

## Sri Lanka here to win

SPORTS REPORTER



The past record might not speak for Bangladesh but Sri Lanka captain Mahela Jayawardene was not ready to take the Tigers lightly in the three-match one-day and the two-match Test series as he believes that Habibul Bashar's men can beat anybody on their day.

Following four month's grueling action in India, New Zealand and Australia, the exhausted 15-member Sri Lankan one-day squad which took a very short break at home on way to Bangladesh, arrived in the capital on Friday. They just had the time to have lunch and talk to the press at the Zia International Airport before boarding a bus for Bogra where they will play the first two one-day matches on February 20 and 22 at the newly approved Shaheed Chandu Stadium.

Bangladesh have a very poor record against the islanders and lost both the Test and one-day

series badly in Sri Lanka in August-September last year but Jayawardene, who has replaced Marvan Atapattu as captain for this series, termed Bangladesh as a competitive side.

"No doubt Bangladesh are improving at this level. We are not taking Bangladesh lightly as we know that they can beat anybody on their day. They have proved it in England by beating Australia," said Jayawardene at a chaotic press conference.

"We have played them for quite sometime in Sri Lanka but not so much here (in Bangladesh). Every time we played them they were very competitive. They might be inconsistent but you know Bangladesh are a very good young side and they have some talented players," the soft-spoken batsman added.

He also said that playing in home grounds is always an advantage and Bangladesh are also no exception.

"Bangladesh have won at least one match in their last two home series. Sides playing at home get extra advantage because they are very aware of the conditions. That's

why it is a challenge for the others," he said adding that it was news for him that both teams will play at new venues.

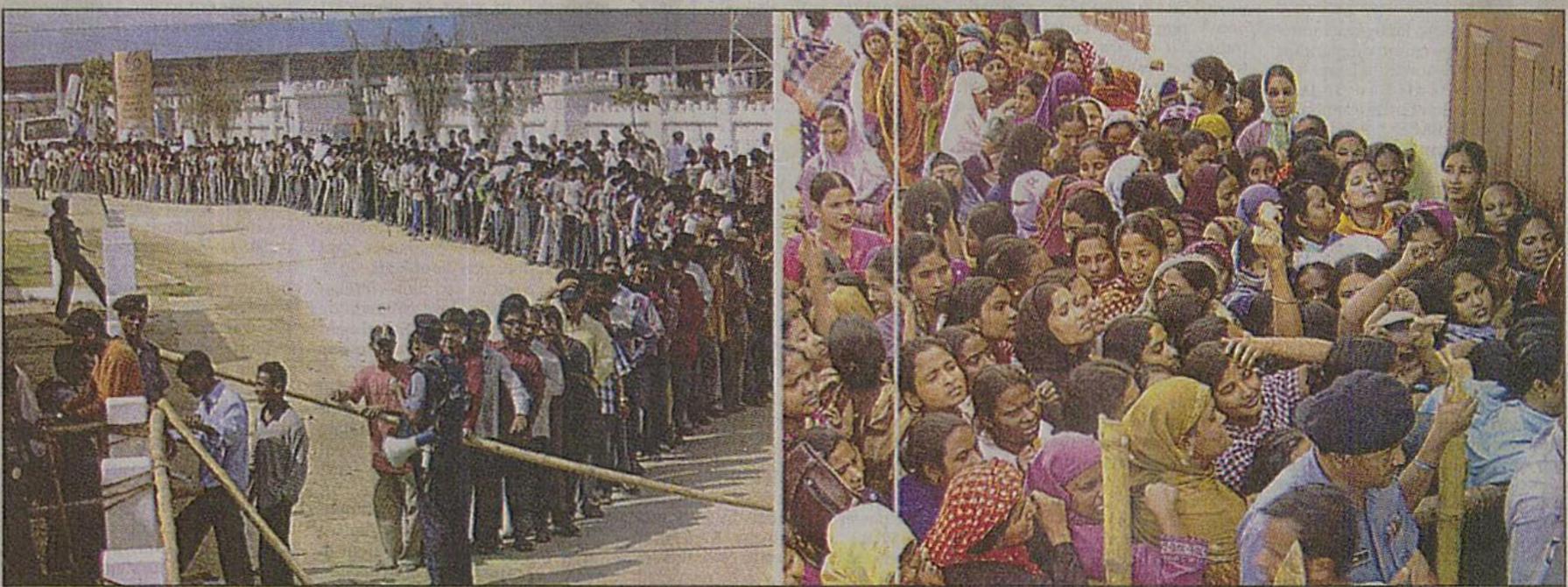
The 28-year old Sri Lankan, a veteran of 74 Tests and 207 ODIs, however, was buzzing on their performance in Australia during the VB Series.

"There were a lot of positive things for us and we can take inspiration from the series. We pushed Australia to the wire as we not only reached the final but also took it to the last game. It was not so common for other teams for quite sometime. We showed that we are a very competitive side. We are very pleased what we achieved this against the world's number one team," said the confident Sri Lanka captain.

He said that the absence of some senior players -- Atapattu and frontline bowlers Chaminda Vaas and Muttiah Muralitharan -- created the opportunity to give the young players valuable international exposure.

"We are looking forward to win

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(L) Long queue at the Bogra Stadium swimming pool counter while (R) women crowd for tickets at the District Council office on Friday, but thousands went home frustrated as all 27,000 tickets to bring normalcy in ticket selling.

PHOTOS: STAR

## Ponting against Bangladesh, too

CRICINFO, undated

Ricky Ponting has set the cat among the pigeons ahead of Australia's tour to Bangladesh by calling for Bangladesh to be stripped of its Test status.

In an interview with London's Daily Telegraph Ponting said: "What I would not have is the minnow nations in the World Cup and the Champions Trophy, and I would not have Bangladesh and Zimbabwe playing Tests at present."

Interestingly, yesterday Cricket Australia (CA) issued a statement in support of Bangladesh playing Test cricket. "Test cricket needs to be about the best playing the best. There are some countries that are developing, and the way to develop is to play on a regular basis against the best countries in the world. Cricket Australia has bought into that process by sending the Australian team," a CA spokesman said.

However, despite not toeing the official line Ponting won't be reprimanded. Late last night CA indulged in damage control, getting Ponting to issue a more diplomatic statement.

PHOTO: STAR

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## Footballers leave for Uzbekistan today

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh national football team recorded a 5-0 win over an understrength Bangladeshi Navy yesterday in the only warm-up match ahead of their Asian Cup qualifiers Group F opener against Uzbekistan.

The team will leave Dhaka this afternoon by a Thai Airways flight for Tashkent for the February 22 match. An 18-member squad was announced last night with Asad, Siraji, Sony and Rintu being excluded from the preliminary squad of 22.

In spite of the big win, coach Diego Cruciani did not look a happy man to have Uzbekistan as their opponents in the first match of the group, also involving Qatar and Hong Kong.

With the temperature in the Uzbekistan capital near freezing point, Cruciani's boys will face two enemies, the eighth-ranked team in Asia and bitter cold.

"Uzbekistan are a very strong

team and miles ahead of us in all respects," the Argentine coach commented after the friendly against Navy at the Bangabandhu National Stadium.

"We have not had satisfactory preparation and the boys are still rusty due to lack of match practice," said the 41-year-old, who will not be allowed to sit at the bench during Bangladesh's matches against Uzbekistan and Hong Kong (March 1) in Dhaka for a provisional two-match ban.

The Asian Football Confederation has slapped the ban on Cruciani after he had made an attempt to assault Indian referee Reazul Haque during their first-leg pre-qualifying match against Pakistan in December last year.

"The cold is a big problem for us too and we have taken necessary precautions. I just hope my boys play well and our opponents don't."

"Our best chances are to produce a good game and deny them from a big win," added the usually jovial Cruciani, who is expected to

## New CEO to lift board's image

SPORTS REPORTER

New chief executive officer (CEO) of Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) Mahmudur Rahman has set a target to lift the image of the board, which he believes is not satisfactory.

"I have set four targets during my two-year tenure where improving the image of the board is the major one. I will try to set a positive image of the board, which I think is at falter following some bad incidents in recent time," said Rahman, who joined the office on Thursday.

"We have to bring the administrative structure under rules and regulation which would be another important task for me while tactical changes and expanding the brand name of Bangladesh cricket would be the other issues," said the new CEO, who replaced Zimbabwean Macky Dudhia, while he was receiving the Sri Lankan cricket team at the Zia International Airport yesterday.

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## Rajshahi in driving seat

ISPAHANI  
MIRZAPORE TEA  
7th National Cricket League

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh face off hosts Sri Lanka in the fifth-place play-off in the ICC U-19 World Cup at the Sinhalese Sports Club ground in Colombo today.

Mushfiq Rahim's boys, who had a disappointing exit from the quarterfinals, won the first play-off match against West Indies by four wickets while Sri Lanka handed an eight-wicket defeat to Zimbabwe.

Bangladesh enjoyed a good record against their Sri Lankan counterparts as they beat them thrice at home to clinch the tri-nation tournament at BKSP last year.



What to WATCH

ESPN

New Zealand vs West Indies  
First one-day international  
Live at 6:55 am

STAR Sports  
India vs Pakistan  
Hockey Test  
Live at 6:30 pm

FA Cup  
Bolton Wanderers vs West Ham  
Live at 8:55 pm

Newcastle United vs Southampton  
Live at 11:30 pm

PCB denies ICC concern over Shoaib's action

CRICINFO, undated

Shaharyar Khan, the Pakistan Cricket Board chairman, has denied that Shoaib Akhtar's action is being closely monitored once again by the ICC, following a maelstrom of rumour and speculation over the last week that suggested the fast bowler was under scrutiny. "The ICC has told me there is nothing against Shoaib because if there was it to come out and be reported to them," Shaharyar told Cricinfo. "No report has been received, nothing has been done and the status quo that his action is fine remains."

Since the second Test at Faisalabad, where Shoaib put in fiercely quick spells on the third afternoon and fourth morning, there have been whispers about ICC's concern with Shoaib's action. Cricinfo has learnt from

It's a wake-up call: Woolmer

Cricket

REUTERS, Karachi

Pakistan's one-day series defeat to India is the wake-up call the team needs, coach Bob Woolmer says.

After winning the Test series and the first one-day in Peshawar, Pakistan lost the next three games to surrender the series. The last match is scheduled for Sunday in Karachi.

"In a way it is good this has happened now. It allows us to identify the areas where we need to further improve on. It would not be ideal for us to face this situation closer to the next World Cup," Woolmer told Reuters in an interview.

"No one likes to lose but now we know what we have to do to lift

ourselves. One can try to put a finger on the areas we need to improve and we can start at Karachi."

"One thing we have to work on is how to quickly adapt to both test and one-day cricket in a short span of time. I think in this series we had too much focus on the Tests and didn't adapt quickly enough for the one-dayers."

Woolmer said he was heartened that Pakistan had stayed close to India in the one-day series despite being on the losing end.

"It's a case of us not grabbing the opportunities or not doing some basic things correctly."

Woolmer said the loss of form by key performers had also hurt Pakistan.

"You can accept players being out with injuries but it is different dealing with players who have

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## Nimbus wins Indian cricket's telecast rights

AFP, Mumbai

The Indian cricket board has awarded its global telecast rights to marketing company Nimbus for an enormous 612 million dollars for the next four years, a top official said Friday.

"We are proud to announce Nimbus from among eight bidders," Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) vice-president Lalit Modi told reporters in Mumbai.

Nimbus, who also won the television production rights last week, have secured satellite, radio and internet broadcast rights.

Nimbus chief Harish Thawani said he will announce the channel on which the matches will be shown on February 20.

"We secured a big amount because of the transparency we ensured and also because we did not bar any marketing or production company from making bids," added Modi, who heads the BCCI's marketing committee.

The telecast rights were to be sold more than a year ago but a dispute between Zee Telefilms and ESPN Star ended in court battles.

India are expected to host 23 Test matches and up to 56 one-dayers during the period, which starts with England's Test and one-day series.

The three-Test series begins March 1 in Nagpur with Mohali and Mumbai as the other venues. The first of seven one-dayers will be held in New Delhi on March 28.

## Eva going great guns

SPORTS REPORTER

Nazrana Khan Eva won her eighth round board against Mahmuda Haque Chowdhury on Friday to maintain her solo lead in the Camellia 27th National Women's Chess Championship.

Eva improved her tally to 6.5 points while International Woman Master Rani Hamid was in second place securing six points. Rani beat Arifa Khatoon.

In the other eighth round matches, Zakia beat Liza, Tamina drew with Nipa, Shimmi beat Shirin and Evana beat Masuda.

## NZ-WI first ODI today

Gentlemen's agreement: No super-sub

Cricket

AFP, Wellington

Cricket's controversial super-sub rule could find itself jettisoned for the first one-day international between New Zealand and West Indies here Saturday after the International Cricket Council ruled it wasn't working.

New Zealand captain Stephen Fleming has approached his counterpart Shivnarine Chanderpaul about scrapping the rule in a "gentlemen's agreement" for the first match in the five-game series.

The International Cricket Council decided on Wednesday that it would seek to overturn the rule from March 21, ending a year-long experiment.

But Fleming said Friday it was common sense to ban the super-sub now.

"I'm not sure how it would wash (with the match officials), but we have to look at the options," he said.

"It's very much common sense. If it did take place it seems strange, especially from the West Indies' point of view of learning how to play it and then having to scrap it doesn't make a lot of sense."

The original intention of the super-sub was to encourage greater use of all-rounders, but instead the rule's been skewed with specialists being used, giving teams who win the toss a greater advantage.

"It seems like a pretty unanimous view that it's flawed," Fleming said.

The New Zealand captain describes himself as a traditionalist who preferred to see "11 play 11" instead of using the extra man, but he was unsure whether they would be allowed to do it.

What New Zealand are certain of, however, is having a full squad to choose from for the day-nighter after winning the series opening Twenty20 match in Auckland.

After the scores were tied on 126, the Kiwis prevailed in a bowl-off to kickstart the tour with a win, but the West Indians were left sweating on the fitness of key allrounder Dwayne Bravo, who suffered a side strain at Eden Park, and batsman Ramnaresh Sarwan, who did not play due to a bout of flu at the match at Eden park.

Chanderpaul said a decision on Bravo would be left as late as possible and hoped Sarwan will recover in time for Saturday's match.

The West Indies enter the series following a miserable run of form with 13 losses from their last 15 fixtures to sit eighth on the ICC one-day championship ladder, above only Zimbabwe and

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Bangladesh coach Dav Whatmore watches his charges play volleyball during a practice session at the Shaheed Chandu Stadium in Bogra on Friday.

PHOTO: AFP