

Sport

PCB's call to Tarrar

KARACHI, Oct 9: Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) on Monday formally asked President Mohammad Rafiq Tarrar to order a judicial inquiry into the allegations of match-fixing and gambling concerning the World Cup 1999 matches against India and Bangladesh, a board statement said.

The decision surprised cricket circles but sources said the move has been initiated on the International Cricket Council's directives.

"Allegations against Pakistani umpire Javed Akhtar's biased umpiring during England-South Africa Test in 1998 will also be part of the inquiry," it said.

No official was immediately available for comment.

Pakistan surprisingly lost to Bangladesh at Northampton by 62 runs and to India by 47 runs.

South African cricket supremo Ali Bacher in his testimony before a judicial commission earlier said former Pakistani cricket chief executive Majid Khan told him that Pakistan played two fixed matches in the 1999 World Cup.

Majid backed up Bacher's statement but said he had no proof to substantiate the allegations.

Bacher also alleged Pakistani umpire Akhtar had connections with bookies.

A Lahore High court judge Malik Mohammad Qayyum conducted a judicial inquiry into match-fixing allegations from September 1998 to October 1999 on then President Farooq Ahmed Leghari's orders.

However Qayyum who submitted his report this year said he was directed by the government not to probe the World Cup 1999 matches.

Former captain Salim Malik and pacer Aftab Rehman were banned in the recommendations made by justice Qayyum.

Wasim Akram, Waqar Younis, Saeed Anwar, Mushtaq Ahmed, Inzaamul Haq and Akram Raza were fined in the report.

PCB made the report public in May and imposed the penalties but had ruled out any further inquiry.

England without Giles against SA

NAIROBI, Oct 9: England leg-spinner Ashley Giles has been ruled out of the squad to face South Africa in the quarter-final of the ICC Knockout Trophy tournament here Tuesday, reports AFP.

According to the England manager David Clarke, the 27-year-old Warwickshire player suffered a calf injury to his left leg last week, and will not be able to take part in the rest of the tournament.

BD to take part in WC carrom c'ship

The third World Cup carrom championship will begin in New Delhi on November 6 with the participation of more than 30 countries, reports UNB.

Eight participants from Bangladesh will take part in the competition.

Kramnik

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"I have my strategies," the soft-spoken Grandmaster said, adding he had developed special mental exercises to banish visions of chess boards that interrupt his sleep during tense tournaments.

The pair will play 16 games at the Riverside Studios in west London, each to be completed within a day and broadcast live on the Internet at www.braingames.net.

The winner will be announced in a month's time and a 2 million USD (1.38 million pounds) prize will be divided between them, depending on the score.

A father's

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balls hit over the boundary, the last one finishing out of the ground and down a street.

Christie's spokesman Robert Parsons said the two bats had been on loan for 30 years to the Nottinghamshire County Cricket Club when Sobers recently decided to sell them.

"He offered to sell them to Nottinghamshire, but the club only wanted them if it could have them for nothing," Parsons told AFP.

"So he decided to put them up for auction at Christie's, Melbourne, which is world famous for sporting memorabilia."

"I suppose some of Sir Donald Bradman's gear might be worth even more if it ever came on the market. But the Bradman bat that would probably fetch the most would be the one that's most famous — the one he used for his last innings when he was out for a duck."

Hosts have high hopes

BEIRUT, Oct 9 (AFP): A world-hunt for football talent has left hosts Lebanon ambitiously eyeing a place in the knock-out stages of the Asian Cup.

Lebanese football chiefs have cast their net far and wide around the globe in an attempt to uncover footballers eligible to play.

Brazilian, Colombian and Australian Lebanese expatriates have all been drafted in for squad training during the past 12 months, although it is not clear how many of the foreign legion will make the final squad.

Nevertheless skipper Jamal Taha believes the infusion of new blood will help give the home fans something to cheer about.

"Our goal is to go to the second round — that's our first goal," Taha said.

"We know every team has its limits but small teams can always beat bigger teams. If we get to the second round many things will change and with our support we will concentrate on reaching the semi-finals."

Reaching the last four would be a massive achievement for Lebanon, who have never previously reached the finals of the Asian Cup. The Lebanese play Iran, Iraq and Thailand in Group One.

The host nation's poor record at international level prompted the worldwide search for players of Lebanese descent, capable of bolstering the home team's campaign.

But Taha admits the policy was not popular with established players in the Lebanon squad.

"At first the Lebanese players did not accept the situation," he said.
"But after a meeting with the federation, everything was okay. They explained to the players how much these people would help Lebanon in this tournament — we all agree that the best players should play, no matter where they are from."
The policy has had a few practical glitches though, with the language barrier causing problems at a recent training camp.

ASIAN CUP WINNERS

- BEIRUT, Oct 9 (AFP): Previous winners of the Asian Cup:
- 1956: South Korea
- 1960: South Korea
- 1964: Israel
- 1968: Iran
- 1972: Iran
- 1976: Iran
- 1980: Kuwait
- 1984: Saudi Arabia
- 1988: Saudi Arabia
- 1992: Japan
- 1996: Saudi Arabia

The first few days were difficult," Taha revealed. "Language was a big problem. The Brazilian players only spoke Portuguese, not even any English, which is the language of football."

"Two of the Brazilian players are defenders so it's important for them to be able to communicate with the goalkeeper, and at the start there problems. But they're now learning Arabic," Taha added.

FIXTURES

Group One
Oct 12 — Iraq v Thailand, Saïda

Lebanon v Iran, Beirut
Oct 15 — Iran v Thailand, Beirut
Lebanon v Iraq, Beirut
Oct 18 — Iran v Iraq, Saïda
Lebanon v Thailand, Beirut

Group Two
Oct 13 — South Korea v China, Tripoli
Kuwait v Indonesia, Tripoli
Oct 16 — China v Indonesia, Tripoli

South Korea v Kuwait, Tripoli
Oct 19 — China v Kuwait, Tripoli
South Korea v Indonesia, Beirut

Group Three
Oct 14 — Saudi Arabia v Japan, Saïda
Qatar v Uzbekistan, Saïda
Oct 17 — Japan v Uzbekistan, Saïda

Saudi Arabia v Qatar, Saïda
Oct 20 — Saudi Arabia v Uzbekistan, Saïda
Japan v Qatar, Beirut

Quarterfinals
Oct 23 — (1) Winner Group One v 3rd Group Two or Three, Tripoli
(2) Winner Group Two v 3rd Group One or Three, Saïda
Oct 24 — (3) Winner Group Three v 2nd Group One, Beirut
(4) 2nd Group Two v 2nd Group Three, Beirut

Semifinals
Oct 26 — Winner 1st quarterfinal v Winner 4th quarterfinal, Beirut
— Winner 2nd quarterfinal v Winner 3rd quarterfinal, Beirut

Final
Oct 29 — Semifinal winners, Beirut

Satellite television Channel 1 will show the Asian Cup matches live.

PSG hold Japan

PARIS, Oct 8: An equaliser deep into injury time from Pierre Ducrocq salvaged a 1-1 draw for Paris St Germain against Japan here Sunday before a modest crowd of just over 13,000 fans, reports AFP.

Playing without on-duty international Nicolas Anelka, Laurent Robert and goalkeeper Lionel Letizi, the Parisians went behind on 38 minutes thanks to a superbly volleyed goal from Morishima who first-timed Nanami's cross.

Coached by Frenchman Philippe Troussier who is preparing his side for the Asian Cup which kicks off on October 12, the Japanese were heading for a prestigious scalp before Ducrocq popped up in injury time.

With over four minutes of added time played, the player who has been in and out of Philippe Bergeroo's first-team line-up to date, struck with a header to keep PSG unbeaten at home since the beginning of the season.

Qatar aiming higher

BEIRUT, Oct 9 (AFP): Striker Mohammed Salem Al Enazi is confident tiny Qatar can carry on their proud giant-killing history at the Asian Cup.

Qatar are placed in a tight-looking Group Three along with Saudi Arabia, Japan and Uzbekistan.

The Saudis and Japanese are the overwhelming favourites to take the first two automatic qualifying spots but Al Enazi and Qatar are hoping to score an upset.

"We like this group because every time we are up against strong opposition we do our best and play good matches," Al Enazi said.

"Against Jordan in the qualifiers we needed either a win or a draw and played terribly in the first half and were lucky not to go three or four down."

"Whenever we have two chances we always seem to lose, but we did well in the second half and got the point we needed."

"I am sure we can do well in this group," said Al Enazi, who became the first Qatar to play in Europe this year when he signed with Turkish outfit Yozgatspor.

With a population of little more than 650,000, Qatar should by rights be one of the minnows of Asian football.

But the oil-rich state has ploughed money into the sport's development and the national team has consistently punched above their weight.

They missed out on qualification for the 1998 World Cup by just one point, registering an impressive away win over China as well as a home victory over mighty Iran in Doha.

But although they have been able to raise their game in occasional big tournaments, Qatar have also been frustratingly inconsistent. After winning the Gulf Cup in 1992 and going close again in 1996, they failed to qualify for the last Asian Cup.

Coach Dzemal Hadziabdic will also be mindful that if Qatar fails to put up a fight in Lebanon his position as coach is likely to come under pressure.

In the past three years, Qatar has had no fewer than seven national team coaches.

Stage set for Daei & Co

BEIRUT, Oct 9 (AFP): Asian footballer-of-the-year Ali Daei and a host of other 'Euro-stars' will lead Iran's campaign to end 24 years of Asian Cup hurt at Lebanon 2000.

Daei, who plies his trade in the Bundesliga with Hertha Berlin, will be hoping to crown a glittering international career by leading Iran back to the pinnacle of Asian football.

The burly 31-year-old has been a linchpin of Iran's renaissance in the past four years — and is poised to play a crucial role as the Persian giants tackle Asia's finest.

"We are ready to prove that Iran are the best team in Asia," Daei said. "Our results have been good for the past five years and we know we have the talent to win in Lebanon."

Iran face Thailand, Iraq and Lebanon in Group One and should progress safely into the second phase.

Daei will be assisted by former Asian player of the year Khodadad Azizi and midfielder Karim Bagheri, both veterans of Iran's 1998 World Cup campaign which saw them memorably defeat the United States 2-1.

Another veteran from the "mother of all football matches" — the mercurial Hamburg wingback Mehdi Mahdavia, is also back at the helm after resigning in the wake of the World Cup. Talebi was reappointed after Nasser Pourdehri was sacked earlier this year.

Victory in Lebanon would end more than two decades of frustration in the Asian Cup for the Iranians, who dominated the tournament throughout the 1970s with victories in 1968, 1972 and 1976.

Political upheaval at the end of the decade left Iranian football in turmoil, but the sport remained a way of life in the Islamic state, with crowds of 100,000 regularly packing Tehran's Azadi Stadium for club matches.



BATIGOL OVER THE MOON: Argentine ace Gabriel Batistuta celebrates his strike against Uruguay during their World Cup qualifier at Argentina on October 8. —AFP photo

Bora's time to prove

BEIRUT, Oct 9: Globe-trotting coach Bora Milutinovic is hoping China can ditch their 'choker' tag at the Asian Cup, reports AFP.

Milutinovic, the only man to manage four countries at the World Cup, has been brought in to help China achieve their holy grail — qualification for the 2002 finals.

And a winning performance in Lebanon would provide his team with the perfect launchpad for their 2002 qualifying campaign, which gets underway next year.

Recent history suggests a red Chinese dawn over Beirut is unlikely however.

They have never won Asia's premier football tournament and stand alone amongst the continent's recognised powers as never having qualified for the World Cup.

A tendency to fluff their lines on the big occasion has seen China dismissed as perennial 'chokers' in some quarters.

This trait was evident at the last Asian Cup in the United Arab Emirates four years ago, when they led 2-0 against

eventual champions Saudi Arabia in the quarter-finals only to eventually lose 4-3. They made a similar hash of their 1998 World Cup qualifying campaign.

Whether Milutinovic can stop the rot remains to be seen, and China will do well to secure one of the top two automatic berths from Group Two, which includes South Korea.

And while the players are determined to give a good account of themselves, most acknowledge that World Cup qualification remains the ultimate prize.

"I think the Asian Cup is mostly important for the World Cup qualifiers," China captain Zhang Enhua said.

"Bora has said that the results in Lebanon aren't too important and we still have some players who are not in the team. I think we need some more experience, especially for the younger players," said Zhang who laments the dismissal of English coach Bobby Houghton earlier this year.

"Bobby brought some very advanced knowledge of soccer of European soccer to China and he was the first coach to let us know what the game is all about."



BORA MILUTINOVIC

Troussier's Nakata worry

BEIRUT, Oct 9 (AFP): The shock withdrawal of star midfielder Hide-toshi Nakata has cast doubt on Japan's ability to launch a successful assault on the Asian Cup.

Nakata stunned Japan Football Association chiefs by ruling himself out of contention to concentrate on his career in the Italian Serie A with AS Roma.

That has left a gaping hole in the creative midfield role filled by Nakata for the past three years.

It also weakens Japan's chances of becoming the first

side from the east Asian region to win an Asian Cup staged in the Middle East.

Nakata was the star of his country's Sydney Olympics campaign but his tournament ended in misery when he missed a penalty kick against the United States as Japan bowed out in the quarter-finals.

Nevertheless Japan's French coach Philippe Troussier is confident his side has the strength in depth to return victorious from Beirut.

"We will get the Asian Cup back in Japan," he said.
"We have to assume that Japan is the favourite to win the cup. There are four other contenders: China, South Ko-

rea, Saudi Arabia and Iran," he said.

With an eye on the 2002 World Cup finals, Troussier set about steadily building a youthful team after his appointment following France 98 two years ago.

The result is that the average age of the 22-strong squad bound for Lebanon is 24, with the oldest player only 28.



PHILIPPE TROUSSIER

With Nakata gone, the creative burden is likely to fall on Shunsuke Nakamura of the Yokohama F. Marinos.

Japan will also be hoping that Lebanon 2000 sees the coming of age of Shinji Ono, who has promised much but so far delivered little on the bigger international stage.

Japan's biggest problem could be in front of goal. Both veteran strikers Kazu Miura and Masashi Nakayama are now out of the set-up, leaving Troussier still searching for a settled attacking partnership.

The Japanese should still be good enough to comfortably advance to the quarter-finals from Group Three, where holders Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Uzbekistan provide the first phase opposition.

Praying for 'Blue Fox'

BEIRUT, Oct 9 (AFP): Wolverhampton Wanderers forward Sami Al Jaber is back to lead the attacking line as champions Saudi Arabia prepare to defend their Asian Cup crown.

Veteran Al Jaber — the first Arab to play in the English league — heads a squad which comes under the control of successful Czech coach Milan Macala.

Al Jaber, nicknamed the 'Blue Fox' by Saudi fans, remains one of the finest forwards in Asia according to Macala.

"Sami has got the ability to score against the very best defences, and I'm not surprised he has gone to England," Macala said.

Saudi Arabia's recent record in the Asian Cup will see them start as one of the favourites in Lebanon.

They have won three out of four of the last editions of the tournament, the only defeat coming in Japan in 1992. And in Macala they now have one of the most successful coaches in the Asian game.

From 1996 to 1998 Macala guided Kuwait to two Gulf Cups, a silver medal at the Asian Games, a bronze in the Arab Cup and fourth place in the Asian Cup.

Now the Saudis are hoping he can weave his magic once again.

But Macala has consistently talked down Saudi Arabia's chances in the competition. The holders are grouped with Japan, Qatar and Uzbekistan in Group Three.

"For Lebanon we have to prepare a new team or else we'll lose against the other teams

from both the west and the east. I think the Asian Cup will be difficult for everyone," Macala said.

"I can't see anyone who is weak. The only weakness comes in preparation and in my experience it's difficult to find weak opponents at this level."



SAMI AL-JABER

"China, Japan, Korea, Iran, Iraq even Indonesia, all of the teams can prepare well."

Macala has had to oversee a changing of the guard as old-timers such as Yousef Al Thunayan and Khalid Mussad make way for the younger Mohammed Al Shilhoob and Marzouq Oteibi.

Al Jaber will be the font of Saudi Arabia's attack, while at the back Mohammad Al Khalawi and Abdullah Suleiman form one of the tightest defensive partnerships in Asian football.

ROK seek redemption

BEIRUT, Oct 9: The nightmare of a six-goal thrashing haunts South Korea as they prepare for the Asian Cup, reports AFP.

Four years ago the South Koreans arrived in the United Arab Emirates confident of lifting the title for the first time since 1960 following a successful showing at the 1994 World Cup in the United States.

But they left the tournament in shame after being ripped apart 6-2 by a rampant Iran in the quarter-finals.

That 1996 defeat remains their heaviest in a major competition. Only Holland — who ran riot to the tune of 5-0 at the 1998 World Cup — have come close to netting six against the normally solid South Koreans.

The UAE debacle also raised the suspicion that the Koreans

are not hugely concerned about the Asian Cup and that World Cup qualification remains the priority.

They have qualified for every World Cup since 1986, but this phenomenal consistency has not translated into success at the continental championships.

However coach Huh Jong-Moo has promised total commitment this time around, in the last major competitive tournament the Koreans will play before co-hosting the 2002 World Cup.

"This is an important testing ground for Korea before the World Cup," he said.

"A tournament like this is always difficult for the players. But it also draws the team together and teaches them how to react to different situations on the pitch," Huh added.

"I expect to learn a lot about the squad in this tournament."

South Korea's preparations have not been helped by the recent Olympic Games, leaving Huh little time to gel players

from the senior and under-23 squads into a cohesive unit.

The lack of preparation was highlighted at a friendly in Dubai earlier this month, where they were defeated on penalties by the United Arab Emirates after a disjointed 1-1 draw.

Huh will rely on a squad blending the experience of old hands such as Hong Myoung-bo, Hwang Sun-Hong and Kim Byung-Ji with talented youngsters led by striker Lee Dong-Gook.

South Korea will need to hit the ground running in Lebanon, and face a tricky Group Two where their opponents are China, Kuwait and Indonesia.

South Korea has traditionally had the upper hand on China, but battles between them are often tense affairs.

After a 1-1 draw in a key Olympic qualifier in Shanghai last October, the South Korean squad had to be barricaded into their hotel as Chinese fans, furious at their team's performance, rioted outside.

Rivaldo warns Barca

BARCELONA, Spain, Oct 9: Barcelona's world player of the year Rivaldo has hit back at pressure from his club and their fans by offering to tear up his lucrative new contract and walk out the door, Spanish sports daily Marca reported on its web-site on Sunday, reports AFP.

Rivaldo aired his differences with Barcelona after being forced to train alone after his trip back from Brazil in spite of the fact that Barcelona had asked the Brazil national side to excuse him on account of his injury.

The player, who missed Sunday night's World Cup qualifier against Venezuela, has become increasingly alienated from the Catalan club since being labelled as greedy after negotiating a pay rise in the close season.

"The situation is uncomfortable for everyone," Rivaldo said.

"If they don't want me in the team, it's better if I go," he exclaimed, adding that he was ready to renounce his contract and all the financial benefits contained in it.

"Since I got the improved contract I've been under pressure and the fans demand too much. If they don't want me I'd prefer to know, give up everything and go back to my family

in Brazil. I'm sure that they at least would be happy to have me," he complained.

Joan Gaspart the Barcelona president was swift to reply to Rivaldo's outburst and gave an optimistic assessment to the affair.

"These declarations are very positive, they show that the love of the fans is more important to him than money. He's a very sensitive player, I'm sure though that he'll give the fans many more glorious afternoons," explained Gaspart.

Rivaldo's teammate Gerard, darling of the Barcelona fans since returning to his home town from Valencia in July, told Marca how important he felt the Brazilian got to the side.

"We ought to be spoiling him, he's one of the best players in the world and he's in our team!" he said before adding, perhaps in reference to Rivaldo's relations to Barcelona coach Lorenzo Serra Ferrer "that the Brazilian got on well with everyone in the squad."



RIVALDO

DFB to discuss Daum crisis

FRANKFURT, Oct 9: The German football Federation (DFB) are set to hold a crisis meeting concerning the recent allegations directed at future coach Christoph Daum, DFB vice-president Gerhard Mayer-Vorfelder announced Sunday, reports AFP.

Daum, who has been accused of drug-taking and involvement with prostitutes, as well as new allegations Saturday of financial impropriety, is to hold his own press-conference Monday.

The task force is a council made up of numerous members of the Federation, put in place recently to deal with the string of accusations directed at the German football team.

Bayer Leverkusen coach Daum, who is set to take over the national post on June 1, 2001 from present boss Rudi Voller will appear before the press at 0900 GMT Monday in Leverkusen.

He has spent the past few days mired in allegations about his private life from, among others, Bayern Munich manager Uli Hoessgen.

Hoessgen has alleged Daum took cocaine and was involved

in prostitution rackets.

Daum is suing Hoessgen for defamation and has vehemently denied any involvement with drugs.

"I do not need this analysis," declared Daum. I have other results that I will make public in good time and I want to be the national coach without any hesitation," he added following Leverkusen training on Sunday.

When the decision to appoint him was announced three months ago, everyone screamed with joy. It was a good decision and there is no reason to go back on it," said Beckenbauer.