



India captain Mithali Raj (on ground) does some stretching exercises after a training session ahead of their ICC Women's World Cup opener against West Indies in Mumbai today. PHOTO: AFP

Focus shifts to Mumbai

Women's World Cup kicks off today

AFP, Mumbai

The women's World Cup opens in Mumbai on Thursday with the cricketers hoping to put aside memories of an unsettling build-up and gain recognition in a country where the men's game reigns supreme.

Barely a week before the start, the International Cricket Council was forced to revise the schedule because of security concerns surrounding Pakistan's participation in Mumbai where the entire tournament was to be played.

All Group B matches, featuring Pakistan, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa, were shunted to the cricketing backwaters of Cuttack following threats from the right-wing nationalist Shiv Sena party to disrupt matches in Mumbai.

Pakistan will remain in Cuttack if they qualify for the second round, but will still have to travel to Mumbai if they make the final at the Brabourne Stadium on February 17. Indian captain Mithali Raj said she was disappointed that the Pakistani team had attracted protests.

"I personally feel that politics should not be involved in sport,"

Raj told AFP.

"Sport is more about entertainment and a fun-loving atmosphere. So we should not be getting too many political issues into it."

Preparations were also disrupted when the hosts made Mumbai's Wankhede Stadium, venue of the men's World Cup final in 2011, unavailable at the last minute.

Three grounds in Mumbai will host Group A, involving defending champions England, Sri Lanka, the West Indies and hosts India.

The players have taken the disruption in their stride and are excited about the tournament, which was first played in 1973, two years before the men's World Cup was inaugurated in 1975.

"I think it is safe to say that the women's game today is unrecognisable from when I started in 1997," said England's captain Charlotte Edwards, set to appear in her fifth World Cup.

One of the players to watch in the 10th edition of the tournament will be England wicketkeeper Sarah Taylor, who reports say could play alongside the men in Sussex county's second XI this year.

India's Raj, preparing for her fourth World Cup, hopes women's cricket will finally take off in her country where some of her male

counterparts are national icons.

"Indian society is still is not forthcoming when it comes to women's cricket," Raj said.

"Parents are still more interested in putting their girls into more feminine sports like tennis or table-tennis."

Australia go into the tournament as favourites to win their sixth title, following victory in the World Twenty20 in Sri Lanka last October.

The Australian side includes Ellyse Perry, a pace bowler who also plays football for her country, the Indian-born Lisa Stalhekar, and Alyssa Healy, niece of former Australian men's wicket-keeper Ian Healy.

Pakistan are more worried about adapting to the new one-day rules than about their security in Cuttack, where they are staying in the club house of the Barabati stadium for security reasons.

"We have not played under the new rules where five players have to be inside the circle at all times and the use of new balls from both ends," captain Sana Mir said.

"We must get used to them before the tournament starts."

Three teams from the two groups will advance to the Super Sixes round, from where the top two will qualify for the final.

U-18 cricket

SPORTS REPORTER

The second day of the fourth round of the Young Tigers U18 National Cricket Competition took place in different venues across the country yesterday. Rajshahi, who took a lead of nine runs against Dhaka North at the Cricket Garden in Rangpur, have set a target of 155. Dhaka ended the day on 3 for 1.

In the other games, Sylhet are playing Barisal at the Dinajpur Stadium, Khulna are taking on Chittagong at the Shahid Kamruzzaman Stadium in Rajshahi while Rangpur are battling against Dhaka South at the Shahid Chandu Stadium in Bogra.

SCORES IN BRIEF

RAJSHAHI: First innings 118 all out in 54.2 overs and second innings 145 all out in 61 overs (Ariful 45; Mehedi 3-44, Ariful 3-31).

DHAKA NORTH: First innings 109 all out in 53 overs (Arnan 32 no; Mehedi 5-30) and second

innings 3 for 1 in 4 overs. **SYLHET:** First innings 197 all out in 61 overs and second

innings 222 for 8 in 66 overs (Mohon 52, Anahar 40; Shawon Gazi 5-82). **BARISAL:** First

innings 138 all out in 60.5 overs (Abdullah Al Saif 71; Kamrul 4-10, Ejaj 4-49).

CHITTAGONG: First innings 241 for 8 in 90 overs and second innings 70 for no loss in 28 overs (Ashfaq Ahmed 45).

KHULNA: First innings 149 all out in 63.4 overs (Imranuzzaman 73 not out; Omar Faruk 3-3).

DHAKA SOUTH: First innings 144 all out in 56.3 overs and second innings 178 for 8 in 63 overs (Mohammad Asif 46, Shah

Alam 43; Siratin Nabi 2-36). **RANGPUR:** First

innings 151 all out in 63 overs (Abiuzzaman 44; Mahmud Koli 6-47, Shuvo 3-30).

Dutch's date with Proteas

AFP, The Hague

The Netherlands are to play South Africa in a one-day international before this year's Champions Trophy, the Royal Dutch Cricket Association announced on Wednesday.

The game on May 31 at Amstelveen is part of the Proteas' preparations for the eight-team competition in England and Wales, which starts on June 6.

BHF to celebrate 40th anniversary



SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh Hockey Federation (BHF) is set to celebrate its 40th anniversary on February 2 though gala events where former noted players and coaches will be honoured. This will be the first time since its inception in 1972 that the BHF will be celebrating its anniversary.

"We have already lost some prominent players, coaches and organisers and many have reached the end of their lives. We want to build a bridge between the past and present generation through a get-together. That's why we are going to celebrate 40th anniversary of the Bangladesh Hockey Federation," said BHF general secretary Khaza Rahmatullah at a press conference at the Maulana Bhasani Hockey Stadium yesterday.

The BHF will accord reception to five noted former hockey players - Khaza Yousuf Reza, Bashir Ahmed, Abdus Sadek, Azizullah Haider Jamal and Jummon Lusa - for their contribution to hockey. Not only the players, BHF will also award five coaches - Nurul Islam Nanna (posthumous), Abdus Salam (posthumous), Pratap Shankar Hazra, Ehtesham Sultan and Abdur Razzak Sona Mia, all former general secretaries and sponsors of BHF.

The game's governing body has also decided to award sports journalists Mohammad Kamruzzaman, Abdul Hamid (posthumous) and umpire Sheikh Nurul Islam (posthumous).

The day-long programme also includes rally, discussion, exhibition matches and cultural programmes at the hockey stadium on February 2.

The celebration of BHF's 40th anniversary gets an extra flavour as International Hockey Federation's president Leandro Negro arrives today, even though Negro will leave the country in the morning of Feb 2 after his two-day visit.

"It is the first time that an FIH president is coming to Bangladesh which is an inspiration for us. Leandro Negro is coming here because of his interest in Bangladesh hockey," said Rahmatullah adding that he would try to pursue the FIH chief to help install a floodlight at the stadium as well as provide a high-profile coach on a long-term basis.

During his two-day stay, Negro will meet with sports minister Ahad Ali Sarker, Bangladesh Olympic Association president Army Chief General Iqbal Karim Bhuiyan, BHF president and will watch the practice session of the national hockey team before attending a press meet.

De Kruif starts groundwork

SPORTS REPORTER

Newly appointed coach of Bangladesh national football team Lodewijk de Kruif is searching for Bangladeshi booters playing in Europe ahead of Bangladesh's engagement in the AFC Challenge Cup Qualifiers in Nepal.

De Kruif, along with his compatriot Rene Koster, is supposed to arrive in Dhaka between February 18 and 20 to prepare national team for the qualifiers which will be held in Nepal from March 2 to 6.

The interested players have been requested to communicate with Koster at his e-mail address (hhwkoster@hotmail.com), informed Bangladesh Football Federation's assistant media manager Ashkur Rahman Habibi yesterday.

Bangladesh will compete against Palestine, Nepal and Northern Mariana Island in the top side qualifiers with the top side advancing to the finals.

Kruif has also asked the BFF to send video footages of the opponents as well as some top teams of Grameenphone Bangladesh Premier League where most of the national players are engaged.

BFF has already managed video footages of Palestine and Nepal and are planning to send video footages of domestic matches of Abahani, Sheikh Jamal DC, Sheikh Russel KC and Mohammedan.

'Eng won't be fooled'



AFP, Auckland

England will not allow New Zealand's recent woes to lull them into a false sense of security, the tourists' Twenty 20 captain Stuart Broad insisted Wednesday.

England head into the tour as firm favourites over the Black Caps, who lost two recent Test matches in South Africa by an innings and have been destabilised by Ross Taylor's axeing as captain in favour of Brendon McCullum.

But Broad pointed to New Zealand's face-saving one-day series win over the Proteas after their Test losses as proof the Black Caps will still pose a threat on the tour, particularly as they will be playing on home soil.

"We know New Zealand have just beaten South Africa in the one-day format and having played a lot of Twenty20 cricket against them, we know they're very dangerous," Broad told reporters.

"We'll have to prepare for that and get used to the conditions as much as we can. We know New Zealand have some

fantastic Twenty20 players and that's who we'll concentrate on... we'll have to be at the top of our game."

England arrived Tuesday night in New Zealand after winning their recent four-Test series in India 2-1 but losing the subsequent one-day series 3-2.

The tour begins with three T20s, followed by three one-dayers then three Tests.

Broad was reluctant to comment on New Zealand's Test prospects, a format in which the hosts are ranked eighth in the world and England second, saying his side would approach each section of the tour separately.

"If we focus on New Zealand cricket and what is going to happen ahead we'll lose sight of what we need to do," he said.

The Blacks Caps appear set to be without veteran spinner Daniel Vettori in the Test series as he continues to struggle with an Achilles injury.

"The Test matches against England may be a stretch for me," he told Fairfax Media, saying he hoped to be back for New Zealand's tour of England in May.

The first T20 international will be at Auckland's Eden Park on February 9.

Arambagh

FROM PAGE 16

Arambagh, who last defeated the All Reds in the third edition of the professional football league in 2010.

Muktijodha however mustered the first attack and nearly snatched the lead in the 19th minute when Brazilian striker Tyson Silva took a curling free-kick, only to be kept out by a diving effort from Arambagh goalkeeper Mitul Hasan.

Four minutes later, Arambagh took the lead when midfielder Sabuj headed a Khaled Ahmed cross home from inside the box.

After conceding the lead, Muktijodha stepped up the attack and yielded a couple of scoring chances but could not avail any of those opportunities.

Nigerian defender Benjamin Eleta found an Emmanuel Dany free-kick inside the box but failed to make good connection while Dany himself wasted a stoppage-time opportunity by driving miles off the target.

Orion sues

FROM PAGE 16

After the hearing, Judge Fazle Elahi Bhuiyan of the First Joint District Judge's Court of Dhaka issued a show cause notice asking the director of I Sports Ltd to explain within 25 days as to why he (Mustafa) shall not be restrained by an order of temporary injunction from making, publishing and repeating such prejudicial statements against the plaintiff.

Payment anxiety alive

FROM PAGE 16

IH Mallick, BCB's ad-hoc committee member and member secretary of the BPL governing council, shifted blame back to the Dhaka Gladiators owner.

"It's really unfortunate the way he (Selim Chowdhury) talked against BCB. They gave the money but they were totally responsible for the delay. As per the procedure for payment, the franchises are obligated to submit signed (by cricketers) and completed player agreement documents to the BPL Governing Council. The Governing Council will then initiate the necessary audit and related formalities before the BCB processes the transfer of funds to the respective players' accounts."

"Despite repeated requests the franchise, until yesterday (Tuesday, 29 January) had failed to furnish the BPL Governing Council/BCB with the agreement papers of each of its local and overseas recruit. So how can we proceed to transfer the payment?" Mallick added.

He also said that Chowdhury tried to misguide the media by saying that this time

the BCB is fully responsible for the payment. Whatever the case with the Gladiators, the players -- especially the local cricketers who suffered most with the delay of last year's payments -- were nervous about payment as they are yet to be paid the initial 25 per cent.

"The foreign players have already started to talk about the non-payment issue which is not good for the tournament. The reality is that the players get nervous day by day because of last year's bitter experience and you never know, it can affect their performance. This thing (non-payment) will definitely tarnish the image of the tournament," said one of the country's leading cricketers on conditions of anonymity.

Mallick however assured that all the players will get their payment although only two franchises have so far completed their payments. The BCB however has set the latest deadline to resolve all pending financial issues for today.

"We will definitely scrap the ownership if any franchise fails to fulfil all the commitments," said Mallick.

At prince LARA's court

FROM PAGE 16

were quite a handy football player. True or false?

BL: (laughs) I did actually play for my national U16 team and I was also quite a handy table-tennis player. But that was about the time when my dad (Bunty) decided that he would force me to channel my energies into cricket.

DSS: ... So, in hindsight, there was no chance of a professional football career?

BL: Dwight was two years younger than me, but he always got picked ahead of me so I think I chose the right sport.

DSS: Before we end Brian, could you settle a long-standing debate we have had -- do you think you were a better player of spin or pace bowling?

BL: (smiles) That's a pretty easy answer -- spin bowling. Growing up in Trinidad and Tobago, the pitches aren't that dissimilar to the ones you see in India. We had a lot of spinners in our ranks and you see it even now in someone like Sunil Narine. But compared to say a Barbadian, at 16 I could play spin a lot better and he could handle the quicks better. But in my career I thought I handled myself well against almost all bowling disciplines which I came up against.

Brian Lara is the brand ambassador for the Chittagong Kings.

Warner breaks thumb

CRICINFO, Sydney

David Warner's place on Australia's Test tour of India is open to serious fitness questions after it was confirmed he suffered a fractured thumb when struck in the nets ahead of the ODI series against West Indies.

On the eve of the squad announcement for the subcontinent, Warner was struck by a prancing delivery from Mitchell Johnson in the lively WACA ground nets and showed considerable discomfort before being whisked away for scans on the thumb that confirmed a break.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS	DOWN
1 Impale	1 Unrivaled
5 Go up and down	2 Walked (on)
8 Fellow	3 Zits
12 Killer whale	4 Collector for the mob
13 Ram's mate	5 Arthur or Lillie
14 Patriot	6 Possess
15 Cursive writing	7 Hotel
17 Frivy to	8 Scold
18 Plant swelling	9 Yield
19 Turn blue?	10 Lotion additive
21 From the top	11 Teller's partner
24 Writer	16 Solo of "Star Wars"
25 Fairy tale	20 Sheltered
	22 Reverberate
	23 In a daze
	25 Can.
	26 Little doggie
	27 Business expenses
	29 Elbow counter-part
	31 "___"
	32 Buddhist sect
	34 Indigent
	38 100 percent
	40 Red-head's secret?
	42 Toss in
	43 Shoppe describer
	44 Even
	45 Santa Maria, e.g.
	47 Libertine
	48 Erstwhile Peruvian
	49 Antiquing apparatus
	52 Greek H
	53 Donkey

Solution time: 21 mins.

BLINK	ATM	FAME
ASTA	MOA	OPAL
RELATION	REDS	
SAD	DEGREE	
SAVES	SOLE	
TIER	RELATION	
ADD	SATIN	BRO
REACTION	BIAS	
LYNN	LADLE	
VALUED	EEL	
OVUM	REVISION	
LENS	GRE	ACHE
TRAY	PAN	MEMO

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15			16				17			
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54				55				56		
57				58				59		

CRYPTOQUIP

PROH XS UQMOHJ UMHWGGS
NOKWXO W KOGONQMFS
GMBO XO, M RWJ FD WEB
RMX "PRD'E EFWQQS HDP?"

Yesterday's Cryptoquip: FOR THIS PARTICULAR MANGER SCENE, SOME OF THE ANIMALS SHOWN WERE THE GOATS OF CHRISTMAS PAST.

Today's Cryptoquip Clue: U equals F