

Rashid pulls out of Protea Tests

AFP, Rawalpindi
Pakistan's wicketkeeper and former captain Rashid Latif pulled out of the two-match Test series against South Africa Thursday, citing family commitments.

"I have decided not to play the Tests as I have family commitments and I have informed the Pakistan Cricket Board about my decision," Latif, 34, told reporters.

Latif, who resigned the captaincy last month shortly after being suspended for claiming an unfair catch in the Multan Test against Bangladesh, said he would be available for Pakistan's tour of New Zealand in December.

"I assure you there is no controversy behind my decision," he said.

Latif's decision may mean an end to his controversial career, in which he earned huge attention for blowing the whistle on a match-fixing controversy in 1995.

He has played 37 Tests and 164 one-day internationals, taking 130 dismissals in Tests and 218 in one-dayers.

Latif also wrote a letter to the International Cricket Council (ICC) in June stating that match-fixing was still practised in international cricket, incurring the disdain of Pakistani cricket officials.

PCB chief executive Rameez Raja said he was unaware of Latif's pull-out from the Tests and refused to comment.

Latif's place is likely to go to Kamran Akmal, who made his Test debut in Zimbabwe last year and played all five one-day internationals against Bangladesh last month when Latif was suspended.

Records roll

FROM PAGE 13
Kamala Akher of Ansars. The remaining two records were set in men's and women's team relay events.

Merina set the record in 800m freestyle, Dolly in 50m butterfly, Samedul in 50m breaststroke, Mahfuz in 50m backstroke, Rubel in 200m backstroke and Kamala in 200m backstroke.

Bangladesh Army team won the men's 4x100m relay while BJMC won the women's 4x100m relay with new records.

Unwanted

FROM PAGE 13
Is there any point for any player to be made to train for five months only to find out he is ineligible for even a warm-up match?

This will certainly have a damaging effect on young players looking for a break into international cricket. Besides, this is absolutely unacceptable behaviour on the part of the Faruque Ahmed-led selection panel.

Although it was heartbreak for Fahim, there was good news for opening batsman Moniruzzaman and leg-spinner Mosaddek Hossain who got the nod in the practice selections.

National opener Hannan Sarker will lead the BCB President's Eleven in the first three-day match against England at the Bangabandhu National Stadium on October 12.

Rajin Saleh, the find of the Pakistan tour, will captain the Bangladesh A team in the second practice match starting on October 16.

SQUADS

BCB PRESIDENT'S ELEVEN: Hannan Sarker (captain), Nafees Iqbal, Aftab Ahmed, Moniruzzaman, Nazimuddin, Mushfiqur Rahman, Nadif Chowdhury, Anwar Hossain, Enamul Haque junior, Anwar Hossain Monir, Gazi Alamgir, Abul Bashar and Ashiqur Rahman.

BANGLADESH A: Rajin Saleh (captain), Javed Omar, Nafees Iqbal, Nazimuddin, Aftab Ahmed, Gazi Sagir Hossain, Ashiqur Rahman, Mosaddek Hossain, Arafat Sunny, Tareq Aziz Khan, Ziaur Rahman, Talha Jubair and Alamgir Kabir.



PHOTO: AFP

A file photo of the state-of-the-art Sheikh Zayed Cricket Stadium in Abu Dhabi. The 20,000-seater facility, will host world champions Australia, New Zealand and India in April after being launched in March with a game featuring matches between Indian and Pakistani veterans.

Cricket's new frontier

AFP, New Delhi

Cricket's growing global circuit is set to expand further early next year when Abu Dhabi stakes its claim to host one-day internationals at its new state-of-the-art facility.

Local officials hope to rope in world champions Australia, New Zealand and India for the inaugural event in April after a soft-launch in March featuring matches between Indian and Pakistani veterans.

The 20,000-seater Sheikh Zayed Cricket Stadium in the capital city of the United Arab Emirates is being hailed as a marvel of modern architecture and one of the sport's most glittering arenas.

The multi-million-dollar complex, named after the President of UAE and the current Ruler of Abu Dhabi, boasts of expansive dressing rooms for players, floodlights, hospitality suites, an ultra-modern media centre and restaurants.

The centre square, comprising eight wickets, is complimented by top-grade practice facilities just outside the main stadium while the adjacent clubhouse contains a modern gymnasium for the players.

Unlike neighbouring Sharjah, already a popular cricket venue funded by local businessman Abdul Rehman Bukhatir, the stadium in Abu Dhabi is backed by the royal family which is interested in promoting the sport in Abu Dhabi.

Abu Dhabi's Crown Prince, Sheikh Khalifa Bin Zayed Al Nahyan, and Minister for higher education, Sheikh Nahayan, Mubarak Al Nahyan, are actively associated with the cricket project.

"We want to make Abu Dhabi a regular cricket venue with at least two or three tournaments a year," said BR Shetty, an expatriate Indian businessman who was recently appointed president of the Abu Dhabi cricket council by a special decree of the royal family.

Shetty is confident he will be able to convince India, who draw in big sponsorship money because of its vast cricket-crazy TV audiences, to play in Abu Dhabi.

Saurav Ganguly's men have not played in off-shore venues like Sharjah, Toronto and Singapore since April, 2000 following a directive from the government to shun "meaningless" one-day events for

three years in the wake of the match-fixing controversy.

That ban ends next April and even though India are still reluctant to play in Sharjah, Shetty is hopeful the ice will be broken at the new stadium.

"I personally met Indian Deputy Prime Minister Lal Krishna Advani and Sports Minister Vikram Verma and they both agreed in principle to send the team to Abu Dhabi," Shetty told AFP.

"We are in touch with the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) and its president Jagmohan Dalmiya has assured me the team will play in April provided there are no other commitments."

India have no prior engagements in that period unless the government gives the green light for the first-ever Test tour of Pakistan in 15 years which is tentatively scheduled for March and April.

As a build-up for hosting the Indians, Abu Dhabi is organising a 'cricket for peace' event in March featuring ex-Test players from India, Pakistan and the rest of the world.s

'Spread the game in US'

Cricket

REUTERS, Rawalpindi

Former Pakistan captain Wasim Akram believes the United States is a huge potential market for cricket and has urged the International Cricket Council (ICC) to do more to promote the sport there.

"If the ICC wants cricket to be truly globalised and the USA to play an active role in the 2007 World Cup it has to start delivering practically and giving proper funds for the development of the sport," Wasim told Reuters on Thursday.

The 36-year-old is being honoured on Sunday by the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) during the final one-day international between Pakistan and South Africa for his outstanding services to Pakistan cricket.

Wasim, rated as one of the finest left-arm fast bowlers to grace the game, retired this year after being dropped from the Pakistan team after the World Cup.

He remains the only bowler to take 500 wickets in one-day internationals and claimed 414 test victims. Akram, who returned home after

attending a victory dinner in Michigan, United States of a local club side, said he had been impressed with the interest in cricket in the States.

"There is lot of interest because of the diversification of cultures. Unfortunately the ICC has so far worked only on paper for promoting cricket in the States but done nothing practically," he said.

"On paper you can do a lot but unless the ICC designates funds it would be difficult for the United States to figure prominently in the next World Cup, leave alone field a competitive outfit in the tournament."

Wasim, who for the last two years has participated in international double wicket tournaments in New Jersey and Houston, said the ICC needed to tap into the cricket market in the United States.

Next year, Wasim is organising a World XI versus Asian XI series of matches in New York. "Hopefully, we will have the top players including Indians involved in the series and it will boost cricket in the States," he said.

Wasim, who will be at the Rawalpindi Stadium on October 12 for the final one-dayer against South Africa, believes Pakistan have a

very good chance of winning the series.

"From what I have seen of our team, it is progressing well and they have lot of spirit. (Former captain) Rashid Latif and (captain) Inzamamul Haq have done a good job with the boys. They just have to lift themselves for the final two games. I think they will win the series," he said.

Akram said the absence of Inzamam and Mohammad Sami had made a big difference in the third one-dayer, which South Africa won to reduce Pakistan's lead to 2-1.

Sponsors of the series Pepsi Cola International Wednesday unveiled plans to give a grand farewell to Wasim, who retired in May, for his services to the country during a 19-year career during in which he also led Pakistan.

"The last match of the ongoing Pakistan-South Africa one-day series to be played in Rawalpindi on October 12 will be dedicated to Wasim and will conclude with a farewell ceremony in Wasim's honour," said a sponsors press release.

Henman in quarters

REUTERS, Vienna

Britain's Tim Henman knocked out fourth seed Sjeng Schalken of the Netherlands 6-2, 2-6, 6-2 on Wednesday to book a place in the quarterfinals of the indoor CA Trophy.

Playing in his first ATP tournament since losing in the first round of the US Open in August, Henman stormed through the first set, using his trademark chip and charge game to full effect against a stunned Schalken.

Schalken woke up in the second set and began to put pressure on Henman on his serve. But Henman, a winner here three years ago, came back with a vengeance in the third set and broke the Dutchman's serve twice to secure the match.

"I'm really pleased with my overall performance -- Sjeng's a good player so it's a good boost for my confidence and another match under my belt," Henman said.

"In the second set I was too aggressive and made too many unforced errors, but I got the balance right in the third set where I was more patient and served well," he added.

The unseeded Briton next plays either eighth seed Albert Costa or Jonas Bjorkman in the last eight.

In first-round action, second seed Carlos Moya shrugged off the loss of a tight second-set tie-break to overcome Chile's Fernando Gonzalez 6-4, 6-7, 6-1.

"He's a dangerous player, but my serve was working well and I was mentally very focused," the Spaniard said.

A strong showing in Vienna is important if Moya wants to remain in contention for one of the last three spots at the Masters Cup in Houston next month.

Hayden hammers

FROM PAGE 13
drove Streak's second ball of the match to the cover boundary.

Ervine, a 21-year-old medium-pacer playing in only his third Test, provided the one bright light for Zimbabwe, capturing 2-56 from 17 persistent overs.

SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard at the close of play on the opening day of the first test between Australia and Zimbabwe in Perth on Thursday:

Table with columns: AUSTRALIA: First innings, Langer b Ervine, Hayden not out, Ponting lbw b Ervine, Martyn c Wishart b Gripper, Waugh not out, Extras: (b-4, lb-4, w-1, nb-3), Total: (For 3 wks in 90 overs) 372, Fall of wickets: 1-43, 2-102, 3-199. Table with columns: BOWLER, O, M, R, W, Ervine, 27, 3, 74, 0, Price, 22, 5, 94, 0, Gripper, 13, 0, 58, 1. ZIMBABWE: Streak, Ebrahim, Gripper, Vermeulen, Carlisle, Wishart, Taibu, Evans, Blythe, Ervine, Price.

British help

FROM PAGE 13
According to England team spokesman Andrew Waipole, England has requested BCB to make this arrangement so that the visitors could avail better training facilities in Dhaka.

Meanwhile, an English reporter on Thursday said that the English Cricket Board had consulted with the South African cricket team before coming to Bangladesh. And it was the South Africans who had informed them that hotel and practice facilities were not up to standard in Chittagong.

Double-up Dravid

FROM PAGE 13
pitch which helped neither seamers nor spinners.

The Indian batting flourished in the afternoon as Dravid and Ganguly played the New Zealand attack with a wide range of attacking shots.

Dravid, who was on 110 overnight, completed his double-century in the post-lunch session when he on-drove seamer Styris for four.

He was caught behind off fast bowler Jacob Oram immediately after tea, but not before putting his team in a commanding position.

Ganguly curbed his strokes in the beginning, but grew in confidence as the match progressed. He looked at his best after reaching his half-century, lofting spinners Daniel Vettori twice and Paul Wiseman once for sixes.

The Indian skipper declared the innings after completing his 10th Test century, which came off 211 balls with three sixes and eight fours.

Patel, playing on his home ground, chipped in with a brisk 29 notout.

New Zealand did well in the morning session when they restricted the hosts to just 71 runs and also dismissed well-set Laxman before being demoralised by Dravid and Ganguly.

SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard at stumps on the second day of the first Test between India and New Zealand at the

Sardar Patel Stadium in Ahmedabad on Thursday:

Table with columns: INDIA: First innings, Chopra c and b Vettori, Sehwa lbw b Tuffey, Dravid c Hart b Oram, Tendulkar c Astle b Styris, Laxman c Wiseman b Vettori, Ganguly not out, Patel not out, Extras: (b-2, lb-3, nb-1), Total: (For 5 wks decl in 159 overs) 500, Fall of wickets: 1-35, 2-107, 3-134, 4-264, 5-446, Did not bat: Kumble, Harbhajan, Zaheer, Balaji. BOWLER, O, M, R, W, Tuffey, 31, 6, 103, 1, Oram, 33, 8, 95, 1, Styris, 26, 5, 83, 1, Vettori, 44, 9, 128, 2, McMillan, 4, 1, 6, 0, Wiseman, 21, 0, 80, 0. NEW ZEALAND: Firstinnings, Richardson b Zaheer, Vincent c Patel b Zaheer, Fleming b Zaheer, Styris not out, Astle not out, Extras: (lb-3, nb-1), Total: (For 3 wks in 19 overs) 41, Fall of wickets: 1-11, 2-16, 3-17, To bat: McMillan, Oram, Hart, Vettori, Tuffey, Wiseman. BOWLER, O, M, R, W, Zaheer, 7, 1, 16, 3, Balaji, 5, 2, 9, 0, Kumble, 5, 2, 10, 0, Harbhajan, 2, 0, 3, 0.

Russians rush in

Tennis

REUTERS, Filderstadt

Elena Dementieva overcame fellow Russian Nadia Petrova and an inconsistent serve to reach the second round of the Porsche Tennis Grand Prix on Wednesday.

She won 6-3, 6-3 and was joined by compatriot Anastasia Myskina, who recovered from a disastrous start to advance 0-6, 6-1, 4-0 when Alexandra Stevenson retired with a back strain.

Another Russian threatened an upset, but was unable to deliver, as seventh seeded American Chanda Rubin edged past Vera Zvonareva 1-6, 6-4, 6-3.

Zvonareva controlled the opening set but Rubin levelled at one set all before five consecutive breaks of serve in the final set left Rubin serving for victory at 5-3. Even then, she had to fend off a break point before finally closing out the match.

Fifth seed Amelie Mauresmo of France was also stretched in the first set before beating Meghann Shaughnessy 7-6, 6-2.

Shaughnessy surrendered just

one point in her first three service games and then led 40-0 on Mauresmo's serve at 3-2. But Mauresmo survived that threat with the aid of two aces and went on to take the tiebreak before dominating the second set.

Dementieva, who with Myskina has been one of the most successful players on the WTA Tour in recent weeks, had her serve broken four times by French Open semi-finalist Petrova.

But for her part, Petrova struggled with her inconsistent groundstrokes and volleys.

"I think we both had a problem with our serve today, especially the first one, so it was difficult," Dementieva said.

"But when I could do it (serve) it was a little advantage for me and I felt I had a chance to win."

Russians have dominated the weeks since the US Open, with Dementieva, Myskina and 16-year-old Maria Sharapova claiming all five titles on offer.

There are now two Russians in the top 10, and four in the top 15, and according to Dementieva the success of one inspires success in the others.

"Anastasia told me that after I won my two titles in Asia it was a big motivation for her to win in Leipzig," said Dementieva, who last month won both Ball and Shanghai.

"That's how it works. One wants to be better than the other one and that's why there are a lot of Russians right now."

Myskina, who has won Leipzig and Moscow in successive weeks, admitted she was tired in the opening set but that her opponent let her into the match.

"I was a little bit tired. Not a little bit, a lot, and I couldn't really concentrate in the first set," said Myskina. "Then she started missing a lot and I thought maybe I should try harder. I did, and then she retired."

"It's really tough mentally, and physically also, to play again so soon after Moscow. But I have a goal to play the Tour Championships this year, and I really want to reach this goal."



PHOTO: AFP

Russia's Anastasia Myskina bounces her racket during her match against American Alexandra Stevenson at the Porsche Grand Prix in Filderstadt on October 8. Myskina won after Stevenson abandoned the match.

Wise Andy won't be back to Zimbabwe

Cricket

REUTERS, Melbourne

Zimbabwe's leading run scorer Andy Flower arrived in Australia on Thursday to play state cricket and said he held out little hope of a swift return to his homeland.

Wicketkeeper-batsman Flower, who averages more than 50 in tests, joined teammate Henry Olonga in wearing black armbands to "mourn the death of democracy" in Zimbabwe during the World Cup in southern Africa earlier this year.

"There was no chance really to go back to Zimbabwe and there won't be for a while," Flower, 35, told reporters in Adelaide where he will play for South Australia this season.

Flower and Olonga have retired from the international game following their protests against President Robert Mugabe, who is battling international isolation over accusations of human rights and other abuses in Zimbabwe.

Former Zimbabwe captain Flower, who scored 4,794 runs at 51.54 in 63 tests, said: "I don't think it would be the smartest thing for either of us (he and Olonga) to go back at the moment."

The timing of his arrival in Adelaide is a painful reminder for Zimbabwe that they are without their top player. Captain Heath Streak's side begin their two-test series against Australia in Perth later on Thursday.

"...I have strong feelings for the country and I hope things turn around there. A lot of the decisions being made there at the moment by the hierarchy are poor decisions," Flower said.

Fast bowler Olonga and Flower

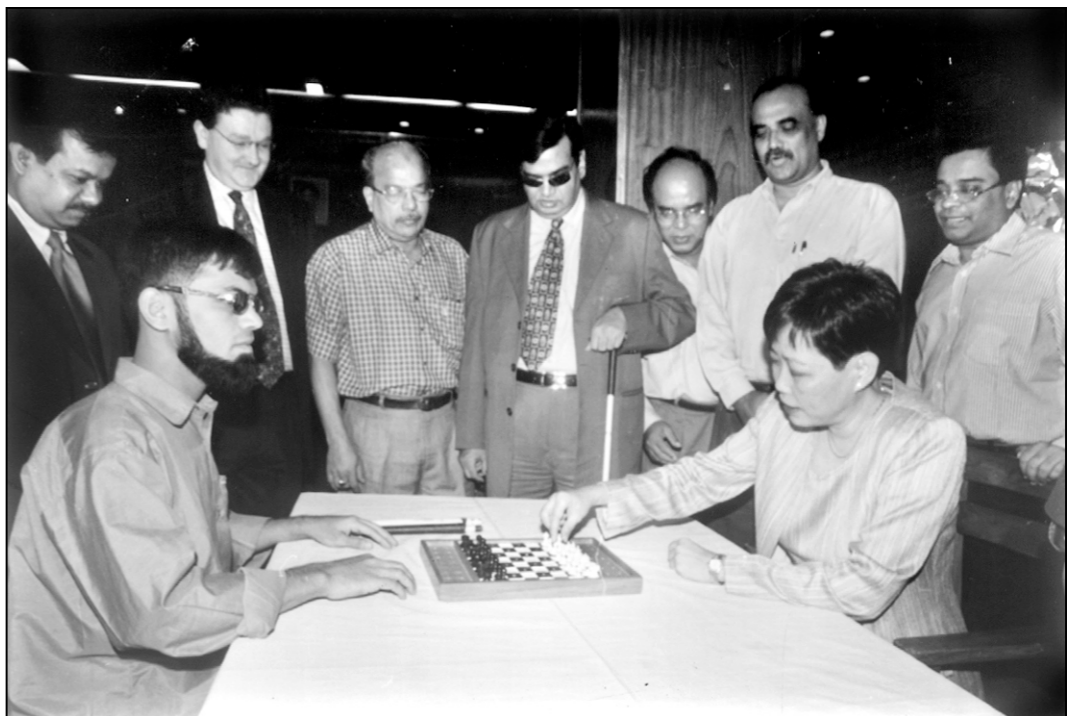


PHOTO: COURTESY

Standard Chartered Singapore's chief executive Euleen Goh makes a move during the opening ceremony of the fifth special national chess tournament yesterday.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

Crossword puzzle grid with clues for Across and Down. Includes a solution time of 21 mins and a solution key at the bottom.

Cryptoquip puzzle grid with a key: G Q J F B Z E T Q U A J F G F. Includes a clue: 'G Z S L Q X G X A F G.' and a solution: 'Yesterday's Cryptoquip: SCARED OF BIG GRIZZLIES. I WENT RIGHT WHEN THE DIRECTIONS SAID "BEAR LEFT"'. Today's Cryptoquip Clue: S equals C.

The Cryptoquip is a substitution cipher in which one letter stands for another. If you think that X 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.