

Junior tennis

UNB, Dhaka

Top-seed Liu Tai-Wei of Chinese Taipei and Chatwindeer Singh of India reached the boys' singles final of the GrameenPhone Bangladesh International Junior Tennis Championship eliminating their respective rivals in the semifinals at the Ramna National Tennis Complex yesterday.

Liu Tai-Wei defeated Ishmatov Gafur of Uzbekistan 6-0, 6-0 while Chatwindeer Singh beat Uda Yuchi of Japan 6-1, 6-4.

In the girls' singles semifinals, top-seed Wang Ting-Wen of Chinese Taipei beat Vijuksanaboon Varanya of Thailand 6-0, 6-0 while another Thai girl Pichayia Laosireen defeated Ranganthan Madura of India 4-6, 7-6, 6-3.

Both the boys' and girls' singles finals will be held today.

India sigh in relief

AFP, New Delhi

England's decision to play their World Cup match in Zimbabwe next month drew a sigh of relief from Indian officials Wednesday -- and it had nothing to do with their love for the African country.

The Indians were worried that if both Australia and England skipped their engagements in Zimbabwe, thereby forfeiting full points, the race for the Super Six stage would have been further complicated in a tough group.

India are drawn with defending champions Australia, England, Pakistan, Zimbabwe, Namibia and the Netherlands in what is being called the group of death at the World Cup.

Of these seven teams, only three will qualify for the Super Six stage.

"Had Australia and England forfeited their matches, Zimbabwe would have bagged eight points and almost certainly have qualified by beating both lowly Namibia and the Netherlands," an Indian official said.

"That would have left Australia, India, Pakistan and England battling for the remaining two berths. It would have been a deadly scramble."

Saurav Ganguly's Indian team is currently recovering from a disastrous tour of New Zealand, where they were blanked 2-0 in the Test series and lost the one-day series 5-2.

English cricket authorities on Tuesday rejected British Prime Minister Tony Blair's call to boycott Zimbabwe during the World Cup in protest against what he said was President Robert Mugabe's authoritarian regime.

Murali no

FROM PAGE 13 international, so I need to get a few games under my belt and try and establish myself in the one-day game the way I have in the Test matches."

Both countries delayed naming teams until Friday.

TEAMS

ENGLAND (from): N Hussain (captain), N Knight, M Trescothick, R Irani, O Shah, I Blackwell, A Stewart, A Caddick, J Anderson, S Harrison, P Collingwood, M Hoggard, M Vaughan.

SRI LANKA (from): S Jayasuriya (captain), M Atapattu, A de Silva, T Samaraweera, M Jayawardene, K Sangakkara, R Arnold, J Mubarak, C Vaas, D Fernando, C Buddika.

Derbyshire

FROM PAGE 13 replacement for Astle, or an extension of Afridi's contract," said a statement.

Afridi holds the record for the fastest century in a one-day international, taking just 37 balls to reach three figures against Sri Lanka in Nairobi on debut in 1996/97.

In 14 Tests for Pakistan, he has 780 runs at an average of 32.50, and 21 wickets with his leg-spin bowling.

But he is at his best in the one-day arena, where 3871 runs have come at more than a run a ball.

Afridi enjoyed a half-season with Leicestershire in 2001, after injury to the club's first choice overseas player, Australian Daniel Marsh.

"Being able to sign an exciting cricketer such as Shahid is a further boost to the club, and evidence that high quality players want to join our promising squad," said chief executive John Smedley.

The county also confirmed that Adrian Pierson has agreed to become head coach for 2003.

No rest on

FROM PAGE 13 tell you is that my team will go out there to win. They were in a good shape. What really important to me is that they have won three matches. That makes your morale high," said Kottan before taking his charges for practice at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday in the afternoon.

His Indian number Stephen Constantine, however, declined to talk yesterday. He conducted team practice in Mirpur later in the afternoon.

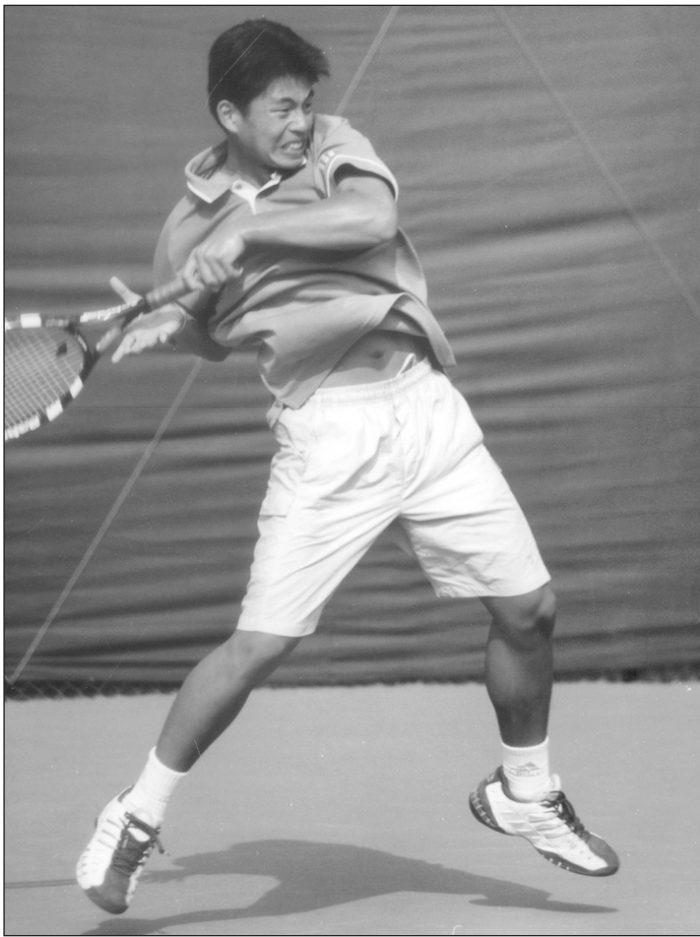


PHOTO: STAR Chinese Taipei's Liutaiwei in action against during his Grameen Phone Bangladesh International Junior Tennis Championship semifinal win (6-0, 6-0) against Uzbekistan's Ishmatov Gafur at the National Tennis Complex yesterday. In today's final, Liutaiwei will face Indian Chetinder Singh who won the other semifinal 4-6, 7-6, 6-3 against compatriot Rangnath Madhura.

Lehmann in for trouble

Cricket

REUTERS/AFP, undated

Australia batsman Darren Lehmann has been charged by cricket's governing body after a remark which he made upset the Sri Lankan cricket team during Wednesday's triangular one-day series match in Brisbane.

The Sri Lankans lodged a complaint with match referee Clive Lloyd after Lehmann was overheard making an offensive comment about the tourists.

The charges follow an incident in which Lehmann shouted a racist obscenity in the corridor separating the teams' dressing rooms after he was run out for 38 in Wednesday's one-day international. But his remarks were overheard by members of the Sri Lankan team who were in the adjoining room.

Lehmann reportedly referred to Sri Lankan players as "black" in a two-word obscenity.

The left-handed batsman apologised to the Sri Lankans, both in person and in writing, and the tourists said later they had decided not to proceed with any charges.

But the International Cricket Council (ICC) released a statement on Thursday to announce that Lehmann had been charged with a level three breach of the ICC Code of Conduct for Players and Officials.

"As a result of an oversight investigation and on the basis of reports received from Australia, I have decided to charge Darren

Lehmann with a breach of Level 3.4 of the ICC Code of Conduct," ICC chief executive Malcolm Speed said in a statement.

"I am aware that Mr Lehmann has apologised for his actions and that the Sri Lanka team was reluctant to lay any formal charges.

"I have, however, carefully considered the situation and, in the interests of eradicating racial vilification in international cricket, I am bound to lay this charge."

The penalty could be as much as an eight-match one-day or four-Test suspension if Lehmann is found guilty, the ICC statement said, and would be a huge blow for the Australian batsman just three weeks' before the start of next month's World Cup in southern



DARREN LEHMANN

Africa. Level 3.4 of the ICC Code reads: "Using language or gestures that offends, insults, humiliates, intimi-

Australia drops boycott scheme

ICC Cricket World Cup SOUTH AFRICA 2003

AFP, Sydney

The Australian government said Thursday it had all but given up its effort to prevent next month's cricket World Cup matches from being played in Zimbabwe.

Defence Minister Robert Hill, speaking for vacationing Foreign Minister Alexander Downer, said Australia was unlikely to act unilaterally in boycotting Zimbabwe venues after English cricket authorities decided Tuesday to go ahead with their scheduled match in Harare.

Both the Australian and British governments sought to convince national cricket authorities to boycott Zimbabwe venues during the World Cup in protest at the actions of Zimbabwe President Robert Mugabe.

The Australian Cricket Board has said it will play its February 24 match against Zimbabwe in Bulawayo unless evidence emerges that the security of its players cannot be ensured.

The England and Wales Cricket Board announced Tuesday that it

had rejected pleas from the British government to boycott Zimbabwe and would go ahead with their World Cup opener on February 13 in Harare.

But the board said players would not be allowed to take part in a pre-game ceremony in which they could have to shake hands with Mugabe.

Hill said the Australian government still believed it would be better if the Australian cricket board would decide it was inappropriate to play games in Zimbabwe, but will not force the issue.

"As the prime minister (John Howard) said, the way we wish to approach this matter is collectively and the British government shares our position," Hill said on public radio.

"We would like to think that the cricket board would listen to governments that are obviously looking at the bigger picture and shift the games, but we are unlikely to act unilaterally," he said.

Mason places Tasman's atop

AFP, Hobart

Opening batsman Scott Mason hit his maiden first-class century as Tasmania worked themselves into a strong position Thursday in a Sheffield Shield game against Victoria at Bellerive Oval.

Mason, a 26-year-old left-hander, hit an unbeaten 168 -- almost trebling his previous best score of 61.

Tasmania finished the second day of a four-day match with 268 for three in their second innings, an overall lead of 214 runs, as they frustrated Victoria's drive for their first outright victory in Hobart for 17 years.

Mason made his debut for Tasmania five seasons ago, but has been unable to establish a permanent position. He was out first ball in the first innings.

Mason said it felt fantastic to "get the monkey off my back."

His six-hour knock has produced 24 fours and a six.

The Tasmanian batsmen dominated after Victoria was dismissed for 174, a first innings lead of 54.

BCCSL plans cash boost

AFP, Colombo

Sri Lanka's cricket board is set to offer a cash bounty to its cricket players in a bid to win next month's World Cup with a new payment scheme tied to performance, board sources said Wednesday.

The Board of Control for Cricket in Sri Lanka (BCCSL), which last month turned down an across-the-board pay increase demanded by players, instead began discussing a performance-based payment scheme, the sources said.

They said a 100,000-dollar bonus was likely to be offered to the entire team if they won the World Cup in South Africa from February 9-March 23.

The match fee for each player will be doubled from 700 dollars to 1,400 dollars, while each player could also earn an additional 20,000 dollars if the team enters the final.

Sri Lanka is in Group B of the World Cup with hosts South Africa, New Zealand, West Indies, Kenya, Bangladesh and Canada. Three teams from the group will advance to the Super Six stage.

Sri Lanka won the World Cup in the Indian sub-continent in 1996, but failed miserably four years later in England when they failed to qualify for the Super Six stage.

Prediction put

FROM PAGE 13 in 80.1 overs (Rajin 78, Mowla 50, Parvez 39; Manzarul 5-52, Razzak 2-36, Hasanuzzaman 2-40)

KHUNA: Second innings (overnight 0 for no loss)

Raju c & b Rajin	87			
Monirul lbw b Mowla	29			
Jamaluddin c Imtiaz b Parvez	31			
Razzak b Rajin	24			
Hasanuzzaman c Imtiaz b Enamul	51			
Manjarul c Nasir b Enamul	74			
Selim b Nasir	11			
Sajjadul c Nasirul b Faruque	5			
Salauddin not out	21			
Russel run out	3			
Al-Amin not out	13			
Extras:(b-17, lb-7, nb-4, w-14)	42			
Total: (For 9 wickets in 90 overs)	391			

Fall of wickets: 1-73, 2-147, 3-194, 4-200, 5-194, 6-328, 7-346, 8-385, 9-366

Bowler	O	M	R	W
Nasir Hossain	20	5	62	1
Rafique	19	2	86	2
Mowla	12	1	40	1
Imran	5	0	25	0
Enamul	26	2	110	2
Rajin	8	0	44	2

Result: Khuna won by 1 wicket. Man-of-the-match: Manjarul Islam (Khuna).



PHOTO: AFP COOLING DOWN: France's Mary Pierce wraps an ice bag around her neck to combat the heat during her loss to Chanda Rubin of the United States in the second round yesterday. Rubin won 0-6, 6-4, 6-2.

Hewitt, Clijsters speed up

FROM PAGE 13 said, "You can't overlook anyone. I think sometimes when people go down, it's because they underestimate their opponent," added Williams.

Monica Seles' dream of adding a fifth Australian Open title to add to her nine career Grand Slams ended on the Margaret Court Arena as world number 113 Koukalova prevailed 6-7, 7-5, 6-3.

Former world number one Seles was struggling to compete after spraining an ankle badly in the third game of the first set.

"It was a struggle, I just tried to fight through the pain but it was too much," Seles said. "I tried to block it out, but I could feel it when I had to move, and she made me move today."

Eisewhere in the women's draw on Thursday, American 10th seed

Chanda Rubin had to fight from a set down before beating France's Mary Pierce 0-6, 6-4, 6-2.

In the men's tournament, Russian third seed Marat Safin came through against Spaniard Albert Montanes in four sets, winning 6-3, 4-6, 6-4, 6-1.

"I'm trying to use less power and energy so I'll be okay for the second week," said Safin, who has been troubled by a shoulder injury in the lead-up to the tournament.

"I'm getting daily treatment and having exercises and it's getting better each day. It's (pain) going away and every day I'm feeling better," he said.

Safin will now face Germany's Rainer Schuttler in the third round. Schuttler beat former Wimbledon champion Richard Krajicek 6-3, 7-5, 6-4.

But it was another Australian Open disappointment for Brazilian Gustavo Kuerten, who was beaten in five sets by the Czech Republic's Radek Stepanek, losing 5-7, 6-3, 7-5, 4-6, 6-3.

The loss continued Kuerten's dismal run at the Australian Open where he has failed to reach the third round in seven attempts.

Kuerten hasn't given up his crusade to triumph in Australia though.

"I need a couple more wins and hopefully they will come," he said. "It's getting more (difficult) every year. It better come quick otherwise I will be finished."

Kenya's cause for concern

ICC Cricket World Cup SOUTH AFRICA 2003

REUTERS, Nairobi

Kenya is battling to convince the International Cricket Council (ICC) that it is capable of handling security at two World Cup matches next month, Kenya officials said on Thursday.

Security fears grew in November when 16 people were killed in a suicide bombing at an Israeli-owned hotel on the Kenyan coast, minutes after two missiles narrowly missed an Israeli airliner taking off nearby.

Kenya's government is due to issue a formal statement later this week reassuring cricket officials and test nations that their country can take care of security for the matches against New Zealand and Sri Lanka on February 21 and 24. "We expect the statement to come from the Office of the President or State House or a high-calibre representative and it should be sent personally to ICC headquarters in London by latest Monday," a senior official in the Ministry of Gender, Sports, Culture and Social Services told Reuters.

"We expect no less a person than the Head of State to push Kenya's

case, in much the same way that Zimbabwe's (President) Robert Mugabe defended his country's record against strong opposition from London and Australia," the official said.

Kenyan cricket fans have been concerned that the games could be moved to South Africa following reports that former New Zealand captain Jeff Crowe was unhappy about security and safety arrangements.

"He seriously doubted Kenya's ability to handle security and safety during next month's Cricket World Cup," said the official, who declined to be named.

Crowe was part of an ICC delegation that inspected security arrangements in Kenya on January 12-13 for the two games due to take place at the Gymkhana club in Nairobi.

"He was particularly disturbed after he visited the United States Embassy in Nairobi and held talks with Security officials there," the official said.

KCA officials declined to comment when contacted by Reuters.

Fresh security concerns about east Africa, where 1998 bomb attacks on U.S. embassies in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam killed 224 people, follow various warnings

issued by Britain, the United States and other countries in the past month.

Britain said on Wednesday that an "international terrorist" group might be planning to carry out an attack on the island of Zanzibar, off the coast of Kenya's neighbour Tanzania, and warned its citizens to be careful.

Australia and the United States have also warned their citizens to be on alert on the mainly Muslim island.

The US warned on January 4 that American citizens in east Africa faced the threat of kidnapping in addition to other potential terror attack risks.

"To him (Crowe), it matters less whether Zanzibar and Kenya are different. It is the region that matters," the official said. "He did not mince his words and he told KCA that there was real danger in staging the matches in Nairobi."

While Sri Lanka have confirmed that they will play their World Cup match in Nairobi, New Zealand have raised concerns on security issues.

KCA officials believe Kenya can safely hold the games following their successful staging of the 2000 ICC Trophy one-day tournament, which involved all the test-playing nations.

Lamb demands a recheck

ICC Cricket World Cup SOUTH AFRICA 2003

INTERNET, London

English cricket chief Tim Lamb has called for a new inspection tour of Zimbabwe before England's controversial World Cup game takes place in Harare next month.

The England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) on Tuesday announced that the February 13 game will take place.

ECB chief executive Lamb was part of an International Cricket Council (ICC) delegation in November that pronounced the country safe to play in.

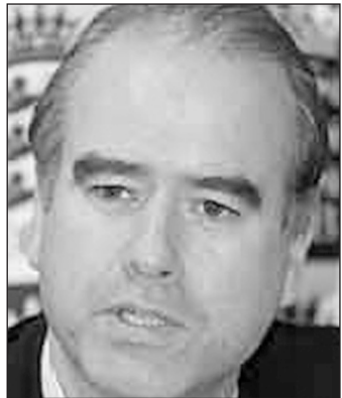
But, following reports of civil unrest, Lamb is now urging the ICC to send another delegation to the famine-affected African country.

"I have written to the ICC saying we do think it's important in the light of recent events in Zimbabwe that there is a re-visit of the security situation," he said.

"The ECB will not expect its players to go to Harare if there's any perceived risk or specific advice

from the appropriate sources that their physical safety could be at risk."

The ICC has already formed a



TIM LAMB

standing committee to keep an eye on safety worries for the six matches scheduled in Bulawayo and Harare.

However, England are the only country to make public any worry about playing in Zimbabwe.

The Australian government has expressed concern about the match but the issue has barely broken the

Hingis' quit hint

Tennis

AFP, Zurich

Former world number one Martina Hingis, who is recovering from surgery on damaged ankle ligaments, admitted on Wednesday she may have to call it quits if there was no end to her injury misery.

"Everything depends on my injury," the 22-year-old Swiss star, who has been the subject of speculation she may never play again, told the Sports Information Agency.

"It could be I will never play again at the highest stage," said Hingis who underwent surgery on her left ankle on May 20 last year causing her to miss the Grand Slams at the French Open and Wimbledon.

Her last match was at Filderstadt in Germany on October 10, 2002,

where she was beaten by Russia's Elena Dementieva - after that she called a halt to her season and had



MARTINA HINGIS

already decided to sit out the year's first Grand Slam event, the Australian Open currently underway

wicketkeeper Kumar Sangakkara, who achieved two fine stumpings in the Australian innings, including the removal of Maher, who opened his side's innings.

Maher was beaten by a viciously turning ball sent down by off-spinning wizard Muttiah Muralitharan.

Sangakkara, who has taken over the gloves from Romesh Kaluwitharana, made an acrobatic retrieval, then flung the ball backwards to break the stumps with Maher out of his ground.

"It must be such a challenge to keep to Muraly -- he turns the ball so much both ways," Gilchrist said.

"Kumar is a terrifically talented cricketer, and I take my hat off to him for that stumping."

Sangakkara, 25, who is studying law at Colombo University, sharpens his reflexes by playing tennis and badminton.

in Melbourne. She has yet to name a date for her return to the sport which she dominated from 1997-2000 when she won five Grand Slam crowns.

"Tennis was and remains my passion, but there is nothing to be gained by playing matches when you are in constant pain," added Hingis who insisted an early retirement from the sport would not be a catastrophe for her.

"I would have more time for myself."

Hingis, who is convalescing at her home in Zurich, said she has still been practising and training - horse-riding, skiing as well as some tennis, but only with caution.

"If I play without forcing, everything is OK. But if I step up the intensity, then there is new pain in the heel and then in all of the foot."