#### Black Caps pleased

SPORTS REPORTER

New Zealand coach John Bracewell thinks that arriving in Dhaka a few days earlier than schedule will help his side during the series.

The 58-year-old accompanied captain Daniel Vettori in a press conference after training yesterday at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur.

"It is winter now in New Zealand so it was good that we came early and acclimatised ourselves. It is important that the players look after themselves but they have enough experience in the sub-continent now," said the former Kiwi off-spinner.

When asked of difficult times in the past while travelling in this region, Bracewell said that times have changed and there has been tremendous improvement.

"I think it was in 1963 when our teams stayed in the stadium but now we are in a very good, five-star hotel where they serve roasted lamb and egg fried rice and there's less spices in the chicken," said a smiling Bracewell.

The inevitable question of security came up with so many cancellations from teams from the Southern Hemisphere. But manager Lindsay Crocker had no rea-

son to complain. "I must say that the security is very comprehensive," said Crocker.



Since the 1950s, Real Madrid and Barcelona have dominated the Primera Liga. The former have won the title 31 times while the latter won it on 18 occasions.





#### Gary Kirsten

(India cricket coach) "India has got the best record against Australia in recent times and we know what to do game-wise as well as mentally."



ESPN Sportscentre India Sports News

Live at 8:30pm

#### 'It should be Tendulkar's decision'

PTI, New Delhi

The air of invincibility that gave nightmares to bowlers is all but gone but Sachin Tendulkar's greatness can never be doubted and the least that the batting maestro deserves is a retirement day of his choice.

Australian pace legend Glenn McGrath, West Indian great Sir Vivian Richards and the man who has been called a 'Tendulkar clone' -- Virender Sehwag -- are unanimous in their opinion that Tendulkar does not need anybody other than himself to decide when

the time is right to call it a day. For all his vulnerabilities that have been exposed over the years, McGrath says Tendulkar remains | time from Eto'o and Eidur as enchanting as he was when he first burst into the international

scene as a 16-year-old.

## All eyes on rookies

Cricket

SPORTS REPORTER .

The national selectors announced a 12-member BCB XI side for tomorrow's limited-over practice match against New Zealand at the Fatullah Cricket Stadium.

Middle-order batsman Rajin Saleh, who was recalled following the mass resignation of many national players, will lead the youthful side. The team was picked from the 24-member probables.

The match was originally scheduled to be played at the BKSP ground but it has been shifted to Fatullah because of waterlogging at the sports institute following rain in the last few days.

The focus will be on the young players as it is almost confirmed that few uncapped players will be included in the one-day side for the three-match series when the Rafiqul Alam-led selection panel announce the 14-member team today.

Left-arm seamer Syed Rasel has been declared fit and was included in the BCB XI side to play the lone practice match before the start of the series on October 9.

On the other hand, bowling spearhead Mashrafe Bin Mortaza has been complaining of pain on his right knee but chief selector

#### SOUAD

Rajin Saleh (captain), Nafis Iqbal, Zunaed Siddiqui, Imrul Kayes, Shamsur Rahman, Tushar Imran, Mehrab Hossain, Enamul Haque, Nazmul Hossain, Syed Rasel, Dollar Mahmud and Sahagir Hossain.

Rafiq however was little bothered with this.

"He (Mashrafe) is quite fine. He bowled one and a half hours during practice today in full rhythm," confirmed Rafigul.

And Shahadat Hossain was looking forward to see his new-ball partner, Mashrafe, bowling with full pace to give the team a brilliant

"It always helps me when he (Mashrafe) bowls well from one side. And his good bowling is always important for the team. We are looking forward to continue our

good job what we did in Australia in the last series," said Shahadat at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

"Our bowling was good in Australia and we want to continue it here. The first 20 overs is very important for us whether we bat or bowl. And now we need to bat well in the series," the lanky pacer added.

Besides the young players, it would be a real test for opener Nafis Iqbal, who returned to the senior fold after more than two years gap, as the selector can understand his fitness level during the game.

"He was out of international cricket for long so understandably he has lack of fitness which means his level of fitness is not up to the mark. He needs some time to achieve it," said the former national cricketer.

The selectors have been facing big problems to find out a partner for left-handed opener Tamim Iqbal, the younger brother of Nafis, as Zunaed Siddiqui is also out of form.

There is only another opening option for the selectors in the probables in uncapped Imrul Kayes.





STUDY OF STRIKING CONTRAST: The Bangladesh team (L) scamper off the turf as the rain gods suddenly appear at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium yesterday. (R) A few hours ago, New Zealand captain Daniel Vettori takes a muchneeded breather while padding up during their practice session under the blazing morning sun at the same venue.

## Players mentally ready

Football

AL MUSABBIR SADI

After experiments to inject too much fresh blood into the national team failed during the AFC Challenge Cup and the SAFF Football Championship earlier this year, new coach Shafiqul Islam Manik will return to experience when he takes Bangladesh into his first assignment.

Manik, who begins his mission with this month's Merdeka Cup in Malaysia (October 15-25), has packed up his brief training camp with 28 probables at the BKSP on Saturday and believes that the residential camp has given him the time to assess the team's strength

and limitations. "It was not enough but the seven-day camp was not bad. I have checked fitness level and also tested the players for discipline and commitment," the former international defender told The Daily Star

vesterday. "I have found out that the players are mentally prepared for an international tournament. Although their fitness level is not where I would have liked it but they are ready to give hundred percent of what they have.

"Its not possible to get from a brief camp what can be achieved after spending long time together.

Also, the players will have to play one more round in the B. League before our trip to Malaysia. So I could not give them maximum pressure considering their club commitments," said Manik, who will make the final selection after the fourth round matches of the B. League, which starts tomorrow

after the Eid vacations. "This round is vital because many good players, currently out of form or a bit injured, could come out as winners," added Manik, who will have to trim his squad to 20.

Manik's bid to bring back the senior players, not considered in the recent past for the national team, faces the injury barrier though.

Sujan, Matiur Munna and Titu are the brightest contenders to come back but need to prove their fitness by this week.

"I will not carry someone who can't play at all. But minor injuries I can overlook."

Manik said he tried to improve conditions of those who lacked

"Among the lot, I am more worried about Titu's groin injury. Unlike the others, he did not get the right environment at his club (Muktijoddha) to recover. He is a utility player, can play at both flanks and very attacking minded."

Titu's efficiency as right- or leftback would also cover for lack of supporting fullbacks for Waly Faisal and Hassan Al Mamun,

although Manik, whose love for the 3-5-2 system is familiar, has been planning to use the latter as one of three centre-backs.

"It is not a defensive format as many suggest. It can be very positive if you have two aggressive fullbacks. If Titu is available, i would be a plus point because i fully fit, he can beat opponent from anywhere.

However, using the more attacking Zahid Hossain or the consistently inconsistent Ariful as rightback could well be the Achilles' heel of Manik's side.

Originally a central defender, Ariful has had been responsible for gifting goals to oppositions in almost every international match he has started but coaches do pick him up for his so-called talents.

"He drifts away from the game and sometimes can't take instant decision. But a player like him must be given exposure," Manik said in defence of the youngster.

Manik's only difficulty to choose would be between Aminul and Biplab under the bar as he thinks both are of similar calibre.

"It's good to have two good keepers. But due to height and other little things, Aminul has slight advantage." Manik's main task, however,

would be to find a playmaker in

midfield as Arman Mia's departure from the game has left a big void. SEE PAGE 18 COL 1

### BTV, Channel i to show matches

SPORTS REPORTER

State-run Bangladesh Television (BTV) and Channel i will provide live telecast of the two-match Test and three-match one-day series between Bangladesh and visiting New Zealand.

The series will begin with the first one-dayer on Thursday at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur. The second one-day (October 11) and the second Test (Oct 25-29) will be also held at the same The teams will go to Chittagong

to play the third and final onedayer on October 14 and the first Test, which will be start from October 17 at the Chittagong Divisional Stadium. "BTV has the terrestrial right

while Channel i has the satellite rights to provide the worldwide telecast," informed Ahmed Sajjadul Alam, media committee chairman of Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB), yesterday. In terms of the commercial

aspect, the series will be a huge loss for the board as there has been a big gap between expenditures and income. As the series is out of the Future Tour Programme of the ICC, Nimbus, which holds the marketing rights of the BCB up to March 2012, has no contractual commitment to broadcast it. On its own channel, Neo Sports,

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Cricket SPORTS REPORTER

New Zealand captain Daniel Vettori faced only a few questions but ensured that blanking Bangladesh in the one-day series would be his top priority.

"We have come here expecting to win, so anything less than that is not a good result," said the bespectacled left-arm spinner, who sat with the local journalists officially after practice at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur for the first time since their arrival at the capital on September 30.

The forthright comment was expected as the Black Caps are on the verge of something special in terms of their ranking.

in the three-match series, New Zealand will become the secondbest team in the world as per the ICC rankings. "If we can win 3-0 in the onedayers, then we will become num-

ber two in the world and that will be pretty special for the New Zealand side," admitted Vettori. The 29-year-old captain however said that his side are not under-

estimating Bangladeshin any way. "If we are not on top of our game

we can get upset and that's the thing we are trying to avoid. The reputation and result had not been

what they wanted. We still look at loss. them individually and in that way, they are a good side.

3-0 to satisfy Vettori

"I think it's going to be tough. Most teams who come to Bangladesh know they are in for a difficult time.

Vettori has happy memories of the Tigers, having taken his best one-day figures in the last ODI played between the two sides. But he singled out his opposite number threat, calling him a match-winner. the hosts 4-1 in the ODI series.

"If you look at the Bangladesh players at an individually level, they have got some guys who performed at the world stage. Captain (Mohammad) Ashraful can play and on his day he can be a worldbeater," said Vettori of his embattled counterpart, who has only 190 runs from nine matches with two If Bangladesh are whitewashed fifties against the Kiwis.

He also had special praise for the Tigers' bowling attack: " I think they have got a nice bowling lineup. They have Shahadat (Hossain), (Mashrafe) Mortaza and (Abdur)

"In their own condition, they are going to be a formidable opposition for us," said Vettori.

He also believed that Bangladesh will only miss Aftab Ahmed when the ODI series begins on October 9 at the home of cricket.

"I think from my understanding the only player they are missing is

pretty much what we faced in New Zealand. So we are expecting a-, similar sort of side. So it can't get weakened really," said Vettori, Vettori, who took over the cap-

"But the rest of the team are

taincy reigns from the great Stephen Fleming after last year's World Cup, has had a mixed time leading the side. His side lost the Test series in England this summer, Mohammad Ashraful as a potential but then turned around and beat

Himself a world-class left-arm spinner, Vettori said he would have to use the likes of off-spinner Jeetan Patel and the slow-medium of Scott Styris and Jesse Ryder, given the conditions.

"We are expecting probably a typical subcontinent wicket. I think its probably going to have plenty of runs in it. But as it wears, I think it's going to start to take some turn. So we have got to cover that with myself and Jeetan Patel and guys like Scott Styris and Jessie Ryder who bowls somewhat similar to Scott.

"I think we are pretty comfortable with the condition. And just like anywhere you turn up, you have to go to the depth, because Bangladesh knows the conditions here better than anyone," said Vettori.

The Black Caps will play a warm-up match against a local selection at the Fatullah Cricket Stadium tomorrow before embark-Aftab Ahmed, so that's obviously a ingon the three-match series.

### Blistering Barcelona

AFP, Barcelona



Barcelona underlined their Spanish title 6-1 thrashing of Atletico Madrid goals in a breathtaking first ten half.

minutes.

Messi against Sergio Aguero then there was only one winner, but it wasn't just Messi who split Atletico open at the Nou Camp.

Rafa Marquez sent Barca on forhisteam's performance. their way with a flicked header from a corner after three minutes was a sorry game, there is no explaand then Samuel Eto'o scored the first of his brace.

allowed Messi to place the ball into an empty net as goalkeeper Gregory Coupet was still constructing the wall as the avalanche con-

relief after 13 minutes with a well taken shot for Atletico but Barca then scored two more before half-Gudjohnsen.

game won, Barcelona coach Pep SEE PAGE 18 COL 1 Guardiola made several substitu-

the bench to score perhaps the best strike of the game with a wellworked goal. "I think that was the best match

since I came here," said Guardiola whose side are now second in the table, three points behind Villarreal. But the Barcelona coach also had to play down rumours of a rift with Eto'o, who was unhappy at

"There is no problem with Eto'o, If the game was billed as Lionel he's not angry. He didn't like being taken off, I know, but that is my

being substituted in the second

Downcast Atletico coach Javier Aguirre was quick to accept blame

"I'm the only one responsible, it nation for conceding three goals like that in eight minutes and it Quick thinking at a free-kick meant that the game was over. They were better than us in everything,

Two goals in two minutes saw had two or three shots and scored Villarreal come from behind against struggling Real Betis for a Maxi Rodriguez offered some win which sees them overtake Valencia at the top of the table.

home for ten months but with Betis the last team to win at El Madrigal, Paco Chaparro's side were confi-In the second half, with the dent of springing a surprise. Betis, who have failed to win this ing again the skills which alerted season, went ahead after 20 min-

tions and Thierry Henry came off utes through former Barcelona defender Damia Abella.

But they struggled to maintain their rhythm and Gonzalo Prado equalised for the home side with a flicked header from a free-kick, after 69 minutes.

Substitute Robert Pires then

miscued a shot from the left of the area, but it fortuitously found Joseba Llorente who was left with the simple task of scoring from close range. Villarreal coach Manuel Pellegrini felt tiredness from their

the reason why his side was not playing at their best. "I think that one of the keys to the game was the extra break that Betis had as they did not play during the week. Luckily though we

had enough in reserve," he said.

Champions League campaign was

A dejected Chaparro was at a loss to explain the result. "They should have killed the match off in the first half. Villarreal

twice," he said. In-form strike partnership David Villa and Juan Mata will aim to put Valencia back at the top Villarreal had been unbeaten at against Valladolid on Sunday. Under Unai Emery this season,

> Valencia have rediscovered their solidity in defence while, going forward, Joaquin Sanchez is show-SEE PAGE 18 COL 5



ICING ON THE CAKE: Barcelona striker Thierry Henry goes airborne to celebrate his wonderful strike in their Primera Liga match against Atletico Madrid at the Nou Camp on Sunday. Henry came off the bench to score Barca's final goal in a 6-1 thumping that reverberated around Europe and set up Pep Guardiola's side as genuine title contenders.

# Big 5 under spotlight

Cricket

AFP, New Delhi

A quintet of ageing Indian superstars goes into the high-pressure Test series against world champions Australia this week hoping to prove their sun has not yet set.

Knives were out for skipper Anil

Kumble, and batsmen Sachin Tendulkar, Rahul Dravid, Sourav Ganguly and Venkatsai Laxman after India's 2-1 defeat in the three-Test series in Sri Lanka in August. The hint that the veterans were in the twilight of their illustrious

careers came after none did justice to their stature, sparking debate whether the time had come to blood new youngsters. Kumble took eight wickets, while Dravid made 148 in six

innings and was followed by Ganguly (96) and Tendulkar (95). Laxman excelled in patches with 215 runs, but such a collective failure had rarely been seen in recent years.

the seniors for the first two Tests of the four-match series starting in Bangalore on Thursday, apparently believing it was not wise to begin a phasing-out process against a

strong opposition. But the sword still hangs over

the 'Fab Five', and the Australian series is expected to provide the answer to how much cricket is still left in them. Leg-spinner Kumble is the world's third-highest wicket-taker with 616 scalps in 130 Tests, while

the experienced players, dubbed

Tendulkar, Dravid, Ganguly and Laxman have a combined tally of 35,011 runs from 480 matches. But age is fast catching up with the veterans, who have made the nucleus of the team for more than a decade. Kumble turns 38 this month and Laxman 34 in

November. Ganguly is 36, while

Tendulkar and Dravid are 35. Their rich contribution to Indian cricket was promptly forgotten after one bad series, with the media even suggesting they had been given an opportunity to plan their "honourable exit" -- reports later rubbished by Kumble.

"We have never discussed that among ourselves. All the talk is only in the media. Age does not matter India's new selectors retained at all, otherwise I'd have retired long ago," said Kumble. "In terms of the players' perfor-

mance, we have performed exceptionally well, except for that one

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