

## Plan with school football

SPORTS REPORTER

Plan Bangladesh, a non-government organisation working for children's rights, will sponsor women's school football for the next three years. The NGO signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) in this regard at the BFF House yesterday.

The first edition of the tournament will get underway from March 20 with a total of 32 teams, divided into eight groups.

The MoU was signed by Kazi Salahuddin, President of BFF and Ms Myrna Remata Evora, Country Director of Plan Bangladesh.

Plan will provide with Tk 24 lacs while BFF will bear Tk 5 lacs for the inaugural edition of the tournament. The champion team will receive a paycheck of Tk 40,000 while the runners-ups will get Tk 30,000.

# Dhoni full of Dravid

SAKEB SUBHAN



The biggest news surrounding the Indian team was the retirement of legendary batsman Rahul Dravid even as the team touched down in Dhaka for the Asia Cup yesterday. The defending Asia Cup champions and also world champions have not had the best of times recently, losing 4-0 in the Test series in Australia earlier this year, while failing to reach the just-concluded CB Series final, a tournament that also involved Australia and Sri Lanka, who will be India's first Asia Cup opponents on March 13.

But it was Dravid who was foremost on the agenda when India skipper Mahendra Singh Dhoni took his seat during the official Asia Cup press conference at a city hotel.

"I think Jam [Rahul Dravid] was a great character to have in the dressing room. He had a great career, he is someone who will definitely be missed, an ideal role model and good ambassador for the sport," said Dhoni when asked how India will fill the gaping hole that Dravid has left in the Test side. "So definitely we will miss him, when it comes to the kind of talent and what he brought to the team. Guys like him or cricketers like him, it's not even advisable to think they will be replaced by some other youngsters because the youngsters will be under tremendous pressure if they start to think like that."

Dhoni thought that new players needed to come in and make the spot their own

rather than thinking about who they are replacing.

"Every individual is special; he brings in a special character to the side," opined the India captain. "Somebody will start a career and maybe in ten or twelve years' time you will have a cricketer who will be very successful, but to say whether they will replace a talent like Rahul Dravid is difficult. So we are hoping that it's an opportunity for some of the youngsters to take it as a challenge and start doing well."

On the Asia Cup, Dhoni thought that starting well was very important especially in a tournament that spans just eleven days with each team playing three matches before the final.

"It is a very short series, and it is very important to start with a positive note because its not very often that you play in a tournament where all the Asian countries are playing together, so I think it's a good one over here. Hopefully the team that plays the best cricket will win the tournament," Dhoni said.

India will be without swashbuckling opener Virender Sehwag, who hit a big hundred the last time India played in Dhaka, against Bangladesh in the 2011 World Cup opener.

"We will miss him, he is one of the most dangerous openers and at the same time we can't do much because he is not available," said the Indian skipper. "I think it's an opportunity for someone like a Yusuf Pathan or a Ravindra Jadeja to do well and grab that number six position and we're hoping that one of them will do that."



PHOTO: STAR

India captain Mahendra Singh Dhoni takes questions from the media during the team's official press conference at the Pan Pacific Sonargaon Hotel yesterday.

# Mahela admires young blood

SPORTS REPORTER



The Sri Lankan team have come to play the Asia Cup on a bit of a high. Although they lost the best-of-three CB Series finals to Australia on Thursday, it was a narrow defeat and their journey to the finals of a tough tournament is part of an upward swing in performance after having a bit of a difficult time following the 2011 World Cup, in which they were runners-up.

Mahela Jayawardene, who took over the captaincy from Tillakaratne Dilshan at the start of the CB Series, indicated that the team was finally settling down after a period of upheaval following the World Cup when he spoke to the media at a local hotel yesterday, ahead of the Asia Cup starting today.

"To be honest, I don't think we were struggling after the World Cup. The first six months obviously was a challenge for us, a lot of new faces coming into the team, and I thought [Tillakaratne] Dilshan did a very good job," said Jayawardene when asked whether his captaincy was the difference. "I think he [Dilshan] introduced a lot of good things to the team, a lot of youngsters came in and those youngsters are now finding themselves. I think a lot of credit goes to the entire team, the way we played in Australia, showed a lot of character and adaptability in tough situations and handled ourselves well. The challenge is now to continue that good work and have a good Asia Cup."

A big positive for the Lankans is some of the youngsters in their ranks realising their potential with big performances in the tri-series in Australia. None have shone more brightly than Dinesh Chandimal, who headed the averages during the Australia series in which he scored four half-centuries in eleven games, while Lahiru Thirimanne also put his hand up with two fifties in crucial situations.

"One of our challenges after the World Cup was to rebuild the team and introduce youngsters," said the Sri Lanka skipper. "I thought Chandimal had a great tour of Australia, even before that in England he batted really well. Thirimanne, quite surprisingly is showing a lot of potential at number five which is great for us."

One negative for Sri Lanka may be the amount of cricket they have played recently, with the third CB Series final on Thursday being their fifth game in ten days. Jayawardene however felt that it was part of being an international cricketer.

"What we are trying to do is give guys a total break from cricket for a couple of days and recharge their batteries and focus on the Asia Cup after that. So there will be a lot of discussions and tactical planning during this period and not so much training to make sure that the bodies recover from the schedule we had," Jayawardene said. "International cricket is such now, you need to adapt very quickly mentally and physically to the schedules that we have. So no complaints, just try to be as professional as we can be."



PHOTO: STAR

Sri Lanka skipper Mahela Jayawardene speaks to the media during his side's official press conference yesterday.

## When it was everything

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Despite Bangladesh's poor performance in the Asia Cup, the former opener found huge difference in the approach of the two generation of cricketers.

"I can't explain to you how much adrenaline rushed through our veins when we thought that we were going to meet India, Pakistan or Sri Lanka. Does it reflect the same to this new generation? Of course not. They are more professional than us and they are playing the big opponents regularly," explained the former cricketer.

The memory of his man-of-the-match award against Sri Lanka in Eden Gardens is still fresh in Athar's mind.

"It was simply an amazing experience."

## Akram returns as the boss

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that there won't be any more problems," said Akram.

"(BCB's influential director Dewan Shafiqul Arefin) Tutul bhai got out of her office and informed me that she has advised me to withdraw the letter," he added.

Akram came down heavily on the BCB president AHM Mustafa Kamal after submitting his resignation letter and pointed out some problem he had faced as a chief selector.

So the question to the former national captain was an obvious one: Can he continue working under the presidency of Kamal?

"I won't let those things happen again. I will work with full freedom," said a confident Akram.

## Tigers' chance to prove

FROM PAGE 16

Test. This is our opportunity to prove us wrong. If we can play our best cricket, we have a chance to do well at home," he said.

Misbahul Haq, the Pakistan captain, also doesn't take Bangladesh as easy prey. "It is really a mistake to say any team is weak. We don't want to make that mistake. Bangladesh is always difficult opposition in their home. They know their conditions well, in any given day they can upset you. We have to put 100 per cent to win this game," he said.

The focus will also be on Shakib, as Misbah called him Bangladesh's "main man".

"He is their main player, with ball and bat. We are all focusing on him and also the other players. If it is a team of eleven, anybody can come and give a good contribution," he said.

## Minister

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were the other cricketers who attended the meeting.

"The minister assured us that he will take all necessary measures not only to uphold the players' rights but also other issues for the greater interest of the game," said Ashraf.

The proposal and amendment which was approved in the BCB's EGM on March 1 will be sent to the NSC for the sports minister to endorse.

However, the sports minister, who is also the chairman of the NSC, holds all the rights to send back these proposals for rectification.

The country's cricketers took a strong stance against the amendments of the BCB constitution and vowed to win their councillorship right, which were 15 before the amendment.

The cricketers are now waiting for a call from Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina who expressed her desire to meet the former cricketers during a discussion with chief selector Akram Khan.

## LOCAL snippets

SPORTS REPORTER

Former Bangladesh League side Chittagong Abahani went down to a 1-2 defeat against 10-men Agrani Bank in their Premier Bank Bangladesh Championship League match at the Birshreshtha Mostafa Kamal Stadium in Kamalapur yesterday. Abahani went ahead in the 19th minute, courtesy of Sohail Rana's goal. But Mohammad Gofur scored in the 32nd minute to restore parity for Agrani Bank. Gofur then scored again in the 74th minute to ensure all three points for Agrani Bank who had Abdul Kader sent off during the match.

## Div-II football

East End Club and BG Press Sports & Recreation Club drew 2-2 in the Destiny Group Dhaka Metropolis 2nd Division encounter at the Birshreshtha Mostafa Kamal Stadium in Kamalapur yesterday. Mohammad Sohail put BG Press ahead in the 42nd minute. However, East End's Khadel Kari scored twice in space of two minutes to give his side the lead. But with eight minutes left, Sohail struck again to snatch a point for BG Press.

## Bangamata handball

Kotalipara Union Institution emerged champions in the Bangamata Sheikh Fazilatunnesa Women's Handball tournament in Gopalganj Tungipara Bangabandhu mriti Girls High School 5-0 in the final at the Sheikh Fazlul Haque Stadium yesterday.

## Tamim's

FROM PAGE 16

AHM Mustafa Kamal dropped Tamim from the selectors' 15-man squad and the ensuing tug-of-war between his uncle Akram Khan and the board president shook up cricket in the country. A small section has pointed out that due to their relation, the former national captain reacted so vehemently when Tamim was dropped, though the whole incident has been a blessing in disguise.

Whether this blessing can also be the tonic for him to revive his fortunes will be played out in front of the world. If the runs keep flowing, all the questions will be answered and the knives blunted.

## Azarenka

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loss on fatigue, specifically the jet lag from flying all the way from southeast Asia and then arriving in the California desert on Monday night.

Reigning French Open champion Li Na came from behind to take her opening second-round match against Galina Voskoboeva 3-6, 6-3, 6-3.

## CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS

- Bake-sale org.
- "Mayday!"
- Basketball team
- Predetermine the outcome
- Elliptical
- Largest of the seven
- "— the fields we go"
- Carte
- Condo, e.g.
- Green insect
- Elev.
- Support of a sort
- Tom's prey
- Lustrous black
- Dandy
- Eager, and then some
- Scratch
- Color quality
- Navigation aid
- Man-handle
- Virago

- Cranberry territory
- Mimic
- Sport venues
- Family member
- Ms. Brockovich
- Ill temper
- Genealogy chart
- Grow weary
- Kvetch
- Chops
- Undo a dele
- Seesaw quorum
- Taj Mahal city
- Sermon
- Occurrence
- Singer k.d.
- One whose work can be draining
- Animal life
- "— It Romantic?"
- Henry —
- Food
- Half-fathom
- Illustrations
- Predicament
- Item on stage
- Layer

- Wardrobe malfunction
- Leno's prominence
- Supporting
- Inseparable
- Parish-ioner's seat
- Attractive items
- You
- Luau side dish
- Small piano
- Information measures
- Burning
- Maze option
- Entice
- Over again
- Unyielding courage
- Scourge of serge
- Show-down directive
- Lily variety

Solution time: 27 mins.

NOV	RAD	GAUZE
ALI	EVE	WIZEN
IDO	VALKYRIES	
AIL	STAIN	
DEAD	AYE	EDGE
EAR	VALTUM	
ATALL	BANTU	
VALLEY	MAN	
EGGS	USA	DAUB
GRUNT	DNA	
VALENTINE	OIL	
ARENA	TEA	ROE
SKEET	ERR	END

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CRYPTOQUIP

C T L N L G B E J B Q U G Q J F J G B  
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J H H T N J C B N J B W C H W J B Q  
N V A B V E Q V N : E C T Q M V U U J B Q .  
Yesterday's Cryptoquip: MY SLATTED  
WINDOW COVERINGS ARE SO UTTERLY DULL,  
THEY MIGHT AS WELL BE CALLED VENETIAN  
BLANDS.  
Today's Cryptoquip Clue: E equals D