

Arjuna afraid of player exodus

Young cricketers may soon opt out of playing for their country because of the huge amounts of money available in the sport...

"I have no problem with senior players joining these leagues, but the younger players worry me."

Top Sri Lankans like Sanath Jayasuriya, captain Mahela Jayawardene, Kumar Sangakkara, Muttiah Muralidaran, Chaminda Vaas, Chamara Silva and Tilakaratne Dilshan have all been contracted to play in the Indian Premier League starting on April 18.

Retired Test stars like Marvan Atapattu and Russel Arnold, who are playing for the rebel Indian Cricket league, have been banned from holding any post in the Sri Lankan cricket establishment.

IPL franchises bought players for the inaugural edition at prices ranging from 100,000 dollars to 1.5 million dollars a year for India's one-day and Twenty20 captain Mahendra Dhoni.

Harris counts

FROM PAGE 17 "It looks drier than the Test match, though I wasn't here for the Test series. I think it will turn, especially in the second innings," he observed.

The tall spinner was also looking forward to the India tour to prove his worth.

"Conditions here are very similar to India; I am looking forward to it. It is going to be a challenging tour for our spin bowlers to bowl in India. But as I said, it's good practice here. Bowling in India can only make me a better player. Hopefully I can go there and win some matches for my country," said Harris, who is already considered as a match-winning spinner for the Proteas after his impressive show in Pakistan.

South African skipper Graeme Smith was reluctant to speak with the reporters ahead of the second match rather they sent Hashim Amla, who made his one-day debut in Chittagong. Amla made it clear that his team will not be complacent with the 1-0 advantage.

"We came off a really good performance in the first game. We are 1-0 ahead and obviously we are not getting complacent and we want to make sure that we are doing the right things all the time," said Amla.

Amla also said that his side was not bothered with the pitch condition.

"The wicket seems to be taking a bit of turn. And as in the first game, it did really help our spinners. And it does really play a crucial role against Bangladesh and I am sure we will come across again," he said.



Did U Know?

American swim legend Johnny Weissmuller, the first to swim 100 metres in less than a minute, was a hero in real life too. He saved the lives of 11 people when an excursion boat capsized on Lake Michigan in 1927.

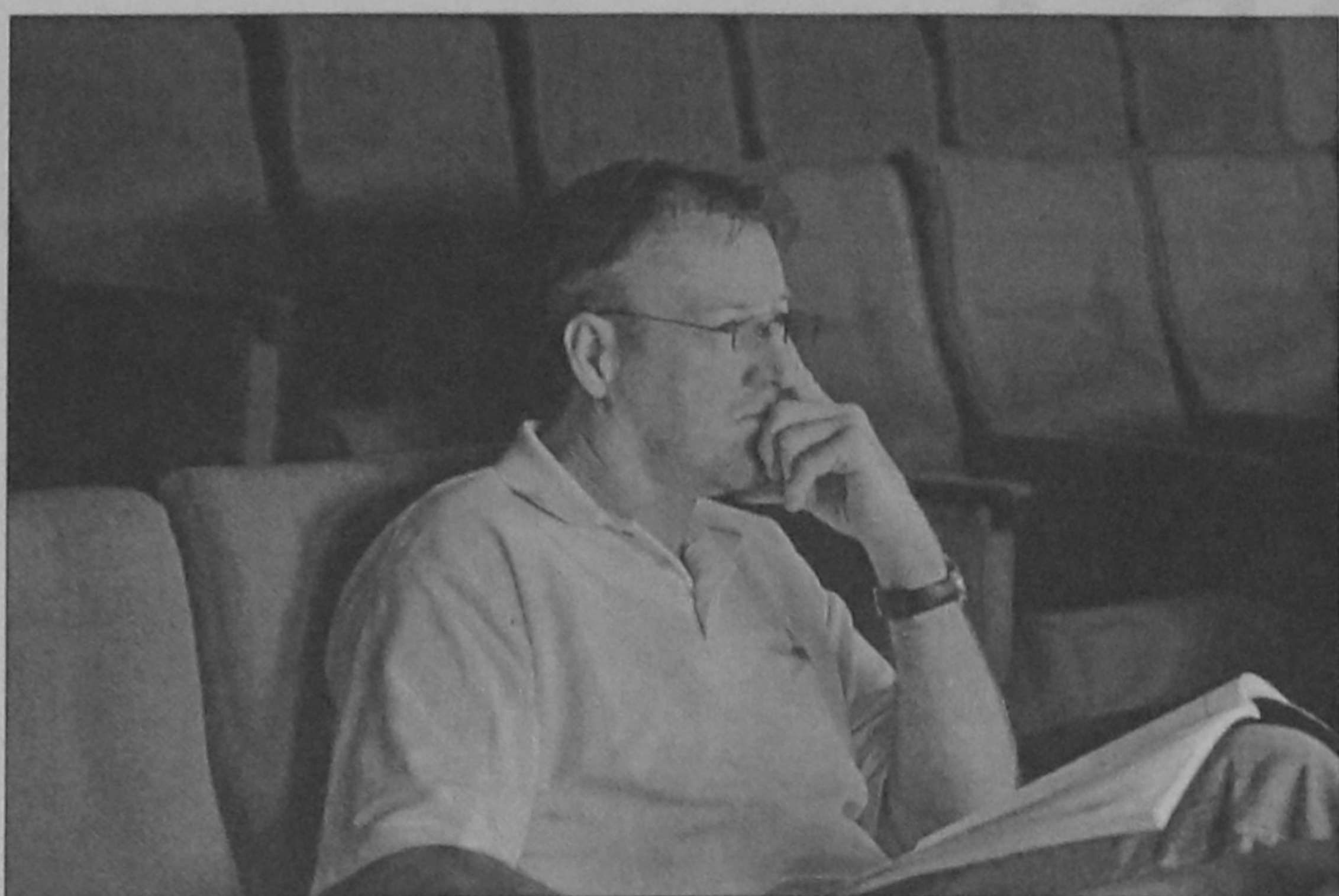


Talk Turkey



Serena Williams

(American tennis star) "It was so nice being in India and winning the title made it even better. A week back I was not even sure I will be able to play, so to win my first title of the year makes it a very special visit."



A visibly upset Pakistan coach Geoff Lawson watches a cricket match at the National Stadium in Karachi yesterday.

Lawson slams call-off

Cricket Board.

"I think the Australians should have come here full steam ahead," Lawson told the Australian Associated Press here.

"Bombs do go off. You can't argue with that. But they're focused on particular targets that have nothing to do with sport, and particularly nothing to do with cricket."

The Pakistan coach said the only plus point was that the tour had been officially postponed instead of cancelled.

"Officially they have postponed the tour, which is better than cancelling it and hopefully between CA (Cricket Australia) and PCB they can find the dates to reschedule the tour, and we can't do much about that," he told reporters.

Lawson said he hoped the International Cricket Council (ICC) would give Pakistan the chance to play more Tests in future than it currently has scheduled in the Test programme.

Pakistan are only set to play India at home early next year.

"Test cricket-wise it is a loss not playing Australia and we don't play very much Test cricket. So it's up to the ICC to put more Tests on our chart," said Lawson.

Former Pakistan captain Rameez Raja -- whose house was damaged by one of the blasts in Lahore on Tuesday -- said Pakistan cricket would lose out from the cancellation.

"It will impact Pakistan cricket in a terrible way," said Raja.

"Pakistan cricket's television rights are up for sale next month and I fear they will be devalued with the current scenario."

"Young Pakistani players will also get demotivated by this situation when no team is willing to play here," he added.

But he said that he didn't blame the Australians given Pakistan's current security image abroad.

"The practical situation is getting worse and with major cities being targeted it is worrying for people who live outside Pakistan," he said.

Another former captain, Wasim Akram, backed Australia's decision.

"Under the current scenario, Australia is justified to take this decision," said the retired Wasim, who did not take part when Pakistan were forced to play their home series against Australia at neutral venues in 2002, also for security reasons.

"But I see far-reaching implications for Pakistan cricket, both financially and in sporting terms."

The ICC meanwhile confirmed the series could be rescheduled.

"As per the agreement under the Future Tour Programme, there is a provision for rescheduling a postponed series with the mutual consent of two countries and it has happened in the past," an ICC spokesman said from Dubai.

The spokesman added that Australia would not be fined for pulling out of the series since the decision was "by mutual consent of the two boards."

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LOCAL SNIPPETS

SPORTS REPORTER

Youngmen's Club Fakirpool stayed atop the Senior Division Football League table after their second successive super six win yesterday.

Sabuj struck both the goals in the second half as title contenders Youngmen's edged Badda Jagarani 2-1 at the Bangabandhu National Stadium.

In the relegation league, Mohakhali XI blanked Agrani Bank 4-0 with a brace from Golap.

JFACUP BKSP and Cox's Bazar won their respective matches in the final round of the 4th JFA Cup in Rajshahi. Sajib scored twice to give BKSP a 4-2 win over Khulna while Cox's Bazar blanked Moulvibazar 2-0 with goals from Ariful and Mohiuddin.

INTER-VARSITY CRICKET Hosts Jahangirnagar University defeated Dhaka University by four wickets in an inter-university cricket match at the central playground. In reply to the visitors' 132-9 in the stipulated 25 overs, Jahangirnagar scored 133-6 in 23.4 overs. Home bowler Shoeb was adjudged man-of-the-match for taking three wickets for 15.

JU SPORTS Bangla department emerged champions in the inter-department handball of Jahangirnagar University defeating English 10-9 in an exciting final at the central playground. Zahid and Bappy scored four goals each for the winners.

In the JU women's club sports, Homaira Tasneem won the carom competition, Homaira and Nadira won the doubles carom title while the other winners were Masuma (chess), Nasrin (table tennis), Fazilatunnesa (card), Sanzida (ludo) and Sanzida-Shahnaz (ludo doubles).

Vice-chancellor Khondokar Mustahidur Rahman distributed prizes among the winners of both competitions.

SCHOOLVOLLEYBALL Five matches of the South Breeze school volleyball tournament were held at the Dhaka Volleyball Stadium.

BIT Beat Motijheel Government High School 2-0, Green herald beat BIS 2-0, South Breeze beat Green Dale 2-0 and St Joseph's beat Scholastica 2-0 in the boys' group while Scholastica won 2-0 against BIS in the girls' group.

HANDBALL The Exim Bank 18th National Handball Championship men's semifinals will be held today at the Dhaka handball ground. Bangladesh Police will face Bangladesh Ansar at 3pm while BDR play Rajshahi at 4.10pm.

DRU CAROM The Dhaka Reporters Unity singles carom competition will begin today at the DRU office. All the contestants have been recruited to be present before the 11am opening ceremony.

GAIBANDHA CRICKET Gaibandha correspondent: Braveheart Sporting Club handed a 37-run defeat on Cricket Coaching Centre in the Naeed Cotton first division cricket league.

In reply to Braveheart's 168, Cricket Coaching Centre were bundled out for 131 here at the Gaibandha Stadium.

Razzak enters

FROM PAGE 17 name came up earlier," he said. Razzak felt lucky that 'someone' remembered his good work in the Twenty20 World Championships and limited-overs performance in Mumbai and selected him.

"My recent ODI performance must have worked in my favour," admitted Razzak, who took seven wickets at an average of 17.28 in the World Twenty20s last September.

BFF polls

FROM PAGE 17 the federation's stubbornness for not holding an EGM, said they did not need to run to FIFA or AFC.

"The BFF could have had decided on an EGM, which we had been demanding for long. The federation officials simply refused to listen to our pleas. But everyone knows that any amendment in the constitution has to go through a general meeting, which we are having at last after wasting a lot of time," said Badal, who is the 'leader of the opposition' according to Sultan.

"The districts and divisions should be given a chance. We feel there is scope for that remaining inside the law."

"Whatever happens, we want to stand united under one leadership and see a new and worthy executive committee in the future."

Badal's last words confirmed the rumour that a joint panel, possibly headed by a big corporate house owner, could be in the election scenes soon.

"We also want the congress (AGM) to take decision whether we can afford paid secretaries in districts in the coming term. We will try to convince the AFC or FIFA representatives if the councillors think so," Badal added.

There would be no election for five posts -- general secretary, deputy general secretary, the assistant general secretaries and treasurer -- that have to be appointed according to the FIFA Statutes.

It was also learned that BFF's latest proposal to the AFC includes to have 15 members in the executive body.

Australia call tour off

Cricket AFP, Melbourne

Australian cricket chiefs announced Tuesday that they had scrapped their upcoming tour of Pakistan, on the day two bombs tore through one of the cities where they had been due to play.

The tour, originally due to begin on March 29, had been in doubt for months amid questions about the level of security they would be assured in Pakistan, which has seen six major blasts since elections nearly a month ago.

Cricket Australia (CA) called it a postponement and said they hoped to fix new dates "in the near future."

But it will not be this year, with CA chief executive James Sutherland telling reporters in Melbourne that there were "a couple of windows" in 2009 and 2010 when the tour may be able to proceed.

"We wish no loss to Pakistan Cricket Board and look forward to undertaking this tour in the near future," CA chairman Creagh O'Connor said in a statement after Pakistani officials earlier announced it had been cancelled.

Sutherland said CA had little choice but to postpone the tour until the security situation in Pakistan "settled down".

"Right now, it's not appropriate for us to be playing cricket in Pakistan," he said.

He added CA acted on advice from the Australian government and its own advisers.

"Our absolute priority has been the security and safety of our players and our employees," Sutherland said. "We've left no stone unturned, we wanted to play this tour."

The announcement came as two bombs ripped through the offices of a federal police agency and an advertising company in Pakistan's eastern city of Lahore, killing at least 26 people.

The Australian government, which has a travel advisory warning citizens against visiting Pakistan, welcomed the move, with Foreign Minister Stephen Smith portraying it as a joint decision between CA and

the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB). "The agreement reached between the two boards is a welcome outcome in light of the uncertainty surrounding the tour," he said.

CA and the PCB said in a joint statement that officials from both countries would meet in Dubai next weekend to discuss possible new dates.

PCB chairman Nasim Ashraf said Pakistan was saddened by the decision.

"We are obviously very disappointed at this decision. I guess there is not much we could do and sincerely hope that the tour of Australia to Pakistan can materialise at the earliest opportunity," Ashraf said.

Several Australian players, including all-rounder Andrew Symonds and pacer Brett Lee had expressed reservations about touring the troubled country.

Sutherland denied player pressure was behind the decision saying the tour would have proceeded if security assessments had deemed it safe.

Steyn can't wait for India

Cricket AFP, Dhaka

Teatray South Africa speedster Dale Steyn is smacking his lips in anticipation of a battle royale with India's batsmen in the upcoming three-Test series.

Steyn, 24, taught Bangladesh a few lessons in fast bowling in the recent two-Test series from which he bagged 14 wickets, and is now training his guns on India who have recently returned from their Australia tour.

The last time he played against India in 2006-07, Steyn picked six wickets from two Tests but given his current form, it should come as no surprise if he betters his record.

"I am looking forward to playing against India, especially after their successful tour of Australia. It will be interesting going to India," Steyn told AFP here.

"The good thing is we have been playing quite a bit of cricket on the sub-continent lately in Pakistan and Bangladesh. We won both Test series, so this will be an interesting contest between two good teams."

Steyn, who recently went past Allan Donald's record of the quickest South African to 100 Test wickets,

however admits that bowling to Indian batsmen in their own conditions will be a challenge.

"It's going to be tough bowling to any of the batsmen, particularly under conditions that they are used to. They have plenty of depth. The key will be to work on their weaknesses and take it from there."

Steyn will also rely on his slower ball to unravel the mighty Indian batting line-up during the series beginning March 26.

"My slower ball really took off when we went to Sri Lanka a couple of seasons ago. Polly (Shaun Pollock) told me that it was a vital weapon to have in my arsenal, particularly in sub-continent conditions."

"It makes a big difference when you are bowling at 145 (kilometres an hour) and can suddenly change gear to 110 or less," said the bowler who has 105 wickets from 20 Tests.

Steyn added he saw nothing wrong with intimidating batsmen with short balls.

"It's never nice to see somebody get hit on a cricket field but the short ball is part of the game and, if you do hit somebody, it sends shivers down the rest of the batting line-up."

"If a top player can't handle a short ball, then it is unlikely that those down the order are going to fare any better."

"It is important to show aggression and let the batsman know that you have got the upper hand."

Steyn, ranked world number two among bowlers behind Sri Lanka's Muttiah Muralidaran in official charts, denies feeling any pressure as a result of the constant hype around him.

"I don't feel I need to prove anything to anybody. If I do well, I am quite happy. At the end of the day it is all about team performance and not about individual achievement."

"There are 10 other guys playing with me and it is all about the team. I am hoping that somebody else in our team will come to India and take 20 wickets in the series because, if somebody is doing that, then we are winning as a team."

The bowler, who will also be seen in action in the inaugural Indian Premier League in India in April-May, is excited about sharing the dressing room with rivals.

"I will have Mark Boucher and Jacques Kallis on my side which will be great but what will be really interesting will be having players like Rahul Dravid and Nathan Bracken as team mates."

"I believe I will learn quite a lot from the experience. It should be a lot of fun and it is great for the players to be so well paid."

Rumi remembered

BSS, Dhaka

The life and works of renowned sports journalist and valiant freedom fighter Masud Ahmed Rumi was recalled by his colleagues, friends and relatives at a function marking his fifth death anniversary yesterday.

Bangladesh Sports Journalists Association (BSJA) organised the discussion and a milad mahfil at its office to pay tribute to Rumi, a symbol of sincere and honest professionalism in sports journalism.

BSJA president Manzurul Haque and general secretary Syed Mohammed Mamun along with BSJA members, well-wishers and friends attended the milad mahfil and prayed for the eternal peace of the departed soul of Rumi.

Former MP and vice president of Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) Monirul Haque Chowdhury, valiant freedom fighter and celebrated judo organiser Hasanuzzaman Moni, Bangladesh Volleyball Federation president Golam Qudus Chowdhury, treasurer of Bangladesh Olympic Association (BOA) Monirul Haque Chowdhury, deputy secretary general of BOA Ishtiaq Ahmed,

former general secretary of Bangladesh Cricket Board Aminul Haque Moni, former national footballers Badal Roy, Mosabber Hossain and Abdus Salam spoke on the occasion.

Rumi's untimely demise was not only a great loss for the BSJA and but also for the sports arena," said one of his friends adding that Rumi's contribution in the War of Liberation would always be remembered with pride and gratitude by the generations to come.

Rumi, also a former president of the BSJA, died on March 11, 2003 following a heart attack at the age of 55.

He joined Bangladesh Sangbad Sangthas (BSS) as a senior sports reporter in 1997 and continued there till his death.

Earlier, he worked with the now-defunct Dainik Bangla for 20 years from 1977.

A brilliant student, Rumi was born in Naogaon on January 1, 1948 and passed the matriculation examination in 1964 with distinction as being one of the first batch examinees of Dhaka Government Laboratory High School.

Elder sister of Rumi Prof Dilruba Afroze of Dhaka University and her husband Prof Dr Nazrul Islam, former national coach Jalal Ahmed Chowdhury and Fazlur Rahman Babul were present along with host of admirers of Rumi.

Earlier taking part in the discus-



MASUD AHMED RUMI

CROSSWORD

By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS 39 Doggy bag 54 Abrasive substance 11 Nano and Shuffie 13 Packs away 6 Analgesic targets 40 Fa follower 18 Height of fashion? 11 "Rome wasn't built in a day" 42 Soft cheese 2 Form ranks 21 Categories 12 Extended family members 44 Preclude speech 23 Morsel 25 Sandra or Ruby 14 Ila locale 46 Caviar, essentially 5 Disinfectant brand 27 Earl Grey, for one 15 Smooth fabric 47 Type of temperature 29 Weapon collection 16 Pussy-cat's partner 49 One beginning 31 Castles 32 Trial 17 "Forget it!" 49 One searching thoroughly 8 Bedridden, maybe 34 Weep 19 Commotion 51 Split 9 "Wind-talkers" tribe 36 One who writes "OED"? 20 Speaker's platform 52 Strata 10 Home of the Geats 37 Servant's garb 22 Allow 53 Boutonniere 38 They last for months 23 Masticate site 39 "Wind-talkers" tribe 41 Big dipper? 24 Church council 54 Strata 44 Jackknife, e.g. 28 Dignified women 55 Strata 45 Paper quantity 30 Actor Stephen 56 Strata 46 "Wind-talkers" tribe 48 Special someone 31 Lists 57 Strata 49 "Wind-talkers" tribe 50 Causal solution 35 With abundance

Cryptogram grid with numbers 1-38 and letters Q, R, K, C, S, Y, R, M, G, R, K, T, T, N, Y, K, P, C, X, M, E, D, H, T, M, Y, C, P, R, D, T, T, P, H, E, D, H, C, B, B, R, U, T, S, M, G, R, G, C, Y, W, C, B, E, G, C, H, X, Q, C, N, R, U, Y, K, G, R, W, R, Y.

CRYPTOQUIP Q R K C S Y R M G R K T T N Y K P C X M E D H T M Y C P R D T T P H E D H C B B R U T S M G R G C Y W C B E G C H X Q C N R U Y K G R W R Y. Yesterday's Cryptopuz: IN THE DAYS WHEN MARRIAGES WERE ARRANGED, YOU COULD SAY THAT MANY COUPLES WERE PRE-PAIRED. Today's Cryptopuz Clue: T equals O