

PM seconds Steve's offer

REUTERS, Melbourne

Australia's Prime Minister John Howard has defended Australia's cricket captain Steve Waugh against charges the team had turned a trip to Gallipoli's battlefields into a photo-opportunity.

Australia's players stopped off at Gallipoli earlier this week to lay wreaths at memorials for more than 8,000 Australians who died battling Turkish forces in 1915 during World War One.

Waugh's team, ranked number one in the world in Test cricket, paid their respects while on their way to Britain for a three-month Ashes tour including five Tests against England.

The Australian newspaper said on Wednesday that the Gallipoli visit had been "hijacked" by the image-makers at the Australian Cricket Board (ACB) to divert attention from bad publicity surrounding the sport internationally amid a match-fixing inquiry.

Waugh and his team re-enacted a photograph of Australian soldiers playing cricket at Gallipoli.

But as controversy over the visit began to mount on Tuesday, Howard said he was surprised by suggestions the Gallipoli visit was inappropriate.

"I think that's unreasonable," said Howard, an ardent cricket fan. "Any Australian who has been to Gallipoli is quite moved by it," he told reporters.

ACB chief executive Malcolm Speed told ABC Radio on Tuesday: "We're always looking for positive publicity opportunities but... I think the major driver was the motivational aspect of it and just the lifetime experience for the players."

"They're going into a battle. It's a battle of a lot less significance than the battle at Gallipoli but a battle nonetheless."

Siraiganj cricket

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Siraiganj

Siraiganj Mohammedan Sporting Club defeated Shaheed Ansar Ali Smriti Club by five-run in the Megdukt cricket tournament at the Char Raipur play ground yesterday.

Winning the toss, Mohammedan batted first and made 109 all out in 25 overs.

In reply, Ansar Ali were all out for 104 in 24.3 overs.

Indian bowlers

FROM PAGE 13

ZIMBABWE: First innings
Ebrahim c Tendulkar b Zaheer 46
Rennie c Dighi b Mohanty 1
Masakadza c Dravid b Nehra 8
Wishart c Dighi b Zaheer 68
Evans b Zaheer 0
Viljoen lbw b Singh 5
Taiba c Das b Singh 1
Friend b Singh 4
Murphy not out 9
Strang c Tendulkar b Nehra 0
Mutendera c Tendulkar b Nehra 13
Extras: (lb-6, nb-14) 20
Total: (All out in 54.4 overs) 175

Fall of wickets: 1-10, 2-37, 3-134, 4-134, 5-139, 6-139, 7-143, 8-149, 9-153

Bowler O M R W
Zaheer 15 3 41 3
Mohanty 12 3 34 1
Nehra 12.4 1 41 3
Singh 11 3 25 3
Ganguly 4 0 26 0

Must win

FROM PAGE 13

sion and headed instead for the seaside and a local amusement park.

The squad called off their afternoon work-out at the ground and set off on a 55-mile trip to Blackpool, the home of a large selection of fairground entertainment, rides and rollercoasters.

Coach Richard Pybus said: "We've practised and practised and practised and now we are having a bit of fun."

"We are doing the scariest rides and having a great time."

Pakistan's decision raised a few eyebrows at Old Trafford — and prompted a smile from England captain Alec Stewart — after the home team had trained in the morning.

But Pybus argued that his players were in good shape after crushing Leicestershire in their final warm-up match and then training for the next two days.

TEAM

ENGLAND (from): Alec Stewart (captain), Michael Atherton, Marcus Trescothick, Michael Vaughan, Nick Knight, Graham Thorpe, Dominic Cork, Ian Ward, Darren Gough, Andy Caddick, Matthew Hoggard, Robert Croft.

PAKISTAN: Waqar Younis (captain), Saeed Anwar, Abdur Razzaq, Younis Khan, Inzamam ul Haq, Younis Younhan, Azhar Mahmood, Rashid Latif, Wasim Akram, Shoaib Akhtar, Faisal Iqbal, Sajid Mushtaq.

Umpires: David Shepherd (England) and Eddie Nichols (West Indies). Television: Ray Julian.

Match referee: Brian Hastings (New Zealand).

Waugh plans early assault

Cricket

REUTERS, Worcester

Australia aim to reopen "some old scars" from the very start of the Ashes series against England to reinforce their dominance over their oldest cricket rivals, Steve Waugh said on Wednesday.

The Australian captain, speaking a day after the tourists' arrival, praised England's recent results but said that his side had to be considered the favourites.

He said: "You can't take anything for granted but we've had some good results against England and a lot of the personnel hasn't changed."

"From our point of view, if we get on top early we can perhaps open some old scars."

England take on Pakistan in the second and final Test at Old Trafford on Thursday, with a one-day series between the three teams leading up to the five-Test Ashes series.

A draw at Old Trafford would be enough to secure England a fifth consecutive series victory, a feat they last achieved 30 years ago.

"England are playing very good cricket," Waugh told a press conference. "If they win this Test match against Pakistan they'll be feeling very confident."

"We lost our last two Test matches (in India) so form-wise England have got the form on the board in recent times. But we've

got a very good side so I would suggest we still go in as favourites."

"I am the only one to lose against England in an Ashes series. My current form is good — they should be up at the top somewhere."

Vice-captain Adam Gilchrist pointed out that England, ranked bottom of the Test-playing nations just two years ago, had managed to transform their fortunes despite largely sticking to the same players.

"Nasser (Hussain) has led well. The personnel is similar to what they had in previous years but perhaps they now have more direction," he said.

Australia coach John Buchanan added: "I don't think there is any

question that Australia should be number one. Obviously England's current form is good — they should be up at the top somewhere."

The workshop begins at the Dhamondi Club ground today. Later it may be shifted to the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) in Saver.

The BCB have already called up 26 young pacemen for the workshop. The number is likely to be reduced to 10 after the first day and Shekhar will make a final selection of four bowlers who will be later sent to the MRF Pace Foundation in Madras for a month long training.

"It's a burning ambition to play a Test against Australia," he said. "That would be a massive goal for me. It's the only country I haven't played against."

"But the players realise this now. The feeling is Indian players are too relaxed, give away the game too easily. We need to toughen up a bit," Binny said.

Binny, who guided India to the Under-19 World Cup last year, wanted junior and "A" teams to tour abroad more often to prepare upcoming players for the senior squad.

"On a big Test tour to Australia (in 1999-2000), we had at least six newcomers."

"If they had toured there six months in advance with an "A" squad, they'd have settled down for the Test series," he said.

Binny said physical fitness and fielding were given high priority in the academy.

"It's a question of adapting. It boils down to toughness, applying one's mind in challenging conditions," Gackwad told in a recent interview.

Gackwad said: "Our bowlers

tend to get worked up by the extra bounce."

Binny and Gackwad attributed India's 3-0 Test whitewash in Australia early last year to poor batting and said such displays led to their being labelled poor fighters under pressure.

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