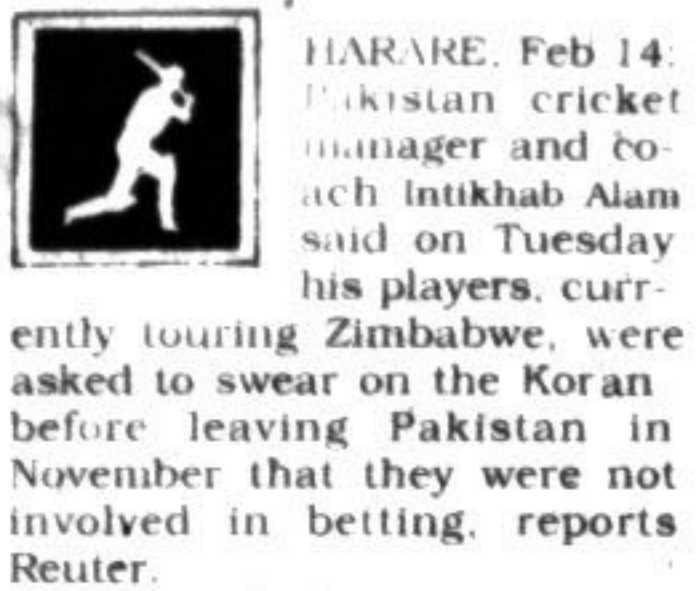


Delving deep in scandal



HARARE, Feb 14: Pakistan cricket manager and coach Intikhab Alam said on Tuesday his players, currently touring Zimbabwe, were asked to swear on the Koran before leaving Pakistan in November that they were not involved in betting, reports Reuter.

"This is a fact," he said. "But there was so much going on from all corners that, yes, this was done, there's no doubt about it."

The players had agreed but Intikhab denied that the fact the players had been asked was a source of worry.

"It's not worrying us at all," he said. "We just wanted to make sure because there are so many ugly rumours. You don't want to create any other problems. Once you have done that how can you suspect people?"

Intikhab was speaking in the wake of allegations in a London newspaper, casting suspicions over the heavy defeats of Pakistan in both the one-off Test against South Africa in Johannesburg last month and the first Test against Zimbabwe 10 days ago.

The odds against Zimbabwe had been 40-1 and the Daily Mail "understood that bookmakers in Bombay were refusing to payout."

However, sources in India said on Tuesday that it was not "unknown for bookmakers in Bombay to refuse to pay on any bet where they faced a big liability. Instead, stakes were simply returned."

Intikhab, hitting out at the latest claims, said: "This is unbelievable. I think people have gone mad."

"Every morning you get up and you see something silly written, what can you say? There is no truth in it. It is terrible, these are very serious charges against the Pakistan team."

"I know that we lost the first match against Zimbabwe but we played badly in that match so we picked it up and the second Test we won in less than three days."

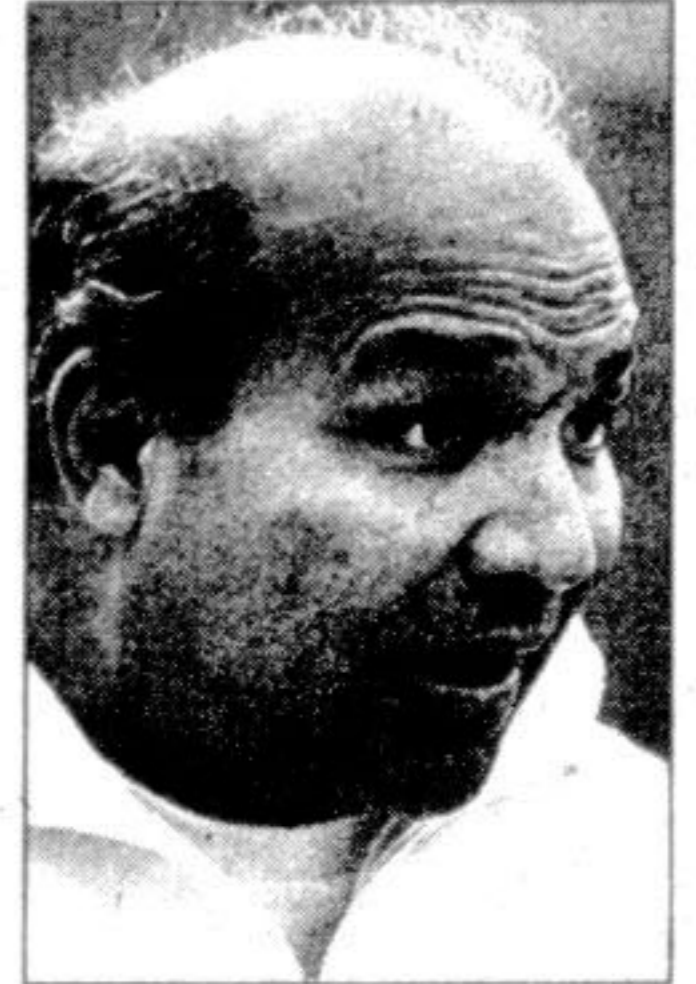
There is no truth in it. I will keep on saying these are

all false allegations unless they come out with concrete evidence and the proof that players are involved.

"Only then can one believe it but how can you believe false statements?"

Intikhab also dismissed reports that former captain Mushtaq Mohammed, who has admitted joking with Australian captain Allan Border in 1993 about the possibility of throwing a game in England, but categorically denied offering a bribe, was involved in a betting ring.

"I have known Mushtaq (Mushtaq) for a very, very long time — we were great buddies — and I don't think that he is the kind of person who would come out with something like that and I agree that it must



INTIKHAB ALAM have been (said) jokingly," he said.

Intikhab also agreed with another former Pakistan captain Asif Iqbal who said on ABC radio that people in Pakistan felt that Australia and England were jealous of their cricket team.

"I think probably he's right," said Intikhab. "Every time you see things going on in other countries nobody says a word."

"So many false allegations have gone against Pakistan and the only people who were actually involved way back in the 1980s were Australians."

Three of them were caught and the board penalised them very heavily. There is no other

such evidence that (Pakistan) players have been involved.

"I can say many things about other countries but what are we trying to prove? It is a very sad story and I think somebody has got to put their foot down and stop all this nonsense."

Intikhab said the allegations had not upset Pakistan preparations for the third Test which begins in Harare on Wednesday.

"It will only affect them if they are involved," he said. "But they are not the guilty party."

BURKI VEXED

Javed Burki, committee chairman of the Board of Control for Cricket in Pakistan, also dismissed the latest suggestions.

"I am quite confident that nobody in the Pakistan team took money to deliberately perform badly. I can't see that happening," he said.

"This sort of news item is certainly very worrying. You have only heard it now but we heard of this sort of thing a month ago in the Pakistani press. Any time a Pakistan team loses these are the allegations."

"We asked the newspaper reporters to give us names but names never come out. We want names. I'll be talking to the boys (Pakistan team) but I don't expect names."

Burki promised immediate action in the event of any impropriety, but added: "I don't think it is possible for cricketers to throw a match — and besides, there is no one in this team who is certain of a place in the World Cup."

"They are all struggling, so how can they go out there and not (try) to play well?"

Mushtaq, he said, had played most of his cricket in England at Northampton and after he retired he had settled in England.

"He lives there, he works there and his children are born and bred there. We never see him, he's not Pakistan cricket."

Burki said he would be discussing the current rash of allegations with International Cricket Council chief executive David Richards in London next Monday.

Reprieve of sorts for Tyson

NEW YORK, Feb 14: Prison officials have given a reprieve of sorts to former world heavyweight boxing champion Mike Tyson and moved his release date up to his original March 25 date, a spokeswoman told The Indianapolis Star on Monday, reports Reuter.

Tyson's release date on a six-year rape conviction had been moved back to May 9 after he was disciplined in May 1992 for threatening a guard and disorderly conduct at the Indiana Youth Centre in Plainfield.

But Indiana Department of Corrections Commissioner Christian DeBruyn decided recently to lift the added penalty time after discussing Tyson's case with staff who supervise adult discipline in the prison system, department spokeswoman Pam Pattison told the Star on Monday.

Pattison said the commissioner was convinced Tyson's misconduct likely was due only to a prison adjustment problem because it came very early in his term. Since then Tyson has been a model prisoner, according to the department.

The 28-year-old Tyson, who withdrew his request for an appeal hearing on his 1992 rape conviction late last summer, could get out even earlier than March 25 if a motion before Indiana Superior Court Judge Patricia Gifford is granted. The defence has asked Judge Gifford to reconsider the sentence.

If Tyson is let out earlier, he would be released under house arrest which means he would wear an electronic device that monitors his whereabouts.

Sampras still worried

MEMPHIS, Tennessee, Feb 14: World number one Pete Sampras warmed up for his return to singles competition with a doubles match on Monday, but his thoughts were with his coach Tim Gullikson, who is being treated for a brain tumour, reports Reuter.

"I've been speaking to Tim just about every day," Sampras said through an official at the \$50,000 Kroger/St Jude international tournament. "He's in good spirits. We've all been thinking about him. I would like to thank all the players for their support."

Gullikson, who is resting at his home in suburban Chicago, is being treated for a small brain tumour.

"This type of tumour responds very well to treatment," James Ausman, head of neurosurgery at the University of Illinois at Chicago Medical Centre, said in a statement on Monday.

"Tim is at home is doing well and is expected to return to coaching tennis in the near future."

The top-seeded Sampras, who had taken the past two weeks off after reaching the final of the Australian Open, and second seed Michael Chang will see their first singles action Wednesday.

Sampras, who teamed with Paul Anacone to defeat fellow-Americans Rick Leach and Scott Melville 6-3, 7-5, declined to appear for a press conference after his doubles match.

Sampras lost to Andre Agassi in the final of the Australian Open, an emotional tournament in which the normally undemonstrative world number one wept openly on the court in a semifinal against Jim Courier after Gullikson became ill and had to return to the United States.

The 43-year-old Gullikson, who has coached Sampras for the last three years, has suffered two minor strokes in the last two months and has been on blood-thinning medication to treat a heart condition.

No seeded players were in singles action on Monday.

Defending champion and third-seed Todd Martin of the United States will play Alexander Mronz of Germany today. Mronz was a first-round winner on Monday over Luiz Mattar of Brazil, 7-6 (7-1), 6-3.

Premature end to Fogdøe's career

STOCKHOLM, Feb 14: Slalom champion Thomas Fogdøe probably never will compete again because of "serious paralysis" from an accident last week, a doctor said Monday, reports AP.

The 24-year-old skier might be able to overcome some of the spinal damage with physical therapy, but it seemed unlikely he could recover to competition form, said Dr Olle Andren, chief physician at Umea University Hospital.

Fogdøe has sustained serious paralysis. Some of it he will be able to improve by training, and some with the help of technical aid, Andren said, according to the news agency TT.



American Bonnie Blair speeds through the corner en route to her gold medal in the women's 1000m World Cup speed-skating event in Calgary, on Feb 13. — AFP photo

NZ's plight in delight

WELLINGTON, Feb 14: Recriminations in the media and among New Zealand cricket players and officials were the order of the day today following this country's worst Test defeat at the hands of the West Indies, reports Reuter.

New Zealand is in the middle of celebrations for New Zealand Cricket's centenary but to date it has been more like a wake.

The West Indies tour began with three Kiwi players being suspended in connection with marijuana smoking during the recently completed tour of South Africa — an incident described by officials as the blackest in New Zealand cricket's history.

However, some saw the second Test loss on Monday by an innings and 322 runs as even darker.

"It can't get any worse, can it?" the headline in the Wellington daily, the Dominion, said.

The New Zealand Herald, in an editorial, described New Zealand's performance as a "spineless surrender".

The Dominion said captain Ken Rutherford had led a charmed life, with his position not under scrutiny despite nine Test losses and two wins from his 15 Tests as captain.

The coach of the team in South Africa, Geoff Howarth, has already been sacked.

Rutherford was also heavily fined and warned against repeat offending after abusing an umpire at the end of the South African tour.

He told reporters his head was "fairly and squarely on the block" and then took a swipe at the selectors for not giving him more say in the selection of the team.



KEN RUTHERFORD

"I am consulted, but quite often I end up with a team which has some players I do not think are up to it," he said.

He was critical of the selectors for leaving out Chris Pringle from New Zealand's one-day squad for the quadrangular tournament with India, South Africa and Australia starting on Wednesday.

Pringle was New Zealand's best one-day bowler, Rutherford said, and he had not been told why Pringle had been

omitted.

Officials have said he had been left out of the team against West Indies for reasons other than cricket but have not provided details.

The deputy chairman of New Zealand Cricket, Cran Bull, said Rutherford would be spoken to about his criticism of team selection but added that his board had confidence in the captain.

"There's no pressure that I know of Ken's position being in jeopardy. The board itself is certainly not pushing for it. What we need now is unity," Bull said in a radio interview.

One of the strangest aspects to the New Zealand cricket saga is that Martin Crowe, one of the world's finest batsmen and team captain until injured last year, is playing for Wellington at present but not for New Zealand.

He had further surgery to an injured knee after returning from South Africa and in his comeback match scored 50 not out, but the selectors apparently did not consider him.

Rutherford, who is also going through a split from his wife that has been splashed across pages of women's magazines, said he has had some doubts about the job.

"There hasn't been a lot there to increase my confidence or my enthusiasm for the job, but I'm really hanging in there. There are events occurring which make me wonder at times."

Pierce's Paris Open plans

PARIS, Feb 14: World Number three Mary Pierce, hoping to win her first-ever tournament in her adopted France at the Paris Open this week, warned that nobody should write off former world number-one Steffi Graf, reports AFP.

Graf, who is in the French capital to play her first tournament in three months, revealed on Monday that she would be carrying a severe back injury for the rest of her career.

But the Canadian-born Pierce, who was 20 last month when she won the Australian Open, revealed that she had trained with Graf on Monday and found the German to be in "excellent shape."

"I had the impression she was as fast as ever," said Pierce who is seeded to play Graf in next Sunday's final of the 420,000 dollar WTA event.

"I thought she looked really sharp out here."

Pierce, who is being heralded as a player capable of wresting the world number one crown from Arantxa Sanchez and Graf, said: "It's always been my dream to be number-one in the world but it certainly won't be easy. It's been hard enough reaching third place in the rankings. But obviously I shall be doing my best."

Pierce, beaten in the final at the French Open at Roland Garros last year by Sanchez, admitted she had learned a lot of lessons since then.

"I wanted to do well — especially in France. But that put extra pressure on me."

"When I faced Arantxa again in the final at the Australian Open it was very different. I went out on court feeling much more confident. I had nothing to lose."

"Obviously anything can happen in a tournament and there is no such thing as an easy draw. But I would dearly love to play Steffi in the final here."

Pierce has become something of a jinx for Graf. She beat the German in the semifinals at Roland Garros and in the quarterfinals of the Virginia Slims Championships in New York last year.

In the other half of the draw Graf also has her first match on Wednesday against either Elena Makarova of Russia or Larisa Neiland of Latvia.

WTA's top 20

- 1. Arantxa Sanchez-Vicario (Spain)
- 2. Steffi Graf (Germany)
- 3. Mary Pierce (France)
- 4. Conchita Martinez (Spain)
- 5. Jana Novotna (Czech Republic)
- 6. Lindsay Davenport (US)
- 7. Gabriela Sabatini (Argentina)
- 8. Kimiko Date (Japan)
- 9. Natasha Zvereva (Belarus)
- 10. Anke Huber (Germany)
- 11. Magdalena Maleeva (Bulgaria)
- 12. Iva Majoli (Croatia)
- 13. Brenda Schultz (Netherlands)
- 14. Naoko Sawamatsu (Japan)
- 15. Amy Frazier (US)
- 16. Helena Sukova (Czech Republic)
- 17. Sabine Hack (Germany)
- 18. Julie Halard (France)
- 19. Mary Joe Fernandez (US)
- 20. Amanda Coetzer (South Africa)

Mushtaq Mohammad offers a new dimension It all started with a joke?

SYDNEY, Feb 14: Former Pakistani captain Mushtaq Mohammad, commenting on claims of bribe-taking in international cricket, said today he was jokingly asked Australian counterpart Allan Border what he would do if he were offered 500,000 sterling (750,000 dollars) to lose a Test match, reports Reuter.

Mushtaq said he approached Border during the fifth Test against England at Birmingham's Edgbaston in 1993 and "vaguely mentioned" the sum of money.

In an interview in London with Sydney's Telegraph Mirror newspaper, Mushtaq categorically denied the conversation amounted to a bribe.

"That doesn't mean I was offering it (the money) to him, although I know these things are going on," Mushtaq was quoted as saying.

Mushtaq said his conversation with Border was prompted by England's plight at Edgbaston.

With one day remaining, Australia faced a victory target of 120 with eight wickets remaining to take a 4-0 lead in the six-Test series.

The situation was strikingly similar to the 1981 Test match between the two countries at Headingley in Leeds when England recorded a dramatic victory by bowling Australia out for 111.

"I said to Allan, 'You remember Headingley? If the offer was made to you to lose this match for 500,000

pounds, what would happen?'" Mushtaq was quoted as saying.

Allan said to me that he would never muck about with a cricket match, and I said that is exactly how I felt when I was playing.

"It was just a chat... this was a joke all along, with that Headingley Test in mind. That doesn't mean I approached Allan Border and said I have got an offer for you from Pakistan," Mushtaq added.

Border has confirmed he was approached during the Test match, but refused to identify the individual involved or give details. He refused to comment on the issues today.

The exchange surfaced in the Australian media on Monday when an unnamed former teammate of Border's spoke out about the incident.

"The bribery allegations have soured relations between Australia and Pakistan."

Former Pakistani captain Asif Iqbal today described Border and Australian Cricket Board chief executive Graham Halbish of being "dishonest with the cricketing people of the world."

"People in Pakistan feel that Australian and English authorities and players are jealous of the Pakistan team," Iqbal told Australia's ABC radio.

Border, who is playing for Queensland after his retirement from international cricket last May, told reporters he did not wish to comment further.

The Australian Cricket Board also refused to comment today.

The Sydney Morning Herald newspaper has reported that Australian spin bowlers Shane Warne and Tim May were each offered 50,000 US dollars to play poorly during the Test series in Pakistan last year.



Brazilian soccer legend Pele shows off his skills in front of British Sports Minister Iain Sproat in Trafalgar Square, London on Feb 13. Pele, who is on a European tour, met with the minister to discuss international cooperation in sport. — AFP photo

Lankans hail ICC decision

COLOMBO, Feb 14: Sri Lanka's cricket board Tuesday welcomed the decision of the game's governing body to probe bribery charges after Australia's Dean Jones said he was offered money during the 1992 tour here, reports AFP.

The International Cricket Council (ICC) on Monday launched an investigation into allegations that Australian players had been offered bribes to lose Test matches.

"This is a correct move by the ICC. I believe these allegations have to be fully investigated to preserve the good name of the game," said Anura Tennekoon, secretary of the Board of Control for Cricket in Sri Lanka.

Tennekoon said that a thorough investigation was necessary because if the allegations were proved, steps must be taken to ensure that "such things don't creep into the game."

Former Australian player Jones revealed that he was offered 30,000 pounds by an Indian bookmaker to provide inside information on the Australian team during their 1992 tour of Sri Lanka. Australia won the three-Test series, 1-0.

"If all what is being said is true, apparently there are people who think there is quick money to be made in cricket," said Tennekoon, who became secretary in 1994, and is seeking re-election for another term on February 26.

There had been wide speculation in cricket circles here that an Indian bookmaker had tried to bribe Jones

when his side toured the island in 1992 but that the Australian had angrily rejected the offer.

Speculation was also rife Sri Lankan players were also offered bribes to lose matches but a commission of inquiry which investigated the disastrous 1993-94 tour of India found no evidence to substantiate the rumours.

However, the six-man commission, in its report to then Sports Minister Nanda Mathew, confirmed the unnamed Indian bookmaker had tried to influence the game here.

"There is evidence that a bookmaker of Indian origin has attempted to make his presence felt in the national cricket scene," said the report by the commission, headed by former cricket board secretary Somasunderam Kandakumar.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS

- 1 So bad
- 5 Hardly
- 9 Holyfield
- 12 Mr. Sharif
- 13 "Tosca"
- 14 Eggs
- 15 Knute
- 17 Mischief
- 18 Docs' due
- 19 Metallic-sounding
- 21 To fetch — of water
- 24 Letter-man's rival
- 25 Dismissed
- 26 Pulpit
- 30 Numerical prefix
- 31 Spotless
- 32 Past
- 33 Like half the trains
- 35 Pre-Yule buy
- 36 River
- 37 Darkness
- 38 English porcelain

DOWN

- 1 Filch
- 2 Medics'
- 3 Wrestling surface
- 4 Make money
- 5 Former filly
- 6 Rainbow
- 7 Gaffer's concern
- 8 Like "The Divine Comedy," e.g.
- 9 "Butterfield 8"
- 10 Bard's river
- 11 A born sucker?
- 16 — canto
- 20 Letter-head abbr.
- 21 Con-
- 22 Indiana city
- 23 Long-popular jazz singer
- 24 Graphite, allegedly
- 26 Positive
- 27 Stimp's pal
- 28 "Zounds!"
- 29 Hitchcock classic
- 31 Set
- 34 Auction action
- 35 Pules
- 37 Box-office initials
- 38 Love-letter acronym
- 39 Macadamize
- 40 Seek on the P.A.
- 41 Adam's grandson
- 44 Deviate from course
- 45 Right angle
- 46 Parisian pal
- 47 Herbert of the "Pink Panther" films

Solution time: 24 mins.

LIFE FLO PLOW AVIATION RENO PERSONAL IVAN PAYEE JOVE ODOA MAKESDO LAK PIPER IVY REGULAR VOID OMEN LENDS SAABAA AIR LIMB GERANIUM IDOL ESTRANGE PARE SPY LOON

CRYPTOQUIP

F B Y X J F Y R - Q W T A N T T Y Q

W Q Y P X J K X W R K

T C W W R K W R P M P T C P

M Y J F N T A X M Q

Yesterday's Cryptoquip: TATTOOED SAILOR APPARENTLY HAD A SHIP ON HIS SHOULDER.

Today's Cryptoquip clue: W equals I

The Cryptoquip is a substitution cipher in which one letter stands for another. If you think that X equals O, it will equal O throughout the puzzle. Single letters, short words and words using an apostrophe give you clues to locating vowels. Solution is by trial and error.