

T20 between England & Scotland

England will face Scotland in a Twenty20 international for the first time when the two sides meet at Trent Bridge on June 2 as part of their preparations for the ICC World Twenty20.

The day/night match comes less than a year after the first one-day international between the two countries, in Edinburgh, was abandoned as a draw in August because of rain.

Scotland will play a second warm-up match for the World Twenty20 the day after the England game, and two days before the tournament begins.

They will face the Netherlands at the Oval in another day/night fixture.

Scotland captain Ryan Watson said Thursday: "We're really looking forward to these games. They should be a lot of fun, and a highlight of the forthcoming season."

However, our thoughts are firmly on the forthcoming ICC World Cup Qualifier in South Africa. We cannot afford to look any further ahead than that."

Cricket Scotland chief executive Roddy Smith added: "This is really tremendous news. We played the first-ever one-day international against England only last year."

Now we're being pitched in against them in this Twenty20 warm-up game. You can be certain that our players will be up for the challenge, and in this short form of the game anything can happen."

The Oval, the south London home of Surrey and England's oldest Test ground, is also the venue for Scotland's World Twenty20 Group D games against New Zealand on June 6 and South Africa on June 7.

Veeru warns NZ bowlers

India's aggressive opening batsman Virender Sehwag has warned New Zealand's bowlers to expect more fireworks in Friday's second one-day international.

The strike power of Sehwag, Mahendra Singh Dhoni and Suresh Raina against a sometimes-wayward New Zealand attack took India to a 53-run win in the rain-marred opening game of the five-match series on Tuesday.

"If we are careful at the beginning, we are confident of scoring 300 every time," Sehwag told reporters.

When India last visited New Zealand in 2002-03 they lost the one-day series 5-2 after being confronted by green, seaming wickets. This year, the pitches do not harbour the same dangers.

"This time the ball is coming on to the bat nicely, flat and hard. The last time we didn't get this kind of wicket," said Sehwag, who struck 77 off 56 balls in the first one-dayer in Napier.

In contrast, New Zealand's batting line-up faces the possible loss of batting strike weapon Brendon McCullum, who aggravated an old injury when he was struck on the right thumb while wicketkeeping in Napier.

He has already been ruled out from keeping on Friday and a decision will be made before the game on whether he will be able to play as a batsman only.

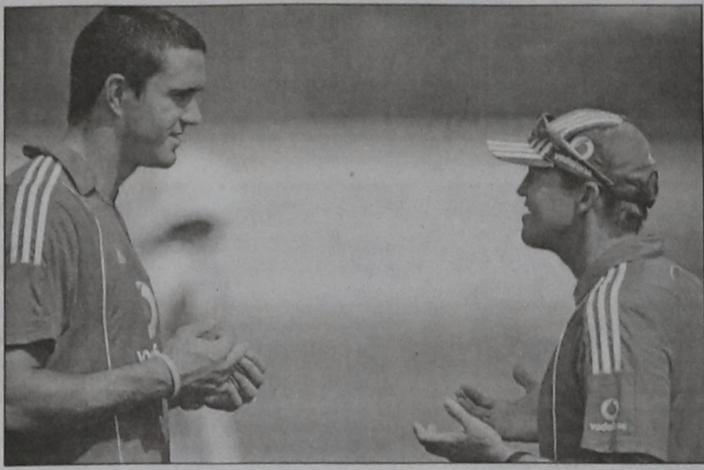
Wicketkeeper Peter McGlashan is in line to make his ODI debut, with middle-order batsman Neil Broom likely to miss out.

LOCAL SNIPPETS

FROM PAGE 17 DOA MAHFIL Bangladesh Olympic Association (BOA) organised a doa mahfil at the NSC conference room in memory of late Maj Gen Shakil Ahmed, the DG of Bangladesh Rifles, who was killed in a mutiny at the BDR headquarters last week.

BOA secretary-general Kutubuddin Ahmed, vice-president Mizanur Rahman Manu and officials of BOA and other federations attended the doa mahfil.

Biman crash FROM PAGE 17 BRIEF SCORES SURJO TORUN: 235 all out in 49.3 overs (Zunaid 83, Shaful 30*, extras: 25; Shahjada 4-19) BIMAN: 91 all out in 26 overs (Hasanuzzaman 23, extras 1; Sajib 4-7) Result: Surjo Torun won by 144 runs MOHAMMEDAN: 189-8 in 50 overs (Shamsur 59, extras 13; Asif 2-39) BKSP: 166 all out in 46.4 overs (Morninul 46, extras 10) Result: Mohammedan won by 23 runs



England superstar Kevin Pietersen (L) talks with interim coach Andy Flower during a training session at Port of Spain in Trinidad on Wednesday.

Last chance for England Final Test against WI starts today

Cricket

AFP, Port of Spain

England will make a desperate bid to win the fifth and final Test against West Indies, starting on Friday at Queen's Park Oval, to level the series and keep the Wisden Trophy which symbolises Test supremacy between the two sides.

England trail in the five-Test series 0-1, following an innings and 23-run defeat in the opening Test at Sabina Park in Jamaica, where they were dismissed for their third-lowest total of 51 in the second innings.

The second Test at the Vivian Richards Cricket Ground in Antigua was aborted because of an unsuitable outfield, while the third Test at the Antigua Recreation Ground and the fourth Test at Kensington Oval in Barbados both ended in draws.

England captain Andrew Strauss admitted that now his side's original objective to win the series has been scuttled, they would now have to settle on a share of the series which would allow them to keep the trophy.

Strauss's big challenge in the previous two Tests is that England have been unable to bowl West Indies out twice on flat pitches, and he is hoping for a surface that would allow for a far more competitive Test.

But he would still need to assemble the kind of bowling arsenal that would be able to bowl England to victory, and playing five frontline bowlers is an option.

West Indies just need to draw the last Test to secure their first series win over England for 11 years, but their captain Chris Gayle believes

that's a negative approach and will be seeking a victory to formalise the series result.

"Definitely, we are looking for the win," he said. For the fourth straight Test, West Indies have had the luxury of selecting an unchanged 13-member squad which suggests that things have started to settle down in their camp, but there are still two places in the final 11 open to question.

Left-handed all-rounder Ryan Hinds has not taken ownership of the No.4 position, and Lendl Simmons, whose form in the domestic first-class championship which is being contested simultaneously with the international series for the first time, may very well make his Test debut on home soil.

And there have been strong calls for the young and raw Lionel Baker to be given a chance ahead of Daren Powell, whose inconsistent fast bowling has often relieved the pressure.

The last 10 Tests at the Queen's Park Oval have all produced outright wins, and fortunately for England, West Indies have been on the wrong side seven times, including twice to the visitors.

SQUADS WEST INDIES (from): Chris Gayle (captain), Lionel Baker, Sulieman Benn, Shivnarine Chanderpaul, Fidel Edwards, Ryan Hinds, Brendan Nash, Daren Powell, Denesh Ramdin, Ramnaresh Sarwan, Lendl Simmons, Devon Smith, Jerome Taylor.

ENGLAND (from): Andrew Strauss (captain), Alastair Cook (vice captain), Tim Ambrose, James Anderson, Ian Bell, Ravi Bopara, Stuart Broad, Paul Collingwood, Steve Harmison, Amjad Khan, Monty Panesar, Kevin Pietersen, Adil Rashid, Owais Shah, Ryan Sidebottom, Graeme Swann.

SA bowlers under focus Second Test against Aussies from today

Cricket

AFP, Durban

South Africa's bowlers will be under the spotlight in the second Test against Australia which starts at Kingsmead here on Friday.

South African captain Graeme Smith blamed the bowlers who he said were "not precise enough" in the first Test in Johannesburg, which Australia won by 162 runs.

By contrast, an inexperienced Australian bowling attack were superb, maintaining consistent accuracy and not allowing South Africa's batsmen to get on top.

The Johannesburg defeat left South Africa needing to win both remaining matches to take over Australia's mantle as International Cricket Council Test champions.

It is a predicament from which South Africa have extricated themselves twice in the past two home seasons, however.

In 2006/07 South Africa lost the first Test against India but won the next two Tests to take the series. They did the same against the West Indies last season.

Australia, though, are likely to be a tougher proposition. Stung by losing a home series against South Africa earlier in the same season, they belied their underdog status with a clinical performance.

Captain Ricky Ponting said his team had worked hard and "talked a lot" after the home defeats.

With only three days between matches, it was the turn of the South Africans to do some hard talking.

Wicketkeeper Mark Boucher revealed that there had been a no-holds-barred discussion in

the Wanderers dressing room after the game. Boucher said the bowlers had been too loose in conceding 466 runs in the first innings, which was far too big a total on a lively pitch.

Kingsmead groundsman Wilson Ngobese said he had been able to prepare what he expected would be a good, hard pitch with an even covering of grass.

The wicket has usually favoured fast bowlers and barring injuries Australia are likely to field an unchanged team, again without a specialist spin bowler.

But the tourists have injury concerns, with two fast bowlers flown in to bolster their squad. Tasmanian Brett Geves arrived as cover for Doug Bollinger, who was not picked for the Wanderers Test but suffered an injury while practicing.

Cricket Australia announced Wednesday that Steve Magoffin of Western Australia would also be joining the squad because Ben Hilfenhaus and Peter Siddle, who provided excellent support for strike bowler Mitchell Johnson in Johannesburg, had minor injuries.

According to a statement, Hilfenhaus was suffering from soreness in his lower back and Siddle had pain in his left foot.

SQUADS SOUTH AFRICA: Graeme Smith (captain), Neil McKenzie, Hashim Amla, Jacques Kallis, AB de Villiers, JP Duminy, Mark Boucher, Morne Morkel, Paul Harris, Dale Steyn, Makhaya Ntini and Albie Morkel.

AUSTRALIA (from): Ricky Ponting (captain), Simon Katich, Phil Hughes, Michael Hussey, Michael Clarke, Marcus North, Brad Haddin, Andrew McDonald, Mitchell Johnson, Peter Siddle, Ben Hilfenhaus, Brett Geves, Steve Magoffin, Nathan Hauritz and Bryce McGain.

Football ready to thrill

FROM PAGE 17 valuable player. The best goalkeeper and the best local referee will receive Tk one lakh and Tk 50,000 respectively.

Every ticket holder of any match of the tournament will get discount while buying a cellphone from Citycell.

Rewards apart, there would be efforts to revive football's old glory though this competition.

"The passion for football in Bangladesh is now in memory only. It is a challenge for us to take it to homes of people through this tournament and inspire the players to give their best," said tournament committee chairman Harunur Rashid.

"This is certainly the biggest domestic tournament in this region in aspect of prize money and I believe it could be biggest in Asia too. So it would be able to thrill not only

fans at home but also abroad," added the BFF executive committee member.

Citycell's head of marketing Anand Raja Singham said his organisation is sharing a dream with the BFF.

"Bangladesh will turn 50 in 2021 and I want to see them play in the World Cup Football next year. We are taking the first steps towards that goal," said Anand.

"We are working together to realise this dream. I hope with 160 million people, Bangladesh should be able to achieve more than smaller nations have.

To me, the image of Bangladesh is the image of very resilient people. I have seen them with high spirits against adversities. This country has presented three Noble Prize winners and we want this type of achievement in football," he added.

Nitol Group chairman Matlub Ahmed, whose sponsorship was the inspiration behind the now-defunct National Football League for three years in a row, said he returned to the scene as he sees a chance of change.

"I never thought so much money could be involved in a tournament in Bangladesh. So I want this to be a success.

"We have been helping in development of the game for long and in future, if the BFF needs, I would talk to India's famous Tata Football Academy for any type of help."

Meanwhile, Bangladesh Television has agreed to telecast 12 matches including the Cup semifinals and the Plate and Cup finals live, informed tournament committee vice-chairman and BFF vice-president Shawkat Ali Khan Jahangir.

Umpire Raza recuperating

AFP, Lahore

Pakistani umpire Ahsan Raza was fast recovering Thursday after undergoing major surgery for serious bullet injuries during an attack on Sri Lanka's cricketers, a family member said.

The 34-year-old Raza, who was reserve umpire for the abandoned second Test between Pakistan and Sri Lanka, was behind the team bus when gunmen attacked the entourage in Pakistan's city of Lahore on Tuesday.

He was travelling with Simon Taufel and Steve Davis - Australians who were field umpires of the match -- and Pakistani television umpire Nadeem Ghouri and umpires' manager Abdul Sami. Their driver was killed.

"Raza is fast recovering," his elder brother Mohsin Raza told AFP.

"We thank the Almighty that he saved our brother and thank everyone for their support. My brother is a kind and loving chap and has three daughters," he said.

Tuesday's attack in Lahore -- which left six police and two civilians dead, and several Sri Lankan cricketers wounded -- is seen as a huge security lapse.

Raza was hit in the back by a bullet that seriously injured his lungs and liver, and underwent two major operations.

Raza played 21 first class matches as a talented wicketkeeper who also used to bat lower in the order.

He turned to umpiring four years ago, making his debut as an international reserve official in the series between Pakistan and Sri Lanka in 2008-09.

Sanath wants

FROM PAGE 17 Jayasuriya who currently holds the record of playing the highest number of one day internationals, flew home yesterday night but will be back on March 11 to feature in Mohammedan's match against Biman on the 12th.

No stopping

FROM PAGE 17 A draw against Amena, on nine points, would take the solo leader beyond the reach of Rani Hamid. But the veteran 17-time champion Rani, who is on eight points, can spoil the hopes of Liza, the last year's runner-up now on 8.5 points.

In the other tenth round matches, Liza beat Rokhsana Titi, Rani Hamid beat Ahly Sarkar, Nazrana Khan Eva beat Jahannara Haque Runu, WFM Zakia Sultana beat Amena Khatun and Farjana Hossain Anne beat Protiva Talukder.

Unfortunate

FROM PAGE 17 "If the series is cancelled then we will be left with no international cricket for three months. In that case we might have to leave for England early so that we can play some warm-up matches," said the shaven-headed coach.

Chief selector Rafiqul Alam, who was scheduled to announce the squad for the series yesterday, still believes that it might take place in the last week of this month or in April.

"I was getting ready to announce the squad when I heard about the postponement of the series. It's a blow but it was not unexpected," said Rafiqul.

"May be this is not an ideal situation at the moment but I believe things will improve quickly and we might still have a chance to reschedule the tour later this month or in April," the chief selector observed.

He said that the series could have provided Bangladesh a big chance for match experience before the T20 World Cup.

Security

FROM PAGE 17 "Every country discusses the security situation with its government. We did ask for clearance for the tour from our government. The International Cricket Council (ICC) has asked them to implement a plan so they needed time.

"Bangladesh will come back to us and we (will) hopefully get a revised itinerary later."

Butt said he hopes to play the New Zealand series at home but added it was too early to say anything definite about the November-December tour.

"I would love to host them," said Butt. "Now it's up to the security situation in Pakistan and we will discuss other options as well."

Kiwis want to draw level Second ODI against India today

Cricket

CRICINFO, Wellington

As expected, India shrugged off the Twenty20 aberration to hand New Zealand a heavy defeat in the first one-day international on Tuesday. The hosts have to do all the running now. The pitch for today's second match here looks slow and is not expected to assist seam movement.

Virender Sehwag has already said that if India's batting clicks, they can score 300 in every game. Even so, New Zealand couldn't have chosen a better venue to level the series. It's their favourite venue and captain Daniel Vettori said his players feel very comfortable playing here.

However, they have a key injury worry ahead of the game. Brendon McCullum has a thumb injury and Peter McGlashan has been called up to the squad in case McCullum doesn't recover in time. If McCullum doesn't play then Martin Gupitll will open. Without McCullum, New Zealand might struggle to get someone to guide the inexperienced batting line-up.

India will again be without the injured Ishant Sharma. But it is their batting that hurt New Zealand in the first game. As they did in Sri Lanka, India have continued to shuffle the batting order. Dhoni came in at No 3 in the last game and if you believe Sehwag, New Zealand were caught unawares wondering if Dhoni had come to pinch hit or bat as a regular No. 3. The Indians are incredibly confident but occasionally, as happened during the Twenty20, they become complacent. The twin losses may actually have done India a lot of good.

Jesse Ryder has already become one of New Zealand's key batsmen. He has a healthy strike rate of 80.61 but is yet to successfully convert

his starts. New Zealand would hope that Ryder can improve on his average of 31.

On the other hand, this series offers India's Suresh Raina another chance to display his consistency. He has begun well; can he carry on? During his injury and absence from the Indian team, Rohit Sharma got a chance but contrived to waste it. In Sri Lanka, Mahendra Singh Dhoni said publicly that Raina is ahead in the pecking order and will get to stake his claim. So far he has done well.

If McCullum plays, Neil Broom is most likely to miss out. Allrounder Grant Elliott, who replaced Nathan McCullum at No 7, and Kyle Mills, who returned from injury, didn't have a great first game but are expected to bounce back strongly. Mills had a good tour of Australia, picking nine wickets at 20.

India are not expected to take any risks with Ishant Sharma. Praveen Kumar, the man who replaced Ishant, had a stellar first game but Munaf Patel will have to step up.

The teams haven't managed to get used to the conditions yet since they practised at the Basin Reserve. The wicket is supposed to be similar to the Twenty20 game -- slow and not much seam movement on offer. Rain is expected; watch out for Messrs Duckworth and Lewis to get into the equation at some point.

TEAMS NEW ZEALAND (from): Jesse Ryder, Brendon McCullum, Martin Gupitll, Ross Taylor, Jacob Oram, Neil Broom, Grant Elliott, Daniel Vettori (captain), Kyle Mills, Ian Bulter or Tim Southee, Iain O'Brien, Peter McGlashan. INDIA: Virender Sehwag, Sachin Tendulkar, Gautam Gambhir, Yuvraj Singh, Suresh Raina, Mahendra Singh Dhoni, Yusuf Pathan, Praveen Kumar, Harbhajan Singh, Munaf Patel, Zaheer Khan.

From glory to nightmare

Cricket

AFP, Lahore

On March 17, 1996, Sri Lankan cricketers left Lahore's Gaddafi Stadium with glowing faces after winning the World Cup, upsetting the more highly ranked Australia.

Thirteen years later, the same ground hosted a nightmare for the Sri Lankans they were evacuated by Pakistan Air Force helicopters, wounded and shocked by terrorist attacks half a mile (800 metres) away from the stadium.

Two members of the 25-man squad airlifted from the stadium -- off-spinner Muttiah Muralitharan and allrounder Chaminda Vaas -- were also part of the 1996 team.

"The stadium gives us a nostalgic feeling. It is one of my favourite grounds. It is a happy hunting ground for us," said Muralitharan in January, after Sri Lanka clinched a one-day series against Pakistan by winning the third match at the stadium.

But Tuesday's attack -- which left six policemen and two civilians dead, and seven Sri Lankan cricketers and an assistant coach wounded -- has probably turned the happy hunting ground into a no-go zone, both for Sri Lanka and other international teams.

"We are lucky to be standing before you. The whole episode is nightmarish," Muralitharan said, after his team returned to Sri Lanka early Wednesday.

Groundman Haji Bashir is another person who has witnessed both triumph and tragedy for the Sri Lankans at the Gaddafi stadium.

"On that day (when they won the 1996 World Cup), their faces were lit with happiness, but on

Tuesday it was exactly opposite," Bashir said. "I don't know when I will see them again."

Built in the 1950s, the Gaddafi stadium at first hosted all sports. It was previously called the Olympic stadium before staging a Test match in November 1959 between Pakistan and Australia.

Since then the sprawling stadium with a capacity of 24,000 spectators has been reserved for cricket matches only.

In all, 40 Tests have been played here, of which Pakistan have won 12, lost six and drawn 22.

The stadium has hosted 58 one-day internationals, with the home team winning 29, losing 18 and drawing one. There have been 10 neutral games (involving teams other than Pakistan).

In 1974, then prime minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto renamed the stadium after Libya's President Moamer Kadhafi.

The stadium, located in the posh Gulberg area, has two entrances, one from the Ferozepur Road and the other from the Liberty roundabout, where Tuesday's attack took place.

The stadium is due to host the 2011 World Cup semifinal but whether any of 1996's happy memories will be repeated must now be in doubt.

The International Cricket Council and its members countries have already cast doubt over Pakistan hosting 2011 World Cup matches.

Even the Pakistan Cricket Board, which is supposed to work with co-hosts Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and India, is not sure what the security situation will be in two year's time.

The ICC has already moved cricket's second-most coveted tournament -- the Champions Trophy, due to be played this year -- away from Pakistan over security fears.

IPL in limbo

Cricket

AFP, New Delhi

Hopes for a big money-spinning cricket season in India were dealt a further blow Thursday as calls mounted for the billion-dollar Indian Premier League (IPL) to be postponed due to security concerns.

At stake is a tournament that has generated more than 900 million dollars in television rights, and tens of millions in advertising, players' fees, merchandising and tickets plus knock-on benefits for the travel and tourism sectors.

But the Indian government says it wants the IPL Twenty20 matches, due to start next month, to be postponed. It argues its priority is to provide security for general elections occurring at the same time.

Indians are already jittery after the carnage

in Mumbai brought by Islamist gunman a little over three months ago, and the attack in Pakistan against the Sri Lankan cricket team has sharpened the focus on internal security.

Half of all respondents in an NDTV news channel poll said the security of 700 million voters in the world's largest democracy must come ahead of the IPL, and that the tournament must be re-scheduled.

The Hindustan Times newspaper agreed the government had made a "sound, sensible" decision to put pressure the IPL organisers, who are reluctant to halt the event after its huge inaugural success last year.

"Why make it easier for the terrorists? Why deny our general election the full attention of the security services?" the paper said.

"Our priority must be to ensure the peaceful conduct of the general election. A cricket tournament, no matter how popular or lucrative, must wait."

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer. Includes grid and clues for Across and Down words.

CRYPTOQUIP. Includes a grid and the text: LUQ TZQTIZ, AZPHLFMW QYZV, LEZ PZCL XZLEQA LQ CEOL, H AQQV, UZVZ WFFYFMW, LEZFY KIQCFMW HVWOXZMLC.

CRYPTOQUIP. Includes the text: Yesterday's Cryptoquip: I MYSELF PROBABLY WON'T USE MUCH CURRY. BUT IF YOU DO, THEN I SAY "MORE POWDER TO YOU!". Today's Cryptoquip Clue: T equals P.