

Tigers aim good show

Warm-up matches starts today

Cricket

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh will open their Sri Lanka tour today with a three-day warm-up match against Sri Lanka A team at the Colombo Colts ground.

Both the teams will be allowed to use 12 players with one only able to bowl and the Tigers have opted to rest key bowlers Mohammad Rafique and Mashrafe Bin Mortaza, also the vice-captain.

The young Mehrab Hossain, an opening batsman, will also be in the dressing room during the affair.

It means the visitors, who had a three-hour training session yesterday, will play two wicketkeepers in Khaled Mashud and Mushfiqur Rahim.

The squad for the warm-up match: Mohammad Ashraful, Shahriar Nafees, Javed Omer, Habibul Bashar, Shakib Al Hasan, Rajin Saleh, Khaled Mashud, Mushfiqur Rahim, Mohammad Sharif, Abdur Razzaq, Shahadat Hossain Rajib and Syed Rasel.

AFP adds: Bangladesh aim to improve their Test performance in the series against Sri Lanka, which gets underway in Colombo next week, new captain Mohammad Ashraful said on Monday.

"We want to improve our performance in the Tests after our recent good showing in the one-day matches," 22-year-old middle order batsman told reporters here at the official launch of the series.

The right-hander, who hit a debut century against Sri Lanka in 2001 to

become the youngest batsman to ever achieve the feat in Test cricket, said he was looking forward to the challenge of leading Bangladesh in the Test series.

"Results do not matter to us, we need improvement in Test cricket," he said.

Ashraful, who was named captain earlier this month, was the highest scorer for Bangladesh in the World Cup, hitting 83 balls for 87 runs to help lead his team to a stunning victory over South Africa.

Bangladesh have just a solitary win in 46 Tests since becoming a Test-playing nation in 2000.

Sri Lanka captain Mahela Jayawardene paid tribute to the improved standing of the Bangladeshis in world cricket.

"We all know how good they can be and how dangerous they can be especially after the World Cup. Our guys are keen to do well because

Test cricket is the ultimate challenge," Jayawardene said.

Sri Lanka plan to use the series to test a few younger players now that several seniors such as Sanath Jayasuriya and Marvan Atapattu are not available.

"It will be a great challenge to maintain our recent high standards. We need to groom a few younger players," the Sri Lanka captain said.

Jayasuriya is considered only for the one dayers and Marvan Atapattu who was picked for the Tests has made himself unavailable.

This should pave the way for Malinda Wamapura to open the batting with Upul Tharanga.

The three-match Test series begins on June 25, while the three-match one-day international series starts on July 20.



PHOTO: AFP

Bangladesh captain Mohammad Ashraful (L) and batsman Rajin Saleh stretch during a training session at the R Premadasa Stadium in Colombo on Tuesday.

Mohammedans battle today



SPORTS REPORTER

Mohammedan will be on a double mission of returning to winning ways in the B. League after two draws and erase memories of a frustrating trip to Chittagong in the first leg when the Dhaka giants host their counterpart from the port city today at the Bangabandhu National Stadium.

The two Mohammedans drew goalless in their meeting Chittagong in March but the status of the two namesakes have changed a lot in the last three months.

While the local black and whites managed to heal their wounds after a wretched start to finish mid season champions under guidance of

The port city side, who were fifth at the end of the first-leg table after not losing to any of the Dhaka heavyweights, have failed to repeat the same and lost to Abahani and Mukti Joddha in successive matches before resting in the last week.

It would be equally tough for them to bounce back in the race but Nazrul Islam Ledu's surprise package have an outside chance despite being five points behind their much illustrious Dhaka wing, who are on 23 points from 13 games, having played one match less.

The remaining contenders, however, have relatively easier draws in the 15th week starting today with Brothers hosting Arambagh in a Dhaka derby tomorrow and

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Shafiqul Islam Manik, Chittagong Mohammedan faded away following their impressive run early in the competition.

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Did U Know?



Shivnarine Chanderpaul of the West Indies scored 136 not out in the first innings of the fourth and final Test against England at Riverside Ground on June 16. It was his sixteenth century, second in successive innings against England.

Monty Panesar took five wickets, including West Indies marathon man Shivnarine Chanderpaul, as England neared victory in the fourth and final Test on the last day at Riverside here Tuesday.

At tea, England – looking to finish the series as 3-0 winners – were 24 for one, needing a further 86 runs to reach their victory target of 110.

Andrew Strauss was 10 not out and England captain Michael Vaughan five not out after Alastair Cook edged Daren Powell to Dwayne Bravo at second slip.

Earlier, left-arm spinner Panesar took five for 46, the sixth time he had taken five or more wickets in a Test innings, in West Indies' 222.

Chanderpaul, who had batted for over 17 hours since last being dismissed this series, was last man out for 70, bowled sweeping against Panesar.

The Guyanese left-hander ended the series with an average of 148.66 but rarely received the support his batting endurance deserved.

At lunch West Indies were 131 for four, a lead of just 18, with Chanderpaul 32 not out and all-rounder Bravo unbeaten on 19.

Bravo, not a naturally defensive player, decided to take the attack to England and when Panesar came on, in the seventh over after lunch, he lofted him back over his head for four.

But next ball, trying to drive Panesar down the ground, Bravo holed out to Ryan Sidebottom at mid-off.

Bravo's 43 featured nine boundaries and he put on 68 with Chanderpaul. But West Indies were now only 49 in front with five wickets left.

Their position worsened when Marlon Samuels (two) was undone by a sharply-spinning Panesar delivery and edged to Paul

Vaughan quits ODI captaincy

AFP, Chester-Le-Street

Michael Vaughan resigned as England's one-day captain with immediate effect here Monday.

But Vaughan, in a statement issued by the England and Wales Cricket Board after close of play on the fourth day of the fourth Test against the West Indies, said he would continue as a one-day international cricketer.

And the ECB also added he would remain England's Test captain.

Vaughan's successor as one-day captain will be announced when the squad for the two forthcoming Twenty20 matches and three limited overs internationals against the West Indies is named on Friday.

However, Vaughan indicated he might miss these matches while the new captain established his own authority over the team.

Vaughan, who has struggled to reproduce his Test form in one-day cricket, was England's captain at the recent World Cup in the Caribbean where they failed to qualify for the semifinals.

The 32-year-old Yorkshire batsman said: "I reached this decision some time ago. But due to intense speculation in the media about my future, I feel it is important to make

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Big challenge for Rahul

Cricket

BBC ONLINE, undated

On March 23, India's World Cup challenge ended. In July, India opens its tour of England. Ample time existed to find a new coach.

The BCCI's inability to do is further confirmation that no one in the Indian board knows, or seems to care, how to build a world-class team. As a group they remain unfamiliar with excellence.

John Buchanan told this writer after the World Cup that Indian cricket had the potential to be the "new Australia", that "India would just dominate world cricket for so long". Of course, only if it organised itself. But it is unlikely a team can turn itself into the best in the world if it constantly has to settle for second best in its preparation.

Travelling to England without a coach is not the best option. But the team may be relieved because it is

not the worst option. Which would have been selecting a coach in a hurry when Graham Ford refused the job. "No coach" is thus a make-shift solution, a bearable compromise. This is not a known route to greatness.

Not that he has been a failure, for dissections of his leadership reveal strong positives. He has won troubled times as captain and yet his batting has stayed mostly firm (56.61 as Test captain, 57.46 career; 45.12 as one-day captain, 40.11 career).

He has earned a Test series win in West Indies, managed a Test win in South Africa, showed he has his own mind in using five bowlers and opening with Kartik and fought mightily for Sehwag.

Among the errors in Rahul Dravid's first instalment as captain was allowing for the perception that Greg Chappell directed the team to flourish. In such matters, the truth is irrelevant. The coach was not absent of virtues, but if his major fault was talking too much, then the captain's was in failing to control him.

Dravid's intelligence, thoroughness and respect within the team led many to view him as a potentially excellent captain. He has not met those expectations yet.

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But Dravid also knows captains, like athletes, are only as good as their last games, and a failing World Cup, the final two unappetising Test performances in South Africa, and the slow leak of spirit from the team, all left an unappealing taste.

No doubt this team is not high on discipline and short on consistency, and some might argue SEE PAGE 18 COL 2



PHOTO: INTERNET

West Indies batsman Shivnarine Chanderpaul pulls one on his way to a fighting half-century during the final day of the final Test against England at Chester-Le-Street in Durham on Tuesday.

SAFF football on schedule

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) general secretary Anwarul Hoque Helal yesterday confirmed that the 5th SAFF Football Championship will be held on schedule this December.

For the first time in the history of the biennial event, which was last hosted by Pakistan in 2005, two nations – Sri Lanka and Maldives – will jointly organise the eight-team competition of South Asian region.

One group of four teams each will play in Colombo and Male in the December 10-22 meet.

Bangladesh, who won the 2003 championship at home, finished runners-up in Karachi 2005. The national team are expected to play in the Nehru Cup in India as part of preparation although the BFF has yet to appoint a new coach.

The BFF has also received an invitation to send a club to India's famous tournament Bardoli Trophy in Assam.



PHOTO: STAR
Anup of Brothers Union in action during his victory over Mariners' Aminur in their Senior Division Table Tennis League match at the Woodenfloor Gymnasium yesterday.