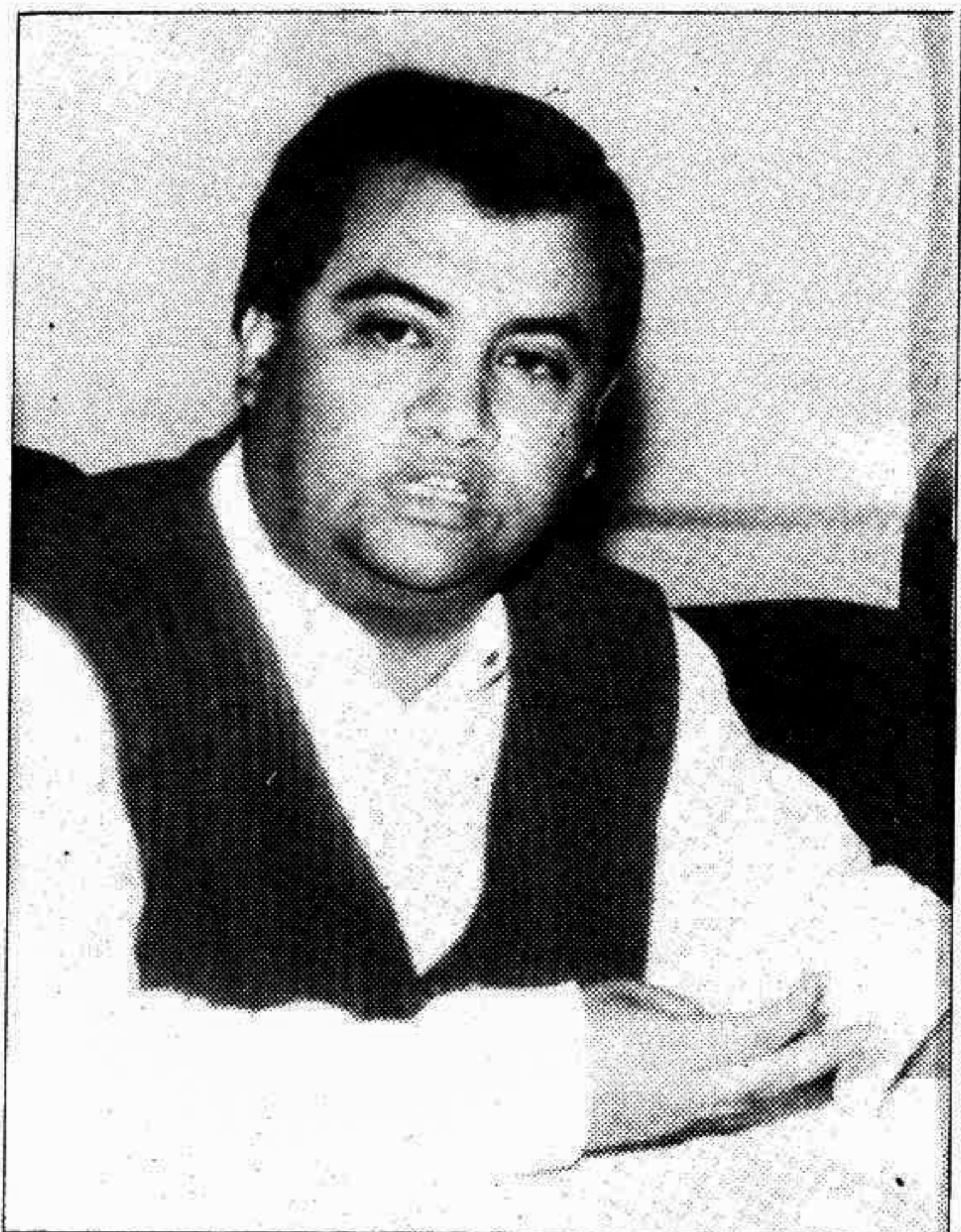
Bangladesh, however, witnessed the finest sporting hour in its history when all the nine-Test playing teams assembled in the sprawling city to feature in the Wills International Cup. A generous gesture indeed from the ICC president Jogmohan Dalmiya, who on January 5 declared that Dhaka will host the first knock-out world Cup instead of Sharjah.

Bangladesh could not expect a better way to get rid of the bitter memories of a devastating flood when it welcomed a galaxy of world cricket stars that stormed the Bangabandhu National Stadium in the month of October.

It was also a year to be remembered for a world record performance by the Indians in the Independence Cup in January, and the triumph for the roobops of Hansie Cronje's South Africa in the Wills Cup.

Bangladesh also had its share of success in international level. They won their first ODI in India by defeating Kenya in a tri-nation tournament. The youths posted a stunning accomplishment in South Africa when they won the 'plate' title defeating West Indies in the final of the World Youth championship.

The Bangabandhu National Stadium, centre of all entertainment throughout the year, went down in history when it accommodated all the nine-Test playing teams in the Wills International Cup. The big bowl which also boasts of holding the Independence Cup early last year, had its share of tragedies when Raman Lamba got the fa-



Distinguished achievement of the year: BCB supremo Saber Hossain Chowdhury, for bringing the carnival to town.

ries and Azhar returned home happy with the glittering trophy.

The tournament drew enormous enthusiasm in every nook and corner of the country. Mobile scoreboards were installed at different parts of the capital.

The chilly and foggy ambience at the Bangabandhu did cause a few problems throughout the meet, and Pakistan will still be wondering how they agreed to play the deciding final even after the streets lights were on, there was no doubt about the success of the tournament.

Although the senior cricketers did little to lift the image of the country, Al-Shahar led the Bangladesh youth team to win the 'plate' championship in South Africa on January 24. The spirited colts defeated their West Indies counterparts in the final by six wickets.

Cricket suffered a stunning blow in February when Raman Lamba died three days after being hit on the head by a ball at the Bangabandhu National Stadium. The jovial Indian right-hander sustained the fatal injury on February 23 while fielding at forward short leg during a Premier league match for Abahani against Mohammedan. Life's little irony on the Delhi-based batsman was that he had just made a nice new house. Lamba was a regular visitor to the Dhaka league.

Abahani, however, lived up to the memory of a great cricketer to win the League title for the second consecutive time.

Bangladesh stamped their first ODI win in May when they took part in a tri-nation tournament in India. The day-night tournament involving Bangladesh, Kenya and hosts India started on May 14.

The historic victory of Bangladesh came in Hyderabad on May 17, when they beat Kenya by six-wickets. Chasing Kenya's 236 all out in 49 overs, Bangladesh scored 237 for four in 47.5 overs. Mageshkar opener Rafique hammered a 89-ball 77 to lay the foundation. He put on 127 in 26.5 overs with Athar, who chipped in with 47. Skipper Akram scored 39.

But Bangladesh had to remain content with their one-off success in the meet, played in double league basis. They lost to Kenya in the repeat clash at Madras on May 23 by 28 runs. With three defeats including two against India, Bangladesh made their exit from the meet, leaving a final clash between India and Kenya at Calcutta, which the hosts won convincingly.

Faruque Ahmed gave Bangladesh cause to cheer in May when he led the second string national side to a 3-0 victory over Singapore in Singapore.

But disaster befell Bangladesh when the national team went on a one-and-a-half month long tour to Scotland, Ireland and England. They failed to win any of the five limited over 'international' matches against the national sides of Scotland and Ireland. Bangladesh won five matches against second-string teams and clubs. The national team also played three three-day matches -- two in Scotland and the other in England. All the matches were drawn.

The aftermath of the tour was devastating. A dejected BCB president Saber Hossain (even before the return of the team from England) reacting sharply on the performance of the national team in the British Isles said, "... this is ridiculous. It is beyond my imagination how a team that won the ICC Trophy last year can be crushed for 97 by Scotland.

BCB General secretary Ashraf Haq took little time to follow the footsteps of Saber. But Ashraf went down in history when he called Gordon Greenidge a "rookie" as a coach on July 19.

The statements of the two high-ups only went on to spark a sharp reaction from Gordon Greenidge.

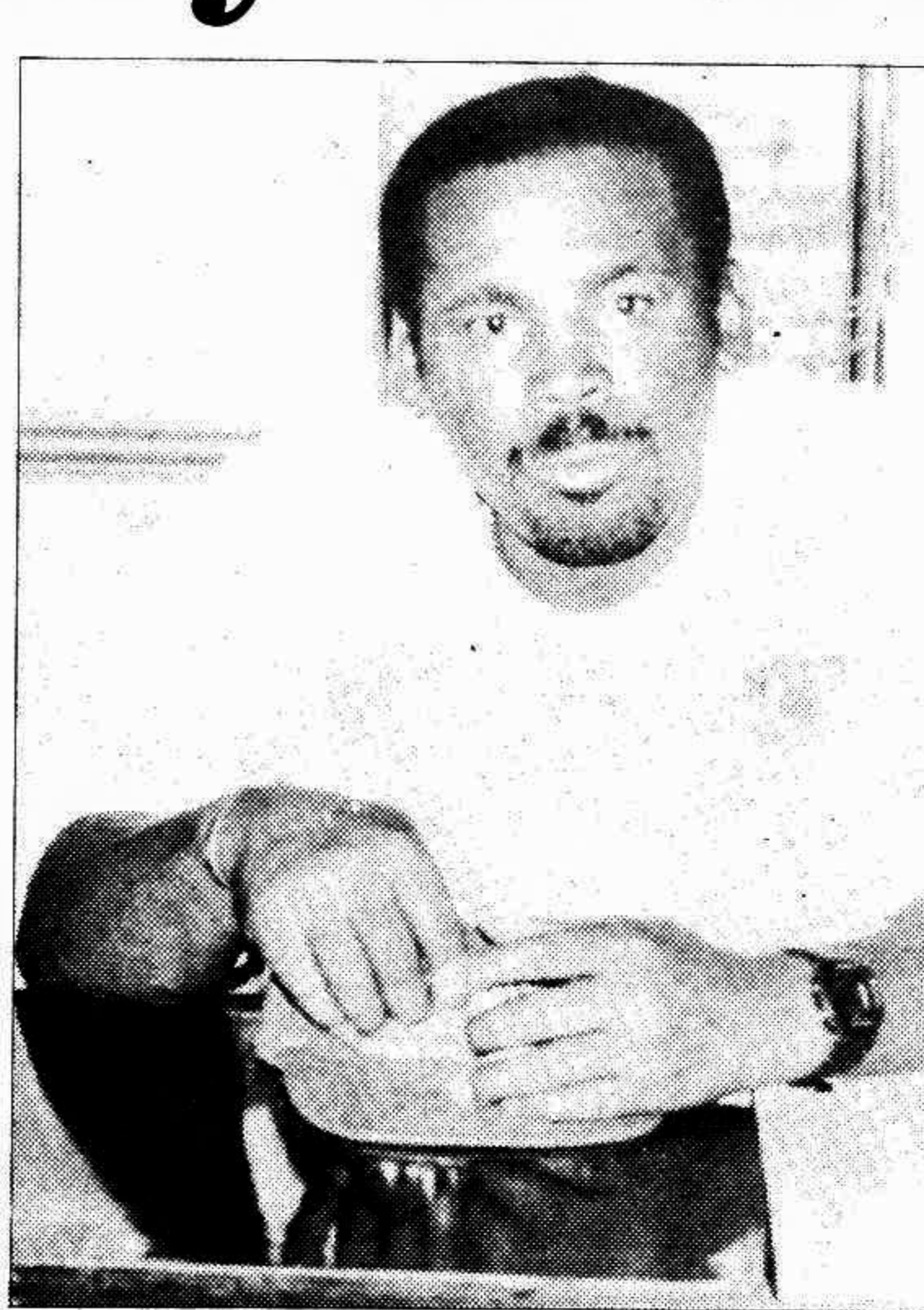
The Caribbean coach of the national team bared his soul to the Daily Star on July 24. In his elaborate taped interview, published in the Daily Star in three parts, pointed out the deep-rooted problems that our cricketers were facing. He did not spare anyone in his tacit but very constructive criticism, chiefly targeted at the BCB.

"A totally disrupted and destructive force beking for self-importance and not promoting cricket for the betterment of the country. I'm no scapegoat", Gordon said in his exclusive interview.

He also blasted the players. "We could not push the Bangladesh players because they were not mentally and physically prepared for this", said the West Indian.

A buttoned-up Gordon was cut to size by the BCB for his interview. He was next included in the Commonwealth-bound Bangladesh squad that followed.

But devastation trailed Bangladesh when they lost all their three group league matches in the Kuala Lumpur meet. Bangladesh conceded a four-wicket defeat at the hands of Barbados on September 10. They lost their second group league match against eventual



Coach Gordon Greenidge -- in, out and in again.

281/7 with skipper Hollislocke knocking an unbeaten 83. The Proteas replied with 283 for 4 in 46.4 overs. Captain-cool Cronje scored 67. Cullinan chipped in with a magnificent 68 and Jhonty Rhodes made 61.

Sri Lanka won the second quarterfinal against New Zealand by five wickets. Ranatunga scored a captain's knock of an unbeaten 90 as Sri Lanka, chasing New Zealand's 188 in 50 overs, recuperated from three wickets for five runs, to 191 with more than eight overs to spare.

Pakistan became the first of the three sub-continental giants to make for the exit from the meet when a rejuvenated West Indies won the third quarterfinal by 30 runs. Thanks to a virtuoso all-round performance from Keith Artherton (33 and four wickets) and an aggressive 79 by hard-hitting opener Philo Wallace.

Sachin Tendulkar stood between two combative forces with a terrific all-round show as India won the big battle against Australia by 44 runs. Tendulkar smashed 141. Azhar made his landmark 300th one-day appearance in the match, but returned for a duck.

South Africa dumped world champions Sri Lanka with a 92-run win in the rain-interrupted first semi-final. Jacques Kallis scored a career-best 113 to help South Africa score a commanding 240 for seven in 39 overs. Sri Lanka, given a revised target of 224 in 34 overs, were all out for 132 in 23 overs.

Maryn Dillon and Rion King unearthed the finest display of fast bowling and Hopper took a magnificent diving catch in the slips to dismiss India's Tendulkar as West Indies set up a final clash with South Africa with a four-wicket win in the second semi-final.

In the grand final, Wallace scored his first one-day ton, 103, to help West Indies to 245 all out in 49.3 overs. But Kallis' five-wicket burst followed by Corne's 61 not out, gave South Africa a three-wicket win and their first major trophy at the international level.

tal blow at this very ground in a league match in February.

It was a year that belonged solely to cricket. The Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) had a hectic schedule, both domestic and international, throughout the year.

The year started with the Independence Cup involving India, Pakistan and Bangladesh. The BCB organised the three-nation meet in celebration of the nation's 25th year of independence. India won the trophy, but not before a world record performance in the last of the three-match final against arch-rivals Pakistan at the refurbished Bangabandhu National Stadium.

The tournament started on January 10 with Bangladesh facing India in the inaugural match. The hosts, quite predictable lost the match, but not before offering a good fight against their awe-inspiring neighbours. In a reduced 48-over match, the hosts scored 190, thanks to a brilliant unbeaten 69 by Aminul. It was

Aminul's first one-day half century. India replied with 191. Azhar celebrated his reappointment as Indian captain with 84.

India stormed into the three-match final on the following day defeating Pakistan by 18 runs. Brilliant Sachin Tendulkar smashed a majestic half-century, took three brilliant catches including a return catch of Inzamam, as India, defending 245 for seven, restricted Pakistan to 227 for nine. Azhar celebrated his first one-day against Pakistan with exactly 100. Inzamam ul Haq threw caution to the wind with 77.

Bangladesh bowed out from the meet, conceding a heavy nine-wicket defeat at the hands of Pakistan in the last group league match on January 12.

The hosts scored 134 before being bundled out in 39.3 overs. Left-handed opener Saeed Anwar scored an unbeaten 73 to set up the three-match final against India.

India won the first final on January 14 by 8 wickets. Tendulkar was again brilliant with 95 off 78 balls as India, chasing Pakistan's 212 in 46-over, reached the victory 213 in 37.1 overs.

Pakistan bounced back on January 16 when they posted a six-wicket win in the second final to equal the series 1-1. India scored 189. Pakistan, aided by a half-century from Saeed Anwar (51), and an unbeaten 40 by Ijaz Ahmed reached the target without much ado.

The Pakistan victory set the stage for perhaps the most entertaining match in the game's history when the two combative forces met on January 16 for the third and deciding final.

India won the thriller by three-wickets. But it turned out to be a red letter day for the game of glorious uncertainties, where a total of 630 runs were scored, and Dhaka Stadium, which witnessed the excitement of the 10-day drama went into history books as the perfect hosts in such a style that the cricket aficionado across the globe will love to remember for a long time.

Pakistan, aided by two centuries from Saeed Anwar (140) and Ijaz (117) piled up a mammoth total of 315 in 48 overs.

India overhauled a target that no team had ever dared to cross with Kanitkar pulling the penultimate delivery of Saqlain for four over mid-wicket. It was a collective performance by the Indians, which enabled them to reach the summit. Ganguly scored 124. Sachin set the pace with a gusty 41 and Robin, promoted up in the batting order, more than justified his skipper's decision with an enterprising 82.

Ganguly was later declared the player-of-the-final. Tendulkar was the unanimous choice for the player-of-the-se-

winners South Africa by five wickets.

Bangladesh cricket hit its lowest ebb on September 15 when the national team suffered a humiliating 114-run defeat against Northern Ireland. The unimaginative national cricketers disgraced the nation when they were bundled out for a meagre 63 in reply to a not-so-impressive Northern Ireland total of 177 all out in 49.5 overs.

Manager turned-coach Gazi Ashraf resigned immediately after the Irish shame.

Skipper Akram Khan was also sacked for a series of failures. Aminul Islam was appointed as the new captain and Gordon again took over charge for the ACC Trophy, staged in Kathmandu from October 4 to October 14. Bangladesh, quite predictably, won the ACC trophy with a nine-wicket win against Malaysian in the final.

Then came the biggest happening in the annals of our cricket when the nine Test-playing teams arrived in Dhaka to take part in the Wills International Cup. The knock-out

Many trips, crore taka expedition, one bronze

Chronicle of failures

Hasan Masood

Bangladesh took part in two major Games-- 16th Commonwealth and 13th Asian-- in 1998. Besides, there were two other notable trips-- one to the 33rd Chess Olympiad in Elista, Russia, while the other was the Asian Track and Field meet in Fukoda, Japan.

Other than the national chess team, who occupied the 52nd position among the 110 participating nations, the other three trips brought nothing but disgrace for the nation. There was also a personal achievement for young chess knot Abdullah Al-Rakib, who earned his international Master's title from that Chess Olympiad.

In Japan last summer, the Bangladesh athletics team was more busy in doing what they were not sent for. Instead of motivating the athletes, winning a medal would have been the eighth wonder of the world, a couple of high officials of the team, the General Secretary and

with shameful results-- were sold to the private sector and a few affluent persons purchased the national blazer at their own cost. In golf we were last among 14 nations. In snooker, we also had to look down a deep hole.

In hockey, the Bangladeshi boys once again proved that they have a long way to go when they conceded 14 goals to South Korea. That was Bangladesh's second worst performance in its hockey history. They eventually finished with the ninth position ahead of hosts Thailand having consumed a total of 26 goals against one in the four first-round matches.

Kabadi was the only event in which Bangladesh had earned a silver in the Hiroshima Asiad in 1994. But this time they finished with a bronze behind Pakistan, who used to take technical tips from Bangladesh even a few years back. That only proves that while other nations try to improve their performance to earn pride for their country, we degrade ourselves with out any qualms. Thanks to the Almighty that we could manage a draw with Sri Lanka (!), otherwise we would not have even won the bronze in our crore Taka expedition.

In the remaining four events, Bangladesh had nothing to do other than appearing in the qualifying rounds and get ousted. Gaining experience was the excuse given by all the disciplines.

There is nothing more to write about all the chronicles of failures because that is the clear reflection of our poor and non-professional sports infrastructure that has been prevailing even 27 years after our independence.

The National Sports Council abolished the ad-hoc committee of the Bangladesh Olympic Association (BOA) in the last week of December for the dismal performance in Bangkok. Many consider the NSC move a show of power. For NSC is equally responsible for the national debacle.

BOA can not improve the standard of sports unless the NSC or the Ministry remain vigilant over the activities of the federations, which rule over each sport with a handsome annual grant from the NSC.

The NSC have provided crores of Taka to these federations for the training of the athletes. So, it should be the federations, who should be held responsible for the poor performances and not only the BOA.

Everybody understands this simple equation. But nobody in our sports arena seems seriously interested in raising this point. And that's the major reason why we do not develop in any sector. Long live Bangladesh sport.

the Treasurer of the Athletics Federation, allegedly abused sexually the lone female athlete in the contingent. Lovely Begum, a sprinter, submitted a written complain to the National Sports Council (NSC) on her return from Fukoda, allegedly at the behest of some rival Federation officials.

The NSC and Bangladesh Amateur Athletics Federation (BAAF) formed two separate committees to investigate the matter. The BAAF committee found the accused not guilty but proposed measures to censure the officials on the dock. But the NSC, after receiving the report of its own committee, issued a letter asking the BAAF to show cause as to why it should not be dissolved.

Then came the third committee. To the surprise of many, the Zainal Hazari-led three-man parliamentary committee took over the matter several months before but nothing has come out of it till filing of this report.

As with most other matters of inquiry, it now seems that almost everyone concerned has shelved the matter and the allegations and denials have died a natural death. Who cares?

The first of the two major trips, arranged by the Bangladesh Olympic Association (BOA), was the 16th Commonwealth Games, which was held in Kuala Lumpur last September.

Although Bangladesh sent athletes in as many as four disciplines, the whole nation pinned its only hopes on the shooting team.

Shooting is the event in which Bangladesh won their first ever gold in the international sports arena a decade back. But the performance of our shooters this time was more than awful. Discipline of the shooting team broke down completely. Many irregularities also took place while selecting the team. Moreover, a few shooters also got involved in alleged sex scandals. The shooting team manager was busy sending news dispatches to a Dhaka Bengali daily. Sadly, NSC and BOA have remained silent and have surprisingly refrained from trouble shooting.

In cricket, which was incorporated in the Commonwealth Games for the first time, Bangladesh could have only beaten Ireland in the group matches. But did they?

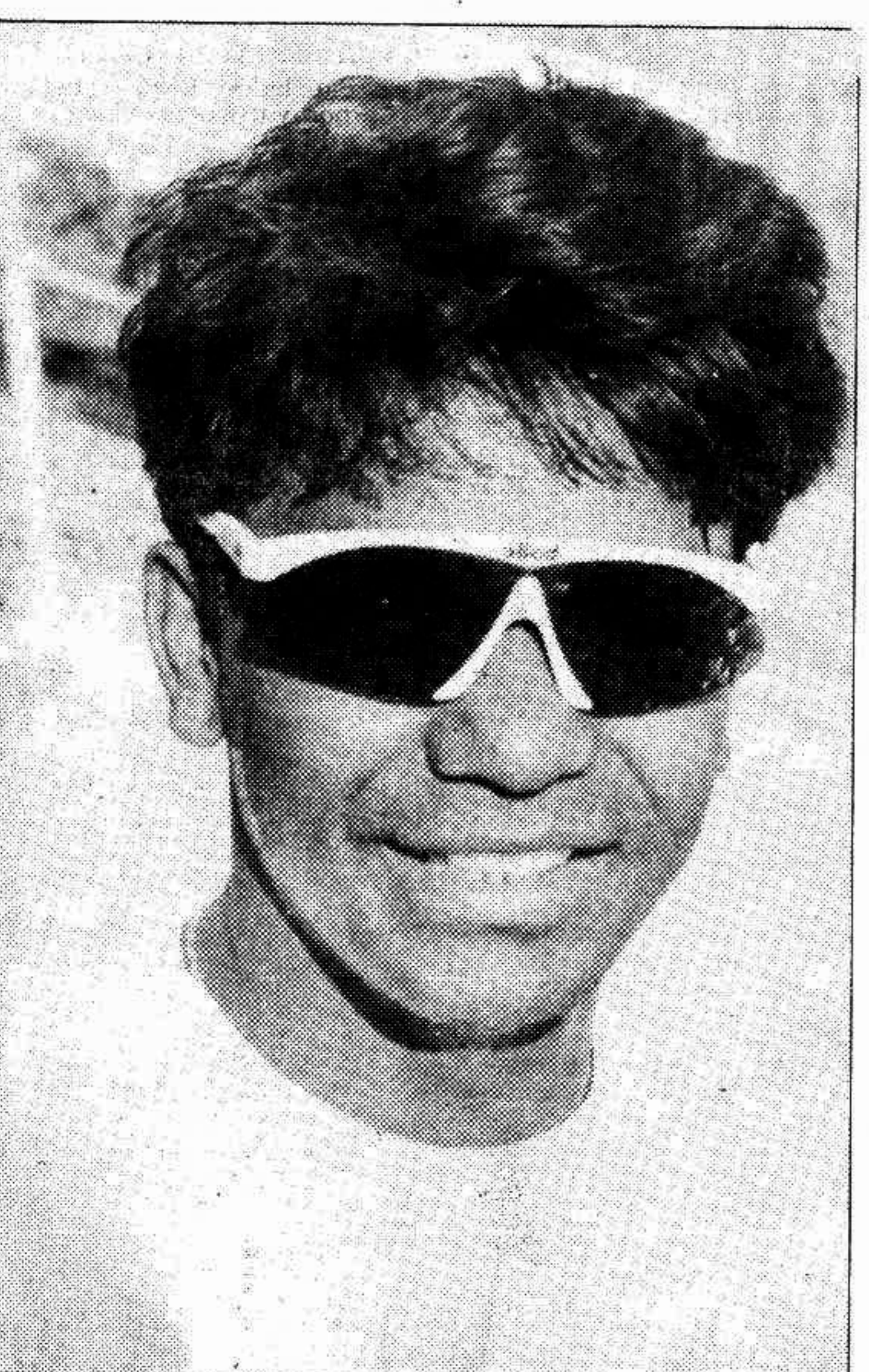
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tourament commenced on October 24 with Zimbabwe taking on New Zealand in the inaugural match.

New Zealand won the last-ball thriller with Chris Harris hitting the winning runs, a four through cover. Harris scored a whirlwind 33 off 22 balls as New Zealand, needing 40 runs from the last 18 balls to topple Zimbabwe's 258, reached the victory target -- 260 for seven. Kiwi skipper Fleming scored 96 to win the man-of-the-match award. For Zimbabwe, captain Alistair Campbell notched a brilliant 100 and Andy Flower ploughed in the sands with a breezy 77.

South Africa sent England packing, winning the first quarterfinal by six wickets. Batting first, England scored



Aminul Islam -- enter the captain.

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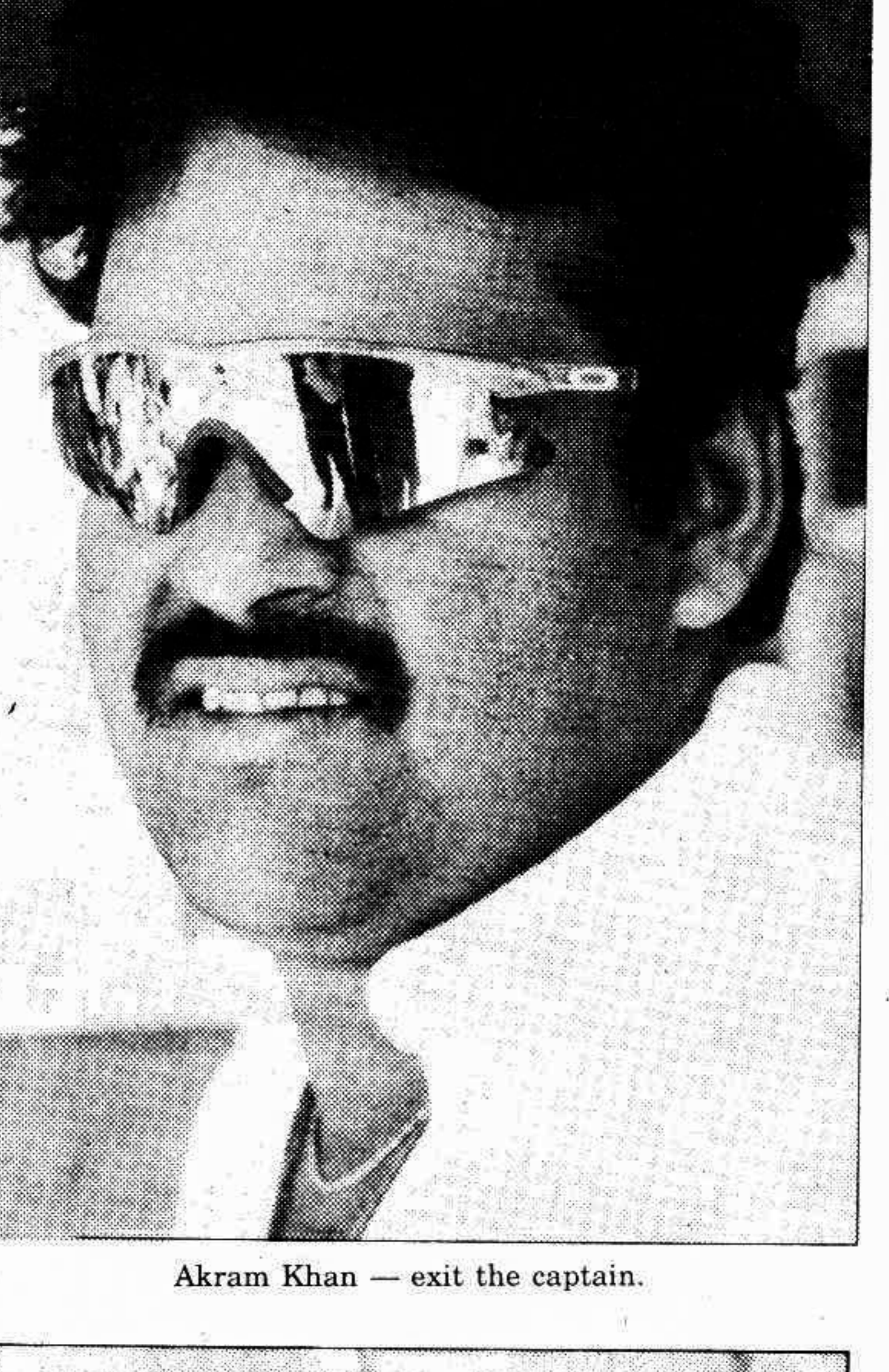
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Akram Khan -- exit the captain.

The Daily Star Standard Chartered

CRICKET QUIZ '98

Wills International Cup Cricket

Standard Chartered

The Daily Star Sport celebrated France '98 World Cup football with its valued readers by organising a nine-round quiz competition. Prizes were sponsored by Transcom Electronics Limited. The Picture however shows celebration, Requibul Hasan, Shabnam Mujtari and Tanvir Haider, during a draw of the two-round quiz competition arranged by the Daily Star Sport on the occasion of the Wills International Cup in Dhaka. Standard Chartered Bank was the sponsor. Full credit to our readers, who made both the quiz competitions a grand success.

— Star file photo

HIS LAST WALK: Abahani's Indian Test batsman Raman Lamba (C) seen leaving the field after being hit by a ball on the side of his forehead during the Janakantha Premier league match against Mohammedan at the former Dhaka Stadium on February 20.

— Star Photo (Feb 23)



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