



PHOTO: STAR  
ISOLATED! Bangladesh spinner Mohammad Rafique sits alone in front of the dressing room during the team's practice session at the Nondescript Cricket Club ground on Tuesday.

## 3-dayer starts today

Cricket

AL MUSABBIR SADI from Colombo

Bangladesh had little selection problems on the eve of their three-day practice match against Sri Lanka Development Squad which starts on Wednesday.

With skipper Habibul Bashar and injured Mashrafe Bin Mortuza and Mohammad Rafique unavailable, they have only 12 players for the game and coach Dav Whatmore wanted to use the opportunity to use all the players in the match at the Colts Cricket Club ground.

"We have only 12 players and will pick the eleven tomorrow. But I have

talked with Tom Moody (the Sri Lankan coach) so that we are permitted to use all the 12 players. We are still waiting for their decision," Whatmore said after Tuesday's practice session at the NCC ground.

Vice-captain Khaled Mashud, who will lead the side, thought it was an opportunity for the new guys, who have joined after the one-day series, to get used to the condition.

"The heat and humidity take toll on the players who get tired fast in this part of the world. The sweating is unbearable for even those who have come here 10-11 days before," the wicketkeeper said.

"We are mentally tired as well as physically. When you are not performing well, your physical condition also

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## Bashar might fly to Lanka today

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh captain Habibul Bashar is expected to leave Dhaka today to re-join the team in Sri Lanka.

The 33-year-old skipper, who had returned home Monday to be his ailing mother's bedside, cut short his week-long compassionate leave and is likely to fly for Colombo provided her condition is satisfactory.

"My mother condition is fine now and she will undergo an angiogram tomorrow morning. I'm ready to fly out tomorrow but everything will depend on her condition," said Bashar yesterday.

"I will miss the three-day warm-up game that starts tomorrow but I

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## Rafique again

Cricket

AL MUSABBIR SADI from Colombo

With the one-day whitewash still haunting and the injury list growing with every passing day, the Bangladesh cricket team suffered another shattering blow during their Tuesday's training session when Mohammad Rafique and coach Dav Whatmore were engaged in a brawl.

The uncalled for incident took place in front of some young Sri Lankan cricketers, who were invited as net bowlers, and journalists at the Nondescript Cricket Club ground after the ace spinner arrogantly blamed that team physio Paul Close was not taking proper care of his injury.

Rafique, who was hit on the right knee during the third and final one-day against Sri Lanka, was supposed to train on Tuesday. Instead he was resting at the team hotel before he was summoned to the ground. Having waited in the stands for about a couple of hours, he came to the practice area and Whatmore asked him why he had not joined training. At one stage, both Whatmore and Rafique were at the top of their voice before Rafique left the ground fuming.

Manager MA Latif and stand-in captain Khaled Mashud were also present when the ugly episode took place.

The incident stunned everybody and Rafique, who has developed

the peculiar habit of creating a scene on every tour, later admitted that he could not control his temper while complaining about the 'non-chalel' attitude of Close.

"He gave me some painkillers and told me to wrap a bandage on my knee this morning. He just visited me casually in my room," the left-arm spinner told.

Rafique also claimed that since the pain was not going away, he went to an orthopaedist who prescribed some medicines but Close ignored those.

But Close refuted Rafique's allegation saying that he was closely monitoring his condition regularly.

"Rafique told me that he had a fracture on his right kneecap in 2003. On match day, I gave him ice therapy and next morning we sent him for an X-ray. Dav and I then went to him to explain that it was only a bruise. I told him to rest and gave medication. Today he was not 100 per cent fit, may be just good for walking."

Asked if Rafique was not fit then why he was called into the ground and was kept waiting for so long in the dressing room Close said: "He was waiting to meet Dav and me. Resting always does not mean that you have to lie down on bed. Being with the team also helps. He was resting but it was active rest."

Regarding the orthopaedist's prescription, he said that he would

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## Abahani blaze

SPORTS REPORTER



Ghanaian striker Ibrahim slammed a hat-trick as Abahani routed Youngmens Club 6-1 goals to finish their Premier Division League campaign in style on Tuesday.

The thrashing victory also brightened their chances of finishing as runners-up. The Sky Blues will now desperately hope for a result in Friday's potential title decider between Brothers Union and Mohammedan Sporting Club as that will give them a chance to meet the losers in a play-off for the second position.

Abahani ended the league with 38 points from 18 matches which puts them level with the two title aspirants.

After a disappointing first-leg, Abahani started the second phase with two consecutive draws against Arambagh and Farashganj. But since then, they hit a purple patch and beat all the title contenders along the way and had even opened up a three-horse race for the league championship at one stage.

On Tuesday, already relegated Youngmens (12 points from 18 matches) were outclassed from the word go.

Ibrahim struck in the 42nd, 45th and 58th minutes to complete the

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## Tri-series goes to NZ

Cricket

REUTERS, Harare

Opener Nathan Astle struck an unbeaten 115 to guide New Zealand to a six-wicket victory over India in the final of a one-day international triangular series at Harare Sports Club on Tuesday.

Astle, who shared in a blistering opening stand of 121 with captain Stephen Fleming (61), anchored New Zealand's total of 278 for four from 48.1 overs in reply to India's respectable 276 all out.

Mohammad Kaif top-scored for India with 93 not out, completing his 14th fifty in one-day internationals to revive the Indian batting after they

had wasted a good start with a mid-innings wobble.

Astle and Fleming cut loose in the opening overs of New Zealand's reply, reaching 50 from 30 balls and hammering 12 boundaries in the first six overs.

They dominated the Indian pace bowlers, with Fleming racing to a his fifty off just 51 balls with nine fours, most of them beautifully struck down the ground.

India captain Sourav Ganguly looked to his spin bowlers to make the breakthrough and Virender Sehwag duly obliged, inducing a return catch from Fleming on 61.

Four balls later, Hamish Marshall was dismissed leg before wicket for three as he pushed forward to the occasional off spinner.

Astle and Scott Styris put on 58 for the third wicket before Styris was stumped off Sehwag for 37 in the 33rd over and Craig McMillan departed soon after for 13.

However, Astle and Lou Vincent, with an unbeaten 33, upped the tempo as New Zealand reached the victory with 11 balls to spare.

### SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard of the Videocon Cup triangular one-day series between India and New Zealand in Harare on Tuesday:

<b>INDIA</b>	
Sehwag c Vincent b Vettori	75
Ganguly c Marshall b Oram	31
Kaif not out	93
Dravid lbw b Vettori	0
Yuvraj c Bond b Mills	20
Rao c McMillan b Oram	8
Dhoni lbw b Styris	11
Yadav c McCullum b Oram	0
Agarkar c Mills b Bond	6
Pathan c Vincent b Oram	10

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## Mashrafe may miss first Test

AL MUSABBIR SADI from Colombo

Mashrafe bin Mortuza's chances to play in the first Test against Sri Lanka looked remote as the back pain of the country's leading paceman got worse.

Team physio Paul Close was so uncertain about his future that he even hinted at a flight back home for Mashrafe.

"His progress has lowed down in the last few days. He is still feeling pain and we are disappointed," said Close here on Tuesday.

"We will have another bone scan tomorrow morning to have more information. There is a possibility he might return to practice or playing match.

"But we want him to bowl 100 per cent pain free. There is a possibility that might not happen before the first Test. If there is any problem we will not let him bowl. We will take the decision whether he will stay or go back after getting the report," said the Australian.

Mashrafe, who had an MRI a few days earlier, was due to have another scan on Tuesday at the Apollo Hospital but it could not be performed due to lack of an imported medicine that was yet to be released from the port.

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PHOTO: AFP  
LEADING FROM THE FRONT: New Zealand captain Stephen Fleming, who got his side off to a rollicking start, sets off for a single on way to scoring 61 in the tri-series final against India in Harare on Tuesday.