



Chairman of Bangladesh Golf Federation Brigadier General (ret) Shafiquzzaman (2nd from L) takes questions during a press briefing in connection with the logo launching ceremony of City Bank-Dhaka Bank Bangladesh Open 2009 yesterday.

Strauss talks of IPL

Cricket

AFP, London

England captain Andrew Strauss believes his side's stars will be able to appear in the lucrative Indian Premier League (IPL) and still play for the Test side without jeopardising the national team's results.

"Everyone will work as hard as they can to ensure it's done before the cricket starts," the opening batsman added.

During last season's inaugural IPL campaign, England

England were set to head to the West Indies on Wednesday for a four-Test tour under new skipper Strauss with the players central contracts still unsigned.

Talks were ongoing on Tuesday between the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) and England's Professional Cricketers' Association (PCA) regarding the possibilities for the likes of stars such as Kevin Pietersen and Andrew Flintoff to play in the IPL, a cash-rich Twenty20 tournament.

But the deadline for players making themselves available for the IPL is February 4 - the same day as the first day of the opening Test in Jamaica.

The IPL debate was an issue before the personality clash which saw Pietersen forced to resign the England captaincy and Peter Moores sacked as head coach earlier this month and it threatens to again destabilise a team now doing its best to rally round Strauss.

"There's a huge will on behalf of the players, the PCA and the ECB to get it done and dusted as soon as possible," Strauss told reporters at England's Gatwick Airport Hotel here Tuesday.

England would have no problems with players going for two weeks from April 10-24 in a competition which features franchise teams, whose wealthy owners will bid for some of the world's best play-

ers at an 'auction'. But one compromise being mooted is a three-week IPL spell for the likes of England stars such as Pietersen and all-rounder Andrew Flintoff.

That would allow them to return to England in time for the first Test against the West Indies at Lord's on May 6.

However, they would then be ruled out of the preceding round of English county championship fixtures, a move that would anger their domestic sides and raise questions about whether their readiness to play Test cricket.

Strauss, unlikely to be an IPL target even before becoming England captain as he has not played one-day international cricket since the 2007 World Cup, said: "Players have to be fully prepared for a Test match."

"What that preparation is depends on the player to a certain extent. I believe the players who will be involved in the IPL are experienced campaigners. They didn't just turn up yesterday. They know what Test cricket is about and know what preparation they need."

England are only playing the West Indies at home in the run-up to the Ashes after Sri Lanka pulled out when it became clear they couldn't field their best team because of players' IPL commitments.

But there are concerns the West Indies could be similarly weakened, leading to accusations that Test cricket - which administrators continue to insist is the pinnacle of the world game - was being devalued.

Div I Twenty20 from today

SPORTS REPORTER

The metropolis cricket season begins today with six matches of the First Division Twenty20 cricket tournament in Dhaka.

The inaugural ceremony will be held at the Dhanmondi Cricket Stadium where Motijheel T&T Club face Sadharan Bima in the morning and Indira Road meet Brothers Union in the afternoon.

This is the first time the first division sides - 20 teams split into four groups - will compete in the shortest version of the game.

The other venues to be used for the group stages are City Club ground and Dhaka University ground.

Kevin fiasco could cost Giles his job

AFP, London

Giles Clarke, the chairman of the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB), will face a challenge for his job in the aftermath of the controversy that led to Kevin Pietersen being ousted as captain, the ECB confirmed Tuesday.

Clarke, who has chaired the ECB since September 2007, is being challenged for the post by businessman/politician Jonathan Marland. Chairmen of the 18 first class counties and the MCC will vote on who gets the job next month.

Marland, 52, is a member of the House of Lords and a former treasurer of the opposition Conservative party.

His chances of victory are seen as depending on the extent to which the county chairmen believe Clarke mishandled the clash between former coach Peter Moores and Pietersen which resulted in Moores being dismissed and Pietersen being effectively stripped of the captaincy earlier this month.

Clarke has also been criticised for sanctioning England's participation in last year's winner-takes-all Stanford Twenty20 tournament in Antigua.

Marland has billed himself as a unifying candidate, saying at the weekend that "there are deep schisms within the game which need to be healed."

Complaint filed against Modi

CRICINFO, undated

A complaint of fund misappropriation has been filed with the Jaipur police against Lalit Modi, the president of the Rajasthan Cricket Association, on Tuesday, according to newspaper reports.

The complaint was lodged by a member of the Jaipur District Cricket Association, Anil Shekhawat, who alleged that Modi had misappropriated Rs 22 lakh. The police were examining the complaint and no FIR had been filed yet.

"As we will have to contact officials of BCCI for confirmation about his complaint, and other enquiries about the funds released by the BCCI, we are yet to file an FIR," said the officer in charge of the Jyoti Nagar police station, where the complaint was lodged.

Modi, however, said there was no truth to the complaint. "It has been done with a malafide intention against me and there is no truth in it," he told PTI. "I have raised thousands of crores of rupees for RCA and BCCI. Why would I divert such a small amount of money? I know one Anil Shekhawat has filed the complaint, but have not seen the exact copy so far."

Mohammedan

FROM PAGE 17 league and there are chances of fixed-matches afterwards," a Mohammedan official said.

It can be mentioned that Mohammedan fell six points behind leaders Abahani and two adrift of Russel after Tuesday's draw.

The club also demanded the BFF to take action against Sheikh Russel coach, assistant coach, manager and official Saleh Zaman Selim for entering the ground during the match and trying to influence the referee.

Before submitting the letter, about 200 Mohammedan fans went to the BFF Bhaban premises in protest and used abusing languages against BFF president Kazi Salahuddin.

The BFF officials had to call the law-enforcing agency to disperse the rowdy fans. The BFF will sit in a meeting to discuss the issue today.

Eng may host neutral Tests

Cricket

CRICINFO, undated

England's major international venues could agree to host Test matches involving two non-English teams, as the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) meet in Leicester on Wednesday to consider the proposals raised at their Test Match Strategy Day at Stapleford Park earlier in the week.

Monday's summit meeting, which was attended by a host of former England captains and players, was called to address the future of Test cricket, which has come under increasing scrutiny following the huge growth in popularity of the Twenty20 format.

At the top of the agenda was the need to strengthen the Future Tours Programme, which has been over-burdened by the sheer weight of matches now required to meet its demands, and undervalued by the proliferation of uncompetitive fixtures. One of the proposals raised was a greater emphasis on contests between the leading Test nations.

"The input from all areas of cricket provided focus on the key opportunities and issues facing the game," said David Collier, the ECB chief executive, who added that the board intended to work more closely with the ICC to give greater context to Test cricket through a World Test Championship.

That proposal could give rise to the intriguing prospect of India playing Tests against Pakistan at Headingley, where Yorkshire's large Asian community could be expected to turn out in droves, or

Australia playing South Africa at The Oval. Meanwhile, the weaker nations such as Bangladesh and Zimbabwe could find themselves limited to home Tests only, which would provide them with the exposure necessary for development, but not at the expense of the revenue of the major boards.

Giles Clarke, the ECB chairman, hinted at that outcome in Mohali last month, when he warned that Bangladesh might not be invited back for a full Test series after their next tour in 2010. "If we are going to have a proper strategy for Test cricket we want to have games like that we have just had in Chennai," Clarke told reporters. "It showed everybody just what a Test can be. We have to make sure that the standard is there."

Under the staging arrangements being put in place for 2012-16, England's nine Category A grounds are expected to be guaranteed only 11 days of international cricket over the course of five years, a prospect which jeopardises the ambitious expansion plans at many of the venues. Those grounds would doubtless welcome the prospect of more big matches being played on English soil, although one major stumbling block to such an arrangement would be the division of TV revenue.

England's current deal with Sky is worth £300 million over four years, which is a considerably larger income than any other board bar India. It is unlikely the ECB would be willing to agree to a revenue share, as proposed by Cricket Australia, if other nations wanted to stage matches on their turf.

Several other issues were raised at the meeting, including the suggestion that

over-rates in Test matches should be improved by using points rewards or penalties within the World Test Championship, rather than the current system of fines and/or bans for transgressing captains. The ECB will also discuss the installation of improved drainage systems in all Test match venues, following the success of the system that is now in place at Lord's.

"I'm confident that there has never been such a gathering in the history of cricket in England and Wales," claimed the ECB chairman, Giles Clarke. "I am extremely grateful for the support of all those who travelled from all corners of the country and the world to share their ideas on the state of Test cricket."

"Everyone who attended shared the desire that Test cricket be preserved and reinforced as the pre-eminent form of this great game. It was an enthralling and informative session which allows the ECB board to consider key proposals which will allow us to deliver our promise of making England and Wales the home of Test cricket."

Six England captains were present at the meeting - Andrew Strauss, Michael Atherton, Alec Stewart, Nasser Hussain, Michael Vaughan and Mike Gatting - as well as numerous past and present Test players, from Dennis Amis, Ashley Giles, Alastair Cook, Hugh Morris, Angus Fraser, Mike Selvey, Jonathan Agnew, David Lloyd and Geoff Miller.

Also present were ICC General Cricket Manager, Dave Richardson, England's assistant coach Andy Flower, the ICC World Twenty20 director Steve Elworthy, and the elite umpire, Simon Taufel, as well as the chairmen and representatives of the 18 first-class counties and MCC.

Relieved but not resting

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hook from 47 or six. "Yes, even though they had a 96-run stand, it was a slow partnership. We did not give runs freely. Nayem bowled well so did Shakib during that partnership. Runs came slow but we could not pick wickets because they did not play any lofty shots, they just stuck to the basics and took singles or doubles."

He was not only excited with the fact that his strike bowler Mashrafe bowled in the last stage but also sounded hopeful that the new think-tank will help their performance. "We do have a group of five, which sits and analyzes games and performances and also plans for the future. I think it was a positive step we have taken and I am sure it will yield positive results in the future," he said.

The Bangladesh skipper was also hopeful about winning the series. "If we play our best cricket we will definitely win the series," said Ashraf adding that he is getting a lot of support from all corners as a captain.

Zimbabwe captain Prosper Uteya was also optimistic about his team's chances to win the series.

"It was not a good score on this wicket. Every team who have been put to bat first in these wickets have struggled to put up a good score and also build up partnerships. Also in order to defend 160 we needed to get wickets regularly which we failed to do," said Uteya. "Of course we need to pull up our socks and try our best for the game on Friday. It is a final for the both of us and we would definitely try to win it," he hoped.

SCOREBOARD  
Scoreboard of the second one-day international between Bangladesh and Zimbabwe at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur on Wednesday:

ZIMBABWE  
Sibanda lbw b Nazmul 7  
Masakadza c Rubel b Nazmul 17  
Matsikenyeri run out 10  
Taibu c Mehrob b Rubel 3  
Williams run out 59  
Chigumbura b Nazmul 1  
Waller b Rubel 1  
Uteya lbw b Mashrafe 38  
Price b Mashrafe 7  
Mupariwa not out 1  
Extras: (lb-6, w-8, nb-2) 16  
Total: (For 9 wks in 50 overs) 160  
Did not bat: Rainsford.

Fall of wickets: 1-26, 2-29, 3-37, 4-45, 5-46, 6-47, 7-143, 8-159, 9-160.

Table with columns: Bowler, O, M, R, W. Includes Mashrafe, Nazmul, Rubel, Shakib, Nayem, Mahmudullah.

BANGLADESH  
Tamim b Mupariwa 21  
Mehrob c Uteya b Price 43  
Ashraf c Uteya b Rainsford 5  
Rokibul not out 52  
Shakib c Taibu b Uteya 22  
Mushfiq not out 13  
Extras: (b-5, w-3) 8  
Total: (For four wks in 44.5 overs) 164  
Did not bat: Mahmudullah, Nayem, Mashrafe, Nazmul, Rubel.

Fall of wickets: 1-32, 2-42, 3-94, 4-135.

Table with columns: Bowler, O, M, R, W. Includes Rainsford, Uteya, Mupariwa, Chigumbura, Price, Williams.

Result: Bangladesh won by six wickets.  
Man-of-the-match: Rokibul Hasan.  
Toss: Bangladesh  
Umpires: Enamul Haque (BAN) and Zameer Haider (PAK)  
Match Referee: Alan Hurst (AUS)

Women's soccer team from India due tomorrow

SPORTS REPORTER

Friends of the Stadium Club women's football team of India will arrive in Dhaka tomorrow to play three exhibition matches in Bangladesh.

The visitors will play the matches in Munshiganj, Bangladesh Ansar Academy in Shafipur and the Bangabandhu National Stadium in Dhaka on January 25, 26 and 27.

Move on to swap Zaheer-Uthappa

PTI, Mumbai

Mumbai Indians and Bangalore Royal Challengers are discussing the possibility of swapping Robin Uthappa and Zaheer Khan during the month-long Indian Premier League (IPL) players' trading window.

"Nothing has been finalised yet, but talks are on. Royal Challengers are keen to have Robin as he's also the captain of Karnataka in the Ranji Trophy," informed sources told PTI today, a day before the trading window closes.

There is another angle to the proposed swap as the Vijay Mallya-owned Royal Challengers want to make the flamboyant Uthappa captain of the Bangalore franchise outfit in place of Rahul Dravid, the sources said.

The Bangalore franchise had a poor first IPL season last year by finishing seventh out of eight teams.

Mumbai Indians, on the other hand, would welcome the inclusion of India's left-arm pace spearhead Zaheer who has had an outstanding year in international cricket in 2008.

Zaheer also played a key role in Mumbai clinching the Ranji Trophy for the 38th time by beating Uttar Pradesh in the final held at Hyderabad recently.

Mumbai Indians have made one trade-off during the window by swapping their left arm pacer Ashish Nehra with left handed opener Shikhar Dhawan of Delhi Daredevils.

Lanka level in style

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From 66-2, Dilshan and Kandamby steadied the innings. Dilshan hit 11 boundaries during his 88-ball knock before hooking straight into the hands of deep square-leg in the 30th over.

The 26-year-old Kandamby, playing only his sixth one-day, batted with resolve, hitting four boundaries, off 79 balls. His previous best of 40 came against Zimbabwe in Harare last year.

Kandamby added another 41 for the fourth wicket with Mahela Jayawardene, who made 24.

Chamara Kapugedera hit two boundaries and as many sixes in his rapid 39-ball 44 as Sri Lanka added 79 runs in their last ten overs.

Gul was the pick of Pakistan bowlers with 4-58.

SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard of the second one-day international between Pakistan and Sri Lanka at the

National Stadium in Karachi on Wednesday:

SRI LANKA  
Dilshan c Misbahul b Akhtar 76  
Jayasuriya hit wicket b Gul 19  
Sangakkara run out 16  
Kandamby c Malik b Ifthikhar 59  
Jayawardene c Akmal b Gul 24  
Kapugedera c Younis b Gul 44  
Maharof b Tanvir 17  
Thushara c Akmal b Gul 8  
Muralidaran not out 11  
Kulasekara not out 0  
Extras: (lb-1, nb-6, w-9) 16  
Total: (For eight wks in 50 overs) 290  
Did not bat: Mendis.

Fall of wickets: 1-43, 2-66, 3-165, 4-190, 5-231, 6-253, 7-269, 8-289.

Bowler O M R W  
Akhtar 6 0 45 1  
Tanvir 7 0 50 1  
Ifthikhar 10 1 43 1  
Gul 9 0 58 4  
Afriqi 10 0 42 0  
Malik 8 0 51 0

PAKISTAN  
Manzoor lbw b Kulasekara 1  
Butt c Jayawardene b Jayasuriya 62  
Younis b Kulasekara 4

Misbahul c Sangakkara b Thushara 1  
Malik c Sangakkara b Muralidaran 54  
Akmal c Sangakkara b Mendis 6  
Afriqi c Kulasekara 6  
Muralidaran 14  
Tanvir c Dilshan b Muralidaran 1  
Gul lbw b Mendis 0  
Ifthikhar lbw b Mendis 5  
Akhtar not out 1  
Extras: (b-1, lb-3, w-8) 12  
Total: (All out in 34.5 overs) 161  
Fall of wickets: 1-6, 2-14, 3-17, 4-125, 5-125, 6-145, 7-150, 8-151, 9-153.

Bowler O M R W  
Kulasekara 7 0 31 2  
Thushara 5 0 24 1  
Maharof 5 0 31 0  
Mendis 6.5 1 29 3  
Jayasuriya 4 1 23 1  
Muralidaran 7 1 19 3

Result: Sri Lanka won by 129 runs.  
Man-of-the-match: Tillakaratne Dilshan.  
Toss: Pakistan  
Umpires: Nigel Llong (ENG), Asad Rauf (PAK)  
Match referee: Chris Broad (ENG)

Captain urges players

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And Strauss added: "I suppose the coaches will play more of an advisory or consultancy role. It's vitally important the players are challenged to think for themselves."

The 31-year-old left-hander said he'd been encouraged by the mood of the squad when they held a team meeting last Thursday and he was adamant star batsman Pietersen would not be a divisive influence.

"Kevin was his normal self when we met up," said Strauss. "I've never seen Kevin show a negative side to him since the first day I met him."

"He's very positive, he doesn't dwell on the past and I'm sure he's already plotting ways of spanning the West Indies bowlers all over the place."

England have a good recent record against the West Indies, winning 13 out of their last 16 Tests against them spread across four series - a run stretching back nearly nine years.

And for all their recent infighting England, who head to St Kitts on Wednesday, remain favourites for a four-Test series that starts in Jamaica on February 4.

"We want to win both the Test and one-day series and start building some momentum before an important summer," Strauss said.

"The West Indies are now a very dangerous side. The likes of Ramnaresh Sarwan, Shivnarine Chanderpaul, Chris Gayle and Fidel Edwards are all very dangerous cricketers." England under Moores only won Test series against

the West Indies and New Zealand, two of world cricket's weaker five-day sides.

"We've been playing some decent cricket over the last year but we haven't nailed it home when we've needed to," Strauss said.

"If we can start being a little bit more ruthless in the way we play, we are a match for most sides."

While the official West Indies side differs significantly from the Stanford Superstars team that thrashed England by 10 wickets in their 20 million dollars Twenty20 clash in Antigua in November, they have been showing signs of improvement in Test cricket too.

They drew a series in New Zealand in December and held Sri Lanka to 1-1 in a series earlier in 2008.

Serbs dominate

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"I feel very nice and comfortable on this court," he said. "The first round was tricky, I didn't play such great tennis, but today was another story."

"Hopefully it can get better in the next match."

Third seed Safina recovered from a slow start to dominate fellow Russian Ekaterina Makarova 6-7 (3/7), 6-3, 6-0 while fifth seed Ivanovic overcame early nerves to crush Alberta Brianti of Italy 6-3, 6-2.

Safina has lost only once this year, to compatriot Elena Dementieva in the final of the Sydney International, and is one of the favourites after a breakthrough 2008.

"She played a very good

match. She gave me a hard time," Safina admitted. "But when I lost the first set I raised my level and that's why I won quite easily after that."

"We don't know each other, I've never played her and I've never seen her play. That's maybe why I had to find out in the first set how to play her."

Next up for Safina is Estonian 25th seed Kaia Kanepi.

Ivanovic made the final here last year where she lost to Maria Sharapova, but her late-season form in 2008 left plenty to be desired.

The 21-year-old though seems to be getting into her groove in Melbourne, where she feels at home with family and friends living here. It

helped her produce a convincing display against Brianti.

"I think I improved a lot since my first match and I'm very pleased with that," said the former world number one.

"But there are still some areas that I have to work on and improve on."

Andy Roddick continued his tilt at the title with a four-set victory over Belgium's Xavier Malisse while Argentinean hotshot Juan Del Potro also won.

Australian wildcard Jelena Dokic, a former world number four, extended her emotional Grand Slam comeback by beating Russian 17th seed Anna Chakvetadze 6-4, 6-7 (4/7), 6-3.

No goals

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Touring Faranganj, who had scored a last minute equaliser in a 1-1 draw in the first-leg in Dhaka, held the hosts again to maintain sixth place with 20 points.

Chittagong Abahani, at eighth place on 17 points, have opened up a six-point lead over Arambagh to brighten their chances to book a place in the Super Cup for the top eight B. League teams.

Happy Mirza

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"When you're playing the world number 10 you expect her to raise her game under pressure and that is exactly what she did," she said of her opponent.

"I was a break up and I played a decent match but I still have a lot to work on."

"There are no excuses. I could blame it on a lack of match practice time, or on playing the world number 10. I had a sore stomach as well," she added.

"But at the end of the day I have to give her credit."

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

Crossword puzzle grid with clues for Across and Down words.

Cryptogram puzzle grid with letters and numbers.

CRYPTOQUIP

Yesterday's Cryptquip: IF YOU'D LIKE YOUR FOLDER FLAPS TO STAY ACCESSIBLE, YOU MIGHT CONSIDER KEEPING TABS ON THEM. Today's Cryptquip Clue: S equals L