

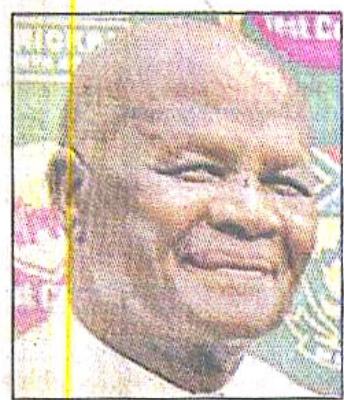


SAY CHEESE: Tigers all-rounder Forhad Reza (L) takes a picture of coach Jamie Siddons as Aftab Ahmed (2nd from L) looks on prior to their flight to New Zealand at the Zia International Airport yesterday.



Did U Know?

Ian Thorpe, former Australian freestyle swimmer, won five Olympic gold medals, the most won by any Australian.



Ray Mali
 (President of International Cricket Council)
 "This is great news for cricket. Our goal has been to become an international federation that is recognised by the International Olympic Committee and we are pleased to have achieved this target."
 After getting provisional recognition from the IOC.



TEN Sports

Sri Lanka v England
 Second Test, Day Five
 Live from 10:30am
 ESPN

Sportscentre India
 Sports News
 Live at 8:30pm

Solid start for Biman

SPORTS REPORTER

Defending champions Bangladesh Biman crossed a major hurdle on the opening day of the Metropolis First Division Chess League yesterday when they edged last year's runners-up Leonine Chess Club 2.5-1.5 in a tough first-round draw.

The star-studded Biman drew their first game as Grand Master Ziaur Rahman shared points with Leonine's Indian GM Neelotpal Das at the Bangladesh Chess Federation hall room.

Biman won their next two boards as GM Abdullah Al Rakib beat FM Khondoker Arminul Islam (C) during a reception hosted by Grameenphone, the cellular operator who sponsored the team's trip to Shanghai, at a local hotel yesterday.

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Ashraful focuses on ODIs



SPORTS REPORTER

Mohammad Ashraful's men flew out of Dhaka yesterday for New Zealand hoping to make a happy return in the New Year after playing good cricket in the demanding trip.

The 15-member one-day side left home in a cheerful mood with some top board officials and spouses of two cricketers turning out to see off the players at the Zia International Airport.

Ashraful however said that everything would depend on how they play the one-day series, which starts on the Boxing Day.

"Right at the moment we are only thinking on the one-day series as we know that we should do something in the one-day series if we want to impress in the two-match Test series," he said while talking with the reporters.

"If our batsmen can put some runs on the board then it will not be impossible to pull off a surprise in the one-day series as our bowling

attack is reasonably good. And if we can manage one or two victories then automatically it will help us in Tests," he added.

And the ace batsman assured that this time they would not fall an easy victim for the home team like they did during their first trip in 2001 and other previous encounters against the Black Caps.

"No doubt we are going to face a tough challenge as even top flight teams struggle to cope with the conditions in New Zealand. But we have confidence in ourselves and I can assure you that we are not going to be easy prey for New Zealand," said a confident Ashraful.

For Bangladesh vice-captain Mashrafe Bin Mortaza the tour was not only a tough one but also evokes a certain memory from his first trip.

"As a bowler I might get some advantage from this kind of condition but overall it's a very tough tour for us," said the leading pace-man.

"I am not too excited despite the fact that the seam bowlers get assistance from the New Zealand conditions," said the left-arm seamer.

"In true sense it's my first tour with the national team although I have already played in the Twenty20 World Cup. I want to be positive whatever the condition is," said the left-handed opener.

England look for a draw



APP, Colombo

England face the daunting prospect of playing out spin wizard Muttiah Muralidaran on the final day Thursday to draw the second Test and keep the three-match series alive.

The tourists, trailing Sri Lanka by 197 runs on the first innings, ended the fourth day's play on a wearing Sinhalese Sports Club (SSC) pitch at 48-0 in their second knock-on Wednesday.

Alastair Cook was unbeaten on 19 and captain Michael Vaughan was on 28 when play was aban-

doned for the day 16 overs early due to bad light.

England, who lost the first Test by 88 runs in Kandy last week, must bat out the last day's play to have a chance of forcing a series-leveling win in the final Test at Galle from next Tuesday.

Sri Lanka have won 10 of their last 12 Tests at the SSC with Muralidaran, Test cricket's leading bowler, being the wrecker-in-chief on most occasions.

Earlier, Sri Lanka took their overnight score of 379-4 to 548-9 before captain Mahela Jayawardene, who top-scored with 195, declared the first innings in the final session.

The hosts were reduced to 450-8

U-19s continue good run

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh Under-19s continued their impressive run when they got off to a winning start against the visiting Sri Lanka Under-19s in the five-match series at the Shaheed Chandra Stadium in Bogra yesterday.

The Junior Tigers, who started the home leg after a 3-2 series victory in Pakistan, secured a 13-run victory in the first match after the visitors completed their 50-over quota scoring 221 for seven in reply to the home side's 234.

Nasir Hossain grabbed two wickets for 35 runs in 10 overs while Rubel Hossain, Sohrawardi Shuvu, Mahmudul Hasan and Dollar Mahmud took one wicket each giving away 24, 32, 45 and 47 runs respectively.

Roshane Silva was the top scorer with 51 runs off 70 balls with two fours.

Earlier, Bangladesh Under-19s recovered from an early hiccup after being put into bat first to put up a respectable total thanks to a half-century by Mohammad Mithun who struck eight boundaries and

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CA ponders D/N Tests

THE AUSTRALIAN

Cricket Australia (CA) is preparing to defy 130 years of tradition by trialling day-night (D/N) Test matches within three years.

It is a move that will horrify many of the game's conservative fans but one administrators hope will tap into the growing audiences attracted to the one-day and Twenty20 matches that threaten to eclipse the relevance of the five-day game.

The trial will be the biggest revolution to hit the game since Kerry Packer introduced World Series Cricket 30 years ago.

Officials are examining the possibility of scheduling games from 2pm-9pm or 3pm-10pm, and claim the move would allow more people to watch the cricket at the grounds and on television.

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Kumble defends late declaration

BBC ONLINE, undated

India skipper Anil Kumble defended his late declaration after bad light forced a draw in the final Test against Pakistan at the Chinnaswamy Stadium yesterday with India well-placed to win.

The result in Bangalore gave India a 1-0 series victory, their first home series win over Pakistan for 27 years.

Kumble waited for India to build a lead of 373 before declaring, but bad light stopped play with Pakistan on 162-7.

"It was important to ensure that we got the score with which we were sure about winning the series," said Kumble.

The captain took 5-60 to end any remote hopes Pakistan may have had of snatching a famous

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27-year wait over

India win home Test series 1-0

Cricket

AFP, Bangalore

Anil Kumble raised visions of a dramatic Indian victory with a five-wicket haul before Pakistan managed to escape with a draw in the third and final Test here on Wednesday.

The veteran leg-spinner grabbed 5-60 with shrewd variations on a wearing track as Pakistan finished at 162-7 in fading light chasing an improbable 374-run target off 49 overs on the fifth and final day.

The Kumble-led India clinched the Test series 1-0 after winning the opening match by six wickets in New Delhi and drawing the next two in Kolkata and here.

It was India's first Test series triumph against Pakistan at home, in more than two decades, the last success coming in 1980 under Sunil Gavaskar.

India needed the last three wickets when bad light thwarted their incredible victory bid. Mohammad Yousuf (10) and tailender Mohammad Sami (four) were the unbeaten batsmen with 12 overs remaining.

According to the playing condi-

tions, both the teams had agreed that artificial lights would not be used in the series.

There was no hint of collapse when Pakistan were 144-3 in the 32nd over following a 71-run stand for the fourth wicket between Faisal Iqbal (51) and in-form Misbah-ul-Haq (37).

But Kumble virtually turned the match upside-down when he dismissed Iqbal and Kamran Akmal off successive deliveries in front of his cheering home fans on a day when teammate Sourav Ganguly missed out on a rare landmark.

It was the second time the spinner had grabbed two wickets in an over, having earlier removed opener Yasir Hameed (39) and stand-in captain Younis Khan.

Kumble was brilliantly backed by part-time spinner Yuvraj Singh, who celebrated his 26th birthday by removing Misbah and debutant Yasir Arafat as Pakistan lost four wickets for 10 runs in a dramatic collapse.

A dull draw looked on the cards when India declared their second innings closed at 284-6 an hour after the lunch-break.

But Kumble enlivened the proceedings by striking in quick succession to push Pakistan on the

verge of defeat with his 34th haul of five or more wickets in a Test innings.

Ganguly's march towards a rare feat and Pakistani fast bowler Shoaib Akhtar's duel with the batsmen were the only talking points in the first two sessions.

Former captain Ganguly fell nine runs short of becoming the seventh batsman to score a double-century and a hundred in a Test.

The left-hander, who cracked a maiden double-ton in the first innings, was dismissed for 91 after an impressive exhibition of strokeplay.

Ganguly looked set to join the elite club in his 99th Test before uppishly driving fast bowler Mohammad Sami to Iqbal, who took a smart catch at gully. But he had completed 1,000 runs in a calendar year at that stage.

Australians Doug Walters and Greg Chappell, West Indies' Lawrence Rowe and Brian Lara, Gavaskar and England's Graham Gooch are other batsmen to have scored a double-century and a hundred in the same Test.

Ganguly and later Venkatesh Laxman were involved in a fascinating duel with Akhtar, who was at his best in his final innings of the

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END OF A LONG WAIT: Members of the Indian cricket team celebrate with the winners' trophy after their 1-0 triumph in the three-match Test series against Pakistan, their first at home after 27 years, at the Chinnaswamy Stadium in Bangalore on Wednesday.

Recall for Sehwag



CRICINFO, undated

The Indian selectors have sprung a major surprise by recalling Virender Sehwag to the Indian team for the four-Test series against Australia. Although he was not in the list of 24 probables Sehwag has got a recall after Gautam Gambhir was advised three weeks rest with a sore shoulder.

There was also place in the 16-man squad for Pankaj Singh, the young Rajasthan fast bowler. Munaf Patel, who was thought to be a front-runner for a spot has been advised to play more domestic cricket before he will be considered for selection in the future.

All season Pankaj has impressed with his performances for Rajasthan. Dilip Vengsarkar, the chairman of selectors, has spoken

highly of Pankaj on more than one occasion. A string of good bowling for Rajasthan Under-19 pitchforked Pankaj into the first-class team in 2003. But it was in late 2006 that he really showed signs of maturing by leading the Rajasthan attack and taking them to the plate league final. In 2007 he broke into the India A team and was successful in the tour of Kenya and Zimbabwe and then played in the home series against South Africa A.

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BFF looks to previous statutes for shelter



SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) is contemplating walking into the past as the executive committee has decided to ask FIFA's permission to hold the next election according to the 2003 constitution.

After BFF president SA Sultan's meeting with the organisers and ex footballers outside the federation on Tuesday, the executive committee once again ignored the urge to hold a general meeting for open discussion and push the ball into FIFA's court.

"Although it is unlikely that the

FIFA will listen to our plea, we will try to convince them that it would be difficult to form the DFAs within the April 30 deadline.

"Asigiriya belongs to the Trinity College of Kandy and we have made a request to them," Lokuge told AFP. It was at that ground in the first Test against England last week that Muralidaran surpassed retired Australian Shane Warne's world record tally of 708 wickets to

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Asgiriya could be renamed as Murali

AFP, Colombo

The Sri Lankan venue where Muttiah Muralidaran shattered the world bowling record could be renamed after the prolific off-spinner, the country's sports minister said on Wednesday.

Gamini Lokuge said he will ask the authorities that control Kandy's Asigiriya Stadium to rename the ground after Sri Lanka's most famous cricketer.

"Asigiriya belongs to the Trinity College of Kandy and we have made a request to them," Lokuge told AFP. It was at that ground in the first Test against England last week that Muralidaran surpassed retired Australian Shane Warne's world record tally of 708 wickets to

