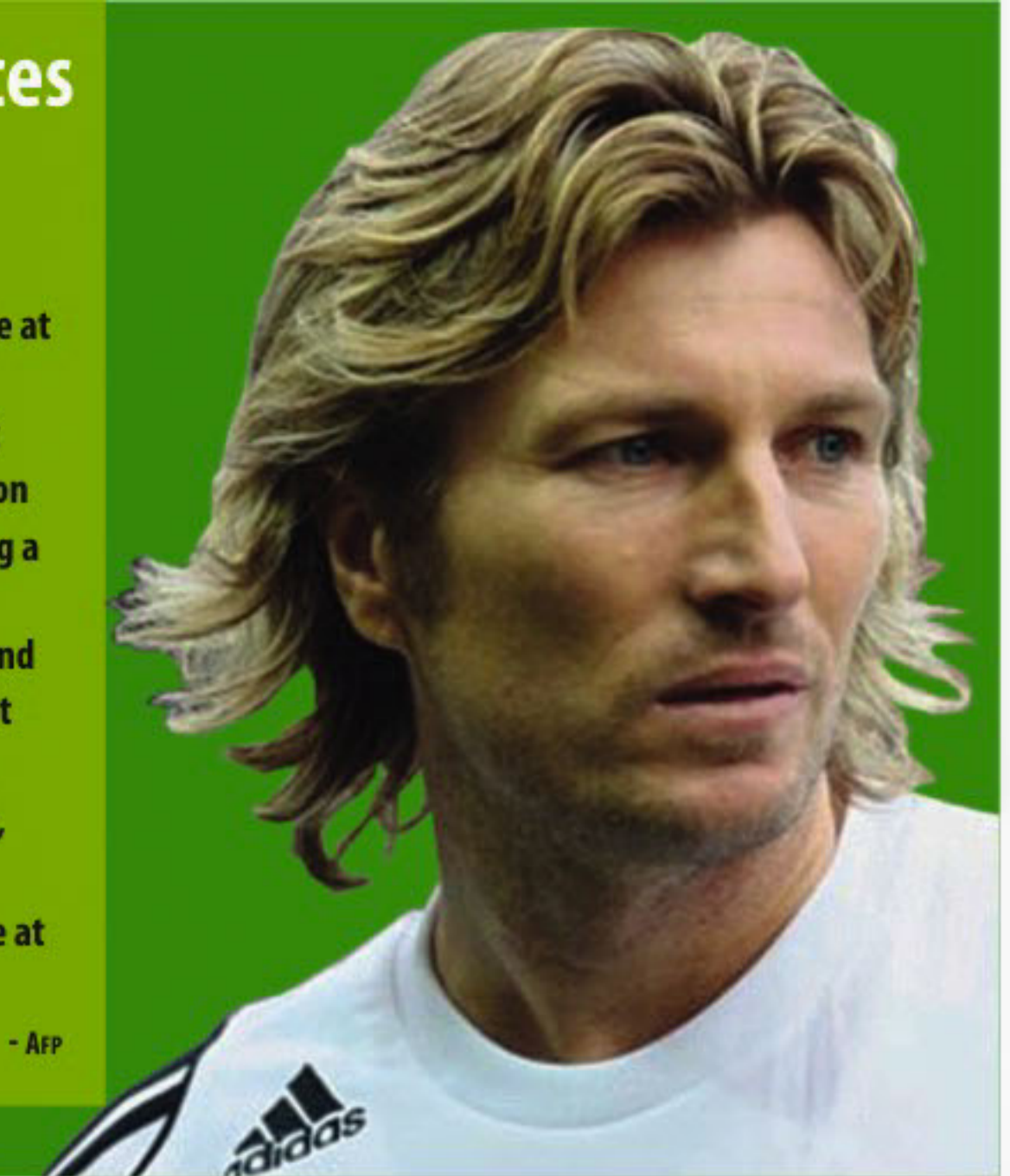


Former Wales midfielder Robbie Savage has announced he will retire at the end of the season. The 36-year-old began his career at Manchester United before moving on to Crewe, but made his name during a successful spell at Leicester. He also had spells at Birmingham and Blackburn before joining his current Championship club Derby in 2008. Savage, who won 39 caps for Wales, wrote on micro-blogging website Twitter: "Breaking news I will retire at the end of the season!!"



SPORT

DHAKA WEDNESDAY FEBRUARY 2, 2011, E-MAIL: sports@the

BATTLE PLAN

Trouble in the middle

BISHWAJIT ROY



As much as the opening position is most satisfying, the middle-order is the most troublesome for the Bangladesh think-tank ahead of the World Cup. It might not be exposed as much in the last two series due to the winning streak, but definitely it's an area coach Jamie Siddons must focus on with the showcase event is knocking at the door. Tamim Iqbal and Imrul Kayes have given some sort of solidity to the opening slot through consistent performances and that's why there is hardly any question about who will open the innings in the World Cup. But everybody is curious to know who will play in the middle-order and to some extent there is also the healthy debate on the batting order also. The debate among the cricket fans and as well as the pundits is also whether the team think-tank will give in-form Shahriar Nafees a chance to play as a middle-order batsman. Will consistently inconsistent Mohammad Ashraful be considered as a big occasion player? Will Mushfiqur Rahim again get a promotion? It's some headache indeed! Nothing could however be better if you have more options in your hand. It would be interesting to see whether the team management goes for the incumbents Junaed Siddiqui and Rokibul Hasan. It's no secret that Siddons has faith in this pair. And now everybody will be looking forward to see whether the think-tank change their

plans for the mega event.

Except for captain Shakib Al Hasan, the rest of the middle-order is inconsistent but it is common knowledge that only a solid middle-order can change the game.

Generally our spin bowling has played a pivotal role in our success but it will not always happen. We must have a good batting performance if we want to impress the cricket fraternity in the World Cup, especially when we are going to play in the subcontinent conditions. We have to put enough runs on the board or chase a challenging target if we want to win matches against India, England and South Africa.

The middle-order batsmen should be able to

SEE PAGE 17 COL 1

IS JUNAED BETTER AT THREE?

| | M | Runs | HS | Ave | SR | 100 | 50 |
|--------|----|------|-----|-------|-------|-----|----|
| Career | 46 | 1056 | 100 | 24.00 | 67.90 | 1 | 6 |

VERSATILE MUSHFIQUR

| | M | Runs | HS | Ave | SR | 100 | 50 |
|--------|----|------|-----|-------|-------|-----|----|
| Career | 84 | 1460 | 98 | 23.54 | 65.00 | 0 | 7 |
| No 2 | 1 | 98 | 98 | 98.00 | 80.99 | 0 | 1 |
| No 3 | 9 | 165 | 57 | 20.62 | 47.41 | 0 | 2 |
| No 4 | 6 | 154 | 76 | 25.66 | 75.12 | 0 | 1 |
| No 5 | 7 | 138 | 44 | 19.71 | 62.44 | 0 | 0 |
| No 6 | 33 | 667 | 86 | 24.70 | 71.10 | 0 | 3 |
| No 7 | 11 | 194 | 38* | 21.55 | 54.95 | 0 | 0 |
| No 8 | 6 | 25 | 16 | 8.33 | 62.50 | 0 | 0 |

ROAD TO WC:
Bangladesh batsman Shahriar Nafees steps out of the bus upon reaching Chittagong, where the Tigers will continue their practice ahead of the World Cup.

PHOTO: STAR



ICC CRICKET WORLD CUP HISTORY

Unfulfilled eminence

Aftab Ahmed was one of the more promising entrants into the Bangladesh fold when in 2004 he made both his Test and ODI debuts. The pocket-sized powerhouse from Chittagong wowed the world with his audacious and carefree strokeplay.

The images that stand out are Aftab's defiant 82 -- the highest score for Bangladesh in the 2005 series against England -- at Chester-le-Street during his first away series, and the last over six that sealed the deal against Australia at Sophia Gardens during the limited overs leg of the same tour. Also, one oft-overlooked aspect of his cricket is his brilliant fielding; he made the point position his own.

He was selected to play the World Cup in 2007, where although he did not set the world alight, he did have his moments. Mohammad Ashraful carried all the glory for the victory against South Africa at Guyana, and rightly so, but what is often unacknowledged is Aftab's role in the victory. Entering the scene with the score reading 84 for four, Aftab joined Ashraful who was only starting his now-famous innings, and the two combined for 56 valuable runs, with Aftab (35 off 43) scoring the lion's share. The partnership gave the team a platform from which Ashraful could work his all-too-rarely-seen magic, paving the way for one of Bangladesh's most memorable victories.

Aftab's story is one of two parts. He is at once the player who can delight spectators and have them inching towards the edge of their seats, and also one who frustrates and infuriates when he throws his wicket away in displays of unwarranted audacity.

The latter, sadly, has been occurring more and more, and coupled with his defection to the Indian Cricket League (ICL), has seen him slip out of favour with the selectors, relegating him to the status of a mere bystander during the 2011 World Cup.



AFTAB AHMED



Scenes from the boat rally organised by the City Corporation of Chittagong to arouse excitement among the city dwellers for the World Cup beginning in the country on February 17.

PHOTO: STAR

Right time for Tigers

AFP, New Delhi



Familiar home conditions, fanatical crowd support and a young energetic side give Bangladesh a chance to emerge from the shadows when the World Cup is played in their backyard.

The Tigers have had a miserable time at the Test level, losing 59 of their 68 matches and winning just three against lowly Zimbabwe and an under-strength West Indies.

But limited-overs cricket is their forte as was evident in the previous World Cup in the Caribbean in 2007 when they knocked out India in the first round and stunned South Africa in the Super Eights.

Now co-hosting the showcase event with India and Sri Lanka, Bangladesh could not have asked for a better setting to prove they are worthy of a place among the top cricketing nations.

A quarterfinal berth is the least millions of fans in the cricket-crazy South Asian nation will expect Shakib Al Hasan's men to achieve, if not an unprecedented place in the semifinals.

Bangladesh are drawn with India, South Africa, England, West Indies, Ireland and the Netherlands in the round-robin Group B from which four teams will qualify for the quarterfinals.

They must defeat one of the established Test nations and ensure they do not slip-up against Ireland and the Netherlands to advance to the knock-out rounds.

The advantage Bangladesh enjoy is they play all their six league matches at home in Dhaka and Chittagong, where they have won seven of their last 10 one-dayers and lost just once.

The victories include a superb 4-0 rout of New Zealand last October, indicating Bangladesh will be a force to reckon with on their own spin-friendly wickets.

The team suffered a blow when former captain and pace spearhead Mashrafe Bin Mortaza was not included in the squad due to a recurring knee injury.

Mortaza, 27, has been the pivot of the Bangladesh attack with 146 one-day wickets, including a match-winning 4-38 against India in the last World Cup.

The team's Australian coach Jamie Siddons admitted Mortaza's absence was a major setback.

"A fit and firing 'Mash' was obviously our first preference, and this is a huge disappointment for him and the team as well," said Siddons.

"The loss of 'Mash' will be seen in his leadership and experience. We cannot cover this aspect of his loss."

The latest injury follows six knee reconstructions in the space of eight years, but

SEE PAGE 17 COL 3

Decorations two days before WC

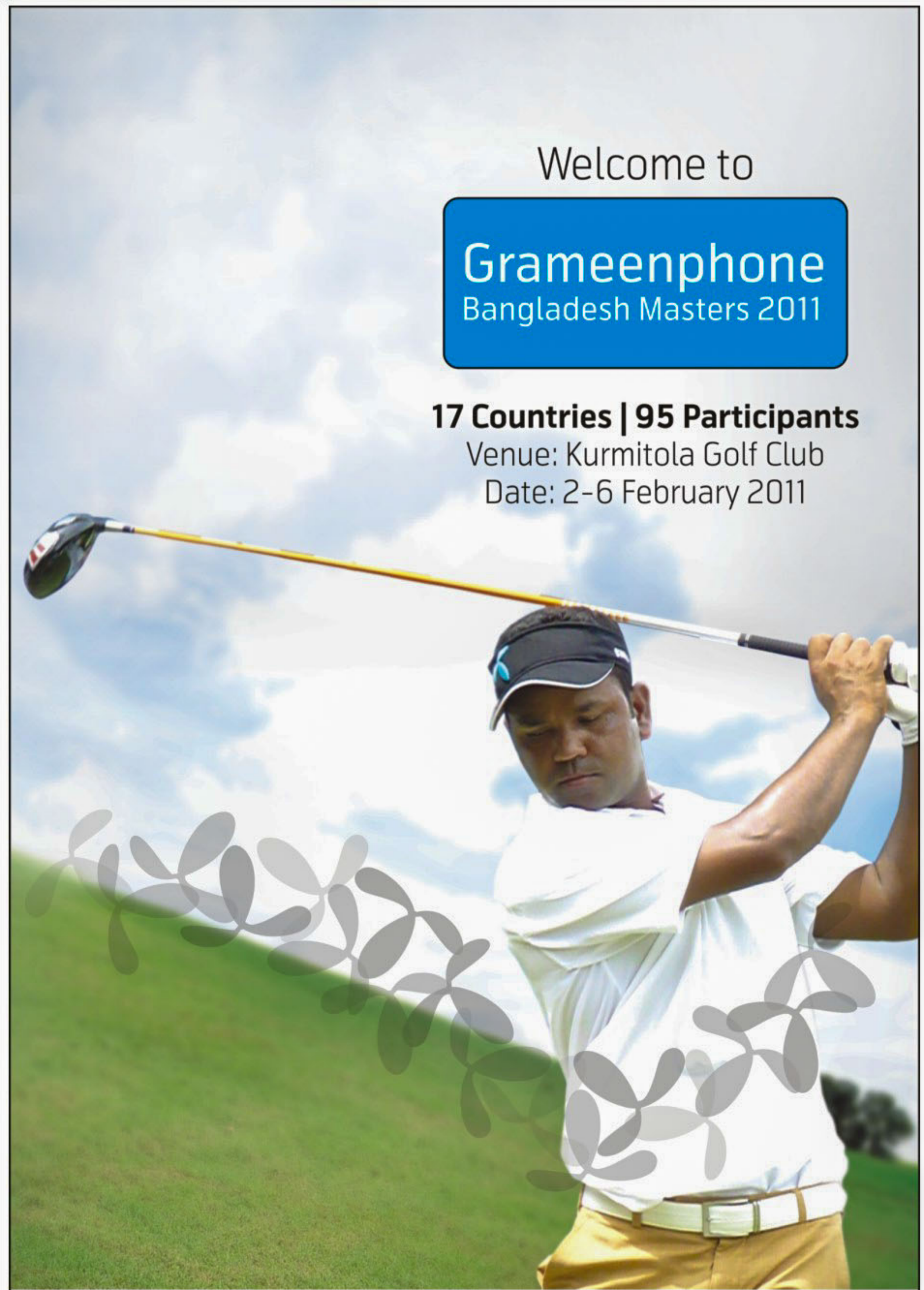
SPORTS REPORTER

Dhaka Mayor Sadeque Hossain exchanged views with Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) president AHM Mustafa Kamal on the progress of work which the Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) has taken up in collaboration with the BCB at Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium (SBNS) in Mirpur yesterday.

The renovation and repair of streets and upgradation of drainage system, which the Army is overlooking with support from the DCC, will be completed by February 5 and after that the city beautification work will start, the mayor informed reporters after the meeting.

In the last phase of the beautification work, two days before the opening ceremony on February 17, the 22-km long streets between Hazrat Shahjalal

SEE PAGE 17 COL 2



Welcome to

Grameenphone
Bangladesh Masters 2011

17 Countries | 95 Participants

Venue: Kurmitola Golf Club

Date: 2-6 February 2011

