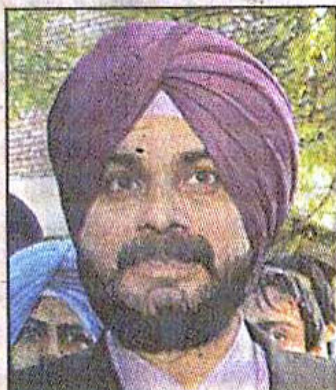




Did U Know?

The average American spends over 80 dollars per year on sporting equipment.



Navjot Singh Sidhu

(Former India cricketer)
"Test cricket is like classical music which has survived since ancient ages. One-dayers are like film music that leaves people enthralled and T20 cricket is like disco and rap which provides occasional pleasure in short bursts."



TEN Sports

Sportscenter India
Sports News
Live at 6:30 pm (7:00-7:30 pm)



National Cricket League
(Second Round, One-Dayers)
Sylhet v Dhaka
Venue: Shaheed Chanderu Stadium
Rajshahi v Barisal
Venue: Rajshahi Divisional Stadium
Khulna v Chittagong
Venue: Khulna Divisional Stadium

Murali shines in drawn tie

AFP, Adelaide

Sri Lankan spinner Muttiah Muralidaran claimed four wickets in a drawn-three day tour match against the Cricket Australia Chairman's XI at Adelaide Oval here Monday ahead of the Test series against Australia.

Muralidaran, eight wickets short of Australian leg-spinner Shane Warne's world record of 708 Test wickets, captured 4-121 off 44 overs as the Chairman's XI forged a 41-run lead on the first innings.

The Chairman's XI were dismissed for 409 off 122.2 overs in reply to Sri Lanka's first innings 368 for six declared.

Batting a second time, Sri Lanka finished at 125 for three off 36 overs when play was called off early by mutual agreement.

The tourists lost two wickets to paceman Mick Lewis (2-17) before captain Mahela Jayawardene (52) gained some valuable batting time ahead of the November 8 Brisbane first Test, following his first innings duck, with Thilan Samaraweera (41 not out).

Sanath Jayasuriya missed the final day with a head cold with vice-captain Kumar Sangakkara and reserve pacer Chanaka Welagedara troubled by leginjuries.

Muralidaran had Philip Hughes stumped for 49, and claimed invitational skipper Luke Ronchi out on the second ball of the morning for a duck when he was bamboozled and was bowled by an off-break.

Cullen Bailey played back to a well-pitched quicker ball to be leg before wicket for three.

South Australian Tom Plant compiled 124 before the remaining wickets fell quickly after lunch with Muralidaran having Plant taken at short fine leg from a top-edged sweep.

In Sri Lanka's second innings batting practice, Marvan Atapattu was lbw half-forward to Lewis for

SEE PAGE 18 COL 5

Siddons sees 'great challenge'

Cricket

SPORTS REPORTER

Jamie Siddons arrived in the capital yesterday to sign a two-year deal with the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) as a national team coach.

The Australian will become the eighth foreign coach of the national cricket team after completion of the official signing today.

The 43-year old coach, who has accepted the offer to put an end to the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB)'s search of finding a successor of Dav Whatmore, termed Bangladesh as a "big growing cricket team" on his arrival at the Zia International Airport yesterday.

"Bangladesh are a young and upcoming team who are playing good cricket in one-day competition and have reached a certain level. I will try to move the team into a better position by upgrading their rank," said the shaven-headed Siddons.

The seven-member Bangladesh team led by Mohammad Ashraful returned home after playing the Hong Kong Sixes tournament in the same flight but, for yesterday at least, it was the Australian who was the centre of attraction for the media.

"It's a great challenge," he responded when asked how big a task it would be to take over a bottom ranked team after working as an assistant coach with the number one side (Australia).

"The team needs to be consistent in their performance," he added. Siddons was not interested to talk about the weakness of the Bangladesh team as he said that it was important to "take responsibility first."

"I can only comment on the deficiencies after my own assessment," he concluded.

Asked what prompted him to revert his decision to accept responsibility, after initially turning down Bangladesh's offer, Siddons remarked, "The time is right on this occasion. I am very happy with my decision."

It was learnt that Siddons first showed an unwillingness to accept the demanding job due to the financial package offered by the board.

The main interest among the throngs of reporters, however, surrounded the official signing ceremony but the BCB officials informed that it will be concluded this afternoon.

"We completed the fine-tuning today. There is no problem with the

signing because it's just a mere formality," said Ahmed Sajjadul Alam Bobby, chairman of the BCB's media committee.

"We have completed all of our discussions and now he will spend his second day settling personal issues like residence," he added.

Although he is the coach in all but paper, Siddons still made a presentation to the BCB's coach-selection committee in the afternoon while at the same time meeting with board president Maj Gen Sina Ibn Jamali, captain Mohammad Ashraful and members of the cricket operations committee.

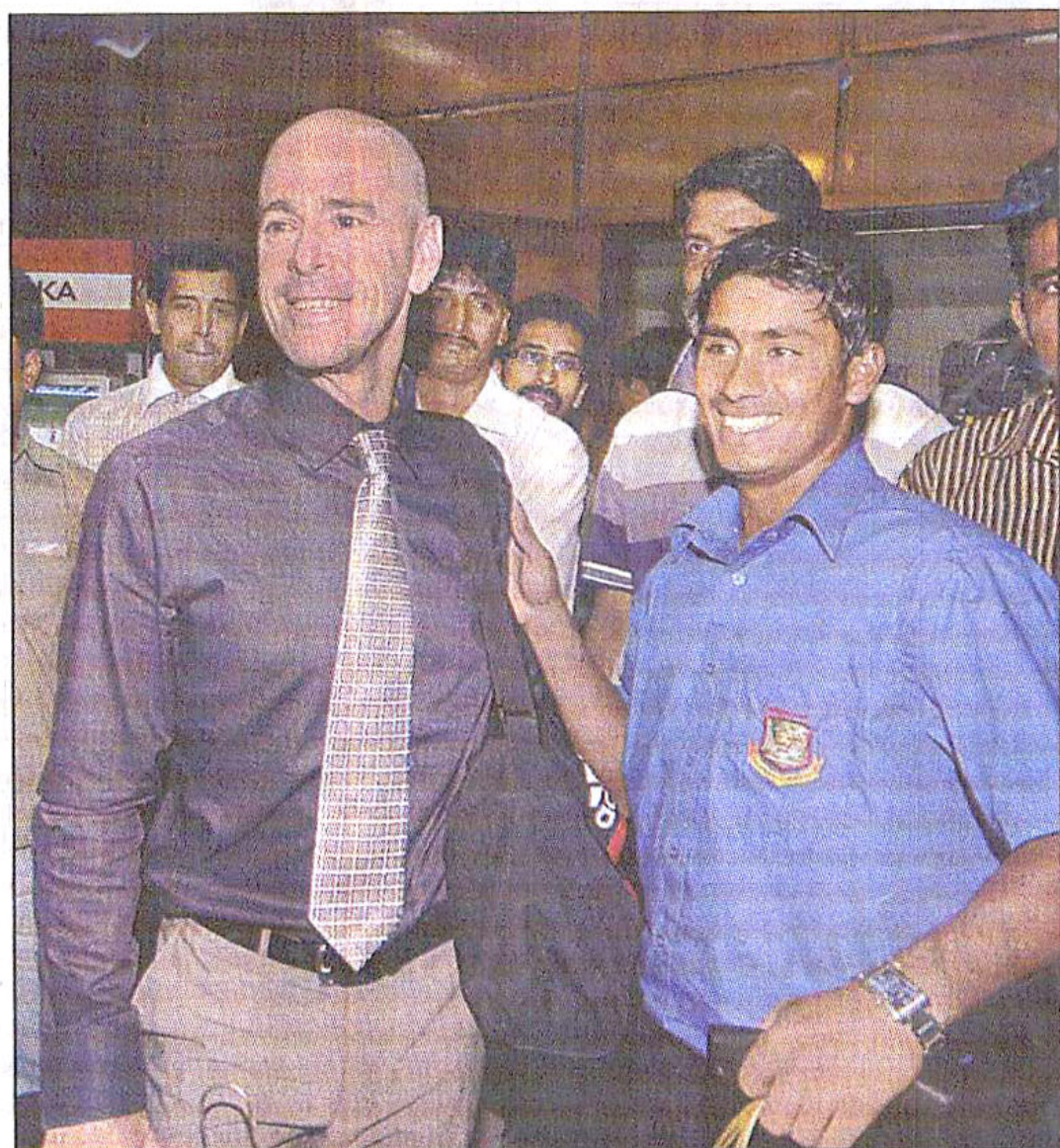
He inquired about Bangladesh's upcoming assignments, his support staff and other facilities.

He professed himself satisfied with the local fielding and bowling coaches but expressed a desire to look beyond the border for a batting coach.

It was learnt that Siddons first met with his compatriot Shaun Williams, who is enjoying a job as a national game development coach, before entering the board management office in Gulshan along with the BCB president in the afternoon.

"We have got a good and quality coach and now it will be our duty to

SEE PAGE 18 COL 1



WELCOME TO TIGERS' DEN: Bangladesh captain Mohammad Ashraful (R) is all smiles as he poses for photographs with Jamie Siddons at Zia International Airport yesterday. Australian Siddons is in the city to complete the formalities for becoming Bangladesh's new coach.

PRESS BOX COLLAPSE Lab tests yet to be done

SPORTS REPORTER

The laboratory tests of materials of the crashed press box at the Bangabandhu National Stadium would not be available by this month, confirmed the National Sports Council (NSC) yesterday.

The roof of the press box collapsed on October 8 and the NSC probe committee was directed to submit its final report by this month.

"It seems that we won't be able to draw a conclusion of the investigation before November 10," said Aminul Islam Khan, secretary of the NSC.

Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (BUET) and the Military Institute of Science and Technology (MITS) have taken specimens of the materials of the crash site but neither organisation has finished the test reports.

"BUET has given us a letter today stating that it will need minimum one further week to complete the tests," informed Aminul.

"If we don't get the lab supports, the investigations won't be conclusive. At this stage, we cannot help but wait. We will submit the final report as soon as we get those lab reports," he added.

Ricky likely to join IPL

AFP, Sydney

Australia captain Ricky Ponting said Monday that he and up to seven other players from Down Under were likely to sign up for the Indian Cricket Board's new Twenty20 competition next year.

"There are a few things from what I saw in the contracts and everything that need to be worked out and smoothed over before all of us sign but I think it will happen," Ponting told the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC).

"It's a very lucrative thing at the moment and a very attractive thing for four to six weeks out of your year."

Vice-captain Adam Gilchrist on Sunday became the first Australian player to confirm his participation in the league -- Indian Premier League, ABC said.

The Board of Control for Cricket in India is trying to squash a rebel Indian Cricket League (ICL) series by setting up its own league, backed by the International Cricket Council and supported by boards around the world.

Both set-ups have promised an array of world-class players, with the BCCI's Indian Premier League saying it has signed on Test captains Graeme Smith of South Africa, Daniel Vettori of New Zealand, Shoaib Malik of Pakistan and the entire Indian team.

The best the ICL has managed so far are retired international stars, headed by West Indian great Brian Lara and Pakistan's Inzamamul Haq, along with a slew of domestic has-beens.

Captain, coach meet early

Cricket

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh captain Mohammad Ashraful and some of his colleagues got the opportunity to get introduced with their new coach Jamie Siddons aboard the Thai Airways flight from Bangkok to Dhaka.

And the 24-year-old Tigers skipper informed that they had some discussions, especially about the upcoming tour of New Zealand in December-January, with their new Australian mentor.

"He showed lot of interest in our young side. We also talked about the coming tour," said Ashraful, who returned home along with his six teammates after playing in the Hong Kong Sixes.

Praising Dav Whatmore's efforts over the last four years, the ace batsman hoped that their new coach would be able to raise their standard in Test cricket.

"We have reached a standard in the one-day game during the stint of Whatmore and now we have to achieve it in the Test level. We are hopeful that our new coach will make a big impact to fulfil the desire," he said.

"Jamie Siddons is not a big name in world cricket, but we all know that he is a very good coach. True he didn't play Test cricket but has a rich first-class record as a batsman. Player like Shane Warne even included him in his list of best fifty players," he added.

Ashraful said that their new coach's batting experience in the first-class cricket will be helpful for them because batting is the main headache of his side.

"You know our performance could have been much better had we not struggled with our batting. I hope the batting experience of our new coach will be handy for us. But the most important thing is that he was the assistant coach of world's number one team," he said.

Ashraful however surprised everybody by making comments on his team's performance and standard of cricket in the six-a-side tournament.

"It was not a picnic cricket because everybody sent good teams in the competition. It was a good experience for us and it was frustrating that we did not play in the semifinals," he said.

He was however quick to contradict his earlier comment saying, "Australia sent their academy players."

No sponsors yet for nat'l football

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) is desperately looking for a sponsor for the National Football Championship, which has already been deferred once.

Jubok Phone, who had a three-year contract to sponsor the country's prestigious event, has officially informed the BFF yesterday that it will not support the tournament any longer.

Jubok Phone sponsored the meet in the 2005-06 season when the BFF showed too much loyalty to the corporate house by changing the moniker of the tournament, previously named after national leader Sher-e-Bangla AK Fazlul Haque.

The BFF, which has decided to sell all its events of 2008 to one company, wanted it to sponsor this year's National Championship too, but now it looks hopeless.

The few business houses the BFF has been talking with have already showed their disinterest about any tournament in 2007.

Team selection is purely on merit: Dilip

PTI, New Delhi

Chief selector Dilip Vengsarkar may be drawing criticism for being too harsh to Rahul Dravid by dropping him from the squad for the first two ODIs against Pakistan, but the man in the hot seat insisted that he picked the team "purely on merit."

"You cannot make everybody happy. Every time you have to pick the best combination, a winning combination. If we pick somebody, we are asked, 'Why did you pick him?' If we drop somebody, we are asked, 'Why did you drop him?' (But) it's how you take it. You must have the courage of conviction," Vengsarkar said.

"We pick a player on his form and fitness. And purely on merit. You watch cricket and you know how well the person is batting, whether he is in form or not," he was quoted as saying by 'cricinfo'.

He, however, refused to elaborate what he meant by out-of-form.

"When you pick a player it means you believe in him, unless he proves you wrong. But that is very rare," he said, adding "you can't put numbers to it. For instance, say that if the player does not perform for five games, he is out. You cannot do that."

Asked if it was difficult to drop a senior player, Vengsarkar said, "There is nothing like senior, junior or middle-aged guys. Just because someone is a youngster, he won't be getting half-volleys in international cricket. Everyone has to be picked on merit, form and fitness."

On who would take the place of Rahul Dravid, who was a regular in the middle order, Vengsarkar said, "At this stage Yuvraj Singh, Mahendra Singh Dhoni, Gautam Gambhir are there and waiting in the wings are Manoj Tiwary, Suresh Raina, Rohit Sharma. So we have a lot of options."

SA win as Pakistan choke

Cricket

AFP, Lahore

An inspired comeback by South Africa overshadowed Shoaib Akhtar's return to the Pakistan side as the tourists clinched the one-day series Monday, winning the final game by 14 runs.

Akhtar, playing his first one-day international for 13 months, took 4-43 to restrict South Africa to 233-9 in 50 overs but the tourists pulled off a sensational victory from the jaws of defeat by dismissing Pakistan for 219 in 46.3 overs.

South Africa bowled well and fielded sharply to win the five-match series 3-2.

Paceman Albie Morkel finished with 4-44 and Makhaya Ntini grabbed 4-61 as the tourists took six Pakistan wickets for just 20 runs off 36 balls to achieve a sensational win.

South African captain Graeme Smith was euphoric.

"It is fantastic to win both Tests and one-dayers and this was an incredible win. We took huge catches and the ball swung in the end and helped us to take those last wickets," said Smith.

Pakistan were cruising at 149-2 with Younis Khan (58) and Mohammad Yousuf (53) adding a solid 106 runs for the third wicket. They repaired the innings after Pakistan lost Imran Nazir (17) and

Kamran Akmal (24). Ntini removed both the openers

in an incisive spell of five overs.

SEE PAGE 18 COL 6



THANKS FOR A NICE LITTLE GIFT: South Africa captain Graeme Smith holds the winners' trophy at the Gaddafi Stadium in Lahore yesterday after defeating Pakistan by 14 runs in a dramatic finish of the fifth and final one-day international.

PHOTO: AFP

SEE PAGE 18 COL 8