

Kaneria eager to upstage Warne

AFP, Karachi
Pakistan's rookie leg-spinner Danish Kaneria Tuesday said he will not be intimidated at the prospect of appearing against Australia's legendary spinner Shane Warne in next month's Test series.

FIFA's fresh

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dealing with referees, the match calendar and the health of players. FIFA's executives also decided to completely change the membership of the governing body's permanent referees' committee, sacking all the current members and replacing them with new ones.

WC flop fear

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finished but early indications were positive despite poor attendance at some matches. "Some crowds have been below what we budgeted for but it is difficult with neutral games and live telecasts into the home market," he said.

Security storm at Asiad

14th Asian Games BUSAN 2002
AFP, Busan

North Korean athletes were in the crosshairs of an Asian Games controversy Wednesday over special treatment that has upset the media, other competitors, and the North's own supporters here.

South and North Korea have remained hostile half-a-century after the 1950-53 Korean War, which has never officially ended, and Busan organisers agreed to provide the North delegation with stepped-up security at the Games.

Tight security measures became apparent Monday when anyone hoping to catch a glimpse of some 150 North Korean athletes and officials arriving at Busan airport was hustled away by police.

The so-called "unification" cheerleaders, an official South Korean cheer squad for the North, turned up at the airport to give a rousing welcome to the northerners only to be sent packing by police.

Journalists, meanwhile, accuse organisers of imposing what amounts to a news blackout concerning the North.

National news agency Yonhap said reporters have been kept away from North Korean training sessions by organising committee officials who refuse to release training schedules and advise the media to keep coverage of the North's athletes to a minimum.

Reporters who do catch up with North Korean competitors also come up against security. The North Korean women's table tennis team were hustled away under escort by a security detail when journalists tried to speak to them at their training centre.

Games officials were reluctant to discuss security arrangements but chief spokesman for the Asian Games organising committee Sohn

Yohl admitted that heavy security was causing complaints.

"Under an agreement reached in South and North Korean sports talks we have worked out plans to protect North Korean athletes," he said.

"There was also a need from our side to prevent unhappy incidents in addition to North Korea's request."

South Korea's own athletes are also unhappy at alleged favourable treatment for the North.

While the South, and all other nations competing in the Games, use shuttle buses to and from venues for training and competition, a special fleet of private buses has been put at the disposal of the



South Korea's special armed police force stand guard at the entrance of the 14th Asian Games Athletes Village in Busan yesterday.

He added that the North Koreans, drawing huge interest here, were also entitled to prepare for competition in relative peace.

"Because of massive interest in the North Korean team we also need to let North Korean players train without interruptions," he said.

A section of the Asian Games security apparatus, the Security Control Headquarters, is devoted entirely to North Korea.

South Korea organisers are "providing excessive treatment to the North Korean team," one South Korean athlete grumbled to Yonhap.

Security could tighten a notch from Friday when another 150 North Korean athletes and officials arrive in Busan on the heels of the 150-strong first contingent that arrived Monday.

On Saturday, a boatload of more than 350 supporters from North Korea will dock in Busan for the duration of the Asiad.

Japan's toughest mission

14th Asian Games BUSAN 2002
AFP, Tokyo

Japan's sports chief on Wednesday predicted the toughest-ever Asian Games for its long-shot, long-running bid to regain from South Korea the number-two spot behind China in regional sport.

"We are braced for the Games which will be tougher than ever," Japan's Asian Games chief de mission Teruji Kogake told a news conference. "We want to unite as one to pave the way for the (2004) Athens Olympics."

The Asian Games will be held in the South Korean city of Busan, starting on Sunday.

Japan refuses to consider the idea of being upstaged by South Korea again, following its lower-keyed performance at the World Cup co-hosted by the two rival neighbouring countries.

South Korea reached the semifinals for Asia's best-ever World Cup result, roared on by millions of near-fanatical fans brimming with national pride. Japan plunged into despair when it was knocked out in the last-16 round.

Kogake earlier admitted: "It makes us shudder when we think about the support they displayed at the World Cup."

Japan will field 659 athletes in all but one of the 38 Asiad sports, its largest ever sporting delegation sent abroad.

South Korea's 769 athletes will go gung-ho for more than 80 gold medals.

But the Japanese Olympic Committee (JOC) has set its gold medal target at "more than 65," one better than its best-ever result produced in the 1994 Games at home in Hiroshima.

China dethroned Japan at the 1982 New Delhi Games, eight years after its return to the Asian Games family. In 1986, South Korea overtook Japan, which has been bedevilled by the absence of cash incentives and the lack of sponsorship for amateur sports in general.

Japan had also aimed for 65 in Bangkok but fell far short at 52, behind China's 129 and South Korea's 65.

It was outdoors by South Korea in 14 of 15 ball disciplines but relieved by unexpectedly brilliant performances by its swimmers and track stars.

The 2000 Sydney Olympics saw China finish third overall with 28 golds, behind the United States and Russia, with South Korea and Japan way back in the field with eight and five golds respectively.

Kogake pinned Japan's gold-medal hopes in Busan on athletics, swimming, judo, women's wrestling, softball, cycling and rowing. "We are all prepared for a tough fight this time," he said.

Kogake pointed out that impoverished North Korea, which sent a small team to Bangkok, would send more than 300 athletes for its unprecedented participation in an international sporting event in South Korea.

He also cited Taiwan's steady improvement in the regional sport hierarchy.

Olympic and world light-heavyweight (100kg) champion Kosei Inoue is spearheading Japan's bid for continued supremacy in judo which they gave to the world. He will step up into the show-piece open-weight class.

Koji Murobushi, who won the hammer throw silver medal at last year's world championships, is aiming for a second straight Asiad gold in a bid to emulate his father, Shigenobu, who won the title for five times in a row.

Veteran Harumi Hiroyama, 34, hopes to win the women's marathon to follow in the steps of Naoko Takahashi, who triumphed in Bangkok on her way to gold in Sydney.

Kosuke Kitajima is seen as a sure bet in the men's breaststroke 100 and 200 meters in the swimming pool expected to be dominated by China.

In synchronised swimming, Japan can well expect gold medals through world duet champions Miya Tachibana and Miho Takeda.

In women's wrestling, former 72-kilogram world champion Kyoko Hamaguchi goes for gold in three events.

Naoya Tsukahara, who won a silver medal at the 1999 world gymnastics championships, hopes to dent China's dominance in the sport.

Japanese women, who narrowly lost to the United States in the softball final at the Sydney Games, will relaunch their fresh Olympian campaign against regional rivals China and Taiwan.

On the baseball diamond, the Japanese squad, bolstered by minor league pros, may hold on to its dream of regaining the title from South Korea's professional all-stars, following its 13-1 defeat in

Andre, Pete to play at Paris

REUTERS, Paris

US Open champion Pete Sampras and beaten finalist Andre Agassi will take part in next month's Paris Masters event, organisers have said.

Sampras's entry into the field means that the American will probably continue his playing career at least till the end of the year as he has also entered the Swiss Indoors in Basel the week before.

The 31-year-old had hinted earlier this month that he may retire having achieved his objective of winning at least one more grand slam title.

Sampras won his 14th major and first title of any kind in over two years by defeating Agassi in the New York final.

He will have the opportunity to shine again in Paris, an event he won twice in 1995 and 1997, as the best 37 players in the world are expected in the French capital.

Key with openers

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would play a major part. Sri Lanka cruised past Pakistan and Holland while Australia crushed New Zealand and Bangladesh.

"Both teams will go into this game a bit under-done in the sense of not having to fight for victories but that is the price you pay for being a good side, you will have stretches where you will win easily," he said.

"Ultimately, they have match-winners and we have some match-winners too, there'll be some fight out there from both sides and it's whoever fights for longest that will come out on top."

The Sri Lankan coach confirmed the hosts have a fit full squad of 14 despite some minor niggles including batsman Mehala Jayawardene (back) and Jayasuriya (shoulder).

Rain prevails at Hong Kong

AFP, Hong Kong

Hong Kong's tropical rain wrecked the Hong Kong Open for a second consecutive day Wednesday with Spaniard Juan Carlos Ferrero and Austrian Stefan Koubek the only players able to get on court - and that was for just one solitary game.

Frustrated players, including world number three Marat Safin and former world number one Carlos Moya, were forced to watch the intermittent rain from the change rooms with tentative practice hits on wet courts their only respite.

Tournament second seed Ferrero and Koubek were forced to wait more than seven hours before getting on to center court, and managed just one game in three minutes of play, before the match was suspended because of wet weather.

Ferrero had led 6-2 2-2 when their match was called off on Tuesday night because of rain. Twenty-four hours later, the score stood at 6-2 2-3, with Koubek holding serve, when the frustrated players were again forced to walk off.

In other matches scheduled for Wednesday that were postponed until Thursday, Moya was due to play Jan Michael-Gambill, Thailand's Paradorn Srichapan was to face American Taylor Dent, and local favourite Michael Chang was matched up against Spain's Alex Corretja.

Only three matches from the first round of the 32-man draw have been played in three days of competition here.

But tournament director Lincoln Venancio said with the whole of the first round rescheduled to be played on Thursday, he was confident of the final being held as planned on



Qatari Women athletes arrive at the 14th Asian Games Athletes Village in Busan, South Korea yesterday.

Is this the beginning?

14th Asian Games BUSAN 2002
AFP, Seoul

The Asian Games in the South Korean port city of Busan provides the backdrop for the latest diplomatic drive to improve North-South relations.

The Busan Asiad will be the largest ever with 11,600 athletes and officials from 44 Olympic Council of Asia (OCA) members taking part for the first time.

And South Korean officials hope the presence of North Korean athletes and supporters in an international sports event in the South for the first time will promote peace on the world's last Cold War frontier.

For North Korea, the Asiad will be another example of its new drive to open up to the outside world, according to analysts and experts here.

"The North appears to be using the Asiad as a springboard for its latest move to ease an economic crisis and isolation," said Chon Hyon-Joon, a North Korea watcher at the Korea Institute for National Unification in Seoul.

"At the Busan Asiad, the North will try to harvest political and economic benefits by showing the world it is sincere in pursuing an inter-Korean thaw," he said.

The North's decision to send 356 athletes and officials to Busan followed an agreement at high-level talks between the two Koreas last month to put their flagging peace process back on track.

The agreement reduced military tensions over an inter-Korean naval clash in June that had eroded support for South Korean President Kim Dae-Jung's policy of seeking rapprochement with the communist state.

Despite tentative efforts at reconciliation, the two Koreas have never formally buried the hatchet since the 1950-53 war.

Domestically, Kim's Millennium Democratic Party (MDP) hopes the North's participation in the Asiad will give the party the boost it needs in its race for presidential elections in December.

But there are worries that any hitch to the North's participation could fuel sentiment among South Korean conservative groups, which are opposed to Kim's policy.

The two Koreas have agreed to allow their athletes to march together in the opening ceremony with flags featuring a sky blue image of the undivided Korean peninsula on a white background.

But the North's flag will fly for medal-awarding and other official ceremonies.

The opposition Grand National Party (GNP) has asked for strong

security measures to prevent the flag, banned under national security legislation here, from appearing in the streets.

"Strong steps must be taken not to see the fluttering of North Korean flags outside Asiad venues," GNP lawmaker Kim Chong-Ha said recently.

The GNP's demand reflects lingering suspicions in Seoul of the North's motives.

The South Korean government is clearly concerned that Pyongyang could score a diplomatic gold medal at the Asiad.

"Ironically, Kim's recent drive helped Pyongyang strengthen its political influence here," said Cho Chong-Bin, a political science professor at Kookmin University in Seoul.

"They know Kim's party is an underdog in the election race," he added.

Kim has been credited with efforts to ease inter-Korean tensions but his popularity nose-dived this year with two of his three sons in jail awaiting trial on corruption charges.

The Nobel Peace Prize winner also suffered a humiliating blow last month when the opposition-controlled National Assembly vetoed his second candidate for prime minister. He must stand down in February next year.

ROK spirits sky high

14th Asian Games BUSAN 2002
AFP, Seoul

South Korean ambitions for the Asian Games football tournament are sky-high following their success in the World Cup on home soil.

Though the South Korean squad for the Asiad bears little resemblance to the World Cup team, national expectations demand nothing short of a gold medal in the Games which run from September 29 to October 14.

"Our goal is naturally winning the Asiad. We will do our best to meet people's expectations," said Park Hang-Seo, 43, who inherited the national team coaching duties from Guus Hiddink, the Dutchman who led the South Korea squad to the World Cup semifinals.

The Asian Games football tournament is restricted to teams of under-23 players with three wild cards, or over-age players allowed in the final squads of 20.

The South Koreans have yet to name their final squad but the two dozen names already in the hat include six World Cup veterans.

They are expected to include two World Cup strikers, Lee Chun-Soo and Choi Tae-Uk and midfielder Hyun Young-Min in the squad while talented Lee Dong-Gook, out of favour for the World Cup, is back on international duty. Choi Sung-Gook, described here as South Korea's answer to Diego Maradona, is also in the starting blocks.

The last time the Asian Games came to South Korea, in 1986, South Korea won the soccer tournament.

They have never achieved that feat since. Indifferent performances frustrated national aspirations at subsequent Asiards, culminating in bitter disappointment in Bangkok four years ago when hosts Thailand beat them in the quarter-finals.

Former national team technical director Lee Young-Soo said the main competition will come from Iran, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Qatar, Japan, North Korea and China.

The North Koreans are clearly a force to be reckoned with and

showed their gritty determination in snatching a 0-0 draw with the South in the first match between the sides in 12 years, the historic reunification friendly on September 7.

But some teams are viewing the Asiad as preparation for the next Olympics and the next World Cup and will not necessarily be fielding their top players, said Lee.

"China and Japan are sending youngsters aged around 21 or below," he said.

"They are making a wise choice but we cannot afford to do that. In our case we are fielding some very good World Cup players including wild cards because we cannot afford to play soft."

"So you may say South Korea is the strongest candidate to win the Asian Games."

Coach Park said he was feeling the pressure of a nation who consider the football gold medal a foregone conclusion.

"We made it to the last four in the World Cup so it seems natural to win the Asiad," he said. "I feel heavy in my heart because of those high expectations."

Waugh aching

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Waugh said he had so far no plans of quitting international cricket after the forthcoming Ashes series against England at home.

"I want to keep playing as long as I am enjoying the game and improving. I'd like to go on my terms," said Waugh, who was axed from the Australian one-day squad after playing against New Zealand at Perth in February.

Waugh said he had not lost hope of staging a comeback in the national one-day team for next year's World Cup in South Africa.

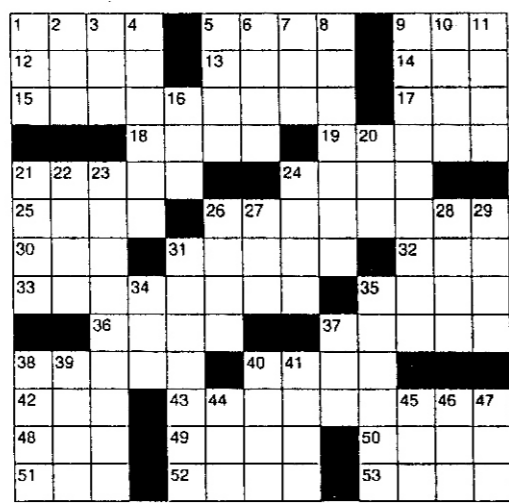


Spectators on Centre Court shelter under their umbrellas as they wait for the rain to stop at the Salem Open tennis tournament in Hong Kong yesterday.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS
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40 Period
41 Coffee
shop
lineup
44 Meadow
45 Good
Feeling,
o.g.
46 Edge
47 Witness



CRYPTOQUIP
D Q M Y B Q ' C T Q F B R L J B
P D R P K O X L R L S K P O X B K
Q M R X B E N R N K B, Q I P T N B
M B S P R Q H B E B C J P Y F.

Today's Cryptiquip Clue: K equals R
The Cryptiquip is a substitution cipher in which one letter stands for another. If you think that K equals O, it will equal O throughout the puzzle. Single letters, short words and words using an apostrophe give you clues to locating vowels. Solution is by trial and error.