

## Rousseau stands by Richards

ST JOHN'S, Antigua, Feb 27: Viv Richards will not be lost to West Indies cricket despite being overlooked for the job as team coach, according to the game's leading Caribbean official, reports Reuters.

(WICB) president Pat Rousseau said Richards' talents would be utilised "in another critical area of West Indies cricket development."

"As soon as we have had a chance to meet with him to discuss the board's proposals for his involvement, an announcement will be made," Rousseau said.

The WICB chief was reacting after Antiguan attacked the board office in St John's on Friday to protest at the decision to overlook their compatriot Richards as coach in favour of former Test all-rounder Roger Harper.

Former Test wicketkeeper-batsman Jeff Dujon is to be Harper's assistant while former West Indies youth team manager Richard Skerritt is to manage the senior side.

Rousseau defended the three appointments, saying they were made after rigorous selection and an intensive interviewing process that was undertaken by a panel of five.

"I sat on the final review and I am satisfied that the panel used appropriate and modern assessment techniques in arriving at the final selections. I fully support their final decision," Rousseau said.

## Grenade attack stops cricket meeting

COLOMBO, Feb 27: A junior minister in the Sri Lankan government escaped injury after being targeted in a grenade attack at a cricket officials meeting, a press report said today, reports AFP.

Deputy Plan Implementation Minister Santan Premaratne was in shock after the attack at a Buddhist temple in north-central Sri Lanka Saturday, the Sunday Times said.

The attack was not believed to be linked to Sri Lanka's long-running Tamil separatist conflict.

Premaratne was attending a meeting of regional cricket boards amid an administrative crisis in the sport here.

Regional cricket boards have voting rights to elect new office bearers to the Board of Control for Cricket in Sri Lanka (BCCSL) which is plagued with internal rivalries and allegations of corruption.

Last week, an interim board running the BCCSL demanded the sacking of the chief executive officer (CEO), Dhammika Ranatunga, of the board.

The Sri Lankan cricket administration has been in crisis since elections in March last year. Following allegations of vote rigging, the minister appointed an interim board in June, headed by Wijetilleke.

The sports ministry had called for fresh elections to the board next month, but suddenly put off the elections indefinitely.

## Parore rested

WELLINGTON, Feb 27: New Zealand wicketkeeper Adam Parore has been dropped for the remainder of the one-day cricket series against Australia, selectors said today, reports Reuters.

He will be replaced by Wellington new cap Chris Nevin.

Parore, 29, played his 137th one-day international on Saturday when New Zealand lost by 48 runs to go 0-3 down in the six-match series. The first match was a no-result due to rain.

"We have been concerned about the wicketkeeping and are looking for more energy behind the stumps," convenor of selectors Ross Dykes said in a statement.

Another to be dropped is Canterbury seam bowler Warren Wisneski, who has made no impression since joining the team for the first time in the current series.

His place has been taken by the experienced Simon Doull, an original selection in the one-day squad who was released from the last two matches to play for Northern Districts in the Shell Trophy first class competition.

The selectors have also recalled off-spinner Paul Wiseman as they extended the squad by one to 13. Wiseman played in the second match on February 19 in Auckland.

Dykes said Parore remained in contention for the upcoming three-match test series against Australia.

## WA emerge victorious

PERTH, Feb 27: Western Australia defeated Queensland by 45 runs in an enthralling final of the Mercantile Mutual Cup domestic one-day competition at the WACA Ground here Sunday, reports AFP.

After making a formidable 301-6 from their 50 overs, Western Australia dismissed their opponents for 256, claiming all 10 wickets over a span of 70 runs.

It was Western Australia's 10th crown in the 31-year-old competition.

Western Australia were given a wonderful start when opener Ryan Campbell hammered 108 from 85 balls, cracking 14 fours and two sixes.

## WI search for skipper

BRIDGETOWN, Feb 27 (AFP): Brian Lara has been abdicated as captain of the West Indies cricket side, leaving a huge void.

The question now is: Who will inherit the poisoned chalice?

Lara's decision has plunged the West Indies into a search for a suitable replacement to lead the side during the forthcoming home series against Zimbabwe and Pakistan.

The selection panel comprising chairman Mike Findlay, Joel Garner and Joey Carey assembled in St Vincent on March 7 to nominate Lara's successor and it will not be an easy job.

There are too many glaring limitations stacked up against many of the possible contenders and West Indies might find themselves in the long run wondering if Lara's decision was the correct one.

It would not be a total surprise if veteran fast bowler Courtney Walsh was again asked to play a role which has become all too familiar for him and was appointed caretaker captain once more.

At age of 37, Walsh is in the twilight of a remarkable career which started in 1984. Though he is quite capable, the WICB also decide against burdening him with the job while chasing the record for the most wickets in Tests (434) held by India's Kapil Dev.

Jimmy Adams, the vice-cap-

tain to New Zealand, where West Indies lost all two Tests and five limited-overs internationals, is the front-runner for the post if the selectors decide against Walsh.

A long-standing member of the side, he has all the qualifications to do an admirable job, but a lack of form and confidence makes Adams' place in the side tenuous.

There has been quiet lobbying, also, for opening batsman Shervin Campbell. He too, has struggled with his form and technique, but, like Lara, he has been groomed for the position from his youth.

The quiet, unassuming left-hander Shervin Campbell is also being proposed. He was appointed captain of his native Guyana during the Busta Cup, West Indies' first-class championship, but did not exhibit the kind of tactical nous which is needed at the international level.

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An outsider with support, particularly in his native Barbados, is Philo Wallace. He has exhibited great leadership skills in the three seasons he has captained his island, but he is not a regular member of the side and might be ruled out on that basis.

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## Browne wies XI captain

Meanwhile, Courtney Browne will captain the West Indies Cricket Board XI in a three-day first-class match to open Zimbabwe's maiden tour of the Caribbean in Grenada from March 4 to 6.

Browne, who has played 13 Tests and 24 limited-overs internationals for West Indies, is one of five cricketers with international experience named in the youthful, 13-men ber WICB XI squad.

The others are fast bowler Cameron Cuffly along with batsmen Ricardo Powell, Daren Ganga and Wavel Hinds.

Ryan Hinds, the Young West Indies captain in this year's Youth World Cup in Sri Lanka, has also been named in the squad, along with off-spin teammate Rodney Sooklal.

Neither Mahendra Nagamooloo of Guyana nor Dave Marshall of Barbados, the most successful bowlers in the 2000 Busta Cup West Indies first-class championship earning 31 and 28 wickets respectively with their leg-spin, have been chosen.

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## Trezeguet the football husband!

MONACO, Feb 27: French international striker David Trezeguet will spend his wedding night with his Monaco teammates after dashing off to Strasbourg for Sunday's league match after tying the knot in the Riviera principality Saturday, reports AFP.

The 22-year-old Monaco player married his Spanish-born fiancée Beatrice Villalva, also 22, in a civil ceremony in the Town Hall followed by a religious ceremony in Monaco Cathedral.

After leaving the church the player headed for Nice airport where he joined his teammates before flying to the Alsatian capital where the French league leaders will play local side Strasbourg on Sunday afternoon.

Monaco club president Jean-Louis Campora and teammate Mexican international defender Rafael "Rafa" Marquez attended the ceremony, however, the remainder of the team were absent as the ceremony clashed with the final training session before Sunday's game.

The witnesses were the bride's friends and the groom's parents.

The reception will take place on Sunday evening in the Monte Carlo Sporting Club following the Strasbourg game.

## Hosts lift King's Cup

BANGKOK, Feb 27: Thailand crushed Finland on Sunday to lift the King's Cup friendly tournament helped by a stunning hat-trick from midfielder Anurak Srikerd in front of a jubilant 10,000-strong crowd.

Anurak opened the scoring 22 minutes into the first half with a powerful 40-yard drive into the top right hand corner of the net.

Thailand's Pipat Tonkanya added a superb long-range effort in the 25th minute, before Anurak thrashed home his second goal before half time.

The Finns came out after half-time determined to press home the advantage given them by their height, but the superior pace and skills of the Thais put the game beyond reach early in the second period when Tanachai Boriban whipped a low shot past the keeper.

The Finns got a consolation goal late in the game from the head of Toni Kallio, but Anurak completed the party and his hat-trick just before the final whistle.

Earlier a Brazil select team beat Estonia 1-0 to secure third place in the tournament.

## Swedish paddlers end Sino reign

KUALA LUMPUR, Feb 27: Sweden topped defending champions China in the final of the World Team Table Tennis Championships on Saturday, marking a watershed victory for a trio of veteran athletes who ended China's decade-long dominance in the sport, reports AP.

In a classic Asia-Europe confrontation pitting China's power play against Sweden's all-round versatility, the Swedes prevailed to win 3-2 in a tense, seasaw battle that had the chanting, flag-waving supporters of both teams at the edge of their seats for nearly three hours.

China's stable of young, top-ranked players succumbed to the European veterans — spearheaded by former world champions Jan-Ove Waldner and Jorgen Persson, as well as Peter Karlsson, ranked No 19 in the world.

After Persson's three-set victory against world No 3 Liu Guoliang in the final match, Sweden's coaches and players flew off their seats to mob Persson, who had flung himself on the floor, kicking his legs in delight.

Sweden and China have battled numerous times. In the 1995 championships, China clinched a narrow 3-2 victory against Sweden, while the Swedes beat China 3-1 in 1993.

With Sweden's victory, China was also thwarted from matching their female counterparts' feat of notching their fourth successive win in the world championships.

The Chinese women on Friday retained their crown by easily defeating archrival Taiwan 3-1.

Sweden's Thomas Enqvist in action against Marc Rosset in the AXA Cup semifinal clash in London on February 26.

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## Shearer ready to retire

LONDON, Feb 27: England captain Alan Shearer ruled himself out of the 2002 World Cup on Saturday by announcing his international retirement after this summer's European championship finals, reports Reuters.

"After a huge amount of thought I have decided to retire from international football," he said in a statement after Newcastle United beat Sheffield Wednesday 2-0 in the Premier League.

"I would like to play, if selected, in Euro 2000 and then beyond so that the manager has time to plan effectively for the 2002 World Cup," the 29-year-old striker said.

Shearer said he had spoken to both Newcastle United manager Bobby Robson and England manager Kevin Keegan and they understood his reasoning.

Keegan said: "Of course I was very sad and I tried to change his mind. But everyone should respect his decision — certainly I do — and I'm happy for him because it is what he wants."

His England record speaks for itself but the best may come at Euro 2000.

Robson said: "This is a decision made entirely by Alan and made in the best interests of himself."

He has served England magnificently and wishes to move on from international football while at the top of his form and Newcastle will benefit from that.

Shearer said he was not walking away from the challenge and admitted he would remain available if England needed him in an emergency.

"I am hugely patriotic and my time as England captain has made me incredibly proud," he said.

The announcement surprised many fans, with some agitated supporters expressing disbelief in radio phone-ins. Others suggested he should stand down immediately.

Shearer struck the second Newcastle goal at Sheffield Wednesday on Saturday after scoring a premier league record of five in one match against Wednesday at St James' Park in September.

He collected his 57th England cap against Argentina on Wednesday and, after a slump when Dutchman Ruud Geul was in charge at Newcastle earlier in the season, has recently returned to the form that made him a feared opponent.

Shearer has scored 24 times this season in all competitions and appeared rejuvenated under Robson who took over at Newcastle in September when they were second from bottom of the league.

He scored the two goals that knocked his former club Blackburn Rovers out of the FA Cup and helped steer Newcastle to a semifinal against Chelsea at Wembley on April 2.

FA executive director David Davies said the news had not entirely surprised him.

"We had something of an inkling of it earlier in the week. I know Kevin Keegan spoke to Alan on Tuesday about this subject. Knowing Alan this decision won't have been made without a great deal of thought," he told BBC radio.

It's his decision and his decision alone.

"There is never an ideal time to take these decisions... he has chosen this moment and we respect that. The important thing is that he is already in the record books as one of England's great goalscorers."

Shearer has scored 28 goals for his country — only six England players have more — and took the Golden Boot prize as top marksman with five at Euro 96.

But he was heavily criticised during the Euro 2000 qualifying campaign as he suffered a goal drought.

Fellow striker Andy Cole complained in October about Shearer's "untouchable" status in the team despite his lack of goals.

On Saturday, as Newcastle fans celebrated his scoring exploits, he made clear his intentions.

"He will want to finish his career with a flourish and what better way than in Euro 2000," said Davies.

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