

Light trouble in Lanka

STAR SPORT DESK
The fifth SAFF Football Championship co-host Sri Lanka faces a hard time answering the questions of how well they are prepared to host one of the biggest football events of the region, according to a Maldives website.

This is the first time in tournament's 11-year history that two nations, Sri Lanka and Maldives, are hosting the biennial meet.
Early in the tournament Sri Lanka, one of the top nations in world cricket, received a major blow when the first game of Group B between Bangladesh and Bhutan was stopped for more than fifteen minutes due to no lights at the Sugathadasa Stadium.

The Sri Lankan Football Federation did not switch on the lighting system even when players of both sides were having hard times to play in the dark. Then the referee had to signal to stop the game after discussion with his assistants and both Bangladesh and Bhutan players were forced to rest their legs for more than fifteen minutes.

Officials from both benches showed frustration and the match resumed with the floodlights believed to be at the minimum standard even to hold an AFC licensed course.

There are also reports of poor advertising of the tournament in Colombo and surrounding areas.

The opening ceremony of this year's SAFF championship was held in Male, Maldives on Tuesday and the final is slated for Colombo. But with the type of lights provided in the Sri Lankan capital on Wednesday, it is obvious the finalists would not be very happy to risk the game.

There was no comment from the tournament organiser, World Sports Group, about the condition in Colombo. But some believed they must review the situation well before the final match.

Slow-going lands fine for WI

REUTERS, New Delhi

West Indies have been fined for slow over-rate for the second consecutive game after being penalised in the drawn second Test against Australia in Antigua, the International Cricket Council (ICC) said on Wednesday.

West Indies captain Ramnaresh Sarwan was fined 10 per cent of his match fee and other players five per cent each for falling one over short in the stipulated period in the match which ended on Tuesday, an ICC release said.

The captains of both teams were fined half their match fees and the players 25 per cent each for slow over rates in the first Test in Kingston, Jamaica.

KP holds Eng

FROM PAGE 17
But the England captain, who struck three boundaries in four balls, fell for 16 when he was bowled attempting a drive by first change Iain O'Brien.

New Zealand gave a Test debut to Gareth Hopkins after Brendon McCullum was declared unfit to keep wicket shortly before play because of a back problem.

However, McCullum included as a batsman after struggling No 3 James Marshall was dropped in the only personnel change to New Zealand's second Test side.

England, for the first time since 1885, named an unchanged team for the fifth successive Test.

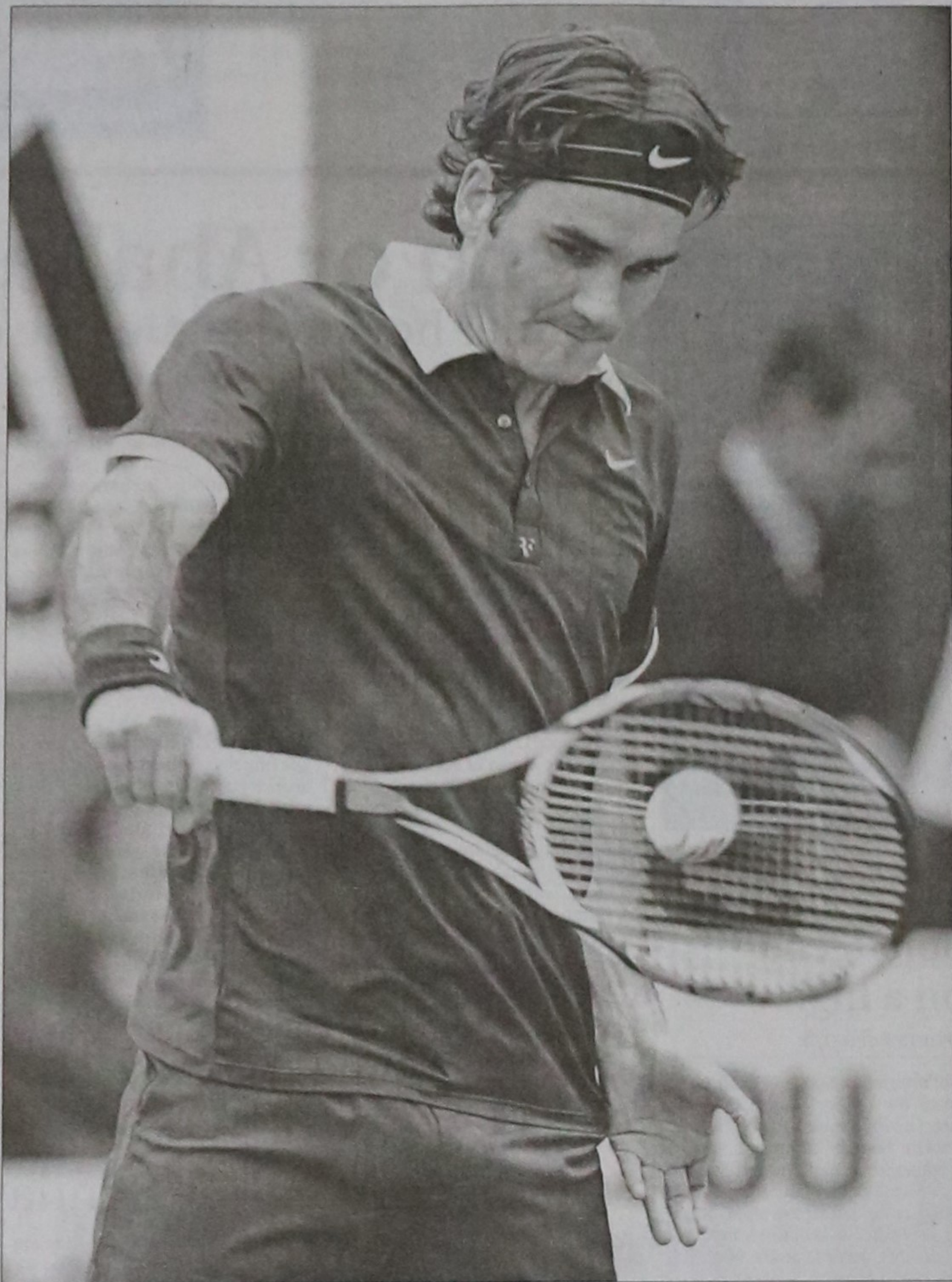
SCOREBOARD

Table with columns for batsmen (Strauss, Cook, Vaughan, Pietersen, Bell, Collingwood, Ambrose, Extras, Total) and bowlers (O'Brien, Mills, O'Brien, Vettori, Redmond, Taylor, Flynn, Hopkins, Oram, Anderson, Panesar, Bowler, Martin, Mills, O'Brien, Oram, Vettori).

Mirpur gets

FROM PAGE 17
final touches in the galleries and the massive task of setting up wooden seating was in progress in the gallery. The clubhouse area will also get a facelift while the stylish corporate boxes are ready for the spectators. Almost every area of the stadium was accessible but security officers were on overdrive to make sure no stone is unturned in and around the home of cricket.

But all this could be rendered worthless if the Tigers again fail to deliver the goods in their home conditions.



Swiss world number one Roger Federer makes a backhand return against Chilean player Fernando Gonzalez during their French Open quarterfinal at Roland Garros in Paris on Wednesday.

Federer finds top gear

Tennis

AFP, Paris

Top seed Roger Federer powered into the French Open semifinals on Thursday, but he was given a scare early on by Chile's Fernando Gonzalez before winning through 2-6, 6-2, 6-3, 6-4.

Federer will play Gael Monfils of France on Friday for a place in Sunday's final.

"I needed to get off to a good start in the second set because I wasn't playing that great and Fernando was playing well," he said.

"Getting broke three times (in the same set) is going to get you rattled, but I got on a roll and dominated him at times.

"He plays particularly -- dinks the backhand and rifles the forehand. He is quite unpredictable, a dangerous player who has the game to upset the big guys."

True to form, the 27-year-old Gonzalez came out with all guns blazing and broke Federer's serve in the opening game.

Throwing it away

Cricket

CRICINFO, undated

As quickly as Mohammad Asif has risen, so is he determined to fall. Eclipsing the bewilderment at this latest scrape, the frustration and disbelief, is the incredible sadness. Few matters in life are as deflating as the squandering, wilful or otherwise, of genuine talent.

For even if this is all some terrible, disastrous misunderstanding -- and the evidence supporting that theory is not great so far -- the stigma for one so bright, so young, so early in his career is too glaring.

And this is yet another taint in a career that has so far been loaded with one other drug scandal, a fight with a teammate, and an unprovoked slur of ball tampering. Men of all kinds have faltered early in life and career only to reform, and made great tales out of it too. If Asif is going to do it, he had better start soon because Pakistan knows -- or should know -- only too well what happens when fast bowlers waste their unique gifts.

Let's not pretend that cricketers have not meddled in drugs before, especially recreational ones. Asif's own countrymen have not been averse. In England a number of county cricketers have had problems big and small. One legend enjoyed the green and it didn't prevent him from having a knighthood conferred upon him. New Zealand and South Africa have also dealt with cricketers who, unlike Bill Clinton, inhaled. The former even made one of them captain, in fact their best and one of the best

Gonzalez won four games in a row to take the first set in just 24 minutes through a mixture of his own explosive shot-making and Federer's uncustomary mistakes. Having dropped his serve three times in four tries in the first set, almost unheard of for the world No. 1, Federer looked shaky again as he was taken to duce at the start of the second set.

He warned off the danger though with a backhand winner down the line and a smash at the net on the back of a powerful first serve.

Federer was 0-40 up on Gonzalez following service game but failed to convert any of his three break points and the Chilean duly levelled at 1-1.

It was an identical scenario two games later and this time Federer nailed the break at the first time of asking to lead 3-1.

The Federer machine was cranking up and the Swiss maestro broke the South American's serve to love again four games later to take the set 6-2.

It was more of the same in the third set with Federer dominating

the exchanges and jumping out into a 3-0 lead having won eight of the previous nine games.

That one break of serve was all he needed to go two sets to one up with Gonzalez being made to work extra hard by Federer just to stay in the rallies.

The Chilean, unbeaten in 16 claycourt matches this year, needed massage treatment to his right shoulder at the changeover. He was near breaking point and it was almost with a sense of inevitability when Federer broke his serve again to love in the third game of the fourth set.

The top seed stepped on the accelerator and powered away into the last four.

Federer's win put him into a record 16th straight Grand Slam semifinal appearance and left him just one match away from playing Rafael Nadal in the French Open final for the third consecutive year, having lost the last two.

He needs the claycourt title to complete his sweep of all four Grand Slam tournaments having won a total of 12 at Wimbledon and the US and Australian Opens.

common denominator in it all is Pakistan," said Allan Border back in 1988. He wasn't far wrong.

But through it all Pakistan teams kept pulling off magnificent, barely believable successes on the field. They won the World Cup, they were undefeated at home, they won abroad. Right or wrong, winning while trying to defeat themselves enhanced their worth. This team, sadly, is not that team. It doesn't look like winning much. It is suspiciously and unnaturally bland, mediocre even. Scandal, therefore, doesn't fit it well.

Tough days lie in wait for Pakistan and young men are required: men as willing as the young and earnest Umar Gul, or with the punch of Salman Butt. Pakistan needs the unflappability of Sohail Tanvir, the tirelessness of Danish Kaneria. Pakistan also needs the gifts of Asif, for no one can afford to lose them.

If he is lucky and somehow escapes punishment in Dubai despite charges being proved against him, he will come out of this with just a ban imposed on him by the board. If so, it would partly, not entirely, make up for their grand folly in helping to ensure that he got away untouched after he admitted to using steroids two years ago. What the PCB sows, it will, like the rest of the world, reap.

If he doesn't come back from this, then of all the talent that has been wasted by the self as much as by inadequate administration in this country, Asif's is among those that will be mourned the longest.

Uthappa eyes permanent India slot

PTI, Kochi

After floating in the top and middle orders for quite a while, Robin Uthappa is now desperate for a permanent slot in India's ODI lineup, which, he believes, would facilitate his Test inclusion as well.

Uthappa said although he has earned his stripes as an attacking batsman, he had the requisite patience and technique to break into the Test team as well and he was aiming to make the cut by next season.

"In one-day matches I was batting up and down the order. I did not get a regular spot and if I could get a regular spot, hopefully I will perform well and get into the longer version of the game," Uthappa told PTI.

"I am hoping by the end of this year or probably the next season," he said.

Uthappa agrees Test cricket poses altogether a new challenge but believes he would need only minor adjustments to fit into the format.

"Test cricket is a different ball game and the only thing is that you have to make some minor adjustments in your shot selection," he said.

"If one is able to choose his shot selection, nothing prevents him from performing in Test cricket," added the batsman who played for the Mumbai Indians in the Indian Premier League.

Uthappa dismissed suggestion that he was too attacking for Test cricket and cited the example of hard-hitting Australian duo of Adam Gilchrist and Matthew Hayden, who have done equally well in the longer version.

Dhaka Bank to sponsor hockey team

UNB, Dhaka

Dhaka Bank has come forward to sponsor the national hockey team for its Singapore tour to take part in the 3rd Men's AHF Cup Hockey Championship to be held from June 14.

Bangladesh are expected to leave Dhaka for Singapore on June 12 to compete in the qualifying round of the nine-nation Asia Cup.

Dhaka Bank chairman Altaf Hossain Sarkar on Wednesday verbally confirmed to Hockey Federation general secretary Sajed Adel that they are ready to provide Tk 20 lakh to sponsor the national team's trip.

The Dhaka Bank also expressed their interest to be associated with Bangladesh hockey for one year as "partner in progress".

Bangladesh Hockey Federation officials had a meeting with Dhaka Bank yesterday to prepare the papers for an agreement to be signed soon.

Dhaka Bank director and media and marketing committee chairman Khandakar Jamiluddin Ahmed, Dhaka Bank AVP Azam Khan and Sajed AA Adel were present in the day's meeting.

Officials for

FROM PAGE 17
Karachi (ODI) Tony Hill and Brian Jerling June 25 Bangladesh v Sri Lanka, Lahore (ODI) Simon Taufel, Ian Gould; India v Hong Kong, Karachi (ODI) Tony Hill and Brian Jerling June 26 Sri Lanka v UAE, Lahore (ODI) Simon Taufel, Ian Gould; Pakistan v India, Karachi (ODI) Tony Hill and Brian Jerling.

Pakistan want

FROM PAGE 17
Bangladesh, where Pakistan are expected to face India in the clash for the title.

"Asif's ouster is certainly a setback for us," chief selector Salahuddin Ahmed told The News, a Pakistan based daily. "But we still have some very talented fast bowlers and hope that somebody like Umar Gul will step forward and shoulder the responsibility of spearheading our pace attack in Dhaka."

Asif was dropped from the 16-man Pakistan squad following his detention in Dubai. Sohail Khan, 24, who made his international debut at home against Zimbabwe earlier this year, was included in his place.

Pakistan's pace attack is also without their fastest bowler Shoaib Akhtar, who is currently trying to overturn a five-year ban. Mohammad Sami was also not considered after his involvement with the unofficial Indian Cricket League.

Now Gul, 24, heads the pace battery that includes Sohail Tanvir, Rao Iftikhar Anjum and youngsters Wahab Riaz and Sohail. "Gul has time and again proved himself to be a wicket-taking bowler and I'm sure he will respond to the challenge," said Salahuddin.

He is also expecting a lot from Sohail Tanvir, who was recently crowned as the most successful player of the inaugural Indian Premier League (IPL). "Sohail showed he can be really destructive and we hope that he would retain his form in Bangladesh."

Pakistan's Dhaka-bound squad will assemble in Karachi today to have a practice session before flying out to Dhaka on Friday.

Arrest worries Lawson

Cricket

AFP, Karachi

Pakistan cricket coach Geoff Lawson said Thursday that the detention of Mohammad Asif in Dubai for the alleged possession of an illegal substance would disrupt the paceman's progress.

The 25-year-old fast bowler was held at Dubai airport on Sunday while returning home from a domestic tournament in India and appeared before a prosecutor on Thursday.

"It's unfortunate and would be disruptive for Asif," said former Australia Test bowler Lawson, dealing with the latest in a series of controversies to hit the troubled Pakistani team.

"Personally I don't know the facts, we feel for him, we hope it turns out well for him. We have been thinking about him," said Lawson.

"He has been missing quite often due to injury but was making a successful comeback from injury and played against Bangladesh in

April and the tri-series would have been one more step on his way back to full form."

Asif was named in the 16-man Pakistan squad for next week's tri-series in Bangladesh, which also features India, but was dropped and replaced by Sohail Khan on Wednesday.

Pakistan fly out to Dhaka on Friday but Pakistan Cricket Board officials say Asif will remain in detention at least until Sunday.

Lawson said Sohail had shown promise recently.

"Sohail has come in Asif's place and has shown promise so one person's misfortune is another's good fortune," said Lawson, who took over as Pakistan coach in July last year.

Pakistan captain Shoaib Malik also hoped Asif's absence would not be felt.

"There is no doubt that Asif is a good bowler but we have other good bowlers who can step up and take their chances. We have Umar Gul, Sohail Tanveer, Rao Iftikhar and Sohail so the attack is in good hands," said Malik.

The Pakistani captain said his

team is capable of putting up a good show in the tri-series.

"It is a good event and we will face tough competition from India who have been doing well. So if we play the final of the tri-series in Bangladesh then it would give us a good boost for the Asia Cup," said Malik.

Pakistan open the tri-series against Bangladesh on Sunday. They play India two days later, while India play Bangladesh on June 12. The final is on June 14.

Pakistan are due to host the eight-nation Asia Cup from June 24 to July 6.

Malik hoped his team would keep up their run of 11 victories attained earlier this year. Pakistan won their last match against India in their 2-3 defeat in November last year.

They then blanked Zimbabwe and Bangladesh 5-0 earlier this year.

"We have been on a winning streak so it would be important to have that going because if a team makes winning its habit then no event is difficult for them," Malik said.

Credit to extra practice

Cricket

AFP, St. John's

Shivnarine Chandernaul has revealed that hour upon hour of extra practice have helped his capability to bat long periods in Test cricket.

The 33-year-old Chandernaul said that spending excessively long hours in the nets at the mercy of a bowling machine was part of the reason why he has emerged from the shadow of Brian Lara in the last 18 months to become the leading West Indies batsman in recent years.

"It's all part of my preparation," Chandernaul told reporters on Tuesday, after another marathon innings that helped West Indies draw the second Test against Australia on Tuesday at the Vivian Richards Cricket Ground.

"You never know what will happen in the middle and what the bowlers will bowl to you, so you have to prepare yourself and get your mind adjusted to being able to

bat for long hours."

A West Indies team spokesman indicated that he has seen Chandernaul bat for as long as three hours with a bowling machine, and then still take deliveries from a net bowler for another hour or more.

"A session of Test cricket lasts two hours -- sometimes two-and-a-half hours, so you have to prepare yourself to do this or go longer, and trying not to make too many mistakes when batting," he said.

"So when I enter the nets, I do not really clock the time. I just go into the nets and bat for as long as I can."

Chandernaul is not the typically flamboyant West Indies batsman, but he has improved his consistency over the last three years and maintains a healthy average of 48.59 in his 111 Tests.

He earned the man-of-the-match award in the second Test. He top-scored with an undefeated 107 -- his 19th Test hundred -- in the West Indies' first innings total of 352, in response to Australia's 479 for seven declared.

He followed up with his match-saving knock of 77 not out in the second innings, and might have made an assault on scoring a second hundred in the Test had West Indies captain Ramnaresh Sarwan not been dismissed late in the day.

"If 'Sars' was still there and there was an opportunity for me to score a hundred, I would have played my shots," he said.

"Obviously, I was worried when he got out and Dwayne Bravo soon followed, so I had to buckle down and get a little tighter again, then hope that we could survive the remaining overs."

The drawn Test however, means Australia retain their hold on the Frank Worrell Trophy -- symbol of Test supremacy against West Indies -- and have not lost a Test series in the Caribbean since 1991.

West Indies trail in the three-Test series 0-1, after they lost by 95 runs in the opening Test at Sabina Park in Kingston, Jamaica.

The third and final Test between the two sides starts on June 12 at Kensington Oval in Barbados.

LOCAL SNIPPETS

SPORTS REPORTER

Lalbagh Tarun Sangha beat Dhaka Mahanagar Jubo Kishore 2-1 in a West Zone match of the Dhaka City Corporation Pioneer Football League at the Outer Stadium ground yesterday.

Momin and Zahed scored for the winners while Saurav struck the goal for the losers.

In a Central Zone match at the Basabo Tarun Sangha Club ground, Khilgona Jubo Sangha edged past Swadhinata Krira Sangha by a solitary goal scored by Shamim.

BANKER'S CRICKET

Rain threatens the first-ever Banker's League final between Eastern Bank Limited and Standard Chartered Bank today at the Dhamondi Cricket Stadium.

Chairman of the organising committee Arman Islam informed that if rain plays havoc, a reserve day in place but if that day is also affected, "the two finalists will become joint champions".

But Arman said that he was satisfied with the competition and hopes to include a few more corporate houses who will bring national players into the competition. Right now, only the bank employees are allowed to take part in the tournament but Arman hoped that better grounds next season will attract more teams.

Bank Asia, Dhaka Bank, Exim Bank and Trust Bank were the other teams in the competition with stars such as Mosharraf Hossain and Tareq Aziz appearing for Bank Asia.

INTER-DISTRICT VOLLEYBALL

Chittagong and Comilla moved into the zonal final of the Inter-District Volleyball Championship winning their respective semifinals at the Chittagong Laldighi ground.

In the first semifinal, Chittagong beat Chittagong Mahanagar 25-19, 25-14 and 25-18 while Comilla defeated Chandpur 25-10, 25-18 and 25-19.

The third place-deciding match of the zonal championship will be held today at the same venue.

GAIBANDHA HANDBALL

Our Correspondent adds: Gaibandha Samannay Sangha crushed SRJ Girls High School 12-1 in the CUTE women's handball league at the local stadium here.

In the other match, Asaduzzaman Girls High School annihilated Police Line High School 11-0.

Gaibandha deputy commissioner Abu Mohammad Yousuf formally inaugurated the league earlier.

MANIKGANJ CRICKET

Our Correspondent adds: Biltu Club and SABIS won their respective matches in the SunLife Insurance Second Division Cricket

League at the Shaheed Miraj-Tapan Stadium here.

In the first match, Biltu Club defeated Bandutia Natya Gosthi (BNG) by 10 runs. Biltu batted first and were all out for just 73 in 19 overs. Sakhawat and Biplob took three wickets each. In reply, BNG was bundled out for just 64 runs in 16.2 over. Pavel remained not out on 17 and Iqbal made 12. Tapu took three wickets while Sumon took two.

In the second match, SABIS defeated Dawli Udayan Sangha (DUS) by 28 runs. SABIS batted first and were all out for 70 runs in 14 overs. Rana made 19 while and Rony added 18. Samrat snared five wickets.

DUS were bundled out for only 42 in 17.1 over. Lal of SABIS took six wickets while Liton took two wickets.

DIVISIONAL SWIMMING

The BRB Cable first-ever divisional swimming competition, organised by Bangladesh Swimming Federation, will be held tomorrow in Rajshahi.

Bangladesh Swimming Federation president and Navy chief vice admiral Sarwar Zahan Nizam will be the chief guest at the prize distribution ceremony of the daylong competition.

As part of the competition, a two-day swimming meet was earlier held at Chandpur in Chittagong Division on May 25-26.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

Crossword puzzle grid with clues for Across and Down words.

Cryptoquip puzzle grid with letters and numbers.

CRYPTOQUIP
FWDU C IROCDOM RBGOF NW
FBUD ZVOD VOF MOCPPQ
NW NCIGRO PBMNQ PMOFFOF:
" FODP BD NVO UWZDF."
Yesterday's Cryptoquip: ASSUMING A HIT SINGER TEAMED UP WITH A BIG ELECTRONICS COMPANY, WOULD THEY BE SONY AND CHER?
Today's Cryptoquip Clue: N equals T