

### Indo-Pak ODIs in England?

LONDON, Jan 20: English cricket officials are considering a plan to stage three limited-overs internationals between India and Pakistan after the county season ends in September, reports Reuters.

A spokeswoman for the English Cricket Board (ECB) said today that Pakistan had agreed in principle but India had still to make a decision.

The ECB hope to generate the sort of interest among Asian supporters in the country that was a feature of last year's World Cup in England.

The matches would be at established one-day international venues following the end of the county programme on September 17.

Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) director of operations Yawar Saeed confirmed in Lahore that the board had accepted an ECB invitation for the matches.

"On our way back from Toronto (for the Sahara Cup limited-overs series against India), we have agreed to a stopover in England for a week to play three one-day internationals," Saeed said.

He said Pakistan intended to honour its commitment to play in Toronto, although India backed out of the tournament last September because of increased political tension between the countries.

Saeed also said England would make a tour of Pakistan later this year, their first visit since a controversial one in 1987-88. Three Tests and three one-day internationals are on the itinerary starting on October 18.

England's visit 13 years ago was marred by a finger-wagging on-field confrontation between touring captain Mike Gatting and umpire Shakoor Rana in the Faisalabad Test.

A full day's play was lost when Rana refused to start play until he received an apology from Gatting.

England lost the three-Test series 1-0 but swept all three one-day internationals.

### PCB secy shown the door

KARACHI, Jan 20: Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) secretary Shafiqat Rana, who made controversial comments about the decision to suspend fast bowler Shoaib Akhtar, has been relieved of his duties, reports Reuters.

The decision was announced by PCB director of operations Yawar Saeed from Lahore today. He gave no reasons.

Rana said earlier this month a decision by the International Cricket Council (ICC) to suspend Shoaib for one month because of his illegal bowling action was "racially based".

The remarks created a furore in Australia where doubts were cast over Shoaib's action by match officials during Pakistan's test tour last year.

Rana's comments were also slammed by PCB chairman Tahir Zia and team manager Khawaja Nasir.

### M'singh cricket

MYMENSINGH, Jan 20: A brilliant 75-run knock by Moni enabled Shapla Kira Chakra to earn a 42-run victory over Gulkibari KC in the Begum Premier Division League at local Circuit House ground today, reports UNB.

Batting first, Shapla made a respectable 206 for eight in the stipulated 45 overs.

Nadim was the another notable scorer who made 29 while Afro added 20 runs.

Ujjal, Rabin and Utpal took two wickets each for 34, 45 and 47 runs respectively.

In reply, Gulkibari were all out for 164 in 40.3 overs with Utpal making 50 and Tapu 32 runs.

Mohammad claimed three wickets for 19 while Sohail took two wickets for 20 runs.

### N'singhdi soccer

NARSINGHDI, Jan 20: Baghata Eleven Star Club beat Belabo Eleven Club by a solitary goal in the Shaheed Maizuddin District football tournament here today, reports UNB.

Sappu netted the all-important goal in the 72nd minute from a penalty shot.

Friday's match: GRC Club vs Chakra Jubo Unayan Sangstha.

### Office hockey

The third Metropolis Office hockey league, organised by Bangladesh Hockey Federation, will begin on February 15 at the Moulana Bhasani National Hockey Stadium, reports UNB.

Interested teams have been asked to send their entries by January 26 at the federation office with a fee of Tk 300.

### Neutral venues for Asian Cup Winners' Cup

DUBAI, Jan 20: The Asian football federation has decided to switch the Asian Cup Winners' Cup quarterfinals between Saudi Club Al-Ittihad and Iraq's Al-Zawra to neutral venues.

Fadi Zrigat, secretary general of Jordan's football federation, told AFP that the first leg would be played in Qatar on January 28 and the return in Amman on February 1.

The decision came after Iraq's football federation rejected a Saudi proposal that the clubs play both legs in Saudi Arabia, calling for one to be played in Baghdad.

Diplomatic ties between Saudi Arabia and Iraq have been frozen since the 1991 Gulf War, and Baghdad has been under UN sanctions since it invaded Kuwait in 1990.



Leicester's Emile Heskey (L) is under pressure from Patrick Vieira of Arsenal during their FA Cup clash at Leicester on January 19. — AFP photo

## Chelsea in FA Cup last 16

# Lucky Leicester oust Gunners

LONDON, Jan 20: Leicester City won their third penalty shoot-out of the season to knock Arsenal out of the FA Cup on Wednesday after their fourth round replay ended goalless after extra-time, reports Reuters.

Leicester's reward is a trip to Chelsea who had a comfortable 2-0 home win over First Division Nottingham Forest in their delayed fourth round clash at Stamford Bridge.

Leicester, missing seven first team regulars, had two goalkeepers to thank for their place in the last 16.

Former England keeper Tim Flowers made a series of great saves before limping out of the action during extra-time. His replacement Peguy Arphexad then saved from Lee Dixon and Gilles Grimandi to give Leicester a 6-5 win in the shoot-out.

Leicester had beaten Leeds United and Fulham on penalties en route to a place in the semifinals of the League Cup, where they play Aston Villa, while Arsenal went out of that competition on a shoot-out against Middlesbrough.

The two teams did not look like scoring in the original tie at Highbury and there were few chances in the opening hour on Wednesday.

Arsenal then stepped up the pace and after Croatian striker Davor Suker was wide with two close-range shots, Flowers made his first great save to tip over a volley by centre back Martin Keown after 71 minutes.

Ten minutes later he repeated the act to keep out a sharp shot by Suker. He then produced a great double save from Patrick Vieira and saw Robbie Savage head Suker's follow-up shot off the line.

Leicester, displaying all their famed fighting spirit as they played their fourth period of extra-time in six weeks, ran for every ball and although they created very few chances they always knew that penalties would give them a chance.

"We wanted to try to win it in extra-time, not rely on penalties," said Leicester boss Martin O'Neill.

"But we were running on empty for a long period in the game. Tim Flowers made some fantastic saves but they just kept going, kept going."

"Tim Flowers hurt his groin making one of his saves and I wanted to delay the substitution as long as possible. But Peguy's never let us down."

While O'Neill can eye Wembley on two fronts, Arsenal boss Arsene Wenger must pick up his troops for next Monday's premier league match against Manchester United.

Former Chelsea keeper Dave Beasant made a great save to deny Gustavo Poyet but could do nothing when Wise was gifted a free header after nice work by Jody Morris four minutes from time.

"We created more chances - it looked to me that they were waiting for penalties for a long, long time," he said.

"We should have scored from the chances we created but we have to accept that if you don't score in two hours you can be punished."

Chelsea were never threatened by Forest who are languishing seven places from the bottom of Division One.

Jon Harley struck a post with a volley as the hosts took early command against a Forest team content to sit back and hope for a counter-attack.

Chelsea thought they had scored late in the first half when Gianfranco Zola touched in a Dan Petrescu shot only to be flagged offside. Petrescu was furious, certain that his original shot was going in, and made sure Zola was fully aware of his feelings, shoving away a proffered arm of comfort.

But the Italian, who has been unhappy with his peripheral role in recent weeks, made amends in the 57th minute when he whipped in a dangerous free kick which Leboeuf deflected in with a glancing header.

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Real, who were given a bye to enable them to play in the World Club Championship in Brazil, made their tactics clear from the start as they fielded just one striker in Fernando Morientes.

Zaragoza went close on several occasions early on, Xavi Aguado missing their best chance on 13 minutes as he planted a free header wide.

Real gradually came back into the game after their slow start but rarely threatened the Zaragoza goal.

Second Division Osasuna, who knocked holders Valencia out in the previous round, beat Deportivo Coruna 1-0, although the championship leaders will be confident of turning that around in their home leg in early February.

In other games, Rayo Vallecano got the upper hand in a 3-2 thriller at second division Lleida. Atletico Madrid cruised to a 3-0 win away at third division Real Union while Espanyol edged out Celta Vigo 2-1 in an all-first division clash.

Compostela got the better of Villarreal 3-0 while Merida beat Oviedo 1-0.

Real Madrid custodian Iker Casillas (2nd from L) is airborne while trying to make a save during their Spanish King's Cup encounter against Zaragoza on January 19. — AFP photo

### Bilardo off to Libya

BUENOS AIRES, Jan 20: Former Argentina coach Carlos Bilardo, who led his native country to World Cup victory in 1986 and to runners-up spot in the 1990 tournament, set off for Libya Wednesday to take charge of the Libyan national team for the qualification campaign for the 2002 World Cup, reports AFP.

Bilardo will stay in the north African country until the end of March when the first phase of qualifying is finished, he told journalists at Argentina's Ezeiza airport.

Libya will face Mali in a two-legged tie, the first at a date to be fixed between March 7 and 9 and the second at a date between March 21 and 23.

The winners will go forward to Group C in the African qualifying pools for the 2002 tournament to be co-hosted by Japan and South Korea.

With five places up for grabs in the 2002 World Cup for Africa, the 50 national teams of that continent have been divided into five groups of five teams. The 25 teams to participate in the second phase of qualifying will be determined via 25 two-legged play-offs with Libya paired with Mali.

If Libya are successful it is expected that Bilardo will continue in his post for the Group C campaign.

Bilardo departed at 13:40 GMT for San Pablo in Brazil. From there he will move on to the Swiss city of Zurich before finally setting off for the Libyan capital Tripoli.

### Strasbourg, Le Havre climb

PARIS, Jan 20: Racing Strasbourg and Le Havre fought their way out of the French First Division relegation zone with victories on Wednesday, reports Reuters.

Strasbourg ended a run of four league games without a victory by beating Troyes 2-0 at home in a match where each side had a man sent off in the last half hour.

Midfielder Pascal Camard and Olivier Echouafni heading home a David Zitelli cross, scored the goals in the 30th and 50th minutes.

Striker Zitelli was sent off in the 64th minute for kicking an opponent who had tackled him, his second bookable offence.

Troyes' Edouard Thomas was dismissed five minutes later after bringing down goal-bound Strasbourg forward Pascal Johansen when he was the last line of defence.

Le Havre upset fifth-placed Sedan, the surprise side of the season, 1-0 away thanks to Yugoslav Miladin Beganovic's first league goal.

Both matches had been postponed from mid-December.

### Zaragoza hold Real

BARCELONA, Jan 20: Real Madrid held out for a goalless draw in their third round first leg game at Real Zaragoza on Wednesday, their Spanish Cup debut, reports Reuters.

Real, who were given a bye to enable them to play in the World Club Championship in Brazil, made their tactics clear from the start as they fielded just one striker in Fernando Morientes.

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### Corus chess Leaders share points

WIJK AAN ZEE, Netherlands, Jan 20: Russian Garry Kasparov still shares the lead at the Corus Chess tournament with compatriot Vladimir Kramnik and Dutchman Jeroen Klusman, reports Reuters.

Kasparov, playing black against Englishman Michael Adams, held a draw while a pawn behind in a bishop-against-knight endgame after the day's longest struggle.

Adams abandoned the chance of a win after both players had made 60 moves in their respective three-hour time limits.

Indian world No. 2 Viswanathan Anand had to be content to split the point with Kramnik with a draw agreed after 40 moves in a rook-and-pawn endgame.

And the other third-round leader, Dutchman Piket, played an uninspiring 11-move draw with the white pieces against compatriot Loek van Wely. Only a single pawn on either side was removed from the board.

The fourth round's only decisive games were Englishman Nigel Short's win over Judit Polgar and Hungarian Peter Leko's victory against Armenian Smbat Lputian.

### African Nations' Cup

# SA Group B's class act

UNDATED, Jan 20 (AFP): South Africa, Democratic Republic of Congo and Gabon have been placed in Group B at the African Nations Cup.

South Africa have finished first and second in two African Nations Cup appearances and coach Trott Moloto believes more gold medals are a distinct possibility this time.

While conceding that home advantage makes Ghana and Nigeria serious contenders, the man in charge of Bafana Bafana (The Boys) brims with confidence despite the absence of his leading strikers.

Italy-based Philemon Masinga is injured and Benni McCarthy, the find of the 1998 finals, had opted out of international football to try and revive a flagging career with Spanish club Celta Vigo when the squad was named.

Shawn Bartlett, a member of the 1996 cup-winning squad, and Pollen Ndianya are the probable replacements while many believe Siyabonga Nomvethe from Kaizer Chiefs could be the new Benni.

But it is in defence that South Africa appear particularly strong with Leeds United captain Lucas Radebe joined by Pierre Issa from Marseille and Mark Fish from Bolton Wanderers in front of goalkeeper Andre Arendse.

Some supporters would prefer Papi Khomane of Orlando Pirates to the often reckless Fish, who was unhappy at missing a English League Cup semi-final against Tranmere Rovers last week.

Moloto is spoilt for choice in midfield although there has been criticism of his unwavering loyalty to Turkey-based veteran John 'Shoes' Moshoeu, who has represented South Africa a record 56 times.

Bafana Bafana defeated and drew with Saudi Arabia last September to win the Afro-Asian Nations Cup and finally claimed a European scalp with a 1-0 victory over Sweden in the other warm-up match.

An indifferent qualifying campaign saw Bafana Bafana beat Angola, Gabon and Mauritius at home, but have to settle for draws in Port Louis and Luanda and lose to a last-minute penalty in Libreville.

Moloto completes his contract after the Nations Cup and a top-four finish should earn him a role in the 2002 World Cup qualifying campaign. Anything less and the local media will renew calls for his head.

The only consolation for Algeria ahead of a customary appearance at the African Nations Cup is that their fortunes can hardly slip any further.

Algeria were crowned champions of Africa 10 years ago after a 1-0 victory over Nigeria in a lacklustre, negative final and little has gone right for them since.

The defence of the title in Senegal proved disastrous as the North Africans collapsed against Cote d'Ivoire and could only draw with Congo to bow out in the first round.

After reaching the 1994 tournament, they were disqualified for using an illegal player and were more comprehensively beaten by South Africa in the 1996 quarter-finals than the 2-1 scoreline suggests.

But even the most pessimistic Algerian could not have imagined how low the team would go in Burkina Faso two years ago as they shared with Mozambique the humiliating experience of losing their three first-round matches.

The Warriors squeezed into the 2000 finals on goal difference from Liberia and preparations for Group B clashes consisted of two friendlies against clubs.

Algeria defeated French outfit Troyes 3-1 in November and were humiliated 7-0 in Brazil this month by a Roman- inspired Vasco da Gama team warming up for the world championships.

Nasser Sandjak is the seventh coach since the start of the qualifying rounds and one of his predecessors, former African Footballer of the Year Rabah Madjer, resigned after a row with the sports minister on a live TV show.

Contrast this with bygone days when Algeria finished first, second, third twice and fourth in six tournaments with Madjer and Lakhdar Belloumi the leading lights.

Elegant Saudi Arabia-based midfielder Moussa Saib is the one link with the cup-winning squad. He was an emerging star then, now he provides a touch of class in an ordinary side unlikely to survive the mini-league first phase.

DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO The Democratic Republic of Congo finished third in the previous African Nations Cup against all the odds and once again promise to be unpredictable.

Chaotic preparations are par for the course with the Central Africans Lions. A lengthy list of planned friendlies released last October never materialised and they had to settle for two friendlies with Congo.

DR Congo lost at home without most of their local and all of their foreign stars and won away in Pointe-Noire, a venue that few visiting national teams leave victorious.

Flight problems prevented the Lions playing Zambia and Zimbabwe recently, but there are hopes of two friendlies in Lusaka this weekend for a nation that were African champions in 1986 and 1974.

The former Zairi, virtually disappeared from the scene in the 1980s, failing to qualify for five consecutive tournaments, before gradually emerging as a formidable force again.

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Probably one of the most physical teams heading for the 2000 finals, the image of Congolese football was badly dented four years ago when they kicked Ghanaian star Abedi Pele out of the competition.

Pele was lucky to avoid de-capitation after one mid-air tackle and the Black Stars blamed the absence of their midfield conductor for a heavy semi-finals loss to South Africa.

It was a much more disciplined Congolese squad that wiped out a three-goal deficit with four minutes left before winning a penalty shootout to pip hosts Burkina Faso for third place.

One concern for coach Basilia Lusadusu must be the form of striker Esanga Emeke, who was released by South African club Kaizer Chiefs this month after failing to impress during a six-month trial.

GABON For practice makes perfect, outsiders Gabon could take Group B rivals South Africa, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Algeria by storm.

The Azingo Nationale played 15 warm-up matches between October and January and spent several weeks at a training camp in Brazil, the home of fiery coach Antonio Dumas.

At one stage last month it looked as if Dumas might not be part of the Nations Cup due to a pay dispute, but a 50 percent rise from the sports ministry saw the South American return.

He probably wished he had stayed away a little longer after watching his team crumble 4-0 away to defending champions Egypt before regaining some pride with a 1-1 draw in Burkina Faso.

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Real Madrid custodian Iker Casillas (2nd from L) is airborne while trying to make a save during their Spanish King's Cup encounter against Zaragoza on January 19. — AFP photo

## Diego's sigh of relief

UNDATED, Jan 20: Argentine football legend Diego Maradona "was feeling very good" and the chief of the medical team treating him in Cuba told AFP Wednesday.

His state is not critical but is delicate, he is affected," doctor Pedro Llerena of the La Pradera Clinic said.

His famous patient is being treated in Cuba as he continues to recover from the severe heart condition he was diagnosed with after being admitted to a Uruguayan clinic after a cocaine overdose a fortnight ago.

Llerena said Maradona was being treated by a team of cardiologists, nutritionists and psychologists and would be for several days.

The first priority is to treat the former player's heart, said Llerena who added that the player was walking with no difficulty.

"He is feeling very good and is very happy," said the medic.

Official Cuban sources described the La Pradera clinic as having state-of-the-art technology and is adjoining a 164-room hotel complex with luxury facilities.

Maradona, widely considered the second greatest ever footballers behind Pele, arrived

on the Caribbean island on Tuesday to continue his treatment for his cocaine addiction and other medical problems.

Cuban President Fidel Castro, a friend of the player, is being regularly informed on the

to the people of Cuba."

Maradona has been a frequent visitor to Cuba and first met Castro in 1987 while in 1994 he spent the end of the year with Cuban world record-holding Cuban jumper Javier Sotomayor, who tested positive for cocaine last year at the Panamerican Games.

Sotomayor has denied wrongdoing in that affair which is being dealt with by the International Amateur Athletics Federation.

It is expected that after being evaluated in the La Pradera clinic that Maradona will be transferred to the town of Holguin where he will continue his recuperation from the illnesses which his personal physician Alfredo Cahe last week admitted had been life-threatening when he was first admitted to the Uruguayan clinic in Punta del Este a fortnight ago.

Meanwhile, Uruguayan state prosecutor Cristina Garcia on Wednesday said the agent of disgraced Argentine World Cup winner should be detained for his role in the retired star's latest drugs problems.

Garcia, who is working on the case in Punta del Este, said Guillermo Coppola had obstructed investigations into the affair, presiding judge Fanny Canessa told AFP.



DIEGO MARADONA health of 1986 World Cup winner.