

## The last mistake?



Cricket

BISHWAJIT ROY

Only time will tell whether Faruque Ahmed's name shall be synonymous with another forgettable event in the history of Bangladesh cricket after he recently took the much-debated decision of leaving Khaled Mashud out from the World Cup squad.

There has already been chaos, not only amongst the cricket fraternity but also within the fans regarding the decision of handing such a demanding job like wicketkeeping to an inexperienced player (Mushfikur Rahim) for cricket's showpiece event.

So any failure in this regard definitely places Faruque in a state of agony, nothing new for a man who is already remembered for the wrong reasons in two previous occasions. It was under his captaincy that a much touted Bangladesh crashed heavily in the

1994 ICC Trophy and their failure created a generation gap that made it take that much longer for Bangladesh to be boosted from ICC associate members to full Test playing nation.

It was also under his leadership that the selection committee made a great mistake by appointing Rajin Saleh as skipper for the ICC Champions Trophy in England in 2004, a move that almost made the team a laughing stock during the second biggest tournament of the game.

Though it takes time to draw conclusions about how suicidal the decision of excluding Mashud would be, the question that will go unanswered is how Mashud, clearly still the number one stumper in the country, was overlooked when veteran Javed Omar was drafted in to make his dream of playing a World Cup come true.

"Gelling? You wrote a very good story on this issue (opening pair) and you are now asking me why the Javed-Nafees (Shahriar) pair

couldn't gel," was the surprise response of a very powerful and influential member of the Tigers' think-tank when this reporter asked him why the most tried opening pair did not gel.

The conversation took place at the Mirpur Indoors just before last year's ICC Champions Trophy team selection when the issue of the continuous problem with the opening pair was most discussed.

To usher in a new era, the selection committee brought left-handed opener Mehrab Hossain in place of Javed as they considered Javed's quality of occupying the crease not required at all in light of the constant voicing of their slogan for the shorter-version of the game - 'we go for win.'

Many wanted to believe that the selectors finally came out from their 'cut-throat' approach towards the batsman, especially after they expressed their satisfaction with the performance of Mehrab in the first few matches.

SEE PAGE 18 COL 5



(L) BCB National Academy players embark on a light jog while (R) the England A team practice catching during individual training sessions at the Mirpur Indoor facilities yesterday.



PHOTO: STAR



## Did U Know?

Zaheer Khan of India took 5 for 42 in the third one-day international against Sri Lanka at the Nehru Stadium in Goa on February 14. It was the seventh time that he has taken five wickets in a match, first against Sri Lanka.



Danish Kaneria

(Pakistan leg-spinner)  
"I am thrilled at being selected in the team. But I will only celebrate this on April 28 if I am able to help Pakistan win the trophy."

After being named in the Pakistan squad for next month's World Cup.



### NEO Sports

India v Sri Lanka  
Fourth ODI  
Live at 10:00 am

### ESPN

FA Cup  
Chelsea v Norwich City  
Live at 10:00 pm

### STAR Sports

FA Cup  
Arsenal v Blackburn Rovers  
Live at 6:25 pm  
Middlesbrough v West Bromwich  
Live at 8:55 pm  
Man United v Reading  
Live at 11:10 pm

## Fine start for Wasiur

SPORTS REPORTER

Wasiur Rahman struck a sublime century to propel Dhanmondi to a 50-run victory over Agrani Bank in the Kai-Altech First Division at the Dhanmondi Cricket Stadium yesterday.

Put into bat, Dhanmondi scored 241-8 in 50 overs but then bowled out Agrani Bank for 191 in 47 overs.

Wasiur struck nine sweetly timed boundaries and a couple of sixes in his 95-ball knock but the other batsmen failed to raise the tempo. Ashiquel and Uttam took

SEE PAGE 18 COL 7

## Dhiman keeps Ctg alive

SPORTS REPORTER



Dhiman Ghosh rescued Chittagong with a timely century as the visitors fought back from a precarious position to brighten hopes of a draw against leaders Rajshahi in the sixth round clash of the Ispahani Mirzapore Tea 8th National Cricket League yesterday.

Under pressure of Rajshahi's first innings total of 300, Chittagong resumed third day's play on 23-3 and stared at further trouble when their innings was halved in addition of six runs. But wicketkeeper-batsman Dhiman's unbeaten 100 not only put a brake to the slide but also handled another mini collapse later to give the Chittagong first-innings total respectability.

The other two matches also headed for draws with just one day remaining after opening day of all three four-dayers were washed out due to rain.

### RAJSHAHI-CHITTAGONG

Reduced to 29-5, Dhiman and overnight batsman Elias Sunny added 74 runs for the sixth wicket as Chittagong began to frustrate the home side at the Rajshahi Divisional Stadium.

Sunny, who resumed on 11, dug deep in a 101-ball 53 before being removed by four-wicket Mushfikur Rahman, who dismissed Sabir Khan in the same over without any addition to the total.

Dhiman kept cool and took the total to 199 from 103-7 with great support from Waskuruni Ahmed, the paceman who contributed a breezy 42 off 67 deliveries with help of seven boundaries.

Dhiman, who batted over four hours, cracked 13 fours in his 174-ball unconquered essay to take Chittagong to 231.

Rajshahi built on the 69-run lead and reached 95-1 at stumps in their second innings with in-form Rabiul Karim, another wicketkeeper-batsman, making 50 on the back of his 40 in the first innings. Rafiqul Islam with 41 and Farhad Reza (1) were at the crease.

With an overall 164-run lead, Rajshahi will look for fast runs today in a bid to go for an early declaration and force a result.

### BARISAL-SYLHET

Bottom-table Barisal posted a scanty five-run lead against Sylhet when they reached 175 in the first innings after resuming on 93-5.

At one stage, Test spinner Enamul Haque's four-wicket spell opened up Sylhet's chances to take

lead when their rivals were struggling at 135-8 but Arafat Salahuddin's 32 not out made sure they surpass Sylhet's first-innings total shortly after lunch.

In the second innings, captain Alok Kapali's 41 off 78 balls helped Sylhet post a 137-run overall lead when they scored 142-5 at close of play.

### KHULNA-DHAKA

Talha Jubair and Mahbubul Alam's new ball combination kept Dhaka on course for taking a first-innings lead against the hosts at the Khulna Divisional Stadium.

Talha and Mahbub grabbed three wickets each as Khulna, overnight 104-4, were bundled out for 182 in their first innings. Nahidul Haq, who resumed on 43, was dismissed soon after completing his half-century (56 off 122 balls).

Opener Uttam Sarkar (43) and Shamsur Rahman, who was batting on 44, took Dhaka to 145-3 — within sight of overhauling the opposition total — at stumps.

### SCORES IN BRIEF

RAJSHAHI: 300 and 95-1 38 overs (Rabiul 50, Rafiqul 41 batting, SEE PAGE 18 COL 1

## Bond buries Australia



Cricket

AFP, Wellington

Australia suffered their first ever 10-wicket loss in limited-overs cricket when they were thrashed by New Zealand here Friday just weeks away from their World Cup defence.

A five-wicket haul from Shane Bond was backed by an unbroken stand by Stephen Fleming and Lou Vincent who needed just 27 overs to knock off the 149-run target in the first game of the Chappell-Hadlee Trophy series.

New Zealand at full strength exposed the inexperience of an Australian side missing Ricky Ponting and Adam Gilchrist by choice, and Andrew Symonds, Michael Clarke and Brett Lee through injury.

The makeshift Australians had trouble getting into rhythm with the bat and had particular trouble handling Bond, making 148 all out three balls short of their 50 overs.

Then their defence of a low target suffered from wayward bowling and dropped catches.

As a result, Vincent cracked 73 from 87 balls and Fleming faced just 76 deliveries for his 70 as they produced a record opening stand for New Zealand and the first century from a New Zealand opening partnership in 22 years.

Australia's woes were summed up late in the New Zealand innings when Vincent took off his gloves and began walking from the pitch, certain he was going to be caught after he top-edged a pull shot.

But he had to be called back by Fleming as a communication mix-up meant neither the bowler Mitchell Johnson nor the close-in fielder Brad Hodge were able to reach the simple chance.

It was a rare third successive loss for Australia, after losing two in a row to England in their recent home tri-series finals, and their first-ever 10-wicket hiding.

Stand-in captain Mike Hussey

described the defeat as "demoralising" for Australia, who need to win the three-match series if they are to defend their world number one ranking from South Africa.

"It's probably as low as we've been or can go," he said.

"We've got a new group at the

moment and we've just got to mould together as quickly as possible."

An elated New Zealand captain Fleming, who won the crucial toss and made Australia bat first under overcast skies, said man-of-the-match Bond set up the victory.

SEE PAGE 18 COL 6



PHOTO: AFP

New Zealand paceman Shane Bond celebrates the wicket of Australia's Nathan Bracken during the opening match of the Chappell-Hadlee one-day series at the Westpac Stadium in Wellington yesterday.

## Nayeem to make Brothers a fighting unit

SPORTS REPORTER

Ex-Indian national coach Syed Nayeemuddin said yesterday that strength of a team should not worry a coach at top level of football.

The veteran, who led India to regain the SAFF Football Championship in Pakistan in 2005, was removed from his position last year following India's poor start in the 2007 Asian Cup qualifiers.

Since then, he has been enjoying a welcome break but responded to Brothers Union's call to take charge of the two-time Premier League champions for the coming professional Football League.

Nayeem, well known for his shrewd brain, arrived in Dhaka on Thursday night and informed while attending Brothers' training session yesterday that he was busy making a football academy in Hyderabad.

"I have some lands in Hyderabad and had to settle some matters with them and now preparing to launch my academy. I refused offers from all the Kolkata giants after parting with the national team but decided to come here as I feel at home," he said.

Nayeem was instrumental in Brothers' maiden Premiership title in 2004 but compared to the team three years earlier, he has a weaker outfit at hand.

"I have no headache about team SEE PAGE 18 COL 1

## LOCAL SNIPPETS

SPORTS REPORTER

Majid took five wickets to help Bakhrrabad High School to a facile 85-run win over Residential School and College in the Standard Chartered National School Cricket tournament at the Housing Estate ground yesterday.

He took 5-24 to shoot out Residential for only 77 runs in 17.1 overs as they faced upto chase 163 set by Bakhrrabad.

In far flung Kalindi Club ground, Dhaka Government Muslim High School beat St Joseph High School by six wickets.

Rasulpur High school and Palashpole high school won their respective zonal matches today in the Standard Chartered Young Tigers National School Cricket Tournament.

Winning the toss, Rasulpur High School scored 142 runs while in reply, PN High School were bowled out for 82.

At Satkhira Stadium, Palashpole High School defeated Palli Mongal High School by 23 runs.

BSWA SEMINAR Sports Adviser Ptan Chowdhury will attend a seminar titled, 'Inactive Sports: Road to Success' at the NSC Tower today.

The symposium is organised by Bangladesh Sports Writers Association and will be attended by legend Kazi Salahuddin, among others.

### NATIONAL JUNIOR CHESS

Shamima Akhter and Sharif Hossain are jointly at the top of the Basic Bank 28th National Junior Chess competition.

Both have earned five points each after beating Minhazuddin and Abdullah Al Saif in respective matches.

## Yardy wants some runs



Cricket

SPORTS REPORTER

England A captain Michael Yardy shrugged off his miss from the World Cup squad and wanted players from his team to be prepared for bigger things to come.

Facing the media for the first time since arriving in Dhaka on Wednesday, Yardy agreed that the series against Bangladesh A will be useful as a breeding ground for potential last-minute replacements for the team bound for the West Indies.

"In case of injury, some players can be called up from here to join in the World Cup squad," said Yardy at the official press conference at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur.

"But it is not just about the World

Cup. These players are eager to play in Tests and one-day internationals for England in future. So this tour is a learning experience for all of us. Hopefully when we will tour the subcontinent with the national team we will utilize this experience."

The left-handed batsman struck his first-class highest of 257 for his county side against visiting Bangladesh back in 2005.

But his personal aim was to get back to the first time as he missed out on the Caribbean touring party for the biggest cricket tournament.

"As a captain, I want to lead the team well and set example by playing good cricket. Beside that I want to get back in the national squad as early as possible. For that I have to score some big runs in this tour," said the 27-year old captain.

England A boasts five players

with international experience but Yardy confidently said that all of his players were key to performance.

Coach Peter Moores however mentioned the likes of wicketkeeper-batsman Matthew Prior and fast bowler Stuart Broad and skipper Yardy as the men to look out for in the tour.

Mentioning the challenge of coping with the conditions here in Bangladesh, Moores said, "The condition is obviously different from ours. The first part of any tour for the touring side is to get used to the condition. We will also try to do that. We are also interested in the wickets, speaking to the curators here. That wicket out there (in Mirpur) looks like a good one which might have a bounce early on and some turn later."

England A play their three-day practice match against BCB National Academy at BKSP today.



PHOTO: STAR

Indian coach Naimuddin (R) lines up his Brothers Union charges for the first training session of the season at the club headquarters in Gopibagh yesterday.

## YOUR SAY ON TIGERS SELECTION

1. Well, I have lost my word to say anything. Mashud is not in the team and that is a big mistake made by the selection panel. I mean he is the most experienced player in the team. How could you throw him away from the team? This is really unfair.

Farhan

2. I was shocked to the core to see Khaled Mashud being excluded from the World Cup squad. Including Javed was a good judgement as I have seen he doesn't throw his wicket easily and is one of the better batsmen. Bringing back Tapsh was good thinking, as he too is one of the better bowlers. But really, including Ashraf who has been so inconsistent and unreliable and a young gun like Mushfikur Rahim was sheer lunacy. Khaled Mashud should have been in the team. It was him who hit the six which handed us the ICC Trophy. We still remember Mashud. We still remember even if Faruque has forgotten about it.

Ro

3. I am shocked in such protests over not selecting one player, who was not a Gilchrist nor Boucher or

Sangakkara. We have Test status; we no more can be satisfied with substandard mentalities like, Gilchrist of Bangladesh/Sangakkara of Bangladesh type. He is not performing for a long time and he never had the batting technique of international class. He always somehow struggled in batting and sometime made some run with mostly non-cricketing shots. I wonder why he was so long in the team? However important wicketkeeping is, batting of the keeper is equally important. Only keeping can't keep a person in the one-day team anymore. You have seen David keeping for India until they found a wicket keeper with batting skills.

Rajin Saleh/Javed have improved their techniques of batting a great deal in the past. I fully agree that they have taken two additional openers. We need their skills to avoid collapse in 20-25 overs against big teams. For many other reasons I feel that their selection is right. One-day is batsmen's game, opening pairs are vital and it's okay to have extra batsmen like them.

I don't want to make it too lengthy reasoning for the selectors. My final words are, please allow the selectors to do their job, don't dictate them. They will be

questioned if team fails to achieve desired result. Let them do their job and let everyone do their job as they think right. If they fails to satisfy us, the fans, we must make everyone answer, I would not mind to be much more rude and critical of all the people who are responsible. The selectors are more in touch with the performance of the players and the skills needed for WI. I support Abahani and I am from Rajshahi, is not the criteria for pushing the selectors, after all its not Rajshahi team, or Abahani we are talking about, that's Bangladesh team.

Let there be debate after every bad performances of the team in any match and lets be cruel in making the people answer us, until they correct their mistakes and performs well. Because bad performance of the national team is related with the self-respect of all its citizens. They are being paid to do the job for us, so now I prefer to allow them to do their job. Now if I dictate I clearly loose the right to ask them questions after bad performances. I don't want to feel satisfied in team selection; want to be satisfied with performance of the team.

Best wishes for the Bangladesh team and hope Tamim and Nafees

SEE PAGE 18 COL 2