

Australia touring Zim

 Cricket

AFP, Melbourne

Cricket Australia said it was committed to tour Zimbabwe next month despite reports of upheaval within the Zimbabwean team.

A boycott by up to 11 Zimbabwe players is seen as the first direct consequence of the simmering crisis over the ousting of national captain Heath Streak, which has split cricket in the African nation along racial lines.

Australia are scheduled to play two Tests and three one-dayers in Zimbabwe, with the opening warm-up game starting on May 17.

Zimbabwe's most capped player, Grant Flower, has warned the Australian tour could prove farcical and told the Sydney Morning Herald on Tuesday he believed there was a

"very good possibility" Zimbabwe could lose their Test and one-day international cricket status.

But Cricket Australia spokesman Graeme Vimpani said here on Tuesday the uncertainty within the Zimbabwe team would not affect the decision on whether to tour.

"We are committed to the tour contingent on safety and security -- as long as those two boxes are ticked we will go," Vimpani said.

"Our position is not to make any comment on what happens in Zimbabwe. We are concerned with our own backyard.

"It is up to Zimbabwe to work through those issues, it's not up to us."

Australian Test batsman Matthew Hayden said the situation in Zimbabwe cricket was a concern, but he believed the tour should go ahead.

"I think it's taken them and will

take them a long time to become a world leader in cricket but that doesn't neglect the fact that we need to take the opportunities to develop that," Hayden said on Tuesday.

"It took New Zealand 27 years to win a Test match -- we need to go over there and show our support for the global game."

Streak triggered the biggest crisis to hit Zimbabwe cricket since it became a full member of the International Cricket Council (ICC) more than a decade ago when he called earlier this month for the removal from the selection panel of anybody who had not played at least first-class cricket, and of a TV commentator.

Streak was immediately sacked and there was no debate about his concerns.

CJKS-Ispahani cricket

CU CORRESPONDENT

Chittagong City Corporation Ekadash recorded a two-wicket victory over Friends Club in the CJKS-Ispahani Premier Division Cricket League at the MA Aziz Stadium yesterday.

Sent into bat, Friends Club made 212 before being all out in 49.5 overs. Sabbir Khan top-scored with 60 while skipper Titu added 28. Saifullah Khan grabbed four wickets for winning team.

In reply, CCC Ekadash reached 213 for eight in 49.2 overs. Former national skipper Akram Khan hammered a glorious 95 not out that featured eight hits to the fence. Friends Club's Rahul took three for 44.

FIRST DIVISION

Meanwhile, Bengle Club defeated Lalalabad Sports Association by two wickets at the Dampara Police Lines ground.

After winning the toss, Lalalabad scored 149 all out in 35.1 over. Babu scored highest 41. Jitu of Bengle Club snatched five wickets.

In reply, Bengle Club reached 153 for eight in 43.4 overs. Jitu top-scored 26 runs. Shoheld and Tutul of Lalalabad Sports Association took two wickets each.

On Monday, Brothers Union recorded a comprehensive 118-run victory over Satadal Club.

Put into bat, Brothers Union scored 285-7 with Nuruzzaman hitting 69. Naeem (58) and Arif Ahmed who added 52, were the other main contrived. Tayeb grabbed two wickets for Satadal Club.

In reply, Satadal Club scored 167 before being all out in 42.4 overs. Brothers' Mominul Haque starred with the ball claiming four wickets. Nuruzzaman also took two wickets.

Elsewhere, Bakalia Ekadash defeated Kolol Sangha by three wickets in their First Division match.

Batting first, Kolol Sangha scored 117 in 45.1 overs. The winners replied with 120-7 in 40 overs.

Cricket can

FROM PAGE 13
fans waving the saffron, white and green national flag surrounded by thousands of ecstatic Pakistanis, have had a greater impact than any politician's speech.

Cricketers past and present recognise that the series goes far beyond the boundary rope.

"This was the medium to get everyone together again," former Pakistani player Intikhab Alam said.

Foreign secretaries are due to meet in May or June before foreign ministers gather in July or August to push forward a "composite dialogue" that will include the key issue of Kashmir, the Himalayan region claimed by both countries.

The two sides have agreed a ceasefire along the de facto border separating their armies in Kashmir, which lies at the heart of their dispute and triggered two of three wars they have fought since independence and partition in 1947.

SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard at stumps on the first day of the third and final Test between Pakistan and India at the Rawalpindi Stadium on Tuesday:

PAKISTAN: Firstinnings

Farhatlbwb Nehra	16
Umarlbwb Balaji	9
Hameed c Laxman b Pathan	26
Inzamam c Patel b Nehra	15
Younahab Pathan	13
Kamallbwb Balaji	21
Akmal c Laxman b Balaji	17
Samirun out	49
Akhtar b Balaji	0
Akbarlbwb Kumble	25
Kanerianot out	4

Extras: (b-14, lb-5, nb-3, w-7) 29
Total: (All out in 72.5 overs) 224
Fall of wickets: 1-34, 2-34, 3-77, 4-77, 5-110, 6-120, 7-137, 8-137, 9-207

Bowler	O	M	R	W
Pathan	22	7	49	2
Balaji	19	4	63	4
Nehra	21	4	60	2
Ganguly	2	0	9	0
Kumble	8.5	2	24	1

INDIA: Firstinnings
Sehwag c Hameed b Akhtar 0
Patel not out 13
Dravid not out 10
Total: (For 1 wkt in 15 overs) 23
Fall of wickets: 1-0

To bat: Tendulkar, Laxman, Ganguly, Yuvraj, Pathan, Balaji, Kumble, Nehra

Bowler	O	M	R	W
Akhtar	5	4	4	1
Akbar	5	0	14	0
Kanerlia	3	0	4	0
Samis	2	1	1	0

Umpires: David Shepherd (England) and Rudi Koertzen (South Africa)

Repeat final

FROM PAGE 13
SABUJ KANAN HIGH: 132 all out in 43.3 overs (Gourav 36, Babu 18; Hanif 3-21, Rajib 2-20, Mithu 2-32)
PARJIAR KALINDI HIGH: 136 for 2 in 32 overs (Ali 53, Masud 47; Johnny 1-15, Rubel 1-22)
Result: Parjari Kalindi High won by eight wickets.

'Absurd' says Beckham

 Football

AFP, London

England football captain David Beckham, engulfed by a media storm surrounding his love life, said Monday newspaper allegations that he had cheated on his wife Victoria with two other women were "absurd".

"This weekend a series of even more absurd and unsubstantiated claims have been published about David and Victoria Beckham," said a statement from 19 management, the agency which represents Victoria, also known as Posh Spice.

Beckham had already rejected as "ludicrous" claims by his erstwhile personal assistant Rebecca Loos, 26, that they had sex together after he moved from Manchester United to Real Madrid while Victoria stayed in Britain.

The furore intensified Sunday when Malaysian-born Sarah Marbeck, 29, told the News of the

World newspaper that she had a two-year affair with Beckham that started during a Manchester United tour in Singapore in July 2001.

"The couple continue to dismiss these stories and they will not be commenting upon them further at this time," said the Beckhams' statement Sunday.

Amid speculation that 28-year-old Beckham might consider legal action, it added simply that the couple had "instructed lawyers" but did not give any more details.

But a News of the World spokeswoman said: "We note a further dismissive statement issued by the Beckham camp, this time on behalf of both Mr and Mrs Beckham."

"The News of the World's position remains totally unchanged," she said.

"Once again we stand by our reports 100 percent -- our revelations speak for themselves," she added.

The Beckhams made a show of unity Sunday night travelling to London from their Hertfordshire home -- dubbed "Beckingham

Palace by the media -- for dinner at the exclusive Claridges restaurant.

After three hours at the celebrity hotspot, the pair emerged smiling before a horde of waiting photographers and journalists.

But the media frenzy surrounding arguably Britain's most celebrated couple is unlikely to subside in a hurry.

Sky News, Britain's most-watched 24 hour news channel said late Sunday it had scooped a TV interview with Loos to be screened on Thursday at 10:00 pm (2100 GMT).

Loos gave a "kiss-and-tell" interview to the News of the World on Sunday, a week after the allegations first surfaced that she had bedded Beckham.

Meanwhile, Marbeck, 29, released a statement which claimed her relationship with the Real Madrid midfielder had changed her life forever.

"In response to many questions about my motives, the reason I decided to go public with details of my relationship with David

Beckham is because for two years my life was on hold while I waited for him," she said in the statement released by Melbourne-based lawyer Michael Brereton.

"He said he loved me and I slept with the phone by my bed waiting for it to ring," she said.

"But in that time my life changed forever, and there is no way back for me. I am not a celebrity seeker, and I am not interested in extra fame, but I have found myself at the centre of a media storm, and I am shocked by the intense level of public interest in my life."

Marbeck said she had finally "accepted that my relationship with Beckham was over" and decided to move on.

But Sydney's Daily Telegraph published a story Tuesday quoting unnamed "friends" of Marbeck as saying she was obsessed with Beckham, describing her recent behaviour as "erratic," and treating cautiously claims that she had slept with him.

Thorpe was there

 Cricket

BBC ONLINE, undated

Poor old Graham Thorpe. To be in the field for the entire duration of one record-breaking Brian Lara innings could be considered bad luck.

To be chasing the ball around the field again for another 13 hours, 10 years on, must feel like the cruellest form of cricketing deja-vu.

Lara's quadruple Test century -- sounds strange, doesn't it -- came at a time when West Indies cricket is at its lowest ebb.

Lara was in serious danger of being the first Windies captain to preside over the wrong sort of home whitewash.

England's bowlers have been rampant. The West Indies batting has been abject. Lara himself has looked ordinary, troubled by Steve Harmison's lift and bounce and uncertain in his handling of his troops.

From that mess he produced the greatest Test innings of all time.

Only Don Bradman has scored more than 300 twice in Tests. No-one has ever broken the Test batting record twice.

The statistics on the innings are staggering. Lara made 139 in singles alone, another 172 just in fours.

But this was about more than mere maths. If you are going to set a new world record, it takes a special kind of bravery and sense of occasion to do so by crashing a six over long on and then, next ball, sweeping a four.

Lara barely gave a chance in his two and a half days at the crease.

There was the potential leg-side catch that Geraint Jones missed once he had made 350, but that apart it was a near-flawless performance.

To bat for that long, and with those levels of concentration, was remarkable enough when he was 24.

To do so at an age when natural physical gifts are on the wane, and when all around are calling for the end of your captaincy, takes



GRAHAM THORPE

immense mental resolution.

You could quibble if you wanted about the injuries England suffered to Ashley Giles and Matthew Hoggard, and point out that Harmison was forced out of the attack for running on the wicket.

You could snipe about the flat nature of the batting surface at St John's or the diminutive size of the Antigua Recreation Ground.

Then again, if you want to be picky, if the track is that flat, how

400: Beat that!

FROM PAGE 13
included seven fours from 86 balls in 128 minutes.

More success came West Indies way when Graham Thorpe, a century-maker in the previous Test, top-edged a hook and was caught inside the deep fine leg boundary for 10 off Deepl Edwards to leave England 98 for five.

Flintoff and Jones batted confidently to resist the West Indies attack for almost two hours to make sure that no more wickets fell. They defied the fast bowlers and forced Lara into an all-spin attack of Ramnaresh Sarwan with leg-spin and Ryan Hinds with orthodox left-arm spin to share 73, unbroken, for the sixth wicket.

There was a piece of drama just before the close though, when Flintoff, then 27, survived a chance to Lara when he top-edged a cut to slip off Sarwan.

England lead the four-Test series 3-0 after convincing victories at

Kingston, Port of Spain and Bridgetown.

SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard at close of play on the third day of the fourth and final Test between West Indies and England on Monday:

WEST INDIES: First innings (over-night 595-5)

Gayle c and b Batty	69
Ganga lbw b Flintoff	10
Lara not out	400
Sarwan c T"thick b Harmison	90
Powell c Hussain b S Jones	23
Hinds c and b Batty	36
Jacobs not out	107
Extras: (b-4, lb-5, w-2, nb-5)	16
Total: (For 5 wks dec in 202 overs) 751	
Fall of wickets: 1-33, 2-98, 3-330, 4-380, 5-469	
Did not bat: Best, Collymore, Collins, Edwards	

Bowler	O	M	R	W
Hoggard	18	2	82	0
Harmison	37	6	92	1
Flintoff	35	8	109	1
S Jones	29	0	146	1

Batty	52	4	185	2
Vaughan	13	0	60	0
Trescothick	18	3	68	0

ENGLAND:

Firstinnings	
Trescothick c Jacobs b Best	16
Vaughan c Jacobs b Collins	7
Butcher b Collins	52
Hussain b Best	3
Thorpe c Collins b Edwards	10
Flintoff not out	37
G Jones not out	32
Extras: (lb-2, w-1, nb-11)	14
Total: (For 5 wks in 58 overs) 171	
Fall of wickets 1-8, 2-45, 3-54, 4-98, 5-98	
To bat: Batty, S Jones, Harmison, Hoggard	

Bowler	O	M	R	W
Collins	13	3	37	2
Edwards	10	1	41	1
Collymore	13	3	32	0
Best	4.3	1	20	2
Hinds	9.3	4	17	0
Sarwan	7	0	18	0
Gayle	1	0	4	0

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS	37 "Mary — Little Lamb"	DOWN	1 Goblet feature	20 Cast a ballot
1 Impale		1 Goblet		22 "Turan-dot"
5 Spigot		2 Danza		23 Makes like new
8 Unwanted		3 Siltcom		25 Chart
12 Sky-high		3 Hanni-bal's		26 Ms.
13 Have a bug		4 Big		27 Thurman
14 Mr.		5 Greek		28 Center of attention
15 PR		6 Melody		29 Torment
agent's concern		7 Arraign-ment		30 Snap-shots
17 Broadway		8 Rx, for		31 Flushing field
hit from 1996		9 Joy		32 Tics
18 Johnny Mathis		10 Family		40 Vestige
classic		11 Apportion		42 Eggs
19 Fly		12 Part of the		43 "Hey, you!"
21 Stuff		13 U.A.R., once		44 Lotion additive
24 Harvest goddess		14 Pack away		45 Waikiki
25 Oodles		15 Green acres		46 Change for a C-note
28 Take it easy		16 Snapshots		47 Actress Charlotte
30 Boom times		17 Apollo		48 — out a living
33 "Little Women"		18 To drive		
woman		19 Prepared		
34 From that moment on		20 To drive		
35 Sartorial woe		21 Bitty		
36 Zero-star review		22 Phoenix cagers		



CRYPTOQUIP

T M L Y X P F V L P D L L D

N T F N M Q Y K D M L ' E C Q U L

N F D N L X C , Q K Z L D D M L

E F L D X E F Z V C L N X U L

Yesterday's Cryptogram: PEACEFUL PROTEST FOR WHICH YOUR OLD, SMELLY FOOTWEAR IS NEVER REMOVED: A SHOE-IN.

Today's Cryptogram Clue: N equals T

The Cryptogram 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.

Premiership

Easy equation for Gunners

 Football

AFP, London

Arsenal need just nine points from their last six matches to clinch the Premiership title after Aston Villa crushed Chelsea's lingering hopes of catching the Gunners.

A shock 3-2 win at Stamford Bridge gave Villa's own hopes of European football next season a lift and did Manchester United a huge favour in their race with Chelsea for second place.

A superb Shaun Bartlett header dealt another blow to Liverpool's chances of Champions League football next season as Charlton held out for a 1-0 win at Anfield.

At the bottom, Portsmouth gave their survival chances a huge boost with a 3-1 win over Birmingham but Manchester City were dragged a little closer to the drop zone after squandering an early lead to draw 1-1 at Tottenham.

Chelsea had looked set fair for victory when Hernan Crespo put them ahead with an 11th-minute tap-in after Adrian Mutu had headed Wayne Bridge's cross on to the post.

A rout even looked on the cards briefly. But Claudio Ranieri's side took their foot off the pedal and were punished by three goals in the

space of ten minutes spanning the interval.

Darius Vassell scored from the penalty spot before Thomas Hitzlsperger and Lee Hendrie put Villa in the driving seat.

Crespo curled a shot past Thomas Sorensen in stoppage time but his second strike came too late to prevent Chelsea losing, leaving Ranieri to contemplate a tight race for second place.

"Manchester can achieve second place," the Italian acknowledged. "It will be a good battle between the two sides."

"What delighted me was that my players bounced back," Villa boss David O'Leary said.

"They kept their belief and kept going forward despite going a goal down."

Charlton were worthy winners at Anfield against a lacklustre Liverpool side.

The winner came just after the hour mark, South African striker Bartlett rising to meet Claus Jensen's corner with a powerful header into the top corner for his second goal in as many games.

Manchester City had looked on track for a desperately needed win when Nicolas Anelka gave them a first half lead. After collecting a pass from Steve McManaman, the Frenchman skipped past Gary Doherty before netting on the

Italian pride at stake

 UEFA CUP

AFP, Paris

Inter Milan will be looking to spare Italian blushes when they bid to overhaul a 1-0 deficit at home to Marseille in the UEFA Cup quarter-finals on Wednesday.

Dominant in Europe 12 months ago, Italian sides have had a miserable time of late failing to qualify one of their number for the Champions League semis and down to just Inter in the UEFA Cup.

Inter are languishing in fifth place in the Italian league, a whopping 23 points behind city rivals AC Milan and success in Europe's secondary club competition is their only hope of salvaging something from their season.

But Marseille, after a tough start to the season, have rebounded under new coach Jose Angino and Didier Droghba's solo strike in the first leg last week could be enough to put them through to the semi-finals.

Droghba however will miss the second leg at the San Siro after picking up a needless yellow card at the Stade Velodrome with Angino turning to bustling Egyptian striker Mido.

The other French club still in contention, Bordeaux, have their work cut out to make the last four after losing 2-1 at home in the first leg to Valencia of Spain.

The Mediterranean coast side moved above Real Madrid atop the

Spanish first division at the weekend and are in top form.

They will have to do without influential Argentine midfielder Pablo Aimar and Mali international Lamine Sissokou, however.

Striker Miguel Angel Angulo is back in the picture having scored the winner against Real Zaragoza on Sunday.

Bordeaux coach Michel Pavon is hoping recent history - Monaco's shock win from a seemingly hopeless position over Real Madrid in the Champions League last week springs to mind - may have a bearing on the outcome.

"You never know, we've seen things like that happen already. And Valencia may have other things on their mind," he added, alluding to their fight for the Spanish league title.

Spanish outfit Villareal hold a slight advantage over Celtic after a valuable away goal with a 1-1 draw in Glasgow.

Both clubs are expected to field full strength sides.

Celtic captain Jackie McNamara said his team were under no illusions of