

Request rejected

AFP, Johannesburg

India's request to have the day-night World Cup semifinal at Durban's Kingsmead ground on March 20 switched to a daytime clash was rejected Friday.

Indian cricket chief Jagmohan Dalmiya had asked for the match to be played in the day following fears that the night-time conditions gave the side bowling second a significant advantage because of increased dew on the pitch.

But World Cup executive director Ali Bacher confirmed Friday, following a telephone conversation with former International Cricket Council (ICC) supreme Dalmiya, that the game would

remain a floodlit affair.

"Having explained the thinking and reasons behind our decision, Mr Dalmiya repeated the assurance given to me Thursday that he and the BCCI (Board of Control for Cricket in India) will accept this in good faith," Bacher said.

"I can reconfirm that the semifinal at Kingsmead, Durban, will proceed as scheduled, as a day-night match."

A statement released by the World Cup organisers backed the concept of night matches.

"They allow thousands of fans to attend games after work or school, that they might otherwise be unable to during the working

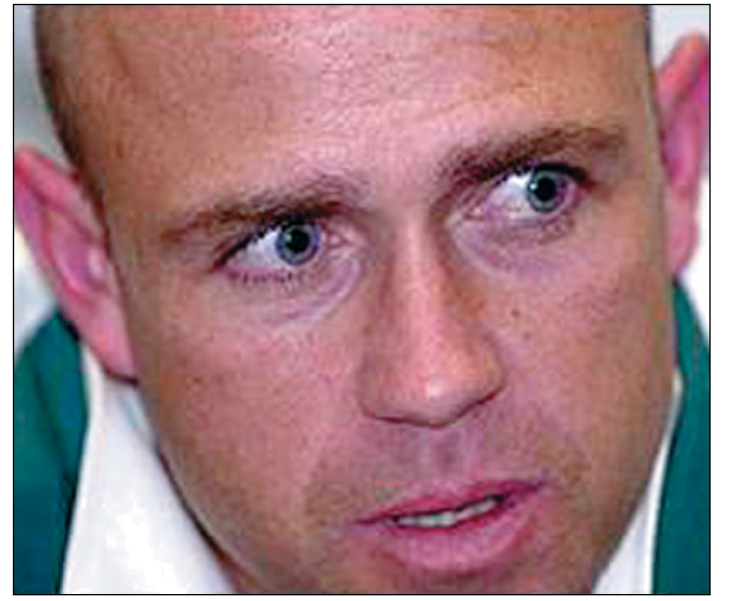
week," it said.

It also said that as thousands of fans had already made arrangements based around the existing timings it would be unfair to change them at this late stage.

And, from a cricket perspective, Bacher and his colleagues pointed out how day-night results at Kingsmead contradicted the view that teams batting first were unduly favoured.

The record for day-nighters at the ground shows that seven have been won by the team batting first, seven

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Richard Pybus

Pybus vents his frustration

AFP, Johannesburg

Pakistan coach Richard Pybus was on the verge of quitting Friday, saying it was difficult to coach a side in which players were not willing to learn.

"I tried my best but it was difficult. Some guys wanted to learn, but some were not interested at all," Pybus told AFP after strong contenders Pakistan bowed out of the World Cup in the first round.

The South Africa-based Pybus, 42, said it was time for someone else to take over.

"I think I can still contribute to Pakistan cricket, but it is time to move on and let someone else do the job," he said.

"I would prefer to spend quality time with my daughter."

He said that Pakistan, World Cup champions in 1992 and runners-up to Australia four years ago, were a good side but some players lacked the passion and desire to perform at the international level.

"I won't name any individual but they get to the park and are part of the team but not of the plan," a disgusted Pybus said.

"They have old habits, they don't want to change. There's a reluctance to learn and change."

Pakistan spent a miserable time at the tournament, their only victory

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Lights, action and drama

AFP, Johannesburg

India's request to have the World Cup semifinal at Durban's Kingsmead ground on March 20 changed from a day-night into a daytime fixture has reopened the debate about floodlit cricket.

According to critics, the team batting second is at a huge disadvantage as the increased dew on the pitch and heavier atmosphere makes for a livelier surface with pace bowlers gaining extra nipp off the deck and greater swing in the air.

But the record at Kingsmead suggests otherwise.

In 16 day-night one-day internationals there, seven have been won by the team batting first, seven by

the team batting second, with one tie and one no-result.

However, India captain Saurav Ganguly is convinced the toss could prove decisive.

"There is no doubt that under lights the pace bowlers have an edge. In day-night games the toss is very crucial," said Ganguly whose side beat England by 82 runs under the Kingsmead lights in the preliminary round after batting first.

England skipper Nasser Hussain, who has since resigned his one-day post following the team's first round exit, agreed: "Conditions did alter, the ball did start to zip off."

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Sobers to do the honours

AFP, Johannesburg

The legendary Garfield Sobers, widely regarded as the greatest cricketer ever, will present the man of the tournament award after the World Cup final here on March 23.

Sobers, named one of the cricketers of the 20th century by Wisden, will fly in from his home in Barbados to attend the final at the Wanderers, World Cup chief executive Ali Bacher said.

The man of the tournament will be decided by a ranking system in which match referees pick the top three players after each match of the World Cup.

India's star batsman Sachin Tendulkar, the leading scorer in the tournament with 469 runs in the preliminary league, currently

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PHOTO: AFP

ARE YOU TAKING ME TO BIN-LADEN? An unidentified person whisks away Pakistan batsman Inzamamul Haq (L) from the Lahore International Airport yesterday after the team returned home from South Africa.

Windies rue 3 factors

INTERNET, undated

Three episodes out of their control left eliminated West Indies after the first round stage, despite being one of the more impressive teams at the World Cup.

New Zealand's forfeit of Kenya, their washed-out match against Bangladesh and the Dilhara Fernando bouncer that consigned Ramnaresh Sarwan all played their part.

Had the Black Caps travelled to Nairobi, and avoided the fate suffered by group-mates Sri Lanka, they would have topped the group and allowed Carl Hooper's men in.

Hooper's hopes of wrapping Bangladesh up early were dealt a blow when he lost the toss, and the rain that intensified in the ninth over of the second innings left them needing to defeat Sri Lanka to

progress.

Had Sarwan remained at the crease, or even been at his best when he heroically returned at the death, they may have achieved that easily.

In the event, his departure saw a quick loss of wickets and his return was too late.

This World Cup has confirmed the old sportsman's adage that you can only "control the controllables".

But for the Windies, several weaknesses were highlighted along the way.

The return of Brian Lara from the mystery illness that had kept him out since September completed an impressive batting line-up, several youngsters having matured in Lara's absence while on tour in India.

The complete package came off against South Africa in the opening game of the tournament, Lara scoring an impressive century before Sarwan and Ricardo Powell extended their total beyond South Africa's reach.

But the side was still suffering a hangover from that match when they took on New Zealand the following Thursday.

Lara aside, the form batsmen were in the lower-middle order a problem quickly exposed when the Trinidadian was superbly run-out.

Sarwan, who starred with 75 against the Black Caps, was only promoted to fourth for the fourth match of the campaign, against Canada.

What should have been a romp

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PHOTO: STAR FILE

Jagmohan Dalmiya

Dalmiya pleads to resume Indo-Pak tie

REUTERS, New Delhi

India's national cricket board has asked the federal government to allow resumption of cricket matches with Pakistan to prevent their team being isolated from world cricket.

India are scheduled to tour Pakistan next month in line with the International Cricket Council's (ICC) 10-year programme but the series is unlikely to go ahead because of tension between the neighbours over the disputed region of Kashmir.

"Each country is supposed to

play four series against each other in a 10-year period (two at home and two abroad)," Jagmohan Dalmiya, president of Indian cricket board wrote in a letter to federal sports minister Vikram Verma earlier this week.

"If India does not play against Pakistan, the equilibrium of world cricket will be severely affected because the World Test Championship cannot be decided. India may be totally isolated in the world cricket scenario," he added.

The Indian government banned all bilateral matches between the sides in 2000 but has not been

opposed to the teams playing in multi-team events at neutral venues.

Pakistan have said they are willing to host India. The ICC's executive board is expected to discuss the issue in their meeting on March 21 in Johannesburg.

India and Pakistan played against each other for the first time in almost three years at the World Cup in South Africa last week, when India won by six wickets.

The two countries have fought three wars against each other since independence from Britain in 1947.

Why me, always?

AFP, Johannesburg

Lance Klusener admitted on Friday that he was left so despondent by South Africa's heartbreaking World Cup exit that he was tempted to give it all up and go fishing instead.

For the second successive World Cup, the 31-year-old was at the wicket when the last rites were performed on his team's hopes.

Four years ago, he was involved in the run-out with Allan Donald in the semifinal at Edgbaston which left South Africa tied with Australia but knocked out of the tournament.

On Monday, fate was conspiring against him again as he was stranded in the middle with Mark Boucher when the crucial Pool B game with Sri Lanka in Durban was abandoned as a tie.

Again it was a result which put

South Africa out of the World Cup.

"When the whole thing was over and I realised just what had happened, I kept asking myself why it should have happened to me," Klusener told the Business Day newspaper here.

"I was just wondering whether I shouldn't just give it up and go fishing."

There has been a huge debate here over the country's exit from a tournament which they started as co-favourites with defending champions Australia.

But they were dumped out by Sri Lanka when chasing 268-9, they reached 229-6 in 45 overs when the Durban rains appeared under the Duckworth-Lewis method, the scores were tied with the points shared.

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PHOTO: STAR FILE

Lance Klusener

Good business

AFP, Johannesburg

Africa's first cricket World Cup will generate a profit of 300 million South African rands (37 million dollars), chief organiser Ali Bacher said.

"The projections are that, including gate receipts, we will have a surplus around 300 million rand," Bacher told a news conference on the eve of the tournament's Super Sixes phase.

Bacher said about 25 million dollars would come from the marketing and sponsorship deals of the International Cricket Council (ICC) and the remainder from gate receipts.

The ICC signed a marketing deal worth 550 million dollar with the Global Cricket Corporation (GCC) two years ago which covers all ICC

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Proteas in problem

REUTERS, Cape Town

South African cricket is caught in a vacuum and failing to produce the quality players of old, according to former coach Bob Woolmer.

"Club cricket used to be strong, but not anymore," Woolmer told. "There are lot of little problems which build up into big ones. It is not an easy thing to manage."

"Many cricketers, both black and white, are not sure what future holds for them."

Hosts South Africa suffered a shock first-round elimination from the World Cup after a series of unimpressive performances.

The final blow came when their do-or-die clash against Sri Lanka ended in a tie, after rain intervened with South Africa one run short of

forcing victory under the Duckworth-Lewis method.

"There is a vacuum in South African cricket," Woolmer said. "South Africa is not producing the type of cricketers it used to anymore."

Woolmer said South African cricket managers faced a tough job to turn things around.

"The most important would be nurturing talent in the 18-24 age group," he said, adding that social transformation in the country had also contributed to the uncertainty.

"Some of the white children may be giving up cricket. In the townships, if the good cricketers kids are not looked after, they also may go to find jobs."

"Kids with jobs can't play on

Saturdays. There are four or five such players I myself know."

Woolmer took South Africa to the semifinals at the 1999 World Cup and is credited with reviving the team after their return to the international fold in 1992.

The highly respected coach, who coached South Africa for five years until 1999, is currently with the International Cricket Council (ICC) as its high performance manager. He supervised the preparation of Canada, Netherlands and Namibia for this year's tournament.

Woolmer said he felt the team management had been caught unaware when it began raining at the day-night game in Kingsmead.

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PHOTO: STAR FILE

Bob Woolmer

Next WC safe

AFP, Johannesburg

Organisers of the next World Cup in the West Indies in 2007 have brushed aside fears the tournament could be shifted elsewhere since it did not suit television timings in Asia.

The time difference between the Caribbean and cricket's main financial backer India means games will start late in the evening in India which could affect television ratings.

But Christopher Dehring, chief executive officer of the Windies World Cup 2007, insisted there were no problems on that front because all factors had been taken into account when the rights were sold two years ago.

"There are no threats to the World Cup 2007 regardless of what other people's concerns on televi-

sion viewership may be," Dehring told a news conference here.

"The television rights were sold and a guaranteed amount reached after considering all factors."

The International Cricket Council (ICC) sold the marketing and sponsorship rights of two World Cups in 2003 and 2007 and three Champions Trophy events for 550 million dollars to the Global Cricket Corporation.

Dehring is here as the head of a 17-member delegation from the West Indies to observe the organisation of the current tournament.

"The 2003 World Cup is the best organised ever but only till the next one comes along," said Dehring, who is also the chief marketing officer of the West Indian board.

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Pollock gets backing

AFP, Johannesburg

South African cricket chiefs on Thursday left skipper Shaun Pollock wondering whether he still has a future at the helm of the national team after the World Cup flop.

Although publicly backing Pollock, chief selector Omar Henry also admitted the search for a long-term successor was underway with Neil McKenzie and Graeme Smith both being tipped as frontrunners for the job in the long-term.

"I want to make it quite clear that we back Shaun completely," said Henry.

"We have absolutely no plans to replace Shaun as captain of the national side."

Henry however pointed out that the selectors had to provide for the future.

"Shaun is fully aware that we are looking to groom captains for the future," Henry told the SAPA news agency.

"Shaun realises that the process



SHAUN POLLOCK

has begun and he has given us his views and input."

Henry conceded that by captaining the South Africa 'A' team, both McKenzie and Smith had been identified as future leaders.

It is understood that one of the two may be given a chance to captain a national side as soon as next month when the 'A' team goes to Australia in April and the seniors play in Sharjah after the World Cup.

"We're going to use both Australia and Sharjah to select the touring side for England later in the summer," said Henry.

Former South Africa captain Clive Rice has also backed Shaun Pollock to stay in the job.

"He's given a side he know he can't win with and told to play with it. I feel sorry for him."

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Choose Adam, says Darren

INTERNET, Centurion

Australian batsman Darren Lehmann says England should choose Adam Hoolioake to replace Nasser Hussain as their one-day captain.

Hussain's decision to relinquish the captaincy shortly after England crashed out of the World Cup has paved the way for the Surrey skipper to take over, argues Lehmann.

He told the BBC Sport website: "I think they should go for Hoolioake because I believe he is the best captain by far in English county cricket."

"The selectors may think the time is right to go for one of the youngsters in the side, say Michael Vaughan, but if they were looking for somebody who has a bit of experi

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