SPÖRT

Gibbs shifts

South Africa batsman Herschelle Gibbs turned his attention to cricket on Friday, a day after being interrogated by Indian police in a six-yearold match-fixing case.

The 32-year-old explosive batsman was playing in a warm-up match against a Mumbai team, three days before South Africa open their Champions Trophy campaign against New Zealand.

"Herschelle is now concentrating on what he does best -- playing cricket," South Africa team spokesman Gordon Templeton told

"Herschelle is happy that his meeting with the senior Delhi police officials went well," Templeton added.

Wednesday for the first time since the scandal broke after a Delhi police investigation into corruption during South Africa's tour of India in 2000.

Back then, Indian police charged the then captain Hansie Cronje and team mates Gibbs. Nicky Boie and Pieter Strydom with "cheating, fraud and criminal conspiracy related to

Gibbs was subsequently fined and suspended for six months by his national board after admitting he agreed to under-perform in a one-

the late Cronie, who was subsequently banned from cricket for life.

Gibbs had declined to tour India since then over fears he may be

On Thursday, Delhi police joint commissioner (crime) Ranjit Narayan, told a news conference that Gibbs admitted during the interrogation that he was made an offer by Cronje and that he was part of the conspiracy.

reporters were so excited and responded after knowing the fact, "Oh, its fantastic for you people."

Within a short time the Bangladesh tent was aware of the fact and manager Khaled Mahmud conveyed the sentiment about the first Bangladeshi winning a Nobel

"We are really excited. He is the former Bangladesh skipper

SKP slams

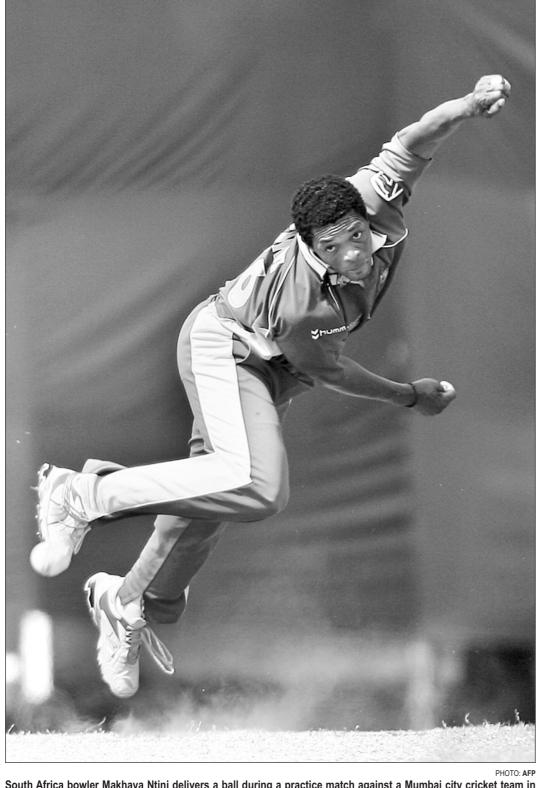
FROM PAGE 17

one week earlier. But its effort went in vain due to non-cooperation of the federation, the organisation of

shooter under direction of the 'higher authority'," the statement

ministry and the federation, espe-Muyeed Chowdhury for the non-

chances of Asif to participate in the coming Asian Games (in December) but also threatens to end a glorious career prematurely,"



South Africa bowler Makhaya Ntini delivers a ball during a practice match against a Mumbai city cricket team in

Crookes claims innocence

Cricket

CRICINFO, undated

Derek Crookes, the former South African spinner, has expressed his dismay at allegations that he was involved in match-fixing in India in 2000. Crookes, 37, has allegedly been named as one of three cricketscandal during Herschelle Gibbs' questioning by Indian police in Delhi

"I was shocked when I heard it, especially as I was cleared by the King Commission of any involvement in match-fixing," Crookes was quoted as saying by the South Áfrican website news24.com "I have never had anything to hide and gave evidence during the King Commission's hearings. I will be more than willing to make a statement, along with my legal team, to the Indian police. The only reason I can think of for them wanting to link me in some way to match fixing is that I opened the bowling on that day in Nagpur."

Crookes declared his innocence and maintained that he was told that he would open the bowling in the suspect Nagpur match six years ago. "Hansie Cronjé had told me

Afterwards it was said to have changed, but shortly before the match. Hansie told me again I would open," he said. "I did not find it strange because I had opened the bowling for Gauteng on occasions. I was always ready for a challenge and suspected nothing when Hansie told me about the plan. I had no idea that it might have something to do with match-fixing or that some

auvs would be bettina on it.' Crookes felt he had no reason to travel to India to testify, and that the Indian police could come to South Africa if they had any questions.

Gibbs, accompanied to New Delhi by his lawyer Peter Whelan, was questioned for two-and-halfhours about his alleged involvement in match-fixing. Both Gibbs and Whelan have denied they mentioned any names to the Indian police, and Whelan still awaited a copy of the questioning's transcriptions. Gordon Templeton, South Africa's media manager, was quick to add: "Matters are very sensitive at this stage and we dare not make a move before we are 100 per cent certain of our facts".

Gibbs will not be questioned during the Champions Trophy

Sending a mistake: Bacher

PTI, Durban

Former South African cricket chief Dr Ali Bacher has said it was a big mistake to send Herschelle Gibbs to India for questioning by the Indian Police six years after the scandal

"I am not so certain that I would have taken such a risk. Why should we open old wounds, particularly during a world cricket championship," the veteran cricket administrator said

Bacher was referring to the interrogation of Gibbs by Delhi Police, hardly a week before South Africa were to start their campaign in the elite Champions Trophy tournament being held in India.

"I have interacted with the Indian media for 15 years and you can be assured they will not back off on this issue until the South African team departs for home," said Bacher who was in charge of South African cricket when the match fixing scandal broke out in 2000.

Bacher was speaking to the 'Star' newspaper in Johannesburg following reports that Gibbs had spilled the beans on Derek Crookes and two other South African cricketers about their alleged involvement in match-fixing during the 2000 tour of

Kramnik wins world chess title

AFP, Elista

Russian Grand Master Viktor Kramnik overpowered Veselin Topalov of Bulgaria in a series of timed tie-break matches to win the World Chess Championship here Friday in a tournament billed as the reunification of long-divided international chess competition.

Topalov resigned in the fourth 25-minute tie-break match after Kramnik, playing white, checked the black king on the 45th move of the match with a well-protected rook, leaving both black rooks open to

Prep delights Freddie

BBC ONLINE, undated

Skipper Andrew Flintoff was satisfied with England's 144-run defeat of Rajasthan on Thursday in their warm-up for the ICC Champions Trophy.

Flintoff said the match was "good practice" for England's first Trophy game against India on Sunday.

"The batters spent time in the middle and the bowlers got miles in their legs which is important," Flintoff said.

Following ankle surgery, it was his first England match since June. "You realise how much you miss it,"

The captain batted at number three, with Andrew Strauss and Ian Bell opening the innings, but insisted that was not a definite system for the Champions Trophy.

"With the depth of batting we've not there are all sorts of ways we can use the order." he said. "We'll discuss where the best

place to bat is, not just for myself, but for the rest of the lads." Two of the main performers in the

opening match were slow bowling all-rounders Jamie Dalrymple and Michael Yardy, who both took wickets and scored quick, valuable runs.

"They have made an impression straight away," Flintoff enthused.

"It's nice to have players who give you depth, hopefully they can keep improving because I hope they will become important members of our team.

Following a sedate atmosphere in front of a sparse crowd in Jaipur, a very different proposition awaits England when they take on hosts India in the first match of the tournament proper at the city's main venue on Sunday. "I don't think it's something to be

intimidated by. We've played in India before and to play in front of big crowds is the reason you play," said the captain

MSC back

FROM PAGE 17 wide of the mark.

Having survived the close calls, Mohammedan went on to force as many as half a dozen penalty corners but managed to convert only one in the dying minutes. The pressure told in the 58th

minute when Habul found the net again for Mohammedan when he flicked in a pass by Pakistani Mohammed Irfan while Yamin Hossain scored from a penalty corner two minutes later to seal the

It was Ajax's second defeat in as many games.

Dhaka Mariner Youngs Club take on Sadharan Bima in today's first match at 1pm while league leaders Abahani face Bangladesh Sporting Club at 3pm.

SL look

FROM PAGE 17 our best to win," said Jayawardene.

"No match will be easy from now

The West Indians have so far lived up to their captain Brian Lara's desire to crush the opposition, swamping Zimbabwe by nine wickets before thrashing Bangladesh by 10 wickets.

Lara, clearly enjoying his third term as captain, wants to build on the momentum.

"The win on Saturday is very important for us as we'd love to qualify as the number one side and move on. We'd also love to continue the momentum," he said.

Lara said Sri Lanka will also be keen on winning because no side wanted to suffer a defeat going into the main stage of the tournament.

"Both teams are going to be very competitive," he said. "We are going to go strongly for a win because think three wins on a trot going into the second stage is definitely a positive.'

Lara will once again be looking for a blistering start from opener Chris Gavle, who made 41 against Zimbabwe and smashed an unbeaten 104 against Bangladesh. The one-sided wins in the previ-

ous two games that has left his batsmen short of match practice does not worry Lara. "If Chris (Gayle) and

(Shivnarine) Chanderpaul are the only two to bat on Saturday, then this is great for us," he said

Hosts' pride at stake



India hope to end a recent dismal run in one-day internationals when they open their Champions Trophy campaign against a confident England here on Sunday.

Rahul Dravid's Indians suffered a 4-1 defeat in the West Indies in May and won just one of their four matches in a triangular series in Kuala Lumpur last month, leaving their fans wondering when the slump would end.

Nothing seems to have gone right for India in recent months despite their innovative training methods, experiments in the batting order and the presence of exciting stroke-makers. India's reputation is at stake

because an unimpressive show at home will be hard to swallow by their They always look a different side in their own backyard as they have not lost a one-day series in more than a

year. They beat Sri Lanka 6-1,

England 5-1 and drew 2-2 with South

against Andrew Flintoff's England

Dravid said poor form of key players was one of the reasons for the team's disappointing performances of

"There has been a bit of a dip over the last couple of months because of this," he said ahead of the main com-

"Earlier, we had a slew of matchwinners who were performing together. In the last six-seven games, there has been some pressure

because everyone has gone through a

"We need them to come back (into form) and I think when they do that, we will be okay.

lean patch.

India expect free-stroking batsman Virender Sehwag and left-arm seamer Irfan Pathan to regain form. Sehwag has contributed just 28 in his last four matches, while Pathan has looked below his best in recent games.

Good news is batting star Sachin Tendulkar's triumphant return to international cricket after a long lay-off due to a shoulder injury: he hit a hundred and a half-century at Kuala Lumpur. England are keen to give a good

account of themselves before the Ashes series, beginning in Australia next month. "We don't fear anything. We go out

to express ourselves. We are confident and believe we can beat anyone," Flintoff said ahead of the group matches. Flintoff, coming off an ankle injury,

was instrumental in his team's squar-

this year by scoring 264 runs and taking 11 wickets.

His team then were also without key players -- Michael Vaughan, Marcus Trescothick, Simon Jones and Ashley Giles -- but he led from the front

to dent India's Test pride. England may have won just two of their last 10 one-day internationals, but Flintoff said his team now had the

"We are quite fortunate to have three all-rounders in Paul Collingwood, Michael Yardy and Jamie Dalrymple. They all bat well and bowl their overs. We also have Rikki Clarke. It gives us a lot of depth," he

The England captain said he was not sure when he would start bowling in the tournament. "I won't be bowling this Sunday,"

Flintoff said.

"As for an exact date as to when I'll be bowling again, I'm not sure. I've bowled two or three times in the nets and it (ankle) is feeling strong but that's something that we're assessing day by

England are in Group A with world champions Australia, India and a qualifier (either Sri Lanka or the West Indies). Each team will play three matches before the top two advance to

Rudi awakening for Indians

Cricket

CRICINFO, undated

Rudi Webster, the Grenada-based psychologist, is currently with the Indian team for a short stint and is eager to carry on the interaction that began on India's tour of West Indies earlier this year.

"This is my first visit to India," Webster told Cricinfo after the team's practice session at Jaipur in the Rajasthan Cricket Academy, "and I'm enjoying it thoroughly. I enjoyed working with a few players when they were in West Indies and can hopefully get some more time here.' One of the players who Webster

closely interacted with during the West Indies tour was Virender Sehwag, who'd been going through a lean phase at the time. In his 19 innings before he met Webster, he'd crossed fifty just three times and his lack of fitness was a serious concern. It's fair to say that the three-hour session transformed Sehwag during the tour and he himself admitted, to Cricinfo Magazine at the end of the series: "If I hadn't met Rudi on this tour, I was struggling. We spent around three hours and I've never spoken to anyone

It was surprising that Sehwag, who'd turned down an offer to interact with Australian psychologist Sandy Gordon, felt so strongly about the meeting. "There's a lot of difference between Sandy and Rudi," he stated matter-of-factly. "Rudi played county cricket for many years and worked with great players. He knows more than Sandy about the game and players. He knows about the way sportsmen think. He'd worked with great players like (Brian) Lara, (Viv) Richards, great footballers, golf players . and it helped

The results were there for all to see. Post Webster, Sehwag spanked 95 in the final one-dayer at Trinidad, a game when none of his team-mates crossed 30; thundered 180 on the opening day of the second Test at St Lucia (reaching 99 in the opening morning and admitting he'd "not hit the ball more cleanly than in that session"); chipped in with vital wickets in the Tests, playing the role of a genuine fifth bowler; startled a few with his emphasis on fitness; and, most significantly, appeared to settle into a mantle of

So what had prompted the change? "I needed to remind myself of some little habits." Sehwag continued. "my thinking before a game, my mindset before the bowler bowls. There are certain things I used to visualise when the bowler was at the start of his mark, when he was running in, when he was about to deliver the ball. All your routines should be in place, for a particular bowler, for a particular team, for a particular series. "Rudi was just chatting to me and I

began recalling several things -- 'I remember doing this in Pakistan'. 'I did the same thing in Australia'. I understood that I need to do these things for a longer time, need to do it continuously. He was telling me things I had done in the past, and I'd forgotten that.

He told me how important it was to remember these things, said it would help if I wrote it down on a paper and read it over and over again.' It helped that Webster had been

following Sehwag's career closely.

"I've been watching him play over the years," he beamed, "and have been terribly impressed with his ability to hit the ball. Not many players have that ability. Viv Richards, who probably had a few more shots, comes the closest All great players have very simple methods and I was very impressed while watching Veeru." Webster admitted that Sehwag

had opened out to him. "My track record probably helped me to establish a rapport with him," he revealed, "and once he found that I was speaking his language, there was a belief that he found. Once you establish a trust, and he believes in your credentials you will find you'll share a very good relationship with him. He discussed things that he would probably not discuss with others.

"Usually when people go into a little slump, a simple technique they use goes through the window," he continued. "All sorts of negative things go through their minds. They doubt themselves because of pressures from media and fans. Their thinking becomes negative. They forget some basic routines that brought them success.

Nafees silences critics

Bashar added 80 runs with Nafees for the fourth wicket association that played a vital role taking the Tigers beyond the 200-mark. Basahr smote four boundaries before being bowled by Rainsford

while trying to accelerate.

Mashrafee Bin Mortuza and
Mohammad Rafique were promoted in the batting order as
debutant Mehrab Hossain did not get the chance to bat but the ploy did not work as Bangladesh failed to impress in the slog overs, having scored only 33 in the last five overs.

Zimbabwe new ball bowlers Rainsford and Anthony Ireland, who began with maidens, took two wickets each.

SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard in the Champion Trophy qualifying match between Bangladesh and Zimbabwe at the Sawai Mansingh Stadium on Friday:

aleh Ibw ainsfor

BANGLADESH

Hasan c Rainsford ains for Mortuza c Chigumbura Extras: (lb-8, nb-1, w-Fall of wickets: 1-9, 2-26, 3-110, **Bowler** Rainsford 3

Chigumbura **ZIMBABWE** Chibhabha Ibw b Mortuza Taylor st Mashud b Hasan Masakadza run out Strydom b Rafique Matsikenyeri run out 27 Chigumbura c & b Hasan Brent c Bashar b Hasan Utseya b Razzak Ireland b Rafique Rainsford not out Kamungozi b Razzak Extras: (b-1, lb-3) 4 Total: (All out in 44.4 overs) 130 Fall of wickets: 1-26, 2-35, 3-61 78, 5-88, 6-123, 7-123, 8-127, 130, 10-130. Bowler



Russian pin-up Maria Sharapova gestures during a press conference to announce her withdrawal from ATP Kremlin Cup tennis tournament in Moscow on Friday.

focus to cricket REUTERS, Mumbai

Reuters

Gibbs arrived in the country on

match-fixing and betting"

day international. The offer was relayed to him by

detained.

Tigers share

first Bangladeshi to achieve the feat and actually it has honoured the country. Muhammad Yunus is our proud. Everybody can take inspiration from his success," said the

sportsmen and organisers claimed in a press release issued yesterday. "We also arranged an air ambulance for Asif's transfer to Thailand but the hospital authority has yet to hand over the medical report of the

said. The SKP blamed the sports cially the NSF president Abdul

cooperation. "The delay would not only kill the

added the statement. ICC is neo-colonialist: Modi

Cricket

AFP, Mumbai India's battle against the International Cricket Council turned nasty Thursday with the world governing body of the game accused of snooty, avaricious neo-

"The avaricious and snooty officials are behaving more as masters and less as paid executives," raged Lalit Modi, vicepresident of the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI).

Modi charged that the "weird

logistics" of the ICC during the ongoing Champions Trophy in India was the root cause of the trouble. "Everything including accreditation and security is being handled by companies based in London or South Africa who have no clue about

ground realities here," Modi wrote in The Times of India. "The one good thing is that the world media has seen the real face of the neo-colonialists of international cricket.

"These people are bent upon setting up their empire by parachuting some mercenaries who are acting like agents of new imperialism in India.

Behind the flare-up lies big money and India's refusal to sign a key commercial contract with the ICC despite threats it could lose the right to stage the 2011 cricket World Cup as a result. "Let me also make it clear that

India was voted to host the 2011 World Cup by the membernations and not by any individual. So nobody should threaten anyone of taking away something that has been decided by an overwhelming majority of ICC members," Modi warned. "It's time we had a chief execu-

tive who comes from Afro-Asia, someone who understands the problems of a majority of ICC members and doesn't heed just the affluent alone," he added. ICC chief executive Malcolm

Speed reacted angrily to the

allegations made by Modi. The comments are a cause of disappointment to us as they serve only to distract from the ICC Champions Trophy, the prestige of which Mr Modi says he wishes to enhance," said Speed.

"Rest assured, despite such regrettable comments, the ICC remains focussed on delivering a world-class event in India, somesponsors are Indian firms or the thing that will benefit all of our 97 Indian branches of international Members by helping to grow the businesses which target the

game worldwide. We will continue to act, as always, in the best interests of the sport.

"The international cricket community has in place processes through which concerns can be raised by any of our Members. If Mr Modi has any genuine issues then he can ask one of his senior colleagues at the BCCI, who will be in attendance. to raise these concerns at the ICC's next Board meeting, set to take place in Mumbai in early November. The world governing body last

Agreement (MPA) binding them to all ICC events until 2015. The BCCI wants certain MPA clauses amended, noting the contract would badly hit its own commercial deals worth a reported one billion dollars over

week said all nations had to sign

the Members Participation

the next four years. India, the economic powerhouse of world cricket, won the right to hold the 2011 World Cup jointly with South Asian neighbours Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh. Five of the ICC's six main

enormous market on the subcontinent where cricket totally dominates all sports. The BCCI caused a major row

ahead of the last World Cup in

South Africa in 2003 when it declined to sign the MPA It objected to a clause which prevented its players from advertising products from rivals of the ICC's official sponsors for three months on either side of the World

India finally sent a team for the tournament but the Rupert Murdoch-owned Global Cricket Corporation, which held the marketing rights for the last seven years, withheld almost 47 million dollars in payment to the ICC. Significantly, the BCCI

announced earlier this week that it

would also make a bid for the ICC's

global media and marketing rights

for the next eight years. The BCCI secured a whopping 612 million dollars for its own rights for the next four years from the Mumbai-based Nimbus