

BCCI may take the hard line

PTI, Mumbai

Amidst the furore over Indian team's poor performance in South Africa and demands for action, the Cricket Board on Friday said it might consider a suggestion for introducing performance-based payments for players but ruled out any immediate pay cut.

BCCI Vice-President Shashank Manohar on Friday kicked off a storm by stating that if he had his way, not a penny would be paid to non-performing players.

However, BCCI's Chief Administrative Officer Ratnakar Shetty said there was no immediate danger for the players on this count but the suggestion would be taken up for discussion once the team returned from South Africa.

"These things have not been discussed as yet with the players. The discussions on the clauses of the new contracts would be done only after the team's return from South Africa," Shetty said.

"Yes, some members feel that the match fees paid to the players should be performance-related but no such discussions have taken place with the players as yet," he added.

Manohar had said in Nagpur that if he had his way the players would "not be paid a single penny" for the second ODI against South Africa in Durban in which India suffered a huge 157-run defeat to the hosts.

The big

FROM PAGE 20

gled to cope with the Londoners' slick passing, and Chelsea won this fixture 3-1 two seasons ago under Mourinho.

Last season, they lost a tight game 1-0 but went on to hammer United 3-0 at Stamford Bridge in April.

With two thirds of the season still to play, Sunday's match will not be decisive in the title race in terms of points, even though a United victory and the resulting six-point lead would not be sneezed at by Ferguson and his men.

Sunday's match could also offer some faint hope to their distant title rivals, notably putting the pressure on fourth-placed Arsenal at bogey team Bolton Wanderers.

Trailing United by 12 points, albeit with a game in hand, Arsenal would clearly welcome a win at the Reebok on Saturday and a draw at Old Trafford the following day.

However, Arsenal have lost their last two league visits to Bolton, where a dramatic 2-2 draw in 2003 killed off their title hopes.

Dhaka romp

FROM PAGE 17

while later picking up the scalp of Dollar.

Arafat Salahuddin, Hannan Sarkar and Taposh Ghosh all helped the off-spinner as they took two wickets each. Only opener Sadat, scoring 43, and national discard Manzarul offered some resistance but Khulna were bowled out quite early.

With this win, Barisal now have eight points and travel to Chittagong for the next round.

RAJSHAHI v SYLHET

Experienced paceman Hasibul Hossain kept alive the visitors when he picked up Farhad Hossain's wicket inside the first 20 minutes of play. But one-down Anisur Rahman added 89 for the second wicket with makeshift opener Mahub Alam Mustajim.

Hasibul dismissed Mustajim, who scored a steady 46, and Rajshahi lost first innings half-century Naem Islam but the experienced Anisur ensured Rajshahi's second victory in as many matches. He hit nine boundaries in his 101-ball knock.

SCORES IN BRIEF

CHITTAGONG: First Innings: 238 and second innings: 206 all out in 78.3 overs (Tammim 20, Masum 21, Salahuddin 38, Faisal 8, Nazimuddin 45, Sunny 0, Ehsanul 7, Dhiman 9, Raihan 14, Tareq 39, Kamrul 0*; Riyad 3-22, Jubair 2-35, Rubel 4-60); **DHAKA:** First Innings: 570.

Result: Dhaka won by an innings and 126 runs.

Man-of-the-match: Mohammad Ashraf (Dhaka).

BARISAL: First Innings: 286 and second innings: 229 all out in 87.5 overs (Imran 3, Hannan 74, Mehdi 1, Rajan 75, Humayun 0, Bashar 33, Arafat 13, Lablu 15, Taposh 0, Sajidul 0, Mukhtar 0; Manjarul 2-40, Ziaur 3-16, Dollar 3-29, Sadat 1-45, Kabir 1-65); **KHULNA:** First Innings: 215 and second innings: 163 all out in 58.3 overs (Sadat 43, Sajidul 13, Saiful 7, Sahagir 5, Manjarul 36, Jamaluddin 0, Salim 39, Ziaur 8, Dollar 0, Kabir 0, Monjurul 0*; Rajan 4-9, Arafat 2-31, Hannan 2-30, Tapash 2-42).

Result: Barisal won by 137 runs.

Man-of-the-match: Arafat Salahuddin (Barisal).

SYLHET: First Innings: 181 and second innings: 277. **RAJSHAHI:** First Innings: 328 and second innings: 132 for 3 in 39.3 overs (Mahub 46, Farhad 6, Anisur 63*, Naem 8, Rahim 0*; Hasibul 2-42, Mowla 1-14).

Result: Rajshahi won by seven wickets.

Man-of-the-match: Mohammad Shahjada (Rajshahi).



PHOTO: AFP

Indian tennis star Sania Mirza (L) and Rohan Bopanna celebrate a point during their mixed doubles match against Chinese pair Shuai Zhang and Mao Xin Gong in the Asian Hopman Cup in Hyderabad on Thursday.

ASIAN HOPMAN CUP

India blank China



AFP, Hyderabad

Local star Sania Mirza and Rohan Bopanna enabled top seeds India to blank China 3-0 in a league tie of the Asian Hopman Cup tournament here on Thursday.

Mirza drew first blood for the hosts with a 6-2, 6-2 drubbing of lower ranked Shuai Zhang in the women's singles, while Bopanna scored an easy 6-3, 6-2 victory over Mao-Xin Gong in the men's match.

After gaining the winning lead, the pair clinched the mixed doubles 6-2, 6-4 for a resounding win in their first outing of the inaugural tournament.

The tournament will decide an Asian qualifier for the main Hopman Cup event in Australia next January.

Mirza, playing in her hometown,

broke her opponent in the fifth and seventh games of the first set and in the third and fifth of the second.

Mirza's superior ground strokes helped her win in just over an hour and the only time the 67th-ranked player slogged it out against 205th-ranked Zhang was in the penultimate game, which Zhang held after ten deuces.

"I played well but made the match a little interesting towards the end," quipped Mirza, who had won her maiden WTA title here last year.

"This tournament is a great opportunity for us and though there have been some pullouts, it does not make the event any less important," said Mirza.

In the second match, 259th-ranked Bopanna banged in eight aces against Gong, who is ranked 997th in the world.

"I went into the match not knowing what to expect," said Bopanna,

who dominated under floodlights with his serves and wrapped up the match with an ace.

"Rankings don't matter in a team event and so I went in cautiously. But I thought I put him under pressure with my serves," said Bopanna, who replaced an injured Leander Paes in the team.

In the other match on the opening day, second seeded Taiwan defeated the Philippines 3-0.

I-Hsuan Hwang, ranked 316th, thrashed 721st-ranked Czarina Arevalo 6-0, 6-2 in the women's singles. Ti Chen then beat Patrick Tierno 6-2, 4-6, 6-4 before the pair won the mixed doubles 7-5, 6-4.

Japan are grouped along with India and China in group A, while Thailand are in group B along with Taiwan and the Philippines. The toppers of the two groups will play the final on Sunday.

Lara hints at Sarwan return

BBC ONLINE, undated

West Indies skipper Brian Lara says Ramnaresh Sarwan still has a great future ahead even though he was dropped for the second Test in Pakistan.

Batsman Sarwan, 26, was left out of the side for the game in Multan, which ended in a draw on Thursday.

"I think Ramnaresh Sarwan is one of the best talents of his generation and even the generation before.

"He is a leader, the vice-captain and someone that we expect a lot from," Lara commented.

"The West Indies did not invest 64 Test matches to have Sarwan sitting on the sidelines. This is something that hopefully he can come back from and come back a lot stronger."

Sarwan has scored more than 4,200 runs in Test cricket, but an average of 38.83 does not do full justice to his ability.

He was omitted after scoring only three and 23 in the first Test but could be back for the final game of the series after replacement Runako Morton managed only five in Multan.

"We need someone like that, in his mid 20s, going out there and taking control of our team.

"He will definitely be back. He's a strong character and someone who we are all going to enjoy seeing in future," said Lara.

West Indies must win in Karachi to square the series and their captain believes they can take a lot of positives from their second Test performance.

"We were in a commanding position up until the fifth day. We couldn't fault the guys for the effort, but it was still a very good pitch (for batting).

"I think there really should be a bit more (of a) test for the batters. Hopefully we can see that in Karachi," Lara added.

Shakil atop alone

SPORTS REPORTER

FIDE Master Abu Sufian Shakil continued his winning spree in the Prime Bank 9th International Rating Chess Tournament when he won both the fifth and sixth round games at the federation hall-room yesterday.

Shakil beat Delwar in the fifth round before securing full point against Parag in the sixth round to take solo lead with six points.

Chanchal Kumar Ghosh and Monir Hossain followed him with five points each.

Tragedy strikes

FROM PAGE 20

after several minutes, by which time all the windows of the McDonald's had been smashed.

French Sports Minister Jean-Francois Lamour condemned the violence. "Such incidents are unacceptable and damage the image of sport," he said.

"Even if the circumstances remain unclear, the fact is that ... a man is dead. Football is not hate. Football should not mean war," said Frederic Thiriez, president of the French Professional Football League.

Barca feeling

FROM PAGE 20

ruptured cruciate knee ligaments suffered in training this week.

Chasing hard after Barca are a Real Madrid side who, with their passage into the Champions League last 16 already assured, travel to fellow second-phase qualifiers Valencia on Sunday for a reunion with former striker Fernando Morientes.

After mixed fortunes with Monaco and Liverpool, Morientes is flying again and was on target in Wednesday's win over Olympiakos.

But the club's recent league form has been inconsistent while coach Quique Flores and sporting director Amedeo Carboni fell out earlier this month and star striker David Villa also had a training ground bust-up with Flores.

Villa will miss Sunday's crunch game.

They are already struggling without knee ligament victim Carlos Marchena at the back and skipper David Albelda is also on the injury list with knee trouble.

Spanish international fullback Asier del Horno is out for two months with Achilles tendon problems.

Real, meanwhile, may take a gamble on including Ronaldo in their squad although Italian defender Fabio Cannavaro is doubtful with a thigh strain suffered in the Champions League draw against Lyon.

Playmaker Guti is suspended for the encounter at the Mestalla stadium as third-placed Real look to close a three-point gap on Barcelona.

Sevilla, who blasted Valencia 3-0 last weekend, will have to wait 24 hours to see if they have a chance of returning to the summit where they spent just one week as they complete Sunday's programme at struggling Athletic Bilbao.

Real Zaragoza, on the heels of the leading trio, travel to Celta Vigo on Sunday.

All-praise for Yousuf



AFP, Multan

West Indian captain Brian Lara hailed Mohammad Yousuf's match-saving innings in the second Test but urged his team to improve the sloppy fielding that keeps letting Pakistan off the hook.

"He (Yousuf) played brilliantly and stayed till the end," said Lara of Yousuf, whose 191 was his seventh century of the year, equalling the current Test record.

"Pakistan owes a lot to Yousuf, who is a great bat, someone who can score seven centuries in one year has to be very special and he showed that again today," added Lara.

Lara said that if his team want to level the three-match series in Karachi they needed to lift their fielding.

Yousuf was one of the main beneficiaries, being let off in the slips by Runako Morton off paceman Daren Powell when the batsman was on 108.

The tourists also dropped Imran Farhat on 43 on the fourth day. The left-handed opener

went on to make 76 and added 119 runs for the third wicket with Yousuf.

"We will have to work on our fielding, because catches win matches," said Lara.

The tourists also dropped Yousuf three times during his 192 he made in the first Test in Lahore last week to help the home team win by nine wickets.

"We didn't take chances presented to us. Now we've got a Test match left and we will work on our fielding," said Lara, whose team has now just two wins in their last 26 Tests.

Lara, who made an epic 216 in the West Indies' only innings, said his team had set their sights on the last Test.

"It was a tough Test match where we failed to win but now it's behind us and we have to work hard in the final Test. We were in the commanding position up until the fifth day.

"I am very proud of the guys that they pushed for a win and now we are very optimistic about our chances in Karachi," said Lara, who said the Multan pitch was not helpful for bowlers.

"It (pitch) was still good for batting even on the fifth day. The wicket was a batting track from

day one and the bowlers toiled on it. After 20 to 25 overs there was not much sideways movement."

Meanwhile Pakistani captain Inzamamul Haq said Yousuf was a "match saviour" for the team.

"Yousuf has been in an exemplary form. He has played two world class innings, one won us the match in Lahore and here he saved us," said Inzamam of Yousuf.

The Pakistani now has 1,562 runs in ten Tests in 2006, the second highest ever in a calendar year. West Indian maestro Viv Richards holds the record for with 1,710 in ten Tests in 1976.

"To play an innings like that under pressure you need to be world class and Yousuf is a world class batsman," said the Pakistani captain.

Inzamam said a fighting draw was morale boosting for his team.

"It (the draw) will raise the team's confidence. It needed a lot of character to come from a 200-plus deficit in the first innings and we showed resilience by fighting in the second innings."

'On your toes Dhoni'



CRICINFO, undated

As if Mahendra Singh Dhoni's batting woes were not disheartening enough, his wicketkeeping abilities are now being questioned by Syed Kirmani, the former Indian wicketkeeper.

"I don't like the way he stands on his heels while waiting for the ball to be delivered. A wicketkeeper should always be on his toes," said Kirmani, who was arguably India's greatest wicketkeeper as his record of Tests and victims testify.

Dhoni's batting slump, especially his vulnerability against the rising ball, has been a point of

discussion of late but his wicketkeeping will need some analysis as well. Kirmani observed that Dhoni was not completely down when a ball was just about to be delivered, making him too committed to his movements and diminishing his reflexes.

"But that is hardly strange," Kirmani said. "Nobody in world is worried about the quality of wicketkeeping. You would look for bowling, batting and fielding coaches but no coach, I am sorry to say, knows a thing about wicketkeeping. You would have specialists in all areas including diet, training, cardio-vascular and what not, but a man who is central to the team's strategy in the middle is completely ignored."

Kirmani advised Dhoni not to be burdened by the added responsibility as a frontline batsman. "It is not a burden, he shouldn't take it as a burden because then he would only chart the route to his failure. He should take it up with enthusiasm. History has many examples where wicketkeepers have taken up the dual responsibility of shoring up the team's batting so it is not something unusual.

"That's been the trend world-wide and Dhoni is no exception. It's been (happening) for a long time now. I would even say that in nearly two decades since I have been out, I have hardly seen any natural wicketkeeper to catch my eye."

Kirmani picked out chinks in even Adam Gilchrist's wicketkeeping. "I am particularly shocked when wicketkeepers, even Gilchrist, collect balls swinging their arms sideways. Why don't they get behind the line of the ball. That's the surest way to ensure that the ball, if it misses your hands, could still bounce off your body."



PHOTO: AFP

Indian wicketkeeper Mahindra Singh Dhoni engages himself in a running-between-the-wickets drill during a training session at Newlands Stadium on Friday.

Waugh sets high mark for Ponting



AFP, Brisbane

Former Test skipper Steve Waugh believes Ricky Ponting will go on and make 50 Test centuries and be rated Australia's best batsman since the great Don Bradman.

Ponting, tormented after becoming the first Australian captain in 20 years to lose the Ashes last year, hammered an unbeaten 137 as Australia powered to 346 for three in the first Ashes Test against England on the first day at the Gabba on Thursday.

Ponting joined his predecessor Waugh as Australia's most prolific century-maker with 32 hundreds.

"I have no doubt he will finish as our best batsman after Bradman," Waugh wrote in a column in Sydney's Daily Telegraph on Friday.

"Averages now are probably five

to seven runs higher than they used to be because boundaries have been brought in, but I still think Ricky is the most mentally tough batsman in the world at the moment," Waugh said.

"He has an insatiable appetite for runs and he knows how to get them."

The newspaper also claimed Ponting as Australia's best since Bradman.

"It is a grandiose tag worn by Neil Harvey, Greg Chappell and Allan Border as each man surged to deeds that made them standouts," the Daily Telegraph said.

"The latest always seems the greatest but there seems little doubt Steve Waugh's prediction for Ricky Ponting will come true. In fact he may be there already.

"Statistics are only part of what makes a great player, but if Ponting (59.13) continues on his current rampage, he will soon pass South

Africa's Graeme Pollock (60.97) as the owner of the second-best batting average in Test history among the game's elite players.

The Australian newspaper agreed and said the captain may be embarrassed by the comparison but he is now in rare and exalted company.

Ponting has scored nine centuries in his past 12 Tests, an achievement matched only by Bradman among Australians.

West Indian Clyde Walcott once made 10 hundreds in 12 Tests and India's Sunil Gavaskar nine in 12.

Thursday's knock also took Ponting's tally to 32 centuries, equalling Waugh's total as the most by an Australian. India's Sachin Tendulkar (35), Gavaskar (34) and West Indian Brian Lara (34) are the only players with more.

Australia take charge

FROM PAGE 17

Michael Clarke, a late replacement for the injured Shane Watson, reached 56 before he was out in the last over before tea but England still found it difficult to extinguish the Australian tail.

The Australians added 102 runs for the last two wickets. Lee hit an unbeaten 43, Stuart Clark 39, with three fours and two sixes, and Warne, 17.

England had a minor victory, dismissing No.7 Adam Gilchrist for a three-ball duck, lbw to Hoggard to continue his below-par scores from last year's Ashes series.

Flintoff, by far England's best bowler, with 4-99 off 30 overs, earlier sent Mike Hussey's off-stump cart-wheeling for 86 before lunch.

Hussey and Ponting's shared stand of 209 in 257 minutes was the best fourth-wicket Ashes partnership in Australia.

Warne's wicket provided a boost for the dispirited Steve Harmison, who started the day again spraying wides to compound England's

woes.

Flintoff significantly left Harmison out of the attack to open the second day, preferring Hoggard and James Anderson with the second new ball.

Harmison, such a dominant figure in England's Ashes triumph last year, was hopelessly out of bowling rhythm, with a total of six wides and one no-ball to finish the innings with 1-123 off 30 overs.

SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard at stumps on the second day of the first Ashes Test between Australia and England at the Gabba on Friday:

Australia 1st innings (346-3 overnight):

Langer c Pietersen b Flintoff 82
Hayden c Collingwood b Flintoff 21
Ponting lbw b Hoggard 196
Martin c Collingwood b Giles 29
Hussey b Flintoff 86
Clarke c Strauss b Anderson 56
Lee not out 0
Warne c Jones b Harmison 17
Lee not out 43

Clark b Flintoff 39
McGrath not out 8
Extras: (b-2, lb-8, w-8, nb-7) 25
Total: (For 9 wkts in 155 overs, declared) 602
Fall of wickets: 1-79, 2-141, 3-198, 4-407, 5-467, 6-467, 7-500, 8-528, 9-578

Bowler O M R W
Harmison 30 4 123 1
Hoggard 31 5 98 2
Anderson 29 6 141 1
Flintoff 30 4 99 4
Giles 25 2 91 1
Bell 1 0 12 0
Pietersen 9 1 28 0

England 1st innings:

Strauss c Hussey b McGrath 12
ACook c Warne b McGrath 11
Bell not out 13
Collingwood c Gilchrist b Clark 5
Pietersen not out 6
Extras (lb-4, nb-2) 6
Total (For 3 wkts in 17 overs) 53
Fall of wickets: 1-28, 2-28, 3-42

Bowler O M R W
Lee 4 1 13 0
McGrath 6 0 25 2
Clark 6 2 9 1
Warne 1 0 2 0