

Sport

Imran Khan's allegation

LAHORE, Pakistan, Jan 14: Former Pakistan cricket great turned politician Imran Khan Wednesday said he would challenge in court the seizure of tiles from his wife Jemima on charges of smuggling, reports AFP.

"The seizure is part of the government's victimisation policy," Imran told reporters here.

He said the government was "crumbling" in the face of law and order problems and an economic crunch and since my party poses a serious challenge to the ruling party the government has launched a vilification campaign against me and my family.

Pakistani customs officials intercepted a consignment of hundreds of tiles in December and have registered a case against Jemima, the daughter of the late Franco-British Tycoon Sir James Goldsmith, for illegally exporting antique tiles.

The decorative tiles were destined for her mother Annabelle Goldsmith in London. Jemima Goldsmith married Imran Khan in 1995 and settled in Lahore.

The couple said the shipment was lawful as the tiles were purchased from a local market.

But the customs department referred the tiles to the archaeological department which has declared them centuries-old antiques dating from the Mughal era.

Customs officials believe the tiles were originally stolen from a site in southern Thatta district.

Imran who has formed Movement for Justice Party, did not elaborate when he will challenge the confiscation.

He reiterated the tiles were not antiques. They were purchased from Islamabad and the government allegations are "politically motivated and baseless," he added.

"In order to clarify our position following the registration of the case against my wife, we will go to the court."

Export of antiques is an offence punishable by a fine or a maximum imprisonment of five years.

Proteas on 'mission whitewash'

CENTURION, South Africa, Jan 14 (Reuters/Internet): West Indies will be under extreme pressure to avoid a 5-0 whitewash when the final Test against South Africa starts at Centurion Park on Friday.

Having lost the first four Tests in this inaugural tour by West Indies of the Republic, Brian Lara's men are feeling the heat from their supporters in the Caribbean and from a South African team bent on ending the series in style with a fifth victory.



HANSIE CRONJE

No South African team has won a series 5-0, the closest being the 4-0 triumph by All Blacks over Bill Lawry's Australians in 1969-70. Captain Hansie Cronje has said he wants to achieve that target in this series.

"Our most important preparation is mental," Lara said. "It's very, very tough to be 4-0 down in a series, especially when it's the first time it has happened to any of the players."

"We know we still have to try and be positive, but I won't pretend that's easy."

Wretched batting by the top six and assorted injuries among the fast bowlers are the main reasons for their lack of success.

But off the field the pre-tour dispute involving the West Indies Cricket Board still lingers, with reports filtering through of rifts within the touring party.

The upshot has been West Indies winning only two of the 13 matches they have played so far, and matters could easily worsen with seven one-day internationals scheduled to follow the Test series.

The ruthlessly efficient South Africans have rarely been challenged in cruising to four emphatic victories.

Lara, however, has not lost heart completely. "If we are better prepared upstairs then I've got to believe we do have a chance of regaining some pride," he said.

"We all know the West Indian people are behind us, we've had phone calls and faxes of encouragement."

"The people back home have become used to having a winning team, and they are naturally disappointed in the way we have played."

"But at least we feel we have their support."

The visitors' moral suffered a further blow when the squad for the one-day series was announced at the weekend and it was learned five members of the squad would be returning home after the fifth test, to be replaced by four newcomers.

"It's the first time the West Indies have selected a one-day team during a Test series and several of the players have experienced a negative reaction because they know they are going home," Lara admitted.

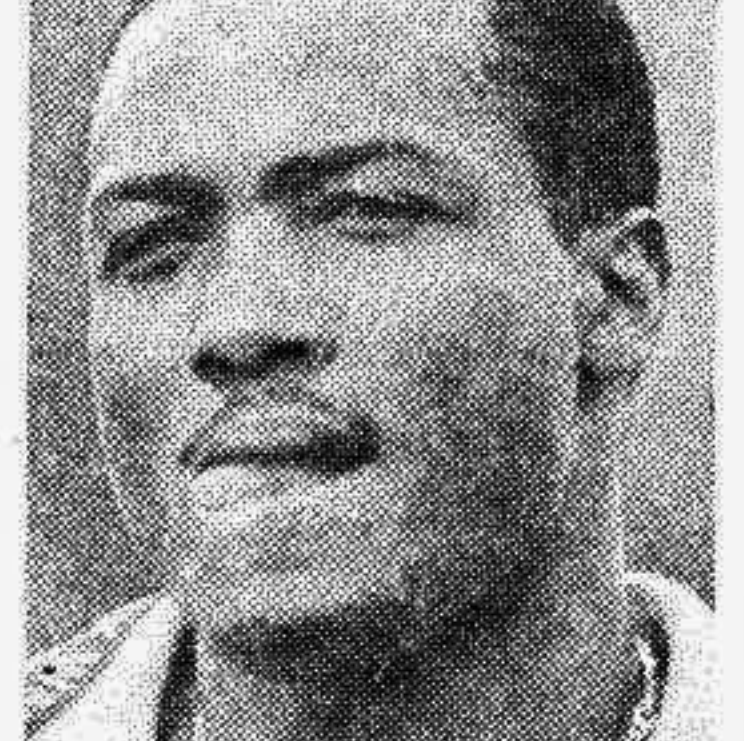
Injured fast bowlers Courtney Walsh and Franklyn Rose, opening batsmen Stuart Williams and Clayton Lambert and change bowler Mervyn Dillon are returning home, with all-rounder Keith Arthurton, paceman Reon King, left-arm spinner Neil McGarrell and Keith Semple scheduled to arrive on Thursday.

Vastly experienced fast bowler Curtly Ambrose has been retained despite the knee injury which saw him limp off the field during the third test at Kingsmead in Durban and not play in the fourth at Newlands in Cape Town. Lara said if Ambrose was not fit to play at Centurion Park he would expect King to take his place.

The other virtually definite change to the West Indies team is the promotion of 19-year-old Darren Ganga from the middle order to an opening berth.

The only problem the triumphant South Africans have is an injury doubt over their world number one fast bowler Allan Donald. South African cricket's most prolific wicket-taker also left the field in the third Test and missed the fourth.

He was due to test his injured hamstring later on Thursday but if he is declared unfit, Lance Klusener will make his return



BRIAN LARA

to Test cricket following the ankle injury which forced him out of South Africa's tour of England last week.

TEAMS

South Africa: Gary Kirsten, Herschelle Gibbs, Jacques Kallis, Daryll Cullinan, Hansie Cronje (captain), Jonty Rhodes, Shaun Pollock, Mark Boucher, Allan Donald (or Lance Klusener), David Terbrugge, Paul Adams. 12th-man: Ashwell Prince.

West Indies (from): Darren Ganga, Philo Wallace, Brian Lara (captain), Shivarine Chandernaul, Carl Hooper, Stuart Williams, Floyd Reifer, Ridley Jacobs, Nixon McLean, Rawl Lewis, Curtly Ambrose, Mervyn Dillon, Franklyn Rose, Junior Murray, Clayton Lambert, Keith Arthurton, Keith Semple, Reon King, Neil McGarrell.

Boxing Hall of Fame's 6 new members

CANASTOTA, New York, Jan 14 (AFP): English manager Mickey Duff, Thai former bantamweight champion Khaosai Galaxy and former featherweight champion Eusebio Pedroza of Panama were among six people named here to the international boxing Hall of Fame.

Promoter Bob Arun, former heavyweight great Jimmy Bivins and publicist Irving Rudd were also named to the honour list, along with 11 posthumous inductees. Enshrinement will be here on June 13.

The posthumous honorees were Lew Jenkins, Vicente Saldivar, Johnny Coulon, Sam McVey, Freddie Steele, Lew Tendler, Giuseppe Ballarati, Murray Goodman, Jimmy Johnston, Tim O'Rourke and Bill Richmond.

Double trouble for Moeti

JOHANNESBURG, January 14 (Reuters/Internet): South African vice-captain John Moeti has been suspended by his club after refusing to play last weekend and could also miss his country's African Nations Cup qualifier against Mauritius next week.

Orlando Pirates officials said on Thursday they had suspended Moeti, their captain, who refused to play in a league match last Sunday because of a pay dispute.

South African Football Association (SAFA) officials said they would also leave Moeti out of the 18-man squad for the trip to Mauritius if the matter was not resolved by next Wednesday.

South Africa have called up Pollen Ndlanga of Kaizer Chiefs to replace Swiss-based striker Shaun Bartlett who has withdrawn from the squad because he has not recovered from a knee operation.

No decision on a possible replacement for Moeti has been made yet, Safa said.

Minto on the move

LISBON, Jan 14 (Reuters/Internet): Benfica defender Scott Minto was set to sign for West Ham United on Thursday in a 1.65 million US dollar return to English soccer after 18 months with the former European champions.

Benfica spokesman Jose Teixeira confirmed that the London side would pay 1.24 million dollars up front for the English player with the balance to be settled later.

Minto, who joined Benfica from Chelsea, is a left-sided defender.

Aston Villa's unsettled defender Gary Charles was discussing terms for a possible move to the Lisbon club, Teixeira said.

Charles plays on the right where he was laying a foundation stone for the new headquarters of the Spanish Football Association. "This is not true, completely not true."

No new financial constraints have been put on the bids. A misunderstanding may have arisen because somebody asked us if we were going to ask our tax authorities to make us exempt, but we are not asking.

Coventry sign Bosnian Konjic

LONDON, Jan 14 (Reuters/Internet): Coventry City have signed Bosnian defender Mohammed Konjic from AS Monaco for 3.30 million US dollars.

The 28-year-old is rated as one of the top defenders in France and has captained Bosnia in 33 of their 34 international matches since they became an independent football nation. "We've been looking for an experienced, top class defender all season and are delighted to have signed Konjic," said Coventry chairman Bryan Richardson, who flew to Monaco on Wednesday to complete negotiations.

Fans have the last laugh

MANCHESTER, Jan 14: (Reuters/Internet): Fan power forced Ian Stott to resign as chairman of English second division Oldham Athletic on Tuesday, seriously damaging his bid to become the new head of the Football Association.

Stott's departure follows his announcement last week of a proposal to merge his club with rivals Bury and Rochdale to form a new club named Manchester North End.

Stott has now stepped down to the role of vice-chairman with David Brierley taking over the chairmanship after angry fans launched a campaign to stop the proposed merger.

But Stott, 64, refused to withdraw from the race to become FA chairman and claimed his statement about a merger had been taken out of context.

"Unfortunately some of my quotes were taken out of context, and I felt that I had inadvertently embarrassed the club to such an extent that it would be in everyone's best interests if I stepped down as chairman and handed the reins over to somebody else," Stott said.

Last Friday Stott was quoted as saying: "A merger with Bury and Rochdale is something I am giving serious consideration to."

I have already discussed the possibility of merging the three clubs into one with my counterparts at both Rochdale and Bury, and like me, they can see the benefits of such a venture."

All three clubs, based within 10 miles (16 kms) of each other on the outskirts of Manchester, have financial problems, but none are in imminent danger of folding.

Carl Marsden, who set up a supporters group to fight the merger, believes Stott had to resign because of the weight of opinion against him among fans.

PCB, Akram looking forward to India tour

Fingers crossed for govt decision

KARACHI, Jan 14: The Pakistan government will make the final decision on whether to go ahead with a cricket tour of India scheduled for his month following threats from Hindu militants, Pakistan cricket chief Khalid Mahmood said today, reports AFP.

"The decision has now gone beyond the limits of the cricket board and the fate will now be decided by Pakistan government," he said on return from the International Cricket Council (ICC) meeting in New Zealand.

"We want the tour to go ahead but security is the prime priority and it's up to the Indian government to give our players hundred per cent safety," the Pakistan Cricket Board chairman said.

After Hindu militants last week dug up the pitch in New Delhi where the first Test was to have been played, Pakistan cricket authorities sent a special envoy to assess the situation.

"Brigadier Saeed Rafi is in India, he is a security specialist and he will enlighten us about the situation," said Mahmood.

The final decision will be taken in the light of Rafi's report, he said.

The Pakistan cricket team is scheduled to arrive in India on January 21 for their first Test series on Indian soil for 12 years. But Hindu zealots have threatened to sabotage the games to protest against Pakistan's alleged support for Indian insurgents.

Indian Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee is determined to hold the series and has promised maximum security.

Mahmood said the Indian cricket board president briefed him about the situation during the ICC meeting. Raj Singh Dungarpur was updating me on the issue and he was also very keen the tour should go on.

Mahmood said that if the tour were cancelled the Pakistani players would concentrate on training for the World Cup in England in May-June.

Meanwhile, newly appointed Pakistan skipper Wasim Akram Wednesday called for the tour to go ahead, saying there was massive interest in the contest in both countries.

"As far as we know the tour is still on," Wasim told reporters.

The ace Pakistani paceman said the tour would provide the team an opportunity to build up for the World Cup.

He said he believed sporting links would do a world of good in establishing better relations between the two countries.

Wasim said field hockey, squash and football players had been visiting India but the cricket team's tour had more importance because of the game's 'greater following' in Pakistan and India.

Cricket matches between the two countries have always been tension packed and exciting, he said, stressing he never felt pressure by playing in India.

Wasim reiterated his earlier suggestion about playing Test matches on neutral territory, it is possible and matches can be played in Sharjah, Dhaka and Toronto.

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World Cup will not be tax-free

BONN, Jan 14 (Reuters/Internet): FIFA president Sepp Blatter rejected a claim made by the German soccer federation (DFB) on Thursday that all profits generated by the nation hosting the 2006 World Cup finals should be exempt from tax.

"Blatter said from Madrid where he was laying a foundation stone for the new headquarters of the Spanish Football Association: "This is not true, completely not true."

No new financial constraints have been put on the bids. A misunderstanding may have arisen because somebody asked us if we were going to ask our tax authorities to make us exempt, but we are not asking.

"It's true," DFB spokesman Michael Nowak said of reports in the German press.

"This is something we have known about for some time and it is an issue which must be addressed."

Such a condition could seriously undermine the German bid, said DFB general secretary Horst Schmitt.

"Our bid has no chance if we don't meet that requirement and cannot guarantee tax exemption," Schmitt was quoted as saying by German daily Berliner Zeitung.

The ruling could also damage other contenders who include England, South Africa, Egypt, Brazil, Morocco, Nigeria and Ghana. FIFA's executive committee will decide in March 2000 which country will stage the finals.

England's senior bid officials were unavailable for immediate comment as they were returning from the Football Expo in Cannes.

But Danny Jordaan, chief executive of the South African bid told Reuters in Cannes: "We knew that the tax issue might come up, but one can't look at the re-working of the tax arrangement in isolation of the total package."

"We would certainly ask for a quid pro quo on the tax situation. Perhaps if we did not tax the profits, we would raise taxes through Customs and Excise in some way."

Earlier, FIFA spokesman Andreas Herren declined to confirm the report, saying the document listing FIFA's requirements which will be submitted to the bidding countries was still being drafted.

"I can't tell you if the reports are true because I don't have that printed document, which will be finalised before the end of the month," he said.

Herren did say that FIFA, as it did for previous World Cups, would ask the countries willing to host the event that any profits made by the World Cup participants, notably the players, should not be taxed in the organising country.

"The money the players make, through bonuses for instance, is already being taxed in their respective countries," he said.

"As a Swiss organisation, FIFA pays taxes in Switzerland and that sum will be taxed in Switzerland," Herren said.

2000 Olympic Games

Auditor Harris wades into secrecy row

SYDNEY, Jan 14 (Reuters/Internet): An official audit on Thursday revealed the hidden costs for Sydney taxpayers of the 2000 Olympic Games, but its most potentially explosive section contained no alarming costing at all.

In a one-page preface to his report, New South Wales Auditor-General Tony Harris waded straight into a long-brewing row over secret Olympic contracts signed by the state government.

Harris said the only objection most government agencies had raised, when shown drafts of his report was that he was revealing too much information that could bring "a large number of queries from the public."

"It is true that accountability has costs," Harris wrote. "It is also true that avoiding accountability has potentially much larger costs."

The total cost of the Games will be A\$5.9 billion (\$3.17 billion) of which A\$2.3 billion (\$1.44 billion) will be picked up by taxpayers. Harris said the Games were now budgeted to make a "symbolic" A\$30 million (\$19 million) surplus.

Harris's audit, which says the government has understated the real cost by at least A\$700 million (\$440 million), comes as a corruption scandal threatens the credibility of the International Olympic Committee.

The IOC has promised to take firm and open action against any of its members shown to have accepted money or services in return for their votes in IOC host city "beauty contests."

But the spirit of openness has yet to reach Sydney, where documents made public by previous Olympic organising committees have been kept under lock and key.

The first one was the original Host City Contract signed five years ago after IOC members meeting in Monte Carlo chose Sydney over Beijing to host the 2000 Games.

Its four signatories were IOC President Juan Antonio Samaranch, Australian Olympic Committee President John Coates, Sydney Lord Mayor Frank Sartor and then New South Wales state Premier John Fahey.

The contract effectively guaranteed that Sydney, with the state government's backing, would put on a Games acceptable to the IOC. But its precise details -- what the government actually promised -- have never been revealed.

Tasmanian tennis

HOBART, Australia, Jan 14 (Reuters/Internet): Top seed Julie Halard-Decugis overcame her second slow start in as many days to reach the Tasmanian International semifinals on Thursday.

The Frenchwoman lost the first set of her quarterfinal against Zimbabwe's Cara Black before winning 3-6, 7-5, 7-5.

Halard-Decugis faces Chanda Rubin in Friday's semifinals after the American fifth seed beat fourth seed Sarah Pitkowski of France 6-0, 6-1, 6-4.

Third seed Virginia Ruano-Pascual of Spain retired hurt in the second set of her match against Italy's Rita Grande.

Grande will play Amy Frazier for a place in the final after the American defeated Nathalie Dechy of France 6-3, 6-1.

Botha not afraid of Tyson

LAS VEGAS, Jan 14 (AP): Mike Tyson suggested earlier this week that his mere presence at a fight guaranteed a sellout.

So even with ticket sales reportedly lagging for Saturday's fight with Francois Botha, it wasn't surprising that Tyson did little at the final prefight press conference to try to get a few more fans in the seats.

Instead, Tyson used Wednesday's event to promote a new line of clothing that his wife is selling.

"I'm here to sponsor it," Tyson said of the clothing line.

The former heavyweight champion actually appeared for only about 15 minutes, then complained that he didn't get to say what he really wanted to say.

An incident a day earlier in which he cursed repeatedly in a conference call with radio and TV reporters led promoters to ask Tyson to tone things down.

"They put a muzzle on me," Tyson said. "I can't really express what I want to today."

Though MGM Grand Hotel officials claimed last minute demand would be heavy, tickets priced from 200 to 1,200 dollars were reportedly not selling well.

for Tyson's first fight since he bit Evander Holyfield's ears.

Even promoter Dan Goossen's proclamation that "when Mike Tyson becomes involved in an event, it becomes the biggest spectacle in boxing" fell flat among an audience that didn't come close to filling a theatre at the hotel.

About the only buzz generated by the final appearance of the two fighters together came before the press conference even started, when a Tyson associate who goes around dressed in camouflage shouting "guerrilla warfare" was led away in handcuffs after ignoring police requests to calm down.

Steve "Crocodile" Fitch was later released and allowed to join Tyson on the dais.

Botha, who formerly held a piece of the IBF heavyweight title and whose only defeat was to former champion Michael Morrer, used his time to proclaim he was in great shape and couldn't be intimidated by Tyson.

"I can't be scared," said Botha, a South African who now lives in California. "I've fought bigger guys when I was an amateur."

Tyson actually had to be introduced twice at the press conference, after first refusing to

come out at the same time Botha did.

Once on the dais, he put his head on the table before answering a few questions.

"I'm ready to fight, man," he said.

The fight is Tyson's first in the 19 months since he bit Holyfield's ears and was disqualified in the third round of their heavyweight title fight. It was Tyson's second straight loss to Holyfield.

"I'm never going to put it out of my mind," Tyson said of the losses to Holyfield. "But, hey, I'm not fighting Holyfield."

Tyson is expected to make more than 20 million dollars for Saturday's scheduled 10-round fight, which will be televised by on pay-per-view television at a cost of about 45 dollars a household.

Botha will receive a little less than 2 million dollars, but also the same shot that everyone who fights Tyson gets -- the chance to make himself a big name in boxing.

"Francois Botha has the opportunity to graduate himself overnight into stardom," said Botha's manager, Sterling MacPherson. "If you beat Mike Tyson, you should be realised as one of the best fighters in the world."

Don-Frank dispute over

LONDON, Jan 14: A heavyweight legal battle between British boxing promoter Frank Warren and his American counterpart Don King was settled on Wednesday with jokers all around -- and a 12 million dollar pay-out to King, reports AFP.

Warren agreed to pay the money in a settlement at the British High Court and make a "clean break" of their four-year partnership.

Both men were in court, sitting a few feet apart, to hear Justice Gavin Lightman agree to the settlement.

King said after the short hearing that he did not regard the result as a victory and was "still very fond" of Warren. "Life goes on," he said.

Warren said it was "cheap at the price" to settle the long-standing row. He said he had the money to pay King but would be dining out on "soup in a basket" on Tuesday night.

Both men shook hands outside the court and swapped jokes about their differences.

Under the agreement, Warren acknowledged his obligation to pay King in recognition of his rights as a partner under their boxing partnership and publicly withdrew all the allegations which he had made against King and his company, Dong King Promotions.

According to King's lawyers, Warren has agreed to sell his house if necessary to make the first of a series of agreed payments.

Outside court, King commented: "My reputation is most

important to me and the vindication of my rights both here and in America, the justice system here has given me justice and I am very, very happy."

But he said he was not gloating over a victory.

"I am very fond of him (Warren) and will continue to be," he said.

Warren then tried to persuade King to buy him a meal and said the settlement was "cheap at the price."

"I am free," he said as he descended the lift from the courtroom. "I am glad this is all behind us, but it looks as if I shall be eating soup in a basket tonight."

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

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