

Mahanama, Mendis' denial

COLOMBO, May 3: Former Sri Lankan cricketers Roshan Mahanama and Duleep Mendis have denied allegations that some of their country's players were approached by Indian bookies in the past to fix matches and called for inquiry into the charges, reports PTI.

Reacting to a report in the Sunday Times of London that he along with fellow players Sanath Jayasuriya and Ashantha Gurusingha were offered money by Indian bookies for match forecasts during Australia's tour to the island in 1992, Mahanama, who retired in huff last year, said the incident had not taken place at all.

"I am totally surprised to hear that someone offered us money to do this. It is news to me and it does not really look good. I think there should be an inquiry into the matter," he was quoted as saying in Daily Mirror on Tuesday.

He also denied the report that the three had sought police protection following rejection of the bookie's offer.

"There was no reason for us to make any official complaint and we did not seek any police protection during the series referred to," he said.

The report was also denied by Duleep Mendis who was the team coach at that time. "As far as I know none of the players had anything to do with the bookies. I will welcome any inquiry," he said.

Former Sri Lankan board president Thilanga Sumathipala, whose restaurant here has been mentioned in the report as place at which the bookies approached the players, also dismissed the report as irrelevant.

"This has no relevance and during my tenure in the board, players had never been involved with the bookies," he said.

However, board chief executive Dhammika Ranatunga, brother of former captain Arjuna Ranatunga, has ruled out any inquiry saying that there was not enough evidence to prompt an inquiry.

"There is a lot of loose talk these days, we have to be careful in what we do. But if there is enough substance we can look into the matter," he said.

NatWest Trophy

Early exits for Scots, Irish

LONDON, May 3: International rivals Scotland and Ireland suffered a double dose of NatWest Trophy misery on Tuesday after being dumped out of the first round by Minor Counties opponents, reports AFP.

Scotland, fielding nine players who recently took part in the Emerging Nations' Tournament in Zimbabwe, were quickly on the rack against Wiltshire at the South Wiltshire ground in Salisbury after stand-in skipper Jamie Glasson won the toss and inserted last season's World Cup qualifiers.

Seamer Kevin Nash -- three for 10 -- had them in deep trouble at 32 for four -- one of his victims being highly-rated Australian overseas player Dene Hills for one -- and there was to be no recovery.

Spinner Richard Bates helped himself to three for 16 as Scotland were routed for just 93, the lowest total on first-round day.

Wiltshire themselves lost their first three wickets for only 18 runs but Dene Winter (37no) and Jimmy Taylor (36no) steered them to victory.

Parton, a 33-year-old left-handed opening batsman making a comeback after three years away in Scotland, carried his bat for an unbeaten 51 of 49 overs to help Shropshire save Ireland's modest 140 all out.

Ireland, now coached by Ken Rutherford, the former New Zealand captain and recent winners over Scotland for the first time since 1993, were soon on the back foot after Shropshire won the toss and elected to field.

Adam Shrimmons took three for 30 and slow left-armers Adam Byram weighed in with four for 24, and only a defiant 56 from their captain Angus Dunlop kept Ireland ticking over.

Shropshire then possessed the perfect anchor in Parton and he refused to give up his wicket to see Shropshire to victory with six balls to spare.

Elsewhere in the first round the closest finish came at Chester Boughton Hall, the venue where Cheshire famously defeated Northamptonshire off the penultimate ball in 1988.

This time it was Cheshire who just lost out in a thrilling finish to Lincolnshire on more wickets lost when the scores finished tied.

Cheshire were bowled out for 204 and Lincolnshire matched that total on 204 for nine when Nick Armstrong lifted the third delivery of the final over from Australian import Geoff Foley for a crucial six.

APOLOGY

In yesterday's report 'Pakistan win comfortably', at the end of the scoreboard we mentioned the result as match drawn. In fact, that wasn't a drawn affair as the story said. Besides, in Pakistan's bowling analysis, Mushtaq was Saqlain and Ahmed was Mushtaq.

Sports Editor

MacLaurin's own campaign

LONDON, May 3: England and Wales Cricket Board chairman Lord MacLaurin on Tuesday launched an anti-corruption campaign by demanding the world's governing body declare themselves free of any financial interest in the sport, reports AFP.

MacLaurin promised, before the start of the two-day emergency meeting of the International Cricket Council (ICC) at Lord's that any investigation should start "from the President down".

He signalled that intent at the start of Tuesday's meeting by insisting all 18 members of the executive board sign a declaration indicating they have no financial interest in cricket and agree to open their accounts for inspection.

It gives the ICC the authority to probe the business or private financial records of any member and should begin the long process of restoring the reputation of the governing body following the damaging blows to its integrity during the aftermath to the Hantis Cronje scandal.

The declaration also gives the ICC a mandate to begin their inspection of other levels of the game knowing their own credentials are very much open to scrutiny.

"It is necessary that we (the ICC) should demonstrate to the cricketing world that we come to these problems without any undeclared personal financial interests in the game, which

may be, or may seem to be, an obstacle to our doing what is necessary in the widest interest of world cricket," wrote MacLaurin.

He asked the ICC to sign undertakings "that they have no financial interest, direct or indirect, in the game of cricket," other than that which is "in the public domain."



LORD MACLAURIN

MacLaurin insists those declarations -- and the willingness of the delegates to open their accounts for inspection -- is crucial to hopes of restoring the public's confidence after weeks of allegations and innuendo.

"I strongly believe that the high ground which we occupy in relation to our governance of the game demands that we are, and are seen to be, as transparently open as possible to the investigating body."

Test series starts tomorrow

An intriguing prospect

GEORGETOWN, May 3 (AFP): In Test cricket, many people would consider India to be the most formidable opponents when they are playing on home soil.

West Indies too, could make a similar claim. Five years ago, Mark Taylor's Australians became the only touring side to have prevailed over the Caribbean cricketers in the last quarter of a century.

In that period, they have played 92 Tests, won 47, lost 13 and drawn 32. Such a remarkable record coupled with West Indies' present vulnerability makes their imminent three-Test series against Pakistan very appealing.

On four previous visits to the Caribbean, Pakistan have failed to win a Test series.

After taking the preceding tri-nation Cable and Wireless 2000 Trophy limited-overs series and blessed with an abundance of talent, the Pakistanis must feel this is their time.

The key to the series for both sides lies in the batting. Both West Indies and Pakistan are packed with enough firepower in their bowling attacks, so batsmen on either side will have to show an enormous amount of tenacity to help give their bowlers to defend.

Adams is also intelligent enough to know that the come-

backs with which West Indies were able to get away against lesser lights Zimbabwe will not be allowed by a Pakistan side eager to atone for its own lapses against Australia and Sri Lanka in the last six months.

Similar to West Indies, Pakistan's batting will revolve around a few key players - captain Moin Khan, opening batsman Saeed Anwar and Inzamamul Haq, though Wasim Akram is capable of a cavalier lower-order knock.

Saeed's experience was badly missed at the top of the order during the 2000 Trophy Series.

He is arguably the best opening batsman in the game today which is testimony to his 3,583 runs at an average of 46.53.

With him to shepherd either teenager Imran Nazir, Wajahatullah "Wasti" or Shahid Afridi, the kind of opening stands Pakistan missed in the preceding limited-overs matches they could very well get in the Tests.

That would take an enormous amount of pressure away from the imposing figure of Inzamam.

Easily the best of Pakistan's current crop of batsmen, he was batted superbly in the limited-overs series and it was always felt if he was dismissed cheaply, the opposition would win.

Others like Younis Khan, Younus Youhana and Mohammed Wasim, all of whom have shown glimpses of ability in their brief international careers, will have to deliver much more than promise for Pakistan to post formidable totals and threaten West Indies' record on home soil.

Three years ago, Wasim Akram's men battered Walsh's hopelessly band 3-0 on the sub-continent, but the conditions are different and so too, is the West Indies' attitude.

The annual basketball championship of the Bangladesh Army concluded at the Mirpur Cantonment yesterday, says a press release.

Hosts, Air Defence Artillery won the title defeating the Chittagong Area by 85-82 points.

The winners led the first half by 48-45 points.

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