



India pacer Zaheer Khan (third from left) is congratulated by teammates after having dismissed Australia opener Matthew Hayden (not in picture) on the fourth day of the first Test at the M Chinnaswamy Stadium in Bangalore yesterday.

Teams arrive in Chittagong

CU CORRESPONDENT, Chittagong



Both Bangladesh and visiting New Zealand cricket teams arrived in the port city yesterday to play the third and last one-day international of the Bank Series tomorrow at the Chittagong Divisional Stadium.

The Tigers were the first batch to arrive at the Shah Amanat International Airport at 10:15am. The Kiwis landed after two-and-a-half hours.

Although the teams reached here early, they however opted to take a day off yesterday after playing two matches inside three days in sweltering heat in Dhaka. They are scheduled to train at the game venue today.

Bangladesh skipper Mohammad Ashraful and his boys were seen in quite a different mood than previous occasions when they touched the Chittagong soil to play the series-deciding match against the visitors.

After beating the mighty opponents for the first time in front of home crowd in the first ODI at

Mirpur on Thursday and then spoiling a 'golden' opportunity to wrap up the series two days later, an upbeat Bangladesh captain was full of confidence to say yet again that the Kiwis were beatable and a series win against them was no longer a daydream.

"Earlier, we used to look for a competitive game alongside one or two happy-hunting. But this time it's a changed scenario and we can hope for even a series win, provided we repeat the character and click in all departments like the first match," the dapper captain said.

"We had a golden chance to win the series in the second match, but unfortunately we missed it. We are now only thinking about the next match with some game plans," Ashraful said.

Bangladesh played 14 matches in Chittagong. Of those, they won two -- the first one came against Zimbabwe on January 26, 2005 at the MA Aziz Stadium and the second against Scotland in December 2006 at the Divisional Stadium.

The Tigers have so far played 10 matches at the MA Aziz and four at the Divisional Stadium.

The Black Caps however kept mum when some reporters approached them.



Bangladesh opener Tamim Iqbal (L) signs an autograph for an adulating fan on his arrival at the Shah Amanat Airport in Chittagong yesterday. Tamim has been in a lean patch of late and will hope that playing in his home city will inspire him to a big score in the final ODI against New Zealand tomorrow.

Draw looms large

Cricket

AFP, Bangalore

Australian captain Ricky Ponting faced a tricky decision on a likely target for India after the hosts clawed their way back into the first cricket Test on Sunday.

The tourists will start the final day's play on Monday with an overall lead of 263 with five wickets in hand on a deteriorating wicket that is making batting difficult.

Ponting, whose team closed the fourth day at 193-5 in their second knock, has three sessions left in the match to force a result by giving his bowlers enough time to dismiss India again.

India not only prolonged their first innings to 360 to narrow Australia's lead to 70 runs, but also slowed their rivals' bid for quick runs by grabbing wickets at regular intervals.

Zaheer Khan led India's fightback with an unbeaten 57, his

team's top score, and then removed the dangerous Matthew Hayden for 13 when the Australians batted a second time.

Hayden was given out leg-before to Zaheer by Pakistani umpire Asad Rauf for the second time in the match, but TV replays indicated the ball would have missed the leg-stump.

Ponting, who made a century in the first innings, was snapped up low at short mid-wicket by Venkatesh Laxman off seamer Ishant Sharma for 17.

Opener Simon Katich (34) put on 50 for the third wicket with Michael Hussey when he was caught by Laxman at silly point off Harbhajan Singh to make the tourists 99-3.

Australia were just 198 ahead when the fifth wicket fell, Hussey bowled by a Harbhajan 'doosra' -- the ball that turned into the left-hander instead of going away from him.

Shane Watson (32) and Brad Haddin (28), however, kept the

tourists on target by adding 65 for the unbroken sixth wicket.

India were hampered in the field by a shoulder injury to captain and spin spearhead Anil Kumble, who was unable to bowl till the 54th over of the innings.

India, who started the day at 313-8, batted till 30 minutes before lunch, before last man Sharma was bowled by part-time spinner Michael Clarke for six.

Zaheer had on Saturday put on 80 runs for the eighth wicket with fellow tallender Harbhajan, who launched the home team's late charge with a stroke-filled 54.

India's last five wickets added a valuable 205 runs after the top five had been dismissed with just 155 on the board.

Zaheer batted for three hours to compile his second Test fifty with the help of seven boundaries.

India's total was helped along by a whopping 52 extras conceded by the Australians, including 23 byes by wicketkeeper Brad Haddin

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Ganguly's timing

Cricket

SHARDA UGRA

Sourav Ganguly has always played cricket and lived on his own terms. His standards are uniquely his own, be it batting or fitness, success or failure. He could be a cricketer of sublime beauty and a competitor afraid to look ugly, a man capable of great generosity and surprise, and an equally baffling source of frustration.

So when he said, "Just one last thing, lads..." at a conference in Bangalore, it could have been any last thing. The team is not practicing tomorrow. I'm going into politics. The Nano would have been good for Bengal. Close the door after you, please.

But instead, Ganguly surprised India yet again. He announced his

retirement, left the galaxy of critics open-mouthed and off balance and before anyone had time to recover, Ganguly had left the building.

Given his history- and histrionics that seemed to accompany every hairpin bend in his career-it was always expected that Ganguly would only go kicking and screaming, in a state of denial to the last. That the well-timed, dignified farewell was not his thing.

But this was classic Ganguly too- and timing has always been his thing. His career had been spent defying prediction and convention for himself and the men he led. If he was expected to rage against his own mortality as an international cricketer, it was precisely the kind of thing he would not do.

When he sighted the opportunity to make his own decision, Ganguly took it swiftly. In a month's time, he will leave, forever

an original.

But what if he is part of some loathsome deal struck by the BCCI to give him a decent farewell? Men in the Board who want to paint themselves bigger than the players will maintain it was.

Ganguly and the other Indian seniors will forever deny it. We will each believe what we believe and the choice here is between the essential contrariness of Ganguly and the farsighted, team-centric plan of the BCCI.

As he did with his leadership, Ganguly has set the tone among his peers. The most incendiary of Indians has admitted that the fires have gone conclusively cold.

Crickets at 30-something is a struggle in which a player's peak mental awareness must manage the slow erosion of physical skills. Every day is a tussle between the

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Warriors falter in opener

Cricket

PALLAB BHATTACHARYA, Hyderabad

The Dhaka Warriors failed to benefit from a fine start given by opener Shahriar Nafees and a tight bowling spell by veteran spinner Mohammed Rafique as they went down by six wickets against Chennai Superstars in their lung opener of Indian Cricket League's Twenty20 competition at the Lal Bahadur Shastri Stadium here on Saturday night.

The Warriors hit up 142-6 in 20 overs but it was not enough to stop the Superstars which overtook the modest target with two overs to spare largely due to the onslaught launched by their openers Ian Harvey of Australia and Ganapathi Vignesh, who together struck the fastest 50, with the help of seven fours and two sixes, by a team in the ICL, and Sri Lankan Russell Arnold's run-a-ball knock of 42.

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Pakistan edge past Sri Lanka

AFP, Toronto

Pakistan defeated Sri Lanka by three wickets to win their Toronto Twenty/20 clash with just one ball to spare on Saturday.

Pakistan made 141-7 with man of the match Shoaib Malik making an unbeaten 42 after Sri Lanka, who rested skipper Mahela Jayawardene and spin wizard Ajantha Mendis, had hit 137-9 off their 20 overs.

Pakistan were struggling at 91-7 at one stage following a four-wicket return for debutant Kaushalya Weeraratne, but Malik and Fawad Alam added 50 in four overs in front of packed King's City ground.

Malik hit the winning boundary off the penultimate ball to send Pakistan top of the table in the four-nation tournament which also features makeweights Canada and Zimbabwe.

Pakistan had needed 13 from the final over but Alam slammed his third six and Malik then sealed victory with consecutive boundaries off Nuwan Kulasekara.

When Sri Lanka batted, opener

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'Kumble injury not serious'

INTERNET, undated

The Indian team management has confirmed that India captain Anil Kumble's shoulder injury was not serious and has been under observation.

"Anil is very much here and has not gone to the hospital to check on his shoulder because it is nothing serious and he will come back on the field once the pain subsides. If it turns out to be a serious injury we will definitely let you know," Russell Radhakrishnan, logistics manager of the Indian team said here.

Kumble, who usually bats at No. 8, dropped himself down the order to No. 10 after taking painkilling injections on Saturday, but didn't take the field when India came out to bowl.

But the Indian skipper returned to the field during the second session, although he won't be able to bowl until after tea, as he was not on the field.

The Indian team physio treated his sore shoulder with ice packs after he was dismissed.

Franklin hoping for comeback

INTERNET, undated

All-rounder James Franklin is hoping to be back in competitive action for Wellington by the middle of next month.

The 27-year-old New Zealand international has been on the sidelines for almost a year after undergoing patella tendon surgery.

The all-rounder has just completed a three-week stint in Canberra under former New Zealand staff coach Ashley Ross and feels confident he will be back in action sooner rather than later.

"I do want to be batting and bowling in Wellington's first game (against Canterbury, starting on November 17)," he said.

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Khulna win on third day

SPORTS REPORTER



Rajin Saleh's first century of the season went in vain as hosts Khulna beat Sylhet by 35 runs on the third day of their first round National Cricket League match at the Birshrestha Matur Rahman Stadium yesterday.

The Sylhet captain was the lone ranger in a side ravaged by the departure of Alok Kapali. Golam Mabud and Tapash Baisya, who left to play in the rebel Indian Cricket League (ICL).

Away at Fatullah, the Dhaka-Chittagong game finally started after the first two days were washed out due to a wet outfield.

In Rajshahi, Barisal took a lead of 207 runs with six wickets in hand as the hosts failed to take a firm grip on the match.

KHULNA-SYLHET
Resuming the 292-run chase on 18 for two, Sylhet lost overnight bats-

men Imtiaz Hossain and Saikat Ali and Mohammad Mithun in the space of thirteen balls with the score on 34.

But the experienced Rajin withstood the pressure from the Khulna pacemen, who took a vice-like grip on the match. Rajin only found assistance from his deputy Mohammad Sharifullah, who scored 38 off 93 balls. The two added 86 for the sixth wicket before Sharif fell to Rabiul Islam in the 44th over.

Seven-wicket man Shuvashish Roy gave Rajin some more support and they added another 132 for the ninth wicket.

Rajin became the ninth wicket to fall, caught behind off Ziaur Rahman, who took four for 63. Rajin scored his runs 229 balls and the innings had eight hits to the rope.

Rabiul completed his first five-for of the season, taking 5 for 60. But it was Sylhet's Nabil Samad who was adjudged the man-of-the-match for his outstanding 13-wicket haul.

DHAKA-CHITTAGONG

Left-arm spinner Mohammad Yunus took the seventh five-wicket haul of the first round as Chittagong bowled out Dhaka for 210 in the first innings of the delayed game.

Nafis Iqbal brought portly Yunus in the eighth over and he rewarded his captain, by removing Anwar Hossain for just six.

The Cox's Bazar player later took four more to bring up the bowler's 'century' as Dhaka struggled to make an impact.

Later, the Chittagong openers remained unscathed as they negotiated 19 overs to score 48.

RAJSHAHI-BARISAL

Mohammad Shahzad's 40 gave Rajshahi some precious time and cut down Barisal's first innings lead to just 58 runs.

Nasiruddin Faruque later scored a very patient 45 off 166 balls as Barisal took a lead of over two-hundred runs.

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A warning for Manik

Football

SPORTS REPORTER

National football coach Shaiful Islam Manik received a warning of what to come in the Merdeka Cup when his side lost their only warm-up match for this month's international tournament in Malaysia.

A selected B. League side, mostly featuring players of Abahani, Mohammedan and Brothers Union, won yesterday's practice match 2-0 at the Bangabandhu National Stadium with Abdul Baten Komol and Rezaul Karim Liton scoring in the second half.

Bangladesh, who open their campaign in Group B against Mozambique, will leave Dhaka after

midnight tonight for Kuala Lumpur. However, Manik, who is in for his first assignment as national coach, was not frustrated at the defeat.

"It was a practice match and the players were told not to play very seriously and avoid all sorts of injury risks," said Manik who was happy with the team's first half performance.

"The eleven that started today is going to be my first choice in Malaysia unless there is any problem. I wanted check their resistance and they showed they are able to handle pressure."

"So the first 45 minutes looks positive to me."

Manik always says he needs aggressive fullbacks to make his favourite 5-3-2 system more attacking but neither Hassan Al Mamun

nor Waly Faisal impressed much.

"Still I am not frustrated. There were some mistakes in the second half when I allowed the boys freedom," told Manik.

Waly, one of the three players to have played full 90 minutes yesterday, played a more attacking second half at the left flank while Zahid Hossain's at right introduction added more pace to the national team.

But it was proved again why Manik does not like a full attacking side as both Waly and Zahid's absence cost them two goals.

Abdullah Parvez lobbed the ball for Komol ten minutes after the break and the Mohammedan striker, dropped from the national side after the SAFF Championship,

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A CANDLELIGHT VIGIL: Players current and former and officials of Mukti Jodha Sangsad led by Shaiful Islam Manik (L), Jahangir Alam (C) and Zakaria Pintoo hold a candle-lit press conference at the National Sports Council yesterday. Despite the power outage the turnout was good as the officials' bid to save the cash-strapped and underperforming giants. They also threatened greater movement if the Ministry of Liberation War Affairs and current management do not take necessary steps to restore the pride of the club.

PHOTO: STAR



Did U Know?

Bangladesh pace spearhead Mashrafe Bin Mortaza took four or more wickets in a one-day international for the sixth time during the first match against New Zealand at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur on Thursday.



Ricky Ponting

(Australia cricket captain)
"It's no rocket science, but Greg (Chappell) was obviously a great player and understands the technique of batting very, very well. He's a very, very good batting coach."



Neo Cricket & DD National
India v Australia
First Test, Day Five
Live from 10:00am

TEN Sports
ICL Twenty20
Chandigarh v Mumbai
Live from 8:00pm

ESPN
Sportscentre India
Sports News
Live at 8:30pm



Nat'l Cricket League (Four-Day)
Rajshahi v Barisal
Venue: Rajshahi Divisional Stadium
Dhaka v Chittagong
Venue: Fatullah Cricket Stadium
Citycell B. League
Farashganj v Ctg Mohammedan
Time: 3:30pm
Venue: Narsingdi Stadium