

## Will it be lucky again?

BISHWAJIT ROY from Bogra

Having buried their poor track record against Sri Lanka with a one-day victory at the Shaheed Chandu Stadium last month, Bangladesh want to make the newly ICC-approved stadium a happy hunting ground when they take on the tourists in the second and the final Test starting here today.

Bangladesh captain Habibul Bashar wanted to take inspiration from the ODI victory and improve their performance than the first Test in Chittagong, but he was also realistic about their chances.

"We left Bogra with a happy mood after our maiden one-day victory against Sri Lanka but you all know that Test match is much harder than the shorter version game. What actually inspires us is that our performance in Chittagong was not too bad," said the Bangladesh captain yesterday after their training session.

There was a lot of talking about the fragile second-innings batting in the first Test but the 33-year-old said there was no scope to concentrate only on this issue.

"We have to put on a healthy total in the first innings, otherwise there will be no chance for us to stay in contention. I think the first innings is very important for any team. We don't want to focus on just one area and our target is to show the improvement in every department," he explained.

Bashar said that a one-man show is not good enough to be competitive against a strong team like Sri Lanka.

"(Mohammad) Ashraful made hundred in the last match but unfortunately, our second highest score was not impressive. We should ensure

that at least three batsmen get big scores and then we could say that our batting has clicked."

Rather than thinking about a win or a draw, the Tigers' focus remained on making more improvements.

"We will not be unhappy if we show improvement than the previous game. We made some simple mistakes which turned out big in the end. We gave Sri Lanka tough time on the first two days and now we want to extend the period."

He also admitted that it is risky to go into the match with only two

pacers.

"Yes, it is risky because we will face a big problem if any of them breaks down. But we are used to play with four bowlers and I think we don't have a real back-up bowler we can rely on," he observed.

Defending the team's decision to retain Nafees Iqbal, he mentioned that it was not good of the opener to get out in both innings playing wild shots after he had looked confident early.

"We have just given him a message that we don't want him to throw out for playing bad shots. Actually,

we are looking for a settled opening pair that's why we don't want to replace him," he added.

### TEAMS

**BANGLADESH** (from): Habibul Bashar (captain), Khaled Mashud, Javed Omar, Nafees Iqbal, Mohammad Ashraful, Shahriar Nafees, Mushfiqur Rahim, Mohammad Rafique, Enamul Haque Jr, Shahadat Hossain, Syed Rasel and Rajin Saleh.

**SRI LANKA** (from): Mahela Jayawardene (captain), Kumar

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NOT IN HIS BEST BIB AND TUCKER: Bangladesh coach Dav Whatmore (L) wearing a vest is seen attending an official press conference with captain Habibul Bashar (R) at the Shaheed Chandu Stadium in Bogra on Tuesday.

PHOTO: AFP

## No rush for tickets

HASIBUR RAHMAN from Bogra

When the Shaheed Chandu Stadium hosted its maiden one-day international here two weeks ago, the 18,000-capacity venue was jam-packed to see Bangladesh and Sri Lanka play. Not only that, thousands of spectators were forced away from the stadium in spite of having valid tickets. But with the second Test starting today, organisers confirmed that only 300 tickets have been sold so far for the first day's play. The authorities have cited the SSC exam as the chief reason for such low ticket-sell as many of the cricket fans include school and college goers.

However, they are hoping of a better turnout on the day with the late inclusion of local boy Mushfiqur Rahim. The young prodigy, who made his debut at Lord's against England last year, will play only his second Test starting today.

Rahim's father Mahubul Hamid is excited with the news of his son's inclusion and said that the whole family will be there to cheer him.

"It is a great moment for us that my son is playing the Test at his home ground," said a delighted Hamid.

"I hope that he brings a cause for joy for us and the nation."

## BFF undecided about booters' Thai trip

SPORTS REPORTER

Hosts Bangladesh, who begin their AFC Challenge Cup campaign against Cambodia on the inaugural day of the 16-nation meet on April 1 in Dhaka, will play their remaining group matches against Guam and Palestine on April 3 and 5 respectively.

All three matches will be played at the Bangabandhu National Stadium.

However, the Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) has yet to ensure proper preparation for the home team, who have started training with 26 players. The preliminary camp concludes tomorrow.

Coach Diego Cruciani has wished to spend about two weeks in Thailand and play at least three preparation matches but the federation has not confirmed the trip so far. After getting the proposal from the National Team Management Committee, the BFF will sit today to discuss the issue. The BFF will have to spend at least Tk 8 lakh for the tour if the Thailand Football Association does not provide accommodation and food.

## Waqar named Pak bowling coach

PTI, Islamabad

Former Pakistan captain Waqar Younis will be the bowling coach of the country's national cricket team.

The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) bosses have agreed to appoint Younis as the bowling coach of the national team in order to utilise his experience and expertise before the side's Sri Lanka tour

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## Rahim under spotlight again

SPORTS REPORTER from Bogra



England last May.

The promising cricketer again came under spotlight on the eve of the Tigers' second Test against Sri Lanka in his hometown as he was chosen to play his second Test after

a nine-month gap.

But the team think-tank had to face a volley of questions about his inclusion and many raised questions that local pressure played the main role behind his selection in place of Alok Kapali, who was a bit unlucky in Chittagong.

"It is just a coincidence that he (Mushfiqur) is a local boy. We brought change because of team combination. There was no other thing behind the inclusion," said chief selector Faruque Ahmed, who skipped the press conference for the first time in the series but later

talked with the reporters.

Coach Dav Whatmore, however, highly praised Rahim's ability in the longer-version game although he has not played any first-class match for the last six months due to his commitment to the Bangladesh Under-19s.

"To be honest, his batting suites more to the longer version and I think he will be a useful contributor in Bangladesh cricket in future. We thought that he could be a strength at number six (batting position). He had a very good U-19 tour and played a lot of cricket in the last six months and its really nice to move into international cricket after watching with one game (in Chittagong)," explained the Australian coach.

Rahim had an experience of facing pacemen like Simon Jones and Steve Harmison but many found his weakness against spin bowling.

"I think playing at Lord's was probably a harder assignment than here. But still it's a test for him and it would not be an easy one," Whatmore added.

Whatmore said that it was difficult for them to drop Alok Kapali, who was considered as an all-rounder, from the squad.

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COME TO SEE ME TOMORROW: Mushfiqur Rahim leaves the ground after practice at the Shaheed Chandu Stadium on Tuesday.

PHOTO: STAR

## Heavy loss for BD women

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh women's football team conceded a huge 6-0 defeat to Kyrgyzstan in the Group 3 qualifier of the AFC Youth (Under-19) Women's Football Championship in New Delhi yesterday.

The winners, who went down to hosts India 7-0 in the group opener, led 5-0 at the break.

Bangladesh will face India in the last match tomorrow.



## Did U Know?

Twelve German cities will host the 2006 FIFA World Cup matches.



Michel Platini (UEFA vice-president) "(Francesco) Totti is one of those very few players in the world who can do something magical."

## Stage set for Murali

BISHWAJIT ROY from Bogra



As soon as Sri Lanka arrived at the Shaheed Chandu Stadium yesterday morning for training, Muttiah Muralidaran went straight into the middle to have a long look at the wicket.

But much to the bewilderment of the people present, the spin wizard who continued his mastery over Bangladesh taking nine wickets in the first Test, did not turn with his colleagues during their final practice session ahead of the second and final Test.

And a few inquisitive reporters, guessing wildly whether Muralidaran would play the match or not, were intrigued by a mysterious smile from Sri Lanka manager Michael Tissera.

They were however got the confirmation when Moody appeared at a briefing to announce that he has no plan to rest the champion bowler.

"No player is considered for rest.

You just can't drop a man who got his 1000th international wickets in the last game," said the witty former Australian all-rounder about his drawcard for success.

Muralidaran is just seven wickets shy of achieving a landmark of 600 Test wickets after Shane Warne.

The visitors will not only field a full-strength side but also issued a warning that they will come hard on the Tigers in the final Test to sweep the series after a 2-1 victory in the one-dayers.

Fresh from a convincing eight-wicket victory in Chittagong, Sri Lanka captain Mahela Jayawardene said that they have learnt the lesson from a four-wicket defeat in the second one-day match against Bangladesh at the same venue.

"It was a one-day game. If you don't play well on a particular day you lose the game. But Test match is a different ball game. Actually that's long gone and we have realised our mistakes," said Jayawardene.

"You saw we came back strongly in the last one-day in Chittagong

and then we had a very good first Test. We want to come really hard on Bangladesh here and want to make sure we put pressure from the very first ball," said a confident Jayawardene.

Muralidaran was the wrecker in chief in the second innings in Chittagong claiming six wickets but the Lankan skipper said that his pace bowlers also impressed him.

"On a flat wicket, they took nearly ten wickets which was not so easy. I am pretty happy with their efforts. You can't expect more from that kind of a track. There was not much bounce in Chittagong but every time given a chance, they got early breakthroughs," he explained.

Like the previous occasions, Sri Lanka decided to wait to see wicket in the morning of the match before naming the line-up.

"We saw a bit of moisture today. It looks different than the Chittagong wicket. During the one-day game, it cracked up considerably," said Moody about the pitch.

"You saw we came back strongly in the last one-day in Chittagong

## Lara vows a WI U-turn

Cricket

AFP, Auckland

West Indian batting legend Brian Lara says the beleaguered Caribbean side are ready to return to their winning ways in the Test series against New Zealand starting Thursday.

Lara, who missed the 4-1 one-day series loss against the hosts, also berated the critical New Zealand media for being "disrespectful towards a country that has a greater cricketing history than the present country we're playing."

The West Indies have lost eight of their last 11 Tests and drawn two but Lara said the side has some exciting new talent ready to make its presence felt in the three-Test series starting in Auckland.

"I sense that this three-Test series could be a turning point, and I sense within myself a desire to win," Test cricket's most prolific run scorer told journalists Tuesday.

"To leave New Zealand, to leave (the third Test in) Napier as winners of this Test series would be the greatest because I'm definitely not going to be back in New Zealand as a cricketer," the 36-year-old said.

"Just give me my bat...I want to get out there and play."



BRIAN LARA

extraordinary feats in a team which has faded from its glory days, has been stung by news reports on the New Zealand tour.

"I just feel that if you put up West Indies against New Zealand and you scroll down, you will see a country that has a greater cricketing history than New Zealand, and that's what really hurt me."

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## Ganguly hit for a six

AFP, New Delhi

Former India captain Sourav Ganguly's hopes of playing for India again were hit for a six during a domestic match, news reports said Tuesday.

The left-hander scratched around for 43 balls to make 17 for East Zone against Central Zone in a one-day match in Jaipur Monday, but worse was to follow for the beleaguered Ganguly.

Bowling the last delivery of the match with the rivals needing five runs to win, the medium-pace was smashed for a six over the cover region by rookie batsman Dishant Yagnik.

It reminded many of Pakistani great Javed Miandad's last-ball six against Indian seamer Chetan Sharma in the memorable Australasia Cup final in Sharjah in 1986.

A stunned Ganguly walked off the field and rushed to catch a flight to his hometown of Kolkata even as teammates awaited the next match in Jaipur on Thursday.

Ganguly's future had generated heated debate across cricket-mad India ever since he was sacked as captain and dumped from the team following a public spat with coach Greg Chappell in September.

Chappell wrote in an e-mail to Indian cricket chiefs that was subsequently leaked to the public that Ganguly was "unfit" to lead India and questioned his commitment to the team.

## Fletcher has faith in Fred

Cricket

AFP, Mohali

England coach Duncan Fletcher said Tuesday he hoped Ashes hero Andrew Flintoff would do well in the dual role of captain and all-rounder for the rest of the India tour.

Flintoff, who led his depleted side to a creditable draw in the opening Test at Nagpur, will stay as captain for the remaining two Tests and seven one-day internationals after Michael Vaughan had been ruled out due to a knee injury.

Vice-captain Marcus Trescothick, who flew home for personal reasons, is unlikely to return in time for the remaining Tests or one-dayers, Fletcher said.

"Fred (Flintoff's nickname), at this stage, will captain for the rest of the tour," said Fletcher ahead of the second Test starting here on Thursday.

"Just as an all-rounder he has a lot to do. Adding the captaincy could be -- you never know with the individual -- what he needs to step his game up to another level. We will only find that later on."

Fletcher said Flintoff had done an admirable job in his first Test as captain at Nagpur, where England looked the better side for much of the drawn game.

"There is a chance we might be asking a lot of him (Flintoff)," said the England coach.

"Considering the circumstances it was not an easy game. Being thrown in he had to grab hold of the reins straightaway, which he did. You can see immediately he is the guy who wants to lead from the front."

England lost three key players in the run-up to Nagpur -- Vaughan, Trescothick and fast bowler Simon Jones. And premier spin bowler Ashley Giles had failed to make the tour due to injury.

"There is a very good chance he (Trescothick) will not play in this Test series and probably a good chance he will not play in the one-dayers," Fletcher said of the opening batsman.

Jones, who had twisted his left knee before the Nagpur Test, was also unlikely to return.

"He will begin his rehabilitation programme this week. At this stage, it is unlikely he will be available for the one-day series," said Fletcher.

Flintoff, who led England in a practice game in Sri Lanka a few years ago, has scored 2,859 runs and taken 166 wickets in 57 Tests. In 98 one-dayers, he has 2,601 runs and 104 scalps.

England hardly missed their key

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England captain Andrew Flintoff hits a ball during a practice session at the PCA ground in Mohali on Tuesday.

PHOTO: AFP



**ESPN**  
Sportscentre  
Live at 8:30 pm  
New Zealand vs West Indies  
1st Test, Day One  
Live at 3:30 am (Thursday)

**STAR Sports**  
Bangladesh vs Sri Lanka  
2nd Test, Day One  
Live at 9:15 am  
UEFA Champions League  
Arsenal vs Real Madrid  
Live at 1:30 am (Thursday)



Bangladesh vs Sri Lanka  
2nd Test, Day One  
Venue: Shaheed Chandu Stadium, Bogra