

Ash to lose top job

BCB announces team today

Cricket

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) is all set to announce the name of the new captain in place of under-fire Mohammad Ashraful when the Test squad for the tour of West Indies is declared today.

It is none other than Ashraful's long-term deputy Mashrafe Bin Mortaza, the 25-year-old, dubbed as Narail Express, who so far played 35 Tests and 103 ODIs, who is all set to take the hot job.

World's number one all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan and wicketkeeper Mushfiqur Rahim are in the race for the vice-captain post but the former has a bright chance to act as deputy of Mashrafe.

It is however all but confirmed that the 24-year old Ashraful, will accompany the team in the Caribbean tour as a batsman.

Ashraful has been facing criticism following a thumping loss to Ireland, which made sure of the Tigers early exit from the ICC World Twenty20 in England and his performance as a batsman also came under scrutiny.

After this massive failure, the call for his removal from the top job has become louder but Ashraful put the ball into the BCB's (Bangladesh Cricket Board) court by saying that he is still enjoying the job.

And few days back BCB's spokesman Jalal

Yunus informed that most of the Board of Directors were in favour of removal of Ashraful from the captaincy.

Ashraful took the helm from Habibul Bashar, who was removed from the hot seat following his poor form with the bat, in June 2007 and the job was extended in February this year until the conclusion of the tour of West Indies in July-August. But the board changed their mind to fire Ashraful before the completion of the tenure.

Rafiqul Alam-led selection panel chose the Test squad from the 20-member provisional squad which is now practicing under the guidance of Khaled Mahmud.

The Bangladesh team will leave for Caribbean on June 29 to play one T20, three ODIs and two Tests.

The Tigers will open their tour with a three-day warm-up game against West Indies A which will start from July 3 at the Kensington Oval, Bridgetown.

The first Test will take place at the Arnos Vale Ground, Kingstown, St Vincent on July 9-13 while the second and final Test is scheduled for July 17-21 at the National Cricket Stadium, St George's, Grenada.

The three ODIs are scheduled for July 26 (Windsor Park, Roseau, Dominica), July 28 (Windsor Park, Roseau, Dominica) and July 31 (Warner Park, Basseterre, St Kitts).

The tour will end with the lone T20 match on August 2 at Warner Park, Basseterre, St Kitts.



Indian tennis sensation Sania Mirza plays a backhand against Germany's Anna-Lena Groenefeld during their Wimbledon first round match at the All England Club in London yesterday.



Did U Know?

Before each of the Wimbledon singles finals nominated children from two charity groups toss the coin for choice of serve.



Xavi

(Spain's star footballer)
"I'm proud of what the team is doing and we want to maintain our form and we are aiming for next year's World Cup."



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CLUB CUP FINAL Shuktara take on Feni today

SPORTS REPORTER

Shuktara Jubo Sangsad of Narayanganj will lock horns with Feni Soccer Club in the final match of the Bashundhara Champions Club Cup football tournament at the Cox's Bazar Stadium today.

The final match of the country's first ever district champions club teams will kick-off at 3:15pm.

Shuktara booked a seat for the title clash eliminating Pabna Brothers Union Club by 3-1 goals in the second semifinal at Cox's Bazar Stadium on Saturday.

Earlier, in the Group C matches, Shuktara outplayed

Brazil rout Italy

AFP, Pretoria



Brazil sliced Italy apart with three goals in a devastating eight-minute spell to send the world champions crashing out of the Confederations Cup on Sunday.

Sevilla striker Luis Fabiano bagged a brace and Liverpool defender Andrea Dossena scored an own goal as Dunga's flamboyant troops stunned their arch rivals with the triple blow just before the break.

It was the first time Italy has conceded three goals before half-time since 1957.

With the United States recording a shock 3-0 win over Egypt in Rustenberg, Italy missed out on goal difference with Bob Bradley's men instead unexpectedly going through to the semifinals with Brazil.

By topping Group B, Brazil avoid Spain and play South Africa on Thursday for a place in the final after the hosts finished runner-up in Group A.

The United States take on the European champions on Wednesday.

"We showed today that we were superior in all aspects of the game. We beat the world champions and we did it in an efficient way," said Dunga.

"We tried to have a balanced approach, keep possession of the ball as much as possible. I told the players they have to concentrate and score goals because that is what throws the other team out of kilter."

It was a lacklustre display by an ageing Italian team that has failed to shine with coach Marcello Lippi sure to face stinging criticism back home where he has been slammed for failing to make better use of his younger players.

"Frankly I didn't think our condition was brilliant when we first showed up. I hoped the physical ability of the players would grow but we are going home," he said.

"We are disappointed with our performance and we are very much aware of that. This does not reflect the way we usually perform. We were certainly not at our best in this championship."

An apathetic Italy slumped to a shock 1-0 defeat against Egypt in their last group game and Lippi made four changes to try and reverse the slide.

Out went Fabio Grosso, Gennaro Gattuso, Giuseppe Rossi and Fabio Quagliarella and in came Andrea Dossena, Riccardo Montolivo, Luca Toni and Mauro Camoranesi.

But it made little difference against a Brazilian team that took full advantage of Italy's defensive frailties.

They were dangerous from the outset with Italy fortunate not to go behind after six minutes when Ramires hit the angle between the post and the crossbar after being put through by Fabiano.

Italy were forced to get men behind the ball as the South Americans surged forward, Maicon and Kaka both having shots blocked and Robinho forcing a save from Gianluigi Buffon.

They eventually settled down but the

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Hockey team leaves for Moscow

Rajon captain

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh national hockey team left for Moscow last night to take part in a four-nation international hockey tournament also involving hosts Russia, South Africa and Canada.

Bangladesh, who recently finished seventh in the Asia Cup hockey and the lowest ranked side in the four-nation meet, will begin their campaign on Wednesday taking on 16th-ranked South Africa and then face Russia, 25th in the world, the next day.

Then the 34th-ranked Bangladeshis will play against 11th-ranked Canada on June 27 before playing a place-deciding match on June 28 in Moscow.

"It is a preparation tournament for Bangladesh ahead of the 2010 South Asian (SA) Games in Bangladesh," said Bangladesh Hockey Federation (BHF) general secretary Khondokar Jamiluddin at a press at the Maulana Bhashani

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Federer off to a flier

AFP, London



Roger Federer's bid for a record 15th Grand Slam title got underway in familiar fashion as the five-times champion settled into Wimbledon's new-look Centre Court with a straight sets demolition of Taiwan's Lu Yen-Hsun.

Federer, a strong favourite in the absence of injured champion Rafael Nadal, recovered from going a break down early in the first set to win 7-5, 6-3, 6-2 and set up a second round meeting with Spain's Guillermo Garcia-Lopez, who had a similarly straightforward win over Argentina's Agustin Calleri.

Fine, dry conditions ensured there was no need of the new retractable roof that has been installed above Wimbledon's most famous court as part of an 80-million-pound upgrade.

Federer also went largely untested once he had recovered from netting a straightforward backhand to gift his opponent a break in the fifth game of the match.

The Swiss broke back immediately and, after clinching the first set with a 12th-game break, improved steadily as the match wore on.

World number one Nadal, who beat Federer in a classic final last year, has opted not to

defend his after failing to fully recover from knee tendinitis in time.

James Blake, who had arrived here with high hopes after finishing as runner-up to Andy Murray at Queen's, became the first major casualty in the men's draw when he suffered a surprise straight sets defeat at the hands of Andreas Seppi.

The Italian beat the 17th seed 7-5, 6-4, 7-6 (7/5) to advance to the second round and leave the American scratching his head over his failure to make an impact here.

"After Queen's I really thought I a great chance to do very well," he admitted. "It's been my worst slam and I just don't understand why."

Maria Sharapova was the first of the leading women to take to the All England club's lawns and the 2004 champion quickly found herself in trouble, trailing 1-4 and 3-5 in the first set to Ukrainian qualifier Viktoriya Kutuzova.

The Russian recovered however to win 7-5, 6-4 and set up a second round meeting with Argentina's Gisela Dulko, one of the few women who can compete with her in the glamour stakes.

There was disappointment for the home supporters when 15-year-old Laura Robson, last year's junior champion, lost in three sets to former world number five Daniela Hantuchova.

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Hero Afridi hailed

AFP, Karachi



Pakistan's swashbuckling all-rounder Shahid Afridi on Monday became the toast of the troubled nation after his performance with both bat and ball lifted his team to World Twenty20 success.

The 29-year-old rose to the occasion at the tournament's key moments, with successive half-centuries in the semifinal and final and taking three crucial wickets -- performances which earned him two man-of-the-match awards.

Afridi hit an unbeaten 54 to help Pakistan successfully chase down a modest 139-run target set by Sri Lanka in the final at Lord's on Sunday.

Hundreds of fans gathered on Monday at Afridi's house in the southern port city of Karachi, keen to congratulate his family.

"I am the proudest of all the Pakistani fathers because my son has given me the best gift on father's day," said Afridi's father Sahibzada Fazl-ur Rehman.

"What I always tell him is that he should play

for the country and for the people who adore him. I am elated that he gave the whole nation moments of happiness," Rehman added.

Afridi, who hails from the tribal Khyber district in the North West Frontier Province, is the most popular Pakistani player, especially among ethnic Pashtuns in the northwest area troubled by Taliban-linked violence.

"I am really happy, Afridi played an excellent innings. I feel proud of my country," said Abdul Jalal, a young student displaced by fighting in the northwest who is now living in a cramped refugee camp.

Afridi is equally popular in Karachi, Pakistan's largest city.

"We are delighted for the Pakistan team winning the cup and the joy is doubled because Afridi was man-of-the-match," said Shirin Khan, a vendor who sells tea in the commercial Saddar area.

When not playing cricket, Afridi works with the Islamic Relief Fund and often visits the United States to drum up funds for people displaced by Taliban violence and army offensives in his insurgency-stricken home region.

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Yousuf, Razzaq return

Pakistan name squad for Lanka tour

Cricket

AFP, Karachi

World Twenty20 champions Pakistan on Monday unveiled the 15-man squad to tour Sri Lanka next week, including in the line-up pardoned rebel Indian Cricket League (ICL) players Mohammad Yousuf and Abdul Razzaq.

Both Razzaq and Yousuf risked their international careers when they played in the Indian Cricket League (ICL), which is not recognised by the International Cricket Council or the Board of Control for Cricket in India.

The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) banned all 23 players who joined the ICL, but in February this year the Sindh high court suspended the bans on all but two ICL players, paying their

way to return to Pakistan's squad.

Inzamam-ul-Haq and Saqlain Mushtaq, who are now retired, did not appeal against the ban.

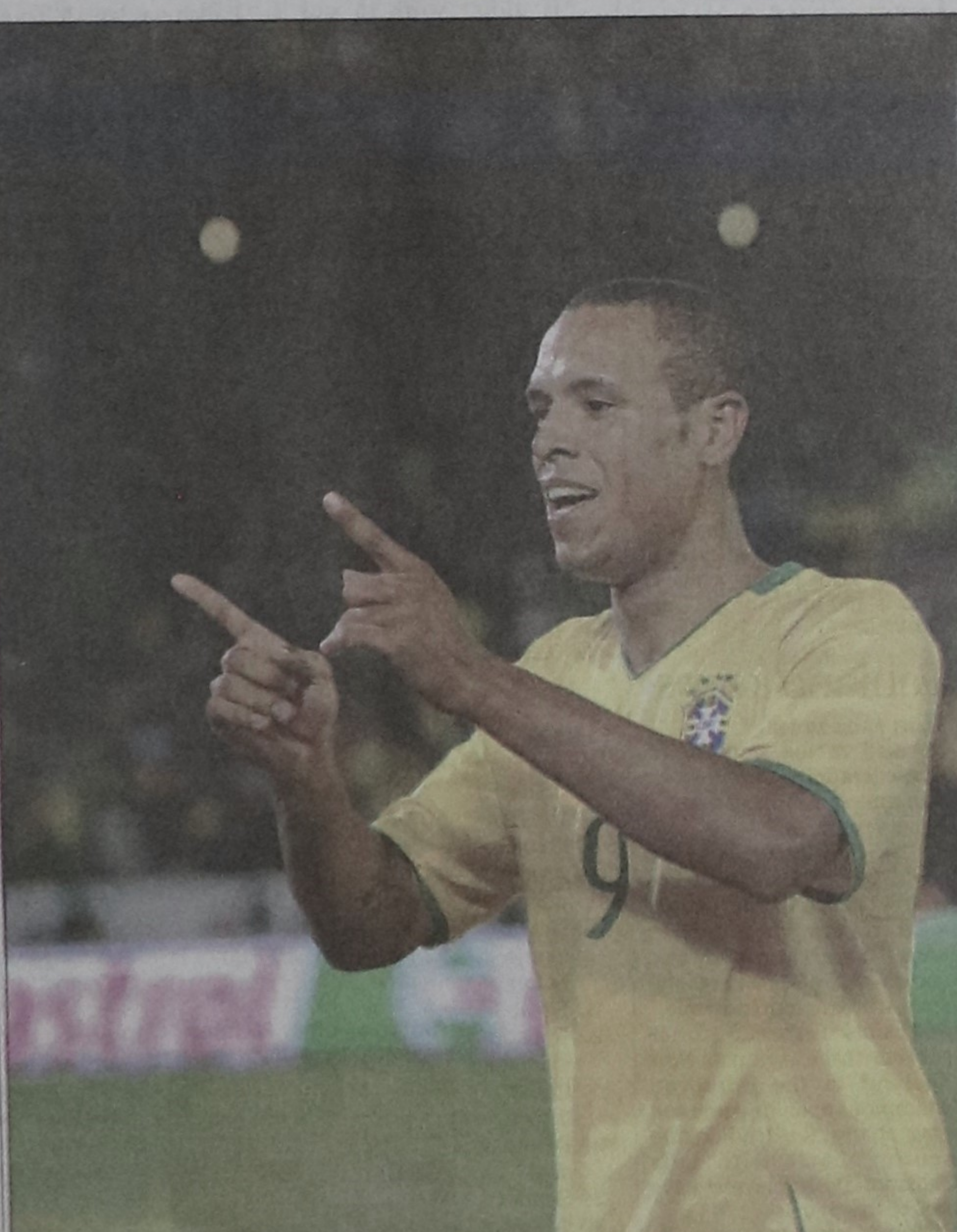
"Yousuf and Razzaq snapped their ties with the ICL so we have cleared them to play for Pakistan and have included in the squad," a PCB release said.

Razzaq was the first ICL player to return to

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SQUAD

Younus Khan (captain), Misbahul Haq (vice-captain), Salman Butt, Khuram Manzoor, Mohammad Yousuf, Shoaib Malik, Kamran Akmal, Umar Gul, Saeed Ajmal, Mohammad Amir, Danish Kaneria, Abdul Razzaq, Abdur Rauf, Faisal Iqbal, Fawad Alam.



Brazil striker Luis Fabiano celebrates his first goal against Italy during their Confederations Cup match at the Loftus Versfeld Stadium in Pretoria on Sunday.

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