



PHOTO: INTERNET

TESTING TIMES: (L) International Cricket Council's (ICC) chief executive Malcolm Speed speaks at a news conference in Johannesburg while (R) England captain Nasser Hussain contemplates his future yesterday.

Nasser's quit threat

REUTERS, East London

Nasser Hussain will consider his position as England captain at the end of the World Cup after losing faith in cricket's governing bodies over the Zimbabwe fixture debacle.

Hussain, speaking hours after the final decision to award his side's Group A match in Zimbabwe to the hosts, said he did not think the International Cricket Council (ICC) had let down the England team. "It makes me think more about my long-term future as captain after the tournament," Hussain told a news conference on Saturday.

"I have seen a group of players whose World Cup dream has been shattered by politics but should have been seen six months ago by people at the ICC. The authorities have fudged the issue."

"I believe that this group of cricketers given the wranglings between Britain and Zimbabwe have been let down by the ICC."

Hussain said he was particularly annoyed that the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) had apologised to ICC chief executive Malcolm Speed on his behalf after the two men had a frank exchange of views last week. The ECB later denied such an apology had been made.

"I have absolutely nothing to apologise for, at no stage did I swear or be rude," Hussain said. "I just let them know that they had let us down, they should have seen it (the situation) snowballing."

ECB chief executive Tim Lamb said later he had not apologised to Speed.

"I just expressed to Malcolm Speed that the atmosphere of the meeting had been charged," Lamb said in a statement. "There has been no formal apology. Malcolm Speed has said the matter is closed and he bears no malice to anyone in the England team."

The World Cup technical committee's decision, which England will not appeal against, ended weeks of wrangling over the Harare fixture Hussain's team were unwilling to fulfil because of security concerns about playing in the strife-torn country.

Hussain, 34, said during the recent Ashes series in Australia that he would consider his future as England captain with coach Duncan Fletcher after the World Cup.

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Eng won't budge

AFP, Johannesburg

England will not lodge a final appeal against the ICC's refusal to switch their World Cup match against Zimbabwe to South Africa, England and Wales Cricket Board chief Tim Lamb said on Saturday.

The decision brings to an end the long-running saga over the game which should have taken place in Harare on February 13 but was boycotted by England claiming a death threat meant that their secu-

urity and safety in the country would be compromised.

The tournament technical committee decided earlier Saturday that they would not switch the game to South Africa.

It means that England are forced to forfeit four points and could face a massive compensation claim from the Zimbabwe Cricket Union (ZCU) for boycotting the game.

"After a great deal of consideration, the ECB has decided not to appeal the decision of the ICC," said Lamb.

"We feel we have done all we can to persuade the ICC of the merits of our case but the issue has dragged on long enough."

"In the interests of the World Cup, the teams and the wider game of cricket, it is time to move on and put this episode behind us."

"However, the ECB does not agree with the decision of the technical committee and we have been advised by our lawyers that it is legally incorrect," added Lamb hinting at a long battle ahead to avoid having to pay compensation for their boycott.

The England officials remain bitter at the outcome.

"We believe that we did put significant new evidence before the technical committee on Friday which was not available to the committee at the original hearing on February 6," added Lamb.

"We also called into question the basis on which the committee decided on that date not to relocate the Zimbabwe-England match to a safer location."

The technical committee, under the chairmanship of ICC chief executive Malcolm Speed, had met for six hours on Friday to discuss the matter but announced on Saturday that they had turned down England's application.

"The technical committee has unanimously decided that the concerns raised relating to new evidence regarding safety and security are not justified," said Speed.

"The committee has therefore unanimously declined the ECB application. England is deemed to be rejected."

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Next comes the Kiwis

REUTERS, JOHANNESBURG

New Zealand will not travel to Nairobi for their scheduled World Cup match against Kenya and have asked the sport's governing body to switch the fixture to South Africa.

"The situation is the New Zealand board have reconfirmed their decision made on January 31, which is not to allow the New Zealand team to travel to Nairobi for the match on February 21," New Zealand Cricket (NZC) chief executive Martin Snedden told Reuters on Saturday.

"The team won't go to Nairobi, we've advised the ICC (International Cricket Council) of this and we've confirmed that we are willing to play the game at an alternative venue in South Africa -- at whatever date the ICC might determine."

"From our point of view, there's only one issue to consider in all of this and that is player safety. You just can't allow yourself to be devastated in any other direction."

New Zealand, who have had security concerns over playing the Group B match in Kenya since a November bombing killed 16 people in Mombasa, have already warned they could appeal to the Court of Arbitration for Sport in Lausanne.

However, Sri Lanka, also in New Zealand's group, have said they have no problems playing in Kenya on February 24.

England and Australia have

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AFTERSHOCKS

Bangladesh in 'Whirled Cup'

DR. NIZAMUDDIN AHMED

The calamity against Canada at Kingsmead, Durban on 11 February was disdainfully set aside by team management as an accident; the sin against the Sri Lankans at Pietermaritzburg three days later was confirmation it was not.

They say lightning never strikes the same place twice, but then Bangladesh has always been an exception in meteorological matters. They first ruined the joy of Eid and the second was a painful arrow piercing through the very heart of Valentine.

With history against the Canadian amateurs not written in chivalry

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Nation of anglers

MUSTAFIZUR RAHMAN KHAN

Our team at the World Cup in South Africa is a national embarrassment and a disgrace to the game of cricket. The excuses commonly proffered for past failures were inexperience and lack of exposure. But are they still tenable? We have already played more than 15 Tests since we got Test status in 2000. No other Test nation has played so many Tests within such a short period of time since gaining Test status. Our A Team has participated in the domestic cricket competition of the West Indies and has

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Cricketing disaster

AFP, Johannesburg

Bangladesh team manager Abu Sharif Faruque warned on Saturday that a failure to win any of their six World Cup games would be a disaster for the sport back home.

Defeats to Canada and Sri Lanka in their first two matches here have extended their losing streak to 28 games and with encounters against South Africa, West Indies and New Zealand to come, Bangladesh are looking at more humiliation.

"Bangladesh's performances here have been hugely disappointing and if we fail in all our games it would be a cricketing disaster back home," Faruque told AFP.

Bangladesh went down unceremoniously to part-timers Canada in their first game by 60 runs and were then routed by Sri Lanka by ten wickets.

Their only realistic hope of breaking their unwanted streak will be against Kenya on March 1 in their last group game in Johannesburg.

"I have received a very negative feedback after the loss to Canada because it was a match we were expected to win and this will affect the following back home."

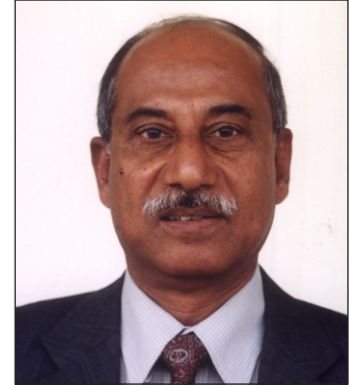
Bangladesh went into the World Cup having played a series in

Namibia and a warm-up game which gave them a good lead-up, but things have gone from bad to worse since then.

"We never expected to lose against Canada after some good performances in Namibia and in a warm-up match we chased 251 to win," he said.

Cricket took over from football as the most popular game in the 130-million people nation after the country was awarded Test status in August 2000, a decision still being

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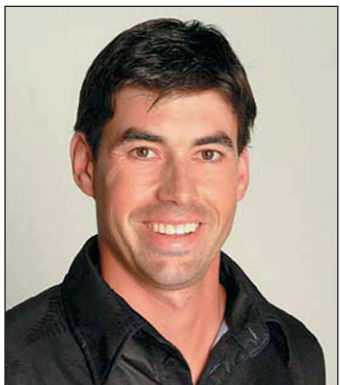


ASM FARUQUE

Matter of survival

AFP, Johannesburg

New Zealand will be playing for survival when they take on South Africa in their World Cup Group B match at the Wanderers here on



STEPHEN FLEMING

Sunday. Defeat would almost certainly mean elimination for the Kiwis, who have already lost against Sri Lanka, unless they change their minds about playing a match against Kenya in Nairobi on February 21.

It's a crucial game, too, for South Africa, who also have lost a match, against the West Indies.

A win would keep alive the hosts' hopes of finishing top of the pool, following the West Indies' defeat against New Zealand Thursday, while defeat would mean they would

have to beat Sri Lanka in Durban on March 3 to make sure of qualifying for the Super Six stage.

There is a third possibility -- that rain could prevent a result. There is

Fleming said that although his team lost five matches out of six against South Africa in a triangular series in Australia last season, following a 5-0 series loss in South

There is also concern over the form of veteran fast bowler Allan Donald, who with Rhodes was the only man to have played in all of South Africa's four World Cup campaigns.



SHAUN POLLOCK

Donald is likely to be recalled Sunday after being dropped for Wednesday's match against Kenya in Potchefstroom but the loss of Rhodes will mean a reshuffled batting order.

Graeme Smith, who replaced Rhodes, is likely to open the batting with Herschelle Gibbs, which will mean Gary Kirsten dropping to number three, with Boeta Dippenaar moving from three to fill Rhodes' position at five.

Gibbs will move into Rhodes' position at five.

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HEAD TO HEAD		
New Zealand v South Africa		
Recent head-to-head record of matches between South Africa and New Zealand ahead of their World Cup Group B clash at the Wanderers here on Sunday:		
Feb 8 2002	South Africa won by 6 wickets	Sydney
Feb 6 2002	South Africa won by 8 wickets	Melbourne
Feb 1 2002	South Africa won by 67 runs	Perth
Jan 27 2002	South Africa won by 93 runs	Adelaide
Jan 19 2002	New Zealand won by 4 wickets	Brisbane
Jan 15 2002	South Africa won by 26 runs	Hobart
Nov 4 2000	South Africa won by 3 wickets	Newlands
Nov 1 2000	South Africa won by 6 wickets	Kingsmead
Oct 28 2000	South Africa won by 5 wickets	Kimberley
Oct 25 2000	South Africa won by 115 runs	Centurion
Total matches played: 33		
South Africa wins: 22, New Zealand wins: 8, Tied/NR: 3		

a 40 per cent chance of thunder-showers Sunday.

New Zealand captain Stephen Fleming said after the West Indies match that it had been a relief to achieve the first victory in 14 matches in South Africa, going back to the 1994-95 season.

He said the players had felt a lot of pressure. "Anxiety levels were high," he said.

Africa in 2000-01, they were confident of putting up a good performance.

"We've got a lot of information on South Africa, but it's going to come down to competing for long periods of time," he said.

South Africa's preparations were disrupted by a broken hand which put star fielder and middle order batsman Jonty Rhodes out of the tournament.

Out of Africa

AFP, Johannesburg

Just over ten years ago, 15-year-old Makhaya Ntini was a barefoot kid playing on dust pitches in the Eastern Cape with any hope of ever playing for South Africa a distant dream.

Now, with Allan Donald's talents fast fading and Shaun Pollock coping with the added responsibility of captaincy, it is Ntini who is reveling in the role of strike bowler.

But it was so different when he was starting out.

Back home, he had to borrow a pair of training shoes when two officials of the local cricket board academy came calling looking for raw talent.

Those men were Border Cricket Board academy and coaching

manager Greg Hayes and Border Bears assistant coach Raymond Boozi who discovered Ntini in 1992 at a match at Mdingi Village outside King William's Town.

"We gave him a chance to bowl and we were so impressed by his speed. We told ourselves this was a Proteas bowler in the making," Boozi told the SAPA news agency.

"During those days Ntini was bowling barefoot. I gave him my old training shoes to bowl with until Hayes bought him new ones."

A year later Ntini made the Border under-15 cricket side which played the English under-15 team which were touring South Africa.

The two men helped Ntini get into Dale College in King William's Town and they have supported him throughout his career.

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However, they do not take all of the credit for discovering the bowler saying that "many people helped in bringing him to where he is now. The community support, players, Border Cricket and South Africa in general have made him what he is."

Boozi and Hayes have great expectations of Ntini in the World Cup as well as Monde Zondeki.

"Give Ntini about three more years, he will be at his peak," said Hayes of the player who has 92 one-day wickets to his name from 64 matches.

Zondeki, 19, went to the same school as Ntini in King William's Town and has only played two

Hatchet buried

AFP, Johannesburg

The South African World Cup team welcome Graeme Smith back into their side at the Wanderers here on Sunday insisting that there will be no hard feelings despite an ugly and foul-mouthed confrontation between them last week.

Smith, called-up to replace the injured Jonty Rhodes, found himself at the centre of a volley of abuse from his national squad teammates when he was batting for his Western Province side against Shaun Pollock's men in a World Cup warm-up game at Greenpoint in Cape Town last week.

He stood his ground when he was dismissed because he claimed the fielding restrictions were being ignored and that the delivery should

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Poor nets

REUTERS, Johannesburg

South Africa's preparations for their World Cup Group B match against New Zealand were seriously undermined on Friday when poor net surfaces at the Wanderers forced several batsmen to halt practice.

Jacques Kallis and Andrew Hall both suffered worrying knocks as the batsmen struggled to cope with unpredictable bounce, several deliveries spitting and lifting off a good length.

South Africa's team management was concerned enough to consider an alternative practice venue for their final session on Saturday.

"It isn't ideal when guys need to walk out of the nets, it's a pity, but we did get some work done," coach Eric

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Vote for democracy

INTERNET, Johannesburg

The International Cricket Council

(ICC) technical committee on Friday rejected Zimbabwe Cricket Union's (ZCU) demand that action be taken

against Andy Flower and Henry Olonga for wearing black arm bands during the World cup match against Namibia.

Flower and Olonga wore the badge protesting against the human right violations and "death of democracy" in Zimbabwe.

The technical committee's decision has put ICC and ZCU on a collision course, because ZCU thinks that the players' action was an insult to the country and its president.

According to ZCU, "the actions of the players brought the game into disrepute and sought to have it dealt with under the ICC's Code of Conduct."

After considering the issue, the technical committee decided that it was not appropriate for a charge to be laid under the Code.

While strongly stating that the ICC's position is that cricket should not be used as a vehicle through which to make political statements, the six-member committee chaired by Malcolm Speed, did not find evidence to warrant a charge being laid against the pair.

"The ICC seeks at all times to avoid using cricket as a platform on which to advance political agendas and its very strong belief is that the players, officials and administrators within the game should refrain from doing the same."

"The Committee requested that the players stop wearing black arm-bands to make political statements for the duration of the ICC Cricket World Cup 2003," said Speed.

"There are enough people outside the sport seeking to achieve political ends through cricket for their own purposes, without the sport's participants contributing to

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PHOTO: INTERNET

TORCHBEARERS OF DEMOCRACY! Zimbabwe stars Henry Olonga (R) and Andy Flower during practice in Harare on February 13.