

## Multi-nation OK, but no bilateral

AFP, New Delhi

Pakistan's presence will not hinder India's participation in major cricket events like the World Cup, Sports Minister Uma Bharti said on Wednesday.

But she ruled out a resumption of bilateral cricket ties with Pakistan, saying "national pride and sentiments get involved" when the two teams confront each other, the Press Trust of India reported.

Bharti confirmed that India would take part in the International Cricket Council's Champions Trophy in Sri Lanka in September and the World Cup in South Africa early next year.

Doubts over India taking part in the two tournaments were voiced by an Indian newspaper earlier this month.

"If Uma Bharti has her way, India and Pakistan may never play cricket again -- anywhere, anytime and in any tournament," the Today newspaper said on May 16.

It quoted the headline sports minister as saying: "When they (Pakistan) are playing with blood, how can we play cricket with them? The nation will not accept this."

The two cricket-mad neighbours last met on a cricket field in May 2000, just before the Indian government put a blanket ban on games against Pakistan.

India are scheduled to play a league match against Pakistan in the World Cup in February-March next year.

The two countries have, however, been drawn in separate groups in the Champions Trophy, but will have to face each other if they make the final.

War clouds hang over India and Pakistan as about a million troops are ranged on the border following increased tensions over the disputed Kashmir region.

Both countries, however, played each other in the 1999 World Cup in England even when the Kargil conflict was at its height in Kashmir.

## Inspired by Irani

AFP, London

Essex captain Ronnie Irani took three wickets to put his side into a potential match-winning position Tuesday against Derbyshire on the third day of this Division Two county championship match at Chelmsford.

Derbyshire finished a rain-affected day on 73 for five after their bowlers had dismissed Essex for 168 - Derbyshire still 10 runs behind on first innings.

After tea former England all-rounder Irani, a medium-pace bowler, had Dominic Hewson caught at third slip for nine.

He then had Christopher Bassano lbw for the same score.

But there was better to come, Irani claiming the prize wicket of Australian batsman Michael Di Venuto (41), caught behind by Zimbabwe wicketkeeper Andy Flower.

Essex will be without opening batsman Richard Clinton on Wednesday's final day.

He has a fractured right wrist and is expected to be out for at least six weeks.

## Costly error

REUTERS, Paris

Beaten by virtually unknown Hungarian Aniko Kapros in the first round of the French Open, sick Belgian Justine Henin said it had been a mistake for her to play.

"I made a mistake. I should not have played," fifth seed Henin, a semi-finalist in Paris last year, said.

Wimbledon finalist Henin was beaten 4-6, 6-1, 6-0 in a match twice halted by rain showers.

"I wanted to fight to the bitter end," she said.

"But physically I was just unable to play that match."

"I had fever and I couldn't breathe and I could not move as I usually do. It's sad and frustrating."

Henin was among the favourites to win the clay-court Grand Slam event after winning in Berlin and reaching the final in Rome earlier this month.

But she said she had felt sick for the last couple of days and had to be treated by a doctor.

"Maybe it's a fit of bronchitis like I had in Hamburg three weeks ago. I don't know, I felt down and without strength."

## Scud almost blew it

REUTERS, Paris

Australia's Mark Philippoussis said an ill-advised decision to go snowboarding had made his chronic knee injury even worse.

Philippoussis, who has had a knee problem for the past two years and has undergone three operations, decided to go snowboarding while on holiday in Whistler, Canada, in February.

"I hurt my knee a little again, which is completely my fault. It was really stupid," he said after coming back from two sets down to beat French qualifier Julien Varlet 1-6, 6-7, 6-4, 7-6, 6-3 in the first round of the French Open.

"That's where the immaturity comes in. I'm just a big kid. There was no fall or anything but after I finished my snowboarding session my knee felt a little sore."

## Camp for SL tour soon

### About 37 cricketers to be called up

SPORTS REPORTER

The selectors are likely to call about 37 cricketers in the primary camp for the national squad that is to tour Sri Lanka in July.

Chief selector Mainul Haq along with his two other colleagues had a meeting with new coach Mohsin Kamal and captain Khaled Mashud at the BCB's (Bangladesh Cricket Board's) management office in Gulshan yesterday to finalise the preliminary selection.

"Yes, we had a meeting today. But I can not tell you yet who is going to be selected or not. We would make an official announcement within next couple of days," said Mainul Haq to The Daily Start Sport last evening over his cell phone.

Mainul however revealed that

they have bracketed around 37 players to give the Pakistani coach Mohsin Kamal a change to have a look at them.

"We will choose a 15-man final squad two weeks after the camp. Rest would be considered for Bangladesh A team's tour of Kenya next August," disclosed Mainul, adding that the camp would start either from the third of fourth of June.

He also informed that they would also run a talent-scouting programme before the primary camp to see whether one or two could be picked from there.

Coach Mohsin Kamal, who took up the job early this month, is also very eager to work with his charges.

"I have not yet decided when to start the camp. I would only be able

to tell you after I meet the team Physio (John Gloster) tomorrow," said Kamal to this correspondent yesterday. He also added that Gloster would reach Dhaka by late in the Wednesday night.

He said that after having some initial sessions in the capital he would move his camp to the BKSP for intensive training.

"The programme of the camp would also be finalised on arrival of Gloster," added the former Pakistan Test cricketer.

Bangladesh will play in two Test matches and three one-day internationals during their tour of Sri Lanka from July 9 to August 8.

Bangladesh will also play two three-day practice matches against two different selections of Sri Lanka.

## Green Delta hockey Abahani rout Railway

SPORTS REPORTER

Abahani Krira Chakra defeated Dhaka Railway 6-1 in a Green Delta Premier Division Hockey League return leg clash at the Maulana Bhasani Stadium yesterday.

The winners led the first half 2-0. Winger Ramijuddin struck thrice while Shamim scored two goals for the winners. Rajib netted the other goal for Abahani.

On the other hand, Nabi Sheikh pulled back one for Dhaka Railway. Meanwhile, Bangladesh Sporting Club blanked Farashganj Sporting Club 6-0 in the day's other match.

Anil and Zahid Biswas netted twice each while Rubel and Tito scored apiece for the winners, who led the first half 4-0.

## JVC badminton from June 3

BSS, Dhaka

The JVC Bangladesh Asian Satellite Badminton Championship will be held from June 3 to 7 at Shaheed Suhrawardy Indoor Stadium.

Bangladesh Badminton Federation (BBF) will organise the tournament under the supervision of Asian Badminton Confederation.

India, Iran, Sri Lanka, Nepal, the Maldives, Bhutan and hosts Bangladesh will take part in the meet.

## India don't need Laxman

AFP, Bridgetown

Prolific Indian middle-order batsman Venkatsai Laxman has been dropped for the third one-day international against the West Indies that started at the Kensington Oval here on Wednesday.

The 27-year-old stylish batsman was India's highest run-getter in a recent five-Test series against the West Indies, scoring 474 in eight innings with 104 half-centuries.

"It was really a tough decision to drop Laxman for one-dayers, but it was necessary for the balance of the team," India captain Sourav Ganguly said on Tuesday.

India lost the five-Test series 2-1, while the first two one-day internationals in Jamaica were rained off without a ball being bowled.

Laxman, who has scored 857 runs in 37 one-dayers with one century and six half-centuries, has been replaced with Mohammad Kaif, one of the five players to join the team after the Test series.

"I think Kaif deserves a chance as he has been batting very well in one-day matches. He's also a very good fielder," said Ganguly.

Kaif, 21, has so far made 249 in eight matches with two half-centuries.

India sprang one more surprise, omitting specialist wicket-keeper Ajay Ratna in order to strengthen their batting.

Batting let the tourists down in the third Test at this venue early this month as they were shot out for 102 on a lively track in their first innings before losing the match by 10 wickets.

India have lost both of their one-dayers here, including a 10-wicket defeat in their last match in 1997.

"Rahul Dravid will keep wickets," said Ganguly. "I'm sure Dravid will do a good job as he has kept wickets before. It'll also give us more options."

India go into the match with seven specialist batsmen, three fast bowlers and one spinner.

## Raja's first big assignment

REUTERS, London

Former Pakistan all-rounder Wasim Raja will act as the International Cricket Council's (ICC's) match referee for New Zealand's tour to West Indies during June and July, the ICC has announced.

Raja, in his first major appointment since joining the ICC's full-time panel in March, will officiate during the five one-day internationals and two Test matches to be played between the sides.

International umpires Rudi Koertzen of South Africa and Asoka de Silva of Sri Lanka will alternate with umpires appointed by the West Indies Cricket Board in each of the one-day games.

Indian umpire Srinivas Venkataraghavan will partner Koertzen for both of the test matches.

ITINERARY	
<b>June 5:</b>	First one-day international, Kingston, Jamaica
<b>June 8:</b>	Second one-day international, Islet, St Lucia
<b>June 9:</b>	Third one-day international, Islet, St Lucia
<b>June 12:</b>	Fourth one-day international, Port of Spain, Trinidad
<b>June 16:</b>	Fifth one-day international, Kingston, St Vincent
<b>June 21-25:</b>	First Test, Bridgetown, Barbados
<b>June 28-July 2:</b>	Second Test, St George's, Grenada

## Serena storms thru'



REUTERS, Paris

Serena Williams has made a colourful start to her French Open campaign as she breezed past Slovakian Martina Sucha 6-3, 6-0 in the first round.

brutal groundstrokes.

Having secured the break in the fourth game with a blistering backhand down the line, Williams ran away with the opening set in just 34 minutes.

The 39th ranked Sucha, who reached the second round on her Roland Garros debut last year, simply wilted in the second set.



SERENA WILLIAMS

Looking more like a soccer player with her bright green T-shirt dress over red shorts and yellow socks, the third-seeded American overwhelmed Sucha with some

Anna Kournikova once again disappointed her legion of fans when she crashed out of the first round of the French Open, beaten 6-4 6-3 by Australian wildcard

Christina Wheeler.

The glamorous Russian, more a tennis clothes horse these days than a credible contender, put up little resistance against an opponent ranked 193 in the world on a breezy court two.

It was her eighth first-round defeat this year and her worst result at Roland Garros. Currently ranked 54 in the world, she won only one match between February and May this year.

Still without a title after seven years on the WTA tour, Kournikova sprayed wild errors around the bullring arena in a display of sloppy



JELENA DOKIC

tennis.

She produced 48 unforced errors to head for the exit at the first hurdle.

She was not helped by a nasty fall midway through the second set when she crashed to the clay with her legs in the air.

The Russian received treatment for a painful finger and she has also been suffering from a groin strain which she sustained in Rome two weeks ago.

Yugoslavia's Jelena Dokic has shaken off a slow start to beat Switzerland's Emmanuelle Gagliardi 6-4, 6-2 and move into the second round of the French Open.

The seventh seed swiftly fell 3-0 behind on Court One before finding her range on a bright and breezy Paris morning.

Dokic, who reached the third round last year, plays either Spain's Conchita Martinez or Italy's Maria Elena Camer in the next round.

## Henin, Federer fall



REUTERS, Paris

Justine Henin's French Open fireworks failed to ignite on a dank and wet Parisian day as the Belgian fifth seed was bundled out of the first round by Hungarian qualifier Aniko Kapros 4-6, 6-1, 6-0.

She was joined on the sidelines by eighth seed Roger Federer, who

title a week ago and quietly slid out of Roland Garros without putting up much of a fight.

"It was such a big moment in Hamburg -- it was kind of tough out there mentally," said Federer.

A semi-finalist last year, Henin's finesse and touch were all but useless on a sodden Court Suzanne Lenglen as rain drizzled throughout her one hour 52 minute ordeal.

Fellow Belgian and fourth seed Kim Clijsters narrowly avoided her



PHOTO: INTERNET

Belgium's Justine Henin listens to a doctor during her first round match of the French Open on May 28.

stumbled to a 6-3, 6-2, 6-4 defeat against gifted Moroccan Hicham Arazi.

compatriot's sorry fate, earlier surviving by the skin of her teeth on the same court with a 3-6-3-8-6 win over Tatiana Poutchek.

Men's fifth seed Yevgeny Kafelnikov also made heavy

## A star is born



REUTERS, Paris

Aniko Kapros vaulted onto centre stage at the greatest claycourt show on earth when she beat hot favourite Justine Henin in the first round of the French Open.

But the sudden elevation from supporting role to headline act did not faze the daughter of Hungarian circus acrobats Attila and Aniko.

"Very happy, I would say. That's the best words for it, very happy," she beamed after pulling off the shock 4-6, 6-1, 6-0 victory.

Kapros's sparkling display lit up an otherwise dank, wet second day of the grand slam event and the entertainment did not stop after matchpoint had been won.

The 18-year-old found it easier to explain how she beat the fifth seed than what her parents did for a living.

"My parents have this board in

the middle of the stage and my dad jumps and my mom flips and my dad catches her. That's mainly it," she said to hoots of laughter.



ANIKO KAPROS

"They worked in theatre ... in the circus ... travelling a lot."

The young Aniko spent her childhood touring the world with her acrobat parents and took up tennis in the Bahamas, where she lived for

a period.

She was, perhaps, destined for sporting greatness as her mother was a bronze medalist gymnast in the 1972 Olympics before joining the world of clowns, jugglers and lion-tamers.

"I listen to her because she did sports too," the Hungarian said. "In gymnastics it is tough mentally, too."

"She tells me what it was like... how it felt."

"But you can't really compare the two. In gymnastics you go and do your stuff in three minutes -- it just depends on you."

"But in tennis it depends on you and there is somebody on the other side of the net to beat."

"It is a different thing, it can go on for two or three hours."

By stealing the spotlight in Paris on Tuesday she paid back her mother's sacrifice 18 years ago.

Aniko senior had been forced to give up a place at the Lido Parisian revue when she became pregnant with the future tennis star.