Sports minister new NSC chief

UNB, *Dhaka*

State Minister for Youth and Sports Ahad Ali Sarkar has been appointed chairman of the National Sports Council (NSC). He fills the gap left by General Moeen U Ahmed's resignation.

An official announcement yesterday said, "The appointment has been given as President Zillur Rahman has accepted the resignation letter of Army Chief General Moeen U Ahmed from the post."

On Monday, General Moeen resigned as NSC chairman citing personal reasons, amid controversies over Bangladesh Football Federation's sponsorship deal with Bashundhara Group.

BKSP champs

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Krira Shikkha Protishtan (BKSP) emerged champions in the Standard Chartered Young Tigers Dhaka Metro Private Cricket Academy competition defeating Dhaka Metro Cricket Academy by 67 runs in the final at the Gulshan Youth Club ground yesterday.

Batting first after winning the toss, BKSP amassed 292-9 in the stipulated 50 overs with Mohammad Rezwan hammering an unbeaten 87 off 73 balls that featured eight fours and three sixes.

Opener Jasim Uddin scored 52 runs off 50 balls with nine fours while one-down Shad Nahid made 63 off 72 balls with four fours and three sixes.

Enamul Haq claimed four wickets for 47 runs.

In reply, Dhaka Metro Cricket Academy were all out for 224 in 49.3 overs with Obaidul Islam scoring 65 runs off 52 balls and Jane Alam making 56 off 50 balls.

Rezwan Ahmed of BKSP was adjudged the man-of-the-match.

KKR's inside

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The other characters include a team-owner called Mr Batlivala, a team coach/captain called the Sheikh of Tweak and a TV commentator called Kishen Kanhaiyya.

The posts describe what the blogger claims are team meetings, arguments between coach and team members, post-match parties and pre-match strategy. Hours before KKR's first game he wrote that "Skipper" would open with "Calypso King" and Lord Almighty would come in one down. For the record, McCullum and Gayle opened with Ganguly coming in one drop.

His prediction for Tuesday's game? Skipper won't keep and either the Bangla Tiger (a fast bowler) or the spinner Junta Tormentor will beef up the bowling. And Fake IPL Player? He says the team management - which, in an official reaction, called it "poison pen writing of the dirtiest variety" - has vowed to out him in 24 hours.

BFF can afford

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than one month for the ceremony, it would severely hamper football activities.

The government has decided to host the opening ceremony of the next cricket World Cup at the BNS while the five games allotted to be held at Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur. But the in the changed scenario after the ICC has dropped troubled Pakistan as one of the four co-hosts, Bangladesh might get more matches to accommodate those games allotted in Pakistan.

Culinary

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agement decided to bring a new dimension in their bid to change the food habits of the players and that's why they have decided to arrange a "cooking class" on April 25 in a local hotel. The class is not for the players but for those who are preparing the food at home.

The idea is to let them know what is actually nutritious and how they can cook this food at home.

Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) is going to arrange the programme in collaboration with AIUB who will also conduct English proficiency courses for Mohammad Ashraful's men.

Did U Know?

Lennox Lewis won most alphabet heavyweight titles (8) – WBC, WBA, IBF, IBO, EBU and three British titles.

PHOTO: AFP

Sri Lankan legend Muttiah Muralidaran celebrates one of his wickets with his Chennai Super Kings teammate Subramaniam Badrinath (L) during their IPL match against Bangalore Royal Challengers at St Georges in Port Elizabeth on Monday night.

Dyson slams pitch

Cricket

AFP, *Leicester*

West Indies coach John Dyson criticised the state of the Grace Road pitch after 14 wickets fell on the first day of his side's opening tour match against Leicestershire here on Monday.

The tourists finished the first day of this three-day game on 80 for four, with teenage paceman Alex Wyatt taking two for 15.

Earlier, the West Indies had bowled out Leicestershire, who won the toss, for 182 with left-arm spinner Sulieman Benn taking four for 31 and promising seam bowler Andrew Richardson three for 46.

But afterwards Dyson, whose side play the first of two Tests against England starting on May 6 at Lord's, said the surface had been below standard

"I don't think it's a great pitch," said the former Australian opening batsman.

"It's an early-season wicket which looked like it was going to be a flat one but there were too many balls which rolled along the ground.

"There was variable bounce and no-one has looked comfortable batting on it - I wouldn't call it a good cricket wicket.

"We had some balls today from a very early stage that hit something and just rolled along the ground well wide of the keeper on both sides of the wicket and there were other ones that pitch in the same spot and sit up."

Dyson though was pleased with the form of Benn and Richardson.

"I thought he (Benn) bowled well today," said Dyson.

"We found in the nets that the slower you bowl the more spin you got and he varied his pace well and it was good to see," added Dyson, who recently guided the West Indies to a 1-0 Test series win over England in the Caribbean.

"Our guys have had a couple of weeks off cricket and that's our first outing here in these conditions, but I'm not totally happy with the day's play. There are too many things that happened today which we need to improve upon."

Meanwhile Leicestershire coach Tim Boon was encouraged by the form of 18-year-old pace bowler Wyatt, who in only his second first-class appearance dismissed Ramnaresh Sarwan in his opening spell.

"He's got a lot of ability, swings the ball away from the right-hander and he's got a natural length," said Boon of Wright.

"He isn't quick at the moment, but he is metronomic with his line and length and he is someone I think will just get better and better.

"The essential thing for us is to try to get him as strong as he can be and at 18 we've got to have some patience and look after him.

"He got a stress fracture and was out of the game for eight months last summer but he's shown a lot of resilience and self-belief to come through that period," Boon added.

The West Indies have two more warm-up games, against Essex and the England Lions, before the first Test gets underway. The second and final Test of the series is due to start at Durham's Riverside Ground on May 14.

When President met the Prince

CRICINFO, *undated*

George Bush tried and failed to swat a tennis ball with a cricket bat on a trip to Afghanistan in the dog days of his presidency, but the meeting between Brian Lara and President Barack Obama in Trinidad was an altogether more successful affair.

Obama took time out from attending the Fifth Summit of the Americas to meet with Trinidad's most famous cricketer. While his sport of choice is basketball, Obama was given a brief batting lesson by Lara, although attempts to teach him to drive were slightly less successful that his lesson in playing the forward defensive.

Obama greeted Lara by saying that he "always wanted to meet the Michael Jordan of cricket". Lara repaid the compliment by presenting the president with a signed bat.

"It was beautiful," gushed hotel manager Ali Khan. "You could see the expression on [Obama's] face and his daughter's. He was truly emotional and touched as were all of us."

Jamie focused on T20

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the WC looks great," he said.

Siddons was also satisfied with his boys' performance in the recently concluded Premier Division Cricket League.

"I think it was in the Super League that the cream started to come out of the milk. That is our national players started showing that they were the better players in the league. They were making 100s and picking up wickets and I was particularly happy with Ashraful's performance. They probably should have dominated the early part of the league lot more but I'm happy that they played good cricket by the end of the tournament," he explained.

Bangladesh, who have been pitted in Group A along with defending champions India and Ireland, made it to the second round in the first T20 World Cup in South Africa in 2007 and it didn't put any pressure on the Bangladesh coach.

"I don't want to think what has happened in the past, we have now got a totally different team. Some of the boys this time around were not part of the national outfit before so it's a different team," he observed.

In reply to a question Siddons said that Kolkata Knight Rider coach John Buchanan's multiple captaincy theory might work for his team too.

"I have a similar sort of plan for our boys too. I do see some merit in it, maybe it helps to take some pressure off Ashraful, maybe if Shakib and Mashrafe could share a bit of responsibilities. I see a bit of merit in it, because of our skipper's inexperience but it needs the board's approval and we haven't got that yet," he defended.

"We have a good leadership group. There is enough pressure in the team like talking to you guys [journalists] after every win or loss. So if we go for the multiple captaincy, that can help Ashraful because some pressure will be taken off him," he elaborated.

Hughes's big

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been criticised by England national selector Geoff Miller, who said he could not imagine a situation where a young England batsman was given a chance to play for a state side before an Ashes series in Australia.

But Middlesex director of cricket Angus Fraser said here on Monday the county had signed Hughes before he made his Australia debut and that, in any case, there was a wider issue at stake.

"We signed him not expecting to be involved in any shape or form," Fraser told Sky Sports. "But, even so, I don't buy into that whole thing at all.

"When England play Argentina (at football) at Wembley, do you want Lionel Messi to play? Well, of course you do. You want to see Lionel Messi play well.

"But you also want to see England win and that's where we are at here.

"I want to see two sides that are well prepared and playing to their best and are creating the sort of excitement the 2005 Ashes (which England won) created and the better side comes out on top.

"Of course I want England to win, but I don't want England to win just because the Australians are disadvantaged and we've made life extremely difficult for them.

"You go down that slope, then what do you expect when you arrive in Australia next time? Are we going to be changing in a tent at the back of the SCG (Sydney Cricket Ground) because they (the Australians) won't let us in the dressing-rooms? Of course not."

Pressure on IPL

FROM PAGE 17

we said we wanted from him was hundreds and he's demonstrated his ability to do that and hopefully it will continue.

"Michael Vaughan hasn't had much of a chance to bat so far, we all know what qualities he brings, but that No. 3 spot is a hotly contested one with Owais Shah the man in possession and Ravi Bopara, who came in West Indies and got a hundred. That's four good options for one place and it will be a tough decision."

Strauss will play one match before the first Test, against Leicestershire next week, when he is set to open the batting alongside Phil Hughes, Australia's rising star, who has arrived for his six-week stint with Middlesex.

Hughes' deal with Middlesex was signed before he stormed onto the international scene, by becoming the youngest batsman to score twin hundreds, in his second Test against South Africa, at Durban. However, his brief move to north London has still stirred controversy ahead of the summer's Ashes series.

Hughes will have three Championship matches for Middlesex alongside a host of one-day games before his spell ends on May 31, but Strauss insists Hughes' time in the domestic scene won't have a major bearing on the Ashes and could even be used to England's advantage.

"Of course a young guy like him who hasn't played in England can get some real benefits from playing here for six weeks," Strauss said. "The other side of it is that both Middlesex and other teams will pick out potential weaknesses that may not have been seen before. It's a double-edged sword.

"The Ashes series is later in the summer so we don't have to worry too much about his form at this stage. Middlesex signed him before he played for Australia so they didn't go into it with any malicious intentions."

Hughes, less than 24 hours after stepping off his flight from Australia, was unflustered about the prospect of English bowlers having an extra look at him. "I'm not worried about that," he said. "They can get the videos and go through the South African series. All the teams do that now, but I'm not worried about it at all. On a personal level it's about getting to know the conditions."

BHF delivers reception at last

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh Hockey Federation (BHF) accorded a reception to the Asian Hockey Federation (AHF) Cup heroes ten months after the national team clinched the AHF title to qualify for next month's Asia Cup.

The BHF hold the reception at the Dhaka Club yesterday to quell the growing discontent among the players in the national camp. The players have recently boycotted the training to press home their demand for BHF's promised reception as well as announcing a date for the players' transfer.

In the reception, each of the 20-member squad was awarded Tk. 20,000 along with a crest. State Minister for Youth and Sports Ahad Ali Sarker handed over the cash and crest to the players.

Grace's bat to be auctioned

CRICINFO, *undated*

A 113-year-old bat used by WG Grace will be auctioned at Sotheby's in London next month for an expected £30,000. The legendary cricketer used the bat while bringing up his 1,000th run in Test cricket against Australia at Lord's in June 1896.

Grace subsequently gave the bat to his Australian opponent Syd Gregory, who in turn passed it on to his fellow tourist and brother-in-law Harry Donnan on their return to Australia.

"I would expect it to go for somewhere in the region of £25,000-30,000," said auctioneer Graham Budd. "From the evidence of the cording, Grace had probably used this bat for some time, culminating in his 1,000th Test run."

The bat, to be sold on May 12, displays the autographs of Grace's England colleagues, Australian bowler Fred Spofforth and future British prime minister David Lloyd George.

No showdowns!

Cricket

CRICINFO, *undated*

As with the Kolkata captaincy issue, the showdown between England's two big beasts, Andrew Flintoff and Kevin Pietersen, did not quite live up to its billing. The pair did come face to face, but not as everyone had hoped: it was Pietersen, with his lesser-spotted offbreaks, who ended up bowling to Flintoff, with his well-disguised fear of getting out to his international colleague, not - as had been hoped - the other way round. And even then, curious onlookers had to settle for a pulled boundary and a couple of bunted singles. As Pietersen said after claiming he had got an inside edge to the ball from Muttiah Muralitharan that removed him for a golden duck, such is life.

But if neither man dismissed his rival, nor indeed sprayed graffiti on the other's bowling figures, then there was no doubt that Flintoff left St George's the happier - and almost certainly the more relieved. His debut on Saturday had been a mildly embarrassing affair. Taught a lesson by Abhishek Nayar's three sixes in four balls, he made an unconvincing 24 that left his side behind the rate against Mumbai Indians. It was not as if he needed a performance to remind everyone of his qualities - just that time was running out to make an impression before the flight home in time for the first Test against West Indies on May 6.

This was the impression the Chennai team had hoped for. His batting was more at home on the quicker Port Elizabeth surface than it was at Newlands, and his flick for six over deep backward square leg off Dale Steyn - who rattled England on Test debut here in late 2004 - was a subtle contrast to his usual blacksmith tendencies, and an eventual innings of 22 off 13 balls helped his side to a total of 179, more than any team has made here in a Twenty20 match.

MS Dhoni then held him back until the seventh over of the Bangalore reply, by which time they were already tottering at 46 for 2. His impact was immediate. First Robin Uthappa struggled to get him away, collecting only a single off the first three balls, then Ross Taylor was persuaded into pulling a ball that came onto him too quickly. The return catch dropped into Flintoff's pair of buckets and the ball was promptly kicked towards the heavens. When he does that, you know Fred is in the mood.

That over cost two, and so did the next. Suddenly, Flintoff was looking like the cricketer that owners fought over at the auction in Goa in February, and the catch at deep midwicket that wrapped up a comprehensive win was taken with the ease of a man beginning to feel more comfortable with life.

Pietersen, meanwhile, was less impressed. His glance towards umpire Simon Taufel after Murali, operating round the wicket, had upheld an lbw shout was followed by a plaintive look at his bat. In the press conference afterwards he confirmed his suspicion that he had hit the ball. Murali, naturally, disagreed. The replays, such as they were, were inconclusive. All that mattered was that Pietersen was out and Bangalore were 49 for 4. The joys of trouncing Shane Warne's Rajasthan Royals had evaporated.

Flintoff and Pietersen have never been the best of buddies. There were even rumours around the time of Pietersen's demise as England captain that Flintoff had not exactly been disappointed to see him go. The handshake at the end of the game looked genuine enough, but a deep sense of rivalry defines the men's relationship, and this result will hurt Pietersen more than he lets on. For Flintoff, it could be the start of better times.

Hurt by the snub

Cricket

AFP, *Karachi*

With five sons, four daughters and a wife to feed, Mohammad Rasheed has become a casualty of Pakistan's descent into the sporting wilderness.

Rasheed used to make a comfortable living selling sweets and nuts to the crowds which would pack Pakistan's grounds to watch Test match cricket and international field hockey.

But now the stadiums stand empty as teams refuse to tour - and tournaments are quickly shifted away from - this frontline state in the fight against Islamist militants.

The 44-year-old Rasheed, who sells maize (Channa) and nuts from a small tray was a common sight at most Pakistani stadiums.

Crowds sought him out as much for his rotund figure and good humour as his collection of dry fruits.

Cricket and hockey have been Rasheed's passion as well as his livelihood.

In between selling his goods on the terraces, he'd catch a glimpse of his favourite players - two joys for the price of one.

"Cricket is my first love," said Rasheed. "I have sold Channa and Phulli (maize and nuts) at every stadium, be it cricket ground, hockey or football arena. I'd watch my favourite players and earn good profits."

But the March 3 attacks on the Sri Lankan cricket team in Lahore have put paid to any immediate hopes of Pakistan hosting international sport in the immediate future.

The gun and grenade attack wounded seven members of the Sri Lankan team, along with their assistant coach. Eight Pakistanis were killed.

On Wednesday, Pakistan meet Australia on neutral territory - playing the first of five one-day matches and Twenty20 in Dubai and Abu Dhabi.

International teams have classified Pakistan a no-go zone ever since the September 11, 2001 attacks on the United States, which unleashed the so-called war on terror in neighbouring Afghanistan.

India refused permission for its cricket team to tour Pakistan following a 60-hour siege siege on Mumbai last November, which New Delhi blamed on militants based across the border in its nuclear-armed rival.

The Indian cancellation cost the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) 40 million dollars (three billion rupees) in lost revenue. Relocating this week's series against Australia cost the would-be hosts another two million dollars.

New Zealand has hinted it will not tour Pakistan later this year and last Friday the International Cricket Council stripped the country of its right to host their share of the 2011 World Cup alongside Bangladesh, India and Sri Lanka.

It all adds up to a bleak future for hawkers like Rasheed.

"I can afford a train ticket to go to cities in Pakistan, but who will give me a air ticket to go abroad?," he asks.

"I love Pakistan. I love my team and I want my team to always do well."

It's a bitter pill to swallow that he couldn't make the Sri Lanka Test in Lahore because he was unwell. It might have been his last chance.

Mohammad Asif is another familiar face at cricket stadiums, assigned to operate the official clock above the scoreboard.

Unlike Rasheed, Asif works for a luxury watchmaker and hopes to find work in Dubai and Abu Dhabi.

"I will lose a good amount which I used to get when the international season started in Pakistan," said Asif.

Bashir Khan works for ground advertisers and used to earn around 400,000 rupees (nearly 5,000 dollars) every season.

Pakistan finds

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world class grounds to host Pakistan's matches.

"It is a great honour to become home for Pakistan cricket. We look forward to hosting them, the Dubai Sports City stadium is a world class facility and can also host international cricket," Khan told AFP.

On Wednesday, the Dubai stadium will become the world's 172nd venue to host a one-day international.

Australia's stand-in captain Michael Clarke praised the state-of-the-art facilities at the stadium.

"This will be the first time we will be playing in Dubai and I think the facilities are fantastic, we look forward to playing more and more cricket at the stadium," said Clarke of the multi-million dollars, 25,000-seater stadium.

"Pakistan will feel more like at home than us, because of the heat and the local crowd, but we take this as a wonderful opportunity to play in Dubai and then in Abu Dhabi," said Clarke.

Veteran scorer Mohammad Ali Jaffri said Pakistan should look at UAE for their cricket matches.

"The venue in Emirates gives Pakistan a chance to give their cricket starved players some activity and the grounds are the best in the world," said Jaffri, who will complete 200 matches as scorer on Friday.

U-19s 3-dayer

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performance in BKSP just the other day.

SQUADS

BANGLADESH UNDER-19: Mahmudul Hasan (captain), Mohammad Rubel, Amit Mazumder, Saikat Ali, Asif Ahmed, Taijul Islam, Tasamul Haque (vice-captain), Noor Hossain, Abul Hasan, Anamul Haque (wicketkeeper), Mohammad Azim, Taibur Rahman, Shaker Ahmed, Kamrul Islam, Irfan Shukkur.

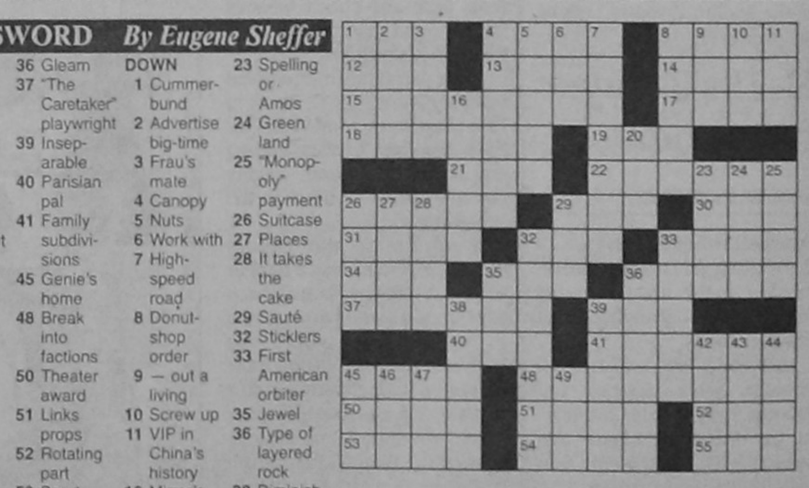
SRI LANKA UNDER-19: Dinesh Chandimal (captain), Angelo Perera (vice-captain), Udara Jayasundara, Buwanaka Ekanayake, Kusal Perera, Banuka Rajapaksha, Imesh Udayange, Chathuranga de Silva, Sameera Weeerasinghe, Mathusha Perera, Rushal Jaleel, Chathura Peries, Vimanga Perera, Lahiru Jayarathne, Madushan Ekanayake.

CROSSWORD *By Eugene Sheffer*

ACROSS
1 "Keep it down!"
4 Touch
8 Consider
12 Sailor's assent
13 Clean
14 Gumbo ingredient
15 Track star, maybe
17 Round figure?
18 Recluse
19 Banjo's kin
21 Whichever
22 Discontent time?
26 Yuletide punch-bowl fill
29 Phone transmission
30 Galena, e.g.
31 Peregrinate
32 Snoop
33 Cheshire countenance
34 Lemieux milieu
35 Feila
36 Gleam
37 "The Caretaker" playwright
39 Inseparable
40 Parisian pal
41 Family subdivisions
45 Genie's home
48 Break into factions
50 Theater award
51 Links props
52 Rotating part
53 Sport
54 Lip
55 Store-front-sign abbr.

DOWN
1 Cummerbund
2 Advertise big-time
3 Frau's mate
4 Canopy
5 Nuts
6 Work with
7 High-speed road
8 Donut-shop order
9 — out a living
10 Screw up
11 VIP in China's history
16 Mirror's offering
20 Breakfast-cereal name
23 Spelling or Amos
24 Green land
25 "Monopoly" payment
26 Suitcase
27 Places
28 It takes the cake
29 Sauté
32 Sticklers
33 First American orbiter
35 Jewel
36 Type of layered rock
38 Diminish gradually
39 Lecher's looks
42 Leave a good impression?
43 Posterior
44 Weaponry
45 Despondent
46 Copper head?
47 "Mamma —!"
49 Shooter ammo

Solution time: 25 mins.



CRYPTOQUIP

XI D JWKZEXJPWPZVS JWVWQIPV IYVVWH HYQY IVWDFXKR XK HDFYQ, X ZPEEWZY NY AXRNF LY IVDA-LPWSDKF.

Yesterday's Cryptoquip: BECAUSE SNOOPY HAS ALL FOUR OF HIS LEGS OUTSTRETCHED, I'D SAY HE'S LYING SPREAD-BEAGLE.

Today's Cryptoquip Clue: Y equals E