



## Widodo steals the opening show



The Bangladesh athletes attend a marchpast session surrounded by the colours and festivity of the opening ceremony of the Asian Games at the Gelora Bung Karno Stadium in Jakarta yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

ATIQUA ANAM from Jakarta



18th ASIAN GAMES  
Jakarta  
Palembang  
2018

The 18th Asian Games got off to a glorious start in the Indonesian capital of Jakarta yesterday amid national pride, calls for international camaraderie and a bit of theatrics, with the country's president Joko Widodo at the centre of the action.

With the motto 'Energy of Asia', and a show of unity in diversity, the second biggest multisport event in the world got underway in front of a festive crowd at the Gelora Bung Karno Stadium who were left to admire the authenticity and originality of the whole event, played before a verdant mountain and a full moon.

The show was dominated by the richness of Indonesian culture and geography, with a blend of their ancient and even mythical past, while the modern and the progressive forces that make this island nation what it is swept aside concerns about security and pollution.

The most exciting part of the show however, was the arrival of the president, which was as clever as it was intriguing, part visual, part surreal.

The 57-year-old president took a tour to the GBK stadium, but stopped his entourage midway through the procession. With armoured vehicles and security personnel in tow, it seemed that Widodo stepped out of the car and, in an almost Bollywood style, grabbed a racing bike and stormed through to the venue. While the action thus far was limited to only the giant screen, an actor in a president's attire, in person, did a round of the venue, still under a helmet, before disappearing into the dark, only to emerge through the gates of the VVIP box, to a huge acknowledgement from the crowd.

If that was a bit of political foreplay staged in front of his adoring people -- with a general election coming early next year -- there were more politically charged themes played out during the event, and it came in the form of the two Koreas marching together under a unification flag, again to a huge cheer from the crowd.

Two other prominent individuals, Indonesian business tycoon and chairman of the Games' organising committee Erick Thorir, and Olympic Council of Asia president Sheikh Ahmed Al Sabah, delivered their speeches before Widodo declared the games open, and the celebrations began.

## BCB aims to raise NCL standards

Four-day competition to begin in October

SPORTS REPORTER

The lack of competitiveness and below-par standards of the domestic first class competition -- the National Cricket League (NCL) -- has been a common feature of Bangladesh cricket for many years.

In the 18 years since getting Test status, Bangladesh's improvement in the longest version of cricket has not matched their progress in limited-overs and that has consistently led to the issues plaguing domestic first class competitions to be highlighted.

And once again after the debacle in the recently-concluded tour of West Indies -- where the visitors faced a humiliating two-match Test series defeat and registered their lowest total of 43 runs in Antigua -- the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) has yet again realised the need to improve the quality of first class competition.

Chief selector Minhajul Abedin informed that the board was willing to raise the standards of the NCL, pressing the issue of quality selec-

tion in the upcoming edition of the four-day competition, which will feature eight teams and is scheduled to start in the first week of October.

"We are working to ensure that this tournament is competitive and that the cricketers are serious about competition. We have a coordination meeting two or three weeks before the tournament starts. We will place a standard of selection. If we want to establish ourselves in Test cricket then there is no way other than having a standard domestic first-class tournament. Everyone involved in this tournament needs to contribute. I hope we will be able to start a good thing for the coming season of NCL," Minhajul told reporters at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

He added that the board was planning to provide technical assistance by offering physios and trainers and that it would also arrange a programme with first class cricketers ahead of the NCL.

"We have a lot of paid players in first class. We discussed criteria, system and fitness of the players and this will start from the first week of



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MINHAJUL ABEDIN,  
CHIEF SELECTOR

September. The target is to ensure that first class cricketers match or are near the fitness levels of national team cricketers. We are involving the fitness trainers and physios for this.

"We saw many cricketers in the High Performance squad faced injuries. This happens especially when the cricketers come to camps following a domestic season. The NCL is starting from the first week of October so we will have around a month to get first class cricketers in shape. I hope we will be able to set a standard from this," he said.

Minhajul also praised the Bangladesh A team's performance in Ireland, where the visitors finished the five-match one-day series 2-2 after the first match was abandoned due to rain. They also clinched the three-match T20 series 2-1.

The chief selector also pointed out a few names, such as Soumya Sarkar, Mohammad Mithun and Al Amin, who caught the selectors' attention with their performances in the difficult Irish conditions and added that it would help them prepare alternatives for the national side.

## Kohli revives India, falls short of century



India captain Virat Kohli plays a cover drive during the first day of the third Test against England at Trent Bridge yesterday. Kohli played a fine knock of 97 missing out on a deserved century by 3 runs.

PHOTO: REUTERS

AFP, Nottingham



India captain Virat Kohli fell three runs short of a hundred but had the satisfaction of leading an India batting revival on the first day of the third Test against England at Trent Bridge on Saturday.

At stumps India were 307 for six after losing the toss.

A day of fluctuating fortunes ended when James Anderson, England's all-time leading Test wicket-taker, struck with the new ball to have Hardik Pandya (18) caught by Jos Buttler at second slip.

That meant Anderson, who prior to this match had 60 Test wickets at Trent Bridge at just 18.95, had become only the second bowler after Sri Lanka's Muttiah Muralitharan to take 100 Test wickets against India.

Earlier India, sent into bat at 2-0 down in a five-match series on a ground renowned for aiding swing, were in trouble at 82 for three come lunch.

Chris Woakes took all those wickets en route to figures of three for 75 in 20 overs.

But a fourth-wicket partnership of 159 between Kohli (97) and vice-captain Ajinkya Rahane (81), that spanned more than 40 overs, revived India.

Unfortunately for India, neither batsman reached three figures with Kohli -- who made a brilliant first Test century in England in the series opener at Edgbaston -- dismissed when he edged an intended drive off an Adil Rashid leg-break to Ben Stokes at slip.

Much of the pre-match attention had been focused on Stokes, recalled just days after his acquittal on Tuesday by a court on an affray charge that stemmed from a fight outside a Bristol nightclub in September last year.

But until his catch to dismiss Kohli, it had been a frustrating day for Stokes, whose 15 wicketless overs cost 54 runs.

India were well-placed at 60 for none when Woakes took two wickets for one run in nine balls to remove both openers, with Shikhar Dhawan (35) caught at second slip before KL Rahul (23) was lbw.

And on the stroke of lunch, Cheteshwar Pujara hooked Woakes, man-of-the-match after scoring a maiden Test century in England's innings and 159-run win in the second Test at Lord's last week after replacing Stokes, straight to Rashid at long leg.

But Kohli, who on Friday had urged India "to stand up" was as good as his word, while showing no sign of the back trouble that hampered him at Lord's as he and Rahane treated an engrossed crowd to a traditional top-order Test partnership.

It was a fitting way for India to honour former captain Ajit Wadekar, whose death aged 77 was announced on Wednesday, as were the black armbands they wore in memory of the first India skipper to enjoy a Test series victory in England, back in 1971.

After tea, Rahane had moved on to 57 when Anderson just failed to hold what would have been a spectacular catch at backward point following a flashing edge off Woakes.

SCORES IN BRIEF

India: First innings 307 for 6 (Kohli 97, Rahane 81, Dhawan 35, Pant 22 not out; Woakes 3-45)

## Roy red-faced after injuring himself

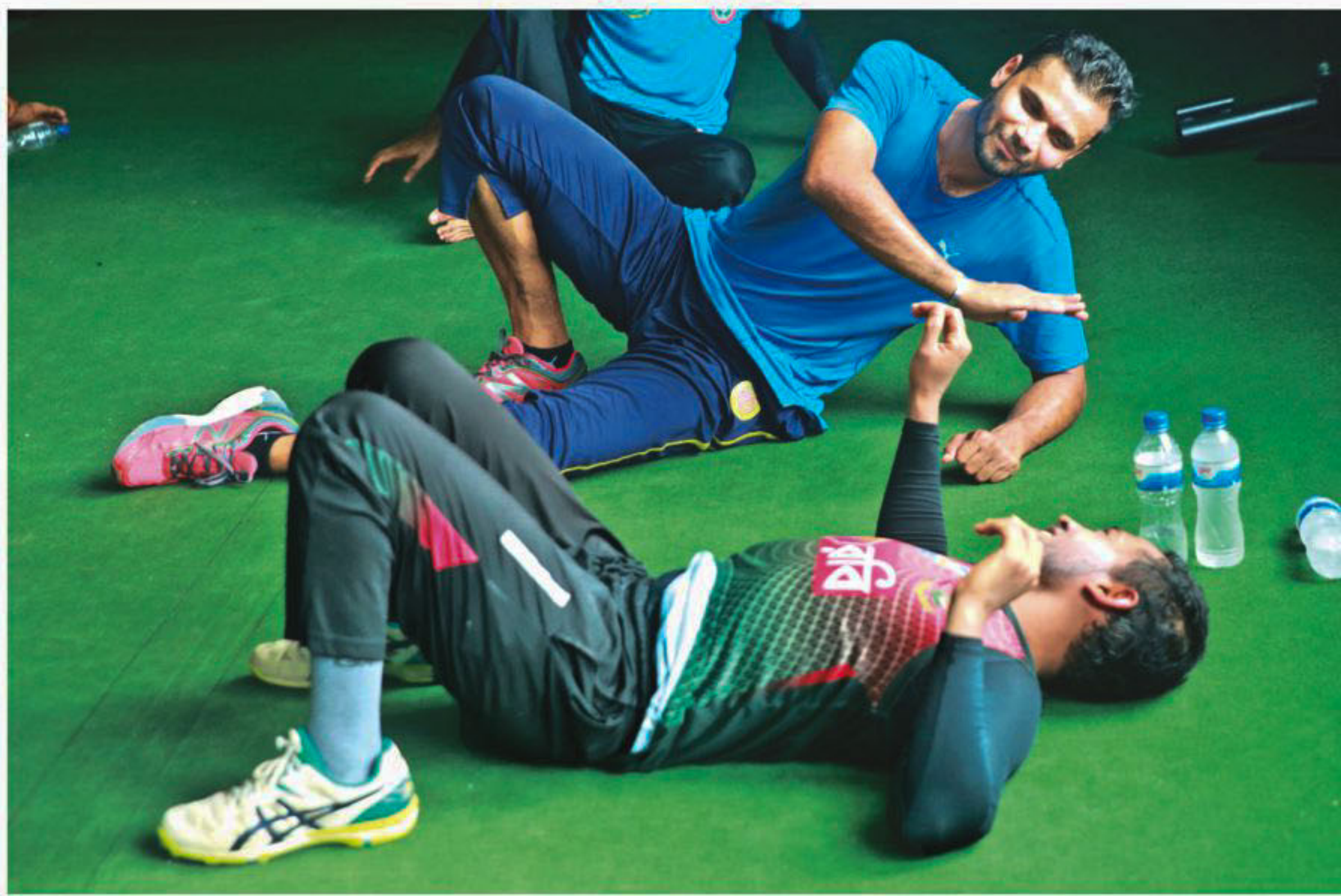
AGENCIES, London

England international Jason Roy said he was "extremely embarrassed" after suffering an injury when his bat, which he had thrown to the ground in frustration, bounced back and hit him in the face.

The 28-year-old was dismissed for a golden duck, bowled by Hampshire's 17-year-old Afghan spinner Mujeeb Ur Rahman, while playing for Surrey in a Twenty20 game on Wednesday.

"I'm extremely embarrassed and apologetic to my team mates and fans for this moment of stupidity," Roy said of the self-inflicted injury yesterday. "Following my dismissal on Wednesday evening, I threw my bat into the ground purely out of self-frustration. It bounced, hit me, and as a result I sustained the injury."

"I've never been so motivated and so positive about my game, and I assure you I will learn from my mistake as I am my own biggest critic."



## MASH BACK IN BUSINESS

The spirit that makes the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium a jovial environment, Bangladesh ODI skipper Mashrafe Bin Mortaza, returned to training yesterday after leading the Tigers to an ODI series win against West Indies recently. His impact on the Tigers' mood was immediate and here he is pictured shooting the breeze and inducing chuckles from Mushfiqur Rahim.

PHOTO: BCB