

Imran wants a full final

MELBOURNE, Mar 23: Pakistan captain Imran Khan wants Wednesday's World Cup cricket final against England to go the full distance even if rain interrupts play, reports AFP.

Imran said today he will be talking to the English team management whether play could be carried on the next day in case of rain to allow a



IMRAN KHAN

full 50-overs-a-side match to be completed.

"The present system, where overs are reduced to enable the match to be completed in

a day, is ridiculous and must go," Imran said.

"The World Cup comes only once in very four years and must be fought out till the end without the use of calculators.

"If England agrees and the Australian Cricket Board okay it, I would like to see the final being played over the full distance.

"That's the only way to determine the best side in the competition."

The 39-year-old Pakistani legend criticised the controversial rule which takes into account the highest scoring overs in rain interrupted match.

"However framed that rule obviously knows little about cricket, because it reduces the game to a farce as it happened in Sunday's semi-final," he said.

In that match, South Africa were set an impossible target of 21 runs off one delivery to beat England after rain interrupted the closing stages of their innings.

The South Africans managed just a single, leaving England victors by 19 runs in one of the most controversial finishes in the game's premier limited-overs tournament.

Imran, who has taken part in all the five World Cups so far, described the current tournament as the worst organised of them all.

"Two flaws are very obvious. One, the run-rate rule and the other the timing of the tournament," Imran said.

"Why should the all-important World Cup be held at the fag end of the season instead of at the start as was the case in the first four tournaments?"

"It's a rare occasion and deserves a higher priority than it has been given by the organis-

ers.

"By having the Cup during the wet part of the Australian summer, they have had no regard for the times which stood to be eliminated by the weather rather than on performance."

"When India and Pakistan hosted the Cup in 1987, there was a provision for the match to be continued on the second day instead of the overs being

Crowe to coach Italians

WELLINGTON, Mar 23: New Zealand captain Martin Crowe said today he would coach Italy's national cricket team for the next two months to help their bid to qualify for the next World Cup in 1996, reports Reuter.



Crowe wrote in the Wellington Evening Post that the Italian team would be playing matches against France, Germany and Austria, and also taking part in the minor countries tournament from which one team qualifies for the World Cup.

Zimbabwe took that place in the previous two Cups as well as the current competition.

Crowe was voted player-of-the-tournament before New Zealand were eliminated by Pakistan in Saturday's semi-final, his Cup aggregate was 456 runs in nine matches.

reduced.

"It was not reduced to a lottery like here where a team batting second has to score very fast on a rain-affected wicket."

"When we played South Africa in Brisbane, rain doubled our target from four an over to eight which really made a mockery of everything."

"All this is not very fair when you have an entire nation, like Pakistan, following the fortunes of the team day and night."

"You are cheating those cricket fans by having results being decided by calculators rather than on the field."

Imran termed Wednesday's final as a battle between "a talented but inexperienced side like ours and the battle-hardened Englishmen."

"England are a very proficient team and we will have to play well to beat them. There are no short cuts."

But Imran was all praise for his boys for their determination to succeed against the odds.

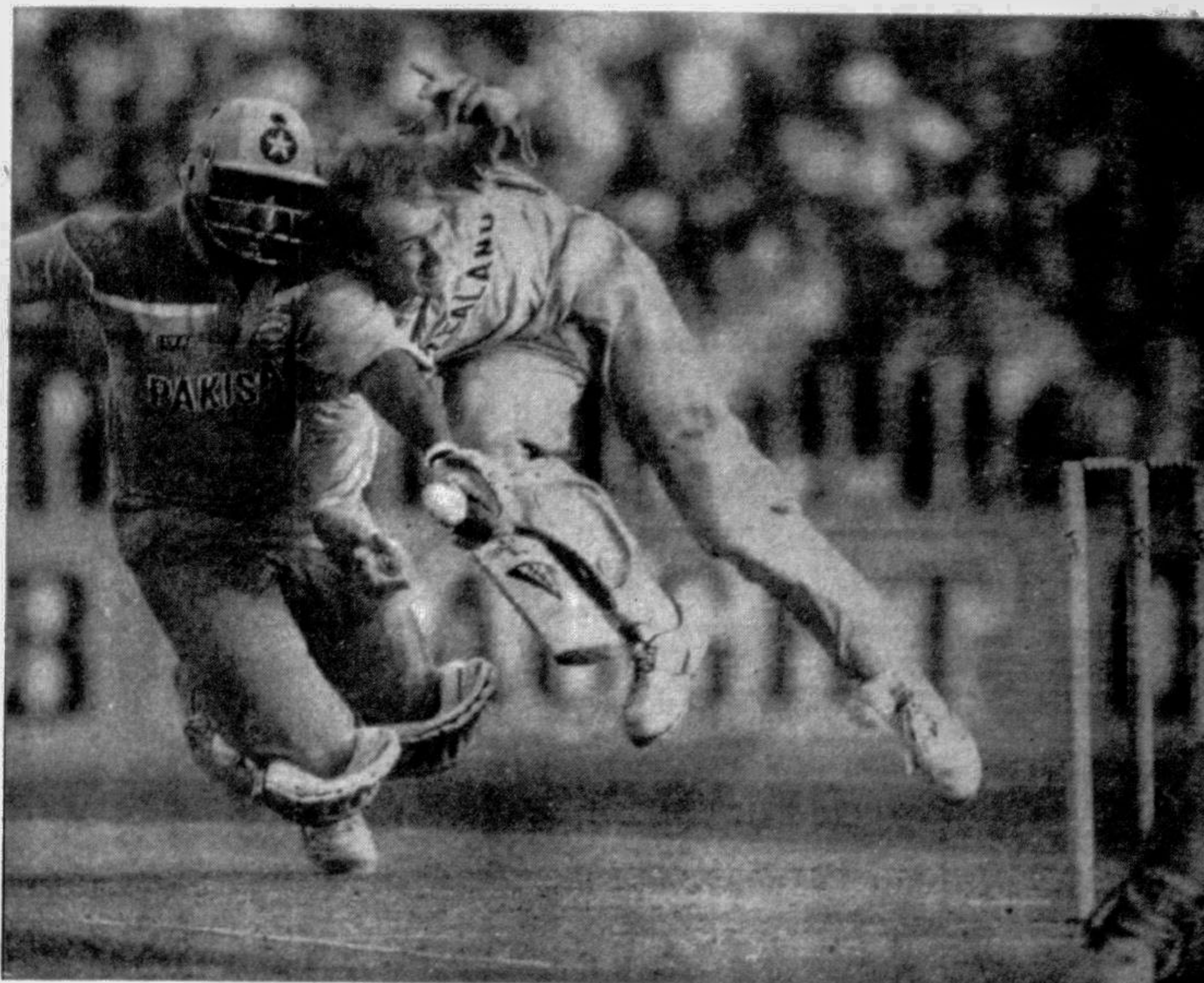
"Having won four crucial matches in a row, we have shown ourselves as fighters who will give everything during a game."

"We have players with guts whom you can bank on when the chips are down. I think that's our biggest asset."

"Everything went wrong for us at the start, Waqar Younis pulled out because of injury and both Javed Miandad and myself have not been fully fit during the tournament."

"But the boys overcame the early setbacks which to me is the most significant part of making our first ever final."

"Even if we lose the final, we will not do so without a fight. That is guaranteed."



Pakistan's Wasim Akram collides with New Zealand's Chris Harris as he tries to run him out during the climax of the World Cup semifinal in Auckland on March 21. —Star file photo

England will be wary of Inzamam

MELBOURNE, Mar 23: Inzamam-ul-Haq has never played in a Test match but England will be particularly wary about the 22-year-old batsman when they meet Pakistan in the World Cup cricket final here on Wednesday, reports Reuter.

It was Inzamam-ul-Haq who turned a seemingly impossible situation into glorious victory over New Zealand on Saturday, giving Pakistan their place in the final as he plundered 60 runs from 37 balls.

The young man's nerve and ability totally substantiated captain Imran Khan's comment when they arrived in Australia that he was "One of the most talented cricketers I have seen."

It was not the first time in the tournament that Inzamam-ul-Haq's scintillating batting has been seen.

Two weeks ago he almost spurred Pakistan to an even more difficult target when rain left them needing 149 off 22 overs to beat South Africa.

He showed then his enormous potential before falling to a memorable run out by fielder-of-the-series Jonty Rhodes, flinging himself bodily into the stumps.

There can currently be few batsmen more valuable in the pursuit of a target against the clock.

Both England and Pakistan have reached the Melbourne showdown after semifinals that have featured furious run

chases.

Pakistan won with an over to spare after their cause had looked lost; England survived a tremendous South African challenge, aided by rain and the rules governing lost time.

Ironically, it was rain that secured Pakistan their semifinal against New Zealand when they finished one point ahead of Australia in the round-robin stage of the tournament.

That one point was gained in a match they looked certain to lose after being bowled out for a miserly 74 by England.

But rain halted England's response when they had made

24 for one and the match was declared void with both sides being awarded one point.

Seamer Derek Pringle returned the amazing figures of three for eight in 8.2 overs that day - but he now heads England's long injury list and is doubtful for the final.

Injuries are to be expected in such an intensive tournament but England have had more than their share.

Both captain Graham Gooch and Allan Lamb are recovering from pulled hamstrings, Chris Lewis is still struggling with a strained side and Gladstone Small and Dermot Reeve have

nip injuries. Added to that, batsman Robin Smith was forced to miss the semifinal because of a pinched nerve in his back.

Pakistan are not without their own worries. Imran has had a shoulder injury throughout the tournament and premier batsman Javed Miandad has a continuing back problem.

England's routing of Pakistan's batsmen in their earlier match might appear to give them an advantage. But that was on a rain-affected pitch and should be ignored.

The Melbourne Cricket Ground is likely to provide a hard track favouring the batsmen for Wednesday's day-night clash.

Pakistan have run into top form after defeats early in the tournament while England lost two successive matches to New Zealand and Zimbabwe. But Gooch is unperurbed.

"I am very confident we can win," he said after Sunday's defeat of South Africa.

"Pakistan are a great side. They have some top players but we also have top players."

Defeated New Zealand captain Martin Crowe thinks differently.

"Pakistan showed they were desperate enough in this match to suggest they could win the final," he said after Saturday's semifinal.

Whoever wins, it will mean a new name on the trophy. West Indies won the first two World Cups in 1975 and 1979 followed by India four years later and then Australia in 1987.



INZAMAM-UL-HAQ

Wessels calls for a balanced rule

SYDNEY, Mar 23: South African captain Kepler Wessels called for a more "balanced" rule after Sunday's World Cup cricket semi-final shambles against England here, reports AFP.

England won by 19 runs in yet another controversial rain-marred match in the tournament which effectively cut the semi-final into a 43-over a-side affair.

South Africa needed 22 runs off the remaining 13 balls before a sharp shower forced the players from the field. When they returned 12 minutes later they faced the ridiculous situation of needing 21 runs off just one ball to complete the 43rd and ultimately final over.

England's victory put them into Wednesday's final against Pakistan in Melbourne.

"There's really no point in complaining about the rule, because that's the way it's been for the whole tournament," Wessels told a post-match press conference.

"But there needs to be a balance between the previous rule and the one we've got now."

"The general consensus is to finish the game on one particular day, but it may be better to continue the game into the second day," Wessels said referring to the Monday reserve day set aside as an emergency.

South Africa's depression was deepened when they later

learnt they face a fine or not completing their required 50 overs earlier in the match.

Organisers said the fine, to be 20 per cent of the team's unspecified match fees, would be imposed on four of the five outstanding overs, as the match was 10 minutes late in starting.

"We're not particularly



KEPLER WESSELS

worried about the fine right now," said Wessels. "We're more concerned about losing the semi-final."

"I'm very happy with the way the guys tried throughout this World Cup, they showed tremendous courage and I'm very proud of them."

"They wanted to go all the

way, but for us it's not a disaster, we've got the nuclear of a very strong team of the future and we've just got to put this behind us, use what we've learnt from this tournament and go from strength to strength."

Graham Halibish, general manager of the Australian Cricket Board and speaking on behalf of the World Cup Committee, explained to a press conference the outcome of the match.

"Because the match started late and the match had to be divided equally into two 50-over innings, the interval was shortened to 30 minutes from a regular 45 minutes and was scheduled to finish at 10.10 p.m.," said Halibish.

"When the second shower of rain came the umpires decided conditions were unfit to play."

"They offered the conditions to the batsmen (South Africa) and they decided to bat on, and they also offered the conditions to the captain of the fielding side (England) who expressed the wish to leave the field."

"The amount of time lost was then divided by 4.2 minutes per over and that reduces the target that is because if a team bowling second is ahead of its over rate they should not be penalised."

"The umpires found that 12 minutes of play was lost and by their calculations that reduced the number of overs to be bowled by the England team

by two.

"At that stage 42.5 overs had been completed and the revised target was 43 overs... Therefore, only one ball was needed to be bowled."

England captain Graham Gooch said it was an "unsatisfying conclusion to what was a great game of cricket."

"We would have liked to have won fair and square."

"But I would like to point out that we were only able to bat for 45 overs."

"Any team that loses, that way would feel very dejected, any my heart goes out to them."

Holyfield to begin promotion tour

ATLANTA, Mar 23: After nearly a week in seclusion following the slaying of his brother, heavyweight champion Evander Holyfield is beginning an eight-city tour to promote his fight against Larry Holmes, reports AP.

Holyfield will appear at Las Vegas Monday on the first stop of the tour advancing the June 26 bout at Las Vegas.

His older brother and assistant trainer, Willie Holyfield, was shot to death Tuesday in a domestic dispute at his Atlanta home.

"Evander said, 'In my lifetime, I've done everything possible that I could to help Willie, and I'm at peace with that.' Ellen Krudys, the champion's publicist, said 'And he really is, he wants to go on.'

Heroes' welcome awaits 'robbed' South Africans

JOHANNESBURG, Mar 23: South Africa were robbed of victory in Sunday's World Cup semifinal against England, the republic's state television said, reports Reuter.

"South African cricket was robbed in Sydney today of the opportunity to play in the World Cup final against Pakistan on Wednesday through a cruel combination of the weather and the rules," said the lead story on the main evening news.

The result will be debated for a long time to come."

Alli Bacher, Managing Director of the United Cricket Board of South Africa, said he could not complain about the result because South African officials had read, approved and signed the tournament rules, which were the same for everyone.

But he agreed with a television interviewer's suggestion that it might have been un-sporting of England captain Graham Gooch to decide to go off when offered the chance by the umpires as the rain increased.

Bacher said South Africa, competing for the first time in the World Cup after readmission to international cricket last year, would receive a heroes' welcome on their return.

"They have given a lot of people renewed pride in their country," he said.

Unchanged SA party for Caribbean tour

JOHANNESBURG, Mar 23: South Africa's cricket selectors have kept faith with the players controversially beaten by England at the World Cup by sticking to the same squad to start a West Indies tour in two weeks, reports AFP.

Opening batsman Kepler Wessels will again lead the side on the tour, cricket officials announced Monday.

Though many South African cricket fans are already talking of reversing the semi-final result at the next World Cup, most accepted that it was the rain and the rules that caused the controversy and not England.

common opinion was that if the rain had not come down with 13 balls remaining, Brian McMillan and Dave Richardson would have taken the 22 runs needed for victory.

United Cricket Board of South Africa managing director Ali Bacher summed up the nation's mood when he said: "Rules are rules."

"All the participants agreed to those applied to the World Cup. South Africa lost the match but won the praise and unstinted admiration of the world," Bacher said.

Newspapers echoed the disappointment on Monday, but were unanimous in their praise of the South African team, competing in their first World Cup after 22 years of isolation.

The Citizen called South Africa's departure unsatisfactory, but said the team performed admirably.

Business Day blamed the controversial rain rule but said "South Africa maintained their dignity to the end," while the Star simply headlined: "Outrageous misfortune."

Shanu steers Biman to final

Sports Reporter

Bangladesh Biman move into the final of the four-team Independence Day cricket tournament with an exciting two-wicket victory against Milnars league runners-up Udit Club at the Dhaka Stadium yesterday.

Skipper Shahnawaz Shahed Shanu steered the airlines team to victory with two wickets and three balls to spare as Biman, chasing Udit's 180, made 181 for the loss eight wickets.

Udit opens Sajid and Anup proved skipper Imran's decision to bat first right as rain as they put on 101 run for the first wicket. Sajid, son of former national skipper Roqibul Hassan, was the first to go after having made a well-compiled 47. Anup, the other opener grafted his way to the highest individual score of 50 off 95 balls, studded with three hits to the fence.

Biman captain Shanu then stepped in to trigger a rather unexpected collapse in the Udit ranks with his innocuous off breaks and the batting side

plummeted to an unhealthy 150 for five from 120 for two in no time. Udit skipper Imran defied the Biman spin attack to help his side manage a modest 180 for nine from 45



SHANU...all-round show

overs with a quick 22 off just 20 balls.

Biman all rounder Enamul Huq Moni struck a deadly combination with wicket-keeper Jahangir to annihilate four Udit batsmen at the cost of 26 runs from his quota of

nine overs. Shanu gave the ball enough air to capture three for 43 runs.

Udit skipper Imran gave his side the right kind of start to defend a total that did not look very promising on a placid wicket by trapping Saiful leg before for nought. Tariqzaman Munir left cheaply also and Selim Shahed appeared to have left his batting form in South Africa, leaving early for just for 19.

The onus then fell on in-form bat Zakaria and skipper Shanu. Zakaria scored a lovely 40 before being stumped off spinner Sohel. Shanu batted intelligently to make an unbeaten 54 that saw Biman through. Shanu played 73 balls and hit two fours in his enterprising knock while Piyal gave him admirable support with 23.

Sohel was the pick of the Udit bowlers with figures of two for 33. Imran claimed two for 36. Durjoy and Rahul picked up one each.

Bangladesh Biman will play Brothers Union, the other finalist, on March 26, at the Dhaka Stadium.

Jordan says he's no Pete Rose

CHICAGO, Mar 23: Two-time National Basketball Association Most Valuable Player Michael Jordan says he never bet on any NBA games or any other sports events, reports AP.

"I am no Pete Rose," the Chicago Bulls guard said Friday in response to questions about gambling debts he was said to have paid off. "I can safely say this is not a Pete Rose matter."

Rose, US Major League Baseball's all-time hits leader, was banned from Major League Baseball for allegedly betting on baseball games.

"I wasn't involved in any point-shaving or betting on

basketball games," Jordan said. "I'm declaring that before anyone else asks."

Jordan is not going to let an inquiry into his gambling affect his play, and his boss says he has a lot of confidence in the Chicago Bulls star.

"If, in fact, Michael lost some money in a golf game or a card game. I don't think it's something to get excited about," Bulls owner Jerry Reinsdorf said on WLUP radio Friday.

"I have a lot of confidence in Michael. Michael is a man of excellent judgement, and I assume he's done nothing he has to be ashamed of."

The NBA is looking into circumstances surrounding

checks Jordan wrote to a North Carolina bondsman shot to death last month. The checks reportedly were to pay off bats Jordan lost to several men.

The Bulls, seeking to repeat as NBA champions, have the league's best record, and Jordan said the news reports from North Carolina won't change that.

"My basketball is my basketball," he said Friday. "Whatever happens, it is not going to affect the way I play."

"I can't fault anyone else for my mistakes. I have to just accept it and move on."

Jordan, a New York native, grew up in Wilmington, NC, and attended college at the University of North Carolina.

Two checks signed by Jordan and a copy of cashier's checks totaling \$108,000 were found by lawyers and police in the estate of bondsman Eddie Dow. Dow's lawyer and his brother said the checks were to pay gambling debts incurred by Jordan, The Gastonia Gazette in Gastonia, NC, reported.

Dow was shot to death Feb 19 outside his Gaston County home. Three of his former employees and another man have been arrested in the slaying. Police said this week the checks weren't connected to Dow's murder.

Flip Dow, a former police officer who is administering his brother's estate, said his brother and Jordan met through a mutual friend.

Gambling doesn't violate NBA rules unless wagers are placed on NBA games. However, it is a misdemeanor in South Carolina, where the bets were allegedly made, and is punishable by six months in prison and a \$1,000 fine.

Title retained

ST PETER PORT, Guernsey, Mar 23: World champion Susandevoy retained the Guernsey Women's Open squash title with a 39-minute 9-5, 9-1, 9-4 win over England number of Martine Le Moignan on Sunday, reports Reuter.



Sumo wrestler Konishiki, 28, holds the trophy after winning the Spring Grand sumo tournament in Osaka on March 22. It was Konishiki's third victory. —AFP photo