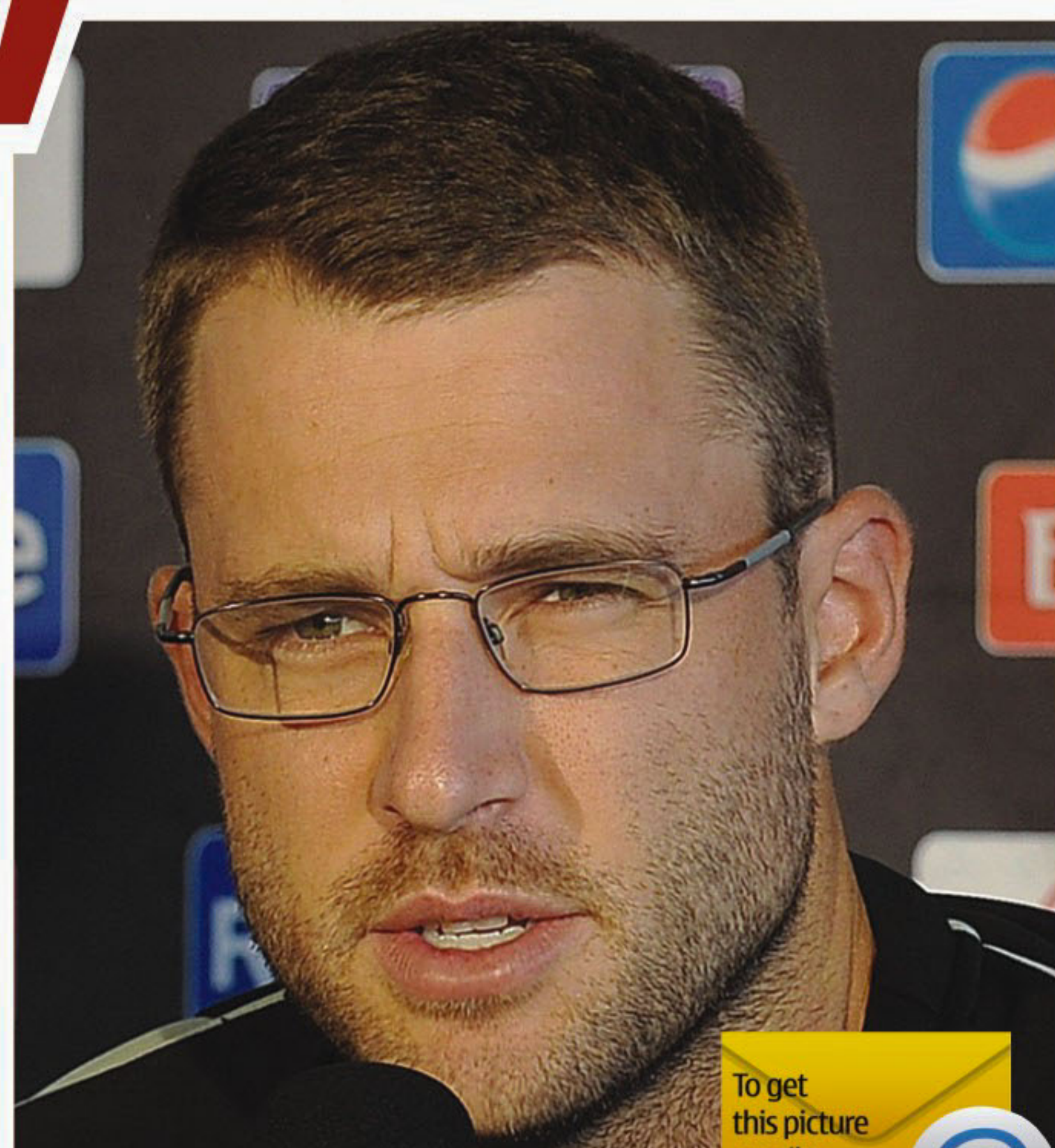


## Banana thrown at Neymar

A banana was thrown on to the pitch towards Brazil striker Neymar during Sunday's 2-0 friendly win over Scotland at the Emirates Stadium. The 19-year-old, who scored both goals, had been regularly jeered by Scotland fans unhappy at what they considered his feigning of injury in the early stages. He said he did not see the banana being thrown but saw it on the ground next to him as he was near the touchline. "It's sad that these things happen but I'm not going to worry about it too much," Neymar told Reuters. —REUTERS



## SRI LANKA V NEW ZEALAND



Sri Lanka skipper Kumar Sangakkara (L) and his New Zealand counterpart Daniel Vettori play mind games during press conferences at the R Premadasa Stadium in Colombo yesterday, ahead of today's semifinal clash.

PHOTOS: AFP

To get this picture email to [pics11@ovi.com](mailto:pics11@ovi.com)

## Mystery of the Technical Committee

Cricket

BISHWAJIT ROY

The Technical Committee of the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) is increasingly becoming the jack of all trades. Although the committee itself is non-existent in the original constitution of the board, it is now calling all the shots starting from serious policy decisions to the extent of selecting a player in the national team.

The board on Sunday named a 14-member Bangladesh squad for the three-match home series against Australia next month. Their selection saw a few changes in the team which was not unexpected after a bitter-sweet World Cup of the Tigers. But the question was raised; who made those changes in the team?

Was it done by the Rafiqul Alam-led selection committee or by the so-called technical committee?

The way the South Africa-bound Bangladesh A team was revised after Sunday's technical committee meeting made it clear that the selection committee was compelled to restrict their originally selected national team as well as the second string side to comply with the powerful 'request'.

Interference in the running of selection of committee was a forgotten thing ever since the board placed a strong clause in the constitution, where selectors were given full freedom to pick their team.

But of late, the so-called technical committee poked its big nose over a selection panel, which looked more inclined

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## Touch and go with Murali

MOHAMMAD ISAM from Colombo

On July 22, 2010, all Muttiah Muralidaran needed was three wickets to reach the unmatched 800-mark in his farewell Test in Galle. But the hope on March 28, 2011 was to prolong the spin legend's career for another day, and then patiently hope that in three days, he can sign off from international cricket in the grandest of stages.

But the cause for concern for Sri Lanka yesterday was the sight of Muralidaran struggling during their final training session ahead of the World Cup semifinal against New Zealand today.

Kumar Sangakkara, the Sri Lanka captain, confirmed that Muralidaran has two injuries to deal with, giving the home side much to think about. He probably will play, given the stature of the match.

"I think Murali and everyone around him are trying to get him as fit as possible and ready to play. It is no use thinking of finals because this is the crunch game. If he can

play tomorrow, that'll be great for us. If he can't, we have enough cover," said Sangakkara during the pre-match press conference at the R Premadasa Stadium.

"We are still a solid and winning side. He had two different injuries he knocked his knee in Mumbai and he's just aggravated a quad muscle, a very slight strain in the game before. It is not the same injury but we'll have to monitor how he goes," he added.

But Sangakkara remained realistic and probably has a Plan B in the case of a last-minute pull-out. "In terms of injuries, we have to make sure that the team and the player are both comfortable with the situation. It is an ongoing assessment. We are hoping he would be fine but if he's not, it's something that we accept and get on with it," he said.

Despite it being a game against New Zealand, essentially a World Cup semifinal has more pressure on the better side and in Sri Lanka's case, they are also the home team, Sangakkara probably reminding his teammates that a relaxed approach could cost his side more than they can think of.

"There's no room for complacency, no chance of that happening in anyone's mind. You understand the gravity of the situation and the challenge that come our way. You have to accept it and enjoy."

"The guys have done that pretty well and tomorrow's not going to be any different. It is not a question of playing for the crowd and showing off. We need to play good solid cricket," he said.

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## Much ado about the wicket

SPORTS REPORTER from Colombo

Daniel Vettori was accompanying the media manager from the dressing room when he suddenly ran off to see the wicket. It was hard to say if he was happy or not but minutes later, the New Zealand skipper voiced his displeasure on the choice of the playing surface on which today's semifinal against Sri Lanka will be played.

The game at the R Premadasa Stadium will be played on the pitch where the home team beat England by 10 wickets in the quarterfinal on Saturday, leaving Vettori wondering whether it would have been the rule to play a game of a semifinal's importance on a separate wicket.

"They've told us we're playing on the same one as England which is very surprising for us. Playing a World Cup semifinal on a used wicket, we would have thought it would be mandatory to prepare a fresh wicket but obviously not," said Vettori during the pre-match press conference yesterday.

"I think the fact that it's a used wicket may allow us to play three spinners again, but Sri Lanka's also a different team, they grew up playing spin. So for us we'll have a

good long hard look at McKay and Tuffey and see if they're a good option to come in instead of the third spinner. But we'll make that decision probably tomorrow," he said when asked if he'd continue with the three-spinner option, something he thinks his counterparts would also consider in this wicket.

With New Zealand playing against a strong home side and the fact that the pitch is a used one, there are only a few things that are in Vettori's advantage. One would have thought that the self-belief they derived after their 49-run win over South Africa in the quarterfinals on March 25 was one of those slight advantages, but Vettori thought otherwise.

"I think there's a positive mindset within

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### SRI LANKA-NEW ZEALAND ENCOUNTERS

Matches	Sri Lanka won	New Zealand won
73	33	35

**Most hundreds:** Sanath Jayasuriya (5).  
**Most ducks:** Stephen Fleming (6).  
 Jayasuriya also holds the record for most sixes in this contest (41).

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**TODAY'S MATCH**

Match	Time	Venue
Sri Lanka v New Zealand	3:00pm	Colombo

**Be The Nokia Match Analyzer**

**New Zealand - Sri Lanka**

Sri Lanka have the distinct advantage of having played in Colombo on three occasions this tournament to New Zealand's none, and will have a better understanding of the intricacies of the pitch. A nine-wicket win (against Kenya), a ten-wicket win (England) and an 11-run loss (Pakistan) leaves the Sri Lankans well placed to again put in a solid performance at the R Premadasa Stadium, while the Kiwis already have to deal with a parochial crowd cheering against them, along with their massive underdog tag as they are unexpectedly crept into the final four. Beating South Africa, though, will ensure New Zealand are a respected species come Today, but Sri Lanka have enough class and enough form behind them to ensure a relatively easy Cup final berth, in comparison to the other India-Pakistan semi final.

Md. Abu Rouf

Send your opinion in 100 words on **India v Pakistan** match to [analysis11@ovi.com](mailto:analysis11@ovi.com). The best analysis will be published.