



Muttiah Muralitharan

PHOTO: STAR FILE

Hosts' back to the wall



HEAD TO HEAD
Sri Lanka v South Africa

AFP, Durban

Recent head-to-head record of South Africa against Sri Lanka, ahead of their World Cup Group A day-night match at Kingsmead, here on Monday: Dec 6 2002, Bloemfontein: South Africa won by 6 wickets

Dec 4 2002	South Africa won by 8 wickets	Kimberley
Dec 1 2002	Sri Lanka won by 7 wickets	Benoni
Nov 29 2002	South Africa won by 177 runs	Centurion
Nov 27 2002	South Africa won by 6 wickets	Wanderers
Aug 21 2002	Sri Lanka won by 27 runs	Tangier
Aug 19 2002	Sri Lanka won by 6 wickets	Tangier
Aug 15 2002	Sri Lanka won by 93 runs	Tangier
Jan 17 2001	Sri Lanka won by 4 runs	Wanderers
Jan 14 2001	South Africa won by 5 wickets	Bloemfontein

Total matches played: 33
South Africa wins: 18 Sri Lanka wins: 14 No Result: 1

AFP, Durban

Sri Lankan captain Sanath Jayasuriya aims to crush South Africa's World Cup dream when the two sides clash in a do-or-die World Cup encounter under the Kingsmead lights on Monday.

"I think we've got a good chance," he said of a match which could secure top place in Pool B for the 1996 champions and eliminate the hosts from Super Six contention.

With Kenya having already qualified, there are only two places left to fight over with New Zealand heavily tipped to claim one of them as they face the minnows of Canada in their final encounter.

Jayasuriya said he believed Sri Lanka could win.

SEE PAGE 15

Joy here, sorrow there

REUTERS, New Delhi/Islamabad

Cricket-crazy fans danced on the streets in New Delhi but were plunged into gloom in Islamabad after India beat bitter foes Pakistan in what was billed as the "Clash of the Centurion".

The Indian team cruised to a six-wicket win in a World Cup match between players of the two hostile neighbours at Centurion Park in South Africa that had deep political undertones.

"We won the war without any bloodshed," said Rahul Rathi, a 28-year-old businessman in India's eastern city of Calcutta.

"It's a really big disappointment for all of us, especially because it was a match against India," said Islamabad resident Fahmina Tariq.

In the heart of the Indian capital, fans erupted with joy, dancing in the streets to throbbing music. Millions elsewhere in India also took to the streets, setting off firecrackers, beating drums and chanting. "Long live India, we're the champs!"

"This is what we wanted to see India playing Pakistan and walloping them. My friends and I screamed ourselves hoarse," New Delhi cricket fan Samir Rai said.

In the southern Indian city of Bangalore, the technology capital, 20 motorcyclists drove in formation through the downtown carrying a huge Indian flag, shouting deliriously.

But across the border in Pakistan, the streets were deserted as the country's cricket lovers went into mourning.

"It was a disgrace, a horrible defeat at the hands of India," said an Islamabad housewife.

Cricket is like a religion in both countries, which have gone to war against each other three times since independence in 1947, twice over the disputed Himalayan region of Kashmir.

The last time the countries met on the cricket field was in June 2000 in the Asia Cup in Dhaka when Pakistan triumphed. The Indian government has banned all bilateral cricket with Pakistan since then because of tensions over

Kashmir.

In Muslim-majority Indian Kashmir, where a revolt against New Delhi's rule has raged since 1989, fans with divided loyalties clustered outside television shops showing the match.

"India won the game and taught Pakistan a lesson," said banker Bilkis Mir in Srinagar, Jammu and Kashmir's summer capital.

"I was praying Pakistan would win. We should have all prayed for them we're religiously one," said student Tahir Bhat.

While the match was underway, streets and markets on both sides of the border were empty as young and old watched the action and some fans painted their faces in the colours of their national flags. In New Delhi, cinemas abandoned movies and screened the match instead.

But the intense passions have a darker side and authorities on both sides of the border had stepped up

SEE PAGE 15



Bangladesh cricket is upside down.

PHOTO: AFP

Youngsters not to be blamed

AL-AMIN from Johannesburg

Bangladesh captain Khaled Mashud made no excuses after his side's dismal campaign in the 2003 World Cup that ended with a 32-run defeat against Kenya at the Wanderers on Saturday.

"We have failed and there is no excuse for that," said Mashud at a post-match briefing on Saturday.

Bangladesh will remember this World Cup for all the wrong reasons. Starting with a stunning 60-run defeat at the hands of minnows Canada at Kingsmead in Durban, Bangladesh completed a deplorable batting performance against the East Africans in Johannesburg.

It was their fifth defeat from six games, which easily could have been their sixth out of six had not rain saved them against the West Indies.

They lost both their matches

against Sri Lanka and South Africa by ten wickets.

It was a story of brittle Bangladesh batting in all their six Pool B games, their highest score being 198 against New Zealand at Kimberley.

But Mashud was not ready to accept that the batting floundered due to the presence of so many young players.

"You cannot blame the younger members of the team. The experienced players like Al-Shahriar, Habibul Bashar, Khaled Mahmud, Mohammed Rafique, Manjural and myself have also failed," he argued.

He however admitted that Akram Khan was the only batsman who played proper cricket while the rest never cared to build partnerships.

"The score of 217 was always an

SEE PAGE 15



PHOTO: INTERNET

LET THE PARTY BEGIN: Indian fans burst crackers on the streets in Bombay to celebrate victory over Pakistan at Centurion on March 1.

No Holding back of criticism

AFP, Johannesburg

West Indian great Michael Holding on Sunday questioned the qualification process for the World Cup's Super Sixes, saying blood and sweat counted for little.

Holding, a member of the World Cup's technical committee, believes giving Zimbabwe and Kenya the points forfeited by England and New Zealand for refusing to play in those countries had undermined the competition.

"The Super Six were meant to be those teams that had played the best cricket in the 42 preliminary matches and had finished in the top three positions in their respective groups," Holding wrote in his syndicated column.

"But unfortunately the off the field activities have ensured that

may not be the case.

"Should teams be allocated points as freely as this in such a prestigious and financially rewarding tournament?"



MICHAEL HOLDING

"Should teams who have played their guts out, giving of their best and heaven forbid, suffered injuries in the process, be allowed to be sent home because another team pocketed unearned points and leapfrogged ahead of them?"

"The simple answer is no."

Kenya became the first non-Test playing nation to book their place in the Super Sixes, while Zimbabwe have a chance if they defeat Pakistan by a big margin at Bulawayo on Tuesday.

Holding believes the answer lies in taking a leaf out of what happens in other sports.

"Take FIFA for example. You

SEE PAGE 15

Quips & Quotes

AFP, Johannesburg

Who's saying what at the World Cup:

"Beating Pakistan does not mean we have won the World Cup. A lot of work remains to be done and we don't want to be caught napping."

India skipper Saurav Ganguly.

"Playing Pakistan is always an important game and to beat them for the fourth time in the World Cup was really special."

Sachin Tendulkar after his man-of-the-match performance of 98.

"It will not be easy to lift the team after this."

Pakistan skipper Waqar Younis.

"The ICC should take notice. Our performances here have shown that we are worth more international matches."

Kenya captain Steve Tikolo after his side reached the Super Six.

Imran for Mandela like 'umpire'

AFP, New Delhi

Pakistani cricket champion turned politician Imran Khan called Sunday for a "neutral umpire" like Nelson Mandela to resolve disputes between India and Pakistan.

Speaking to a conference in the Indian capital, the Pakistani MP said it was "important for the leaders to begin talks" between the South Asian rivals.

"If the mistrust between the two is too much, then let us agree on bringing in neutral umpires like Nelson Mandela to mediate," said Imran, quoted by the Press Trust of India news agency.

"I wish the UN could have come to the rescue of the people of the two countries and successfully waded their way from the air of mistrust prevailing for quite some time," Imran said.

India and Pakistan have been at loggerheads, often violently so,

over the Himalayan territory of Kashmir for a half-century.

India rejects any third-party mediation in the dispute, as it considers Kashmir part of the Indian union.

Imran said earlier on his visit here that South Asia's most popular pastime could help ease tensions between India and Pakistan.

"Cricket can help make all the difference in breaking the ice," Imran told The Times of India in an interview.

"Cricket between India and Pakistan would definitely be a step towards normalisation of ties. After all, this state of tension cannot be allowed to continue indefinitely."

The former all-rounder, who led Pakistan to an epic triumph in the 1992 World Cup in Australia, felt hardliners on both sides of the

SEE PAGE 15



Saeed Anwar is enjoying his cricket.

PHOTO: AFP

A father in mourning

AFP, Johannesburg

An emotional Pakistan opener is preaching Islam to recover from the death of his young daughter Bismah who died in Lahore in August, 2001 following a mysterious illness.

"Her death was Allah's (God's) wish and turning to religion has given me the strength to cope with the tragedy," Anwar said.

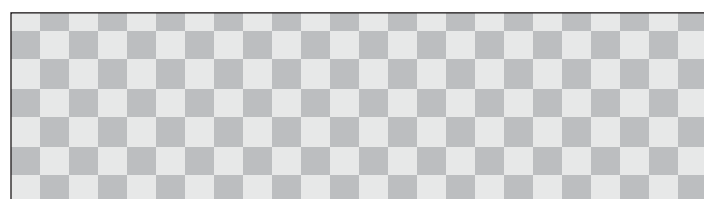
His selection for the World Cup

was questioned by the Pakistani media, who called it a gamble since Anwar had lost his batting form while devoting his time to preaching.

Anwar was also unfairly accused of distracting teammates by urging them to attend his lectures.

"I have tried to balance my life and want to play as long as I am fit to compete in top class cricket," said Anwar.

SEE PAGE 15



Look before you leap

LENIN GANI

Someone should have reminded the Bangladesh cricketers to 'look before you leap' before sending them off to South Africa to play in the World Cup.

Their African adventure was more of a nightmare. Because they failed to win a match, they failed to cross the 200-run mark for once and what is more they even failed beat lowly Canada.

During a press conference prior to their departure, the team management boldly set itself a target of 'two wins and an upset'. Now, they

will be returning home with eggs in their faces.

In five completed matches (Canada-120, Sri Lanka-124, South Africa-108, New Zealand-198 and Kenya-185) the team's aggregate total was 735 runs.

Perhaps the one thing they can be proud of is denying West Indies the chance to play in the Super Sixes. And that was only possible when rain came to the rescue.

Several questions will be asked on the selection of certain players

SEE PAGE 15



PHOTO: AFP

Imran Khan... ease tension through cricket.