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Tigers' maiden Test series scalp

Nafees hits composed century as hosts enforce draw

AL MUSABBIR SADI

Mission accomplished. Bangladesh won their first Test series when they drew the second and final match against Zimbabwe at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

The historic result was made possible because of a magnificent century by Nafees Iqbal, who shattered Zimbabwe's hopes of squaring the series with a flawless 121 under pressure.

The 20-year-old opener could not think of a better time to score a maiden Test hundred as the Tigers, resuming on 98-0 on the fifth and final day, eventually finished on 285-5 when play stopped five overs before the end.

Bangladesh take the series 1-0 after defeating Zimbabwe by 226 runs for their historic first-ever Test victory at Chittagong on January 10.

Needing another 276 runs on the final day, the home side, set a stiff target of 374 to win, never entertained any thought of chasing down those runs despite Nafees and his overnight opening partner Javed Omar producing a record first wicketstand of 133 runs.

The pair scored a single off the first ball of the day but waited a further half an hour to take the score past the 100-mark.

Javed Omar scored a patient 43 off 258 balls but once the experienced right-hander tried to play an attacking stroke for a change, he succeeded only to offer a tame catch at point to Brendan Taylor off leg-spinner Graeme Cremer. But by the time he was out Bangladesh had passed an important phase as the openers had seen off 83 overs.

Nafees however was not ready to leave without giving a lasting

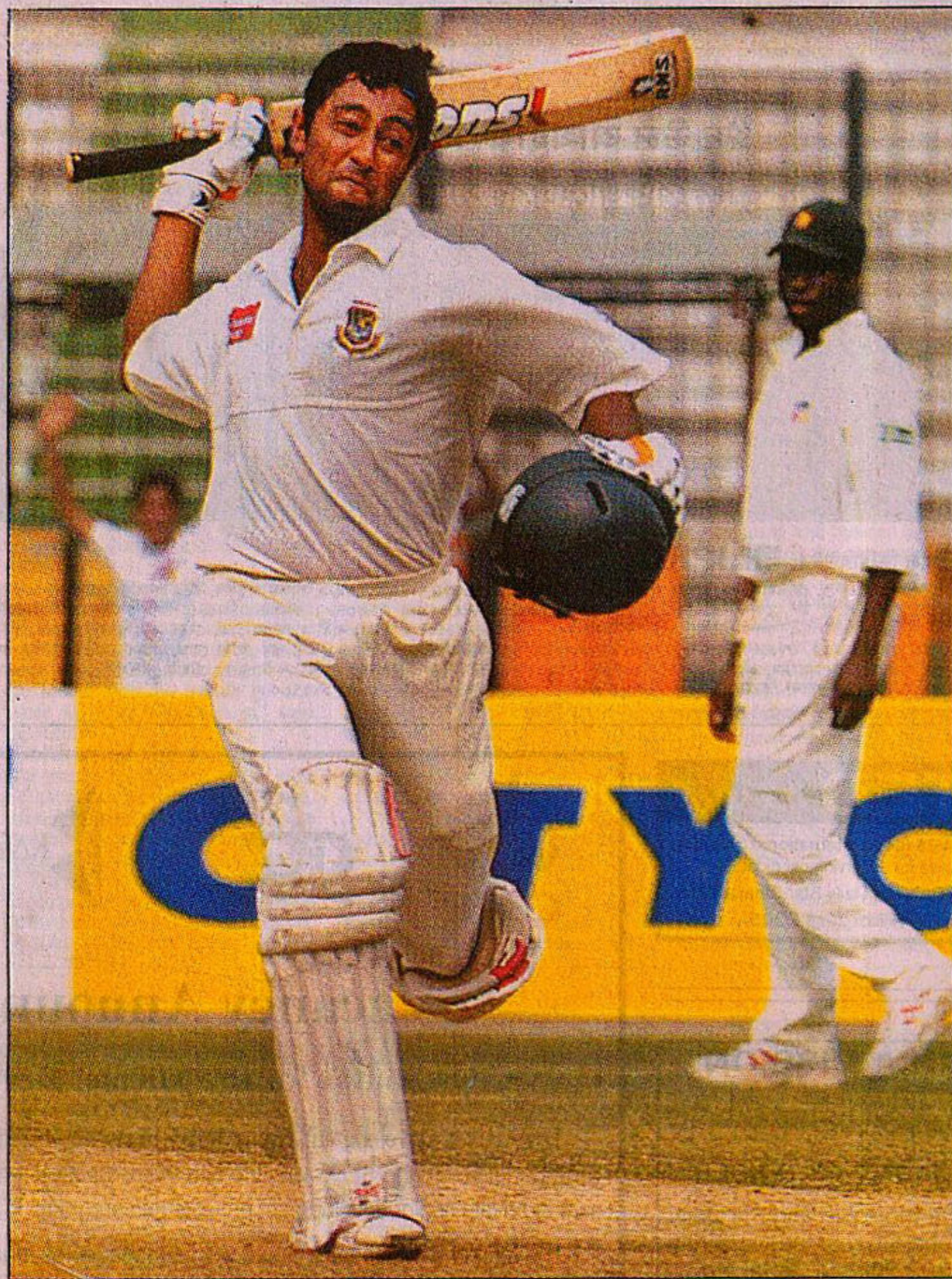


PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

Bangladesh opener Nafees Iqbal, who steered the home side to a draw in the second and final Test against Zimbabwe, shows his exuberance after hitting his maiden ton yesterday. Bangladesh clinched the series 1-0.

18 Bangladeshi Hajj pilgrims die in Saudi Arabia

UNB, Dhaka

Eighteen Bangladeshi Hajj pilgrims have died of various diseases and in road accidents in Saudi Arabia.

They are Abdul Matin of Karimpur village in Begumganj upazila of Noakhali, Delwar Hossain Pramanik of Khalifapara in Sadar

SEE PAGE 11 COL 4

Dhaka-Delhi water talks wind up without consensus

No terms fixed for interim Teesta treaty

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka-Delhi talks on water sharing ended here yesterday without a consensus and any headway in fixing the terms of an interim agreement on the Teesta water-sharing

and a joint technical survey of the river.

Bangladesh meanwhile accused India of not making "all possible efforts" on the matter from the start of the ongoing dry season, which left Bangladesh 11,000 cusec short of its

share of the Ganges water through the Farakka barrage in accordance with the 1996 Ganges water treaty.

The five-member delegation of the Joint Technical Group (JTG) on rivers held talks for the

SEE PAGE 11 COL 1

Bapex finds new gas field in Comilla

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Petroleum Exploration Company (Bapex) yesterday discovered a gas field in Srikail village of Muradnagar upazila in Comilla.

Bapex started drilling in the Srikail gas field on April 25, 2003 and succeeded yesterday in discovering gas primarily estimated at approximately 200 mmcf.

The discovery of the new field brings the country's total number of gas fields to 24.

The good news in the country's energy sector comes at a time when household gas users are everyday bearing the brunt of a acute gas crisis.

AKM Mosharrif Hossain, state minister for energy and mineral resources, announced the gas field discovery to newsmen yesterday and expressed the hope that the current gas crisis would ease within next two months.

ACC wants five new directors

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) will ask the government for the appointment of five directors at the commission on deputation after the withdrawal of the five directors of the now-defunct Bureau of Anti-Corruption (Bac).

The commission on January 15 asked the government for an immediate withdrawal of the five ex-Bac officials saying it was facing immense difficulties in its smooth functioning.

Sources said the establishment ministry yesterday sent the commission's proposal to the Prime Minister's Office for approval.

As the five ex-Bac directors had been working on deputation, the commission does not want to bring them under screening to absorb

SEE PAGE 11 COL 6

MPs for law to up privileges

SHAKHAWAT LITON

Both the ruling and opposition parties have agreed to increase the privileges of the lawmakers through enacting a law that will provide them with legal protection.

The BNP and Awami League (AL) lawmakers at a high-powered parliamentary body meeting yesterday reached a consensus that their existing privileges are inadequate. They decided to formulate the act through the law ministry.

The existing rules provide the members of parliament (MPs) with the facilities like accommodation, car and telephone at government expenses but there is no provision

for legal protection for them, the meeting observed.

Speaker Jamir Uddin Sircar chaired the meeting of the parliamentary standing committee on privileges that also formed a four-member sub-committee to prepare a report reviewing the existing rules and submit it in two months.

The standing committee will then ask the law ministry to proceed with the task of formulating the law.

This was the first meeting of the committee since its formation in 2001. The speaker and members of the committee however said from now on, they would sit frequently.

SEE PAGE 11 COL 4



Zia's birth anniversary today

UNB, Dhaka

Today is the 69th birth anniversary of late president Ziaur Rahman, founder of the ruling Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP).

SEE PAGE 11 COL 3

ACC probes BTTB mobile, rail sleeper purchase deals

JULFIKAR ALI MANIK

The anticorruption watchdog yesterday asked Bangladesh Telegraph and Telephone Board (BTTB) and Bangladesh Railway (BR) to furnish information about the contract of BTTB's mobile phone project and the tender for purchasing steel sleepers for the BR.

In a major move towards combating corruption, the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) has issued separate letters to the BTTB

chairman and BR director general (DG) following allegations of corruption in the cellphone project and the sleeper purchase deal.

Earlier, the ACC took another sensational move asking 13 secretaries to inform it about the whereabouts of several thousand government vehicles. It also asked Bangladesh Bank to provide information about tax evasion through under-invoicing of imported goods.

The ACC sent the copies of

SEE PAGE 11 COL 1

Islamists attacked Jatra, says arrestee

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bogra

Islamist militants of Jamatul Mujahedin (JM) were involved in Saturday's bomb attack on a Jatra (a folk theatre form) show in Laxmikola village in Shahjampur upazila, a detainee confessed to police yesterday.

Shafiqullah, who was arrested Monday, also disclosed names of several JM militants responsible for the attack. He admitted he is a JM militant but claimed he had no link with the incident.

Police have not disclosed the names for the sake of investigation.

SEE PAGE 11 COL 5

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Welcome Mr. K R Kim

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