

Pakistanis rejoice

ISLAMABAD, Mar 21: Millions watching televi-sion or huddled around radio sets in cities and villages across Pakistan rejoiced over the national team's sensational World Cup victory against New Zealand Saturday, reports AFP.

"I was so tense all along that when the final moment came, I had a relapse of my migraine problem," said a housewife who followed every ball of the exciting game with her entire family.

Troops assembled here for a National Day parade on Monday shouted Allah-o-Akbar (Allah is Great), while children fanned out dancing in the streets.

Despite the match's early morning start, the market places and homes were full of life because of Ramadan, during which Muslims get up long before dawn to eat and begin their daily fast.

"It was a marvellous victory," said Zaheer Abbas, a former Pakistan cricket captain, in Karachi.

He praised Inzamam-ul-Haq for his breezy knock of 60 as the real hero of the triumph that put Pakistan in the finals of the World Cup for the first time.

Abbas, a master batsman in his day, was optimistic that Pakistan would lift the World Cup, echoing the feelings of former Indian captain Sunil Gavaskar whose comments have been widely highlighted here.

"At one stage it appeared that we have lost the match when Imran Khan and out-of-form Salim Malik were back in the pavilion, but Inzam and Javed Miandad turned the table against the Kiwis," Abbas said.

Sadiq Mohammad, also a former Test player, said he was certain of Pakistan's victory in the finals, adding "Our batting has clicked with Javed Miandad in form having recovered from his back problem."

A former Pakistani cricket selector, Salahuddin Ahmed, said, "Pakistan's second victory against New Zealand in a row on their home ground is a tremendous achievement and one could hope to see the Cup in Pakistan."

Pakistanis prove the kiwi can't fly

AUCKLAND, Mar 21: Pakistan pulled off a dramatic four-wicket victory over New Zealand at Eden Park today to reach the final of the cricket World Cup for the first time, reports Reuter.

The Pakistanis, thanks to veteran campaigner Javed Miandad's cool head and a thrilling innings by Inzamamul Haq, overhauled New Zealand's impressive total of 262 for seven with one over to spare in a gripping finish.

Miandad scored 57 not out, backed up by a compelling and equally important 60 from Inzamamul, after Pakistan appeared to be bogged down in the middle of the innings.

Opener Rameez Raja and Pakistan captain Imran Khan laid a solid foundation with 44 apiece while their winning runs came from wicketkeeper Moin Khan.

He smashed a six and four in the 49th over, bowled by Chris Harris, to see Pakistan through to the semifinal victory at 264 for six.

New Zealand set what appeared to be a tough target after winning the toss, captain Martin Crowe scoring an accomplished 91 of their 262 for seven. But Crowe pulled a hamstring while batting and did not field.

New Zealand's medium-pace attack, effective against most teams in the World Cup, faltered badly on this occasion. Harris was smashed for 72 runs from his 10 overs and off-spinner Dipak Patel, who again opened the bowling, recorded unusually expensive figures of one for 50.

Inzamamul received the man-of-the-match award for his 60, which turned the game.

The 22-year-old middle order batsman came in when Pakistan were struggling at 140 for four. He reached his half century in just 31 balls and his innings altogether included five fours and one six.

He and Miandad put on 87 vital runs in 64 balls, hauling back a required run-rate of more than eight an over to set up the victory.

Pakistan scored 118 runs from the last 15 overs, and never looked desperate in a situation that had the 32,000 crowd in a state of high tension.

Patel made an early breakthrough for New Zealand when



Man-of-the-match Pakistan's Inzamamul Haq plays and misses during his whirlwind innings of 60 in the World Cup cricket semifinal yesterday against New Zealand in Auckland. —AFP photo.

he had opener Aamir Sohail caught attempting to sweep with the score on 30.

Imran Khan promoted himself to number three and put together a patient 54-run partnership with Rameez before the latter was caught in the deep by Danny Morrison after scoring 44.

From 84 for two, Imran and Miandad batted slowly but surely, watching the run-rate grow, until Imran was caught by Gavin Larsen off Harris for 44 in the 34th over.

When Salim Malik was caught by substitute Rod Latham six runs after, New Zealand appeared to be cruising, but Inzamamul finally exposed an attack that had helped to achieve seven wins in their eight round-robin games.

He was run out in the 45th over, having faced just 37 balls for his 60, leaving Pakistan needing 36 from five overs.

Wasim Akram made nine before he was bowled by Willie Watson, but wicketkeeper Moin kept a cool head, scoring



THE FACE OF DEFEAT: Despair writ large on New Zealand wicket-keeper Ian Smith's face as the Pakistanis inch closer to victory. —Star photo from TV

20 not out with Miandad to see Pakistan home.

A jubilant Imran said Inzamamul's innings was responsible for the Pakistani victory.

Calling Inzamamul one of the finest stroke players with one of the coolest temperaments in the game, Imran predicted Pakistan would be

the 39-year-old Pakistan captain said.

Pakistan lost in the semifinals when they were co-hosts of the previous World Cup in 1987, and Imran said he knew exactly what Crowe was going through.

Imran predicted his team would win the World Cup, and attributed part of it to his Muslim faith.

"My faith is very strong. I believe we are going to win the World Cup because of that," he added.

Crowe, who has led New Zealand from rank outsiders to the semifinal, said after the match his team was heartbroken.

Choking back tears, Crowe said he sensed panic setting in among his teammates halfway through Pakistan's innings, as Inzamamul began to punish New Zealand's bowlers.

"We were on a downer and they had climbed a few mountains to come back," Crowe said.

The New Zealand captain, whose innings of 91 had placed his team in a strong

position, said his personal dream was shattered when he was forced to leave the field with a hamstring injury.

"My dream was to show New Zealanders we could go all the way and my dream stopped when I was taken out of the match," he said.

There is no doubt the absence of Crowe, whose innovative captaincy has been widely admired, affected New Zealand, especially at the crucial mid-point of the innings when the home team's bowlers needed to keep Inzamamul and Miandad under control.

SCOREBOARD Scoreboard in the World Cup cricket semifinal between New Zealand and Pakistan at Eden Park today:

Table with columns for team, player, and runs. Includes sections for NEW ZEALAND and PAKISTAN.

Did not bat: D Morrison, W Watson.

Table with columns for player, O, M, R, W. Includes sections for Bowling and Extras.

England won the first-round match between the teams with two balls to spare. A similarly close encounter could be decided by the fielding.

England's Neil Fairbrother and South African Jonty Rhodes are to the of the sharpest fielders in the tournament and their contribution could prove vital.

"I'm here as a batsman," Fairbrother said Saturday. "Fielding is an occupational hazard."

"It's a part of the game like anything else but I wouldn't say I love it."

Rhodes, in contrast, thrives on being involved while fielding. "A lot of people find it a hassle, but I've always enjoyed it," he said. When I first started out I was not much of a batsman and couldn't bowl, so fielding was always very enjoyable.

"I can't keep still, so fielding is one way of releasing my energy."

The winner of Sunday's match will face Pakistan in the World Cup final in Melbourne next Wednesday.

WORLD CUP NOTEBOOK

SYDNEY, Mar 21: The daily notebook on the World Cup cricket:

AUCKLAND: An American airline is trying to profit from the departure of the Australians from the World Cup by appealing to the instincts of Kiwis, reports AFP.

A full page Continental Airlines advertisement lists some of the lower scores of Australian batsmen — headed by Allan Border 12, and followed by Geoff Marsh 8, David Boon 5, Dean-Jones 6, Tom Moody 4, Steve Waugh 2, and Ian Healy and Craig McDermott both 0.

Adds the airline: Few things are consistently as low as Continental's fares to (Australia).

EDEN PARK JINX CONTINUES

Eden Park's infamous jinx continued Saturday. For a couple of overs, its troublesome electronic scoreboard, which failed during a number of games, gave faulty information.

But potentially the greatest problem for the management was the failure of the lifts to the corporate boxes. Like everybody else, the rich and want-to-be famous had to walk up the steps.

RIDICULOUS RULES

The injustice of the rain rules in the World Cup were graphically illustrated Saturday in the Pakistan-New Zealand semi-final.

New Zealand scored 262 -- for seven. If the promised rain had arrived and Pakistan had been limited to 25 overs they would have required 216 runs to win — an extraordinary runrate of 8.6 runs an over.

In the event after 25 overs Pakistan were 97 for two.

TRADITION TAKES BACK SEAT

Political tradition in New Zealand demands that MPs spend the weekends in their electorates.

But for Prime Minister Jim Bolger, from the remote King Country seat, and Sports Minister John Banks from provincial Whangarei, passion for cricket has overridden this.

And for the last three weekends, they've arranged affairs to be in the same town — indeed the same ground — for World Cup cricket.



Pakistan's star batsman Javed Miandad (R) who played a salutary role in yesterday's win, advises the young Inzamam-ul Haq. —Star photo from TV by Taneem Khan

For Imran and his men, it's a crusade

AUCKLAND, Mar 21: A crusade to build Pakistan's first cancer hospital is Imran Khan's secret weapon in leading his country to the World Cup cricket final, reports Reuter.

The dashing bachelor, entering the final stages of a phenomenally successful sporting career, has raised about three million dollars in two years for a non-profit hospital in memory of his mother, who succumbed to the disease.

The hospital will both contribute to and benefit from a Pakistani victory, captain Imran said.

"Because of my hospital we have to win," he told a news conference after the New Zealand match. "My faith is very strong and I believe we are going to win the World Cup because of that."

"To collect money from Pakistan I needed this win today and I hope for a win in the final," he added. The hospital he plans to build in Lahore will be Pakistan's only specialised cancer unit.

Even New Zealand captain Martin Crowe acknowledged Imran's cancer crusade has instilled the team with a desperation that will probably take them to victory.

"I'm pleased for him because I know he has a deep-seated dream to go on and win

the World Cup... because he's got a dream to build a cancer hospital which is a wonderful thing and that's what's driving him to drive his team," Crowe said.

Ironically, Imran almost killed that dream in the semi-final — his effort in scoring 44 runs slowed the team's momentum. The 10 overs he bowled yielded 59 runs with-

Imran invites Sharif to final

ISLAMABAD, Mar 21: Pakistan Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif Saturday congratulated his country's cricket team on their "superb and splendid" game in Auckland where they beat New Zealand by four wickets to reach the World Cup final, local television reported, reports AFP.

Sharif phoned and congratulated the Pakistani skipper Imran Khan and team manager Intikhab Alam saying the "Victory of our team has sent a wave of joy among the people of Pakistan who feel rightly proud of them," it said.

He particularly appreciated Imran for his "quality of leadership," it said.

Imran has invited Sharif, who also plays cricket at the club level, to visit Australia to witness the final of the World Cup on Wednesday, the official Associated Press of Pakistan reported.

Pakistani team, which reached the World Cup final for the first time, will take on the winners of the second semifinal to be played between South Africa and England in Sydney Sunday.



New Zealand captain Martin Crowe made a magnificent 91 from only 83 balls in his side's total yesterday.

THE JINX REMAINS

by Chandra Shekhar

Pakistan, one of the pre-tournament favourites of the Benson and Hedges 1992 World Cup, underwent a Kafkaesque metamorphosis to arrive at the threshold of the championship with a highly commendable victory against co-hosts New Zealand yesterday at the Eden Park, Auckland.

With Australia, the 'major' host taking a surprising and unceremonious leave in the round robin phase, Pakistan's victory effectively blew out New Zealand's resolve to break the jinx of host country not winning the Cup in the 17-year history of the championship.

Judged from the viewpoint of sheer natural talent Pakistan have often been labelled as the most likely bidders for the championship, along with the West Indies. Somehow or the other, they failed to win a place in the finals of any of the previous tournaments. They began their present campaign with a humiliating drubbing at the hands of two-time champions West Indies. Then they made most of the weather intervention by getting away with a point even after being skittled out for a paltry 74 against England. The successive defeats to India and South Africa did nothing but raise their spirits and since then their performance has been most dramatic. They won three consecutive matches in sudden-death conditions, situations where a defeat could have meant the evaporation of their Cup dreams.

While top favourites Australia, the West Indies and 1983 champions India withered, Pakistan went from strength to strength beating Australia, Sri Lanka and New Zealand on their way to the semifinals and then, of course, capping it with a virtuoso performance against the Kiwis in the first semifinal yesterday.

They will play the winners of the other semifinal between South Africa and England to be played today.

For South Africa it's been a magnificent return to the world of sound and fury after twenty odd years in isolation because of the apartheid policy. If they can knock out the 1987 runners-up and two-time finalists England and then the Pakistanis, who will be as nervous as them in the final, then glorious, unpredictable cricket will add another feather to its cap.

Talking about the kaleidoscopic nature of the tournament, this World Cup has been an unending source of colour and innovation to be etched in the memory for a long time.



One of the imaginative cartoons that flashed on the TV screen following the dismissal of Pakistan skipper Imran Khan yesterday. —Star photo from TV by Taneem Khan