

PHOTO: COLLECTED/REUTERS

141 years after this English squad (Top) contested the first Test against Australia in 1877, England will embark on the country's 1,000th Test against India today.

IMPERIAL LEGACY

It is a cause to celebrate for all Test cricket fans that a country is playing its 1,000th Test match as it is an example of the format's durability since England and Australia played the first Test in Melbourne in 1877. However, the table below listing the number of matches the 10 Test nations have played -- newcomers Ireland and Afghanistan not included -- points at cricket's imperial past. The global governing body was named the Imperial Cricket Conference till 1965, and cricket's old-world power dynamics are evinced in the disparity in the number of Tests played by England and Australia and the rest. India are the supreme global power today, but are still far behind the ancient powers -- they have played 522 Tests since 1932 while England have played 807 and Australia 664 in the same period.

| Team | 1st Test | Mts | Won | Lost | Tied | Drawn | W/L |
|--------------|----------|-----|-----|------|------|-------|-------|
| England | 1877 | 999 | 357 | 297 | 0 | 345 | 1.202 |
| Australia | 1877 | 812 | 383 | 219 | 2 | 208 | 1.748 |
| West Indies | 1928 | 535 | 171 | 188 | 1 | 175 | 0.909 |
| India | 1932 | 522 | 145 | 160 | 1 | 216 | 0.906 |
| South Africa | 1889 | 427 | 161 | 142 | 0 | 124 | 1.133 |
| New Zealand | 1930 | 426 | 92 | 170 | 0 | 164 | 0.541 |
| Pakistan | 1952 | 415 | 134 | 123 | 0 | 158 | 1.089 |
| Sri Lanka | 1982 | 274 | 88 | 101 | 0 | 85 | 0.871 |
| Bangladesh | 2000 | 108 | 10 | 82 | 0 | 16 | 0.121 |
| Zimbabwe | 1992 | 105 | 11 | 67 | 0 | 27 | 0.164 |

AFP, London



India may be the world's top-ranked Test side but they still face accusations they are lions at home and lambs abroad.

But a series win in England, where Virat Kohli's men begin a five-Test campaign at Edgbaston on Wednesday, would go some way to ridding India of that unwanted tag.

They have a chance to start off on the right foot by winning the first Test, which is a historic occasion as England will become the first country to play 1,000 Test matches since becoming one of the first two nations to contest the format in 1877.

In the past five years, India have won just one of their six Test series outside of Asia, against a struggling West Indies.

Their overall Test record in England is uninspiring -- six wins from 57 matches and three series victories -- 1971, 1986 and 2007.

But if the current prolonged hot weather in England continues, the upcoming series may well be played on dry and

dusty pitches, more akin to the surfaces that are found in India, rather than traditional green English seamers.

Also, while doubts persist about England's ability to cope should either one of veteran new-ball duo Stuart Broad and James Anderson get injured, India do at least have some pace-bowling depth.

Bhuvneshwar Kumar and Jasprit Bumrah may be unfit for the first Test but the likes of Mohammed Shami, Ishant Sharma and Umesh Yadav have shown themselves to be capable operators outside of Asia.

Anderson is a master of conventional swing, but India may have the edge if conditions favour reverse-swing during what will be England's 1,000th Test match.

"They seem to have got a good variety of bowlers and strength in depth in their pace bowling," said England opener Alastair Cook.

"In the last ten years I've played them, they haven't had the option of playing five or six different types of seamers," added Cook, England's all-time leading Test run-scorer, whose highest score of 294 was

made against India at Edgbaston in 2011.

Meanwhile India captain Kohli, one of the outstanding batsmen of his generation, will be desperate to prove he can score runs in England.

He managed a meagre 134 in five matches during his maiden Test series in England in 2014, which India lost 3-1 with one draw.

England captain Joe Root, who like Kohli is at his best when leading from the front, comes into the series having converted only three out of 23 fifties since his Test-best 254 against Pakistan in 2016 into hundreds -- a poor return for a player of his ability.

Batting could hold the key to the series and there are question marks against both top-orders.

England, following a 1-1 drawn series with Pakistan, are sticking with Keaton Jennings in the hope of at last finding a reliable opening partner for Cook, while India's Shikhar Dhawan and Cheteshwar Pujara have both been struggling for runs.

"We are not worried at all, because both

are really quality batsmen," said India's Ajinkya Rahane of his top-order colleagues.

"It just takes one good innings to get into your rhythm."

India would appear to have the edge in spin bowling but off-break bowler Ravichandran Ashwin has rarely performed as well outside of Asia as he has in the sub-continent.

Left-arm Ravindra Jadeja is an experienced campaigner while left-arm wrist-spinner Kuldeep Yadav has forced his way in after impressing during the preceding one-day series.

White-ball form also led England to recall Adil Rashid even though the leg-spinner has not been playing red-ball cricket for Yorkshire this season and he could team up with off-spinner Moeen Ali.

"He's a very good bowler," said Rahane of Rashid.

"Wrist-spinners, we all know they are wicket-takers -- and right now, in England weather-wise, it's like playing in Mumbai or Chennai."



➤ The first Test was a Timeless Test played between England and Australia on March 15, 1877, which Australia won by 45 runs in five days. 100 years later at the same venue in the Centenary Test, Australia again won by 45 runs.

➤ Australian Charles Bannerman scored the first single and the first Test century in the match. Bannerman scored 67 per cent of the runs in the first innings of the first-ever Test match, which remains a record.

➤ India and England were the two sides duking it out in Test cricket's last big milestone, the 2,000th Test in July at Lord's in 2011.

➤ England and Australia contested the first 30 Test matches in history, before South

➤ Africa became the third team, playing their first Test against England in Port Elizabeth in March 1889.

➤ England have been the first opponents for six Test debutants -- Australia (1877), South Africa (1889), West Indies (1928), India (1932) and Sri Lanka (1982).

ENGLAND'S 1,000TH TEST *kicks off today*

HOCKEY TEAM IN SOUTH KOREA Campaign ends with defeat

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh national hockey team wrapped up their training campaign in South Korea with a 1-4 defeat against their Korean counterparts in their fifth and final practice match yesterday.

The defeat means Bangladesh suffered four defeats alongside a draw and they will head to Jakarta for the Asian Games after returning home tomorrow.

Although Bangladesh notched up a creditable draw in the previous match, they failed to carry the momentum to yesterday's game and virtually surrendered in the first quarter by conceding three goals as Korea took the lead in the second minute before adding two more goals in the fourth and 12th minutes to take the match away from the visitors.

In the second quarter, the home side widened the margin to 4-0 before both sides fought neck-and-neck in the third quarter but no one could find the net.

However, the visitors struck a consolation goal in the final quarter with Rasel Mahmud Jimmy scoring from a penalty corner.

No D/N Tests before domestic trials: BCB

SPORTS REPORTER



The Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) clarified their rationale behind not agreeing to New Zealand Cricket's (NZC's) proposal to play what would have been Bangladesh's first day-night Test during their tour of New Zealand in February 2019.

According to BCB CEO Nizamuddin Chowdhury, the board has refused on the grounds that they have not played day-night longer version cricket in the domestic circuit for six years.

After India's tour of New Zealand ends on February 10, the hosts will take on Bangladesh for three ODIs, with the first being on February 13, followed by a three-Test series -- the first time that the two countries will play more than two Tests in a series.

Bangladesh last toured New Zealand in the 2016-17 season. It will only be Bangladesh's fourth three-Test series having last played a series of that length when they hosted Zimbabwe in 2014.

The Test series has been scheduled to start from February 28. The NZC proposed to BCB to play the first Test of the series in Hamilton as a day-night fixture. However, according to a release from NZC, BCB did not agree to play a day-night fixture and as a result NZC was forced to re-schedule the first Test to the traditional hours of play.

"NZC had hoped to schedule the opening Bangladesh Test at Seddon Park as a day-night fixture but could not obtain the agreement from the Bangladesh Cricket Board and was

forced to revert to the traditional hours-of-play," an NZC release said.

"We have expressed the reason for not participating in a day-night Test match against New Zealand in the upcoming tour. We need to experiment with day-night matches in our first-class competitions first, but due to a lack of time with the Tigers' packed schedule until February, with no first-class competition on the cards, we couldn't accept the proposal," Nizamuddin told The Daily Star yesterday.

However Nizamuddin added that the BCB understood the reality of playing day-night Test matches in the future.

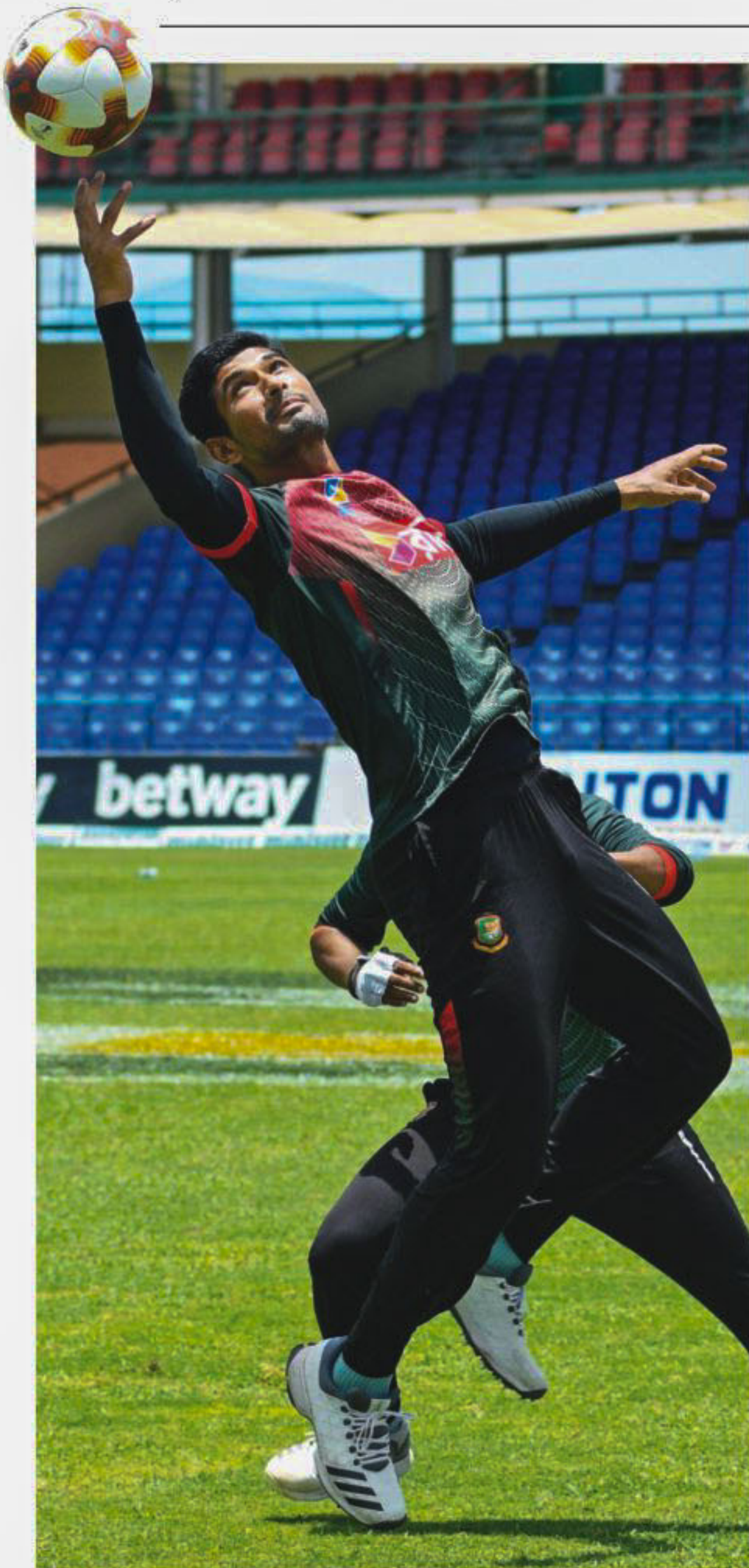
"I will give a proposal to the board in the upcoming meeting on the steps to be taken in domestic cricket to reach a stage where we can play day-night Tests in the future," he added.

It is understood that the BCB is positive about the issue but the board is more keen to play its maiden day-night Test at home rather than abroad.

It has been more than six years since the BCB hosted its first and only day-night first-class match in the final of the inaugural Bangladesh Cricket League.

Bangladesh and India are the only two regular Test playing nations yet to play a day-night Test. The two newest Test teams Afghanistan and Ireland are also yet to play a day-night Test.

So far a total of 11 day-night Tests have taken place with the inaugural match taking place between Australia and New Zealand in 2015 in Adelaide, which the hosts won by three wickets.



Mahmudullah Riyad takes part in a training session ahead of today's first T20I against West Indies at Warner Park in St. Kitts.

PHOTO: AFP

Tigers still wary of Gayle-less Windies

SPORTS REPORTER



When it comes to playing the shortest format of the game as opposed to ODIs, West Indies are a much stronger unit; therefore it will be a challenge for the Bangladesh team to carry the momentum from their 2-1 ODI series win to the three-match T20I series against the hosts, with the first match set to get underway today at 6:30am Bangladesh Standard Time in Saint Kitts.

Although West Indies will be without the services of hard hitting batsman Chris Gayle, a fact that the Tigers can take some solace from, the Caribbean team boasts a devastating group of T20 specialists in their ranks.

All-rounder Andre Russell, who suffered a hamstring injury in the first ODI and subsequently missed the remaining two matches of the series, returned for the T20 series and will surely provide a boost to the side.

The inclusion of skipper Carlos Brathwaite, Marlon Samuels and Andre Fletcher revamped the T20 team and makes them a stronger unit as each of them have the ability to singlehandedly turn a game around.

On the other hand, Bangladesh will surely miss their inspirational ODI captain Mashrafe Bin Mortaza in the T20 series. However, his T20 counterpart Shakib Al Hasan will have to make use of his experience of playing T20s all over the world in order to lead the Tigers from the front.

Apart from a couple of new inclusions, most of the players from Bangladesh's ODI squad will feature in the T20 series and once again it falls on the seniors such as Tamim Iqbal, Shakib, Mushfiqur Rahim and Mahmudullah Riyad to step up, just as they did in the ODI series.

However, finding an opening partner for Tamim remains as one of the Tigers' major concerns as Bangladesh are yet to find a settled pair at the top.

Liton Das has been inconsistent, scoring 138 runs in eight T20Is this year at an average of 17.25, despite boasting a strike rate of 131.42. Liton's highest score in the format, 43 runs, came against Sri Lanka during the Nidahas Trophy.

Left-hander Soumya Sarkar once again has an opportunity to showcase his talent in the T20 format but he will have to fight for his place with wicket-keeper batsman Liton.

It will be paramount for Bangladesh to play calculative cricket if they are to deal with West Indies' power cricket when the two sides lock horns in the first match of the series today.