

Rainy welcome at Cox's Bazar

SPORTS REPORTER

The national cricketers took part in their first session in a rainy Cox's Bazar yesterday after arriving earlier in the afternoon.

After a recovery run in the beach, trainer Grant Luden informed that the cricketers will have a busy day today.

"There will be an explosive team building session where they will help each other in time trials. They have to carry sandbags and each other," he said.

"Afterwards, weather permitting, we will go for hill running," added the South African.

The five-day stay in Cox's Bazar is the last leg of fitness work for the cricketers who began the camp in the first week of June.

Earlier, they had a residential camp at BKSP where they took part in full fitness sessions as well as trying out other sports like boxing and football.

Vice-captain Tamim Iqbal did not travel to the beach town as the left-handed opener is preparing to fly to England to play county cricket for Nottinghamshire.

The cricketers will return to the capital on June 30 and after that the skill training will start at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur.

Premier Div basketball

SPORTS REPORTER

Dhumketu edged past Mohammadpur Basketball Club by 66-62 points in the Citycell Premier Division Basketball League at the Dhanmondi Basketball Gymnasium yesterday. Dhumketu led the first half of the keenly contested match 30-29. Amit netted 23 points for Dhumketu while Nahid scored 25 for the losing Mohammadpur.

In the matches played on Saturday night, Greggs beat Hornets SC by 84-48 points while Gregarious defeated Rangers by 59-52 points.

Critical trip

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also at work with little confidence on Bangladesh's ability.

The BCCI is implicitly behind this change and since Bangladesh were heavily involved with their claim to presidency at stake, even a good bargain with the powerful neighbours would have come as a boon.

But Asian solidarity, just like colonial collaboration, is a thing of the past and not an inch can be expected from cricket's latest clique. It is no longer region but money that polarises the members and India's wish will be top of the agenda.

Even if Bangladesh had asked for some succour, they were clearly shown the door. India will not host Bangladesh for another eight years while England have also refused to host the Tigers for Tests though they accommodated a tour during the last Future Tours Programme.

In fact, Bangladesh have been given 42 Tests in the FTP for 2012-2020, an increase of only 9 games from the previous programme.

Kamal has departed to the state-city with much vigour although possibility of bagging anything significant is minimal.

Now it remains to be seen how much the BCB president can win with his already battered cricket diplomacy.

Maruf, Kala

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convict the alleged clubs.

Chairman of the committee and BFF's senior vice-president Salam Mursedy said: "Referring to reports published on national dailies, we have called Maruf Haque and Salauddin Kala to inform us about their knowledge of match-fixing and I expect to talk to them tomorrow (Monday). This information will surely help us a lot to prepare our report."

The committee is also expected to recommend BFF to investigate the matter further through any government investigation agency.

Vettel's sixth in eight

AFP, Valencia



Defending Formula One world champion Sebastian Vettel won the European Grand Prix here on Sunday to extend his lead in the overall standings with his sixth win in eight races.

The 23-year-old German dispelled any thoughts that his last lap error in Canada a fortnight ago which cost him victory would have an adverse effect on him as he coasted home in his Red Bull to beat Spain's Fernando Alonso in a Ferrari.

Vettel's Australian teammate Mark Webber was third.

It was just the fourth time in Formula One history that all the drivers finished the race and first time since the Italian Grand Prix in 2005.

Great Britain's 2008 champion Lewis Hamilton for McLaren honoured his pledge to restrain his daredevil style and finish the race, taking fourth place.

Brazilian Felipe Massa in the second Ferrari and Briton Jenson Button, in the second McLaren, finished fifth and sixth.

German Nico Rosberg was seventh for Mercedes and Spaniard Jaime Alguersuari produced a stunning drive to take eighth for Toro Rosso with Germans Adrian Sutil ninth for Force India and Nick Heidfeld 10th for Renault.

"Ooooooh yes, baby!" screamed Vettel over his team radio after winning. "That is better than anything you can imagine this year. Yes. Yehhhh!"

Vettel, whose other two finishes this year were as runner-up, produced the perfect riposte to those who felt he might buckle under pressure.

Team chief Christian Horner paid tribute to Vettel.

"He just enjoyed this afternoon as you could see. He drove a fantastic race and

he got everything right. It was just perfect."

On a sweltering early summer afternoon by the Mediterranean, Vettel produced a start to match the weather as the air temperature rose beyond 30 degrees Celsius and the track temperature hit the high-40's.

This signalled potential degradation problems for the tyres, but Vettel made light of any concerns as he pulled clear without any fuss to lead by 1.3 seconds at the end of the opening lap.

Both McLarens were slow to pull off the grid and gave the Ferraris of Alonso and Massa an invitation to attack. Webber, caught in a scarlet pincer

move, managed to survive.

That left him second behind the champion with Alonso third, Massa fourth and Hamilton fifth at the end of the opening lap, Rosberg also having started well to find his way past Button into sixth.

The 2009 champion, however, was not content to bide his time and found a way past the young German with a late-braking move into Turn Two that lifted him into the top six.

The positions pretty much stayed the same in a race lacking in the drama from Canada a fortnight ago with only Alonso's daring overtaking of Webber enough to send the home crowd into ecstasy.



PHOTO: AFP

Red Bull Racing's German driver Sebastian Vettel raises his arms in celebration of winning the European Grand Prix at the Valencia Street Circuit yesterday.

Shakib propels Worcs

Cricket

SPORT DESK

Bangladesh captain Shakib Al Hasan's bowling-heavy form for Worcestershire continued as he was dismissed for just 5 while taking 4 wickets for 31 runs in Worcestershire's 41-run win over Yorkshire in their Friends Life t20 match at New Road, Worcester yesterday.

Shakib faced eight balls before he fell victim to Yorkshire medium pacer Rich Pyra, but teammates Moeen Ali (40 off 20), Alexei Kervezee (56 off 36) and James Cameron (55 off 37) more than made up for it to take the

score to a formidable 183 for 7.

Like on Saturday against Leicestershire, Shakib was Worcestershire's best bowler, breaking the back of the Yorkshire batting by claiming the four middle order wickets of Adam Lyth, Anthony McGrath, Joe Root and Ajmal Shahzad. His figures at one stage read 15 for 4 from three overs, but Shakib was taken to 16 in his last over.

Yorkshire's England cricketer Tim Bresnan tried to make a match out of it with some late order blows, but Yorkshire were always behind the eight-ball, and were eventually dismissed for 142 off the last ball of the 19th over.

SPL to go on sans India

Cricket

AFP, Colombo

Sri Lanka Cricket will push ahead with its inaugural premier league with Australian and Pakistani players, despite a no-show by Indian stars, the island's sports minister said Sunday.

"We will lose a bit of money because Indian players are not coming but the tournament will be played as planned," Mahindananda Aluthgamage told AFP after failed talks to bring the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) on board.

Fast bowlers Praveen Kumar and Munaf Patel were among 12 Indian players who were blocked by the BCCI from playing in the T20 Sri Lankan Premier League (SLPL) from July 10 to August 4.

The minister said the Indian board's reluctance stemmed from media reports that the event was being organised by a Singapore-based company with alleged links to Lalit Modi, the sacked former boss of the Indian

Premier League.

"Mr Modi is not involved in our tournament. But we have to accept India's decision. We remain friends with India," Aluthgamage said.

The London-based Modi faces criminal charges, including false accounting, and accusations by the BCCI that more than 10 million dollars were misappropriated during his three-year tenure as IPL chairman.

The Singapore-based Somerset Entertainment Ventures, who won the marketing rights for five years, has already paid an advance of 300,000 dollars to Sri Lanka Cricket, the local Sunday Times newspaper reported.

It said India's reluctance had led to broadcaster ESPN withdrawing support for the tournament, which will feature seven teams and will include a mix of local and international players.

The newspaper said top Sri Lanka Cricket officials met Somerset chairman Sandeep M Bhammar and chief executive Kunal Bhargava on Friday for talks, but details of the discussion remained unclear.

Ilievski imparts pressing

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left to prepare themselves before the home match and it is yet to be found how quickly they can adopt to the new coach Ilievski's strategy.

Both Emily and Mamunul said that that the style followed by Ilievski, that of pressing football, is similar to the one introduced by former coach Zoran Djordjevic introduced during SA Games, and that they would not have much difficulty adopting to Ilievski's style.

"He prefers pressing football which we had learnt from Djordjevic. In this style you regain possession as soon as possible after losing it and I think we will be able to cope

with his strategy," said Emily.

It was seen during the practice that the coach preferred his players to release the ball as soon as possible and take his position while a defender or a defensive midfielder goes to the attack to strengthen the forward line keeping four defenders intact in the backline.

Ilievski is more or less happy after the session and apparently declined to mention whether any player drew his attention.

"The standard of Bangladesh football is not like that of Brazil and they don't have a player like Messi," Ilievski said. "It is a game of eleven players and I prefer to emphasise on all of them, not just a single one."

ICC's crucial meeting on

Cricket

AFP, Hong Kong

Cricket's governing body began its annual conference on Sunday with all eyes on controversial proposals to scrap its rotating presidency and bar non-Test playing nations from the next World Cup.

The International Cricket Council (ICC) kicked off four days of meetings between the chief executives' committee and executive board, followed by a full council meeting on June 30, at a glitzy hotel in downtown Hong Kong.

The conference will consider moves, reportedly spearheaded by India and England, to scrap the two-year rotational presidency, although details of any new system remain unclear.

The proposal is expected to be met with vehement opposition from Pakistan and Bangladesh, who are scheduled to nominate the body's next-but-one leader to take power from 2014.

Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) chairman Ijaz Butt told reporters before leaving for Hong Kong: "It's Pakistan's turn to nominate the president or the vice-president so we will not allow anyone to snatch that right."

"We have already shown our reservations on both the amendments and since the matter will be discussed at the meeting I am not going to make it more public."

The ICC will also review its unpopular decision to limit the 2015 World Cup, in Australia and New Zealand, to the 10 full-member teams -- excluding countries such as Ireland, the Netherlands, Canada and Kenya.

ICC president Sharad Pawar has asked his board to discuss the matter at the conference, with the governing body looking to avoid a repeat of the seven-week World Cup, deemed by some critics as unnecessarily lengthy.

Officials are believed to be in favour of retaining a 10-team limit but may consider a qualifying tournament that would give minor nations a chance of reaching the event.

Also on the agenda will be the issue of whether the ICC should adopt the controversial Decision Review System (DRS).

The ICC has announced its desire for the DRS, whereby teams will be allowed one incorrect referral per innings to the television umpire, to be used for all Tests, ODIs and International T20s.

Decisions would be checked using video, audio, ball-tracking and thermal-imaging technology in an innovation welcomed by most countries.

But powerful India, whose huge revenues give it a dominant position in the ICC, has never agreed to its use nor played a Test or one-day series when the DRS has been in operation.

Another epic by Novak, Marcos

REUTERS, London



Novak Djokovic and Marcos Baghdatis had the normally reserved Centre Court crowd rocking in the aisles on Saturday as they produced their second Wimbledon blockbuster in four years.

For the record, world number two Djokovic won 6-4, 4-6, 6-3, 6-4 but the scoreline fails to do justice to a match which had everything from temper tantrums to jaw-dropping rallies.

Serbia's Djokovic demolished his racket frame after one point that bordered on the preposterous at the end of the second set but despite feeling heavy-legged he resisted a furious barrage from the grinning Cypriot showman to reach the last 16.

The 24-year-old won 41 consecutive matches this year, including the Australian Open, but few of those wins provided the sheer sporting theatre that captivated 15,000 fans in Centre Court and millions around the world on television.

"I mean, playing here the last five years, there were not many moments when I saw practically all the Centre Court stadium on their feet," Djokovic, who faces French serve and volleyer Michael Llodra on Monday, told reporters.

"It was incredible really. It was exciting to see the Centre Court of Wimbledon being so enthusiastic about the match.

"Me as a player, I have to appreciate that and be happy I was a part of the exciting match."

Once, twice, three times Djokovic, poised to take over as world number one if Rafael Nadal fails to retain his title here, buried his racket frame into the dust patch behind the baseline until his shiny frame was in pieces -- the warning issued by the umpire almost drowned out by the din.

"I like to make sure," Djokovic, who beat Baghdatis in a five-hour epic Wimbledon quarterfinal in 2007, joked later.

DHAKA MONDAY

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TESTS THROUGH TIME



England's knight

Sir Ian Botham was the leading sports personality of his time, the anti-establishment paragon and possibly English cricket's first folk hero since the days of WG Grace. That is as much as can be said about his persona because much more significant was his on-field exploits.

His folk hero status originated from the 1981 Ashes in England which is otherwise known as 'Botham's Ashes'. Four years into his Test career, he was made captain and resigned the post after an unsuccessful tenure, and he was not in the best of states mentally. He bagged a pair in the second Test at Lord's and was not impressive with the ball either. These failures only kindled Botham's fierce competitive spirit, and what came next will forever be remembered as one of the most outrageously courageous displays of skill on a cricket pitch.

England headed to Headingly in Leeds one down in the six-match series and were in trouble pretty soon, following on after being bowled out for 174. Botham provided a glimpse of what was to follow with a swashbuckling 50 off 54 balls. In the second innings, 227 runs behind, England were disintegrating at 105 for 5 as Botham strolled out.

It was not just that he wiped out the deficit in the company of tail-enders Graham Dilley and Chris Old, neither that England's eventual lead of 130 allowed Bob Willis to put in a sensational bowling display to win the Test, but the fact that he scored those runs at better than a run a ball that turned the series on its head. He scored 149 off 148 balls, and 114 of those came in boundaries against an Aussie attack that could all but taste English blood.

He was far from satisfied with his Headingly display. There were two more performances, with the ball in the fourth Test and with the bat in the fifth, which left Australia shell-shocked. Chasing 15