

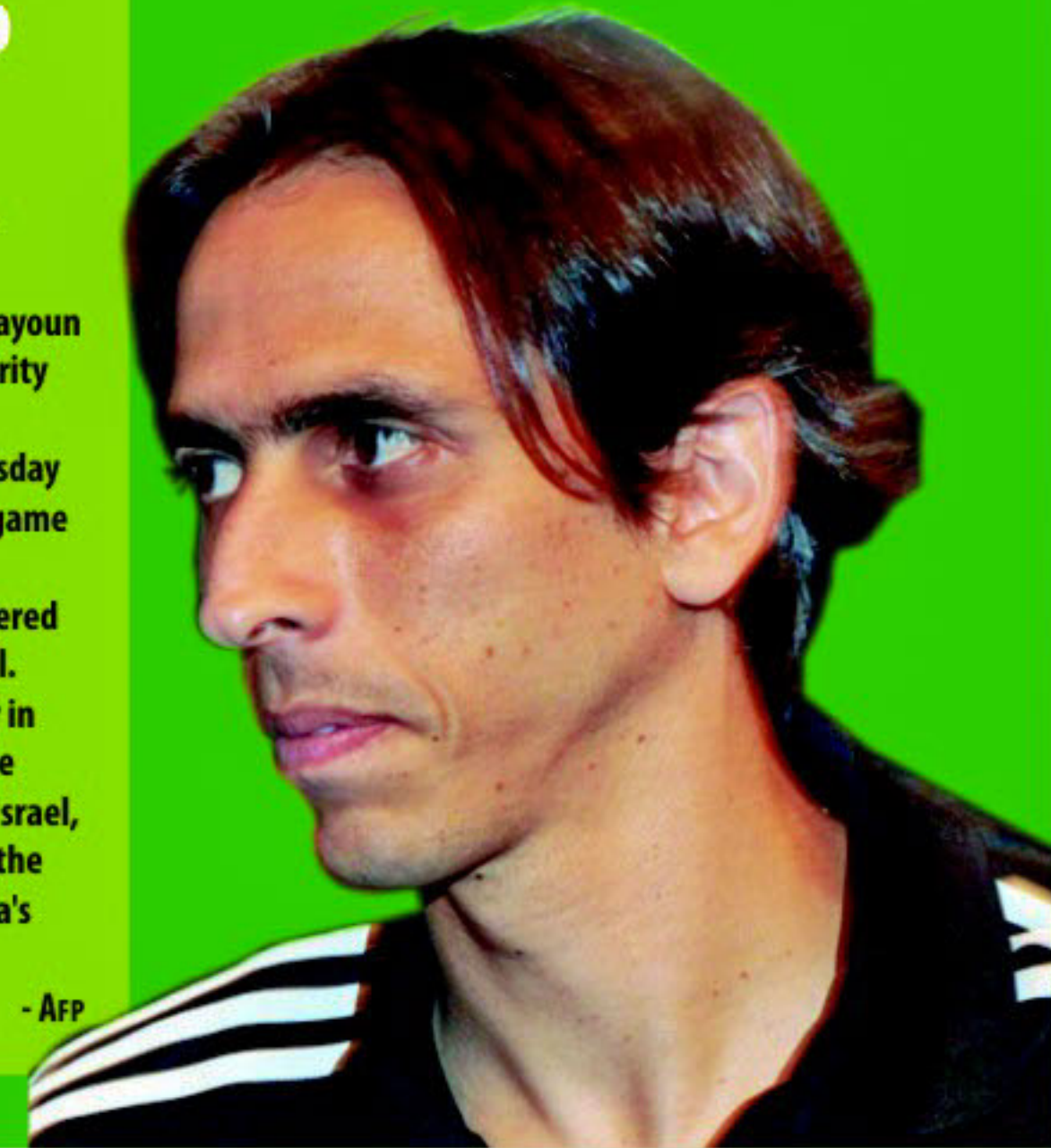
Star SPORT

DHAKA SATURDAY JULY 23, 2011, E-MAIL: sports@thedailystar.net

Malaysians boo Benayoun

Malaysian sporting figures on Friday sought to play down the booing of Chelsea's Israeli midfielder Yossi Benayoun during a friendly in the Muslim-majority country. Chelsea beat hosts Malaysia 1-0 Thursday in the capital Kuala Lumpur but the game was marred by racial abuse toward Benayoun as the crowd booed and jeered whenever the midfielder had the ball. Benayoun was the first Israeli to play in Malaysia, which strongly supports the Palestinians and does not recognise Israel, maintaining no diplomatic ties with the country. Some 60 per cent of Malaysia's population is Muslim.

-AFP



Coach Nikola Ilievski watches over his charges as they train at a local stadium in Beirut on Thursday before taking on hosts Lebanon in the FIFA World Cup Pre-qualifier Round 2 match today.

PHOTO: COURTESY

WORLD CUP PRE-QUALIFIER Bangladesh chase history

Football

SPORTS REPORTER

Visitors Bangladesh will be looking to play their natural game when they take on hosts Lebanon in their FIFA World Cup pre-qualifying away match at the Camille Chamoun Sports City Stadium in Beirut today.

The match will get underway at 8pm (BST). A win or a draw against Lebanon in the first meeting will provide Bangladesh with a big edge going into the second leg on July 28 and will let them keep alive their never before achieved dream of playing in the group stages of the qualifying process.

Bangladesh have never passed the hurdle of the pre-qualifying round which was introduced in 2003. They fell to Tajikistan in both of the last two editions, but this time they have already crossed the first hurdle and stand on the cusp after amazingly holding a small edge over Lebanon (14 places) in terms of FIFA rankings.

Bangladesh had earlier been eliminated from the group stages of the qualifying rounds in all five previous editions from 1985 to 2001 although they did have the odd wins over the likes of Indonesia, Thailand, Sri Lanka, Chinese Taipei and Mongolia.

And drawing inspiration from those very results the Bangladeshi boys are dreaming big for a spot in the qualifying stages with an aggregate

win over Lebanon.

"Our boys will try to play their natural game tomorrow (Saturday) and I am hoping that the boys will show their fighting spirit even though we know that our opponent, Lebanon, is a good side," said assistant coach Syed Golam Jilani at a pre-match press conference at the Bristol Hotel in Beirut yesterday.

Bangladesh captain Biplob Bhattacharjee said that Bangladesh team have a mixture of youth and experience and are determined to make the country people happy through a positive result which will put the eyes of the nation on them.

Bangladesh head coach Macedonian Nikola Ilievski was not present at the occasion but he said

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Siddikur steady in Selangor

SPORT DESK

Siddikur Rahman kept his steady form in the Worldwide Holdings Selangor Masters to climb up one spot with a two-under-par 70 in the third round at the Kota Permai Golf and Country Club yesterday.

Siddikur's cumulative score of eight-under-par 208 put him level with another four on the fifth position who were trailing the leader Panuphol Pittayarat of Thailand by five shots.

The 18-year old Thai, who

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Pietersen puts India to sword

Cricket

AFP, London

Kevin Pietersen's commanding unbeaten double century left England well on top against India at the close of the second day of the first Test at Lord's on Friday.

India, at stumps, were 17 without loss in reply to England's 474 for eight declared built around Pietersen's 202 not out -- his second double century in seven Tests following his 227 against Australia in Adelaide in December and the third of his 75-match career.

Pietersen, watchful early on but upping the tempo so his final fifty took just 25 balls, batted for eight-and-a-quarter hours in total.

He faced 326 balls and hit a six and 21 fours.

As soon as Pietersen reached his double ton, England captain Andrew Strauss, criticised for being "defensive" by former skipper Michael Vaughan, made an attacking declaration in what was the 2,000th Test and the 100th between the two sides.

However, Abhinav Mukund (eight not out), playing instead of the injured Virender Sehwag and Gautam Gambhir (seven not out) survived until stumps.

It was tough going for India, who were without attack leader Zaheer Khan all day because of the hamstring strain that had forced him off the field on Thursday and who only had four frontline bowlers to start with.

But persevering seamer Praveen Kumar, swinging the ball of a good length, responded with a Test-best return of five for 106 in 40.3 overs.

England, who will replace India at the

top of the Test rankings if they win this four-match series by two Tests, resumed Friday on 127 for two after Zaheer had removed openers Alastair Cook and Strauss before breaking down.

Jonathan Trott was 58 not out and Pietersen 22 not out.

But Kumar was rewarded for his accuracy when Trott, aiming across the line, was lbw for 70.

Pietersen, on 49, almost fell into a well-set trap when he glanced Kumar towards Rahul Dravid in the rarely used position of leg-slip.

But Pietersen stood his ground and, after the umpires consulted replays which proved inconclusive, he was reprieved.

England started the second session on 217 for three, with Pietersen 71 not out and Ian Bell 28 not out.

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LAWSON'S VERDICT

Talent impressive, pitches not so

Cricket

SPORTS REPORTER

Geoff Lawson's period as the specialist fast bowling coach for the GP-BCB National Cricket Academy ended yesterday with mostly encouraging words except for a warning that could greatly help the Tigers in the immediate future.

The former Australian cricketer, who arrived on July 4, mainly worked with the pace bowlers in the 24-man Academy side. He also had sessions with discarded Test bowlers and observed national team and Under-19 fast bowlers as well.

One of them, Rubel Hossain, looked

slightly unfit to the one-time new-ball spearhead of the Australian team.

"He [Rubel Hossain] needs a bit more fitness work. I haven't worked with him and just observed when he bowled in the Academy," said Lawson, who also opined that the Tigers' new-ball bowler needs to do work on his action.

"I think he can do a bit of work in that as well. I watched him bowl for 30 minutes.

"That [slingshot action] is a good thing to have. He does it a little bit but looks like he needs a little more work," he added.

Lawson though was all-praise for the Academy pacemen who were picked for the programme after impressing in both

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Nafees keeps up form

Cricket

SPORTS REPORTER

Shahriar Nafees continued his good form in the practice matches as the left-hander hit 72 against the GP-BCB National Cricket Academy team in a rain-interrupted day at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

The national batsmen looked quite uncomfortable against the young academy bowlers and the 104-ball 72 from opener Nafees, who slammed a hundred in the previous two-day match against the same opponents at the same venue, helped the seniors to post 258 runs before being all out in 59.3 overs.

Left-arm spinner Shaker Ahmed dismissed Nafees, who smote thirteen boundaries, but the batsman was not happy with the verdict of the umpire and expressed his anger in an unsporting way.

The other top order batsmen however failed to capitalize on their last opportunities of making some runs before the demanding trip to Zimbabwe as Imrul Kayes scored 20 while Junaed Siddiqui got out cheaply for eight and Mohammad Ashraf failed to score facing 12 balls.

Wicketkeeper batsman Mushfiqur Rahim (18) and Mahmudullah Riyad (29) got off to good starts but failed to

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Tests Clarke's priority

AFP, Sydney

Australia cricket captain Michael Clarke said Friday he will not take part in the inaugural season of the country's new Twenty20 Big Bash League and instead concentrate on playing Tests.

"With the greatest respect to everybody involved in the T20 Big Bash League, I will not be committing for this year," Clarke said in a statement.

"My goal is to play Twenty20 cricket domestically, for sure.

"But at the moment, I want to prioritise my time and commitment to my role with the Australian team."

Clarke said Australia have important Test series against Sri Lanka, South Africa, New Zealand and India coming up.



PHOTO: AFP

England batsman Kevin Pietersen (R) raises his bat to celebrate his century on the second day of the Lord's Test against India on Friday.