

ICC reassures Murali

Cricket

AFP, Birmingham

International Cricket Council (ICC) general manager David Richardson insisted there would be "no witch-hunt" against Muttiah Muralitharan as he unveiled plans here Thursday to carry out research into slow bowlers' actions.

The research comes following renewed controversy over the unusual action of Sri Lanka off-spinner Muralitharan.

But Richardson insisted the sole aim was to help gather information for the ICC which would then decide whether changes were needed to current regulations.

"We're not out here on a witch-hunt," former South Africa wicketkeeper Richardson told reporters at Edgbaston.

"Murali's is a very complicated

case. It's not right that we should make laws that are specifically designed for him."

The research will start here Friday during the second Test between England and West Indies at Edgbaston and continue through-out September's Champions Trophy one-day tournament in England, featuring all the world's leading sides.

Results will be submitted to the ICC who could, in November at the earliest, announce changes to regulations as a result.

Murali, now the world's leading Test wicket-taker, alongside Australia leg-spinner Shane Warne with 527 dismissals, has twice been no-balled for 'throwing' during his career.

He missed the recent tour of Australia, following comments from Australian Prime Minister John Howard that he was a chucker.

Muralitharan came under fresh

scrutiny because of the 'doosra', a delivery which spins away from right-handers instead of coming into them like a normal off-break.

He was warned he could be banned from international cricket for a year if he persisted with the delivery in its original form.

Although the Laws of Cricket allow no straightening of the arm at the moment of delivery, the ICC has said that is physically impossible.

Instead it has set tolerance limits that currently stand at five degrees for spinners, 7.5 for medium-pacers and 10 for pacemen.

Cameras filming at 250 frames per second will be installed at grounds during the Champions Trophy in a bid to create three-dimensional computer images of bowlers' actions.

Richardson added ICC were not looking at faster bowlers because they were happy with the current tolerance levels.

BDR keeps kabadi crown

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Rifles retained their supremacy in the Premier Division Kabadi League when they clinched the title beating Bangladesh Army 41-28 in the last match of the super league at the Outer Stadium kabadi court yesterday.

This was the eighth crown out of the nine for Bangladesh Rifles and fourth in a row while Bangladesh Army earned the runners-up slot thrice in succession.

Bangladesh Police finished third outplaying Sonali Bank Recreation Club 43-21 at the same venue.

Rajib remains second

SPORTS REPORTER

International Master Enamul Hossain Rajib continued his impressive show in the Dortmund Open International Chess Tournament in Germany as he won the seventh round against Roman Basylin of Ukraine to maintain his second slot along with four other players.

Rajib and other four players earned 5.5 points each after the seventh round.

Another Bangladesh participant FIDE Master Taibur Rahman Sumon also won this round against Michael Schwertek of Germany to secure five points.

Hosts reach

FROM PAGE 13
Iran next Tuesday thanks to a first-half strike from Hao Haidong and two late penalties from Zheng Zhi as Iraq lost their cool in a fierce contest.

The closing minutes were

marked by an ugly 20-man brawl sparked by a clash between China's Manchester City star Sun Jihai and Qusay Munir, and the sending off of Iraqi keeper Ahmed Ali for an off-the-ball incident with Sun.

Veteran striker Hao opened the scoring for the hosts, the 33-year-old netting with a cool finish on eight minutes before Zheng made sure of the result with an 81st minute spot-kick.

Zheng added another penalty in injury time when Iraqi keeper Ali clashed with Sun.

Under 19s

FROM PAGE 13
Hossain Rajib shattered the stumps of Joe Denley for a duck, England captain Alastair Cook completed a responsible fifty and Bopara chipped in with 23 as the target got closer. However, there was a brief period of anxiety when left-armers Nadif and skipper Enamul Haque (jr) combined to snare four wickets for 34 runs. But it was an effort that just made the loss look respectable. The next Test of the three-match series starts on August 10.

SCORECARD

Scoreboard on the third day of the four-day Test between Bangladesh Under-19 and England Under-19 at Headingley yesterday:
BANGLADESH U-19: First innings 230 all out in 77.3 overs (Nafees Ahmed 16, Aftab 6, Shamsur 68, Dhiman 11, Nadif 6, Mushfiqur 1, Sonnet 8, Nazmul 33, Enamul 36, Shahadat 4 not out; Cusden 4-64, Harrison 2-42, Wright 3-26, Bopara 1-31)
ENGLAND U-19: First innings 269 in 81.4 overs (Wright 78, Bopara 59, Cook 45; Nadif 5-89, Enamul 2-40)
BANGLADESH U-19: Second innings (overnight 52 for 1) 44
Iqbal c Patel b Stiff 44
Nafees lbw b Cusden 3
Aftab c New b Harrison 54
Shamsur c Denly b Bopara 23
Mushfiqur lbw b Patel 1
Nadif lbw b Harrison 2
Dhiman c New b Bopara 15
Ishraq lbw b Patel 1
Nazmul lbw b Patel 1
Enamul not out 1
Shahadat c Patel b Bopara 0
Extras: (b-5, lb-2, nb-1) 11
Total: (All out in 52 overs) 156
Fall of wickets: 1-3, 2-57, 3-115, 4-123, 5-132, 6-141, 7-146, 8-154, 9-155, 10-156.

Bowler O M R W
Cusden 5 2 29 1
Harrison 10 2 31 2
Stiff 8 2 24 1
Patel 17 7 31 3
Wright 4 0 15 0
Bopara 8 3 19 3
ENGLAND U-19: Second innings
Cook c Aftab b Enamul 57
Denly b Shahadat 0
Bopara b Nadif 23
Hildreth c Shahadat b Nadif 14
Patel b Enamul 4
Wright not out 14
New not out 3
Extras: (w-1, nb-2) 3
Total: (For 5 wickets in 32.3 overs) 118
To bat: Harrison, Lawson, Stiff, Cusden.
Fall of wickets: 1-2, 2-66, 3-94, 4-99, 5-100.

Bowler O M R W
Nazmul 3 0 13 0
Shahadat 2 0 9 1
Nadif 14 3 54 2
Enamul 13.3 4 42 2
Result: England Under-19 won by 5 wickets.
Toss: England Under-19.
Umpires: DJ Constant and MJ Harris

Bahrain smile on penalties



AFP, Chengdu

Bahrain advanced to the semi-finals of the Asian Cup here Friday with a 4-3 penalty shoot-out victory over Uzbekistan after the two sides finished extra-time level at 2-2.

Bahrain - who face either Japan or Jordan in the last four next Tuesday - looked on their way out of the tournament after Mohamed Juma saw his side's second penalty saved by Uzbek keeper Yevgeny Safonov.

Uzbekistan converted their next two kicks to hold the advantage as Bahrain stayed in touch at 3-3 but with the pressure mounting, Uzbekistan's nerve failed them.

Marat Bikmoev blazed the Uzbeks' fourth kick over the bar, allowing Bahrain to take a 4-3 lead with their fifth and final penalty from A'ala Hubail, who had scored both his team's goals in normal time.

Amid unbearable tension, Uzbekistan's Leonid Koshelev screwed his team's final penalty wide and Bahrain were through, sparking delirious celebrations amongst players and officials from the tiny Gulf nation.

Earlier, the Bahrainis had looked set for victory in 90 minutes when a two-goal blast from Hubail put them 2-1 ahead after Uzbekistan had taken the lead on 60 minutes through Alexander Geynrikh's free-kick.

But with just three minutes remaining, Uzbekistan scrambled a dramatic late equaliser. A perfectly weighted pass from CSKA Moscow



PHOTO: AFP

Bahrain players are over the moon as they celebrate their victory against Uzbekistan in the Asian Cup quarterfinal match in Chengdu yesterday.

forward Geynrikh found strike partner Vladimir Shishelov, whose shot beat Bahrain keeper Ali Saeed.

Bahrain almost snatched victory in injury time when Hubail's shot was hooked off the goal-line with a last-ditch clearance by Andrey Fyodorov.

It was the final act of a pulsating second half which saw four goals scored in the final 30 minutes. Geynrikh gave Uzbekistan the lead on the hour mark with a curling

free-kick that flew into the top corner past Saeed.

The goal was hard on Bahrain, who had seen a legitimate effort from Talal Yusuf ruled out in the first-half for offside.

The Gulf side showed great character to claw their way back into the game however. Hubail made it 1-1 on 71 minutes when he drove home from close-range after Husain Ali hooked across the face of goal.

Six minutes later Hubail put his side ahead, sweeping home from six yards out after Mohamed Salmeen's cross was parried by Uzbekistan keeper Safonov.

The drama continued in extra-time after Shishelov's last-gasp equaliser. Bahrain had another chance scrambled off the line by Uzbekistan, who also saw Shishelov denied from point-blank range after a save from Saeed.

Giants collide



AFP, Beijing

South Korea and Iran collide in a heavyweight 'Asian Cup' quarter-final showdown Saturday as champions Japan seek to find their scoring touch against defence-minded minnows Jordan.

IRAN V SOUTH KOREA

On paper, World Cup semi-finalists South Korea and Iran's last eight tie in Iran is the match of the tournament so far and is a repeat of the two teams' epic meeting at the 2000 tournament.

In Tripoli four years ago, South Korea upset the fancied Iranians by equalising in the last minute of normal time before claiming a 2-1 victory with a golden goal from striker Lee Dong-Gook.

Lee's three goals in China have put him on top of the standings once again, a remarkable turnaround after injury and poor form saw him cast into the international wilderness after Lebanon.

"My form is getting better with every game," said Lee. "As long as we keep winning, the goals will come."

Iran will be missing defenders Rahman Rezaei and Ali Badavi, banned for two matches for their slap-fight during the 2-2 draw with Oman, and Mohammed Nosrati, booted out of the tournament for a vicious stamp in the same game.

But Iran coach Branko Ivankovic

believes his team have been galvanised by their disciplinary problems and reckons Korea are inferior to their final group opponents Japan, with whom they drew 0-0 on Wednesday.

"South Korea beat Kuwait 4-0 but I think they are not as good as the Japan team," he said. "If we can play as well as we played against Japan I don't think the match against South Korea will be a problem."

"They have a new coach and it's given the team a new spirit but we should not have a problem. Although South Korea's strikers are better than Japan, that shouldn't be a problem."

JAPAN V JORDAN

Japan meanwhile will have to overcome a Jordan side that has indicated it plans to play for a draw, hoping to take the match to penalties.

The Jordanians have scrapped through to the last eight in only their first ever appearance, relying on a defensive style that has seen them branded "the Greece of Asia".

Coach Mahmoud Al-Gohary happily accepts comparisons between Jordan and the shock Euro 2004 champions, but is not bothered by criticism that his side are boring.

Jordan, who will be cheered on again by the country's football fanatic monarch King Abdullah II, have scored only twice in three matches so far and reached the quarter-finals with a dour 0-0 against the United Arab Emirates.

Winning Group D has seen the draw open up invitingly for Japan, who will face a semi-final against Bahrain next Tuesday if they can negotiate the Jordanians.

Eriksson speaks

Football

REUTERS/ AGENCIES, London

England coach Sven-Goran Eriksson said on Thursday he had never confirmed or denied to the Football Association that he had had an affair with an FA secretary.

Eriksson said he had broken his policy of not commenting on his private life and his silence over the relationship, which threatens to end his 3-1/2-year spell as manager, because he was "so distressed by recent inaccurate comment".

"With regard to the Football Association's forthcoming enquiry announced on July 27th into the circumstances which led to the FA issuing legal statements based on misleading information, I wish to state unequivocally that... I have at no time either categorically confirmed or denied any relationship with Ms. Maria Alam," Eriksson said in a statement released by his agent.

The FA are holding an urgent inquiry into whether they were misled after being forced to confirm an affair by Eriksson after initially denying it.

The FA also admitted that chief executive Mark Palios had had a relationship with Alam who is of Bangladeshi origin.

Eriksson, 56 and unmarried, said neither he nor his advisers had any "prior knowledge" of the two FA statements about Alam.

The Swede said he looked forward to discussing the matter with the FA on August 5 when the ruling body has called an emergency meeting.

Meanwhile, the 'Svengate' saw a new twist on Thursday when Alam

revealed she had a fling with a third FA executive.

Alam claims she was "crazy" about a third man at the Football Association.

And as the embarrassment piles up for the FA, it is believed that Alam is poised to sell her side of the story for up to one million pounds.

The 'Third Man' has not yet been



FARIA ALAM

named but he is believed to be unmarried and a key member of the team at the FA's headquarters in Soho Square.

Public Relations guru Max Clifford says he is not representing Ms Alam but believes she could make about a million pounds from the tangled story.

"She knows what Sven thinks about the Beckhams, his views on what players are worth and on Nancy Dell'Olio."

"I'm not handling her PR so I don't know what she knows...but everyone's phoned me to say they'll outbid everyone else for the story."

Relief first up for biggies



REUTERS, London

Former European champions Real Madrid and Manchester United avoided dangerous unseeded floaters Benfica and FC Basel in the draw for the third qualifying round of the Champions League on Friday.

Belgian champions Anderlecht were paired with Benfica, European champions twice in the 1960s and now undergoing something of a rejuvenation after years in the doldrums.

Inter Milan, who also won the European Cup twice in that decade, were handed the tricky task of facing Swiss champions Basel.

Real Madrid, nine times European champions but forced to qualify for the Champions League proper after finishing fourth following a disappointing end to last season's Spanish League programme, almost certainly face a trip to Poland.

They were drawn to meet the winners of the second qualifying round tie between WIT Georgia

Tbilisi of Georgia or Wisla Krakow of Poland who are virtually certain of their place after beating WIT 8-2 in the first leg in Tbilisi on Tuesday.

Real were particularly relieved to avoid Benfica, who were coached last season by Jose Antonio Camacho, now the Real boss.

"We thought we were going to get drawn against Benfica because that's just the sort of thing football throws up," said Real spokesman Amancio Amaro.

But he added: "We can't be too confident with Wisla because Polish football is difficult."

Manchester United, who finished third in the English premier league last season, will meet either Slovakian champions Zilina or Romanian champions Dinamo Bucharest following the draw at UEFA's headquarters in Nyon.

Dinamo won the first leg 1-0 away this week, but United, like Real Madrid, should have little trouble in coming through their fixture.

Monaco, who lost last season's Champions League final to Porto, will face either Nova Gorica of Slovenia or FC Copenhagen of Denmark in their tie, with the Danish champions the likely

opponents after winning the first leg 2-1 away on Tuesday.

The second legs of the second qualifying round ties will be played next Tuesday and Wednesday, while the third qualifying round ties take place on August 10 and 11 and August 24 and 25.

The winners of the 16 ties go into the competition proper, while the 16 losers drop into the UEFA Cup.

Four-time European Cup winners Liverpool face Austrian champions Graz AK, while another former European champion Juventus will meet either Djurgarden of Sweden or Kaunas of Lithuania who drew 0-0 in their first leg in Stockholm this week.

Another intriguing tie brings together Bayer Leverkusen of Germany, who lost the 2002 final to Real Madrid in Glasgow, and Banik Ostrava of the Czech Republic, whose squad includes a number of players from the Czech team which made such a fine impression at Euro 2004 last month.

The competition proper begins on September 14 and 15. This season's Champions League final is in Istanbul on May 25.

Five-star Ntini

REUTERS, Colombo

Strike bowler Makhaya Ntini launched South Africa's tour of Sri Lanka with a five-wicket haul on the first day of their warm-up match against a Sri Lanka Board President's XI on Friday.

Ntini took five for 37 from 13 overs as the President's XI were bowled out for 251 in 79.4 overs.

South Africa lost both openers, Graeme Smith and Andrew Puttick, to Sri Lanka quick Dilhara Fernando as the touring side closed the first day of the three-day game on 34 for two after eight overs.

Underachievers

FROM PAGE 13
Hong Kong match, where we did not do that well.

Pakistan coach Bob Woolmer also shared his thoughts on Bangladesh's performance.

"Having watched them (Bangladesh) play, I think they have certainly made strides. They looked fit and quick. They have lot of talent... I know it from being in the country. The infrastructure is building but the first-class system needs a lot of fine tuning," the Englishmen said.

"The way the team is getting out, I think there is a lot of technical work needed to be done. They have to make changes in technique for the batsmen to stop getting out the way they are doing. I think Dav is working on that but it is only my view from an opposition coach's angle."

Star Whizz Kid

COMPETITION 215

Tick the correct answers, post to

The Daily Star

Win attractive prizes

Competition closes at 8 pm

August 6, 2004 and draw

shortly afterwards

1. Who clinched the national

tennis men's crown?

Pasia Anal Murad

2. How many Test wickets has

Shane Warne taken?

519 527 434

3. Who won the Wimbledon men's

title?

Agassi Federer Henman

4. Who lifted the Wimbledon

women's crown?

Serena Sharapova Venus

5. Who are the Euro 2004 soccer

champions?

Portugal Greece France

Name

Class

School Address

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