

Tamim set for World XI action

STAR SPORT DESK

The charity T20I match between an ICC World XI and a West Indies XI will be played today at the Lord's Cricket Ground in London, with Bangladesh opener Tamim Iqbal expected to turn out for the World XI side.

The match will start at 11:00 pm Bangladesh time and has been organised to raise funds for stadia in the Caribbean damaged by hurricanes Irma and Maria last year.

World XI captain Eoin Morgan has been ruled out of the match due to a finger injury, and Pakistan's popular all-rounder Shahid Afridi will take the reins.

In a squad containing the likes of India's Dinesh Karthik, Sri Lanka's Thisara Perera, Afghanistan's Rashid Khan and Pakistan's Shoaib Malik, Tamim is expected to open the innings for World XI.

The West Indies line-up boasts the likes of Chris Gayle, Evin Lewis, Andre Russell and Marlon Samuels.



Argentina superstar Lionel Messi leaves two Haiti players in his wake during an international friendly at La Bombonera Stadium in Buenos Aires on Tuesday. Messi scored a hattrick in a 4-0 win which was a big boost for his fans ahead of the World Cup.

PHOTO: AFP

'Going to WC with hope'

REUTERS, Buenos Aires



Argentina showed once again how reliant they are on Lionel Messi as the Barcelona forward scored a hattrick in their 4-0 World Cup warm-up win over Haiti on Tuesday.

With Javier Mascherano making his 143rd appearance to put him one ahead of Javier Zanetti as Argentina's most capped player, Messi got the opener from the penalty spot after 17 minutes.

He doubled their lead 12 minutes into the second half with a simple tap-in after the goalkeeper could only parry a header, scored Argentina's third after 65 minutes, and then set up Sergio Aguero to make it four just two minutes later.

Argentina failed to add to their tally but should have been further ahead against Haiti, whose sole appearance at the World Cup finals came in 1974 and are ranked 108th in the world, 103 places below them in the world rankings.

"More than the result we were able to say goodbye to our fans and show that we are going to Russia with hope," Messi said.

"We're not going as favourites because we had a complicated time in the qualifiers, but we are training well and we will give it our all."

Aguero was fit again after a knee injury but began the game on the bench, with Gonzalo Higuain and Angel Di Maria starting up front alongside Messi.

However, both men failed to shine and instead it was Aguero and Boca Juniors' Christian Pavon who staked their claim for a World Cup place when they came on after an hour.

Argentina now fly to Barcelona to prepare for World Cup matches against Iceland on June 16, Croatia on June 21 and Nigeria on June 26.

From refugee to Croatia's hope

AFP, Modric



The burned-out shell of a remote cottage bears testimony to the trauma that Luka Modric lived through long before he became a Croatian national hero and Real Madrid star.

Hidden in the folds of Velebit mountain, with the nearest neighbours several kilometres away, trees now grow inside the roofless ruin where Modric spent part of his childhood and a sign warns of "Mines - Keep out!"

The player's grandfather, also named Luka, lived in the house, lying on a mountain road winding through the Modrici hamlet. Modric, born in 1985, spent his early years there and in the nearby village of Zaton Obrovacki until Croatia's 1990s independence war broke out.

His grandfather was killed by Serb forces, the house was burned and the family fled to the coastal town of Zadar, some 40 kilometres away.

"I heard about a little hyperactive boy constantly playing with a football in the corridor of a refugee hotel, even going to sleep with it," said Josip Bajlo, who was then the first-team coach at the First Division club NK Zadar, where Modric began to make a name for himself as a brilliant player.

As soon as Bajlo saw Modric play he signed him up for the club's football school, where he immediately stood out. "He was an idol to his generation, a leader, a favourite."

"Already children saw in him then what we are all seeing in him now in football terms," Bajlo told AFP.

The 1991-1995 war with Serb rebels, during which Zadar and the surrounding region were heavily shelled, toughened Modric, according to those close to him.

"It happened a million times that we were going to training as the shells were falling, and we were running to shelters," said childhood friend Marijan Buljat, who trained and played with Modric while growing up.



The 36-year-old, himself a former professional player, remained close to Modric over the years and believes that such a hard background contributed to the Croatia captain's character and mental strength.

"It is certainly one of the factors that contributed... that drove him to become one of the best in the world."

Last October, Modric was named for the third time in the FIFA FIFPro team selected by thousands of professional players. In 2015, he became the first Croatian voted on to the FIFPro XI.

His former club NK Zadar, now fallen on hard times in Croatia's third division, have a history of finding talent -- but Modric stands alone as a legend among fans. "Luka is for Zadar a football God," said Slavko Strkalj, 66, a retired metal worker.

However, Modric's popularity in Croatia and his image was tarnished by his testimony last year during the corruption trial of former Dinamo Zagreb chief Zdravko Mamic.

Some fans and coach Zlatko Dalic worry that the issue could damage his performances in Russia, but Modric answered those concerns directly when he told Croatia's Jutarnji list newspaper that his "conscience is clear and that things happening aside don't influence my game."

Tigresses KL-bound

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh Cricket Board announced a 15-member squad for the national women's cricket team's Asia Cup T20 2018 campaign yesterday.

The team will depart for Kuala Lumpur today, where the six-team regional tournament will be held from June 3 to June 10. Apart from Bangladesh, the participating teams are India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Malaysia. The teams will play each other once before the top two contest the final on June 10 at the Kinara Oval.

Bangladesh will open their campaign against Sri Lanka on June 3 at 8:00 am at the Royal Selangor Club, the other venue for the tournament. They will play against Pakistan the next day, take on India on June 6, Thailand on June 7 and Malaysia on June 9.

SQUAD: Salma Khatun (Captain), Nahida Akter, Rumana Ahmed, Panna Ghosh, Nigar Sultana, Lily Rani Biswas, Fargana Haque, Sanjida Islam, Khadija Tul Kubra, Sharmin Sultana, Fahima Khatun, Jahanara Alam, Ayesha Rahman, Shamima Sultana, Jannatul Ferdous Sumona

MAZHAR UDDIN from Dehradun

'DAB DAB' IN DEHRADUN

The Bangladesh team started training in Dehradun's Rajiv Gandhi International Cricket Stadium yesterday with net sessions at the centre wicket and the outer nets. The centre wicket was still a bit wet as it had not gotten enough time to absorb the water. When Tigers vice-captain Mahmudullah Riyad was batting, the majority of the balls tended towards the low and slow side. After Mahmudullah had finished, it was Ariful Haque's turn and as he strolled towards the centre wicket Bangladesh team manager Khaled Mahmud said "The wicket is Dab Dab [slow and low]." Mahmudullah quipped: "You know how to bat on Dab Dab wickets." Coming from a rainy country, batting on the Dab Dab is almost second nature for the Tigers.

COMMENTATOR MUSHFIQUR

Mushfiqur Rahim is one of the biggest pranksters in the Bangladesh ranks and the wicketkeeper-batsman was right in fine fettle during yesterday's training session. Mehedi Hasan Miraz was struck all over the park by Ariful Haque during the centre-wicket net session and Mushfiqur started a faux commentary stint to tease the young off-spinner. "In comes Mehedi Miraz and there goes the ball out of the park," commented Mushfiqur.

"Will the captain hand the ball to Miraz again? Will Miraz be able to make a comeback in the game, only time will tell. This is going to be a tough time for the youngster," Mushfiqur said in his best radio commentary voice, which left the other Tigers in stitches.



PHOTO STAR

Mushfiqur Rahim takes a break from training at the Rajiv Gandhi International Cricket Stadium in Dehradun yesterday.

FASTING TIGERS, HUNGRY CRICKETERS

The hot and humid weather in Dehradun has been hard on the Bangladeshi cricketers since they landed here on Tuesday. Most of them were fasting and the 36-degree temperature was beginning to take a toll on them by the time they started training yesterday. Left-arm spinner Nazmul Islam asked this reporter: "Are you fasting?" When the reply was in the negative, Nazmul said: "Then how would you know what I am going through as I am fasting and getting hunger pangs." Mahmudullah joined in and said with a smile: "What heat? It's not that hot, but yes I am also getting hunger pangs."

Mushfiqur overheard the conversation and seized on the opportunity as if it was a half-volley outside off stump. "Why are you not fasting? Are you working harder than us?"

A shining gem in a small city

SPORTS REPORTER from Dehradun



Dehradun's only stadium, the Rajiv Gandhi

International Cricket Stadium (RGICS) is probably one of the most beautiful and modern stadiums in India, but interestingly it is yet not affiliated with the Board of Control for Cricket in India as there is no cricket association in Uttarakhand state.

Located around 10 kilometres away from the main city, the stadium was financed by the Uttarakhand State government for around 250 crore rupees and the contract given to private firm Infrastructure Leasing and Financial Services Ltd, who will take care of the operations and other maintenance work for the next 30 years.

The 25,000-capacity venue received ICC approval just last week after match referee Javagal Srinath inspected the stadium.

The company has already built a stadium in Kerala, and the RGICS has a specialised group of curators and groundsmen who worked on that stadium. According to the company's marketing and operations manager Anita Navik, they know what the standard should be for an international venue and pitch. The Afghanistan Cricket Board, however, will be in charge of ticket sales and receive the revenue from it as the home board.

Anita also told The Daily Star that as a state



Partial view of the state-of-the-art Rajiv Gandhi International Cricket Stadium in Dehradun.

PHOTO: MAZHAR UDDIN

starved of international cricket in a cricket-mad country, spectators turned out in droves for the practice match between Afghanistan and a local team recently, and it was hoped and expected that there will be big-time interest in Dehradun's maiden international game between Bangladesh and Afghanistan on Saturday.

Bangladesh's T20I vice-captain Mahmudullah Riyad, who saw the stadium for the first time yesterday along with the rest of the squad in Dehradun, was generous in his praise for the picturesque venue.

"It's a beautiful stadium and the outfield is nice, along with the other facilities. It is surprising to see such a world-class stadium here, in quite a small city," Mahmudullah told The Daily Star yesterday.

Djokovic, Zverev through

AFP, Paris



Former champion Novak Djokovic reached the French Open third round for the 13th consecutive year by beating Spanish qualifier Jaume Munar 7-6 (7/1), 6-4, 6-4 on Wednesday, while second seed Alexander Zverev staged a fightback to win a five-setter with Dusan Lajovic.

Djokovic, the 2016 Roland Garros champion and former



world number one, is seeded 20 this year after struggling to rediscover his best form after returning from a right elbow injury.

He wasn't at his best on Court Suzanne Lenglen, but goes on to face Spain's 13th seed Roberto Bautista Agut for a place in the last 16.

The Serbian 12-time Grand Slam champion fired 39 winners but 33 unforced errors and was broken three times by Munar, the world 155.

"I am very happy to be here on Suzanne Lenglen and see so many people and see the support," said Djokovic.

"Jaume is a great player, he has lots of quality and good concentration. I congratulate him on a great match today."

German world number three Zverev found himself in deep trouble when trailing by two sets to one against Lajovic, but the Serbian ran out of gas as it finished 2-6, 7-5, 4-6, 6-1, 6-2.

The 21-year-old, a winner of three Masters titles, is yet to reach a Grand Slam quarter-final and was knocked out in the first round at Roland Garros last year.

But Zverev moved into round three for the second time, where he will play Bosnian 26th seed Damir Dzumhur, as he looks to become the first German man to win the title since 1937.

Japan's Kei Nishikori also staged a comeback to edge out Frenchman Benoit Paire on Philippe Chatrier court, winning 6-3, 2-6, 4-6, 6-2, 6-3 in his first Grand Slam event since Wimbledon last year after recovering from a wrist injury.

The unlikely adventure of Argentinian world number 190 Marco Trungelliti, who became the eighth lucky loser in the draw after driving back to Paris from Barcelona, came to an end as he lost 6-1, 7-6 (7/1), 6-1 to Italian Marco Cecchinato in the second round.

Meanwhile, world number one Halep fought back after a disastrous opening set to beat American Alison Riske 2-6, 6-1, 6-1 in their delayed first-round match.



Novak Djokovic celebrates after his straight-sets win against Spanish qualifier Jaume Munar in French Open second round at the Roland Garros yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

U-19 girls in tough group

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh found themselves in the comparatively tougher Group D in the AFC U-19 Women's Champions Qualifiers, being placed alongside two-time champions South Korea, 2002 runners-up Chinese Taipei and hosts Tajikistan during the draw in Kuala Lumpur yesterday.

The qualifiers will be held from October 24-28.

A total of 27 nations will be split into six groups, with group champions and two best runners-up overall advancing to the eight-team second round. From there, four teams will join direct-qualifier Japan, North Korea, China and the yet-to-be-announced host nation in the final round to be held in 2019.

The draw for the AFC U-16 Women's Championship Qualifiers was also held yesterday, with hosts Bangladesh drawing Vietnam, UAE, Bahrain and Lebanon in the 30 team-event. It will start on September 15 and follow the same format as the U-19 Championship.