

## 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.

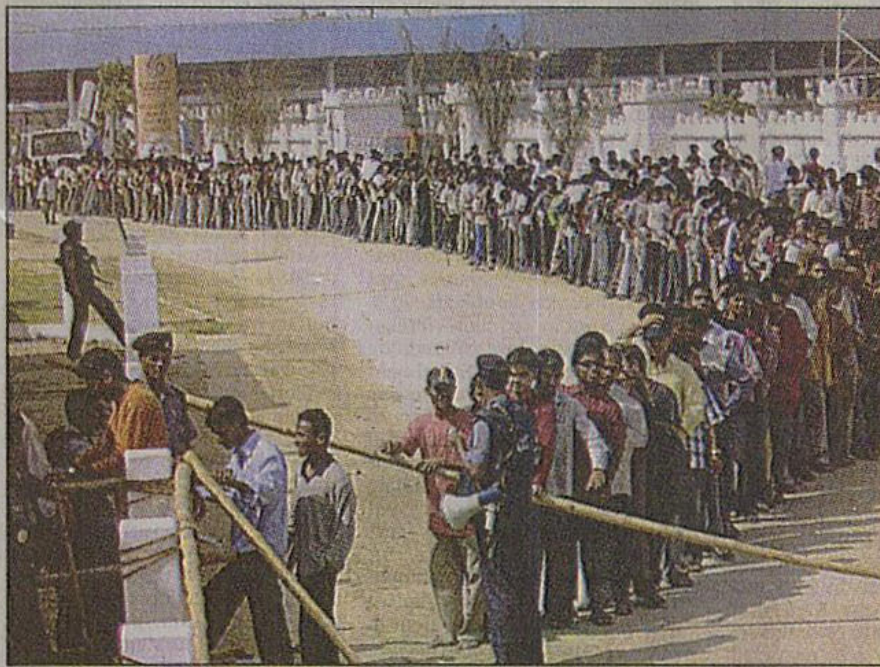
The 28-year old Sri Lankan, a veteran of 74 Tests and 207 ODIs, however, was buzzing on their performance in Australia during the VB Series.

"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 for the two ODIs between Bangladesh and Sri Lanka have been sold out. Situation got wild at one stage and the police had to charge baton. Eventually, Rab had to intervene and control angry mobs 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 minor 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 repudiated. Late last night CA indulged in damage control, getting Ponting to issue a more diplo

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## Footballers leave for Uzbekistan today

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Bangladesh national football team recorded a 5-0 win over an understrength Bangladesh 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 Assad, 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

pick a rather defensive strategy.

Cruciani, who has so far used a 4-3-1-2 formation with a free midfielder, will field two defensive midfielders -- captain Joy and Arman Aziz -- in a 4-4-2 starting lineup against Uzbekistan.

"Yes, we are going to rely more on counter attacks like today's game, where the players had to concentrate more on marking and blocking the opposition. I won't mind if we lose 1-2 or 0-2. I would still like to score a goal."

His first choice eleven led the match 1-0 at the break with playmaker Arman curling in a freekick from the left while the second set flourished against the tired sailors, who conceded an own goal through Imrul before Kanchan, Ujjal and Abul added one goal apiece.

"Lack of good strikers is my main problem. It was before and remains now. I am also a bit worried about the fitness level because it is not hundred per cent."

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## 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 Zimbabwian Macky Duthia, while he was receiving the Sri Lankan cricket team at the Zia International Airport yesterday.



PHOTO: STAR

Sri Lanka captain Mahela Jayawardene giving answers to reporters' queries as coach Tom Moody (C) looks on at the Zia International Airport on Friday.

## BD-SL U-19s play-off today

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.

Mushfiqur 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.



**ESPN**  
New Zealand vs West Indies  
First one-day international  
Live at 6:58 am  
**STAR Sports**  
India vs Pakistan  
Hockey Test  
Live at 6:36 pm  
**FA Cup**  
Bolton Wanderers vs West Ham  
Live at 8:55 pm  
Newcastle United vs Southampton  
Live at 11:30 pm

**7th Nat'l Cricket League**  
Four-Day Matches (Day Three)  
Dhaka vs Rajshahi  
Venue: Rajshahi Divisional Stadium  
Khulna vs Sylhet  
Venue: Khulna Divisional Stadium  
Barisal vs Chittagong  
Venue: Dhanmondi Cricket Stadium

## Rajshahi in driving seat

ISPAHANI  
MIRZAPORE TEA  
7th National Cricket League

SPORTS REPORTER

Having removed Dhaka from lead in the one-day competition, Rajshahi looked set to join their title rivals on top of the first-class table in the Ispahani Seventh National Cricket League as well.

Rajshahi, needing an outright win in the fifth round clash to take joint lead with Dhaka, posted a handsome 226-run lead with eight second-innings wickets intact at stumps on second day.

Sylhet also got into an almost invincible position when they decided not to force a follow-on on Khulna and stretched their lead to 325 runs with two days left in the four-dayer.

In the other match, skipper Ehsanul Haque's century propelled Chittagong to a massive first-innings total of 471 but Barisal came out with a solid reply, reach-

ing 84 without loss at close of play.

DHAKA-RAJSHAHI

Overnight 21-2, Dhaka skidded out for 177 in their first innings at the Rajshahi Divisional Stadium, conceding a 106-run lead. Most of the visiting batsmen got a start but failed to carry the innings as Rajshahi put the pressure with Farhad Hossain bagging 3-18 in just 4.5 overs.

Rajshahi lost opener Junaid for a duck in the fourth over but his in-form partner Jahurul Islam scored his second fifty of the match as the home side scored 120-2 in their second innings. Fresh from his 51 in the first innings, Jahurul made 60 off 117 balls and added 94 runs with Farhad (46 not out) for the second wicket.

SYLHET-KHULNA

Sylhet enjoyed the upper hand throughout the day at the Khulna Divisional Stadium as they shot out the hosts for a meagre 138 in the first innings in defence of their 360.

Resuming on 326-8, Sylhet's purpose to bat was served when

overnight batsman Rezaul Haque - who was 82 at stumps on Day One -- completed his century. Her was eventually dismissed for 105, made of 198 deliveries with ten fours and three sixes.

The visitors continued to dictate the terms as former national pacerman Hasibul Hossain tore apart the Khulna batting after national team's Tapash Baisya had made the inroad. Hasibul returned with an enviable figure of 5-20 from 12.5 overs as the local innings folded by the 40th over. Test left-arm spinner Enamul Haque Jr took 3-17 from eight overs.

Sylhet did not force a follow on and made 103-1 at close of play.

CHITTAGONG-BARISAL

At the Dhanmondi Cricket Stadium, Ehsanul scored 114 off 229 balls as Chittagong added 156 runs to their overnight 315-5. Ehsanul, who was 44 on Wednesday, struck 15 boundaries in his five-hour stay before being dismissed by left-arm spinner

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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 Khatun.

In the other eighth round matches, Zakia beat Liza, Tanima 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 by 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-out 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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PHOTO: AFP

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