

## Zim kits burned down

AFP, Harare

The Zimbabwe cricket team lost its training kit and equipment in a suspected arson attack that also damaged offices at a training academy in Harare, the national governing body said Wednesday.

Zimbabwe Cricket (ZC) said in a statement the fire on Tuesday night had destroyed computers, office files and video equipment after the roof of the two-storey building caved in.

"Also burnt was the playing kit and equipment for the national team that is in camp for the tour of Bangladesh later this month," the association said adding that the fire could be an act of arson.

An AFP correspondent saw charred cricket balls and remnants of computers, documents and furniture among the debris while academy staff were dousing smouldering grass.

The fire came a day after a mysterious fire broke out in the ZC boardroom at the main cricket arena, the Harare Sports Club. Curtains and carpets went up in flames before municipal firefighters arrived.

"The coincidence is just too much that we can have the fires on consecutive days on ZC premises," said ZC president Ozias Bvute.

"Investigations are under way and if these fires are acts of arson, then we are confident that the police will apprehend the person or people behind them."

Bvute, an ally of Zimbabwean President Robert Mugabe, has stirred widespread controversy in his time at the helm of the ZC amid allegations that he has been interfering in team selection and the administration of the local boards.

The incident is the latest blow to Zimbabwe cricket which has been rocked by a string of crises since co-hosting the 2003 World Cup with South Africa and Kenya.

Henry Olonga, Zimbabwe's first black international cricketer, and his white compatriot Andy Flower, the country's leading batsman, took to the field for a match wearing black armbands "to mourn the death of democracy" in Zimbabwe.

Since then, the team have lost their Test match status while other top players such as captain Heath Streak have quit the team.

## No pay

FROM PAGE 17  
already played this season but Asim Khan will make his first appearance today when the match kicks off at the Maulana Bhasani National Hockey Stadium at 2.45pm.

In-form Abahani on the other hand, will be seeking revenge after giving up a lead and lose the Club Cup final to Mohammedan. The sky-blues, however, will not include a third foreigner and will rely on old guards Ronald Kiran and Prakash Chalke and a confident local collection.

## Draw suits

FROM PAGE 20  
their moments of danger but often overlapped at the critical stage.

Bayern looked solid at the back despite the absence of injured Brazilian international centre-back Lucio and kept another clean sheet and they have yet to concede a goal in Europe's flagship competition this season.

Bayern, winners of this competition in 2001, lead the standings four points ahead of Inter Milan who defeated Spartak Moscow 1-0 earlier on Tuesday. Spartak -- winless in their last 22 Champions League matches -- are Bayern's next opponents in the Russian capital on November 22.

## Cruz missile

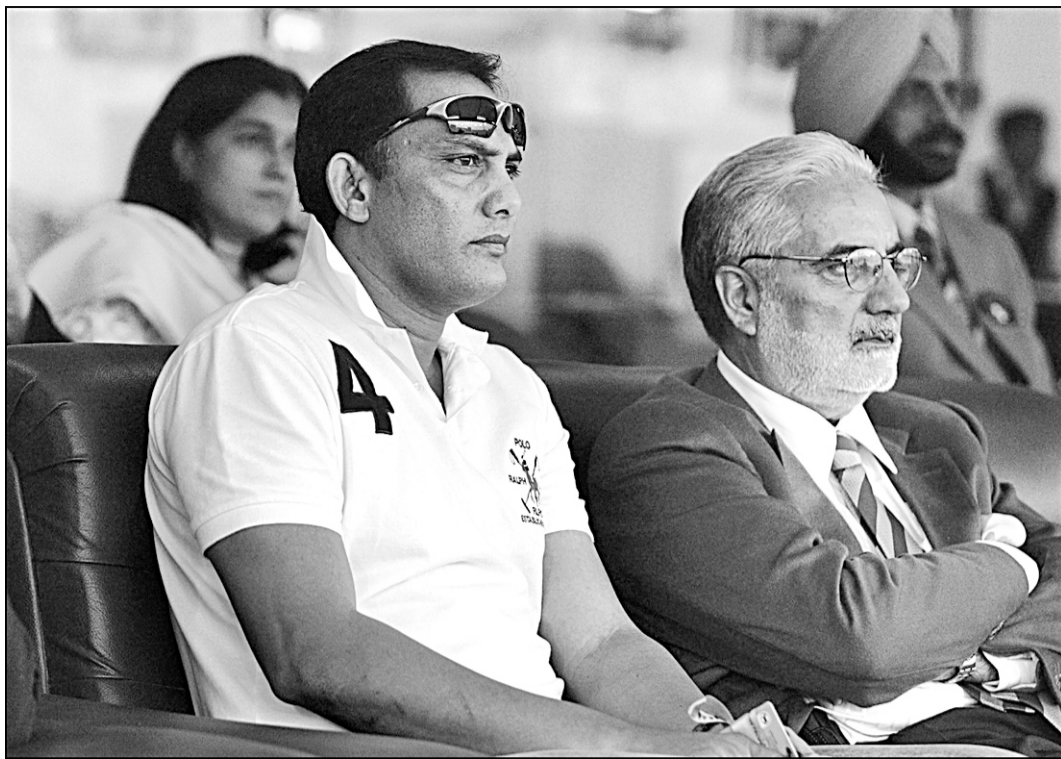
FROM PAGE 20  
The hosts came agonisingly close to an equaliser in the 66th minute as Roman Shishkin got free down the right and put in a brilliant diagonal ball into the area which evaded the Inter defenders but Yegor Titov with only Julio Cesar to beat could only get the slightest of touches and the ball rolled over the line.

In an enthralling end to end match it was Inter that had the next shot on goal as Figo, increasingly influential despite his advancing years, evaded his marker and released Ibrahimovic but the Swede found Kowalewski equal to the task of saving his fierce effort.

Figo's role, though, was soon to end as Inter coach Roberto Mancini decided to go more on the defensive sending on Italy World Cup winning defender Fabio Grosso.

It looked as if that had not worked when Shishkin unleashed a stunning long range shot from around 35 yards which beat Julio Cesar all hands up with 13 minutes remaining but his effort was denied by the crossbar.

An increasingly perky Spartak again went close to the equaliser with under 10 minutes remaining as Titov put in a superb cross from the left and only Julio Cesar's brave charge distracted Radoslav Kovac enough for the Czech defender to place his header just over the bar.



Former India captain Mohammad Azharuddin (L) watches the first semifinal between Australia and New Zealand with BCCI vice-president IS Bindra (R) at The Punjab Cricket Association (PCA) Stadium in Mohali on Wednesday.

## Monty ducks Glenn banter

Cricket

AFP, London

Monty Panesar has played down suggestions made by Glenn McGrath that he was "soft" for seeing a sports psychologist ahead of England's upcoming Ashes tour of Australia.

Australia fast bowler McGrath loves to indulge in verbal sparring with the opposition before the start of a major Test series -- before the 2005 Ashes he said he expected his team to win 5-0 only to see them lose 2-1.

And the fast bowling great turned his attention to rising spin star Panesar during a recent radio interview.

"I heard about that but I guess that's pre-Ashes (banter). You just accept that as part of cricket," the soft-spoken Panesar said.

England have employed sports psychologist Steve Bull as part of their backroom staff and Panesar insisted he'd not had any one-on-one sessions.

"We had a brief chat about Australia, but it was a team thing, not on an individual basis. That's how it goes with cricket -- you just accept it."

After the South Africans complained of racial abuse by crowds on

their 2005/06 tour of Australia, fears have expressed as to the kind of reception Panesar, the first Sikh to play for England, can expect from home supporters -- a suggestion that has irked many within Australian cricket.

But Panesar, who has played cricket for the Glenelg club in Adelaide and was a member of England's academy squad, under the direction of Australia wicket-keeping great Rodney Marsh, which provided backup to the senior squad on their ill-fated Ashes tour four years ago, said he'd not experienced any problems in the past.

Adding he found the prospect of playing in front of big crowds, "exciting", Panesar explained: "I felt pretty comfortable out there. Rod Marsh taught me a few things, and it was beneficial. I got a few wickets, and there's a bit more bounce, which helps the spinners."

Panesar said he hoped to form a spin partnership with Ashley Giles during the Ashes, even though the two left-armers are often portrayed as rivals for the same place.

## Aus in final

FROM PAGE 17  
McGrath not out 0  
Extras: (lb-6, nb-3, w-14) 23  
Total: (For nine wkts in 50 overs) 240  
Fall of wickets: 1-3, 2-4, 3-70, 4-123, 5-188, 6-211, 7-220, 8-223, 9-236.

Bowler	O	M	R	W
Mills	10	1	38	4
Bond	10	0	55	2
Franklin	8	1	48	1
Oram	10	1	43	0
Vettori	10	0	41	1
Astle	2	0	9	0

## NEW ZEALAND

Vincent c Ponting b McGrath	1
Fleming c Ponting b Bracken	15
Astle b Lee	0
Marshall c Gilchrist b McGrath	5
Fulton b McGrath	2
Oram st Gilchrist b Symonds	43
McCullum c Martyn b Bracken	1
Vettori b Johnson	79
Franklin c Gilchrist b Watson	10
Mills c Gilchrist b Lee	21
Bond not out	9
Extras: (lb-5, w-13, nb-2)	20
Total: (All out in 46 overs)	206
Fall of wickets: 1-16, 2-20, 3-30, 4-30, 5-34, 6-35, 7-138, 8-159, 9-180, 10-206.	

Bowler	O	M	R	W
Lee	8	0	31	2
McGrath	10	2	22	3
Bracken	7	1	36	2
Johnson	7	0	38	1
Watson	7	0	29	1
Symonds	7	0	45	1

Result Australia won by 34 runs.

Man-of-the-match: Glenn McGrath.

## Debutants

FROM PAGE 17  
Islam (first hundred of the season) and Marshall Ayub were eye-catching to say the least.

Among the bowlers, the fast men Tapash Baisya, Mohammad Shahjada, Alamgir Kabir and Debabrata Paul stood out with some superb spells while left-armers Enamul Haque, Elias Sunny had their moments too.

The semifinals beckon with definitely the four best teams financially as well as on-field strengths. Acme look the best squad with the return of stalwart Mohammad Rafique and national captain Habibul Bashar but the defending champions can have two good days to clinch the title. Partex, a newly promoted side to the Premier League, surprised a lot of critics but now they have their work cut out against Beximco on November 5 while Epyllion, a young side led by Tushar Imran, would give a stiff challenge to the much-vaunted Acme line-up this Saturday.

The 23-year-old Asif, whose career took off early this year before being held up by injuries, has 30 wickets in six Tests and 19 in 17 limited overs international.

The bans cap a bitter few months for Pakistan after they forfeited a Test match for the first time in history at the Oval in August in a row over ball-tampering.

Captain Inzamamul Haq was banned for four one-dayers for bringing the game into disrepute through his actions at the Oval, and there have been musical chairs in both the captaincy and the PCB chairmanship since.

Every pitch has been different and adapting to the conditions has been the key," said Smith.

TEAMS  
SOUTH AFRICA (from): Graeme Smith (captain), Loots Bosman, Mark Boucher, AB de Villiers, Boeta Dippenaar, Herschelle Gibbs, Andrew Hall, Jacques Kallis, Justin Kemp, Charl Langeveldt, Andre Nel, Makhaya Ntini, Robin Peterson, Shaun Pollock.

WEST INDIES (from): Brian Lara (captain), Ramnaresh Sarwan, Chris Gayle, Shivnarine Chanderparul, Runako Morton, Dwayne Bravo, Dwayne Smith, Carlton Baugh, Fidel Edwards, Corey Collymore, Ian Bradshaw, Jerome Taylor, Marlon Samuels, Wavell Hinds.

## ICC at peace with Azhar

PTI, Mohali

The International Cricket Council on Wednesday sought to put an end to the dispute over Board of Control for Cricket in India's (BCCI) felicitation function for India's former captains including Mohammad Azharuddin, saying that it would attend the programme since the issue was an "internal matter" of the BCCI.

After a prolonged war of words with the BCCI on the Azhar issue, the game's governing body sang a different tune and retracted its earlier decision to stay away from the function organised by the BCCI to mark the inauguration of its new office in Mumbai on November 4.

"The BCCI has invited all the former Indian captains for the function. We have talked to them and have a better understanding of the situation."

"I can only laud their decision to felicitate these former captains and we are looking forward to attend the programme," ICC president Percy Sonn told a press conference here.

Chief executive Malcolm Speed said that the final decision in this regard was taken by Sonn.

Asked what made the ICC to have a change of heart just three days before the function, Sonn said, adding, "we appreciate what the BCCI is doing regarding the development of the game. I never had a change of heart. I had this heart for the last 57 years," he said.

## Sangakkara

FROM PAGE 17  
the remaining matches and he will arrive on Friday," informed team manager Morshed Ali Khan, a former national pacer.

Sri Lanka's early exit from the ongoing ICC Champions Trophy has inspired the local corporate houses go for the islanders and title aspirants Epyllion are in negotiation with Sri Lanka skipper Mahela Jayawardene for their November 4 semifinal battle against Acme Laboratories.

The season's curtain raiser tournament will now resume tomorrow after Eid vacation with an inconsequential group match between Biman Bangladesh and Raju Fish Culture Ltd at the Fatullah Cricket Stadium tomorrow.

The final will be held on November 7.

## This could

FROM PAGE 20  
four English teams have a chance.

"We have made a good start. What we need to do that is maintain that and show consistency. That's what good teams do and we will know more about that as the season progresses, but the encouraging thing for me is that the squad as a whole has done well."

Recent seasons have seen United's depth of squad tested by injuries and key players losing form at crucial times.

## Media poke

FROM PAGE 20  
"I was afraid that we would lose some of our players because most of them probably have never used the metro before and could have got lost there. I had to chase after every one and make sure no-one was left behind," he said.

"We were running late, thus we didn't have a proper warm-up and it all contributed to our poor play at the beginning."

"I had to conduct the pre-game talk inside the carriage."

## Reds ease

FROM PAGE 20  
The hosts then scored twice in five minutes to seal a comprehensive victory.

Gerrard, who has come under fire from critics after below-par displays for club and country, showed his class to beat Rame after a defence-splitting pass by substitute Boudewijn Zenden in the 72nd minute.

Then Garcia capped a fine night's work by bouncing on a mistake by David Jammali to put the game out of reach.

## Magpies dismiss

FROM PAGE 20  
"It is one thing to say that a club is interested in him -- and in this case, there has been no contact whatsoever -- but to say he has targeted the job of another coach is absolutely unacceptable and is malicious."

Eriksson has been out of work since leaving his post as England coach after this summer's World Cup Finals.

The Swede has been linked with several jobs since, although Still has repeatedly spoken of his desire to take on a club with the potential to compete in the Champions League.

The right opportunity is yet to come along, but Eriksson's agent is confident it is only a matter of time.

"There have been lots of clubs interested, but somebody at his level has to wait for the right job," Still said.

"The right job will come, and I believe it will come sooner rather than later."

## Speed's snide at India



AFP, New Delhi

India's long-running dispute with the International Cricket Council (ICC) flared up Wednesday after the world governing body poked fun at the losing Indian team.

ICC chief executive Malcolm Speed told reporters the big money that Indian cricket managed to generate due to its vast television audiences did not reflect the true state of the sport in the country.

Speed also took a swipe at the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI), saying he judged sporting organisations by on-field performances and infrastructure, not on how much money they had in the bank.

"I judge them on how well the team performs, how they look after stake-holders in terms of facilities on the ground etc, and how well they use resources like population to produce great cricketers," said Speed.

The BCCI, the richest cricket body in the world which this year

signed deals worth a billion dollars, is on the warpath with the ICC over handing over players' commercial rights to the governing body.

India has refused to sign the Members Participation Agreement (MPA) of the ICC in its current form which binds teams to all major events for the next eight years, saying it affected the BCCI's own deals.

Last month, BCCI vice-president Lalit Modi accused the ICC of "snooty, avaricious neo-colonialism" in a signed newspaper article.

"The avaricious and snooty officials are behaving more as masters and less as paid executives," Modi wrote of the governing body.

India, currently hosting the ICC's Champions Trophy limited-overs tournament, failed to make the semifinals in their own backyard last week.

Speed noted that New Zealand, which has a population of four million, entered the semifinals when India could not despite a billion people at its disposal.

"New Zealand do not have lot of money, but they are consistent," said Speed. "India last won a major cricketing event in 1983 (when they

won the World Cup)."

The ICC's Executive Board is meeting in Mumbai on Friday and Saturday to discuss if the BCCI's offer to bid for the global marketing and television rights for the next eight years can be accepted.

The ICC's current seven-year deal, worth \$50 million dollars, ends after the next World Cup in the Caribbean in March-April.

The BCCI, which sold its own television rights for four years for a whopping \$12 million dollars, believes it can earn the ICC at least two billion dollars if given the rights.

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 sponsors are Indian firms or the Indian branches of international businesses, which target the enormous market on the sub-continent where cricket totally dominates all sports.

The BCCI declined to react to Speed's comments.

## Bite won't deter Hayden

Cricket

CRICINFO, undated

Matthew Hayden is certain his recovery from a broken finger and a dog bite will not disrupt his preparations for the Ashes.

And he is confident the mental and physical changes he made to counter England towards the end of the 2005 series will erase his problems against Andrew Flintoff, Steve Harmison and Matthew Hoggard.

Hayden finished the last contest with a gutsy 138 at The Oval, an innings that saved his spot, and he will begin the upcoming event buoyed by last summer's collection of five centuries and 1287 runs in 12 Tests. "I sort of addressed those problems (against England's bowlers) towards the end of the series," Hayden said during the launch of his second

cookbook.

"I was ensuring I was batting long periods of time. There's been a lot of runs under the bridge since then and there's been great momentum towards the series. I'm very confident in the way I want to play this summer."

Jamie Siddons, the Australia batting coach, has spoken with Hayden and Justin Langer about the need to be more selective with their shots against Flintoff and Harmison while being conscious of playing Hoggard down the ground. "They just need to be a bit more aware outside off stump, knowing what they can and can't play," he said. "The Poms bowled a bit shorter to us than had been bowled to us in the past, so letting a few more balls go early was pretty much the secret. Matthew and Justin worked that out by the end, we were just a little bit slow."

Mariners' all-out effort resulted in a classic counter attack by Usha and Kamal neatly put the ball into the path of Shafiq who went round the rival goalie to place the ball into an open net with two minutes remaining on the clock.

## Usha gun down

FROM PAGE 17

Zahid with a through from Prashanta. Farhan could have put Mariners ahead soon but blasted his effort over from close as Usha went ahead again in the tenth minute. This time, Saqlain's long pass across the field picked up fellow Pakistani Delwar whose powerful drive stunned the whole rival defence and goalkeeper Bitu.

Delwar was on target again when he dribbled Miraj to make it 3-1 in the 17th minute.

Mariners took absolute control after the breather and bombarded the rival post but Farhan fired just over before Rahul squandered two sitters, having shot straight to the keeper and failing to push the ball into an open net. Shishu also frustrated his teammates as the Mariners striker showed poor finishing during a number of combined efforts.

Mariners' all-out effort resulted in a classic counter attack by Usha and Kamal neatly put the ball into the path of Shafiq who went round the rival goalie to place the ball into an open net with two minutes remaining on the clock.

## Volatile WI worries SA

FROM PAGE 17  
pressure and get stuck into their middle order as quickly as possible, then we will go a long way in curbing their strengths."

Smith did not believe their top-order batting was a major cause of concern, saying he was confident the batsmen would come good in the crunch match.

South Africa had played three matches on different pitches, scoring 108 against New Zealand, 219 against Sri Lanka and 213 against Pakistan.

"It is just a matter of spending some time in the middle. You have got to make a good start and take it from there. We have got guys to perform well," said Smith.

"I think most top-order batsmen have so far struggled in this tourna-

ment. I think the new ball has been a difficult phase to bat. If we can get off to a good start, it will be a huge bonus for us."

Mark Boucher, Justin Kemp and AB de Villiers are the only batsmen to have scored a half-century, while Smith, Jacques Kallis and Herschelle Gibbs are yet to fire.

"It's time all of us delivered. The pressure is there on everybody in a semifinal. Whichever top order gets off to a good start, it will allow the rest of the guys to play a far more attacking and aggressive game."

Smith said his batsmen needed to adapt themselves to the pitch here because it looked a bit inconsistent. "This wicket looks different from the ones we have played on. It seems a bit two-paced and inconsistent.