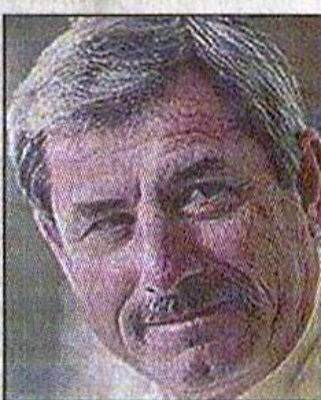




Did U Know?

Volleyball is the second most popular sport in the world today. William G Morgan invented it in 1895.



Sir Richard Hadlee

(NZ selection panel manager)
"He deserves a spot as a specialist batsman on merit. He is innovative, he can hit the ball to the boundary, he has some deft touches and is very quick between the wickets."
On Gareth Hopkins.



Myanmar meet uncertain

SPORTS REPORTER

The national under-23 team's participation in the Grand Royal Cup in Myanmar looks uncertain after the host federation has failed to confirm Bangladesh's schedule. The Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) had appealed to host Bangladesh's first match after November 2 in the four-nation meet (November 1-7) to be held in Yangon but for the last three days, there has been no contact from Myanmar.

The BFF officials feared that the tournament could well be postponed due to political unrest in the country.

Meanwhile, the Bangladeshis booters who were not selected for the trip to Tajikistan for the World Cup Football pre-qualifier, have still been training under assistant coach Golam Jilani at BKSP for the Myanmar event.

The BFF will wait two more days for confirmation from Myanmar and a negative response would result in disbanding the residential camp, said a BFF official.

New look Dhoni top tax payer

PTI, Ranchi

India's one-day captain Mahendra Singh Dhoni has become the highest individual income tax payer in Jharkhand with the IT department expecting around four crore rupees from the cricketer.

Dhoni, one of the cricketers endorsing various top brands, has already paid 73 lakh rupees up to September as advance tax, income tax department sources said.

The IT department, Bihar-Jharkhand, set a collection target of 2,350 crore rupees collection for this fiscal.

Meanwhile, sporting a close-cropped hair Dhoni on Wednesday returned home after the recently concluded hectic seven-match cricket series against Australia.

Dhoni was whisked away by security men from one of the gates at the Birs Munda airport as a folk troupe, which was to greet him, was stopped at another.

Dhoni looked neat and trim with his locks, which once drew attention of Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf, short off.

"The enthusiasm would have been different had Dhoni returned immediately after the World Twenty20 Championship," said a fan and blamed the 2-4 loss to Australia in the one-day series for the low presence of fans.

A few determined enthusiasts, however, shouted 'Dhoni Zindabad' and 'Welcome Dhoni' as their poster boy drove away to his brother-in-law's home.

The cricketer did not speak to the media which was present in strength.

BFF ready to axe coach

Football

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) will wait for the result of Bangladesh's 2010 World Cup pre-qualifier on October 28 against Tajikistan before deciding the fate of Indian coach Syed Nayeemuddin.

The national team, which drew 1-1 with Tajikistan in the home match on October 8, left Dhaka yesterday afternoon for Bangkok en route to Dushanbe.

After staying overnight in Uzbekistan capital Tashkent, they are expected to take bus ride today before boarding a flight for neighbouring Tajikistan.

Following press reports that the match could be the last for Nayeemuddin as Bangladesh national coach, BFF's acting general secretary Manzoor Hossain Malu yesterday admitted that the federation is considering to bid the former Indian international and two-time SAFF Football winning coach goodbye.

"We recruited Nayeemuddin with a view to prepare the national team for the SAFF Championship, which was due to be held in December. After its deferral to June

next year, we have a long time in hand. Considering the high cost of running the camp, we cannot afford to have a foreign coach for about eight months.

"We also have to consider that the players will have to be released for the domestic season with the National Championship and the second professional league on the cards," said Malu.

He informed that the cost of running the camp is Tk 12 lakh per month, inclusive of the coach's salary -- Tk one lakh.

The BFF has been sweating over the expenses -- reportedly Tk 70 lakh -- of the home and away pre-qualifying matches for the World Cup in South Africa and it seems that they would dissolve camp as soon as the team return.

If Bangladesh reach the qualifiers by upsetting favourites Tajikistan, the federation, however, will have to think differently.

"If we have to play the second stage of the qualifiers, we have no other option to run the camp," said Malu, who did not sound that convincing about keeping Nayeem.

"That's why we have been waiting for the result," he told adding that the BFF has already discussed the Nayeemuddin issue following

his row with senior players.

"He has also humiliated our staff and it is certainly damaging to the BFF's image. If things go beyond control, we can't keep him. We have requested the coach to 'behave'," the acting secretary said.

He, however, did not mention whether the 60-year-old Indian would be chopped immediately after the team's return.

"His contract expires in December but it can be terminated at any time. Still, we want it to happen smoothly if it comes to that."

It is nothing new for Bangladesh, unlike any other nation, to remain without a coach for the national team for long periods.

Previously, SAF Games winning coach Samir Shakir and SAFF Championship triumphant George Kottan of Austria were shown the doors immediately after success.

Argentine coach Diego Cruciani was also let go, after 13 months in charge, before Nayeemuddin came as a saviour.

If the Indian -- the least expensive of foreigners to have coached Bangladesh -- leaves now, it is understandable that the federation will go for a face saving recruit shortly before the SAFF Championship, killing any hopes of success in the regional event by starting it all over again.



Bangladesh national footballers gather at the BFF Bhawan yesterday ahead of their trip to Tajikistan to play the 2010 World Cup pre-qualifier.

PHOTO: STAR

Vettori's tough task

Cricket

AFP, Bloemfontein

Daniel Vettori faces a tough challenge as New Zealand's new cricket captain on their tour of South Africa that starts with a four-day match against a South African Invitation XI in Bloemfontein from Thursday.

Vettori was appointed captain of the Black Caps after former skipper Stephen Fleming stepped down as one-day captain following the World Cup in the West Indies earlier this year.

Fleming said he wanted to continue to lead the Test side but the selectors opted for a complete change, putting Vettori, 28, in charge for all matches.

The left-arm spinner had his first taste of leadership when he skippered the Black Caps to the semi-finals of the recent World Twenty20 in South Africa but taking on the host country in two Tests and three one-day internationals is likely to be an altogether more

challenging task.

New Zealand were beaten 2-0 in a three-Test series in South Africa two seasons ago after losing a one-day series 4-0.

One of the key players for Vettori in the Test matches will be his predecessor, Fleming, who has been picked as a specialist batsman. On the 2005-06 tour Fleming made 262 in the drawn second Test



DANIEL VETTORI

in Cape Town, a record score by any visiting batsman in a Test in South Africa.

But Vettori has high hopes for his pace attack, spearheaded by Shane Bond, Mark Gillespie and Chris Martin, on pitches in Johannesburg and Centurion that usually favour fast bowlers.

On the previous tour Fleming identified South Africa's fast bowlers, Makhaya Ntini and Dale Steyn, as the difference between the two teams. Bond had to withdraw from the series because of injury, while Gillespie had not yet broken through.

Unusually for modern tours, New Zealand have a lengthy build-up to the Test matches. They arrived in South Africa last Friday and have had almost a week to prepare for Thursday's match against a capable Invitation team, led by recent Test batsman Boeta Dippenaar.

They have another four-day game, against South Africa A, before the first Test starts in Johannesburg on November 8.

Lanka aiming higher

Cricket

CRICINFO, undated

Sri Lanka have landed in Australia in a buoyant mood and are confident of posting their first Test win in the country during the two-match series. Despite losing a one-day contest to England already this month, Mahela Jayawardene, the captain, believes the squad is good enough to compete with the new-look hosts.

"We're confident we can play good cricket and if we play good cricket we will be in with a very good chance of winning some matches," he said shortly after the team flew into Adelaide. "If I can finish 1-0, I will take that. If I can finish 2-0, I will take that, too. But the most important thing for us is how we compete. To beat Australia you need to be with them for four days. You can't compete for one-and-a-half sessions and expect to win."

Sri Lanka have arrived during a debate in Australia about crowd behaviour and Jayawardene hoped racism would not overshadow the Test series, which begins in Brisbane on November 8. However, Trevor Bayliss, who coached New South Wales before accepting the Sri Lanka job, expected at least some racist taunts during the tour.

"There are idiots in any crowd," he said. "I don't know whether you're going to stop that 100%, but the majority of the crowd realise it's the wrong thing to do. I think there will be one or two idiots, put it that way." Sri Lanka had crowd problems in Adelaide the last time they toured and Muttiah Muralitharan is expected to be targeted by the home crowds as he looks for the nine wickets to overhaul Shane Warne's record of 708.

"Murali has not played here for ten years in a Test match and he's geared up," Jayawardene said. "He sees Australia as one of the places

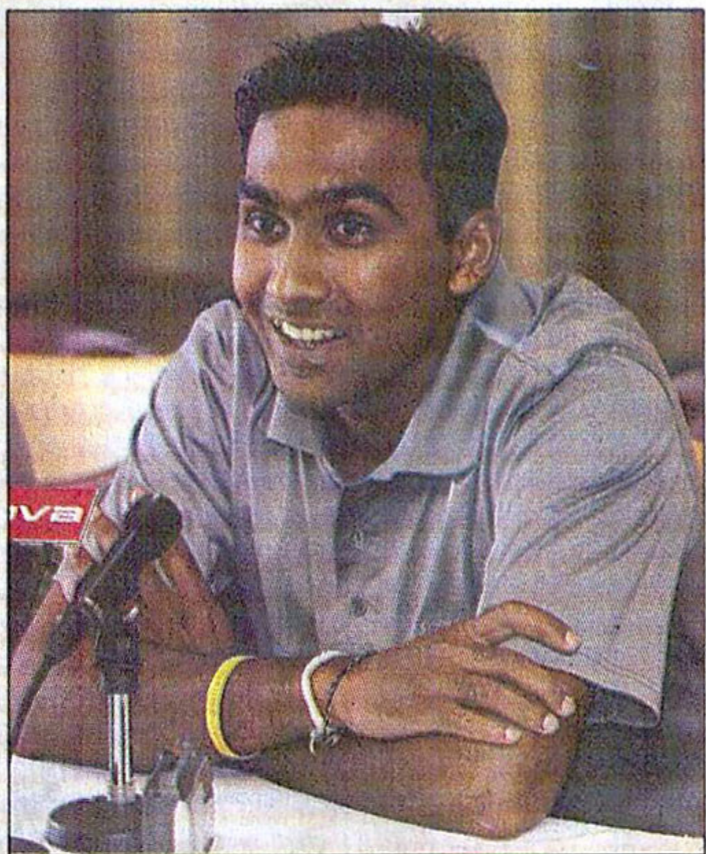
he has to challenge himself. For him to prove himself that he's taken so many wickets around the world, he's looking forward to the challenge."

Muralitharan will play in the tour-opener on Saturday, which is a hastily-arranged three-day warm-up against a Chairman's XI at Adelaide. It is one of two practice matches before the first Test and Sri Lankan officials requested the extra game having learned from previous tourists who had come unstuck in Australia through insufficient practice.

Sri Lanka certainly need the preparation after surprisingly losing at home to England. They recovered to win the last match of a close series, which finished 3-2, and gain some momentum heading to Australia. "The main positive thing was our bowling attack," Jayawardene said. "All four fast bowlers bowled well."

"But the disappointing factor was how we batted throughout that series. We learned a lot, we needed to brush up. But the guys have been working very hard. It was a very

SEE PAGE 18 COL 5



Sri Lanka captain Mahela Jayawardene speaks to the press upon arrival in Sydney on Wednesday.

PHOTO: INTERNET

Strong Tigers fly to HK today

SPORTS REPORTER

Seven players, who leave Dhaka today to play the Hong Kong sixes, will miss second round matches of the National Cricket League that starts on October 26.

National captain Mohammad Ashraful, Aftab Ahmed, Abdur Razzak are just some of the big names who are set to play the exhibition tournament, featuring ten teams that include an All Stars side.

Sending these top players raise serious doubt over Bangladesh Cricket Board's intention to give national stars maximum number of matches in the ongoing NCL.

The Hong Kong-bound Tigers looks the strongest on paper, even better than traditional powerhouses Australia and South Africa. Only the All Stars team could provide some fight for the Tigers, who face all three teams next Saturday.

SQUAD

Mohammad Ashraful (captain), Aftab Ahmed, Abdur Razzak, Dollar Mahmud, Mahmudullah Riyad, Nazmul Hossain Milon and Zunaed Siddiqui Imrose.

U-16s take on Uzbekistan today

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Under-16 football team will meet Uzbekistan in their fourth match of the Group D qualifiers in the AFC Youth Championship today in Abu Dhabi.

The match will kick off at Bangladesh time 6pm at the AlWahda Stadium.

Hosts, United Arab Emirates lead the group by virtue of superior goal difference although they are level with Uzbekistan on seven points after three rounds.

Second-from-bottom Bangladesh have three points from their 9-1 thrashing of Palestine in the opener. They later lost 9-1 to UAE and 3-1 to Turkmenistan.

In the day's other matches, Turkmenistan face bottom table Palestine while UAE play Tajikistan.

Raihan takes seven

UNB, Dhaka

Raihan picked seven wickets as Golden Age crushed Winsome Cricket Academy by 146 runs in the Third Division Qualifying Cricket tournament at the Gulshan Youth ground yesterday.

Sent into bat first, Golden Age posted 237-8 in their stipulated 45 overs with Rajib contributing 48 runs. In reply, Winsome Cricket Academy were bundled out for only 91.

In another match at the Dhaka University ground, Masud struck a brilliant 111 off only 93 balls, guiding his team Thunder Cats to a 50-run victory over Eastern Sporting Club.

In the day's other matches, Udioman Cricket Academy, Dakshin Khan Naba Udayan Sangha and Baghpara Cricket Club won their respective matches.

Lacking only true pitch

SPORTS REPORTER



Without any doubt, the new look National Cricket League made an

impressive start. But it seems that a major issue remains unchanged: want a true pitch.

It was shocking to watch the unresponsive behaviour of the surface at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur during the first round tie between the two star-studded opponents -- Dhaka and Khulna.

The board has taken a lot of initiatives to make NCL worthy but without good wickets everything will go in vain, especially when the Tigers have a trip to New Zealand in December-January.

"There were difficulties in both ways. It was hard for batsmen to play strokes and bowling was also not so easy in it (Mirpur wicket). It is really hard to understand the behaviour of this black-clay surface. We were afraid when Dhaka sent us to bat first in the four-day game but surprisingly we were proved wrong," said Khulna skipper Habibul Bashar.

The ball kept low from the very beginning of the longer-version game and there was no change in the corresponding surface for the limited-over game that understandably upset Tigers and Dhaka captain Mohammad Ashraful.

"We were hardly benefited by playing on these pitches," said Ashraful.

But it was said that the home of cricket would be special. Not only for its top class facilities but also the character of wickets when Australian curator Richard Winter had predicted a bouncy pitch, although unusual in the subcontinent, two years ago. He also mentioned that the outfield would take some time to gain pace.

Initially it gave the right impression but suddenly the wicket became pretty flat and slow. The board is spending a lot of money to maintain the grounds but the question is whether it is yielding the required results.

Many thought that the local expert's lack of technical knowledge on maintenance of a pitch to ensure good bounce is the reason behind this failure and they believe that it would be wise for the board to hire someone from abroad to look after this important area.

"It is really frustrating," said former Bangladesh captain Gazi Ashraf Hossain Lipu, who now holds a very important post in the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) as chairman of cricket operations committee, on the Mirpur pitch after the one-day match on Tuesday.

Lipu was one of the persons who told time and again that without sporting wickets, it is impossible to

SEE PAGE 18 COL 5

Final ODI moves to Lahore

Cricket

CRICINFO, undated

The final ODI between Pakistan and South Africa has been shifted to Lahore from Karachi following security concerns raised by the tourists.

"The fifth ODI will now be played at Gaddafi Stadium Lahore on 29th October," read a statement from the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB). "The venue was changed on the request of the South African team management."

"On the request of the PCB, the South African team management sent one of their security officers to

the people of Karachi for having deprived them of this opportunity but unfortunately the members of the South African contingent are not comfortable travelling to Karachi. After consulting with Cricket South Africa back home, we would like the venue to be shifted to some other city."

Naidoo added that this does not rule Karachi out as a venue for future tours. "We have already played two matches in Karachi during the current tour and hope to play there on our next tour as well."

The decision is a significant one for the status of Karachi as a venue with Australia due to tour the country in March next year for the first

SEE PAGE 18 COL 4

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