

Sport



Abdullah Al-Rakib (L) makes a move on his way to beating Ziaur Rahman in the seventh round of the Prime Bank IM chess tournament at the NSC yesterday. — Star photo

A N Korean revelation

BANGKOK, Dec 26: Sports chiefs from cash-strapped Stalinist North Korea are wooing corporate sponsorship for their Olympic campaign following their low-key comeback to the Asian Games, reports AFP.

Chang Ung, a member of the International Olympic Committee (IOC) said here that his country was seeking financial help for their preparation for the 2000 Sydney Olympics from several foreign businesses.

"I've talked to my friends here in Bangkok and many other people," said Chang, who is also his country's vice sports minister. "Some of them are really willing to support us."

He refused to identify the firms but confirmed they were based in Southeast Asia and Europe. A large Korean community in Japan is also known to be providing an economic lifeline for Pyongyang.

North Korea boycotted the 1994 Hiroshima Asian Games, citing a diplomatic row with Japan, and their trip here had to be subsidised by the organisers as the country has been hit by famine and economic woes for several years.

They are going home with seven gold medals from gymnastics, judo, shooting and wrestling, down from 12 at the 1990 Beijing Games where they finished fourth overall behind China, Japan and South Korea.

Atlanta Olympic women's judo bantamweight Kye Sunhui and 1996 world gymnastic pommel horse champion Pae Kil-su both swept aside regional rivals.

"We are satisfied but this completely," said the 60-year-old Chang, a former basketball player at 1.9 metres (6ft). "Human ambitions are always bigger than reality."

The result may be remarkable in that North Korea fielded just 196 athletes due to what Chang admitted was economic difficulties, eight years ago in Beijing they had 446.

North Korea tried to keep a low profile here but found themselves caught in the spotlight when doubts were raised about the age of their tiny girl gymnasts. Their passports were checked and showed they were not under-age.

But the suspicion persisted amid the memory of a case in which one female gymnast was found to have submitted a false age in the mid-1990s. As a result, North Korea was suspected from international competition for a year.

Chang said North Korean boxers may be young and powerful but they lacked international experience.

Aloysius sues AAFI

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, Dec 26: (India Abroad News Service): Indian national women's high jump record-holder Bobby Aloysius is taking the Amateur Athletic Federation of India (AAFI) to court, claiming damages for denying her and the country a chance to win a medal at the recently concluded Asian Games.

Aloysius has claimed that several athletes were included in the Indian team to the Asian Games in spite of their failing to make the qualifying standard.

Challenging this "discrimination", she had earlier approached the Delhi High Court which dismissed her plea for lack of documentary evidence.

However, the court granted her permission to file a suit for compensation. With the results at the Bangkok Asian Games bolstering her case, she has decided to battle it out in the High Court.

"My main aim is to bring the malpractices that are the bane of Indian sports to the attention of the judiciary. There should be strict guidelines for the selection process," Aloysius told IANS. "Government funds should be utilised properly for achieving excellence in sports and should not be misused according to the whims and fancies of vested interests."

Early this year, Aloysius had broken the national high jump record clearing 1.85 metres at the Fukuoka Asian Track and Field Meet followed by the gold at the Colombo South Asian Federation (SAF) Games with a magnificent jump of 1.86 metres.

At the selection trials for the Asian Games, the AAFI hiked the qualifying standard from 1.83 metres, which was equivalent to the third place result in the previous Asian, to 1.88 metres. Aloysius failed to qualify, clearing only 1.86 metres.

Caribbeans cave in early

DURBAN, South Africa, Dec 26 (Reuters/Internet): South Africa were 46 for no wicket in reply to the West Indies 198, at the close of the opening day of the third Test at Kingsmead on Saturday.

Kirsten and Gibbs were at the crease with 15 and 26 respectively when stumps were drawn for the day.

Earlier, South African pace bowler David Terbrugge cut short a threatening innings of 51 by Brian Lara to help his

team bowl West Indies out for 198 on the first day of the third Test.

West Indies, already trailing 2-0 in the five-Test series, were 156 for five at tea after being put in on a cracked and well-grassed Kingsmead pitch.

Captain Lara carried the attack to the South African bowlers as he made his runs off 91 balls, hitting eight fours and a six until he fell 30 minutes before tea.

The Trinidadian left-hander pulled a delivery from Terbrugge but got the ball on the

splice and skied a catch to his opposite number Hansie Cronje at mid-on, reducing West Indies to 133 for five.

Nineteen-year-old Test debutant Darren Ganga, who has made a composed 24 not out, and wicketkeeper Ridley Jacobs, 14 not out, took West Indies safely through to tea.

The touring team had started the match encouragingly as Philo Wallace and Junior Murray shared an opening stand of exactly 50, only for much of their good work to be undone in the 16th and 19th overs.

First Wallace, who missed the second Test with glandular fever, was caught at first slip by Darryl Cullinan off Jacques Kallis' medium pace for 21.

Then Murray, promoted from the reserve wicketkeeper's berth to open the innings in place of Clayton Lambert, was trapped in front by Terbrugge for 29.

In the 22nd over Kallis struck again when Shivnarine Chanderpaul's footwork failed him and he was caught between first and second slip by diving wicketkeeper Mark Boucher.

West Indies, 69 for three at lunch, lost Carl Hooper 40 minutes afterwards when he flashed at a wide delivery from Kallis and was caught at first slip by Cullinan for 10.

SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard on the opening day of the third Test between South Africa and West Indies at Kingsmead on Saturday.

WEST INDIES: First Innings

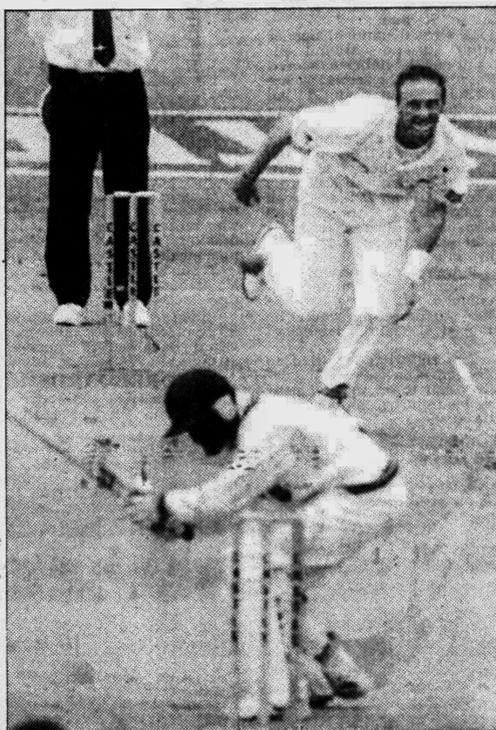
Wallace c Cullinan b Kallis	21
Murray lbw b Terbrugge	29
Chanderpaul c Boucher b Kallis	4
Lara c Cronje b Terbrugge	51
Hooper c Cullinan b Kallis	10
Ganga b Pollock	28
Jacobs b Cronje	31
Lewis c Cullinan b Cronje	0
Rose c Kallis b Cronje	6
Ambrose run out (Rhodes)	0
Walsh not out	0
Extras (lb-5 nb-5)	10
Total: 198	

Fall of wickets: 1-50; 2-52; 3-57; 4-105; 5-133; 6-178; 7-179; 8-185; 9-186

Bowler O M R W

Donald	13.4	1	55	0
Pollock	23.2	8	45	1
Terbrugge	12	2	39	2
Kallis	10	3	18	3
Symcox	8	1	17	0
Cronje	4.1	0	19	3

(Incomplete)



West Indies captain Brian Lara ducking a short-pitched Allan Donald delivery during the first day's play of the third Test. — Internet photo

Has Jordan's career been put on ice?

NEW YORK, Dec 26 (Reuters/Internet): After making the dramatic steal and shot that won his Chicago Bulls their sixth NBA championship of the decade, Michael Jordan posed for a long moment, freeze-framed in his follow-through. Holding his shooting hand cocked in a gesture of triumph and finality, he also teased fans with a question: Was that the last shot they would ever see by basketball's greatest-ever player?

The question remains unanswered. Jordan had said he would decide whether to retire after seeing what kind of team the Bulls management put together for the 1998-99 season, but a lockout has shut the league down, leaving his career in limbo.

If the one-point victory over the Utah Jazz last June 14 was the final game of his glittering career, it proved a fitting crown.

Jordan scored 45 points, including the last four of the game and the last eight by his team, to bring the Bulls a third title in a row for the second time.

Coach Phil Jackson said those heroes even surpassed Game 5 of the previous year's finals, also in Utah, when a weak and wobbly Jordan rose from his sickbed to score 38 points in a pivotal victory.

Those two games in 1998 and 1997 are respectively, numbers one and two in "Michael Jordan's 50 Greatest Games," a book in which the author, Chicago sports columnist Bob Condor, laments that it was tough to narrow the list down to 50.

Jordan is so used to such defining moments that in Game 5 this year, down by two points with 1.1 seconds to go and a Chicago crowd shrieking with excitement, he paused to reflect how cute it was that no one knew what would happen next.

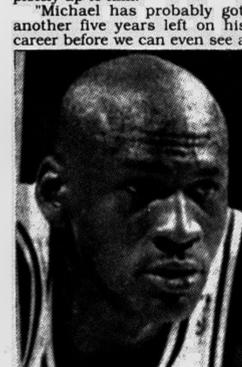
He missed that final desperation shot and his Bulls lost the game, but Jordan remained

philosophical afterwards.

Part of that comes from his coach's Zen borrowings. "The moment starts to become the moment for me," Jordan said after the decisive Game 6. "And that's part of that Zen Buddhism stuff. Once you get in the moment, you know you're there." The enigmatic Jackson has quit the Bulls but key team mate Scottie Pippen, his future in Chicago also in doubt, believes Jordan's future is completely up to him.

"Michael has probably got another five years left on his career before we can even see a

decline in him," Pippen said. "Because he had so much knowledge of the game, there's other things that he knows that we can always pull out. And right now we're seeing him probably at the top of his game."



MICHAEL JORDAN

Jordan outdid himself again this season as he added his unrivalled 10th scoring championship, his unsurpassed 10th all-NBA first team berth, his ninth all-defensive first team spot, his fifth league Most Valuable Player award and his sixth Finals MVP honours in as many appearances.

He has won the scoring title

each of his last 10 full seasons, interrupted only by a brief defection to baseball.

His salary this season was expected to be around 40 million dollars if he chose to return, and he is certainly earning more than that from his many other financial interests.

His penetration of the world's commerce and media continued this year, in big ways and small. "Michael Jordan Cologne," which had already claimed 200 million dollars in revenues, went on sale in China, and a pair of his old sneakers went on auction along with a collection of rare books in Boston.

A poll found him the celebrity that US children would most like to E-mail. American adults placed him fifth on a list of "most-respected newsmakers" behind Mother Teresa, Abraham Lincoln, Martin Luther King and Ronald Reagan.

"Fantasy Sports Exchange" was set up in cyberspace allowing sports fans and market aficionados to invest in imaginary shares in Jordan, measured against the likes of baseball's Mark McGwire and golfer's Tiger Woods.

Back in the real business world, Jordan has participated in the NBA talks between owners and players. His agent, David Falk, also represents union president Patrick Ewing and is regarded as a key factor on the players' side.

As debate wore on over when it would be too late to stage a meaningful season, jokesters suggested that it would be a real season as long as there were playoffs — no, as long as there were a few seconds left in a championship game with the ball in Michael Jordan's hands.

That is an NBA season in the Michael Jordan era: a moment unforgettably and deliberately frozen in time by the master of his game.

Prime Bank Chess Rakib pulls off a stunner

Sports Reporter

Abdullah Al-Rakib pulled off an upset win over Ziaur Rahman in the seventh round of the Prime Bank International Master's Chess Tournament at the NSC chess room yesterday. Young Rakib, who got his IM norm in the 33rd Chess Olympiad a few months back, outwitted IM Zia, the highest rated player in the nine round Swiss League meet, to maintain his unbeaten run.

With this win, Rakib joined IM Reefat at the top of the table, both collecting six points. Reefat defeated Tayabur Rahman, co-sharer at the top slot on completion of the sixth round. Tayabur now share the third position with both having collected five points. On the other hand, Abu Sufian and Shawkat Hossain jointly shared the second position with five and a half points apiece.

Chelsea go top temporarily

LONDON, Dec 26 (Reuters/Internet): Chelsea beat struggling Southampton 2-0 on Saturday to go temporarily top of the English premier league on goal difference from Aston Villa, who were playing at Blackburn Rovers later.

Norwegian striker Tore Andre Flo, starting a match rather than typically coming on as a substitute, got the opening goal with a volley in the 20th minute after being set up by Italian Gianfranco Zola's run and chip.

Uruguayan Gustavo Poyet made it 2-0 from close range in the 35th leaving

Southampton facing a return to the bottom of the league table should Nottingham Forest snatch a draw at Manchester United in their later match.

But Poyet failed to complete the match after being carried off on a stretcher with what looked like a serious injury shortly before the end.

Chelsea now have 36 points at the half-way point in the season, level with Villa, who will regain the lead if they avoid defeat at lowly Blackburn. Chelsea have a goal difference of plus 14, Villa of plus 11.

In the premier league's other lunchtime kick-off matches, former Arsenal striker Ian Wright returned to Highbury with his new club West Ham but ended up a 1-0 loser after an eighth minute striker by Dutchman Marc Overmars.

Arsenal moved up to third place with 32 points.

Wimbledon beat London rivals Charlton 2-1 with goals from Jason Euell and Michael Hughes after Neil Redfern had earlier given Charlton the lead.

Charlton, promoted at the start of the season, and briefly top of the table in August, have now lost their last six league matches.

Neck and neck battle in Sydney

SYDNEY, Dec 26 (Reuters/Internet): Three of the biggest yachts in the Sydney-Hanar race, suffering neck-and-neck down Australia's east coast late on Saturday as the 115-strong fleet prepared for gale-force winds expected overnight.

U.S. maxi Sayonara and Australian maxis Brindabella and Marchioness were setting a race record pace for the bluewater classic as they revelled in northeasterly winds of up to 20 knots ahead of an expected strong southerly change.

"We have three boats racing virtually abreast," race spokesman Peter Campbell said.

Sayonara, helmed by America's Cup ace Chris Dickson, was the first boat out of Sydney Harbour after the start and set its spinnaker as it led the fleet south into the Tasman Sea for the 630-nautical mile race.

Defending champion Brindabella, a noted downwind flyer, needed only two hours to catch and pass Sayonara, which is better suited to upwind sailing.

However, the white-hulled Sayonara fought back and the pair were soon joined by giant sloop Marchioness which also enjoys sailing with the wind after undergoing major modifications since it was built for the 1993 Cape Campbell said all three had reported their positions on the same latitude after covering 105 miles in seven-and-a-half hours at an average of 4 knots.

"We are all hoping the speed needed to break the record set in 1996 by German maxi Morning Glory.

The trio was comfortably ahead of new Australian maxi Wild Thing with the best of the smaller boats still further back.

"It's going to be torrid sailing, a hard night at sea for everyone, from small boats to big boats," Campbell said.

Organisers hoped there would not be a repeat of the 1993 race when mountainous seas and 75-knot winds slammed into the fleet, sinking two boats and forcing 66 of the 105 yachts out.

Sayonara's owner and skipper Larry Ellison has predicted his 23.8-metre yacht could scythe 12 hours off the race record.

Sayonara won in 1995 but her performance was eclipsed the following year when Morning Glory set a new mark of two days 14 hours seven minutes 10 seconds, breaking a race record which had stood for 21 years.

Ellison has described his yacht as the "fastest upwind boat ever built in history" and was looking forward to strong headwinds to push Sayonara across Bass Strait, a notoriously rough stretch of water leading to Tasmania.

A challenge to the record has not been discounted despite the heavy overnight conditions, particularly if the change tends more to the southwest than the south.

Mark eyeing another mark



MARK TAYLOR

MELBOURNE, Dec 26 (Reuters/Internet): Australian cricket captain Mark Taylor is on the verge of another major milestone as the greatest year of his illustrious career draws to a close.

Just two months after matching Sir Don Bradman's record 334 for the highest Test score by an Australian, Taylor is quickly reeling in Allan Border's world record for the most catches by a fieldman other than wicketkeeper.

Heading into the fourth Ashes Test against England, Taylor had taken 154 catches in Test cricket, just two behind Border's world record of 156.

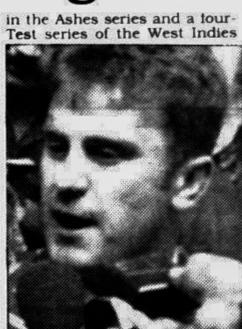
Taylor, who claimed his catches in 102 matches compared to Border's 156, said he was proud of his record as a fieldman.

"It's probably one of the few statistics that I keep on myself," said Taylor, who has taken the bulk of his catches at first slip.

"It's something you always felt I had to work on quite hard because you spend a lot of time in the field.

"If you don't enjoy your fielding or you don't get something out of it, you're wasting probably the biggest part of your game."

With two matches remaining in the Ashes series and a four-Test series of the West Indies coming up, Taylor is almost certain to pass Border's mark.



MARK TAYLOR

LEADING FIELDSMEN

Allan Border (Australia)	156 catches, 156 matches
Mark Taylor (Australia)	154 catches, 102 matches
Greg Chappell (Australia)	122 catches, 88 matches
Viv Richards (West Indies)	122 catches, 121 matches
Ian Botham (England)	120 catches, 102 matches
Colin Cowdrey (England)	120 catches, 115 matches
Bob Simpson (Australia)	110 catches, 62 matches
Wally Hammond (England)	110 catches, 85 matches
Gary Sobers (West Indies)	109 catches, 93 matches
Sunil Gavaskar (India)	108 catches, 125 matches
Ian Chappell (Australia)	105 catches, 76 matches
Mohammad Gooch (England)	103 catches, 118 matches
Graham Azharuddin (India)	101 catches, 91 matches

Reasons behind India's debacle

NEW DELHI, Dec 26: A small sporting population and absence of commitment are the main reasons for India's poor performances at international events, the country's senior-most sports official has said.

"The number of playing population (people who actively take part in sports activities) in spite of a very big population of the country is very very small. This is a very big problem for us," Sports Secretary Bhaskar Barua told India Abroad News Service in an interview.

"Our problem is we lack long term commitment," whether on part of parent, school or society, Barua said. "The resources which are required are not put into sports in terms of money or the organisational effort," he added.

Commenting on India's performance at the Bangkok Asian Games the official said: "I am not unhappy." India with 35 medals, including seven golds, was placed ninth in the overall medals positions of nations. The gold medal in hockey, after 32 years, showed how problems have been identified by the government in certain sports disciplines and successfully overcome, he said.

"This very improvement indicates the lacuna has been identified," he claimed. "We found that physical stamina and a lack of it, is a very important factor. We took care of it. Then defence and penalty corners have been yielding a lot of our attention," he added.

He said fresh impetus was being given to infrastructure by encouraging the local municipal bodies to build stadiums and other sports facilities by giving them grants. The future potential of Indian sports was in rural areas. Half of the country's sports persons, including the medal winners, were from very backward rural areas. Keeping this in view, Barua said that the government had taken rural sports in a big way by encouraging state administrations to

hold rural competitions. Barua conceded these steps were aimed at increasing the playing population. Speaking of tackling the problem of long term commitment will come if it is seen that sports is something that can open up avenues."

Commenting on India's comparison with China's performance, Barua said: "When I asked the Chinese sports minister the secret of their success, he said that every school of China has one hour of compulsory physical training every day and three hours of compulsory sports every week. That is the beginning of what China has made in the sports arena."

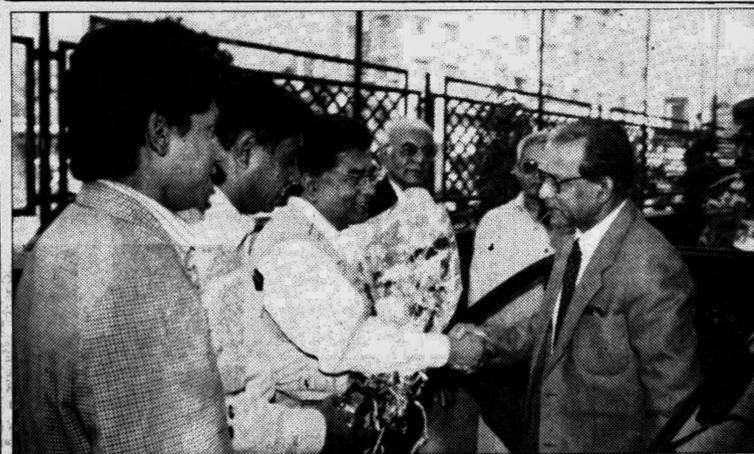
China topped the Bangkok Asian Games with 129 gold medals while South Korea with 64 gold finished runners-up in the overall medals tally.

"The Chinese are a different society, much more regimental. We are different, but it also gives us a longer route to travel. We cannot have shortcuts in this country," Barua said. "We cannot compare with China's performance. That can be a dream. But a medal in some sports in Olympics and many more golds in Asian Games would be what we have been preparing for," Barua said. "We are now trying to create a link between the base that we have created and excellence." Barua said. "Let us set standards for ourselves. Do not talk about the medals." Reacting to reports about the Indian Olympic Association's desire to host the 2006 Asian Games in India, Barua said: "There is no formal proposal at the moment. As soon as the proposal comes we would give our support."

Both the government and private sectors were trying to place sports persons at suitable positions so that they do not fear about their future, but the country still had a long way to go. Barua conceded the sports budget in the country was inadequate. "That is a fact that the sports budget has been very much less," Barua said. The present government had increased the sports budget from 750 rupees million (18 million dollars) to 1 billion rupees (24 million dollars). "To take care of the backlog such as infrastructure we would require such a huge amount which we cannot think of it at the moment. I should imagine if one billion rupee becomes 5 billion rupee (119 million dollars) it should be considered as a good beginning," Barua said. Reacting to

media reports of delay in clearing sports persons for the Asian Games, Barua said: "That delay has been there, we admit that. There were standards but at the last moment attempts were made to dilute them. We set dates which were not adhered to. Second place at the last Asian Games or the Asian championship is what we wanted. At a very late stage a request was made to make it to third place. And then that processing took some time."

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The newly-appointed Bangladesh Olympic Association president Lt Gen M Mustafizur Rahman, BB, (R) being received by National Sports Council officials.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS

1 Prince member
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23 Graph lines
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29 Couronne
30 Bradstreet's
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41 One of the
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43 Diner
44 Lion's
45 Bygone
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49 Take
50 Chart type

Solution time: 22 mins.

BIERT ANN SCOT
OVER MOT HYDE
SILS WAVE LINN
GLOSTW GOLORN
O SEE EELS
GAS PUP ROUGH
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ADIEU GAL EINS
NATE MID
LOFTS AWAZES
ABET SIGNPOST
MOLL EWE ANTI
BEDE LOS SEAR

Yesterdays answer originally

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CRYPTOQUIP

PIH AVK K Z I U A E A G H S
O E G O M E A X U A R A O G H W X P
M A S O E A K G V M G K P
M A G H Z X W Z X H W X R P

Yesterday's Cryptoquip: AFTER SCHOOL MANY A GOOD ELF WILL LIKE TO HEAD DIRECTLY TO HIS GNOME WORK.

Today's Cryptoquip clue: R equals G

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.