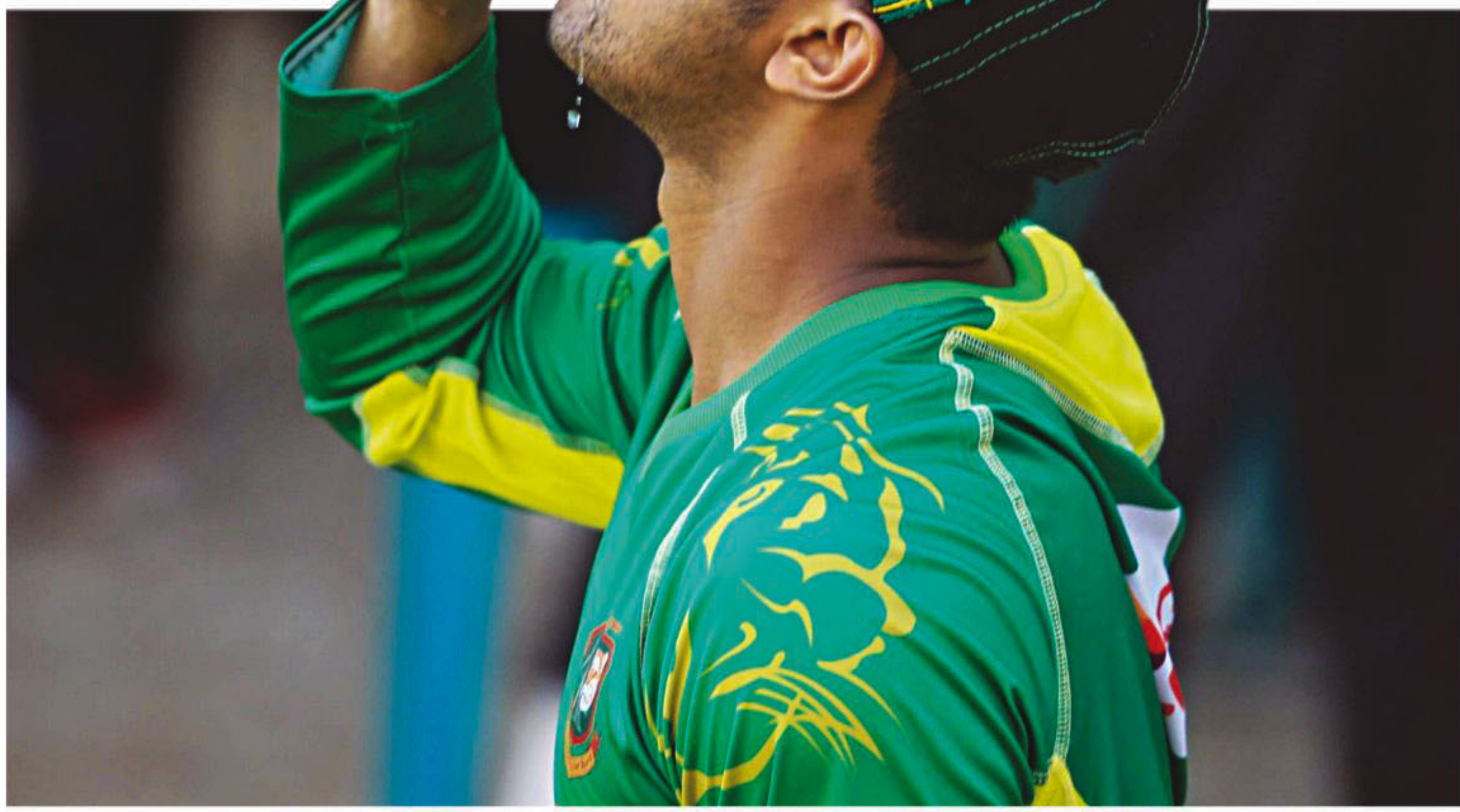


# SPORTS



Nothing is more refreshing than a bottle of water after a hard workout on a hot day in Mirpur yesterday.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

## Mamunul, six others to be show-caused

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) has decided against considering seven national players including captain Mamunul Islam in the provisional squad for next month's World Cup and Asian Cup qualifying away match against Jordan.

According to the National Teams Committee (NTC) chairman Kazi Nabil Ahmed, who briefed reporters after a meeting at the BFF House yesterday, the seven players would have to appear before a panel to defend their positions against allegations brought by the three-man fact-finding committee.

"They will be served with show-cause notices by tomorrow [Tuesday] and they will appear before a three-member committee to defend themselves. They will only be considered for the national squad if they can satisfy the committee," Nabil said after conducting a two-and-a-half hour meeting.

The decision was made in light of recommendations of the fact-finding committee formed following Bangladesh team's debacle in the SAFF Cup and the Bangabandhu Gold Cup.

Meanwhile, the meeting also decided to appoint Spanish coach Ganzalo Sanchez Moreno as Bangladesh coach for the Jordan game, which will take place in Amman on March 24. The national team will play a warm-up match away to UAE on March 18 before their final World Cup qualifier.

## UAE join big four

SPORTS REPORTER



When the United Arab Emirates won their first game against Afghanistan on the first day of the qualifiers for the Asia Cup, it was expected that the men from the Gulf would make it through to the main round of the competition.

And the expectation came true yesterday after they thrashed Oman by 71 runs at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur.

Meanwhile, Afghanistan did their part with a 66-run victory against Hong Kong in the day's first game, but UAE's all-win record meant that there was no chance for the Afghans to play their second Asia Cup.

Batting first, a half-century from Mohammad Kaleem and a 22-ball 46 from Muhammad Usman helped UAE finish on 172 for 6. In reply, Oman were restricted to 101 for 8. Mohammad Naveed and Qadeer Ahmed took two wickets each to dent Oman.

Oman's Zeeshan Maqsood was the only player who managed to provide some resistance with a 42-ball 46.

Earlier, Najibullah Zadran and Mohammad Nabi came up with their career-best T20 performances to ensure an easy win for Afghanistan. Najibullah smashed an unbeaten 60 off 35 balls to lead Afghanistan to 178, which they defended with ease, thanks to Nabi's four wickets for 17 runs.

### SCORES IN BRIEF

AFGHANISTAN: 178 for 7 in 20 overs (Najibullah 60 not out; Aizaz 3-38)

HONG KONG: 112 all out in 17.1 overs (Rath 41; Nabi 4-17)

Result: Afghanistan won by 66 runs.

UAE: 172-6 in 20 overs (Kaleem 50, Usman 46; Kaleem 4-36)

OMAN: 101-8 in 20 overs (Maqsood 46; Naveed 2-14)

Result: UAE won by 71 runs.



The UAE players celebrate their 71-run victory over Oman, which ensured their qualification for the Asia Cup tournament proper in Mirpur yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

## Tigers primed for T20 success

BISHWAJIT ROY



There are very few who would have foreseen Mahmudullah Riyad going to Australia-New Zealand last year and scoring the first hundred for Bangladesh in World Cups, and fewer still would have thought that he would go on to become the first Bangladeshi to score consecutive tons in the showpiece event. Before embarking on the trip down under the Tigers made a lot of promises as usual, but who actually could have believed that Bangladesh would make it to the quarterfinals and ultimately be lauded by pundits for the brand of cricket they played. One can argue that all these were stories in 50-over cricket, which is the Tigers' most favoured format, and so it would be unwise to invoke those memories before the Tigers face the challenge of T20 cricket; a format with which Mashrafe Bin Mortaza's brigade is yet to be comfortable.

But take it from Riyad, there are plenty of

reasons to be hopeful ahead of their Asia Cup campaign that will begin with the match against India at Mirpur tomorrow. Like his silky batting the experienced batsman exuded confidence with a sweet smile while talking to reporters after training at the Mirpur Indoors yesterday. "We will light up (in the T20 format)," a bold statement came from the history-maker, who added: "I hope we will be able to overcome the shakiness in the T20 format during the Asia Cup."

He promised that they will emerge as a different team in T20 cricket in the coming challenges and will play aggressive cricket. When asked from where he received the confidence, Riyad said: "It's all about self-confidence. At this moment we are very much confident. We are hopeful that we will be able to play a different brand of cricket in the T20 format with the confidence. Everybody says that we are not a good team in T20 cricket, so it's our challenge to prove ourselves."

He pointed to their good preparations as another reason to be confident. "We are well prepared to take on the challenge. We took good preparations in Khulna and Chittagong and

practised in match scenarios. We will fight for the trophy but we will need a good start. So we are looking forward to a good start against India in the opening match."

It was evident that Bangladesh has yet to learn certain T20 skills, such as how to pace an innings, so it was cause for minor confusion when Riyad said that they will play aggressive cricket. "Whenever I go to the middle I will try to hit the first ball for six (smiles). Anyway in T20 cricket not only the batsman but also the bowlers should be crafty and they should understand the situation. So the main thing is that we should play according to the situation," he explained.

It was not possible to finish yesterday's proceedings without mention of the achievement of Mashrafe Bin Mortaza, who is going to become a UNDP goodwill ambassador. "Congratulations to Mashrafe bhai. He is a champion leader. His leadership is unique and simply, you can't explain it," praised Riyad adding that, "If we want to give him any trophy then nothing would be bigger than the Asia Cup and the World Cup. So we will try to play for him."



### McCULLUM IN TESTS

Matches	Runs	Ave	HS	100	50	Cts	St
101	6453	38.64	302	12	31	197	11

One last time in all whites, New Zealand captain Brandon McCullum salutes the Hagley Oval crowd after his final knock against Australia yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

## Baz bids farewell

### Aus smell victory

AFP, Christchurch

Brendon McCullum drew the curtain on his illustrious batting career as a typically pugnacious but short-lived innings Monday was unable to loosen Australia's firm grip on the second Test in Christchurch.

On an emotional day when players and fans marked the fifth anniversary of the devastating Christchurch earthquake, the captain's departure in his 101st and final Test left New Zealand staring down the barrel.

At the end of the third day New Zealand were 121-4, needing a further 14 to make Australia bat again, but refusing to concede.

"It's 1-0 in the series and we've got to go out there and try and win this Test match," BJ Watling said.

"We've just got to try and get a total on the board that we can win the game (with); that's the ultimate goal."

McCullum arrived for his farewell innings at 72-3 but after 25 off 27 deliveries, the man who hit the fastest ever Test century in the first innings was out.

His second-to-last whack sent Josh Hazlewood for a record-extending 107th six over square leg. But when he danced down the wicket for a repeat performance off the next ball he was caught by David Warner.

SCORES IN BRIEF  
NEW ZEALAND: First innings 370  
AUSTRALIA: First innings 505 (Burns 170, Khawaja 24, Smith 138, Voges 60, Wagner 6-106)  
NEW ZEALAND: Second innings 121 for 4 (Latham 39, Williamson 45 not out; McCullum 25; Pattinson 3-29)

## BCB to reward gold winners

SPORTS REPORTER



The Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) has decided to award Tk 5 lakh to each of the Bangladeshi athletes who won gold medals at the South Asian Games.

The BCB also revealed that it would increase the cricketers' salaries by 25 percent in the new contract. 14 players have been included in the new contract with Soumya Sarkar, Mustafizur Rahman and Sabbir Rahman the new entrants in the list. The only change in the list of contracted players is the exclusion of Rubel Hossain.

The pacer, according to BCB president Nazmul Hassan Papon, has been excluded as he had not followed his rehabilitation programme properly.

Speaking to reporters following

BCB to award Tk 5 lakhs each to SA Games gold medals

Mashrafe to lead Bangladesh in the ICC World T20

BCB to bear expenses for foreign hockey coach

National players' salaries to be increased by 25 percent

Rubel Hossain kept out of national contract

BCB lifts ban on Nadir Shah

yesterday's board meeting at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur, Papon said: "In order to encourage the gold medal winners we have decided to pay Tk 5 lakhs for each gold medal."

It was a welcome gesture from the BCB considering that these athletes -- Mahfuza Khatun Shila, Mubia Akter Simanta and Shakil Ahmed -- have barely received the recognition they deserve.

Papon also said that the board will help the national hockey team by providing the Bangladesh Hockey Federation with financial assistance for their coach.

The board has also decided to allow umpire Nadir Shah, who was banned for 10 years back in March 2013, to officiate in domestic matches.

The BCB president also stated that Mashrafe Bin Mortaza's captaincy had been extended till the ICC WorldTwenty20 in India, with Shakib Al Hasan as his deputy.

Lastly, the board decided to change the chairman of the cricket operations committee. Naimur Rahman has been replaced by Akram Khan.

## Clash of the giants

AFP, Paris



Champions League holders Barcelona arrive at the Emirates on Tuesday to tackle an Arsenal side seeking to rediscover the ruthless streak which deserted them in a tame weekend goalless FA Cup tie.

The clash headlines a week of European action that sees Bayern Munich at Juventus, PSV Eindhoven hosting Atletico Madrid and Manchester City at Dynamo Kiev.

Barca and Arsenal are no strangers in this arena, the pair having fought out the 2006 final, with the Catalans prevailing over Wenger's "Invincibles" 2-1 in Paris.

Lionel Messi then scored four times when Barca dishd out a 4-1 drubbing to the Gunners in a 2010 quarterfinal.

And the Argentine superstar inspired a Barca second leg fightback after Arsenal edged the last 16, first leg home tie 2-1 in 2011.

To prevent a similar scenario this time around, Gunners coach Arsene Wenger has told his team to bare its teeth on Tuesday after Saturday's 0-0 stalemate against sec-

ond-tier Hull.

Mesut Ozil, one of nine changes against Hull, will return to face Barcelona after recovering from a cold.

Barca turn up seemingly firing on all cylinders and eight points clear in La Liga after Suarez and Neymar teamed up in the weekend's 2-1 win at Las Palmas.

Bayern head to Turin to face last season's runners-up Juve with the German giants

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having Thomas Mueller to thank for digging them out of trouble in a 3-1 home comeback win over Darmstadt over the weekend.

Juve are on a 16-match unbeaten home run in European competition, their last defeat coming in 2013 to Bayern in the Germans' title-winning season.

Juventus striker Mario Mandzukic is expected to return from a three-week injury lay-off to come up against his old side.

## A chance for revenge

AFP, New York



Lionel Messi and Argentina were given a chance for revenge on Sunday after being drawn against reigning Copa America champions Chile in the group stage for this summer's special centenary edition of the tournament.

Argentina suffered an agonizing defeat to Chile in the climax of last June's tournament in Santiago as their major championship drought continued.

However, Messi and his teammates have the opportunity to strike back at Chile after being drawn alongside their South American rivals in Group D here Sunday.

The Copa America Centenario is taking place outside South America for the first time this year to mark 100 years of the world's oldest international football tournament.

Ten cities across the United States will host games from June 3-26 in the 16-team tournament, which features 10 sides from South America and six from the CONCACAF region.

Argentina's clash with

Chile was the standout fixture from Sunday's draw at New York's Hammerstein Ballroom in Manhattan. Panama and Bolivia complete Group D.

Host United States will kick off the tournament against Colombia in the opening match on June 3 at Super Bowl venue Levi's Stadium in Santa Clara, California.

The Americans' Group A is full of demanding challenges, with 2014 World Cup quarter-finalists Colombia and Costa Rica as well as 2015 Copa America semi-finalists Paraguay.

Five-time world champions Brazil, however, were given what looked like a straightforward passage into the knockout rounds, with Ecuador, Haiti and Peru forming their opposition in Group B.

Group	Team
A	USA
	COLOMBIA
	COSTA RICA
	PARAGUAY
B	BRAZIL
	ECUADOR
	HAITI
	PERU
C	MEXICO
	URUGUAY
	JAMAICA
	VENEZUELA
D	ARGENTINA
	CHILE
	PANAMA
	BOLIVIA

## Sheikh Jamal face Tampines Rovers today

SPORTS REPORTER

Sheikh Jamal Dhanmondi Club is set to make its debut in the finals of the AFC Cup when the Bangladesh Premier League champions square off Singapore League runners-up Tampines Rovers FC in one of two Group E matches at the Jalan Besar Stadium, Singapore today.

Three-time Bangladesh premier league champions have qualified for the finals having emerged group champions in the play-off round by putting up a bold performance, thanks to the consistent performance by the group of players who had been together for two successive seasons.

But Sheikh Jamal will not be the same dominant force that they had been as they lost most of their key players at the advent of a new domestic season.