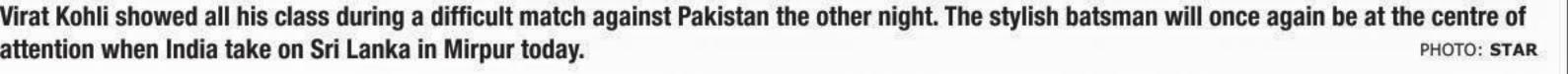
BATTLE ASIA







धूला सरालार फिन (अर्थ)



IMPACT MAN

AMIR'S STING

Mohammad Amir returned

astonishingly economical

figures of two wickets for just

six runs from his four overs.

The left-arm speedster did

not quite blow away the UAE

batsmen as expected, but he

bowled with a venom that

made the batsmen retreat

into a shell. With figures of 3-

1-2-1 at one stage, only a

four in his last over kept him

from recording the most

economical four-over spell in

T20ls. He compensated for

that with a searing yorker to

bowl Mohammad Usman.

Without his incisive and

economical spell, Pakistan

would have been looking at a

total substantially higher

than the one they

had to chase.

Face Bangladesh on Wednesday

SPORTS REPORTER



What was expected to be an easy win for Pakistan turned out to be the

most closely fought contest of the Asia Cup T20 so far. A three-wicket early burst from UAE skipper Amjad Javed threatened an upset, but a 46-ball 50 from Umar Akmal and a 49-ball 63 from Shoaib Malik gave Pakistan a

seven-wicket win at the Shere-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday. Pakistan will face hosts Bangladesh tomorrow in a must-win encounter for both the sides.

Despite Pakistan's relatively poor performance yesterday, coach Waqar Younis reckons that they will be the favourites heading into that game.

"I think so, I don't know if many people think the same but I feel that we are a force to reckon with in this tournament. In T20 there are times you are going to get into jail and then get out. What really matters is that we have finally opened our account," said Wagar after the match.

Bangladesh pacer Mustafizur Rahman, who has been ruled out of the tournament due to an injury, would be an advantage for Pakistan, Waqar replied: "One can't really be worried about one individual. We have to think about our strengths. We are ready for the challenge."

Back to yesterday's match, after UAE scored 129 for six and pegged Pakistan back, the early focus of Malik and Akmal's 114-run fourth-wicket stand was on picking singles as the UAE bowlers maintained their discipline on a challenging, green-tinged wicket.

At the end of the 13th over Pakistan



still required 66 runs and the match was in the balance. It was then that the tide turned in Pakistan's favour. Malik hit Mohammad Naveed for a four and a six in the 14th over which yielded 11 runs and a six in the following over brought the equation down to an When asked if the absence of achievable 46 runs from five overs. The match could still have been UAE's if the top-edged pull from Malik in the

16th over was taken at midwicket by Usman Mushtaq. That sapped UAE's spirits and a flurry of boundaries including three sixes and a four by Akmal in a 23-run 18th over bowled by skipper Amjad -- took Pakistan home with eight balls to spare.

Javed had a happier beginning however, rocking Pakistan's chase with a trio of wickets that cut them down to 17 for three by the fourth over. It all started in the second over when he was fortunate to see the umpire's finger go up after trap-

ping Sharjeel Khan in the crease with a ball that replays suggested would have gone over the stumps. A ball later he dispatched Khurram Manzoor with one that seamed away and took the edge. An upset was on the cards when in his next over Amjad had experienced opener Mohammad Hafeez driving uppishly to cover. That however brought together Akmal and Malik, who had the

experience and quality to quell the UAE uprising.

Earlier, UAE decided to bat first on a green pitch and despite losing early wickets managed their highest score of the tournament, courtesy of Shaiman Anwar's 42- ball 46 and Amjad's 18ball 27. Mohammad Amir was once again phenomenal and finished with figures of 2 for 6 in four overs.

Pace revolution in spinners' den

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It is a little surreal that a country that has little or no history of encouraging pace bowlers now captures

Holcim

the imaginations of cricket fans the world over with exciting pace bowling. It is a country where pace bowlers inhabit teams in the domestic competitions apparently only to make up the number because their role is limited to taking the shine off the new ball for the slow bowlers to take charge, most pace bowlers have to beg for a team in domestic cricket. It is a country where the word bowling was not too long ago synonymous with left-arm spin.

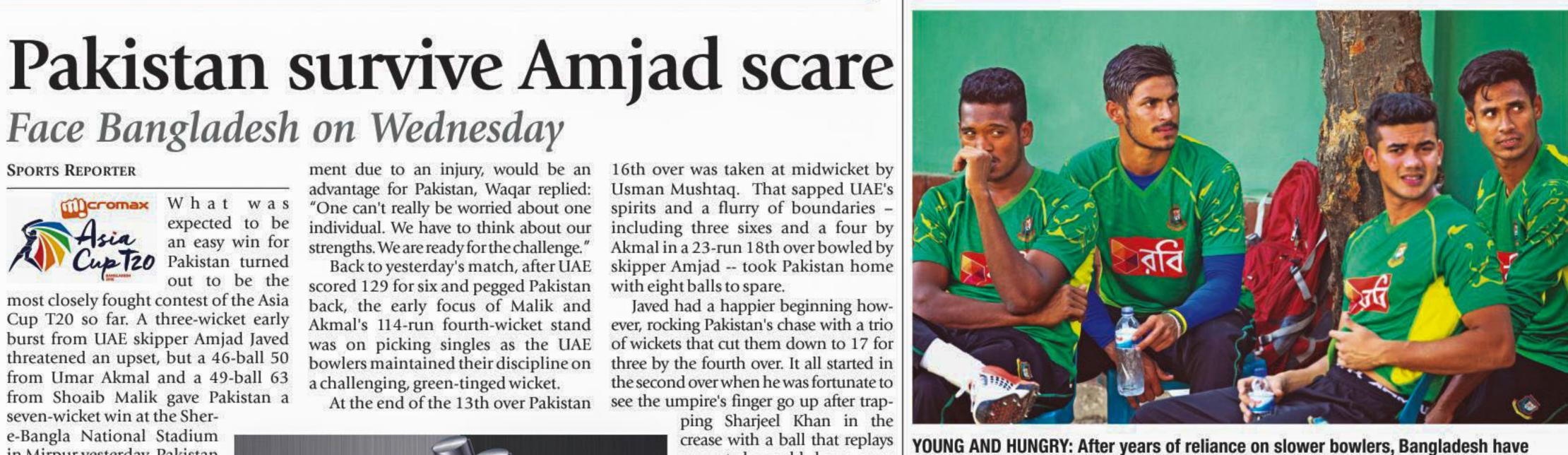
Against this backdrop, Bangladesh's selectors have shown great faith in their quicker bowlers as they have included five pacers in the squad for the ICC World Twenty20 and Asia Cup T20 competitions. The Bangladesh team management have shown courage to play with a four-pronged pace attack in the ongoing Asia Cup. Taskin Ahmed, Al-Amin Hossain, Mustafizur Rahman and captain Mashrafe Bin Mortaza have received accolades from laymen and cricket pundits alike. There may not be an express fast bowler -- Taskin tops out at around 145 kph -- but the attack has the

Was it an easy decision to change the ageold concept? Maybe it was Bangladesh head coach Chandika Hathurusingha who started the process of change when he preferred pace-friendly wickets in the home series against India in June 2014.

It was then new skipper Mashrafe Bin Mortaza who argued that only a good pace attack can bring more success and respect from the opponents, and that an attacking brand of cricket required at least three specialist pace bowlers in the team.

What Bangladesh did in the World Cup in Australia-New Zealand under the leadership of Mashrafe is now history. The success owed a huge debt to their pace-bowling prowess on conducive wickets. Memories of that World Cup cannot be related without mention of Rubel Hossain, who claimed four wickets to shoot England out of the tournament. Later on, the mysterious cutters and slower balls from Mustafizur compelled world cricket to pay serious attention to pace of the Bangladeshi variety.

"Bangladesh has never seen such a good pace attack before. I want to give credit to our coach [Chandika Hathurusingha] and captain Mashrafe Bin Mortaza] for their proactiveness in bringing a change in the planning. The promise Mashrafee's arrival on the scene held for pace bowling is now being fulfilled through his captaincy," said chief selector Faruque Ahmed.



suddenly unearthed a young crop of fast bowlers who are already making their mark in world cricket and taking the team to the next level. PHOTO: STAR FILE

versatility and variation to trouble the best.

A leading pacer in the country in the 1990s, Golam Nowsher Prince follows Bangladesh cricket from thousands of miles away and is immensely proud of the rise of pace bowling in his country. "I can assure you, any avid lover of the game would love to watch the exciting pace bowling of this Bangladesh team. Without any doubt we have a better pace attack than any Asian attack so why not utilise that advantage. I have always dreamt of such pace bowling throughout my career, but one thing I can tell you is that I was not as good as them," said an excited left-arm pace bowler. "They look like they read the game better than any other fast bowler in our sub-continent. Especially Mustafizur, he looks so mature," he continued.

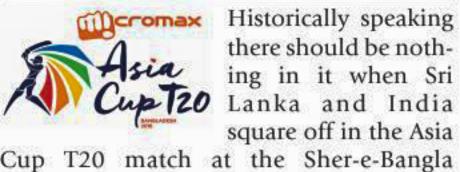
"In my opinion it all began when we started to think that we have to consider opponents and conditions before picking the team. You cannot succeed with typical thinking," he continued.

A new era has begun but will we be able to make it a tradition? "A big opportunity has come our way as young bowlers now love to see pace bowlers as role models. We all know how Imran Khan and Wasim Akram has a big impact on Pakistani pace bowling. You cannot expect that you will always get gifted bowlers; only the system can aid you in the long run," he opined.

So it is up to the powers that be to ensure that the current pace wealth is not a comet but a constant star.

Struggling Lankans face red-hot India

SPORTS REPORTER



Historically speaking there should be nothing in it when Sri Lanka and India square off in the Asia

National Stadium today. The two countries have won the Asia Cup five times each since its inception in 1984. But what should be anticipated as the match between the two Asia Cup giants in reality may turn out to be a bit of a mismatch, with India streets ahead of Sri Lanka on current T20I form.

Defending champions Sri Lanka in fact have the edge in Asia Cup encounters, winning 10 out of the 19 so far, and are also the reigning World Twenty20 champions. But while India have hit a rich vein of form in the shortest format -- winning the series in Australia and also beating Sri Lanka 2-1 last month -- Sri Lanka's form has taken a nosedive since the start of 2015, winning only

three and losing eight matches. Sri Lanka will have their work cut out playing against a fine batting order, especially if it is without their standout bowler and captain Lasith Malinga who sat out of Sunday's 23-run loss against Bangladesh due to a niggle. Stand-in skipper Angelo Mathews said after the defeat that he is not sure whether Malinga would play the rest of the matches. With the World Twenty20 in

India to follow hot on the heels of the Asia Cup, he may well not be risked for the remainder of the tournament.

"Malinga is a champion bowler and it will help any team playing Sri Lanka without him," said India off-spinner Ravichandran Ashwin while speaking to reporters yesterday.

Another aspect that stacks the odds in India's favour is that their bowling attack, so long a weak link, has matured into a reliable and versatile unit, most notably with the recall of old warhorse Ashish Nehra and the inclusion of the youthful and pace of Jasprit Bumrah.

"We know Ashish [Nehra] is an experienced candidate. He has got good ability to do well in the death and Bumrah is able to bowl the Yorkers -- which we might have been missing in the past few years," Ashwin said about India's newfound bowling prowess.

Sri Lanka's batting, meanwhile, has lost much of its venom after the retirements of Kumar Sangakkara and Mahela Jayawardene. But Ashwin, perhaps with memories still fresh of the 2014 World Twenty20 final at the same ground where the Lankans spoiled an in-form India's bestlaid plans, sounded out a cautionary note about their opponents.

"One thing we are wary about with Sri Lanka is that they will always punch above their weight and in big games -- they raise their standard; they are a very good team."

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HEAD TO HEAD IN ASIA CUP										
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19	9	10		19	10	9				
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Last meeting: Vishakhapatnam, Feb 14, 2016, India won by nine wickets with 37 balls remaining after bowling Sri Lanka out for 82.



UAE			R/B	4/6
Mustafa c	1/5	0/0		
Kaleem b	1/11	0/0		
Shahzad c	5/3	1/0		
Anwar c Sa	46/42	5/2		
Mushtaq c	9/19	1/0		
Usman b A	mir		21/17	2/1
Javed not	27/18	3/2		
Naveed no	10/5	1/1		
Extras: (lb	-2, w-7	7)	9	
Total: (For	6 wkts	in 20 ov	ers) 129	
Fall of wic	kets: 1-	-5, 2-5, 3	-12, 4-4	1,5-
72, 6-118.				
Bowler	0	M	R	V
Amir	4	1	6	
Sami	4	0	28	
Irfan	4	0	30	
Afridi	4	0	24	
Nawaz	3	0	26	(
Malik	1	0	13	(
PAKISTAN	ı		R/B	4/6
Hafeez c Ta	11/12	2/0		
Sharjeel Ib	4/3	1/0		
Manzoor c	0/2	0/0		
Akmal not	50/46	2/3		
Malik not	63/49	7/3		
Extras: (w-	3			
Total: (For 3	wkts i	n 18.4 ove	ers) 131	
Fall of wic	kets: 1-	-11, 2-11	, 3-17.	
Bowler	0	M	R	٧
Naveed	3.4	0	28	(
Javed	4	0	36	
Shahzad	4	0	19	
Raza	3	0	20	(
Mustafa	3	0	20	(
Tariq	1	0	8	