

Shiv Sena acts hurt Imran



AFP, Islamabad

Former cricket great Imran Khan Tuesday deplored attempts by a group of Hindu hardliners to spoil a Test pitch in a bid to disrupt Pakistan's forthcoming tour of India.

"Attempts to dig pitches by the extremists to disrupt Pakistan's tour of India and statements calling for cancellation of the tour are disheartening and uncalled for, fans in Pakistan and India are really hurt over such reports," he told this news agency.

"Cricket can further the peace process. Indian team and spectators were received so warmly last year and people here expect the same in India," Imran said referring to India's 2004 tour of Pakistan, their first for 15 years.

Pakistan are due to pay a reply visit, their first tour to India since 1999 to play three Tests and five one-day games but the tour faces an imbroglio over Pakistan's refusal to play a Test match in Ahmedabad.

Ahmedabad is the main city in

the western state of Gujarat where at least 2,000 people, mostly Muslims, were killed in communal riots in 2002.

The dispute has delayed the announcement of the schedule even though only 10 days remain before Pakistan land in India around February 25.

Pakistan's refusal has sparked calls for the tour to be cancelled and some suspected activists of the Hindu fundamentalist Shiv Sena party were arrested attempting to dig up the pitch at Mohali, proposed venue of the first Test.

India's main opposition party, the Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP), has urged the government and the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) to cancel the tour if Pakistan insist on avoiding Ahmedabad.

"If Pakistan refuse to play in Ahmedabad it will be better to call off the tour," said BJP spokesman Vijay Kumar Malhotra.

The fundamentalist Shiv Sena party also wants the tour cancelled, saying India should not play cricket against Pakistan in protest at what it said was Islamabad's alleged support for militancy in the disputed

Kashmir valley.

But Imran said the majority of Indians want the tour to go ahead.

"It's not a major threat, the vast majority of Indian public is looking forward to this tour, I was in India recently and everyone said they look forward to the tour," said Imran.

Imran, who is now an MP, played 82 Tests for Pakistan between 1971 to 1992 before taking up politics as head of his own party, Movement for Justice (Tehrik-e-insaaf).

Imran, who led Pakistan to their first series win in India in 1987, backed the Pakistan Cricket Board's stance of not playing in Ahmedabad.

"I think Pakistan's stand is understandable, in 1987 I had to ask the players to wear helmets on the boundary line, we didn't want the team to come out of the ground but it was threatening the safety of the players."

"We were ambassadors of peace at that time, so we did not want to mar the tour because General Ziaul Haq, then Pakistan president, had done cricket diplomacy by visiting India during a match," said Imran.



PHOTO: STAR

Chittagong wicketkeeper Mohammad Rabbi (C) is being congratulate by his teammates after the fall of a Sylhet wicket on the opening day of their four-day Ispahani Sixth National Cricket League match at the Chittagong Divisional Stadium yesterday. The young stumper took four catches.

Sylhet double

SPORTS REPORTER

Sylhet enjoyed double delight on the third day of the Cricket Carnival at BKSP yesterday.

They defeated Rajshahi by 22 runs in the first match and then beat Barisal by 32 runs in the second match of the Super 8s competition.

In the other matches, Khulna managed a five-wicket victory over Chittagong, Rajshahi handed Dhaka a 29-run defeat, Barisal edged Chittagong by 10 runs and Dhaka recorded a 19-run win against Khulna.

BCB XI's training begins

SPORTS REPORTER

The short training camp of the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) XI, that will take part in the Duleep Trophy competition, began yesterday at the Bangladesh Army Stadium.

All 14 selected players turned up at the venue to report to coach Dav Whatmore and had a light warm up session.

The team would train at the Army Stadium again today and would practice at the Bangabandhu National Stadium tomorrow before they fly off to Mumbai on February 19.

The BCB XI, led by Mohammad Ashraful, will play East Zone (March 22-25 at Nagpur) and Central Zone (April 1-4 at Jaipur) in the group matches of the first-class tournament.

Annual sports

SPORTS REPORTER

Poet Kazi Nazrul Islam House and Dr Muhammad Shahidullah House finished joint champions in the annual sports competition of the BAF Shaheen College on Tuesday.

Sher-e-Bangla House became runners-up in the meet.

Sizzling

FROM PAGE 13
Enamul 7-47, Shahadat 2-60)
BANGLADESH A: Second innings 232 all out in 70.3 overs (Tushar 52, Waseluddin 46, Dhiman 28, Raqibul 25, Cremer 4-75, Mahwire 3-53, Macmillan 2-14)
ZIMBABWE A: Second innings (overnight 229-6 in 86 overs)
Duffin c Sharif b Tushar 56
Sibanda st Dhiman b Enamul 27
Ebrahim c Nafees b Shahadat 63
Samunderu lbw b Shahadat 9
Strydom c Waseluddin b Shahadat 0
Ervine b Russell 2
Mufambisi b Enamul 38
Mahwire c Nafees b Shahadat 6
Cremer lbw b Enamul 1
Macmillan c Raqibul b Shahadat 9
Nicolson not out 5
Extras: (b-7, lb-7, w-1, nb-17) 32
Total: (All out in 96 overs) 248
Fall of wickets: 1-77, 2-120, 3-156, 4-156, 5-168, 6-203, 7-232, 8-232, 9-241
Bowler O M R W
Syed Russell 18 9 42 1
Shahadat Hossain 25 5 63 5
Mohammad Sharif 11 2 36 0
Enamul Haque 32 8 69 3
Tushar Imran 9 2 17 1
Raqibul Hasan 1 0 7 0
Result: Bangladesh A won by 50 runs.

Gaibandha cricket

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gaibandha

Gaibandha Abahani Krira Chakra defeated GKSP by 84 runs in the First Division Cricket League at the local stadium yesterday.

Abahani were bowled out for 196 in the stipulated 50 overs after deciding to bat.

In reply, GKSP were shot out for 114 in 34.5 overs.

A 3-page Venus

AFP, New York

Sports Illustrated's annual swimsuit issue hit the American newsstands Tuesday with Olympians such as Australian basketball hero Lauren Jackson being pictured along with American tennis star Venus Williams.

Jackson, who posed nude in an Australian art magazine before the Athens Games, was pictured in a bikini and quoted in a caption as saying, "It felt better to have some clothes on."

Jennie Finch, a United States softball pitcher, was pictured showing off her Athens gold medal clad in a gold bikini while US swimmer Amanda Beard, who has won seven Olympic medals, was pictured in a large fold out.

Williams, whose sister Serena Williams has been a prior SI photo subject, received a three-page layout of her own.

Tennis

REUTERS, Brussels

Former world number one Kim Clijsters has celebrated her long-awaited return from a serious wrist injury with a demolition job against Croatia's Jelena Kostanic in the Antwerp Open first round.

Belgian Clijsters, sidelined since last October, needed only an hour to beat the Croatian 6-2, 6-3 but Nathalie Dechy of France and Croatian Karolina Sprem suffered surprise early exits.

Clijsters, who last played when she retired in the second set of a match in Belgium against Russia's Elena Bovina, looked as if she had never been away.

Moving freely and dominating her 35th-ranked opponent from the baseline, she broke Kostanic in the first and fifth games before taking the opening set in 30 minutes.

She broke the Croatian's serve again in the third game of the second set before wrapping up the match with another break when Kostanic sent a forehand long on the first match point.

"I wanted to play again so badly and I am really surprised everything went so well," Clijsters told reporters.

"Physically, I was 100 per cent and I did not have to hold back at all out there."

Russian qualifier Anna Chakvetadze. "I never found the proper tempo," said Dechy. "I was not feeling a 100 per cent mainly because I have a little flu and also because I haven't been able to practise a lot indoors this winter."

Two other qualifiers advanced to the second round, Camille Pin of France beating Spain's Marta Marrero 6-1, 6-2 and Katarina Srebotnik of Slovenia defeating Italian Maria Elena Camerin 3-6, 6-2, 6-4.

In the day's late match, Mary Pierce of France eased past Czech Iveta Benesova 6-2, 6-1.

Pierce, who won the Australian Open in 1995 and the French Open in 2000, will meet compatriot and top seed Amelie Mauresmo in the second round.

It will be their second meeting in successive weeks, Mauresmo having beaten Pierce 6-4, 6-3 in the last 16 of the Paris Open.

A vintage Mehrab

FROM PAGE 13
of the country, laid the foundation there were only one half-century stand between Jamaluddin Babu and Asadullah Khan, who added 70 runs for the fifth wicket after their skipper was dismissed by Sohraward Shuvo, the pick of the Rajshahi bowlers with 4-83.

Bashar, who missed the first round, cracked nine fours and one six before being caught behind by Shamimul Haque.

Paceman Alamgir Kabir chipped in with three wickets for 39 from his tidy 17 overs to put Rajshahi on top at one stage as the hosts lost four wickets in addition of 11 runs. But a 46-run last wicket stand between Monirul Islam and Manjurul Islam rescued the hosts from a wobbling 227-9.

CHITTAGONG-SYLHET

Chittagong correspondent adds: Fresh from an exciting win in the one-day fixture on the previous day, Sylhet failed to repeat the same magic when they were restricted to 216 in their first innings at the Chittagong Divisional Stadium.

The hosts were 37-1 at close with Gazi Salahuddin being the lone casualty. Tamim Iqbal (18) and Nazimuddin were at the crease on 18 and 12 respectively.

It was Yasin Arafat who plotted the Sylhet destruction, the left-arm spinner capturing four wickets for 45 from 20.1 overs. Chittagong's new ball pair Gazi Alamgir (3-52) and Wayskarani Palash (2-69) also bowled well.

Most of the Sylhet batters got a start but failed to carry on. Moniruzzaman, a guest player from Dhaka, top-scored with 37 from 90 studded with half a dozen boundaries while experienced national paceman Hasibul Hossain made a quickfire 30 with three fours and one six.

SCOREBOARD

Scoreboards of the second round matches of the National Cricket League at the end of first-day's play yesterday:

DHAKA-BARISAL
DHAKA: 1st innings
Javed c Shahin b Anis 60
Rashedul c Shahin b Sonnet 3
Mehrab c & b Anis 98
Mehrab Jr run out 0
Halim Shah batting 16
Mahmud batting 2
Extras: (b3, lb3, nb1) 7
Total (For 4 wkts in 90 overs) 186
Fall of wickets: 1-6, 2-157, 3-162, 4-167.

Bowlers
O M R W
Anis 19 6 27 2
Sonnet 8 3 13 1
Salahuddin 9 3 23 0
Mosharrar 22 7 31 0
Tarique 10 2 28 0
Nadif 12 2 35 0
Humayun 10 1 23 0

KHULNA-RAJSHAHI
KHULNA: 1st innings
Sadat c Rezwanul b Shuvo 20
Shafiuil b Alamgir 7

Bashar c Shamimul b Shuvo 64
Sazzad c Shamimul b Forhad 12
Jamaluddin c Shamimul b Shuvo 42
Asadullah c sub (Naeem) b Alamgir 36
Salim lbw b Alamgir 0
Monirul run out 34
Zia c & b Shuvo 0
Dollar b Sumon 24
Manjurul not out 14
Extras: (b3, lb10, nb1, w6) 20
Total: (All out in 88.1 overs) 273
Fall of wickets: 1-22, 2-62, 3-98, 4-121, 5-191, 6-191, 7-202, 8-202, 9-227, 10-273.

Bowlers
O M R W
Alamgir 17 4 3 39
Forhad 11 0 36 1
Sumon 19 2 58 1
Shuvo 29 7 83 4
Saifullah 7.1 0 40 0
Rezwanul 5 1 4 0

CHITTAGONG-SYLHET
SYLHET: 1st innings
Himel c Nazim b Alamgir 18
Mabud c Rabbi b Wayskarani 6
Sadikur c rabbi b Ehsanul 16
Parvez c rabbi b Alamgir 26
Moniruzzaman c Rabbi b Alamgir 37
Nasirul c Ehsanul b Wayskarani 18
Nayeem lbw b Arafat 18
Hasibul c faisal b Arafat 30
Sirajullah b Arafat 24
Nabil not out 1
Extras: (b3, lb2, nb3, w1) 9
Total: (All out in 75.1 overs) 216
Fall of wickets: 1-13, 2-41, 3-43, 4-85, 5-130, 6-149, 7-149, 8-168, 9-209, 10-216.

Bowlers
O M R W
Alamgir 20 5 52 3
Wayskarani 18 3 69 2
Ehsanul 6 2 15 1
Arafat 20.1 6 45 4
Sunny 9 2 22 0
Faisal 2 0 8 0
CHITTAGONG: 1st innings
Tamim batting 18
Salahuddin c Mabud b Hasibul 0
Nazimuddin batting 12
Extras: (b4, lb1, nb1, w1) 7
Total (For 1 wkt in 14 overs) 37
Fall of wicket: 1-11.

Bowlers
O M R W
Hasibul 6 2 12 1
Sirajullah 3 0 16 0
Nayeem 4 2 4 0
Nabil 1 1 0 0

Kiwi appetiser

FROM PAGE 13
"As a team, we're under no illusions about how tough it will be or how good they are; but it's simply a matter of playing consistently well against them, and grabbing all our chances."

Meanwhile Bracewell said he was receiving positive reports on players who had been rested recently to recover from injuries and niggling complaints and would reassess his squad after the second one-day match.