

WI's adventure in the sky

MELBOURNE, Nov 15: The West Indies cricket squad was forced to make an unexpected detour on their Australian trip Wednesday after bad weather delayed their planned arrival here, reports AFP.

The tourists were heading from Alice Springs to Melbourne via Sydney, when a storm forced all flights to the Victorian capital to form a holding pattern near the city while the weather abated.

But a lack of fuel meant the Windies' plane was diverted to Adelaide in South Australia, making for a long travel day.

The tourists were scheduled to arrive here late Wednesday, allowing them one rest day before Friday's four-day tour match against Victoria at the Melbourne Cricket Ground.

The Windies had played a one-day match in Alice Springs in the centre of Australia on Tuesday, recording their first win of the tour against a Northern Territory invitation XI by 57 runs.

The first Test against Australia begins in Brisbane on November 23.

Cricketnext.com strikes deal with stars

BOMBAY, Nov 15: Indian cricket portal cricketnext.com Wednesday said it had signed up several leading global players for brand endorsements, creation of websites, coaching clinics and syndicated articles, reports AFP.

Managing director Sanjay Jha said the players included Saeed Anwar and Inzamamul Haq of Pakistan, Sri Lanka's Ramesh Kaluwitharana and Marvan Atapattu and Zimbabwean captain Heath Streak.

"We will also be announcing the names of a few leading Australian cricketers for brand endorsement during their forthcoming tour of India early next year," he said.

Jha said the portal would focus "increasingly on talent management for both overseas as well as Indian cricketers."

"Till September, our portal was averaging approximately five million page views per month, but with the popularity rating of the game almost returning to old times, we have seen a tremendous resurgence," he said.

"We expect to conclude the year with at least 22 million page views per month."

Jha said the portal has also launched an e-commerce initiative called "Batnext," a retail store to sell cricket gear.

Cricketnext.com received its initial funds from Australian media tycoon Kerry Packer and a couple of Indian venture capitalists.

India call off

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of whether India agrees to play. He added that Pakistan would have no choice but to reject the ICC's ten-year itinerary of international cricket unless the PCB received a guarantee that India would tour Pakistan.

Official contact between the two South Asian rivals has been frozen since May last year when Indian troops began a bitter 10-week battle against Pakistan-backed forces along their disputed border in Kashmir.

India last played a Test match in Pakistan in 1989, but crossed the border for a three-match limited-overs series in 1997.

This is the second time in three months that the Indian government has refused to clear a cricket series against Pakistan.

The annual Sahara Cup series in Canada in September was also cancelled for the second consecutive year at India's behest.

Pakistan, however, played three Test matches in India early last year, before the Kargil conflict broke out in May.

Two of the Tests in Madras and New Delhi passed off without any incident, but the third in Calcutta was marred by unruly crowd behaviour.

Pakistan won the match in front of empty stands after police were forced to evict all spectators, except officials and the media, from the Eden Gardens.

Saqlain's late

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first day of the first cricket Test between Pakistan and England at the Gaddafi Stadium on Wednesday:

ENGLAND: First innings Atherton c Youhana b Saqlain 73 Trescothick c Elahi b Saqlain 71 Thorpe not out 22 Stewart lbw b Saqlain 3 Hussain c Akram b Saqlain 7 Hick not out 6 Extras: (b-3; lb-3; nb-7) 13 Total: (For 4 wickets in 84 overs) 195

To bat: C White, A Giles, A Caddick, I Salisbury and D Gough

Fall of wickets: 1-134, 2-169, 3-173, 4-183

Bowler O M R W Akram 9 4 12 0 Razzak 11 4 29 0 Saqlain 30 7 61 4 Mushtaq 23 4 69 0 Afridi 9 3 17 0 Abbas 2 1 0

PAKISTAN: Saeed Anwar, Shahid Afridi, Salim Elahi, Younus Youhana, Inzamamul Haq, Qaiser Abbas, Abdur Razak, Moin Khan (captain), Wasim Akram, Saqlain Mushtaq, Mushtaq Ahmed

Umpires: Darrell Hair (Australia) and Riazuddin (Pakistan)

Zimbabwe tune up well



FARIDABAD, India, Nov 15: Andy Flower smashed 54 off 103 balls as Zimbabwe warmed up for the upcoming Test series against India with a four-wicket victory here on Wednesday, reports AFP.

The tourists were heading from Alice Springs to Melbourne via Sydney, when a storm forced all flights to the Victorian capital to form a holding pattern near the city while the weather abated.

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Donald targets 400 wkts



BLOEMFONTEIN, South Africa, Nov 15: South African fast bowler Allan Donald is determined to reach the milestone of 300 Test wickets when he plays in the first Test against New Zealand in his home town starting Friday.

Donald needs three wickets to become the first South African and the 15th in Test history to join the 300 club.

And the 34-year-old is already looking further ahead.

"Obviously I want to get the remaining three wickets to achieve the 300 mark but I think it is realistic to aim for 400 in the longer term," said Donald.

Donald's career seemed to be drawing to a close when he took a rest from international cricket during the South African winter in order to play a

WACA pitch causes a commotion

PERTH, Nov 15: Preparations for a good wicket for the second Test in Perth between Australia and the West Indies early next month are on track, red-faced officials assured fans Wednesday after a match was abandoned here because of a dangerous pitch, reports AFP.

In an unprecedented move at the WACA Ground Wednesday afternoon, umpires Keith Rinaldi and Randolph Woolridge called off a one-day Interstate Cup game between Western Australia and Queensland, ruling that the surface was dangerous.

They halted the match after Queensland had reached 20 for one at the end of the fifth over.

Western Australian Cricket Association chief executive officer Mike Allenby admitted the shock move by the umpires was embarrassing, and blamed exceptionally hot weather in recent days for the wide cracks which developed in the pitch.

But he was adamant preparations were well in hand for the Test, starting Friday fortnight (December 1).

The pitch being used for Wednesday's match was the strip on which Western Australia defeated the West Indies Sunday on the fourth day of that game.

Cracks had started to appear before the end of that game, and they widened as the temperature soared in recent days, reaching 37 degrees Celsius Wednesday.

Allenby said officials had decided to use the same pitch because they believed it would provide plenty of runs.

But the pitch played anything but well. One ball shot along the ground and another flew in the air, striking Queensland opening batsman Jimmy Maher in the chest.

and two sixes during a third-wicket stand of 115 with Andy Flower that propelled Zimbabwe towards victory.

Flower smashed 12 fours and two sixes, before falling six runs short of his second century on the tour.

Stand-in captain Guy Whittall (26 not out) and Mulkei Nkala (22 off 19 balls) ensured the effort of the top order batsmen was not wasted.

Earlier, the President's team took their overnight score of 52-0 to 183-2 with all-round Virender Sehwag top-scoring with 58.

SCOREBOARD Final scorecard of the three-day tour match between Zimbabwe and the Indian Board President's XI on Sunday.

BOARD PRESIDENT'S XI: First innings 314-5 decl (118 not out)

ZIMBABWE: First innings 236-5 decl (G Rennie 79, G Flower 49)

PRESIDENT'S XI: Second

innings 165-4 197, 5-220, 6-256

Bowler O M R W

Nkala 15 7 27 2

Friend 7 2 26 0

Murphy 15 3 35 0

G Flower 2 1 0 0

Strang 4 0 4 0

Fall of wickets: 1-91, 2-92

Bowler O M R W

Olonga 11 1 44 0

Nkala 15 7 27 2

Friend 7 2 26 0

Murphy 15 3 35 0

G Flower 2 1 0 0

Strang 4 0 4 0

Fall of wickets: 1-5, 2-50, 3-

165, 4-197, 5-220, 6-256

Bowler O M R W

Mohanty 10 3 35 0

Saxena 7 0 29 1

Sanghvi 16.5 0 93 3

Kapoor 15 2 55 1

Kimikar 2 0 20 0

Sehwag 3 0 27 0

Result: Zimbabwe won by four wickets.

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