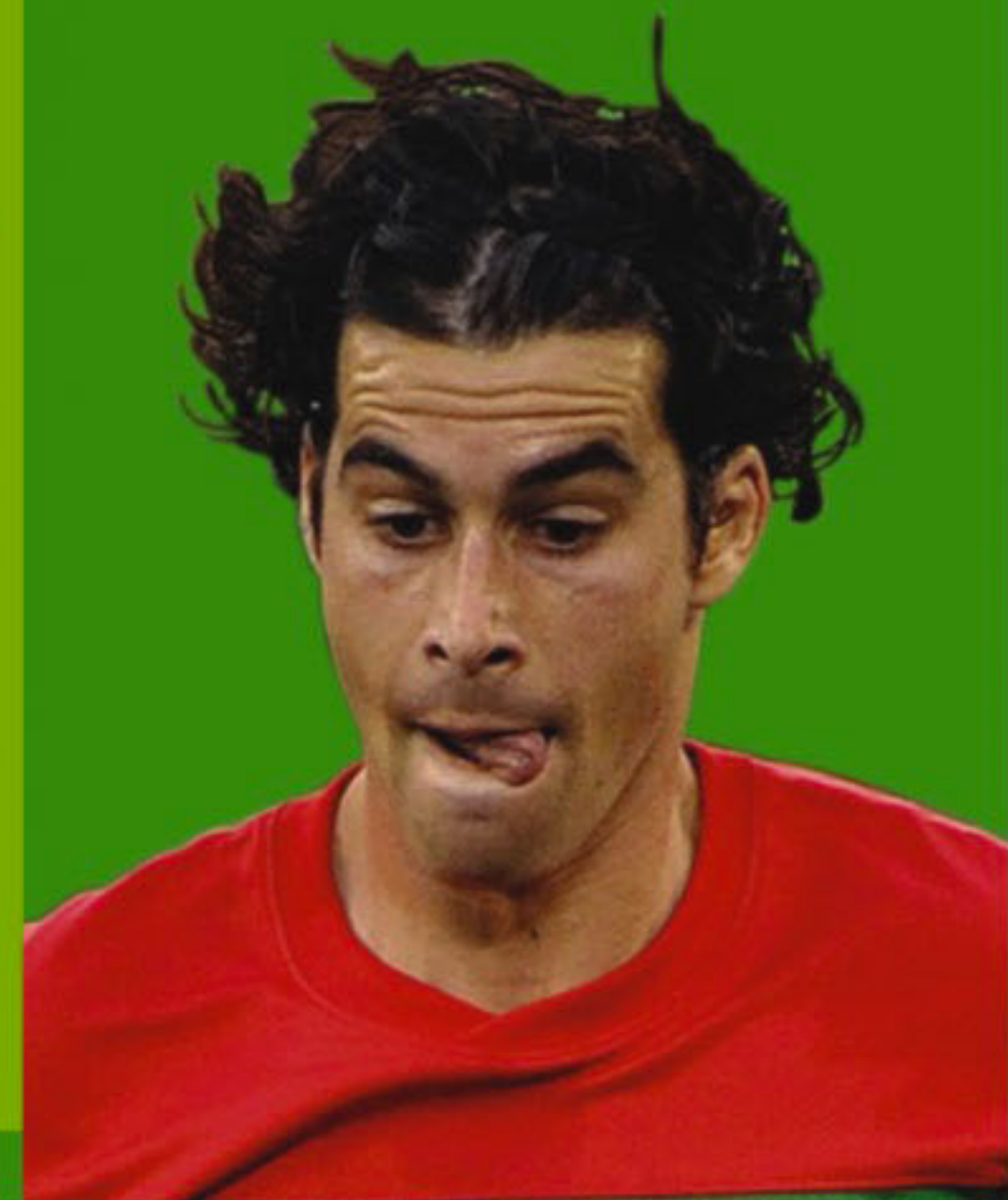


Atletico Madrid's Portuguese midfielder Tiago announced on Monday that he is retiring from international football. "The time has come to call time on this fantastic experience," Tiago wrote in a letter made public by the Portuguese football federation. The 29-year-old said that he was making the decision "for personal reasons" and to allow "new Portuguese footballing values to find their place." Tiago, who has 58 caps for the national side, made his international debut against Scotland in 2002 and has scored three goals.



SPORT

DHAKA WEDNESDAY JANUARY 19, 2011, E-MAIL: sports@thedailystar.net

Lara's bet on India

West Indies batting legend Brian Lara on Tuesday picked India as favourites to win the World Cup starting next month but warned they would face enormous pressure playing before home crowds.

Lara, 41, said Mahendra Singh Dhoni's men have been in top form in both Tests and one-dayers leading up to the showpiece event, which will be hosted by India, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka.

"With the World Cup being held in Asia, India are definitely the favourites," the former West Indies skipper told reporters after conducting a coaching clinic for youngsters at the Firoz Shah Kotla Stadium in New Delhi.

"India have been on the top of their game, they will be a very tough team to beat. They have a well-balanced team that can compete with anyone in the world, but playing before home crowds will not be easy.

"The key will be to build the right momentum. You must start slowly and then build up as it is a long-drawn tournament. As hosts, India may find it difficult because they would want to start on top and stay on top.

"They have to ensure that they do not run out of steam. This requires both physical and mental strength."

Lara, whose 400 not out remains a Test world record, also rated South Africa as a side capable of winning the coveted trophy but expressed doubts over whether they would be able to break their World Cup jinx.

"South Africa are a very good team. They can play consistently good cricket. But they have a bit of World Cup bogey which is why I won't put my money on them."

Pallima badminton from today

SPORTS REPORTER

Prime Bank Pallima Badminton tournament gets underway Farashganj at the Pallima Sangsad premises in Khilgaon, Dhaka.

Country's top shuttlers including Enayet, Muktar, Rana, Elina, Konica are taking part in the 26th edition of the meet since its inception in 1976, said speakers at a press conference at the NSC conference room yesterday.

The tournament comprises four events -- men's singles and doubles, mixed doubles and women's doubles. The champions in men's doubles will be awarded Tk 20,000 followed by the men's singles champion who will get Tk 15,000. A total of Tk 1.15 lakh will be up for grabs in four events.

Sponsor Prime Bank will provide Tk 1.5 lakh out of estimated budget of Tk 3.75 lakh.



READY OR NOT? Bangladesh pacer Mashrafe Bin Mortaza is seen bowling at the Academy Ground yesterday off a two-step run up in his bid to be fit for the 2011 World Cup.

PHOTO: STAR

Mashrafe yes, Mashrafe no

SPORTS REPORTER

All the talk has centred on the Mashrafe Bin Mortaza question and there seems to be no end to speculations ahead of today's World Cup squad announcement.

The three-member selection panel again sat with the technical committee last evening to deliberate the issue, but the feeling among many (including those who matter) was that the door is all but shut for the pacer.

Mashrafe bowled off a few steps in the nets for almost 30 minutes at the Academy ground and while this was surprising to the media, who got the impression that he would not be bowling until early February, the coaching staff was quite aware that this was how it was going to pan out.

"He [Mashrafe] is on track with his rehab. He was supposed to bowl today, bowl off a full run-up at the end of the month in eight to ten days," explained head coach Jamie Siddons after yesterday's training session in Mirpur.

"We definitely want him to be fit. If the selectors don't pick him and if he's fit by the first match, we can use him as a replacement in the World Cup," he said.

Mashrafe was the only talking point in an otherwise quiet net session but it is clear that the Narail Express is desperate to play his third World Cup.

"He has responded well and there were no negative repercussions after his bowling stint," said team physio Michael Henry, adding that everything is going according to plan and at the start of

February, the pacer will begin bowling off his long run-up.

But Siddons was clear that he wants a fit Mashrafe, though the timing of the injury and the proximity to the selection deadline are going against him.

"There are a few good reasons for him to bowl. I expect him to be fit by the start of the World Cup. I want him in the team, I want a fit Mashrafe. [It is a] really unfortunate timing. We are not going to play more than two fast bowlers here in this coun-

I expect him to be fit by the start of the World Cup. I want him in the team, I want a fit Mashrafe. [It is a] really unfortunate timing. We are not going to play more than two fast bowlers here in this country

try," said the Australian coach.

Bowling coach Ian Pont, who was also excited with the prospect of the announcement, said that he didn't actually see Mashrafe train in the nets.

"I didn't see him bowl. He turned his arm over for four overs. I think he is walking around okay. He also had a hit in the nets and fielded with Julien Fountain," said Pont.

SA 220 all out

AFP, Cape Town

Francois 'Faf' du Plessis scored a half-century on debut as he and JP Duminy rescued a floundering South African innings in the third one-day international against India at Newlands on Tuesday.

The five-match series is tied at one-all.

Du Plessis made 60 and Duminy 52 before South Africa were bowled out for 220 on a pitch of inconsistent pace and bounce.

The pair came together with their side in trouble at 90 for four in the 24th over.

They put on 110 off 129 balls before Du Plessis slipped as he went down the wicket to attack Munaf Patel and sliced a catch to cover.

Du Plessis, 26, a former schoolboy teammate of AB de Villiers who has been signed to play for Chennai Super Kings in the Indian Premier League, made his runs off 78 balls.

He showed composure at the crease and the only sign of nerves came when he needed treatment for cramps in his forearm.

Du Plessis was out in the first over of the batting powerplay, which was taken in the 45th over, and as in the second international in Johannesburg, the lifting of fielding restrictions heralded a flurry of wickets.

SCORES IN BRIEF
SOUTH AFRICA: 220 all out (Smith 43, Amla 16, Ingram 10, De Villiers 16, Duminy 52, Du Plessis 60; Zaheer 3-43, Patel 2-42, Harbhajan 2-23)

Yousuf shown the door

AFP, Lahore

Pakistan on Tuesday left out experienced batsman Mohammad Yousuf from their final 15-man squad for next month's cricket World Cup hosted by India, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh.

The selectors also surprisingly deferred naming the squad's captain, raising doubts over whether all-rounder Shahid Afridi will lead the side after Pakistan's 2-1 defeat in the Twenty20 series against New Zealand last month.

Thirty-six-year-old Yousuf was deemed not fit enough to warrant a place in the squad after he was last month named in the 30-man preliminary team.

His future was thrown into doubt last week after he was omitted from the one-day team due to play a six-match series in New Zealand from January 22.

Yousuf retired in protest over an indefinite ban imposed on him by the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) in March following a disastrous tour of Australia in which Pakistan lost all its matches under his leadership.

However, he came out of retirement in July and was sent to England after his ban was revoked, featuring in the last of four Tests and in the one-day matches.

Yousuf also played the last of five one-day matches against South Africa in Pakistan's neutral venue series in United Arab Emirates in November before he was forced to pull out of the Tests due to a recurring groin injury.

He has so far scored 9,720 runs in 288 one-day matches, including 386 in World Cup matches in 1999, 2003 and 2007.

With Yousuf's exclusion the squad is largely inexperienced, with only seven players having featured in previous World Cups.

Afridi, Abdul Razzaq and Shoaib Akhtar

SEE PAGE 17 COL 2

Rhodes stays with Kenya

AFP, Nairobi

Former South Africa batsman Jonty Rhodes has accepted to continue his coaching role with Kenya until the start of the Cricket World Cup, officials said on Tuesday.

Rhodes, who first worked with the team during a three-week training camp in Pretoria last November, is expected to arrive in Nairobi this week to join the team, which is currently on a tour of India for a series of build-up matches.

Cricket Kenya (CK) chief executive Tom Sears said the former Proteas star fielder will be with the squad during their final preparations for the World Cup.

ICC CRICKET WORLD CUP TALK

KFC and other tales

He caught legendary West Indian Andy Roberts's eye at a very young age. In his short international career, the Faridpur boy showed glimpses of ability and was part of the 2003 World Cup team and played one game. Here he shares his World Cup experience with The Daily Star.

Daily Star Sport (DSS): How do you feel to be a part of the 2003 World Cup squad?

Talha Jubair (TJ): It was a great feeling. To play a World Cup is every cricketer's dream and I was lucky to turn that dream into reality.

World Cup is always different from other tournaments that you play. It was very special for me as well.

DSS: Were you very excited?

TJ: I was very young at that time. It wasn't a very long time before that I started playing



TALHA JUBAIR

cricket, and to be a part of the World Cup so early in my career... I was very excited!

DSS: Were you confident during the camp?

TJ: It was 2001-02 when I got a chance in the national team. I was performing well in the domestic league matches. During the camp, I was quite confident to be a part of the squad.

DSS: Any frustrating part in the campaign?

SEE PAGE 17 COL 2

Dhoni bowls for Chawla

PTI, Cape Town

Mahendra Singh Dhoni on Monday defended Piyush Chawla's inclusion in India's 15-man World Cup squad, saying the leg-spinner's presence provides variety to the attack.

Chawla has been a surprise inclusion in the squad, announced on Monday by the Kris Srikkanth-led selection committee in Chennai.

"It is good to have Piyush in the side as he provides that variety to the attack. He is one guy who can bat a bit. He has scored decent runs in Ranji and also while playing in County circuit. If we plan to play with five bowlers, then he can be a handy number seven or eight batsman," Dhoni said on the eve of India's third ODI against South Africa here.

Chawla has been picked despite not playing a one-day since July 2008, and Dhoni was aware of that.

"I would always say that playing in first class match or IPL match and playing in the international match is different. Piyush needs that international match practice," the India skipper said.

Names like Rohit Sharma, Sreesanth and Ishant Sharma missed out on selection but Dhoni said that the reserve players should be in a proper frame of mind during the tournament.

"If you are in the reserve and if any batter or bowler gets

SEE PAGE 17 COL 4



A Chittagong Abahani defender attempts an aggressive tackle on Farashganj striker and sole goalscorer Sohel Rana during their Bangladesh League match at the Birshreshtha Mostafa Kamal Stadium yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

Farshganj win again

SPORTS REPORTER

Farashganj SC recorded their second victory in the Grameenphone Bangladesh League with a single-goal win over visitors Chittagong Abahani at the Birshreshtha Mostafa Kamal Stadium in Kamalapur yesterday.

Farashganj, on back of their morale boosting 1-0 win over holders Abahani, took only nine minutes to break the deadlock. Striker Sohel Rana was again the hero for the old Dhaka outfit after his solo strike had given them victory over Abahani. That single goal decided the fate of the match as the Sky Blues from the port city suffered their third defeat in four matches to stay at the bottom of the 12-team table.

For Farashganj a second successive win means they stay at fourth position with six points. Sheikh Russel

SEE PAGE 17 COL 4

SPORTS POLL WEEKLY QUESTION

Should Ashraf be included in the WC squad?

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