

Yuvi didn't even meet Akshara

Yuvraj Singh has vehemently denied media reports he is dating little known Bangalore model Akshara Gowda. "I am really annoyed with the reports published in a leading daily today [Tuesday]. I very strongly deny the story. I would like to put this on record that I have never met this girl [Gowda] personally," Yuvraj told yesterday. One of the most eligible bachelors in the country, the 29-year-old has often been linked to Bollywood actresses and top models. "I request the media to state the facts and please don't create stories out of nothing," an upset Yuvraj added. --PT



Rafiqul era ends

Cricket

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) decided to terminate the contract of the national selection committee led by Rafiqul Alam yesterday in its 29th meeting at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium headquarters.

"It was decided in the meeting that their contract will not be renewed after April 30," said BCB media committee chairman Jalal Yunus. "We will prepare very soon for a fresh selection committee. After April 30, we don't have any cricket activities till late July. We will form a new selection committee by April, and we will try by this time to form the new committee."

The board's media release, a few hours later last evening, read, "It was decided that the contracts of the National Selection Committee members, which expire on 30 April, will not be renewed. The BCB president has been given the responsibility of forming a five-member team comprising Board Members to select a new selection panel."

The current panel also consists of former national captain Akram Khan and former national player Zahid Razaque Masum, Rafiqul being in charge of the committee since August 28, 2007. Former national captain Naimur Rahman was also part of Rafiqul's selection panel till he quit in 2009 and was replaced by Masum.

During Rafiqul's reign as the chief, the Tigers won 33 international games out of a total 111 games (Tests, ODIs and Twenty20 internationals). Rafiqul's period in office also coincided with Jamie Siddons's time as the head coach as the first assignment for both was Bangladesh's tour to New Zealand in the winter of 2007.

Though Siddons ended up claiming that he sometimes didn't get the team he wanted from Rafiqul, there have been times in the past and even post-World Cup when "outside influence" reigned over Rafiqul's selections.

Prime among those would be the inability of the Tigers to conjure up more draws in Tests as well as its failure to reach the World Cup quarterfinals and the twin batting disasters against West Indies and South Africa.

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The way the South Africa-bound Bangladesh A team was revised earlier this month made it clear that the selection committee was compelled to recast their originally selected team as well as the second string side to comply with the powerful "request".

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Mohon Khan (R) flashes the V sign sitting next to Nazmun Nahar Beauty after they became the fastest man and woman in the National Athletics Championships at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

Argentina-Nigeria match in Dhaka?

Football

SPORTS REPORTER

The dream of watching football superstars like Lionel Messi, Gonzalo Higuain and John Obi Mikel is close to becoming a reality for the millions of football fans in Bangladesh.

Argentina and Nigeria, two of the powerhouses of international football, are expected to play an exhibition match in Bangladesh in September this year.

The two teams are slated for a visit to neighbouring Kolkata, and according to a reliable source at the Bangladesh Football Federation, will make a whistle stop tour to Bangladesh.

On condition of anonymity, the source, who is a member of the federation stated that talks with the respective federations are at an advanced stage.

He added that everything might be finalised by the 24th of this month.

It would represent a major coup for Bangladesh if they were able to attract the Argentina team to the country, since the Albiceleste's are one of the most widely supported teams in the country.

The match scheduled for September 6, is being organized with the help of Celebrity Management Group, an event management company which have previously negotiated the appearances of stars like Diego Maradona, Franz Beckenbauer and Roger Milla in India.

On all of those times, the BFF have failed to negotiate terms to bring any of them here but this time it looks like this might be a realistic possibility.

Argentina will face Venezuela at a friendly at the Salt Lake City Stadium on September 2.

Beauty, Mohon fastest

Athletics

SPORTS REPORTER

Lance corporal Mohon Khan and Nazmun Nahar Beauty became the fastest man and woman in the Walton 36th National Athletics Championships amid fears of picking up injuries on the damaged turf at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

The 10-crore taka athletic turf was badly damaged during the Tri-Nation Big Show, a cultural event that involved Bollywood stars, after the gala opening ceremony of the ICC Cricket World Cup at the venue and the athletes were forced to run on the damaged turf as neither National Sports Council nor Bangladesh Athletic Federation took proper initiatives to repair the 44 damaged spots.

"There were fears of getting hurt on the damaged turf as I am returning to track after a long time. But luckily nothing happened and I finished on top in the 100m sprint for the first time," said Mohan, who was out of action after sustaining injury in 2006.

"However, I was confident to win the medal as I toiled hard in the practice," said the former BKSP student, who took 10.56 seconds to run the distance.

Beauty dethroned Shamsunnahar Chumki to regain the women's 100m gold as she recovered well from her knee injury. It was her seventh overall crown in 100m sprint.

"There was a fear of slipping on the track but I managed to run well and finish on top as I prepared well to regain the title," said Beauty, who took 12.10 seconds for the medal.

But runner-up Chumki blamed the damaged turf for her loss.

"There were a couple of holes in Lane 3 and that was in my mind and I could not finish well which allowed Beauty to go ahead of me," said the former champion, who this time took 12.40 seconds for the silver.

After the women's 100-metre hurdles, State Minister for Youth and Sports Ahad Ali Sarker and high officials of the National Sports Council and Bangladesh Athletics Federation inspected the damaged turf. Later, the sports minister avoided the journalists.

Abdur Rahman, NSC director of planning and development, informed that Modern Builders, which installed the turf in 2005, assessed the damages and recommended to repair at least 3,200 square feet at 44 spots that would cost nearly Tk 30 lakh.

Rahman said that they had already asked the Bangladesh Cricket Board, which got the allotment for holding the Tri-Nation Big Show, to pay the repair cost, but the board had yet to respond to their letter.

On the opening day, 11 events were settled with Bangladesh Army leading the table with four gold, one silver and four bronze medals, followed by Bangladesh Ansar and VDP with two gold, three silver and one bronze medals.

Academy taught a lesson

SPORTS REPORTER

Paceman Hardus Viljoen took seven wickets in the second innings as South Africa Cricket Academy crushed GP-BCB National Cricket Academy by an innings and 58 runs at the Fatullah Cricket Stadium yesterday.

The 22-year-old Viljoen, who plays for Easterns, took his match tally to 12 wickets for 126 runs. In the second innings the home side were bowled out for 305 runs in 81.5 overs.

Only lower-order batsman Alauddin Babu slammed eleven boundaries in his 120-ball 80 runs, but none of the recognised batsman even reached the 50-mark.

Viljoen removed Ashraf

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Farewell party for Siddons

SPORTS REPORTER

Outgoing Bangladesh coach Jamie Siddons was accorded a farewell party at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) president AHM Mostafa Kamal, CEO Manzur Ahmed, a number of board directors and office-bearers as well as members of Siddons's coaching staff was present on the occasion. Kamal thanked Siddons for the three-and-a-half-year tenure and the progress he had administered.

"He did a great job for BCB and I was lucky to get him for a year and half. He is a great soul, very passionate about Bangladesh cricket. It is because of him that our cricket has a bigger stature now," said Kamal during the afternoon ceremony.

"Our boys learned a lot from him. I hope he will remember us and extend his support to our cricket in the future."

"We had our difference in opinions but I found him to be very methodical and he always thought about the good of Bangladesh cricket," he added.

Why hand timing?

Athletics

ANISUR RAHMAN

There were a few hundred athletes who assembled at the Bangabandhu National Stadium to compete in the National Athletics Cham-

pionships yesterday. The purpose of those vibrant male and female were to showcase their talents and skills in what was the biggest event of country's athletics. They did run as fast as they could and somebody from the lot popped up from no where to become the

fastest man or women of the country. What was his or her timing? He or she clocked 10.56 seconds. Have you seen it? No, but someone with his trusty age-old watch has confirmed it.

It might sound as a joke in modern day athletic competition where hand timing is a thing of distant past. But it is what we are still happy living with despite the fact that we have the got facilities of electronic timing, a device worth nearly Tk 2.5 crore that was purchased by the National Sports Council (NSC) and installed during the SA Games in early 2010.

Then why on earth it was not used in the competition? It's a long and funny story.

The two computers of the software used for database were in the custody of the Bangladesh Athletics Federation (BAF). Unfortunately, both were stolen. While the time-house, the main component, was kept in the NSC store.

The BAF, after failing to recover those two stolen computers or buy new ones, put the blame on non-cooperation from the sports governing body NSC.

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Bangladesh A set 227 to win

SPORTS REPORTER

A three-wicket haul from Bangladesh A skipper Mohammad Ashraf was cancelled out by a late flourish from Vernon Philander as South Africa A made 226 for eight from 50 overs in the first one-day match at Buffalo Park in East London yesterday.

Ashraf took the first three wickets to fall after he won the toss and decided to field first. The home side slipped to 73 for six as Ashraf's off-spin claimed the wickets of his opposite number Jacques Rudolph, Imraan Khan and Loots Bosman by the 14th over and a run-out he inflicted to get rid of the experienced Vaughn van Jaarsveld.

But Dean Elgar and Philander added 121 runs for the seventh wicket during which Elgar made 76 off 99 balls with the help of three sixes and two boundaries.

Philander provided the fireworks towards the end as he smashed Forhad Reza for three consecutive sixes in the 48th over, the all-rounder making 79 off 99 balls with the help of four

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NATIONAL LEAGUE

Win takes Rajshahi top

Cricket

SPORTS REPORTER

Farhad Hossain's dogged unbeaten half-century guided Rajshahi to a four-wicket win over Sylhet in the second phase of the National Cricket League yesterday.

The middle-order batsman, alongside all-rounder Zubair Ahmed, took the winning runs after they were set 237 to win in the fourth innings at the Shaheed Kamruzzaman Stadium in Rajshahi, and reached the target late in the afternoon after batting out 71 overs.

But it was a completely different story at the Shaheed Chandu Stadium in Bogra where Barisal made sure they pushed Dhaka out of the contest and settled for a draw.

Rajshahi are now at the top of the points table with five wins from seven games altogether.

RAJSHAHI-SYLHET

Having already lost one of their openers overnight, Rajshahi lost nightwatchman Tajul Islam and Mizanur Rahman by the first session.

But man-of-the-match Farhad, batting at number five, added 67 for the fourth wicket with Shahjada before the opener was out for 76 off 146 balls. But the Abahani batsman continued despite losing two important wickets (Anisur Rahman and Dhiman Ghosh) thereafter, adding another vital 35 for the unbroken seventh wicket stand with Zubair, who made a run-a-ball 27 with the

help of two sixes and a boundary.

For Sylhet, Nasum Ahmed took three wickets while Tasamul Haque picked up two.

DHAKA-BARISAL

Nasiruddin Faruque and Shahin Hossain took Sylhet's approach in the morning session as they added just 57 runs in 29 overs. The left-handed Faruque reached his century, staying unbeaten on 111 off 153 balls while Shahin made a painstaking 47 off 190 balls.

Dhaka's reply began badly when they lost opener Abdul Majid for a duck but a second wicket 54-run stand between Uttam Sarkar and Anwar Hossain calmed their nerves.

Uttam was also involved in a 92-run fourth wicket partnership with Mosharraf Hossain. The opener made 99 off 181 balls with the help of eleven boundaries and a six while Mosharraf scored his second half-century of the match.

Iftekhar Nayeem was declared the man-of-the-match for his first innings 149.

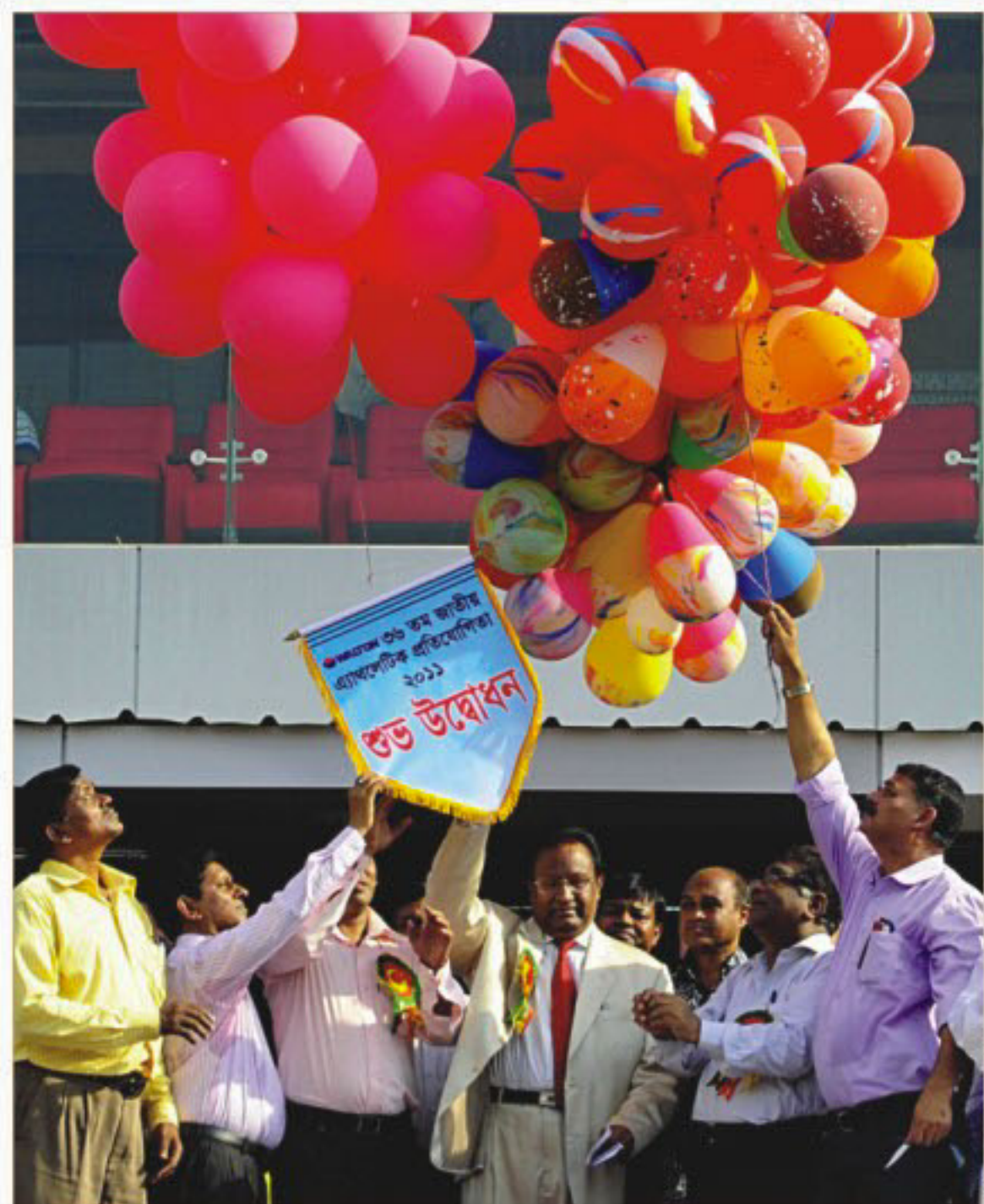
BRIEF SCORES

SYLHET: First innings 316 all out and second innings 157 all out.

RAJSHAHI: First innings 237 all out and second innings 237-6 in 71 overs (Shahjada 75, Farhad 68 not out; Nasum 3-83). Result: Rajshahi won by four wickets.

BARISAL: First innings 438 all out and second innings 172-2 in 63 overs (Faruq 111 not out; Robin 2-36).

DHAKA: First innings 223 all out and second innings 211-4 in 61 overs (Uttam 99, Rubel 51 not out; Monir 2-35). Result: Match drawn.



Sports Minister Ahad Ali Sarker (C) inaugurates the Walton 36th National Athletics Championships at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

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