

# SPORT

## MOMENTS

SPORTS REPORTER  
 from Colombo

### ASELA ONCE AGAIN

Soumya Sarkar was batting like a man possessed. Starting from the fifth ball of the fourth over and till the fourth ball of the seventh, he hit two sixes and three boundaries while scoring 29 runs in eight balls. Sri Lanka skipper Upul Tharanga was at a loss. His trump card Lasith Malinga was supposed to be the man to stop Soumya in his tracks. But he was dispatched for two boundaries in the seventh over. Then, maybe Tharanga remembered he had another trump card at the opposite end of the spectrum -- Asela Gunaratne, one of the slowest off-spinners with a long run-up who for inexplicable reasons had caused Soumya a world of problems in the Tests. Well, not quite inexplicable -- off the first ball Soumya faced off him, Soumya played too early -- as if you could be late against Gunaratne -- and offered a simple return catch.

### SHAKIB'S TWIN LIVES

One of the enduring memories of this tour will be Shakib Al Hasan's batting on the second evening of the P Sara Oval Test, when caution was desperately called for but he went hell for leather, survived a dropped chance, to go to stumps on an eight-ball 18. It was an innings worthy of censure, but yesterday in the 10th over of a T20 innings, he was well within his rights to do a repeat. And just like in the Test, he was lucky to survive. He hit Seekkuge Prasanna to square leg and a valiant effort to catch a powerful hit just ended up conceding four runs. Shakib then pulled fiercely to the midwicket boundary but in an attempt to repeat the stroke was lucky again as the midwicket fielder dropped a high chance that died on him as he ran nearly 30 yards. At the end of the over, Shakib was on 13 off eight -- not quite up to Test standards.

### THE WRONG KIND OF GOLDEN END

Mashrafe Bin Mortaza strode out in the 19th over after Lasith Malinga had taken out Mushfiqur Rahim's stumps. This was Mashrafe's last innings and he must have been thinking of hitting some of the big sixes he is known for. But that was not to be as a yorker first ball took out his stumps for a golden duck. But what seemed an unwanted end soon became a distinguished one. Debutant Mehedi Hasan Miraz was trapped in front off a slower ball. And Mashrafe became the middle victim in Malinga's fourth international hat-trick.



PHOTO: AFP

## THANK YOU!

Bangladesh captain Mashrafe Bin Mortaza reaches out to the heavens after what was his last T20 international at the R Premadasa Stadium in Colombo yesterday. It was a fulfilling end for the charismatic cricketer as he signed off with a 45-run win against Sri Lanka. This is a game he will fondly remember not for his own performance but for the way his teammates responded in every aspect of the game to ensure a fitting send off to their inspirational leader.

# 'Will remember this match as long as I live'

SAKEB SUBHAN from Colombo

Last night, after Bangladesh won the second T20I against Sri Lanka, something unusual happened. Shakib Al Hasan went to the press conference after the post-match presentation ceremony. And while Shakib is always a welcome speaker, as when in the mood he provides great insight like he did yesterday, there was still the yearning to hear from Mashrafe Bin Mortaza, the captain who was walking away from the format with head held high.

Mashrafe, after the ceremonies, walked over to Australian commentator to do a television interview for the official broadcaster. But when the interview ended Mashrafe acquiesced to the request of some press men from Bangladesh for a few words, even though he was tired after a long day's work and must have been spent emotionally at officially walking away from the format, with only ODIs remaining in his Bangladesh career.

"I believe that my career has come this far for the supporters," said Mashrafe, who patiently agreed to take selfies with the few Bangladeshi supporters who flocked to him when the television interviews were over. "It was their prayers, their love that never let me go too far from the game. No matter how severe the injury, these thoughts were always on my mind.

"I am not completely gone yet; I will play ODIs," he added with a smile. "This is of course a matter of pride for me. I feel good that Bangladesh have won. I will always remember this last match as long as I live; that in my last match Bangladesh won, and I was the captain."

As it has always been with Mashrafe, he spoke from the heart and admitted to a feeling of emptiness during yesterday's match. "I was feeling a little restless. It was okay when I went out to toss, but there was a bit of discomfort when I went out to bat; maybe because it was my last match.

"Some of them cried," Mashrafe said when asked how the emotions among the team were in the lead-up to yesterday's match. "What happened was instead of express-

ing my emotions I had to console them. I had to make them understand. Everyone has their emotions. But no one will feel worse than I do or my family does. I am saying this to everyone, shedding tears for me is a big thing for me."

There was the obvious question of whether there were some ill feelings behind the scenes that led him to the decision to retire, and that was the only time that Mashrafe was a little stern. "I said that day too, let us please not bring these issues up and try to create controversies. We are all Bangladeshis, and we all want the country's cricket team to do well, let us all pray for that."

In yesterday's match, Shakib Al Hasan, who according to Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) president Nazmul Hassan is the likeliest candidate to take over from Mashrafe, was running a lot of the show. Shakib was at times seen talking with the bowler and changing the field -- it looked like a changing of the guard.

"When Shakib is active, the job becomes much easier," Mashrafe said. "You will have seen this before too. It was the same in the World Cup match against India. Because Shakib was active, when I was fielding at fine leg, I did not have to run up to the bowler and discuss with him and change the field. As I said, at times I could not control myself, so Shakib being active made things easier."

With that and a few more words, the people's champion walked away for the last time in the shortest format.

# 'Most important to be representing Bangladesh'

SPORTS REPORTER from Colombo

It is now becoming quite routine that in a momentous victory, Shakib Al Hasan is one the best performers. He scored a century in Bangladesh's historic first Test win over Sri Lanka at the P Sara Oval in the country's 100th Test, and he scored a blistering 71 in Dambulla less than a week later to help Bangladesh take a lead in an ODI series against Sri Lanka for the first time. So it was fitting that he was the player of the match in Bangladesh's series-levelling win over Sri Lanka in the tour-ending T20I, a win made all the more important as it was the last T20I match of inspirational leader Mashrafe Bin Mortaza.

Ever since his retirement announcement during the toss before the first match on Tuesday, this was going to be a series about Mashrafe's farewell, and fortunately for Bangladesh, although it did not spur them to action immediately, it did bring about a change in fortunes with yesterday's 45-run thrashing, a win that ended a streak of nine losses in the format.

There was one extra spotlight on Shakib, as he had been anointed by Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) president Nazmul Hassan as the 'likeliest

candidate' to succeed Mashrafe.

"I don't know yet, actually," said Shakib when asked about his possible promotion. "I am not thinking about it, honestly. The next target for me is the Indian Premier League and to do well there. I don't even know when Bangladesh will next play T20Is."

About the thumping win, he said: "It is important because we hadn't won the last eight games. The Asia Cup was our last good tourna-

ment. It was a big challenge for us in this game, after losing the first game. This is a satisfying win."

A person who normally does not betray his emotions, Shakib had glowing words when asked if Mashrafe's exit made the match an emotional affair. "He is a special figure in the dressing room. Naturally everyone will miss him. We need support on and off the field, and there's no one more helpful than him. Nobody can play

forever, so I wish him all the very best in life. I would want him to continue in the ODI team for a long time, and take Bangladesh cricket forward.

"It was important to send off Mashrafe with a win, but what was more important was to represent Bangladesh. I think what you saw out there was an expression of that pride."

Earlier yesterday, the Bangladesh media had a meet with Sri Lanka legend Arjuna Ranatunga, who said that Bangladesh could win the 2023 World Cup. Shakib's words when made aware of that estimation by Sri Lanka's World Cup-winning captain was slightly uncharacteristic for the all-rounder, who usually keeps things close to his chest, while also reflecting the general mood of confidence in a team that has achieved the feat of drawing every series on a tough Sri Lanka tour.

"I think we have a very good chance in 2019 as well. The way we are improving, if we keep it up, I think we will have a very good chance. We lost to India in the 2015 World Cup. They played better than us in that game. Overall, if you look at our graph, we are doing well. We have some experienced, and young players who are performing really well. We are going in the right direction. I would fancy our team to do well in the 2019 World Cup. His [Ranatunga's] comment is a great

## QUICK SINGLES

The following are a few samples of stories that did not make the print edition. However, if they pique your interest, you can always read them online on The Daily Star website by simply scanning the QR codes

### Brazil top FIFA rankings for first time in 7 years

Five-times world champions Brazil have returned to what they will consider their rightful place at the top of the FIFA rankings for the first time in seven years.



### Hazard warns Chelsea of dangers

Chelsea playmaker Eden Hazard believes the club are inching ever closer towards the Premier League title but remains wary of getting too carried away as there are still plenty of points up for grabs.



### Morata helps Madrid keep Barca in check

Alvaro Morata scored twice as Real Madrid maintained a two-point lead over Barcelona at the top of La Liga by making light of Cristiano Ronaldo and Gareth Bale's absence in a 4-2 win at Leganes.



### Higuain brace takes Juve to final

Gonzalo Higuain scored twice on his old Napoli hunting ground to send Juventus into the Italian Cup final despite a 3-2 defeat to their bitter rivals.



### Hairy hitman: Bearded Messi reaches 50

Has Lionel Messi's beard taken the Barcelona star to another level? The numbers seem to suggest so!



### Desperate Djokovic seeks Davis Cup reboot

Novak Djokovic spearheads Serbia's bid to reach the Davis Cup semi-finals for the first time since 2013 and reboot a career which has stalled since his history-making



## PERFORMER OF THE DAY

### SHAKIB AL HASAN



Shakib Al Hasan didn't say a word over the last two days since Mashrafe Bin Mortaza announced his retirement from T20 cricket. But he gave his captain the best possible send-off with a virtuoso performance in the second T20I. He hit a 38, which was crucial as he didn't allow the Lankans

to seize the momentum as they did in the first match. He was even more devastating with the ball, removing both openers in successive overs that took the wind out of the hosts' sails. The magnificent all-rounder also struck again at a crucial stage, when Thisara Perera and Chamara Kapugedera were looking ominous. He fired a shrewd delivery which the left-hander missed to be stumped by Mushfiqur Rahim.