



The Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium in Chittagong was awash with rain throughout yesterday, forcing the fourth day of the first Test between Bangladesh and South Africa to be called-off. Unfortunately, the forecast for today is not much brighter.

PHOTO: ANURUP KANTI DAS

## 'We dominated this Test'

SPORTS REPORTER from Chittagong



There was disappointment all round the Bangladesh camp after the fourth day of the Test was called off due to incessant rainfall. However, the immense break provided the chance for most of the players of the playing eleven to hit the gym and enjoy some extra training sessions.

Skipper Mushfiqur Rahim, for instance, was one of the first players to pad up and get to the indoor facilities to attend his batting sessions. The wicketkeeper-batsman hasn't been at his best and will hope he can regain his form ahead of the second Test.

Although they sweated it out indoors, most of the players would have been much happier had they received the opportunity to use that

energy to bowl the visitors out at the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium yesterday.

"As a team we played really good cricket. Overall, had there been five days of cricket, we would have had a positive result because we dominated this Test. I guess we were unlucky that it didn't happen," opener Imrul Kayes said yesterday.

"I think this is a positive side for Bangladesh cricket. The fact that we played consistently for a long time is a good sign for us and a big achievement on our part," he added.

Former national cricketer and current team manager Khaled Mahmud echoed Imrul's thoughts.

"It does feel bad. We had an opportunity after taking the lead. Actually not just us, it was open for both teams. It could have been an exciting finish. But again, no one can

control the rain," said Mahmud.

Imrul believes that if play does take place today, it might be a little harder for the visiting batsmen out in the middle considering that the covers were on throughout the day yesterday.

"The pitch was completely covered. Normally the wicket may become a bit damp if the cover is not lifted and then the wicket doesn't behave normally. I think batting will be a little difficult and our spinners will get help.

"I think if Shakib [Al Hasan] and Taijul [Islam] can bowl well, then we will be able to bowl them out quickly," said Imrul.

Furthermore, Mahmud believed that the good display on the field from the Tigers in the first three days would help them put up a confident display against the Proteas in Dhaka in the second and final Test.

"We will definitely return to Dhaka with plenty of confidence. I don't know what will happen tomorrow, whether we will get a result or not. Let us see what happens if play resumes.

"Maybe we could have done much better than this in this Test. Our batting could have been slightly better, but then again, our confidence levels have been boosted. And we know the Dhaka wicket is much better than the one here," said Mahmud.

The former national cricketer also said that Bangladesh's positive performance in this Test was a sign that, like in the ODIs, the team is readily improving in this format as well.

"I would say that this performance is a signal that we are gradually rising in this format as well. I think we need to play more Tests. It doesn't matter whether we win or lose. We need the experience and that's why the Dhaka Test is very important," said Mahmud.

## Maria & Grigor call it quits

REUTERS, Sofia

Russian five-time Grand Slam champion Maria Sharapova has split with Bulgarian boyfriend Grigor Dimitrov after a nearly three-year relationship.

"Our paths split," 24-year-old Dimitrov, currently number 16 in the ATP rankings, told Bulgarian media on Friday. "We experienced wonderful moments together. I wish her much happiness and success in life and in tennis.

"Now I'm concentrated entirely on the game and I'm sure the results will soon be seen... This is the summer of the new beginning for me."

Dimitrov, who climbed to number eight in the world last year after reaching the Wimbledon semifinals, has had a lean year and is still to reach a final.

Sharapova, 28, announced that her and Dimitrov were a couple in May 2013.



Bangladesh pacer Mustafizur Rahman didn't get the opportunity to build on his four-wicket haul in the first Test, but he and the rest of the bowlers will try to replicate their first innings performance if weather permits fifth day's play today.

PHOTO: STAR

## Soccer reveals the child in Steyn

SPORTS REPORTER from Chittagong



Hey, you're on our team,' yelled a child in Bengali after the world's most dangerous pace bowler passed a football, possibly to a player playing on the opposing team, during a friendly, yet competitive, game of street football.

While the entire South African team decided to take the day off, after the fourth day of the Test was called off in the port city yesterday, Steyn decided to surprise a bunch of teenagers by joining them for a game of football.

Right next to the team hotel, Radisson

Blu, is a field better known as the Jamiatul Falah ground where locals tend to gather in the evenings for a game of football.

And with the rain around, yesterday was twice as fun and Steyn could barely control himself. The South African made his intentions known through his twitter account at 4:30 PM, "Stuck in my room all day watching these kids play soccer... looks like plenty of fun... #shouldIgo," Steyn tweeted, accompanied by a picture taken from his hotel window of the kids.

One hour later, he posted a video of himself dressed in a tank-top and shorts, playing bare-feet along with the locals. Steyn showed-off his fancy footwork before providing an inch-perfect

through ball for an enthusiastic striker, who unfortunately failed to control the ball with a clear path to goal.

"I may have just broken every security protocol and my coach won't be happy, but this was just too good to miss! #Bangladesh #streetsoccer #stoked," Steyn later tweeted, presumably after drying off.

The pacer's video received plenty of replies from fans asking him when he would hit the streets again.

"Next time please let me know when you decide to play on the streets of Dhaka," posted Faisal Khan.

With the fifth and final day of the Test unlikely to take place due to the inclement weather, it won't be a surprise to see the pacer take to the streets of

## Rain plays spoilsport

NAIMUL KARIM from Chittagong



Incessant rain in the port city of Chittagong yesterday compelled match officials to call off day four of the first Test between Bangladesh and South

Africa at 1:30 PM yesterday.

With two innings left on a wicket that hasn't deteriorated much, the match -- according to the current scenario which sees South Africa trailing by 17 runs with ten wickets in hand in the third innings -- is headed for a draw. In addition, the forecast for the fifth day today looks threatening as well, with continuous rainfall predicted in the port city yet again.

Unfortunately, it's not just the current Test that is in danger of being direly affected by the rain. The second Test, which is scheduled to begin at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur from July 30, might also face regular interruptions.

If the end result is indeed a draw, then this will be the first time that Bangladesh have managed to draw a Test against South Africa. They have lost all their last eight outings against the Proteas, seven of which were by an innings.

In terms of results, the expected draw may be seen as a sign of progress, but the players would definitely feel that it was an opportunity lost.

While the visitors decided to spend yesterday in the hotel, ten players from Bangladesh's 14-member squad decided to go to the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium and attend a few indoor sessions.



The players who are absent from the main team -- Rubel Hossain, Soumya Sarkar and Nasir Hossain -- stayed back at the hotel along with Liton Das. Liton, who kept wickets and batted long sessions during the Test, was given a break.

A sense of disappointment was clearly felt among the players, who arrived in the stadium at noon. It was an unfamiliar emotion considering the fact that the rains have generally been welcomed during a number of Bangladesh's Test matches, courtesy of their disappointing run in the format.

However, the disappointment yesterday was understandable considering the fact that this has been one of those rare Tests where the Tigers have been the better side from the word go.

The hosts managed to post their highest ever lead in a Test while batting second and sniffed a rare opportunity to do well against the top-ranked team in the Test circuit.

The visiting South African side would have been disappointed as well, considering the fact that they had come back well on the third day and nearly wiped off the lead. Openers Dean Elgar and Stiaan Van Zyl actually batted at a faster rate compared to the first innings and were looking like they would wipe away the 78-run advantage that the hosts had accumulated. If play resumes today then the Proteas, who haven't gotten much batting practice in the Tests, may look to bat for as long as possible.

If that happens then it would mean that Dale Steyn will not get an opportunity to take the one elusive scalp he requires to reach 400 wickets, at least not in the first Test. He will then have to look ahead to the Test in Dhaka to reach that landmark.

If he does go on to get that one wicket, he will become the second bowler after Shaun Pollock to break the 400-mark.

## Afghanistan, Oman thru' to World T20

AFP, Dublin



Oman's fairytale rise as a cricket nation continued Thursday when they qualified for next year's World Twenty20 in India.

A five-wicket win over Namibia at the ICC qualifying event in Malahide near Dublin saw the Gulf minnows reach their first major international tournament.

Victory also saw the International Cricket Council grant Oman full Twenty20 status.

Oman had previously beaten Canada, the Netherlands and Afghanistan, all far more experienced associate or non-Test cricket nations, at the qualifying tournament.

Afghanistan sealed the other qualifying spot on offer Thursday with a six-wicket win over Papua New Guinea.

The 16 teams who will compete in the finals phase of the World Twenty20 are the 10 Test sides, plus qualifiers Scotland, Ireland, Hong Kong, the Netherlands, Afghanistan and Oman.



South Africa speedster Dale Steyn poses for a selfie with a youth after playing a game of street soccer with local kids near the team hotel in Chittagong yesterday evening.