

Rain dogs Shri Lankans on

NEW DELHI, Jan 12: Shri Lanka's cricketers, dogged by bad weather at home for the past one month, found little respite at the start of their five-week tour of India this week, reports AFP.

Unseasonal rains have delayed the tourists much-needed net practice since their arrival here Tuesday for a series of three Tests and as many one-day internationals.

Worse, slushy ground conditions threaten to delay the start of their three-day tour opener against the Indian Board President's XI at the Kotla Oval here Thursday.

With the first Test scheduled to begin in Lucknow next Tuesday, the Shri Lankans are left woefully short of match practice.

"The rain appears to be following us everywhere," said Shri Lankan coach Bandula Warnapura, worried that his

Frail Korda's fat purse

SYDNEY, Jan 12: Petr Korda is the palest, frailest figure in professional tennis but there is nothing unhealthy about his bank balance. Even Arnold Schwarzenegger would be impressed by the Zie of the Czech's cheques, reports Reuter.

The last month has been one Korda will treasure for ever. He scooped the 1.6 million US dollar jackpot at the Grand Slam Cup in December, downing the world's top two players Pete Sampras and Michael Stich on the way, and then emerged from the Christmas break to help the Czech Republic win the Hopman Cup in Perth.

His wife, former player Regina Rajchová, gave birth to their first child, Jessica, last year and Korda gives the impression of being among the happiest men in the game.

All of which means, as 1994 unfolds, that Korda has become a name to be reckoned with.

After beating the unorthodox Swede Mikael Pernfors in his opening match at the New South Wales Open on Tuesday, though, Korda was keeping his secret to himself.

"Tactics? I only have one tactic... hit the ball over the net into the court," he grinned. "Honest, it's true. If you're hitting the fence, it's not much good."

Not many of his opponents are fooled by such homespun claims, even from a man whose

men may not hit the right groove for the Test series.

Warnapura said bad weather back home throughout December ruined the first-ever tour of the Island by the West Indies and wiped out the conditioning camp that preceded the Indian tour.

During the wettest Indian tour, the one-off Test and a one-day international were rained out while two other internationals were disrupted by bad weather.

"We would have liked to get a full game here since it is the only match before the first Test, but who can defy the weather?" Warnapura said while supervising a light work out by his team.

BOARD PRESIDENT'S XI (from): Navjot Singh Sidhu (captain), Vikram Rathore, Rizwan Samshad, Rajesh Puri, Rahul Dravid, Saurav Ganguly, Avinash Vaidya, Ashish Kapoor, Venkatesh Prasad, Prashant Vaidya, Narendra Hirwani, Utpal Chatterjee, Bhupinder Singh, Amay Khurasia.

chief claim to fame used to be that he was a ball-boy for Ivan Lendl in his native Prague.

Australian Wally Masur is typical: "If he gets on a roll and starts playing shots like he can, he's capable of beating everyone" regardless of his position at number 11 in the world rankings.

Apart from the money, the Grand Slam Cup has given him a whole new respect within a sport which, since his professional entry in 1988, has regarded him as a gifted but erratic performer.

Even his appearance in the 1992 French Open final appeared slightly flattering as he avoided all the seeds en route to his final date with American Jim Courier. He lost 7-5, 6-2, 6-1 but is now a significantly more consistent player.

"I don't know what's going to happen next week, let alone next year, but I'm healthy and I'm really enjoying my tennis," Korda said, reflecting momentarily on his big pay-day last month.

"I was like a marathon man in Germany I felt I gave all I had. But the most important thing was that I was able to make the important points to beat the number one and two players in the world."

Beating both Sampras and Stich in five sets on consecutive days made up for an unsettling 1993 in which he finished outside the top 10 for the first time in three years.

Injuries were the chief cause, including time spent recovering from a heart complaint.

"I had one good week and that's it," the left-hander said. "I'd like to put everything else in a box and forget about it."

Bowe chimes in with Clinton

WASHINGTON, Jan 12: Down the street from US President Bill Clinton's well-guarded White House, people live in terror, reports AFP.

Children on youth football teams are killed in drive-by shootings. Some plan their funerals and say they cannot imagine being alive in 20 years. The choir at Eastern High School visited Australia last year and plans a trip to France later this year ... if they survive. There were 466 murders here in 1993, 15 more than the year before.

"When you're on the way to school, you worry about what can happen to you," student Latrice Moore said. "You may not be doing something wrong, but you might get hurt anyway."

Welcome to the southeast neighbourhood of the US capital, where policeman Jason White was killed by a gunman two weeks ago. Residents are poor and mostly black. Police are often outgunned. But they have a new ally — former heavyweight boxing champion Riddick Bowe.

Bowe announced a "funds for guns" programme here Tuesday in which he will pay 100 dollars for every gun given to police. Bowe began the programme by surrendering his

own 10 mm Silver Smith and Wesson pistol.

Authorities hope 1,000 guns will be exchanged at Union Temple Baptist Church on Saturday, the birthday of slain US civil rights leader Martin Luther King.

"I'm trying to lead by example," Bowe said. "If we can save even one life, then 100,000 dollars is worth it."

Bowe said the slaying of policemen while motivated him to start the programme. Bowe said he still fears gunmen.

"Myself, at times, I am afraid. Very much so," Bowe said. "Everyone is afraid at one time or another. I would feel real bad if somebody broke into my house and used by gun against me. I decided I wanted to get rid of it and do something to help other people."

Bowe, joking that his fists were the only "six-shooters," he needed, said he became fearful of his gun the first time he gripped it, at a shooting range near Atlantic City. Bowe said he never fired the weapon.

"I'm scared of it. I don't even want to hold it," he said. "The first time I held it, I didn't like it. I don't feel like I should use it. Everyone should be afraid of them."

Washington police chief Fred Thomas agrees.

"Every gun we take off the street can save five or six lives."

Aussie Open on Prime Sports

The Star TV network inaugurates another sensational year of tennis with the 1994 Australian Open, the first Grand Slam tennis tournament of the season. This event takes place in Melbourne, Australia from January 17th-30th, 1994. Star TV's live coverage on Prime Sports begins Monday, January 17th at 2:30 pm (GST), says a press release.

Star TV's anchorman, Brian Langley accompanied by Indian tennis legend, Vijay Amritraj and a Prime Sports crew will be on location this year. They will be hosting live interviews with various tennis professionals as well as providing daily reports on previous day's play and upcoming match analysis.

Prime Sports' telecast will offer viewers over 120 hours live coverage through to the finals, which will broadcast on a short delay. Times of play are divided into a day and night sessions, allowing for a break in action, this format will take place through to the semifinals.

Prime Sports' men's and women's singles, doubles and mixed doubles day sessions will broadcast from January 17th-23rd at 6:00 am. Night time sessions from January 17th-22nd begin at 2:30 pm (GST).

The 1994 Ford Australian Open, now in its 89th year, offering a total prize purse of 8 million Australian dollars, is the richest sporting event in Australia and will once again host a showcase player entry.

Of the 128 men's entry 44 of the top 50 players including defending champion Jim Courier, Pete Sampras, Stefan Edberg, Michael Stich, Goran Ivanisevic, Michael Chang and Cedric Pioline will compete. The women's competition will feature 27 of the top 30, and will include the likes of Steffi Graf, Jennifer Capriati, Arantxa Sanchez Vicario, Mary Pierce, Conchita Martinez, Gabriela Sabatini, Jana Novotna, Anke Huber, Manuela Maleeva-Fragner, and Kimiko Date. Defending champion, Monica Seles has announced that she will be passing up the tournament as she continues to recuperate from a stab wound.

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