

## Nasir enjoying the pressure

SPORTS REPORTER

Before the final ODI in Fatullah on Sunday, everyone wondered whether the series between Bangladesh and New Zealand would pass without any significant input from all-rounder Nasir Hossain as he seemed to be struggling to get back his rhythm. But Nasir dismissed such notions by playing a useful, unbeaten 44-run knock on Sunday to maintain his reputation as a finisher.

"I didn't score in the last two matches, in one I got out because of a good ball and the other because of a bad shot. There was no pressure because of that, but it was in my head that I had to score," said Nasir while he was talking to reporters yesterday.

Nasir enjoys having the 'finisher' tag, although he feels it to be a pressure role.

"It feels really good when people call me a finisher. It's a pressure role because people now expect me to score, so batting in this position is actually tough. I may be having a good run, but it's still difficult. I can't take 20 balls to get set, I need to go out in the middle and play to the tone of the match. So it's not easy but I am still trying my best," he said, adding that he also love to bowl.

## BHF bans four seniors



RASEL MAHMUD JIMMY



ZAHID HOSSAIN



IMRAN HASAN PINTU



KAMRUZZAMAN RANA

SPORTS REPORTER



In an unprecedented yet anticipated move, the Bangladesh Hockey Federation (BHF) yesterday suspended four senior national players from both international and domestic circuit for different terms and relieved assistant coach Mahbub Harun from his duties for deliberately underperforming and violating discipline during the Asia Cup in August this year.

Striker Rasel Mahmud Jimmy, goalkeeper Zahid Hossain and defender Imran Hasan Pintu have been banned from the national team for three years and suspended from domestic competitions for two years while midfielder Kamruzzaman Rana has been handed a two-year ban from the national team and for one year from the domestic circuit.

The decision was taken unanimously after a four-hour meeting of the executive committee of BHF yesterday

which analysed reports of the probe committee formed for the Asia Cup debacle, reports from coach and manager and replies of show-cause notices from the players and the assistant coach.

"In order to bring back discipline in the national team and to keep the team in the right direction, we have been forced to take such a decision," said BHF president and Air Marshal Muhammad Enamul Bari after the meeting.

The BHF president later conceded that the performance and disciplines of the players before and during the Asia Cup were two of the major reasons behind the suspension but their previous contribution to the national team was also taken into consideration.

Since the end of the Asia Cup where Bangladesh performed poorly and finished seventh out of eight teams, allegations were raised against some of the senior players of creating factions within the squad, breaching discipline, deliberately underperforming, not co-

operating with the coach and mixing too much with the opposition players and officials. Assistant coach Harun was accused of carrying liquor and distributing it among the players. In the wake of these allegations, the BHF formed a fact-finding committee on September 18 and served show-cause notices to four players, a coach and an umpire on October 10, giving them 13 days' time to reply.

One of the members who attended the meeting said that the tone of replies of all four players were almost identical, with an attacking verve, where they all denied the allegations brought against them. However, Harun's reply was decent and the coach even admitted to making mistakes.

Jimmy, the star forward of the national team, said that he was not surprised with the decision. "We knew it all along that they [BHF] would suspend us for our movement regarding the inter-club players' transfers. I take it as a reward for serving the national team for ten years," was the sarcastic reply from Jimmy.

## Soumya makes the grade

SPORTS REPORTER



Uncapped Soumya Sarker was selected to the national squad for tomorrow's only T20 International against New Zealand.

The 20-year-old cricketer from Satkhira, a left-handed batsman and right-arm pace bowler, was surprised by the call-up but selector Habibul Bashar said that they considered him a useful player. Left-arm spinner Elias Sunny made way for Soumya in the 15-member squad.

"Yes, I'm surprised. It's like a dream come true for me. It's a fantastic feeling," said the newcomer to the team, which has been in the midst of a dream run in the series against New Zealand with a drawn Test series and 3-0 victory in the ODI series.

"He is a very useful cricketer -- a hard-hitting batsman, handy bowler and a very good fielder. He is an aggressive batsman and his style of batting goes with the demands of cricket these days. The team can use him as per their needs as he can bat at any position. He is in consideration for the match but most importantly we consider him as a future cricketer, so it will help if he connects with the team and familiarise with the environment," said Bashar.

Soumya said that he is not a follower of the batting of Tamim Iqbal but he has grown up watching the hard-hitting batting of the



**READYING FOR DEBUT? Soumya Sarker, a dashing opening batsman, steps onto the playing field of Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur to practise on Monday. The Satkhira player may make his Bangladesh debut when the Tigers meet New Zealand in the lone T20 International here tomorrow.**

PHOTO: STAR

Chittagonian. The batting style of Virender Sehwag and Chris Gayle influence him most.

It's not unlikely that he will make a debut tomorrow. But the team management is yet to decide on the team as today's fitness test will confirm whether Tamim, who missed the third and final ODI at Fatullah, will play the last encounter of the series.

## Still need to fight to get in the team

*With 163 runs, Naeem Islam was the highest run-scorer of the ODI series and was Bangladesh's unlikely hero. 'Unlikely' because Naeem did not originally feature in Bangladesh's playing eleven and made a late entry following Shakib Al Hasan's exit due to dengue fever. The player, who played crucial knocks in the first and third ODIs, spoke to The Daily Star's Naimul Karim regarding his performance in the series.*

**DAILY STAR SPORT (DSS):** Congratulations. How does it feel to be the highest scorer in the series?

**NAEEM ISLAM (NI):** Am I the highest just among my team or among everyone?

**DSS:** Among everyone.

**NI:** Oh, I was not sure of that. But that's good. Well, that just feels great honestly. I have been working hard on my batting in the last few months and thankfully I performed at the right time.

**DSS:** According to the captain you got in the playing eleven only due to Shakib Al Hasan's injury. From not being in the team to top-scoring in the series, did you expect that?

**NI:** After Shakib got injured I tried to make the most of the opportunity. I don't get too many chances so I really wanted to make it count. So yeah, I gave it my best shot. It started from the Test series; I worked on my batting a lot. Back then, even before Shakib's injury I was hopeful of playing at least one ODI and I knew that I would have to prove myself. Thankfully it worked out.

**DSS:** After that heroic performance, do you think you have sealed a spot in



the team?

**NI:** No, not at all. How can that be? Once Shakib gets fit he is going to be back and play in the number five position, where I batted. So I think I still need to fight to get a place in the team for the next series.

**DSS:** Is that disappointing?

**NI:** No. Look, it depends on what the team needs and the right combination. In fact this is a good sign for Bangladesh, there is a growing compe-

tion which was not that clearly seen before. There are so many players performing; it shows that we are progressing as a team.

**DSS:** You were a member of the team that beat New Zealand 4-0 in 2010. Which series win would you rate better?

**NI:** In terms of series wins both are equally important. But for me this win feels a lot better than the one in 2010. Back then I just played one out of the four games. My performance this year was a lot better.

**DSS:** You were involved in two 50-run stands on Sunday. What was your plan?

**NI:** There was a goal that we had to reach after every set of overs and it was going well. With [Shamsur Rahman] Shuvo I wanted to bat till the 35th over. He got out just before that. I wanted to bat till the end with Nasir [Hossain], but sadly I could not.

**DSS:** You were run out. An unfortunate end to a good innings?

**NI:** Yes. Actually, they had changed the position of the fielder just before that and I did not notice that. So yes, hard luck.

## Munro still positive

SPORTS REPORTER

Colin Munro, who scored 85 -- his highest ODI score -- against Bangladesh on Sunday, has said that New Zealand remained positive despite the 3-0 defeat and were looking ahead.

Speaking to reporters, he said, "It would be silly of us to have our heads down halfway through a long tour. We have a lot of cricket left, including the Twenty20 game here. If we can win that one and go to Sri Lanka that would be great for the team."

Despite losing the third ODI at Fatullah, he was pleased with his performance. "I got a duck in my last international match. I had a lot to prove yesterday. It was very pleasing to score runs in my first game here because I have been working on playing against spin," he said.

## Vettel's 7th on the trot

AFP, Abu Dhabi

Quadruple Formula One world champion Sebastian Vettel eased to victory in the Abu Dhabi Grand Prix on Sunday for his seventh successive victory and 11th of the season.

The 26-year-old German led home a Red Bull 1-2 -- the 15th time in Formula One and giving them their 100th podium finish.

## NZ press lays into whitewashed Kiwis

STAR SPORT DESK



"How does a team go from beating South Africa and England in ODI series in their own back yard, to being Bangla-washed?" was a question posed yesterday by the Auckland-based New Zealand Herald, the country's leading daily, following their cricket team's 3-0 series defeat to Bangladesh.

There were other media reports too which followed a similar flavour and came down hard on the Black Caps.

The New Zealand Herald in an article titled 'Black Caps: Three Harsh Questions' wrote, "This series result is symptomatic of New Zealand's long-running problems on the sub-continent. They often look clueless over there. They can hardly be accused of underestimating the opposition after the 4-0 drubbing three years ago."

The paper also questioned if the Black Caps had reached an all-time low. It stated, "The Black Caps' latest ODI series whitewash to Bangladesh adds another chapter to what has been a pretty dark year for the New Zealand cricket side that began when they were bowled out for just 45 against South Africa in Newlands."

Another leading Daily, The Press, described New Zealand's ground fielding and bowling performance as 'second-rate' and that it reminded everyone of the ghosts of the 2010 series defeat. According to an article entitled, "Sorry Black Caps lose by four wickets", "The broom came out of the cupboard again this morning, as New Zealand suffered a successive one-day international series whitewash in Bangladesh."

Analysts stated that while the defeat cannot be forgotten, the only way to ease the pain would be to perform well in the next series at home.

"They [fans] would call for patience, that there's a long summer at home to come. Beating the West Indies, then India, would make Bangladesh a distant memory.

You're as good as your last effort, however, so the Windies can't come soon enough. Problem is, this won't be forgotten," wrote The New Zealand Herald.

## 'City of Sachin'

CNN-IBN, Kolkata



The 'Sachin Tendulkar Carnival' is all set to hit the 'City of Joy' with the Cricket Association of Bengal (CAB), organisers of his penultimate Test match, chalking out an elaborate list of plans to felicitate the legend as he prepares to walk out at the Eden Gardens for one final time against the West Indies over November 6-10.

From conferring him with an honorary membership, felicitation by Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, to naming a gallery after him, the CAB officials have chalked out a list of 'to-do' in order to match Tendulkar's home association MCA in giving the maestro a memorable farewell.

"We would like to give him an honorary membership and later we would think of naming a gallery after him. But at the moment, we would

not like to disturb his focus from the match," CAB joint-secretary Subir Ganguly told reporters.

Tendulkar has always offered puja at Kolkata's famous Kali Temple at Kalighat and the CAB plans to present the cricketer's wife, Anjali, with a saree which was an offering to Goddess Kali during the recently concluded festivities. "We would present them [Tendulkar couple] with a 'blessed saree'; and if Tendulkar scores a ton here, we'll feel proud," said Ganguly.

The chief minister will personally come to Eden Gardens on the last day of the Test to felicitate Tendulkar.

With superstars Amitabh Bachchan and Shah Rukh Khan in town for the film festival during that time, they too are expected, even though the CAB is tight-lipped about the guests list. It's like 'Sachin Tendulkar Festival' as the countdown began on Sunday for the Indian batsman's last outing at the majestic Eden.

CAB president Jagmohan Dalmiya and sports minister Madan Mitra earlier flagged off a tableau carrying memorable moments of Tendulkar's illustrious 24-year international career. The tableau has Tendulkar's cutouts and some rare photographs, and it would go to every parts of the metropolis till the last day of the Test traversing about 200 kms.

"Eden has the largest capacity of 70,000 but still many would be deprived to see Tendulkar, and the tableau will make up for it. It will stop at several places giving people an opportunity to have a glimpse of it," Dalmiya said. "To get a Test in the Tendulkar farewell series itself is a big achievement for us," he added.

On the last day of the Test, three two-seater aircraft will shower 199 kg rose petals from the sky to make it more befitting for Tendulkar. "They had a drill on Monday and everything is going on course. We're hopeful of a fine show," Mitra said.



**Indian batting maestro Sachin Tendulkar is being given a floral welcome as he arrives at the Eden Gardens in Kolkata for training on Monday.**

PHOTO: IANS

## 9-star Siddikur

SPORTS REPORTER

In the fertile land of left-arm spinners, Siddikur Rahman arrived on the scene with a nine-wicket haul in the second three-day match between BCB Under-16s and the visiting Madhya Pradesh Cricket Association (MPCA) at the outer ground of Sheikh Kamal International Cricket Stadium in Cox's Bazar yesterday.

The left-arm spinner returned with figures of 41.1-13-84-9 on the second day and also had a hand in the run-out of opener Rishabh Choubey. In other words the BKSP student was involved in all ten dismissals as the tourists were all out for 290 runs in their first innings.

The BCB Under-16s scored 71 for two in 55 overs before stumps were drawn for the day.

## Injury doesn't worry Watson

AFP, Sydney

Injury-prone Australian batsman Shane Watson said Monday he is confident he will be fit for this month's opening Ashes Test against England despite suffering from a hamstring problem.

The powerful all-rounder will have scans later in the day on what he believes may be a fascial tear, before discussing the results with Cricket Australia's medical staff and working out how best to prepare for the Brisbane Test, which starts on November 21.

"It's not too bad,"

Watson told reporters at Sydney airport.

"I've had a few niggles like this even over the last eight or nine months, so hopefully it won't be too bad at all or put me out for too long.

"My body's really adjusting to bowling, it's just an unfortunate little hiccup."

Asked if he had any doubts about whether he would be involved in the series opener, Watson said: "I'd never say 'no doubt' but I've been able to get on top of this sort of thing over the last eight or nine months with a few niggles that I had even throughout the [July-August] Ashes as well."