



A Bangladeshi woman shakes hands with Indian star Yuvraj Singh at the entrance of the Chittagong Divisional Stadium yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

Bashar mulls in the rain

MOHAMMAD ISAM from Chittagong



Bangladesh captain Habibul Bashar remained unsure of his one-day international career, as he wanted to give more time to his retirement thoughts.

"To be honest, I want to finish this series first and then decide on it," said Bashar on a rain-soaked afternoon here yesterday at the team hotel after their initial practice session was cancelled due to wet outfield at the Chittagong Divisional Stadium.

"I want to put all my concentration on this series and then I will tell you. I do feel a bit of personal pressure and was mentally upset ever since I came back from the World Cup. It is a big decision and it is not easy for me.

"If my body would tell me that it's enough, it would have been easier for me but that's not the case. I want to give it a bit more thought but obviously the team comes first," admitted Bashar.

"I don't want to be a burden to the team."

Bashar was frank to admit that he was not sure himself of the decision and would let everyone know whenever he thinks it's necessary.

"I don't want to hamper the

game that is upon us or the Test matches that is coming up in two days time," said Bashar.

"Let the series end, and I will do what is good for me," stated a visibly tired Bashar.

But the match, which could be Bashar's final game in the limited-over version, is almost certain to be washed out as rain persisted all day on Monday. The rain was due to a low over Bay, which developed into a cyclone named Akash.

The cyclone, that forced the maritime authorities to hoist danger Signal Number 9, was 450km away from the coastline and was approaching Chittagong port.

According to Bangladesh Cricket Board curator Shafiqul Alam, there is little chance that the match will take place as the ground is situated much closer to the beach.

If the weather takes a sudden turn, then Bangladesh will have their own dilemma as the viral fever that forced Mohammad Ashraful to stay back in Dhaka has also struck down all-rounder Forhad Reza who was set to replace the ace batsman.

"There are a few in the team who have complained of high temperature and that is a real concern," said Bashar.

Fast bowler Shahadat Hossain is also reported to be struck down by fever while Abdur Razzak has, somewhat recovered from his bout of high temperature.

"But we will monitor the situa-

tion closely but it's the changing weather that is this, I think."

Bashar however did not want to be drawn into a 'war of words' with Indian cricket manager Ravi Shastri after the latter remarked that India would show no mercy.

The 34-year-old captain said: "Time will tell what the difference between India and Bangladesh is."

"But this time they had to work harder than their last tour to beat us and I think the difference is coming down by each day. But what he (Ravi Shastri) said was his thinking," said a smiling Bashar.

Too much security?

SPORTS REPORTER from Chittagong

If we are very hospitable, giving away gifts to the opposition, then it is also true that we are overprotective too.

Around 200 policemen, another hundred from the paramilitary wing and a further 50 or so from other security divisions were deployed to 'protect' India and Bangladesh cricket teams.

If you were standing inside the stadium premises on Monday morning, awaiting their arrival, you would have thought you were inside a fortress and a war was being waged in Chittagong.

SEE PAGE 18 COL 8



Did U Know?

Olympic mascot made its first appearance at the Munich Olympic Games in 1972.



Wasim Akram

(Pakistan cricket great)

"What happened in the World Cup was regrettable and disappointing. But the past is history now and we must look ahead. Pakistan team still has lot of talent and some good young players are coming up but we have to be patient and give them

Noakhali upset hosts Satkhira

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Satkhira

A brace by Nurul gave Noakhali a fine start in the final round of the Western Union National Youth Football Championship when they came from a first-half deficit to edge hosts Satkhira 2-1 yesterday.

Zahir put the hosts ahead after 22 minutes at the Satkhira Stadium but Nurul cancelled the lead in the 51st minute and slotted the match winner 15 minutes later.

BFF president SA Sultan inaugurated the finals.

Uthappa, Singh to play

SPORTS REPORTER from Chittagong



Chittagong Divisional Stadium today.

With injured Shanthakumaran Sreesanth still being monitored and Zaheer Khan being rested, it gives another chance for opener Virender Sehwag to get into some much-needed form.

"Sehwag must capitalise on the starts that he's been getting and must play a bigger innings than what he's doing here. He must start converting them. He knows it himself," said Indian captain Rahul Dravid while talking to reporters at

the indoor facilities of the stadium yesterday morning.

Right-handed opener Uthappa will bat at number three, informed Dravid after rain forced them to use the indoor nets where he also reiterated his wish to whitewash Bangladesh.

"Trying to win it 3-0 remains the target for us. We are very keen on it as it was one of our goals," said Dravid.

But Dravid was quick to admit that after the World Cup debacle, winning the series was a relief.

"We have had to play good cricket to win it 2-0. Considering the disappointment of the World Cup, it is a good start and it is better than to be losing.

"This is the first step and we have a lot of cricket ahead of us," remarked Dravid.

It is likely that left-handed batsman Dinesh Mongia, whose only contribution was the three-

wicket haul in the first game, would be axed for the Chittagong match. But Dravid refused to acknowledge that it was a risk to play their fringe players. He however thought that it was important for players like Mahendra Dhoni, who will bat down the order today, be rested because of the workload ahead.

He also played down the comments made by manager Ravi Shastri who made strong suggestions after the second match.

"We are here to play for ourselves and focus on ourselves and not on Bangladesh," said Dravid.

The 'wall' from Bangalore however hinted that it was too early to think that everything is fine after just a one-day series victory and that it would be a problem if anyone would sit on this for too long.

His charges took part in a short session yesterday where they had a little batting as well as some fielding drills.

Rain set to play foul

CU CORRESPONDENT

Just like the dark sky above the port city, a pall of gloom hung over cricket fans as weather threatened to wash out the third and final one-day international between Bangladesh and India here today. The storm that has put everything in jeopardy is expected to hit this morning.

All tickets for the much-awaited match were sold out on Sunday, two days ahead of schedule. Against 15,000 seats at the Chittagong Divisional Stadium, the authority sold 14,000 tickets through eight branches of the Arab Bangladesh Bank in the port city, sources said.

Huge crowd from all walks of life were seen gathering at the AB Bank branches for tickets till yesterday but the cricket lovers who queued before the bank counters had to return empty handed.

It is alleged some vested quarters bought five to 10 tickets per head with an ill motive of selling those in the black market. The spectators suspected tickets would be available for a higher rate at the venue. But the unruly weather is all set to spoil the ticket touts' party.

The rain is also set to rule out the home debut for Tamim Iqbal, the local boy who has won a lot of praise from his captain.

"I always tell him not to play for the crowd. The crowd would want you to hit sixes every ball if possible but if someone tries to do that, one can't play a big innings. I tell him to play long innings all the time, which will do him good," said Bangladesh captain Habibul Bashar yesterday.

"He has given us a good start almost every time and has a good future so he must play for himself at the top of the order," remarked Bashar.

India'll play only when it shines!

AP, undated

It seems that the India Meteorological Department (IMD) could soon be playing a major role in deciding the itinerary and schedule of cricket tournaments in India and other countries in the Indian subcontinent.

The president of the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI), Sharad Pawar who also happens to be a Union Minister in the Indian government has agreed to a suggestion from Kapil Sibal, his cabinet colleague and science and technology minister.

Sibal had suggested that the BCCI could get weather forecast from the IMD before deciding on the venues and timings for cricket tournaments.

The suggestion was made following a presentation by the IMD last week on what kind of weather condition could be expected in Bangladesh during the on-going

SEE PAGE 18 COL 5



PHOTO: STAR

Bangladesh players take part in indoor training at the Chittagong Divisional Stadium yesterday.

Woolmer not murdered?



AFP, Kingston

Pakistan cricket coach Bob Woolmer died of a heart attack and was not murdered, the Jamaican Gleaner newspaper reported Sunday, citing Scotland Yard sources.

Woolmer, 58, was found dead in his Kingston hotel room on March 18, the day after cricketing powers Pakistan crashed out of the World Cup in an upset loss to minnows Ireland.

But the Jamaican police said Sunday they are standing behind their belief that Woolmer was murdered.

"That will remain our position until such time as the results of the

investigation are known; including the forensic and pathology analysis," said Jamaica Constabulary Force (JCF) director of communications Karl Angell in a news release.

Woolmer's death led to a fevered round of speculation. One theory was that his death was linked to match-fixing and illegal betting in cricket, and investigators from Britain and Pakistan were drafted in to help with the probe.

But the Jamaican Gleaner said that a pathology report submitted by Scotland Yard detectives stated that Woolmer "died of natural causes and not manual strangulation as was initially reported by Deputy Commissioner Mark Shields."

"The Scotland Yard report specifically said Woolmer died of

heart failure, contradicting earlier reports by the investigative arm of the Jamaica Constabulary Force and local pathologist, Dr Ere Sheshiah, who had conducted a post-mortem on Woolmer's body," the papers said.

The Scotland Yard findings "were disclosed last week during a meeting with Jamaica's Deputy Commissioner of Police Mark Shields and Superintendent Colin Pinnace, who stopped over in London en route to South Africa" where they were heading to meet with Woolmer's family, it added.

Said Angell, "The speculation made in Sunday's newspapers is part of a series of unhelpful reports that have appeared in the media throughout the duration of this investigation," Angell continued in

SEE PAGE 18 COL 3

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PHOTO: AFP

Sri Lanka coach Tom Moody (L) gives instructions to captain Mahela Jayawardene during a practice session at the Nondescript Cricket Club in Colombo.