

## Thank you Ashraful

AL-AMIN

It is high time to seriously consider whether Bangladesh cricket is held hostage by a set of Ashraful's. And if it is the case then we better immediately send those 'FOOLS' to rehabilitation camp at least to stop the emotional bloodshed that was overpowering after Monday night's stunning defeat against Ireland.

Sorry! It was not a defeat, it was a disgrace to a nation for the way Bangladesh captain Mohammad Ashraful and company batted, bowled and fielded against the lightweights.

The cricket world considers Ashraful as a talented batsman. But he is perhaps the worst of that kind with his so called talent causing more harm than good for a team that desperately needs consistency rather than a flash in the pan.

He is one of those rare errant cricketers who never learns from their mistakes. Dropped at the early stage of his innings while trying to play the ball between the wicketkeeper and the lone slip, he played the same outrageous shot as a show of 'catch me if you can'. The Irish however did not repeat the same mistake and his latest demonstration of arrogance on Monday night at Nottingham eventually opened the window to compose an Irish Braveheart after the Pirates of Caribbean



PHOTO: INTERNET  
WHAT SHOULD I DO NOW? Bangladesh captain Mohammad Ashraful walks out of Trent Bridge ground after conceding a stunning defeat against Ireland in their ICC World Twenty20 final group league match on Monday.

act in 2007.

"Our top order batted poorly," Ashraful said after the match. Sorry, captain, we beg to differ. Rather it is the captain himself who provoked others to play shots that belies logic.

We want to stress the word 'provoked' because we have no instances that the captain was punished for playing reckless shots in his last three years of his reign.

Ashraful took over the captaincy from Habibul Bashar from a concept that it would make him more responsible. But he remained as pre-committed a shot-maker on the field as his monotonous presence in post-match briefings. He never ceased to commit stupid mental errors, leading someone to believe that he needs to be treated at a place beyond cricket.

It is not unbecoming if someone calls for the head of the captain after Bangladesh cricket had hit the nadir. It might sound harsh but it is only fair to say that his approach towards the game needs to be corrected. And sad as it is to say, that correction will not come courtesy of international cricket.

Banish our captain to the leagues and ask him to pay the comeuppance of his actions. He might return a rejuvenated man, or he might not.

If he does, good and well for Bangladesh cricket. If he does not, then we will all know that Mohammad Ashraful's time is, finally, well and truly up.



PHOTO: AFP  
Pakistan's Kamran Akmal (L) sweeps and misses as Jeroen Smits of Netherlands looks on during their ICC World Twenty20 Cup match at Lord's in London yesterday.

## Women's v'ball team leaves for Bangkok

SPORTS REPORTER

A 16-member Bangladesh Women's Volleyball team leave for Bangkok today to participate in the qualifying round of the World Volleyball Championship to be held in the Thai town of Nakhonpathom from June 12-14.

Bangladesh team have been placed in a group with Chinese Taipei and Fiji. The champions of the three-team group will qualify for the next round.

**SQUAD**  
Farhana Akhter (captain), Aleya Khatun, Lubu Akhter, Yasmin Akhter, Nadia Parveen Lucky, Nushrat Jahan Nishi, Nazmun Nahar Pappa, Diti Rani Sarker, Shaheda Parveen, Sharmin Parveen Seema, Sushmita Khan, Eva and Rahela Akhter.

Bangladesh team will return home on June 15.

## Premature exit brings Tigers home today

SPORTS REPORTER



The 'toothless' Tigers return home from the World Twenty20 this morning after they had made an early exit from the event in England with a heart-

breaking six-wicket loss to bottom-ranked Ireland at Trent Bridge on Monday.

The defeat broke the heart of millions of fans at home and abroad and coach Jamie Siddons was apologetic about his team's performance.

"I can apologise for it but I want the players to do that if they think that they have made mistakes. Give some credit to Ireland also. They are a good cricket team. We are coming through the ranks and we should be pushing Ireland aside really and pushing teams like the West Indies," he gave his message to the fans after the disappointment while talking at the post-match media conference on Monday.

"It is a disappointing loss no doubt. We should have gone to the Super Eight. I have no excuses. We were well prepared. We came here nice and early and that's the lowest score we have made on the whole tour," the Australian was quoted in the TigerCricket.com.

"There were some stupid mental errors by our batsmen. There was some ridiculous batting. It started right from the top. The opening batsmen had to be aggressive but they knew that the Irish bowlers bowled some good slower balls early in the innings but they made the same mistakes. This went right the way through.

"Tamim Iqbal has got run out like that a few times on this tour, Shakib Al Hasan has got out like that about five times on this tour, same shot, same spot. These are just mental errors. Their skill level is as good as anyone but I am on the borderline of being disappointed and angry. There's nothing we can do if they keep making mental errors like that and the same mistakes over and over. We train and we talk about it and we do everything we possibly can," he explained the reason behind the defeat.

Siddons also criticised his captain. "Even Ash [Mohammad Ashraful] made the same mistake. He hit the ball in the same area after getting dropped in the previous over, as if to say catch me this time. It goes down the list. Five, six maybe seven batsmen got out to ridiculous shots."

"The batsmen kept disobeying the plan and we ended up with a score of 137. Anyone can get those. It's not cultural. Our boys tend to get

## Razib shares 2nd position

SPORTS REPORTER

Grand Master Enamul Hossain Razib beat International Master DP Singh to earn 3.5 points after four rounds and is sharing the 2nd position in the points table along with 16 other players in the 1st SCS International Open Grandmasters Chess Tournament at Bhubaneswar, India.

GM Niaz Murshed, FM Minhazuddin Ahmed Sagar, FM Taibur Rahman, FM Syed Mahfuzur Rahman Emon, FM Mohammad Abdul Malek, FM Mehdi Hasan Parag, Mohammad Ali, Debaraj Chatterjee and Md. Hasan Emam earned 3 points each.

IWM Rani Hamid, Sohail Chowdhury, Feroz Ahmed, Sharmin Sultana Shirin, Sharif Hossain, Masuda Begum and Tawhidur Rahman Toffee earned 2 points each.

In other fourth round matches Niaz beat Subhansu Mohan, Taibur beat Feroz, Emon beat Pollabi Roy, Malek beat Sharif, Ali beat Shrestha, Parag beat Atishay Ajmera, and Debaraj drew with IM Konguval. Sagar lost against GM Timoshenko Georgy and Rani Hamid lost against GM Temibayev Serikbay.

## Afridi propels Pakistan

AFP, London



Shahid Afridi starred for Pakistan with the ball as the Test side ensured the end of the Netherlands' fairytale performance at the World Twenty20 at

Lord's here on Tuesday. Leg-spinner Afridi took four wickets for just 11 runs in his four overs - the fourth best return in all Twenty20 internationals - as 2007 finalists Pakistan won by 82 runs to book their place in the second phase Super Eights.

The Dutch, shock four-wicket winners over England at Lord's in Friday's tournament opener and with a better run-rate at the start, needed to make 151 to get through and so deny Pakistan the minimum 25-run margin of victory they required.

But Afridi, well supported by fellow spinner Saeed Ajmal (three for 20), sparked a collapse that saw the Dutch decline from 42 for one to 93 all out.

Victory saw Pakistan, beaten by 48 runs by England at the Oval on Sunday, join the hosts in the second phase after they had made 175 for five with wicket-keeper Kamran Akmal, who later made four stumpings, top-score with 41.

By contrast, no Dutch batsman made more than Alexei Kervezee's 21.

"Afridi was outstanding and we struggled on this wicket," said Dutch skipper Jeroen Smits.

"We talked about Afridi and that we had to play him straight, but we didn't do it. However, it's still been a privilege to be here even if we didn't make it to the Super Eights."

Pakistan captain Younus Khan was relieved that his team had avoided suffering the fate of Australia who lost both their matches and were eliminated.

"We were much better today and the partnerships were important," said Younus. "Our spinners bowled very well."

The Dutch chased started briskly with Darron Reekers striking four off left-arm quicks Sohail Tanvir and Mohammad Aamir.

But Afridi struck with his first ball when he bowled former Sussex batsman Bas Zuurderent for 13.

That left the Dutch 42 for two in the eighth over. It was the start of a collapse from which they never recovered.

Tom de Grooth, who made 49 against England, could not repeat his heroics this time and was bowled by Afridi, better known as a hard-hitting batsman, who took three wickets

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## What to WATCH

BTV & STAR Cricket

ICC World T20 Cup  
Sri Lanka v West Indies  
Live from 6:30pm  
India v Ireland  
Live from 10:30pm  
STAR Sports  
FIFA WC Qualifier  
South Korea v Saudi Arabia  
Live from 5:00pm

## TALK TURKEY



Robin Soderling

(Swedish tennis star)

"Roger [Federer] doesn't have any weaknesses. He deserves to be described as the best player of all time." After losing the French Open final to the Swiss superstar on Sunday.

## TODAY'S T20 MATCHES

Sri Lanka v West Indies  
Venue: Trent Bridge  
Time: 6:30pm  
India v Ireland  
Venue: Trent Bridge  
Time: 10:30pm

## KP sees new England

AFP, London



Kevin Pietersen believes England are finally playing without an inhibiting fear of failure and can, after a wretched start, go on to win the World Twenty20.

No England side has ever won a major global one-day competition and few would have given much for their chances following a shock four-wicket loss to the Netherlands in the tournament opener at Lord's.

All the old English failings in one-day cricket were on show against the Dutch - a lack of power hitting and unconventional bowling among them - while it was the minnows who gave their professional hosts a lesson in fielding and running between the wickets.

But the return from an Achilles injury of Pietersen, whose South African upbringing may explain why the diffidence which can affect some of his England colleagues has no place in his mentality, helped inspire the team to a 48-

run victory over Pakistan at the Oval on Sunday.

So convincing was their winning margin, with Pietersen top-scoring with 58, that England, despite their Dutch debacle, booked their place in the second phase Super Eights regardless of the final Group B match between Pakistan and the Netherlands at Lord's on Tuesday.

The African influence within the England dressing room is not just restricted to Pietersen now that former Zimbabwe batsman Andy Flower is the team coach.

"I spoke to Andy Flower before the game about bringing calmness into the dressing room and it was really calm, it was really positive and we talked about not thinking too hard about the consequences and results of that game," former England captain Pietersen said Monday.

"We just wanted to go out and play cricket like we'd played over the last two or three months and the guys really turned it on."

"It was a huge game because Pakistan are a fantastic cricket team with good spin bowlers and destructive batsmen and I think our boys

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## Irish heroes hailed

AFP, Dublin



Ireland's cricketers were hailed as sporting heroes here on Tuesday after they sent Test side Bangladesh crashing out of the World Twenty20 in Nottingham on Monday.

For the growing number of cricket fans in the Irish Republic it was confirmation of the form their side had demonstrated at the World Cup in the Caribbean two years ago.

With its international successes, cricket in Ireland is getting a profile that it has not had for more than a century.

And the Irish Times said "there could be no argument that Ireland had again deserved their victory on the big stage."

"Inspired Ireland reach Super Eights" headlined the newspaper.

"O'Brien brothers bash Bangladesh" said the Irish Independent which toasted the brothers Niall and Kevin O'Brien after they blasted Ireland into the last eight of the World Twenty20 "with a stunning six-wicket victory".

"In many ways the match followed Ireland's famous World Cup win against Pakistan two

years ago," the newspaper said.

"Ireland have now beaten Bangladesh in both the 50- and 20-over versions of the World Cup, and the growing clamour for the national team to be given full Test status will be deafening should they perform well against India."

Though the Irish Cricket Union is an all-Ireland body, Northern Ireland has been the stronghold for the game on the island.

But during the so-called Celtic Tiger economic boom and before the country lurched into recession the Republic, historically known for emigration, attracted immigrants from traditional cricket-playing nations.

Ireland is now home to players from countries like New Zealand, Australia, South Africa, India and Pakistan.

The game is very much a minority sport in the Republic with attitudes only changing in recent years following the Northern Ireland peace process and the cricketing immigrants boosting the game.

In the past, playing cricket had a political dimension. It was known as a "garrison" sport because it was associated with British army barracks around the country during colonisation.

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## BFF plans three-year calendar

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) is considering publishing a complete calendar for the next three years, which also marks the tenure of the existing executive committee, led by BFF president Kazi Salahuddin.

The BFF has already revealed a one-year calendar, which has 29 local and international tournaments for the year 2009 and is now looking forward to reveal the next three-year calendar in a bid to maintain the domestic as well as international meets on a regular basis.

BFF president told reporters yesterday that they were working on this and would make it public as soon as possible with the approval of the executive committee.

The Salahuddin-led committee took over on April 30, 2008 for a four-year term and have already completed major events like B. League, Super Cup, Federation Cup, AFC Challenge Cup qualifiers, Futsal tournament, women's championship, school tournament and the Club Cup championship.

Now events like the National Championship, BFF international tournament, Women's Super Cup, Women's Corporate League, Women's Divisional championship, Futsal tournament with first and second divisions as well as divisional teams are being expected in the 2009 calendar.

## INDIA V IRELAND

# Champs have to do without Sehwag

AFP, Nottingham



India take the field in their last World Twenty20 league game against Ireland here on Wednesday reeling from the news that Virender Sehwag will return home due to injury.

Sehwag, who suffered a shoulder injury during the Indian Premier League in South Africa, has not played competitive cricket since the team arrived in England 12 days ago.

The Indian vice-captain missed both practice matches and also the opening World Twenty20 match against Bangladesh which India won by 25 runs.

Sehwag, regarded one of the most destructive batsmen in the modern game, has so far played 12 Twenty20 internationals and scored 223 runs at a strike-rate of 144.80.

The defending champions, preparing for Wednesday's match against Ireland at Trent

Bridge here, were disappointed at the news of Sehwag's return.

"Veeru is one of our main batsmen, so not having him around is a blow," said coach Gary Kirsten. "We need to work around his absence."

Sehwag's replacement, batsman-wicketkeeper Dinesh Karthik, will arrive in London ahead of India's first Super Eights match against the West Indies at Lord's on Friday.

The game against Ireland holds only academic interest for both teams, who qualified for the Super Eights at the expense of Bangladesh.

But Indian captain Mahendra Singh Dhoni warned his team against taking Ireland, a non-Test playing nation, lightly.

"One can never predict what happens in a Twenty20 game," he said. "Ireland are obviously a good side and will be full of confidence after beating Bangladesh."

"From our point of view, we just want to concentrate on executing our plans. No international match is easy. So there is no question

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PHOTO: INTERNET  
Indian players indulge in a football game during a practice session in Nottingham yesterday.