

## 'Arafat is with us'

SPORTS REPORTER

The widespread rumour that former advisor and Development Committee chairman Arafat Rahman, is about to sever his ties with the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB), was categorically dismissed by Board president Ali Asghar on Monday.

"We need him for the greater interest of the game. We have talked to him recently and he has assured us that he would continue to work with the Board. I can assure everybody that he will be working in an official capacity," said Asghar about the youngest son of Prime Minister Khaleda Zia.

Arafat, an influential member in Asghar's advisory committee that had governed the BCB before August's election, did not take part in the polls.

According to sources, Arafat became disillusioned with the activities of the Board after witnessing irregularities in the election mechanism and process and wanted to distance himself from the BCB. But Asghar emphasised on the importance of his presence and hinted that the media-shy Arafat could be back as the development committee chairman.

"You all know what an important role he has played in the development committee. We have done many things with his help and that's why it is important for us not to lose him."

Neutral observers believe that had Arafat been in the Board, the recent ugly confrontation between vice-president Shah Nurul Kabir Shaheen and general secretary Mahbul Anam would not have taken place. His presence is also expected to discourage potential power struggle among councilors.

Although the newly elected body took over charge on September 12, it has yet to form standing committees for grounds and game development.

"We have formed only those standing committees that are essential. There are some technical problems but we will finalise

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## U-15 team posts big win

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh Under-15 cricket team crushed CAB (Cricket Association of Bengal) U-15s by 90 runs in their tour opening limited-overs match at the Kalyani Stadium in Kolkata on Monday.

A solid opening stand of 95 between Abdus Sajjad (44) and Ali Hossain (51) helped the visitors pile up 210-5 in 45 overs. Ashraful Aziz contributed a fine run-a-ball 48 not out.

In reply, the local boys struggled to make 120 for six in 45 overs with Ipu Saha top scoring with 56.

## What to WATCH

### ESPN

Football Focus  
Live at 5:00 pm  
Sportscentre  
Live at 8:30 pm  
UEFA Champions League  
Man United vs Lille  
Live at 12:30 am (Wednesday)  
Bayern Munich vs Juventus  
Same Day Delay at 3:00 am (Wednesday)

### STAR Sports

UEFA Champions League  
Sparta vs Arsenal  
Live at 12:30 am (Wednesday)

# India tour uncertain yet



SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) president Ali Asghar finally broke his silence yesterday. But his rare encounter with reporters at BCB's management office in Gulshan gave no clear indication of whether India would host Bangladesh for a full series next year.

Asghar, who returned home on Saturday after attending the International Cricket Council (ICC) meeting in Melbourne, was supposed to win a definite commitment from his Indian counterpart Ranbir Singh Mahendra over the pending tour that was stalled twice.

"Bangladesh's tour of India is still on for sometimes in next September-October. But we will get a definite response from India only after the approval of ICC's next Future Tour Programme (FTP) which will be ratified in March next year," said Asghar.

India, Bangladesh's opponent in the inaugural Test in 2000, has also played their first full series here last year. But they somehow failed to provide a slot for Bangladesh's return visit to India as prescribed in the ICC's first five-year programme.

Former BCB president Saber Hossain Chowdhury during his recent

visit to India criticised the present board for failing to arrange the tour. He also claimed that the tour did not take place due to cold relationship between the boards.

Although Mahendra reacted sharply to Saber's statement, terming him as a liar, but his another effort to buy more time from Asghar in Melbourne raised questions on whether India was really interested to



ALI ASGHAR

host their neighbours. Because the next FTP has got nothing to do with India's legal obligation to host Bangladesh that has long been settled.

India had earlier promised to host Bangladesh twice but backed out apparently to accommodate more

lucrative home assignments against Pakistan.

Asghar however was not interested to disclose whether India has officially expressed to host Bangladesh in September-October next year.

"I can only say that the tour is on and you will get the details after the next ICC meeting in March."

The BCB boss said that the FTP was not approved this time following objections from the Asian and African members.

"The interests of the Asian and African Test countries didn't reflect in the draft FTP rather it hugely favoured Australia and England," he added.

He also confirmed that there was no chance to cut off Bangladesh's away series in the new roster. Asghar however showed interest on playing more series at home than abroad.

"We wanted to play at least two series at home in a year during the period because it would be our main source of income. We have desired to hold at least two triangular series involving India and Pakistan during the next six-year cycle," he said.

Asghar said that the ICC wanted both Bangladesh and Zimbabwe to hold a tri-series involving Kenya.

"We are not against the idea. Interestingly, Sri Lanka also showed interest to play a triangular

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# CCL resumes today

SPORTS REPORTER

The third round of the GrameenPhone Corporate League begins today with the cricketers still un

happy about under-prepared grounds and pitch conditions.

Already one week has passed since the start of the 12-team meet but organisers have not only failed to provide quality grounds outside the capital but also in Dhaka with the exception of BKSP.

It has resulted in low-scoring matches at most of the venues but chief selector Faruque Ahmed thought that conditions would improve with the dry season in the offing.

"I admit that conditions have not been the best for cricketers. While it is a

matter of concern but frankly, it is a natural phenomenon at this time of year," Faruque told reporters on Monday.

"It is difficult to prepare grounds quickly at the end of a rainy season but we are trying to improve the conditions. We will discuss with the grounds committee about how fast they can do it," he added.

Due to an extended rainy season, today's three matches in Dhaka are under threat.

In a crucial Group B match, all-win Beximco and Biman Bangladesh face off at the Dhanmondi Cricket Stadium for pole position while star-studded Acme are pitted against lowly Orion Group at the Saver-based sports institute. In the other match, Jamuna Bank play Metro Real Estate at the Fatullah Stadium.

In case matches are washed out, the

teams will share points according to the bylaws.

Meanwhile, senior players have also complained about the size of the ball being used in the tournament, saying that it (the ball) is difficult to grip.

Tournament committee secretary Ali Hossain informed that the cricket committee is supplying the ball.

"We cannot change the ball without the cricket committee's consent. If the cricketers have any reservations, they should go to the cricket committee through the match referees. We can change the ball when asked," he said.

Three matches will be held tomorrow with Araf Apparels playing MM Ispahani at (Khulna), Bangla Cat meeting Security Air Express at Chittagong and Gazi Tanks facing Epyllion at Bogra.



WORLD-BEATERS: Victorious Australia cricket team members pose with the Super Test trophy at Sydney on Monday.

PHOTO: AFP

## BCB selectors to get contract extensions

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) will extend the contracts of three national selectors -- Faruque Ahmed, Golam Nawsher Prince and Athar Ali -- for two more years.

After Monday's meeting with BCB general secretary Mahbul Anam, who is also chairman of the cricket committee, chief selector Faruque Ahmed said that the trio will act as national selectors until August 2007.

"It was verbally communicated earlier but today it was made official." Their respective contracts expired in August 2005 but the board is expected to settle this issue in tomorrow's executive committee meeting.

Meanwhile, six separate selection panels will be formed for the divisional teams for the coming National Cricket League.

Each of the selectors will look after two divisions with the BCB-appointed coach for the team, the captain and an official being the part of the panels.

## BFF to select teams officials today

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) is expected to announce names of the officials of different national team and youth teams (Under 20 and U-17) today in its executive meeting.

There was a rumour that the meeting would also select the national captain for the four-nation meet in Myanmar and December's SAFF Championship in Pakistan.

But on Monday BFF general secretary Anwarul Hoque Helal dismissed it.

"There is a National Team Management Committee (NTMC) and I think they should handle this matter in association with the coach. We don't want to interfere," Helal said. "We are more concerned about the preparation of the national team and the youth teams at this moment."

Although the BFF would stick to the decision of NTMC about captain, sources said that the local football body might ignore the NTMC's recommendation about selection of the team leader and manager for the SAFF Championship.

Reportedly, the NTMC has already suggested BFF vice-president Monir Ahmed as team leader and former national goalkeeper and a member of the NTMC Sayeed Hassan Kanan as manager.

A few other persons have joined the race to become officials of the SAFF squad including Moha-mmedan's controversial ex-football manager Amirul Islam Babu -- a contender for the manager post -- who was twice suspended for abusing referees.

Meanwhile, the organising committee of the JFA Under-16 Football Tournament is also expected to be formed today.

The BFF general secretary informed that the estimated budget for the PM Gold Cup Football Tournament to be staged in Dhaka in January-February will be submitted to the executive committee as well. The PM Cup organising committee, however, will not be formed before Eid.

# The World is not enough



AFP, Sydney

Leg-spin wizards Stuart MacGill and Shane Warne spun Australia to an easy 210-run victory over the World XI here Monday, raising doubts about the future of best-versus-the-rest cricket series.

The Australians wrapped up another conclusive triumph following last week's 3-0 clean sweep of the one-dayers, ending the match just over an hour after lunch on the fourth day of the scheduled six-day Test.

The two champion tweakers

finished with 15 of the 20 wickets -- MacGill claiming 5-43 Monday and 9-82 for the match, and world record-holder Warne 3-48 for match analysis of 6-71.

The world team of superstars crumbled by the first hour of play Monday, losing their last eight wickets for 88 to be all out for 144, chasing 355 for victory.

Australian captain Ricky Ponting, who pocketed more than 130,000 US dollars in prize money for the four victories, said he looked forward to better times after the recriminations from losing the Ashes to England last month.

"It's no compensation for losing the Ashes but we've started afresh in this series, and it's extremely satisfying to beat the best players in the world," Ponting said.

"We've set ourselves a standard for the rest of the summer that hopefully we can live up to."

World team coach John Wright dismissed suggestions that his all-stars didn't put in an effort to win.

"There's no question that anyone went out there to fail -- no one does. Not with their reputations," he said.

"I think form was an issue for some of them. A lot of them came here without a lot of cricket behind them."

"We never got an innings going in the one-day series, which perhaps had an effect flowing to this match."

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## Diego won't dance in Italy

REUTERS, Buenos Aires

Argentine soccer legend Diego Maradona has quit the Italian version of reality show Strictly Come Dancing after the Italian Inland Revenue seized his pay packed.

The 45-year-old owes the state GBP21.17 million in back taxes for the years 1985-90 when he played for Naples team Napoli.

Earlier this month (OCT05) the finance ministry responded to criticism by deciding to confiscating GBP3 million Maradona had been paid, by the state-owned television network, to appear in three shows. The star responded by cancelling his flight from Buenos Aires, Argentina to Rome and pulling out of the show.

His lawyer Victor Uckmar says, "We intend to take this matter to the European Court of Appeal and I have waived my fees."

Maradona's agent adds, "He doesn't have a penny to his name."



PHOTO: REUTERS

TAX DANCING! Argentine legend Diego Maradona (R) and his daughter Gianinna (L) dance with Brazilian television star Xuxa Meneghel during Maradona's weekly television show 'La noche del 10' (The Night of the 10) in Buenos Aires recently.

# No Super Series on horizon



AFP, Sydney

Australia's overwhelming dominance of the world's best in three lopsided one-dayers and a Test match may have killed the International Cricket Council's

golden goose concept of a super series. Ricky Ponting's Aussies crushed the World XI by a whopping 210 runs here Monday in a one-off Test that was scheduled to go for six days, but ran out of puff as a credible contest well inside four.

Ponting praised the concept -- his 132,000 US dollar share of the lucrative prize money perhaps helping his sentiments -- but it is unlikely if cricket fans will get to see more in the near future.

"When we set this series up, the question we asked was, 'Can a team of champions beat a champion team?'" ICC chief executive Malcolm Speed said.

"And I think we saw the answer comprehensively both in Melbourne in Sydney," Speed told a press conference after the Test on Monday.

"As far as the world team is concerned, we share the players' disappointment in their performances."

"As for the future, I simply don't

know about that. It's a concept that for it to succeed it requires one team to stand out from the pack, to be the best team in the world.

"We've seen that with Australia in both one-day and Test cricket and so it was an opportunity to test that team against the rest of the world."

Speed said the next great team in world cricket could be England, India, South Africa or Australia, but the super series concept would not become a regular event on the world cricket calendar.

"It's not something we'll put in on a regular basis, it's not something that we're going to say we'll play this every two, four or six years," the ICC chief said.

"It's something that, if a team emerges that justifies being called the clearly the best team in the

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# MacGill's strong claim



AFP, Sydney

Stuart MacGill's nine match wickets in Australia's thumping win over the World all-stars are pressuring selectors to keep him in a leg-spin tandem with Shane Warne for next month's opening Test against the West Indies in Brisbane.

MacGill put in another sizeable order for a regular spot in the Australian team, after being spurned for the recent Ashes series in England, with 5-43 off 15 overs as the world tumbled all out for 144 in the Super

Test Monday.

That followed his 4-39 in the first



STUART MacGILL

innings on his favourite spinning Sydney Cricket Ground track to take more wickets than leg-spinning Warne (3-23 and 3-48).

MacGill, 34, now has 169 wickets at 27.76 from 34 Tests, at a rate of just under five wickets a match.

With Australia making greater use of all-rounder Shane Watson, giving them five front-line bowlers rather than the four they used in the Ashes, MacGill has more opportunities for playing Test cricket.

It's a pleasant dilemma that skipper Ricky Ponting and national selectors are wrestling with in the countdown to this summer's six Tests against the touring West Indies and South Africa.

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Dear Readers  
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-- Sports Editor