

## Ashraf comes down hard

Cricket

SPORTS REPORTER

Gazi Ashraf Hossain defended his right of opinion and reacted strongly to comments made by Bangladesh captain Mohammad Ashraful as the fallout of Bangladesh's disastrous ICC World Twenty20 Cup campaign continued on Friday.

The former national skipper had launched a broadside on the current captain after Bangladesh had sensationally crashed out in the first round following a loss to Ireland.

However Ashraful hit back on Thursday amid reports of unrest in the Tigers camp and murmuring of calls for Gazi Ashraf to publicly apologise for his comments.

But the Bangladesh Cricket Board Director was having none of it while speaking to The Daily Star yesterday.

"I must say I was quite surprised to read [in the newspapers] about the players' reaction to my comments," he said.

"There is nothing that

prevents me from speaking my mind. And you are compelled to say something when even after such a shoddy performance a captain can come in and say that he is comfortable with his performance and happy with his team's showing.



GAZI ASHRAF HOSSAIN

"This is really an alarming precedent."

Ashraf explained that his comments were made not as a member of the BCB but as an

ex-captain and one who had to answer to a lot of people following the humbling by associate nation Ireland.

"My comments were made entirely as an ex-captain speaking out to another. But being a member of the BCB does not mean that I cannot give my opinion on an issue that I am also part of. I have been elected to this position and no one has made me sign a bond saying that I would not be able to share my opinions.

"No one can claim cricket for themselves. It is a national property and we are all linked to in some fashion or another. The issue [of the failure in the WC] has even been raised in the parliament. So no one is actually in the comfort zone. Therefore I am completely warranted to comment on something that I know is going totally awry."

Gazi Ashraf said that he had been deeply disturbed by the Tigers' showing in England.

"Before the World T20, I made a brief presentation in front of a number of other directors about our goals for the tournament, which was to

beat Ireland and move into the Super Eight's. We did not manage to complete a single one.

"There is no use talking about our performances in the practice games when we failed miserably in the tournament proper. It is the same as failing the core subject and passing the subsidiary ones. You really have nothing to show for it at the end.

"This is the easiest group we have had in recent memory and our progress should have been a formality," said a fuming Ashraf.

"These are the sort of performances that lead high-ups like the ICC President [David Morgan] to question our Test status," he continued.

As regards the players reported displeasure at his comments, Ashraf pointed out that the BCB would come down strongly if the purported incidents were true.

"No one, be they a player or a member of the Board, is beyond the code of conduct and if the players have indeed voiced their displeasure in the suggested manner, cricket operations will deal with it accordingly," said Ashraf.



Sri Lanka batsman Tillakaratne Dilshan hoists one over the leg-side during his sparkling knock of 96 against West Indies during their ICC World Twenty20 semifinal at the Oval in London yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

## It's our turn now: Younus

AFP, Nottingham



Pakistan captain Younus Khan wants his team to win the ICC World Twenty20 title to bring joy to the millions in his volatile country starved of big-time cricket.

"We are one match away and we will do our best to win," said Younus after his team knocked out favourites South Africa in Thursday's semi-final at Trent Bridge here.

"We want to make people back home happy. Winning the title will mean a lot to them and that will inspire us in the final. One more game and the World Cup will be ours."

Pakistan has become the pariah of world cricket after being shunned by foreign teams due to security concerns which forced the Champions Trophy and World Cup matches to be shifted out of the country.

Pakistan, runners-up to India in the inaugural ICC World Twenty20 in South Africa two years ago, will play either Sri Lanka or the West Indies in the final at Lord's on Sunday.

Younus said it did not matter who Pakistan play in the final, but admitted he will keenly watch the second semi-final at the Oval on Friday.

"We will keep track of both Sri Lanka and the West Indies. They are tough sides but we are not worried who we play.

"We will just go out and put our best effort, like we did against South Africa."

Pakistan rode on a brilliant all-round performance by Shahid Afridi to pip South Africa by seven runs and end the Proteas' five-match winning streak in the tournament.

Afridi smashed 51 from 34 balls and then grabbed 2-16 with his leg-spin as Pakistan successfully defended 149-4 to restrict the favoured Proteas to 142-5 before a sell-out crowd at Trent Bridge.

"Afridi is the sort of player who wins games on his own," said Younus. "He has done it here and I know he wants to repeat this in the final as well."

Younus said the five-run defeat by India in the 2007 final at the Wanderers in Johannesburg still hurt, and he hoped the team

SEE PAGE 18 COL 2

## We're not chokers: Smith

AFP, Nottingham



South African captain Graeme Smith will not let his team be branded chokers anymore despite failing to make the final of the ICC World Twenty20 here.

South Africa, overwhelming favourites after five straight wins in the tournament, were knocked out by Pakistan in a seven-run defeat in Thursday's semifinal.

Shahid Afridi smashed 51 from 34 balls and then grabbed 2-16 with his leg-spin as Pakistan successfully defended 149-4 to restrict the Proteas to 142-5 before a sell-out crowd at Trent Bridge.

"Every time we lose an important game, that word, chokers, is thrown around," a disappointed Smith said after the match.

"But we have played great cricket and I am proud of the way the guys have performed."

"During the last couple of years we have been on an upward curve and the team will improve and get stronger and stronger."

South Africa have faltered in most major multi-nation tournaments like the World Cup and Champions Trophy despite being one of the leading sides in the modern game.

Smith said the semi-final loss hurt, but conceded Pakistan were the better team and deserved to win.

"It is obviously disappointing and sad to be leaving the tournament now," he said.

"We have played some great cricket in this tournament and played some great cricket in the semi-final."

"But Pakistan brought their 'A' game to this match and every cog worked well for them."

"Afridi was the difference. His four overs brought Pakistan back into the game. We lost our way and never got back into it."

"I think we deserved to be in the final with the way we performed during this tournament, but that is not how it works. Pakistan played better than us."

Pakistan, runners-up to India in the inaugural World Twenty20 in South Africa two years

SEE PAGE 18 COL 2



### Did U Know?

Mariana Avitia of Mexico is the youngest archer who took part in the 2008 Beijing Olympics at the age of 14.



### Shane Warne

(Australia cricket legend)  
"I think he's got all the talent in the world, but I just don't think he's got the temperament. He can be put off his game too easily and he's too worried about how he looks."  
On England batsman Ravi Bopara.



ESPN  
FIFA Confederation Cup  
Spain v South Africa  
Live from 1:30am (Sunday)

### India reach Jamaica

CRICINFO, undated

Two days after their ICC World Twenty20 campaign ended, the Indian team has landed in Jamaica for their next assignment, a four-ODI series against West Indies.

India have been in great form in one-dayers over the past ten months, losing only three dead matches from 18 games. West Indies performed strongly in the World Twenty20 after a forgettable show against England in the Tests and one-dayers.

"I think it's going to be a competitive cricket (series) and we are looking forward to it," Mahendra Singh Dhoni said. "West Indies is playing good cricket at the moment. They are having a very good World Twenty20 tournament, but in the 50 overs, you have time to settle down."

India are missing four first-team players on the tour - Sachin Tendulkar, Zaheer Khan, Virender Sehwag and Suresh Raina - but coach Gary Kirsten said this was a chance for the youngsters to shine.

The first of four one-dayers is on June 26 in Kingston.



Egypt midfielder Mohamed Homos (L) heads in the all-important goal against Italy during their Confederations Cup match at the Ellis Park Stadium in Johannesburg on Thursday.

PHOTO: AFP

### Club Cup Football Feni in final

SPORTS REPORTER

Feni Soccer Club beat Shaheed Muktijoddha Moeen Smriti Sangsad 3-2 in the tie-breaker, following a goalless draw during the stipulated period to advance into the final of the Bashundhara Champions Club Cup at the Jessore Stadium yesterday.

Khokan, Jahangir and Shahed converted the penalty kicks for the winners, while Mahub and Aziz scored for the losers.

Feni Soccer Club will play the final against the winners of today's second semifinal between Shuktara Jubo Sangsad of Narayanganj and Brothers Union Club of Pabna at the Cox's Bazar Stadium.

The final will be played on June 23 in Cox's Bazar.

## Booters leave for camp today

Football

SPORTS REPORTER

A 26-member preliminary squad led by coach Edson Silva Dido and containing rookie U-16 player Al Amin will leave for Cox's Bazar early today morning to take part in a three-week long strength and conditioning camp to prepare for the three upcoming international football meets later this year.

The mercurial Dido has picked as many as nine fresh faces in the squad and believes they are capable of making it big under the proper training and guidance. Aside from Al Amin others like Mushtaq, Russell Reza, Rana, Jitu, Nayeem, Pritom and Mobarak will be making their entry into the national team circuit for the first time. The precocious Al Amin is an eighth grade student of Govinda High School in Narayanganj and was only recently part of the 20-man squad of Bangladesh Football Federation's (BFF) Under-16 camp beforehand.

Dido had earlier told the Daily Star in an exclusive interview that he believed in picking players who are talented and have special skills and is not necessarily swayed by a player's name and repertoire.

Five experienced booters have failed to make the preliminary 30 and have been overlooked by Dido for his three-month long pre-season training camp. They are Motiur Munna, Sujon, Sharif, Robin and Pranotosh.

Four players, Arman Aziz, Rezaul, Rana and Rashed will join the team down south at a later date. Rezaul (Youngmen's Club), Rashed (Badda Jagarani) and Rana (BKSP) are on duty in the ongoing Bashundhara Champions Club Cup and will join the camp soon after finishing their respective commitments.

Midfielder Arman Aziz is on leave on personal grounds and will join the camp later.

After the conditioning camp, the booters will join the residential camp that will start on July 16 at BKSP in Savar.

SEE PAGE 18 COL 1

## Egypt stun Italy

AFP, Johannesburg



Egypt hailed its shock victory over world champions Italy in the Confederations Cup as one of its best ever, but for Marcello Lippi's men it was a disaster.

The African Nations Cup holders stunned the Italians 1-0 late on Thursday as they cracked under pressure to leave their tournament fate in limbo.

Mohamed Homos scored the only goal in the 40th minute to hand them a famous victory in front of 51,000 fans, but they also had goalkeeper Essam al-Hadary to thank for pulling off a string of fine saves.

Egypt and Italy are now level on three points in Group B with the Pharaohs favourites to go through to the semi-finals.

They face the United States on Sunday while Italy must play Brazil, who have two wins out of two so far.

"We played better than them for the 90 minutes. This will go down in Egyptian history as they are the world champions," said Egypt deputy coach Shawky Gharib.

"Playing them was a scary feeling at times but we controlled the match and excelled."

"We were playing in the name of African football because we represent Africa and we did Africa proud."

Lippi put a brave face on their loss, but will be hugely disappointed knowing his team face an uphill task against Brazil to make the busi-

ness end of the tournament.

"Egypt played two very good matches, a fantastic second half against Brazil and an excellent first half against us," he said, referring to Egypt's agonising 4-3 loss to the South Americans.

"We picked it up after half time and the players always have the will to react, but they didn't make it because their goalie was fantastic."

"We almost got the ball in the net three or four times, I think we deserved at least one goal."

Egypt made one change from their last match and it was an inspired move, with Homos replacing 35-year-old captain Ahmed Hassan.

Lippi welcomed back his captain Fabio Cannavaro, who missed their 3-1 win over the United States with a calf strain, and brought in Fabio Quagliarella and Giuseppe Rossi, their two-goal hero from Monday.

The game started quietly with AC Milan defender Gianluca Zambrotta having Italy's first shot on goal after seven minutes, but it was a feeble effort that didn't trouble El Hadary.

Villarreal's American-born striker Rossi let rip with a left foot rocket soon after only to see it flash over the bar as Italy pressed the attack.

But Egypt also had their moments, with Mohamed Aboutrika causing problems in the Italian box.

It was Italy, though, who looked more likely to score with Juventus man Vincenzo Iaquinta and Rossi both forcing saves from Al-Hadary within the space of a minute midway through the half.

SEE PAGE 18 COL 4