

BD A play 1st 4-dayer today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Bogra

The first four-dayer of the two-match series between Bangladesh A and Maharashtra Cricket Association (MCA) will start at the Shaheed Chandu Stadium in Bogra today.

Both teams promised to play good cricket after the one-day series, which ended in a 1-1 draw.

"We played here, so we are well aware of the pitch. You need to bat and bowl well in this pitch if you want to produce any result," said Bangladesh A captain Mehrab Hossain.

"We are looking forward to continue our good performance. We will try to play better cricket here," said 20-year-old MCA skipper Harshad Khadiwale.

MCA bounced back in the three-match one-day series to make it 1-1.



BROTHERS IN ARMS: A couple of Manchester United (L) and Barcelona supporters sing and dance in front of the Fontana di Trevi on the eve of the Champions League final in Rome on Tuesday.

PHOTO: AFP

Fans await an epic

AFP, Rome



Tens of thousands of fans poured into Rome Wednesday, warming up for an epic Champions League Final between Manchester United and Barcelona in a carnival atmosphere despite a heavy police presence.

Supporters of both sides dressed up as Roman legions and gladiators, posing for pictures around the Coliseum and St Peter's Square in the countdown to the evening kick-off, some of them sharing a drink at cafes despite an alcohol ban.

"There is a great atmosphere in the city centre. It's nice to see the two sets of fans mixing so well," said one English fan who would only give his first name Dave who had travelled with a friend from London for the match.

"We spent the morning down by the Coliseum and it seemed to be four to one Barcelona fans."

Police said there had been no serious incidents of violence but some 10,000 officers have been mobilised for the operation amid fears that headline fans of AS Roma, known as the

Ultras, will try and attack English fans.

A small number of English and Spanish police were also on duty, both in uniform and undercover.

While some 50,000 fans of both teams have tickets for the match at the Stadio Olimpico, many more have travelled to the Eternal City for the contest between two of the most famous teams in world football against each other.

The prefect of police Giuseppe Caruso said that his officers were keeping an eye out for "a few dozen" hardcore English fans who could pose a potential hooligan problem.

The main fear is of violence between English and Roma supporters in a replay of the clashes that broke when United played in the Italian capital in December 2007.

Fans from other English clubs, including Arsenal and Liverpool, have also been attacked during times in Rome in recent years.

Police said they had only had to deal with minor incidents so far although one English supporter was slightly injured after being stabbed in the early hours.

"At about three o'clock in the morning (0100 GMT), an English supporter was slightly injured in the thigh by a blow from a knife," said

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Victoria pulverise Barguna

SPORTS REPORTER

Riding on two brilliant hattricks, Victoria Sporting Club of Moulvibazar drubbed Barguna Zilla School 10-0 in a final round match of the Citycell National School Football Championship at the Abhani Club ground yesterday.

Khaled scored four goals while Babu scored a hatrick, Ismat Ronny struck twice and Jayed netted one goal for the winners.

In another match, Kayagola Hat High School of Nilphamari blanked Cox's Bazar Ramu Khijari High School 2-0 at the same venue.

At the Bangabandhu National Stadium, Zia Shar Karkhana High School of Brahmanbaria defeated Tangail Shuti VM Pilot High School 2-1 while Narayanganj Laxminarayan Cotton Mills

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Tigers' tough workout

Second practice match today

TIGERCRIKET.COM, Oxfordshire



New Zealand in the first of the additional practice matches at Wormsley Cricket Ground on Tuesday.

Today the team travels to Kent for the second warm up against Holland. The Tigers failed to practice yesterday, due to light rain.

"It was a good outing in the park for us against some quality players but I think we let ourselves down in the last five overs when only 33 runs came. We had wickets in hand and still about 15-20 runs short," said captain Mohammad Ashraf after the four-wicket loss against the Kiwis.

Bangladesh, opting to bat, were nicely placed at 87 for 3 after 11 overs but then the runs dried out, especially after the departure of Shakib Al Hasan who made 35 off 27 with some spanking pulls and drives. Ashraf (13) himself flicked a six and square cut for a four off the bowling of paceman Ian Butler but was out in the same over when a ball jagged back from outside off to hit his stumps.

"It is not easy to defend 146 but the bowlers brought us back into the game. I am happy with the spirit we showed out there and the way we fought till the last ball. We have to improve in all areas and that's what practice matches are for. From that perspective this was a good start and now we'll be able to better assess where we are," added Ashraf.

Tamim had helped himself to a 13-ball 19 with a four boundaries which included a drive through covers and a straight one that never left the grass. That showed the intent which Ashraf, Shakib and Mahmudullah Riyad had continued to display before they got out. Riyad (43 off 41; 4x4) came in at five and worked the ball beautifully and hit boundaries when the opportunity came. Just when he started to open up Shakib fell at long on when Nathan McCullum dived forward and took a stunning catch off a flat hit. The same fielder had dropped an easier catch of Shakib off the previous ball.

The conditions, for the first time since they landed here was typically English. It had drizzled the night before and there was quite a strong chilly breeze blowing across the lush valleys of the Wormsley Estate. The sun did come out after the match got underway but the wind remained. Still the Bangladesh players

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Did U Know?

Robert Tinas was the first American to teach karate in the United States. He opened a karate school in Arizona in 1946.



Patrice Evra

(Man United's French defender)

"Lionel Messi is a great player. I might stop him 10 times, but if on the 11th he goes past me and scores, people will say I have played badly against him."



ESPN Sportscenter India Sports News Live at 8:30pm

School football

SPORTS REPORTER

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At the Bangabandhu National Stadium, Zia Shar Karkhana High School of Brahmanbaria defeated Tangail Shuti VM Pilot High School 2-1 while Narayanganj Laxminarayan Cotton Mills played to a 4-4 draw with Gaibandha Govindaganj Multipurpose High School.

Raja Suryakumar Institute of Rajbari beat Azimuddin High School of Kishoreganj 3-2 while Shingra Dum Dum School and College of Natore split points with Netrakona High School playing to a goalless draw at the Brother's Union ground.

Back where it started

AFP, London



Cricket's newest format returns to its birthplace when England hosts the ICC World Twenty20 next month.

But, as with all the other forms of one-day cricket first played in England at county level, the 'mother country' has found herself having to play catch-up with the rest of the world.

Originally conceived as a fun way of bringing new audiences, particularly those who couldn't watch cricket during the working day, into the game, Twenty20 has taken the sport by storm.

Tournaments such as the Indian Premier League (IPL) are now far more lucrative per match for a player than five-day Test cricket, the traditional pinnacle of the sport.

India, whose administrators were originally hostile to Twenty20 because they feared its commercial impact upon the 50-over game, won the inaugural global tournament in South Africa two years ago.

Nine members of that winning squad, which defeated arch-rivals Pakistan by five runs in a thrilling final in Johannesburg, will be coming to England.

But, in what above all other types of cricket is a game heavily weighted in favour of batsmen, India will be without master run-maker Sachin Tendulkar, who has now opted out of Twenty20

internationals.

Generally short boundaries and fielding restrictions put a premium on big-hitting batsmen and in Yuvraj Singh they have someone who struck England's Stuart Broad for six sixes in an over in South Africa.

Tendulkar, who himself played in this year's IPL, warned it was important that opens Yuvraj and Gautam Gambhir were refreshed after failing to find top form in the IPL.

"I think the key would be how soon they can shed the fatigue factor," Tendulkar said.

Wicket-taking bowlers are an invaluable commodity in a game where economy rates can go out the window and India look to have a promising pace attack.

Left-armers Rudra Pratap Singh, who took 12 wickets in South Africa in 2007, will be supported this time around by Zaheer Khan and Ishant Sharma.

Pakistan, starved of international cricket at home after a terror attack on the Sri Lanka team bus in Lahore in March made the country a 'no-go zone', will fancy their chances of going one better this time around.

"I thought Australia would thrash them in the one-off T20 match in Dubai but it was the other way round and now, if Pakistan play to their potential, they can win the title," Pakistan great Wasim Akram told AFP this month.

Australia have dominated all forms of cricket during the last decade except Twenty20 and captain Ricky Ponting is determined to

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Strauss rested from T20s

CRICINFO, undated



England's Test captain, Andrew Strauss, will play no part in Middlesex's Twenty20 Cup campaign, after it was decided by the England management

that he should concentrate solely on first-class cricket ahead of the Ashes, which begins in Cardiff on July 8.

Despite his current fine form in both Tests and 50-over internationals, Strauss opted to stand down from England's World Twenty20 squad because the format didn't suit his accumulative style. Now, despite Middlesex being the reigning Twenty20 Cup champions, he will remain on the sidelines until the resumption of the County Championship on June 6.

"Andrew Strauss will not take part in Middlesex's Twenty20 Cup campaign in order to focus on the longer form of the game ahead of the Ashes," the England team director, Andy Flower, said in a press release.

Strauss is one of four players currently

involved in the ODI series against West Indies who will be unavailable to their counties ahead of the forthcoming World Twenty20. The England new-ball pairing of James Anderson and Stuart Broad have also been told to rest, along with Matt Prior, who is not in the Twenty20 squad, but who damaged his right ring finger during the closing stages of the second Test in Chester-le-Street.

"Anderson and Broad will be rested from this week's Twenty20 Cup fixtures due to their recent heavy workloads... against West Indies," Flower said. "We believe they will benefit from a brief rest ahead of the ICC World Twenty20. Prior will be rested from the Twenty20 Cup as he needs to allow time for his injured finger to recover properly."

Prior and Strauss will be available to Sussex and Middlesex respectively for their County Championship fixtures against Yorkshire and Essex, starting on June 6. For the remaining 13 players involved in England's Twenty20 campaign, they will be permitted to turn out for their counties from Wednesday through till Friday, before joining up with the national squad on Saturday.

Zia moves to three points

SPORTS REPORTER

Grand Master Ziaur Rahman drew his fourth round board against his Indian counterpart Surya Shekhar Ganguly in the Second Subic Open International Chess tournament at Subic Preport in Olongapo yesterday.

Zia improved his tally to three points.

Another Bangladeshi Grand Master Niaz Mursheed however lost his fourth round game against International Master Sadorra Julio Catalino of Philippines.

Murray struggles thru'

AFP, Paris



British third seed Andy Murray battled into the French Open last 32 on Wednesday as Roland Garros prepared to acclaim yet another record for four-time champion Rafael

Nadal.

World number three Murray overcame a stern test from Italian world 104 Potito Starace before prevailing 6-3, 2-6, 7-5, 6-4.

The 22-year-old Scotsman had to come back from 1-5 down in the third set, saving two set points, before eventually cruising to a comfortable victory as he matched his best career performance here.

"I got broken at the start of the second set and once I got broken he started to play a lot better," said Murray.

"He managed to make me move a lot with his forehand but I still found a way to win. In five-set matches, the momentum always tends to shift."

Maria Sharapova reached the French Open last 32 on Wednesday with a 6-2, 1-6, 8-6 win over Russian compatriot, and 11th seed, Nadia Petrova.

She will now play Kazakh qualifier Yaroslava Shvedova for a place in the last 16.

Later Wednesday, top seed Nadal tackles Russia's Teimuraz Gabashvili looking for another record in his remarkable career.

If the world number one prevails he will better Chris Evert's record of 30 successive wins at Roland Garros. Evert set her sequence between 1974 and 1981, although she didn't play from 1976-1978.

Women's top seed Dinara Safina enjoyed another French Open breeze, defeating teenage compatriot Vitalia Diatchenko 6-1, 6-1 to set up a last 32 clash with another Russian, Anastasia Pavlyuchenkova.

Safina, who didn't lose a game in her first round mauling of Britain's Anne Keothavong, took just 55 minutes to dispose of 18-year-old qualifier Diatchenko, the world number 151.

The world number one next faces 17-year-old

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Andy Murray of Great Britain jubilates after beating Italian Potito Starace in the French Open second round match at Roland Garros in Paris yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP