

Pak inspectors to visit India

AFP, Karachi

The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) is sending a two-member inspection team to India to clear venues for next month's tour of India but it would not examine security, an official said on Monday.

"Basically it's a venue assessment committee and the date of the team's visit will be finalised only after the Board of Control for Cricket in India confirms the venues of the three-match Test and five-match one-day series," PCB spokesman Abbas Zaidi told AFP.

It will be Pakistan's first full tour across the border since 1999 and follows the easing of political tensions between the two countries in 2003.

Pakistan leave for India on February 25.



Did U Know?

Australia (301/4) recorded their fifth total of 300-plus at Melbourne Cricket Ground - second against West Indies. Australia's highest ever at the venue is 338-6 v West Indies in 2000-01.



Talk Turkey



Inzamamul Haq (Pakistan cricket captain) "He started as an opener and I think he has played (almost 140) games in one-dayers as an opener. But in the last couple of months he has been batting at number eight or number nine and did well... I think that is his number."



What to Watch

ESPN Sportscentre Live at 8.30 pm FA Cup 3rd Round Blackburn Vs Cardiff City Live at 2 am (Thursday) STAR Sports Australian Open tennis Live at 6 am Australian Open tennis Live at 2.30 pm Sportsline Live at 8 pm FA Cup 3rd Round Exeter City Vs Man Utd Live at 1.30 am (Thursday)



HIP, HIP, HOORAY! Bangladesh cricketers sit on a pair of Nissan cars after the presentation ceremony of the CityCell Test Series at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday. Sponsors CityCell gave the luxurious cars to Nafees Iqbal, the Bangladesh centurion, and Enamul Haque, who took 12 wickets in the second Test against Zimbabwe.

Inzy wants to bowl first Pakistan take on West Indies today

AFP, Brisbane



Pakistan are pinning their hopes partly on winning the toss when they take on the West Indies in their triangular VB Series limited-overs match at Brisbane's Gabba ground on Wednesday.

Captain Inzamamul Haq wants to bowl first so that paceman Shoaib Akhtar, who has disappointed for much of the Australian tour, can make the most of the local conditions and put the West Indies on the back foot early on.

The match will start at 9 am and the forecast is for overcast and humid conditions -- ideal for fast bowlers working with a new white ball.

"The early start at nine o'clock... any team would take the advantage and bowl first because I think there will be some moisture and it's a 20 or 25 per cent help if you win the toss," said Inzamam.

Both Pakistan and the West Indies lost their opening matches against Australia, even though Inzamam recovered some of the

form which has deserted him on this tour with a run-a-ball 68 against the hosts in Hobart on Sunday.

Wednesday's clash could prove crucial in determining which of the two makes the best-of-three finals play-offs.

Shoaib, Pakistan's trump card, has done little on tour since bagging five first innings wickets in each of the Test losses to Australia in Perth and Melbourne.

His commitment has been questioned and his lengthy run-up criticised as the reason for his team's slow over-rate. He was belted for 54 runs off eight fruitless overs by the Australians in Hobart.

Pakistan are set to stick with the same 12 which lost by four wickets to Australia on Sunday but Inzamam hinted the top order was in for an overhaul.

Changes would start with the skipper himself and deputy Yousuf Youhana -- the team's two most experienced batsmen -- moving as high as three and four in the order.

West Indian skipper Brian Lara was more guarded about his plans, saying he would defer to new coach, Australian Bennett King, who spent three seasons in charge of the Queensland state team based at the

Gabba. Unlike Inzamam, King did not believe the early start automatically meant a team should choose to bowl first.

"The sun comes up pretty early and it can still be quite hot at 9 am," he said. "The wicket's generally a very good batting wicket."

The Windies are expected to go into the match with all-rounder Chris Gayle who has overcome inflamed tendons in his right shoulder. But he may be rested from bowling his off-spinners.

LIKELY TEAMS PAKISTAN: Inzamamul Haq (captain), Salman Butt, Yasir Hameed, Yousuf Youhana, Shoaib Malik, Mohammad Hafeez, Abdul Razaq, Shahid Afridi, Kamran Akmal, Shoaib Akhtar, Navedul Hasan, Azhar Mahmood (12th man to be named).

WEST INDIES: Brian Lara (captain), Chris Gayle, Wavell Hinds, Xavier Marshall, Ramnaresh Sarwan, Shivnarine Chanderpaul, Marlon Samuels, Dwayne Bravo, Courtney Browne, Ian Bradshaw, Mervyn Dillon, Pedro Collins (12th man to be named).

Lara's advice for McGrath

AFP, Brisbane

West Indian cricketing superstar Brian Lara offered Australia's premier pace bowler Glenn McGrath some friendly advice here Tuesday -- think twice about playing in the 2007 World Cup.

Lara, in Brisbane with the West Indian team as they prepare to take on Pakistan in their second tri-series limited-overs match on Wednesday, said McGrath was a champion bowler but his age -- he will be 35 next month -- could count against him.

"He'll be an ageing fast bowler coming in to bowl on really nice batting tracks in the Caribbean," Lara said.

Lara said Australia's most successful one-day bowler might damage his reputation and frugal economy rate if he tried to help the world champions defend their title on flat wickets in the Caribbean.

But the West Indian captain agreed it wasn't his role to tell McGrath what he should do.

"That's for him and Australia to decide really," he said.

"He's a great servant of Australian cricket and he's not just there due to his past performances.

"He's still an asset to Australian cricket."

Lara also agreed that McGrath's style lent itself to longevity, likening him to former West Indian teammates Curtley Ambrose and Courtney Walsh and former South Africa skipper Shaun Pollock.

"He's not someone who thrives on energy or the fact he needs to get the ball up to the 80s and 90s (miles per hour), he's more about consistency," he said.

"He's going to hit the seam and get the ball to move around and it doesn't matter if he bowls in the 70s or 80s (miles per hour) you've got to be a thinking batsman to keep him out."

"Someone like that is always going to go on."

McGrath has said he wants to be a part of a third straight World Cup-winning campaign for Australia after returning from a lingering ankle problem in May last year.

He also said his temporary respite had left him refreshed and would ultimately lengthen his career in the top-flight.

While some pundits felt he had slipped from his lofty heights before surgery in late 2003, Lara said he was not surprised McGrath's staggering burst of form in the past six months.

Since returning, the Australian has taken 47 wickets at 18.47 in 10 Tests to have 477 overall at 21.40.

He has also passed leg-spinner Shane Warne as Australia's leading one-day wicket-taker with 292 scalps.

Lara's team will meet Australia for a second time in the triangular series at Brisbane's Gabba ground on Friday after losing their opening encounter by 116 runs.

For Australia, opener Matthew Hayden, who's form this season has been indifferent, is due to return from a two-game rest.

Both Hayden and all-rounder Andrew Symonds enter the clash desperate for runs.

Symonds has made four ducks from his last five international one-day innings while Hayden has failed to make an international century since June against Sri Lanka in Cairns, in Australia's far north-east.

UAE, ZIMBABWE TOURS Enamul named A team skipper

SPORTS REPORTER

Star Test bowler Enamul Haque has been named as captain of the Bangladesh A team when the selectors announced a 15-member squad for the upcoming tours of UAE and Zimbabwe.

Left-handed opener Shahriar Nafees Ahmed has been made his deputy for the tours. The team leaves for the Gulfstate on January 31.

Apartment left-arm spinner Enamul, Tushar Imran, Sanwar Hossain and Mohammad Sharif were the other three Test caps in the squad.

During their one and a half months trip, the second string Bangladesh side will first play four one-day games against UAE and then three 4-day Tests and five one-day matches against Zimbabwe.

ENAMUL Haque (captain), Shahriar Nafees Ahmed (vice-captain), Shamsur Rahman, Tushar Imran, Sanwar Hossain, Saqib Al Hasan, Raquibul Hasan, Dhiman Ghosh, Mushfiqur Rahim, Mahmud Ullah, Mohammad Sharif, Wasel Uddin Ahmed, Shahadat Hossain Rajib, SK Russell and Shafaq Al Jabir.

Federer plays cricket too!

REUTERS, Melbourne

World number one and defending Australian Open champion Roger Federer has swapped his racket for a cricket bat and showed he might have a fruitful alternative career if he ever gets bored with tennis.

Federer has spent several weeks in Australia preparing for his Melbourne title defence and began in grand style on Monday with a 6-1, 6-1, 6-2 defeat of Frenchman Fabrice Santoro.

During that match he made several practice swings which looked suspiciously like forward defensive strokes a cricket batsman would play, suggesting that his time in sports-mad Australia was starting to leave an impression.

Intrigued by Federer's air swings, a local television station decided to offer him a few quick lessons on a roof-top court.

Federer struggled as he put on a pair of gloves and a batting pad but quickly showed the kind of hand-eye coordination of which any cricketer would be proud.

The Swiss, winner of three grand slam titles in 2004, hit several deft cut shots, pulls and even an off-drive to tennis balls bowled to him by a Seven Network television reporter.

Kapali & Razaq

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and pacer Talha Jubair, who were members of the Test team, for the limited-overs matches.

Also returned to the side were regular one-day members all-rounder Khaled Mahmud and pacer Nazmul Hossain.

"Rafique was ignored as he is injured. Kapali was considered for his form in the just-concluded Premier League while Razzak, who is a very good one-day bowler, received the call after his action got cleared," said Faruque.

Habibul Bashar (captain), Khaled Mashud (vice-captain), Nafees Iqbal, Rajin Saleh, Mohammad Ashraf, Aftab Ahmed, Alok Kapali, Khaled Mahmud, Enamul Haque, Abdur Razzak, Manzarul Islam, Mashrafe-Bin-Mortuza, Tapash Baisya and Nazmul Hossain.

Portuguese superstars' show of heart

AFP, Lisbon

Real Madrid's Portuguese star Luis Figo wants to help a seven-year-old tsunami victim who was rescued in Indonesia over the weekend wearing a Portugal team jersey after spending three weeks alone.

"It is an incredible story. To find a child who survived so many days without eating, on top of it all wearing Portugal's jersey, is almost a miracle," he told Portuguese daily Correio da Manha.

"I am going to see what I can do as I also want to help," added the

midfielder who made 110 appearances in 12 years for Portugal.

The boy, named Martunis, was found hidden in mosquito bites by a British television crew on a Banda Aceh beach which was engulfed by the December 26 tsunami.

He was taken to hospital where he was recognised by another patient and then reunited with his grandfather and father.

Martunis became separated from his family and is believed to have lived on puddle water and dried noodles until he was rescued. Doctors expect him to make a full recovery.

His mother and two siblings are still missing.

The images of the child wearing the red-and-green jersey of the Portuguese national side has led to an outpouring of offers of aid from Portuguese football officials and players.

Manchester United's Portugal winger Cristiano Ronaldo has offered to put up the child at his home in England for a few days so he can see the Red Devils in action while Benfica striker Nuno Gomes said the Lisbon club was looking into how it could help the boy.

Portugal's Football Federation has also promised to help Martunis, with Portugal coach Luiz Felipe Scolari saying they planned to buy the boy and his father land and a house in Indonesia.

Seeds sail along

AFP, Melbourne

World number one Lindsay Davenport erased any lingering doubts about her fitness to open her Australian Open campaign with an easy win here Tuesday.

Davenport, forced to pull out of the Sydney International last week after a bout of bronchitis, had clearly benefited from a few days' rest as she swept aside Spanish veteran Conchita Martinez 6-1, 6-0.

Former Wimbledon champion Martinez was never in the contest as top seed Davenport romped home in 48 minutes to set up a second round meeting with world number 99 Michaela Pastikova on Thursday.

Davenport said she was relieved to have negotiated Martinez so emphatically, an opponent who until Tuesday's contest led in head-to-heads with the American.

"There's not many people that I could play in the first round that I don't have a winning record against," said Davenport, who now stands level on eight wins with the

Spaniard.

"I felt pretty good. I mean, you can't really pick on too many things. It was a very mental match. Made a few more errors in the beginning, and once I settled down I felt obviously great.

"But considering only playing one match last week and having an opponent that could give me a hard time, I'm thrilled with the way it turned out."

Venus Williams joined sister Serena in the second round by overcoming Eleni Daniilidou of Greece 6-1, 7-5 while French Open champion Anastasia Myskina eased past Kvetia Peschke of the Czech Republic 6-1, 6-4.

In the men's draw, former US Open champion Andy Roddick had too much firepower for world number 75 Irakli Labadze, overwhelming his Georgian opponent 7-5, 6-2, 6-1 in bright afternoon sunshine on the Rod Laver Arena.

Roddick now faces Greg Rusedski in the next round after the veteran Briton ousted Sweden's Jonas Bjorkman 2-6, 6-4, 6-0, 7-6.

Other men's seeds to go through included Argentine number six Guillermo Coria, a 6-2, 6-4, 6-0

winner over Czech Tomas Berdych.

Despite her shortcomings, Williams was the more powerful player and was also steadier in the rallies, and that was enough against an opponent who appeared to lack any weapons to trouble her.

Daniilidou was also hindered by her serve, hitting nine double-faults.

The third of those double-faults gave Williams her first break point, and she broke for 3-1 when Daniilidou put the ball long. A fifth double-fault gave Williams another break for 5-1 and allowed her to serve out for the set.

Although Williams began the next set by breaking serve for a third time, she immediately dropped her own serve and then failed to convert three break points at 1-1. Williams then broke again to lead 3-2, but once more failed to consolidate her lead and allowed Daniilidou to level at 4-4.

Williams earned yet another break to lead 5-4 when she forced Daniilidou to volley a backhand wide, but despite holding two match points she again dropped her own serve as Daniilidou belatedly raised her game and won some spirited rallies.

Hailing Hoggard

AFP, Johannesburg

Matthew Hoggard produced the performance of his life as England snatched a 77-run win on the fifth and final afternoon of the fourth Test against South Africa at the Wanderers Stadium Monday.

Hoggard took the first six wickets and then dismissed last man Dale Steyn to finish with career-best figures of seven for 61 and win the plaudits of his captain, Michael Vaughan, and his vanquished South African opponents.

"It was a great effort," said Vaughan. "He has bowled well throughout the series. He keeps running in. To bowl South Africa out in two sessions was very special."

South African captain Graeme Smith said Hoggard had bowled "superbly", while South African coach Ray Jennings said the Yorkshire opening bowler had bowled well throughout the series.

"He puts a lot of passion and energy into his bowling and his first two spells today were crucial."

Vaughan had set South Africa to make 325 off 68 overs and they needed all but 8.3 of them to achieve a victory which puts them 2-1 up in the series

with one match to play. Only Herschelle Gibbs, who followed up his first innings 161 with a high-quality 98, resisted the Hoggard blitz of the top order.

But there was some late defiance. Smith, advised by a doctor, not to bat after suffering concussion in a fielding accident before play Sunday, batted at number eight and made 67 out, with the last two batsmen, Makhaya Ntini and Dale Steyn, both surviving for more than half an hour to take the game down to the last few figures.

Hoggard had match figures of 12 for 205. It was the first time in his career he had taken 10 or more wickets in a match. "We put a lot of pressure on the South African batsmen. I was able to put the ball in the right places today," he said.

When Gibbs was on 63 he became the third South African, after Gary Kirsten and Kallis, to score 5000 runs in Tests.

SCOREBOARD Final score on the fifth and final day of the fourth Test between South Africa and England at the Wanderers Stadium on Monday.

ENGLAND: First innings 411 for 8 declared (Strauss 147, Key 83, Vaughan 82; Ntini 4-111, Steyn 2-75, Pollock 2-81)

SOUTH AFRICA: First innings 419 (Gibbs 161, Boucher 64, Boje 48; Hoggard 5-144, Anderson 2-117) ENGLAND: Second innings 332 for 9 declared (Trescothick 108, Vaughan 54; Ntini 3-62, Pollock 3-74, Kallis 3-93)

SOUTH AFRICA: Second innings De Villiers lbw b Hoggard 3 Gibbs lbw b Giles 98 Rtdolph b Hoggard 2 Kallis c Trescothick b Hoggard 0 Dippenaar c Giles b Hoggard 14 Boucher c Jones b Hoggard 0 Boje c and b Hoggard 18 Smith not out 67 Pollock c Jones b Flintoff 4 Ntini lbw b Flintoff 13 Steyn lbw b Hoggard 8 Extras: (b-2, lb-5, nb-12, w-1) 20 Total: (All out in 59.3 overs) 247

Fall of wickets: 1-10, 2-18, 3-18, 4-80, 5-86, 6-118, 7-163, 8-172, 9-216

Bowler O M R W Hoggard 18.3 5 61 7 Haarmison 14 1 64 0 Flintoff 16 2 59 2 Anderson 6 1 32 0 Giles 5 0 24 1

Result: England won by 77 runs and lead the 5-Test series 2-1. Man-of-the-match: Matthew Hoggard. Toss: England. Fifth Test: Jan 21-25, Centurion.

Winning the series

FROM PAGE 13

Against England here last year (October-November 2003). There were some very positive comments to come from the England team. We know now that we have a little gem in our hand," he said.

Whatmore reserved special praise for Tendata Taibu the Zimbabwean captain who scored over 300 runs in the series.

"Taibu was very positive. He is very good player and he will be a difficult batsman to dismiss for us in the one-day series."

Captain Habibul Bashar was said that they were not thinking about pushing for a victory and instead had concentrated on a series triumph.

"It might have been a risk for us because it was not easy to chase a big total in the fourth innings. We are happy the way we fought back in the match," said Bashar.

The country's premier batsman said that the magnificent century of young opener Nafees Iqbal (121) greatly helped them in materialising their dream.

"It was a fantastic innings. He is a natural stroke maker but he played the innings in a different way. The way he occupied the crease set an example for us."

Nafees said the coach's pep talk on Day Three had played on his mind when he went out to bat in the

second innings.

"He (told me something very important. He said that sometimes you have to sacrifice your natural style to suit the situation. I remembered that."

Zimbabwe lost the series but they were not frustrated with the outcome.

"We are a bit disappointed. I thought we should be able to bowl them out in 140-odd overs. But full credit to them, they really stuck it out there," said captain Tendata Taibu.

Taibu pointed at two things behind their series defeat but expressed his satisfaction at the way his side gradually improved in the series.

"I think top order batting and spinners made the difference between the two sides. I think their (Bangladesh) spinners were more consistent than ours. But we have improved from the first game to the second and if you look at it that way it can only get better for us."

The 21-year old wicket keeper promised that his boys will show a much better performance in the five-match one-day series which begins tomorrow at the same venue.

"The guys are more adapted to one-day cricket. We are ready to fight all the way."

Beckham's heart with United

AFP, London

England captain David Beckham has said he would return to Manchester United if he ever left Real Madrid even if Sir Alex Ferguson was still manager of the Old Trafford club.

Beckham, 29, quit United for Real in July 2003 after an ongoing row with Ferguson which even saw the Scot accidentally kick a stray boot in the dressing room into the face of the playmaker.

Now comes

FROM PAGE 13 Extras: (b-13, lb-6, nb-8) 27 Total: (For 5 wickets in 42 overs) 285 4-196, 5-206 Did not bat: Rafique, Mashrafe, Baisya, Enamul

Bowler O M R W Panyangara 21 10 28 3 Mpofo 22 10 29 0 Honda 21 7 31 0 Chigumbura 19 7 37 0 Cremer 34 9 61 2 Matsikenyeri 8 0 41 0 Masakadza 10 3 11 0 Taylor 4 0 11 0 Rogers 3 0 17 0

Result: Match drawn and Bangladesh win the 2-Test series 1-0. Man-of-the-match: Tendata Taibu. Man-of-the-series: Enamul Haque. Toss: Zimbabwe. Umpires: Nadeem Ghauri (Pakistan) and Gamin Silva (Sri Lanka).

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

Crossword puzzle grid with clues for Across and Down. Includes Cryptic clues at the bottom.

Cryptic crossword puzzle grid with clues.

CRYPTOQUIP XPEUI PT XPO TEPW N TNLZIRA ULOBOE WLAJB FO "N XNLIB LI N BOELFZO B JLRA BP WLRU." Yesterday's Cryptic clue: I ASKED MY HORSE IF HE'D LIKE SOME MORE HAY. "NO THANK YOU, I'M ALREADY STUFFED." Today's Cryptic Clue: X equals W