

Munna's death anniversary today

SPORTS REPORTER

The second death anniversary of former Bangladesh football captain Monem Munna will be observed today.

A commemorative meeting and doa mahfil will be held at the Abahani club premises where the country's football icon passed most of his life before his untimely death.

Fans are asked to join the programme to pray for the departed soul.

A golden chapter in Bangladesh football had closed on February 12, 2005 with the death of Munna, who ruled the pitch like a king during the 80s and 90s, at the age of 39.

The finest defenders suffered from kidney related complications.

Cruciani coming for Abahani

SPORTS REPORTER

Former national football coach Diego Cruciani will arrive in Dhaka on Wednesday to join Abahani ahead of the first-ever Professional Football League scheduled to start from March 3.

There was uncertainty over the arrival of the Argentine in last few days but the Abahani officials confirmed that he has already left his country along with three booters to take over the charge of the Sky Blues.

"(Cruciani) was supposed to arrive tonight but unfortunately missed the connecting flight in

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Did U Know?

Prize-money at this year's Australian Open totalled 20-million Australian dollars.



Adam Parore

(Former New Zealand wicketkeeper) "With New Zealand having lost seven of their past nine games, the endless drivel offered as explanations makes it clear to what Fleming does not hate losing."

While criticising the leadership of Stephen Fleming.

LOCAL SNIPS

Bangladesh Olympic Association (BOA) has handed a lifetime opportunity for one boy and a girl to take part in the youth camp programme of the Beijing Olympics to be held from August 6-26.

Anybody between the age of 16 and 18 years, picked by BOA, can participate in the Games if he/she is fluent in English, good at sports and arts and past experience as a volunteer in the Olympic movement or any other environmental events.

Interested persons (only Bangladeshi citizens) are urged to send in their details - name, father's name, date of birth, present and permanent address, passport photos, educational background and any sports or other certificates - to Bangladesh Olympic Association, 62/3, Purana Paltan, Dhaka-1000 (Phone-9560369) by 5pm on February 18.

U-23 SQUAD LEAVES TODAY

Bangladesh Under-23 Football team leaves today morning for Hong Kong to play the AFC Olympic Pre-qualifying round away match.

Smarting under their 3-0 defeat in the home encounter last Wednesday, Bangladesh take on Hong Kong in the return-leg match on February 14.

"We would not repeat those faults which we made in the home

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PHOTO: AFP

England captain Andrew Flintoff (L) and star performer Paul Collingwood (R) hold the trophy after defeating Australia in the second final of the Commonwealth Bank Series at the Sydney Cricket Ground yesterday.

It's Collingwood again

England clinch tri-series title

Cricket

AFP, Sydney

England capped their miraculous resurrection by claiming the triangular one-day series with an emphatic 34-run win over Australia in the second final at the Sydney Cricket Ground here on Sydney.

It was a fairytale end to their Australian tour and because the win gave the English an unbeatable 2-0 lead in the best-of-three tri-series

finals after their four-wicket victory in Melbourne on Friday, the third game will not be played.

England, led by Paul Collingwood's third successive man-of-the-match performance, made 246 for eight after winning the toss and electing to bat and then emerging swing bowler Liam Plunkett starred with the ball as Australia struggled to 152 from eight for 27 overs in reply.

When rain brought a premature

end to the match, an outclassed Australia were well short of the necessary total of 187 under the Duckworth-Lewis system, following earlier rain delays.

It was England's second win in the tri-series and their first since 1986-87.

England started the tri-series as 14-1 rank outsiders, were told by the Australian media they might as well go home after two poor performances in Adelaide and finished the series without injured quartet Kevin Pietersen, Michael Vaughan, James Anderson and Jon Lewis.

Yet they won their last four games to snatch an unlikely trophy from the wreckage of their previously disastrous Ashes tour as Australian coach John Buchanan's complaints that the English were not providing enough competition for his side came back to haunt him.

It was the first time Australia had not won their home tri-series since 2001-02 and they looked like anything but a side heavily favoured to

win a third World Cup in succession in a couple of months.

It was the first time the Australians had lost three games in a row on home soil since 2002.

After Collingwood made 70 to help England post a total that was always going to be competitive at a ground where teams batting first have an excellent record, Plunkett (3-43) turned the game on its head in the first over after the day's third rain break.

Australia were already in some trouble at 39-2, with Plunkett having claimed the prized wicket of Australian captain Ricky Ponting, when the rain came.

With the first ball after the resumption, things got much worse for the home side when Plunkett went around the wicket and produced a huge inswinger to clean bowl the dangerous Mike Hussey, for a duck.

Plunkett struck again to have Michael Clarke caught behind from the last ball of what was a pivotal over as Australia slumped to 40 for

four.

Interim captain Andrew Flintoff, who would have savoured the victory more than most after a draining summer, then came into the attack and snared the one player who might have been able to engineer an Australian comeback, the normally reliable Mike Hussey, for a duck.

There was more drama when rain forced the players off for a fourth time, with Australia at 79-3 and 3.4 overs still needed in the Australian innings to constitute a match.

All hope of an Australian revival disappeared when James Dalrymple hauled in an incredible one-handed diving catch from the bowling of the irrepressible Collingwood to remove Shane Watson for 37.

Collingwood also claimed the scalp of Brad Hogg to cap an outstanding finals series.

Earlier, Collingwood's rich vein of form continued when he top-scored to ensure his side made a total that would challenge the Australians at a

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Proteas pummel Pakistan

Cricket

AFP, Cape Town

South Africa raced to a crushing 10-wicket win over Pakistan in the fourth one-day international at Newlands Sunday after what captain Graeme Smith described as one of the team's best bowling performances.

South Africa's pace bowlers took advantage of overcast weather and a helpful pitch as they bundled out Pakistan for 107.

Then Smith and AB de Villiers hammered a demolition Pakistan bowling attack to take their side to victory in only 14 overs, with Smith finishing the match by smashing Abdul Razzaq over midwicket for six.

The win gave South Africa a 2-1 lead in the five-match series.

Smith said the bowlers had shown their worth following a disappointing performance in the second match in Durban when Pakistan scored 351 for four.

"It was one of the best bowling performances I've seen from the team," said Smith.

"The bowling unit took a bit of flak after Durban. They have been a superb bowling unit for a few years now and today (Sunday) they were fantastic. I don't think the ball did that much after eight overs but the pressure we built on them and the way we fielded was fantastic."

Smith said there was no deliberate attempt to score the necessary runs at a breakneck pace. "Once AB and I got the momentum going it was just a matter of trying to score an emphatic win."

He said, though, that South Africa would be wary of Pakistan's ability to bounce back when they

played the fifth and final match in Johannesburg Wednesday.

Captain Inzamamul Haq was the only batsman able to play a substantial innings for Pakistan, making 45 not out.

Inzamam said it had been a disappointing batting performance. "On this track 230 or 240 would

have been a good total," he said.

South Africa's bowlers shared the wickets, although Shaun Pollock was outstanding, taking two for 13 in ten overs.

Wicketkeeper Mark Boucher equalled the world record for dismissals in a one-day international, taking six catches.

Smith's decision to send

Pakistan in on an overcast day paid off as the visiting batsmen struggled on a pitch which offered movement through the air and off the pitch. Rain had fallen during the two days before the match.

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PHOTO: AFP

South Africa paceman Shaun Pollock celebrates dismissing Pakistan opener Imran Nazir during the fourth one-day international at Newlands in Cape Town yesterday.

Dilemma for Faruque

WC squad likely to be named tomorrow

Cricket

SPORTS REPORTER

The triumphant Bangladesh cricket team returned home today morning, only for a short respite before setting sail for the West Indies to play next month's World Cup.

Immediately after their arrival, the national selectors including coach Dar Whatmore and captain Habibul Bashar will sit to decide on the 15-member squad for the showpiece in the Caribbean which will start from March 13.

"We will meet tomorrow to decide on the World Cup team because there is hardly any time before the ICC deadline for the list," said chief selector Faruque Ahmed yesterday.

Bangladesh team, who have been pencilled in Group B along with India, Sri Lanka and Bermuda, is expected to fly to West Indies on February 20 to have a two-week camp before playing in the two lead-up games against New Zealand on March 6 and Scotland on March 8 both in Barbados.

The Tigers will launch their main campaign by taking on former World Champions India on March 17 before locking horns with 1996 champions

Sri Lanka on March 21 and will round off their group fixtures by playing ICC associate member Bermuda on March 25.

Conquering Zimbabwe on their own soil was the main mission for Bashar's men although the just concluded trip was billed as preparation for cricket's mega event. And in the end they accomplished just that with a 3-1 series victory to maintain their recent supremacy over their southern African opponents.

Undoubtedly the 3-1 series victory not only relieved Whatmore of the big task but also buried the bitter memory of their 3-2 series reverse in July-August last year. However, the manner of the victory failed to convince the selection panel boss.

"Winning is always important and the first-ever series victory in Zimbabwe is a boost for the team ahead of the World Cup. But I am not satisfied with the way we won the battle because it could have been much better had we completed it convincingly. What I honestly believe is that we need to prove that we are as good away as we are at home," said Faruque.

"We won the first match quite comfortably but lost the momentum in the second game to suffer a heavy defeat. We beat Zimbabwe in the last two games but not before we survived scares," he explained.

Despite the series victory the selectors will run the rule over a few debatable positions in the side and it is not unlikely that there may yet be surprises in the squad for the World Cup.

The former national skipper was reluctant to reveal anything about the selection but said that he was concerned about the opening slots as well the inconsistent performance of the top-order.

"I am really concerned about the opening batsmen's performance because in Zimbabwe they alarmingly failed to deliver. On the other hand nobody was inconsistent in the top-order," he said.

In four games, only the first match saw the opening pair of Shahriar Nafees (34) and Mehrab Hossain (12) reach double figure partnership as they put on 34. After two matches, Tamim Iqbal was drafted in place of Mehrab but it changed nothing as the openers continued to falter. Most worrying was the performance of Nafees who only managed one half century against his happy-hunting side.

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Lanka win a thriller

Cricket

AFP, Rajkot

Kumar Sangakkara cracked a robust 110 under pressure to set up Sri Lanka's exciting five-run victory over India in the second one-day international here on Sunday.

India needed 11 runs in the last over with three wickets in hand to surpass Sri Lanka's total of 257-8 but they ended on 252-9 following a tight over from veteran left-arm spinner Sanath Jayasuriya.

Jayasuriya conceded just five in the eventful over, which also saw well-set Mahendra Dhoni (48) fall to a superb running catch by Farveez Maharoof and Anil Kumble run-out coming back for a second run.

Sri Lanka lead 1-0 in the four-match series after the opening game was abandoned due to rain in the Caribbean.

India were strongly placed at



Sri Lanka batsman Kumar Sangakkara guides the ball through point during the second one-day international against India at the Madhavrao Scindia Stadium in Rajkot yesterday.

Shoaib doubtful for WC

Cricket

AFP, Karachi

Pakistan fast bowler Shoaib Akhtar Sunday said he fears he could miss the World Cup after suffering a knee injury that may take three to four weeks to heal.

Doctors have advised Akhtar to have scans to reveal the extent of the injury to the left knee, which was operated on, along with the right knee, in February last year.

"I am devastated at the thought of missing the World Cup," Akhtar told AFP, just a month away from the start of the World Cup in the West Indies, which kicks off with Pakistan playing the hosts on March 13.

"I was excited at the prospect of playing the World Cup. I want to help my team win the World Cup and I hope this injury is not worse and I am able to play some part in Pakistan's cup campaign."

His selection in the squad was also subject to his clearing a doping test to be carried out on February 16. Akhtar tested positive for banned steroids in October last year.

If scans reveal serious injury then Akhtar will have to fly to Australia for an operation and it could rule him out of the World Cup.

The latest injury scare to Akhtar compounds Pakistan's problems as they are already grappling with injury worries to key pacemen Umar Gul (ankle), Shabbir Ahmed (hamstring) and Mohammad Sami (back).

To add to their problems, the International Cricket Council (ICC) turned down Pakistan's request for an extension to the February 13 deadline for naming their World Cup squad.

Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) director of operations