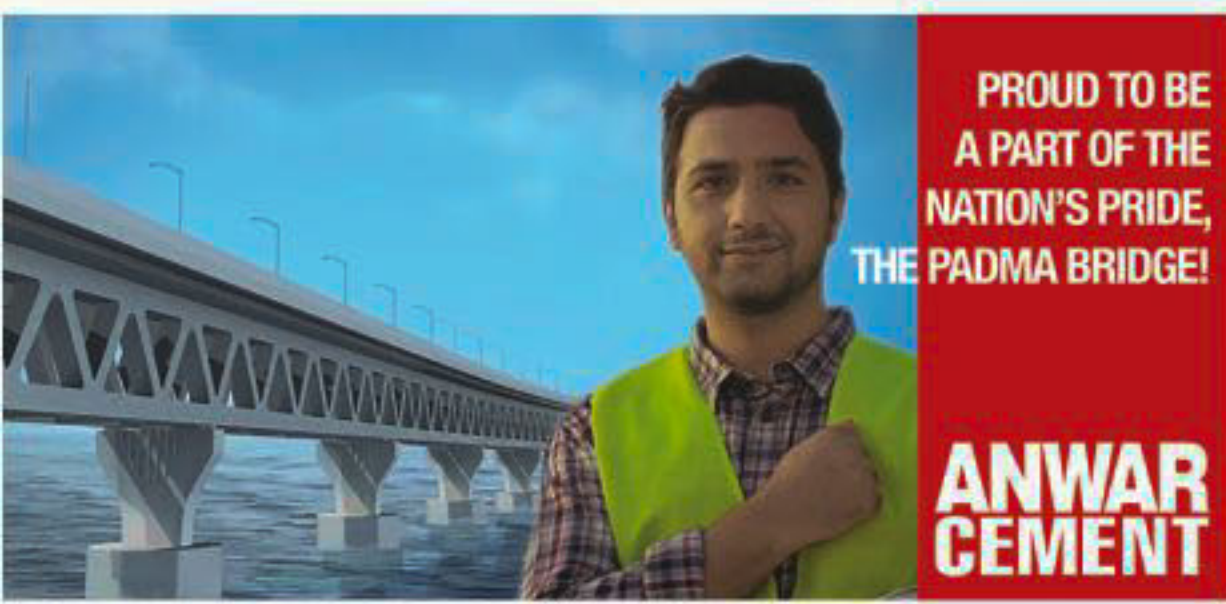


# Samaraweera speechless

SAKEB SUBHAN from Colombo

After an ending like yesterday's, when Bangladesh lost three wickets inside the last four overs to hand the initiative back to the Sri Lankans, one can imagine the dressing room full of people at sixes and sevens trying to convince someone to come out to the press conference and provide an explanation for the events.

Whether it was by accident or design, a more suitable person than batting coach Thilan Samaraweera could not have been offered up. As someone not given to resorting to diplomacy, Samaraweera -- who as a former Sri Lanka Test batsman would not have dreamed of playing some of the shots played near the end of a day -- in expressions and words provided the essence of how a professional cricketer or former cricketer should react to the batting at the end of the day.



Bangladesh, with Sabbir Rahman and Imrul Kayes at the crease, had gotten to 192 for two in response to Sri Lanka's first innings score of 338 and with four overs left on the second day of the second Test, all that was needed was to play out the overs and go to their hotel rooms secure in the knowledge that they were ahead in their 100th Test. Instead, Imrul Kayes played a rash pull shot to chinaman bowler Lakshan Sandakan and was out leg-before, before Taijul departed first ball and Sabbir was out caught in an obvious leg-side trap in the next over. Since Taijul's dismissal, 22 runs were scored off 20 balls before the umpires called an end to the chaos, 18 of them scored by Shakib Al Hasan off eight balls.

"I have no clue at the moment. I think one rash shot made trouble for us -- Imrul's dismissal," Samaraweera said after coming into the media room with a bemused smile and chuckling, ruefully perhaps, when a Sri Lankan journalist said something to him in Sinhala. "I

can teach skill, but when you are batting in Test cricket you have to know what the opposition is doing, you have to have that awareness. I think you have to be intelligent in the middle and we are lucky we finished with five [down], I thought [we would] finish with six."

That last bit may well have been a pointed remark at Shakib, who seemed to be doing his best to get out. He hit the hat-trick delivery for a cross-batted boundary, hit another off Sandakan's next over before being dropped by Upul Tharanga on the midwicket boundary from an attempted pull for six two balls later. Then he played another hook off Suranga Lakmal in the last over of the day, with the top-edge bouncing a few feet in front of the onrushing square leg fielder. Even by Shakib's standards, this was irresponsible batting. While his previous exhibitions of recklessness were batted away by coach Chandika Hathurusingha or captain Mushfiquir Rahim, Samaraweera, when asked how he saw Shakib's 'little

cameo', at first struggled for words while smiling ruefully, shook his head and said all that he could say.

"I don't have words, honestly. I have run out of ideas honestly."

He also rubbished notions of playing the 'natural game', a favoured refuge of Bangladesh batsmen when they get out in a manner not befitting the match situation.

"You can play a natural game but you have to be aware of what the opposition is doing. That is cricket. You can't play every day like your natural game. It is not like one-day cricket; in five-day cricket, mentally you have to be strong."

Soumya Sarkar had scored his third successive half-century and gotten out without taking it further for the third successive time.

"If you are batting in the top five, you have to score hundreds. If you are happy with 50s, that is not enough," said Samaraweera. "Honestly I am out of ideas, the same thing happens every time."

After some of the answers, Samaraweera did revert to press-conference speak: "Hopefully the next two, three guys can get close to the Sri Lanka score or we can get a 50-run lead."

For the only time in the presser, the Bangladesh coach did not seem to believe what he was saying.



Bangladesh opener Soumya Sarkar scored a patient 121-ball 61 but, like most of the players who got a start, failed to convert it into a big score on the second day of the second Test against Sri Lanka in Colombo yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP



## Mushy goes on the defensive

SPORTS REPORTER from Colombo



Amid trying to solve the puzzle of why exactly the batsmen would play shots which lead to what has now become a grimly inevitable collapse late in the day for Bangladesh, thoughts turned to the morning session when Sri Lanka added 100 runs for the last three wickets after resuming the day on a shaky 238 for seven.

Bangladesh began well enough, stringing together dot balls and giving little away, playing on the Sri Lankans' patience. Rangana Herath was caught at slip off a faster ball from Shakib Al Hasan that the left-hander was late in going forward to, and things seemed to be going according to plan with Sri Lanka at 250 for eight. Dinesh Chandimal, however, changed gears after Herath's dismissal and hit two boundaries in successive overs by Subashis Roy and Shakib to reach 99, and that was it for the old plan.

Shakib bowled well to keep Chandimal on 99 for the last four balls of 94th over, but once he scored his eighth Test ton in the next over with a single off Taijul Islam, an invisible switch seemed to have flicked in Mushfiquir Rahim's mind. Sri Lanka were just 261 for eight and Chandimal, as well as he batted, had offered enough opportunities in his innings with sometimes the rub of the green going his way.

But a regress into old habits for Bangladesh began with Chandimal's turn to aggression as he was allowed easy runs in the company of Suranga Lakmal, a batsman with a highest Test score of 31 before this innings and a Test average below nine. Mushfiquir placed point and deep square leg back on the fence even though memories must still have been fresh about the first of those two fielders drying up a lot of runs around 24 hours ago. Soon, with the spinners operating, the only fielders not on the boundary were at slip, short leg and short midwicket when Chandimal was batting during the first four balls of the over.

It also became obvious that the farming of strike by Chandimal was more to attack the bowling than protect Lakmal, who was not really being given the tailender treatment by Mushfiquir. In their 55-run partnership -- Sri Lanka's highest for the ninth wicket against Bangladesh --



Chandimal faced 70 balls for 48 with six fours while Lakmal faced 19 balls for seven. What those stats tell you is that Chandimal was certainly not blasting bowlers to all corners, he was choosing the balls to hit boundaries off. When he did get out, it was not because of any pressure built but because it was the last ball of the over and Mushfiquir had brought the field up to save the single.

That was not the end of the Lankan revival however as Lakmal had grown in confidence. Even after Chandimal got out Lakmal was given the batsman treatment with long on kept back for singles.

Last man Lakshan Sandakan was then dropped off Mehedi Hasan Miraz in the 110th over at short midwicket by Mustafizur Rahman, but why Mustafizur was stationed there is the question when he could have been at a less crucial position -- short fine leg or the sweeper positioned on the leg side. Incidentally, Mushfiquir swapped his position with Mosaddek, the sweeper on the leg side, immediately after the drop -- a perfect metaphor for a captain reacting to events rather than dictating them, a position that he was in but ceded as the morning wore on.



Sri Lanka spinner Lakshan Sandakan (C) took three wickets, including two in two balls, as the home side wrest back the initiative from Bangladesh at the fag end of the second day in Colombo yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

## My best innings: Chandimal

SPORTS REPORTER from Colombo



As recently as the Galle Test match that started on March 7, Dinesh Chandimal was in trouble having gone eight innings without a half-century, a streak he broke in the second innings of the aforementioned Test. After that turn in fortune against his favourite opposition, he hit 138 across the first two days of the Colombo Test to bail his side out of trouble and to relative safety -- an innings he described as the best of his eight centuries in Test cricket.

"I rate this as my number one century in Test cricket so far, because I batted four sessions -- I never batted four sessions in my Test career. I rate this one at the top," said Chandimal after the second day of the Test at the P Sara Oval ended with a Bangladesh collapse that left the visitors trailing by 124 runs with five wickets in hand.

"We were in a tough spot with three wickets down for 30-odd," said Chandimal. "I had a responsibility at the time to think about how I could take the team beyond 250. The pitch was a bit tough at the time. I

thought about how to take the single and get to the other end. I also thought about how to score off the lengths they were bowling. It was a good innings."

Bangladesh's batting was in marked contrast to the qualities Chandimal displayed during his 300-ball innings. The tourists lost three wickets in seven balls for six runs as part of a chaotic 20 minutes at the end of the day.

"They played really well till the last half an hour. We stayed in the game and tried to get one or two wickets," said Chandimal when asked whether he was surprised by Bangladesh's collapse, before he added that the P Sara pitch was better than it was on the first day. "Yes, it was better than yesterday, but the thing is, the Bangladeshi players are trying to play shots, so that's the difference. Still the pitch is dry. Hopefully it will get more turn tomorrow."

"How we play tomorrow morning is very important. If we can get one of these two batsmen out [Shakib Al Hasan and Mushfiquir Rahim], we can get a lead of about 100. I think if we have a lead of about 350 going into the last innings, we will be protected from defeat. We can push for a win from there."

## Premier Div B'Ball Gregarious keep going

SPORTS REPORTER

The Gregarious notched up a massive 94-29 win over Bakshi Bazar in the UniMed and UniHealth Premier Division Basketball League at the Dhanmondi Basketball Gymnasium yesterday.

Gregarious controlled the first-half comfortably with a lead of 42-15 points. Mahin and Sajid caged 37 and 20 points apiece for Gregarious while Farhan and Tahrir scored nine and eights respectively for Bakshi Bazar.

In the day's other matches, Dhumketu Club handed a 94-59 defeat to Eagles Club after dominating the first half 45-30. Tareq top scored for Dhumketu with 35 points while teammate Sajid scored 22. Meanwhile Flame Boys defeated Old DOHS 70-43 where Aumit scored 19 for Flame boys as Johnson tallied 13 for Old DOHS.

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## PERFORMER OF THE DAY DINESH CHANDIMAL



board was 77 runs richer by the time he was dismissed. The classy right-hander had rebuilt the innings first with Rangana Herath and then had a vital 55-run stand with number ten Suranga Lakmal. He finally departed for 138, but not before showing the visitors the value of a wicket and also how to recover from the brink of disaster. His measured play seemed to have rubbed off, with Lakmal and Lakshan Sandakan adding a further 33 runs to the total.

## MOMENTS

SPORTS REPORTER from Colombo

### IMRUL CAN'T CATCH A BREAK

Things have not been so great for Imrul Kayes of late. He picked up an injury while batting well in Wellington in January, and an aggravation of that injury kept him out of Bangladesh's maiden Test in India in February. While he was away, Soumya Sarkar usurped his opening position with a good performance in India and twin 50s in Galle. Then, late

Wednesday evening, he must have thought that his comeback was doomed when he was dealt a painful blow on his toe while fielding on short leg. He hobbled off the field, but was back on the field yesterday morning, but not in the high-risk short-leg position.

Soon, however, he bit the bullet, put on the lid and crouched in position, probably thinking that he couldn't possibly be so unlucky to be hit again. But in the 111th over, tailender Lakshan Sandaka of all people, whipped a ball off his pads and struck Imrul just where the shin guard gave way to flesh. Maybe that is when he thought 'the gods must be crazy', and followed the example set by the deities when he batted.

### HATTRICKS DON'T BOTHER SHAKIB

Imrul, after getting a life on 25, was not satisfied with his slice of fortune. With less than four overs to go he tried to pull a ball not short enough from Sandakan, a bowler whose googlies Bangladesh's batsmen cannot read to save their lives, and was trapped in front. Nightwatchman Taijul Islam was trapped in front off the next ball, and Shakib Al Hasan strode out to face the hat-trick ball. He can't read Sandakan, as proved by his dismissals in Galle, and hit the hat-trick ball, on one knee, with a horizontal bat to the midwicket boundary.

That set the tone and Shakib went on to prove, in the short time that he had, that neither hat-trick balls nor match situations bother him. That he survived the eight balls he faced was probably not part of the plan.