

India willing play Test in Karachi?

PTI, Karachi

The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) has expressed willingness to play Test and one-day international in Karachi during the Indian team's tour of Pakistan next year.

A top Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) official said the BCCI has also asked for an additional three-day practice match in Karachi after the proposed itinerary sent last week, included only a Test and one-day.

Since 2000, when England beat Pakistan in near darkness, only Bangladesh and Sri Lanka have played Tests in Karachi while South Africa, India and England have stayed away from the turbulent and at times violent Port City.

West Indies and Australia refused to visit Pakistan and preferred to play off-shore in the aftermath of terrorists attacks in United States on September 11.

The PCB official added that the BCCI has forwarded the itinerary to its Foreign Office for formal approval.

British bookie puts money on hosts

AFP, Manchester

One of Britain's leading bookmakers declared England favourites to win the Ashes after they finished the second day of the third Test against Australia at Old Trafford in a strong position.

William Hill had England 5/4 and Australia 6/4 for the five-Test series.

"This is the first time in 20 years since England last won the Ashes in the mid-80s we've done this," said Hills spokesman Graham Sharpe, whose firm are offering odds of 11/4 on a drawn series.

Hills make England 4/7 favourites to win the third Test, with Australia 13/2 and the draw 15/8.

England are now 10/1 to win the match by an innings with Australia 9/4 to fail to reach the 245 total they need to avoid the follow-on.

Fed Cup h'ball starts today

SPORTS REPORTER

The Orient Bread eighth Federation Cup Handball Tournament begins today with holders Bangladesh Rifles taking on newcomers Rajshahi City Corporation in the inaugural match at the outer stadium handball court.

Six teams, split into two groups, will take part in the meet and top two finishers from each group will play in the semifinals scheduled for August 18.

The final is billed for the next Saturday.

Bangladesh Handball Federation (BHF) general secretary Asaduzzaman Kohinoor revealed this at a press conference yesterday.

He said that eight teams were supposed to take part in the meet, but two teams - Dinajpur and Chaitinawabganj withdrew at the last moment.

A fighter

FROM PAGE 12

Tigers practice at the Mirpur Sher-e-Bangla Stadium that any good performances from his two young guns would enhance the confidence of the national team ahead of the Sri Lanka tour.

"They (Ashraful and Mashrafee) are real assets in our team and that's why its important they do well in South Africa. I believe that they have the ability to lift our image," said Bashar.

Isinbayeva scales

FROM PAGE 12

Gatlin was powerless to do anything about it.

He was not running in the heat and Greene, winner of three titles in the 1999 championships, also saw his hopes of winning a medal in his only event here come crashing to the ground.

While Isinbayeva said she had achieved her target of winning the title she remained modest about her achievements.

The praises were led instead by Ukrainian pole vault legend Sergei Bubka.

"She proved she is a great athlete in the way she performed today and in the way she keeps breaking records," said Bubka, whose 35 world records is being chased by the Russian phenomenon.

"She's still young and will grow and gain in experience. She already has great confidence and great motivation."

Doucoure was as modest as Isinbayeva.

"I am not the best. I was just the best tonight," said the 22-year-old.

Johnson insisted that for him the battle was not over yet despite the advent of Liu, also 22, and Doucoure.

"I'll be back in 2007, 2008, maybe 2009," said the 34-year-old.

While Isinbayeva chases Bubka's standard, Wariner wants to better Johnson.

"I'll try to get some more strength in me to go for the world record," said Wariner.

Ronaldo's 35-goal target

Football

REUTERS, Madrid

Real Madrid striker Ronaldo has set himself an ambitious target of 35 goals for this season.

"I hope to win my bet because I've lost it for the last two years," the 28-year-old Brazilian told the club's webpage.

"It isn't going to be an easy target to reach, but it will motivate me."

The three-times winner of the World Player of the Year award scored 30 goals in all competitions in his first campaign at Real, 31 in his second and 24 last term.

The best season in his career came at Barcelona in the 1996-97 season when he scored a total of 45 goals for the Catalans.

Ronaldo said that the addition of Brazilian duo Robinho and Julio

Baptista and Uruguayan internationals Pablo Garcia and Carlos Diogo to the Real squad would allow

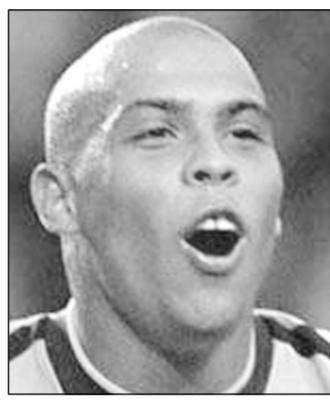
seasons.

"I think that the club has come to understand the importance of having more players because there are a lot of games and a lot of competitions in the season," he said.

"All sides now have squads of over 25 players so that they can rest people."

"Having said that I've never won the Champions League and I'm not going to give up football without winning it."

Real leave their pre-season training camp in Austria on Saturday to head for Budapest where they will play a testimonial match in honour of former player Ferenc Puskas.



RONALDO

the team to mount a much stronger challenge for the honours that have eluded them over the past two

PREVIEW: PREMIERSHIP

Wigan aiming to be nobody's friends

Football

AFP, Wigan

Newcomers Wigan are out to make enemies in the Premiership this season starting with champions Chelsea on Sunday.

While not quite a case of the prince against the pauper - Wigan have just splashed out a club record three million pounds for Henrique Camara -- the northern club's success does have something of the fairytale about it.

Jewell goes into Sunday's game with his eyes wide open but he urged his players not to be overawed by the presence of the millionaires from London at the JJB Stadium.

"The excitement in the town will be fever pitch come Sunday," said Jewell.

ARSENAL v NEWCASTLE

Under-fire Newcastle boss Graeme Souness has warned that last season's Premiership strugglers are ready to hit hard in Sunday's opener against league runners-up Arsenal at Highbury.

Souness is confident that the

Magpies can bounce back from their lowly 14th place finish, their worst finish since winning promotion in 1993.

And despite being the underdogs against the mighty Gunners Souness believes that Sunday's match will be the ideal opportunity to show their worth.

Captain Alan Shearer has been given the all clear following a calf injury and the striker's presence comes as a huge relief with Shola Ameobi (suspended) and Michael Chopra (knee ligaments) both out.

Jermaine Jenas is included despite speculation over his future, as are new signings Scott Parker, Emre and Craig Moore, although defender Titus Bramble is still out after having plaster removed from his fractured elbow.

Arsenal boss Arsene Wenger insists that their title-winning potential is unchanged despite the departure of talismanic skipper Patrick Vieira and Edu, with only Alexander Hleb and 17-year-old Alexander Song added to the squad.

Asia still can win: Inzy

Kallis against ODI status of Afro-Asian Cup

Cricket

AFP, Karachi

A disappointed Asian XI captain Inzamamul Haq feels his side can beat an African XI in next week's inaugural Afro-Asian Cup one-day series in South Africa despite several stars pulling out.

"It's disappointing to lose stars like Rahul Dravid and Sanath Jayasuriya, but Asia still has the firepower to beat Africa," Inzamam told AFP before departing for South Africa with three other Pakistan players.

Pakistan fast bowler Shoaib Akhtar will fly from England and join the Asian squad in Johannesburg on Monday.

"This may not be the best Asian XI and I think the respective Boards of the countries should have ensured the availability of the players before selection, for the cause of Asia," said Inzamam, also captain of Pakistan.

The series opens with a match at Centurion, Pretoria on August 17 before moving on to Durban for two more fixtures on August 20 and 21.

The series, aimed at improving continental relations, is considered by many to be a made-for-television event.

The Asian XI, already without India's injured Sachin Tendulkar -- the

leading scorer in one-day cricket -- was further depleted on Friday when Sri Lankan opener Jayasuriya and India's prolific number three David pulled out.

Last week Pakistan's one-day specialist bowler Navedul Hasan dropped out due to his commitments with English county Sussex and was replaced by Mashrafe bin Mortaza of Bangladesh.

In another major blow frontline pacers Irfan Pathan of India and Chaminda Vaas of Sri Lanka were both sidelined due to injuries.

Indian pair Ashish Nehra and Zaheer Khan came in as replacements, while Sri Lankan captain Marvan Atapattu and batsman Mahela Jayawardene, and Bangladesh's Khaled Mashud are in contention to come in for Dravid and Jayasuriya.

The Asian XI will be coached by former Sri Lankan fast bowler Rumesh Ratnayake.

Inzamam admitted the Asian XI faced more of a challenge now that a lot of first choice players were missing.

"Definitely the chances of the team are hit badly because players who have been performing well were selected, but we would still give them a tough fight," said Inzamam, who has the second most one-day runs behind Tendulkar.

"I don't think it's right that the matches should have official status. Even the matches between the Rest of the World and Australia, which I'm really looking forward to, should not count for the records because it's not one country playing another," he said.

A South African newspaper on Saturday reported that Kallis was "not too excited" about playing in the three games.

"It's just another game of cricket, like a pre-season warm-up, because it's obviously not strength versus strength," the Saturday Independent quoted Kallis as saying.

"I don't think it's right that the matches should have official status. Even the matches between the Rest of the World and Australia, which I'm really looking forward to, should not count for the records because it's not one country playing another," he said.

"I don't think it's right that the matches should have official status. Even the matches between the Rest of the World and Australia, which I'm really looking forward to, should not count for the records because it's not one country playing another," he said.

"I don't think it's right that the matches should have official status. Even the matches between the Rest of the World and Australia, which I'm really looking forward to, should not count for the records because it's not one country playing another," he said.

"I don't think it's right that the matches should have official status. Even the matches between the Rest of the World and Australia, which I'm really looking forward to, should not count for the records because it's not one country playing another," he said.

"I don't think it's right that the matches should have official status. Even the matches between the Rest of the World and Australia, which I'm really looking forward to, should not count for the records because it's not one country playing another," he said.

"I don't think it's right that the matches should have official status. Even the matches between the Rest of the World and Australia, which I'm really looking forward to, should not count for the records because it's not one country playing another," he said.

"I don't think it's right that the matches should have official status. Even the matches between the Rest of the World and Australia, which I'm really looking forward to, should not count for the records because it's not one country playing another," he said.

"I don't think it's right that the matches should have official status. Even the matches between the Rest of the World and Australia, which I'm really looking forward to, should not count for the records because it's not one country playing another," he said.

"I don't think it's right that the matches should have official status. Even the matches between the Rest of the World and Australia, which I'm really looking forward to, should not count for the records because it's not one country playing another," he said.

"I don't think it's right that the matches should have official status. Even the matches between the Rest of the World and Australia, which I'm really looking forward to, should not count for the records because it's not one country playing another," he said.

"I don't think it's right that the matches should have official status. Even the matches between the Rest of the World and Australia, which I'm really looking forward to, should not count for the records because it's not one country playing another," he said.

"I don't think it's right that the matches should have official status. Even the matches between the Rest of the World and Australia, which I'm really looking forward to, should not count for the records because it's not one country playing another," he said.

"I don't think it's right that the matches should have official status. Even the matches between the Rest of the World and Australia, which I'm really looking forward to, should not count for the records because it's not one country playing another," he said.

"I don't think it's right that the matches should have official status. Even the matches between the Rest of the World and Australia, which I'm really looking forward to, should not count for the records because it's not one country playing another," he said.

"I don't think it's right that the matches should have official status. Even the matches between the Rest of the World and Australia, which I'm really looking forward to, should not count for the records because it's not one country playing another," he said.

"I don't think it's right that the matches should have official status. Even the matches between the Rest of the World and Australia, which I'm really looking forward to, should not count for the records because it's not one country playing another," he said.

"I don't think it's right that the matches should have official status. Even the matches between the Rest of the World and Australia, which I'm really looking forward to, should not count for the records because it's not one country playing another," he said.

"I don't think it's right that the matches should have official status. Even the matches between the Rest of the World and Australia, which I'm really looking forward to, should not count for the records because it's not one country playing another," he said.

"I don't think it's right that the matches should have official status. Even the matches between the Rest of the World and Australia, which I'm really looking forward to, should not count for the records because it's not one country playing another," he said.

"I don't think it's right that the matches should have official status. Even the matches between the Rest of the World and Australia, which I'm really looking forward to, should not count for the records because it's not one country playing another," he said.

"I don't think it's right that the matches should have official status. Even the matches between the Rest of the World and Australia, which I'm really looking forward to, should not count for the records because it's not one country playing another," he said.

"I don't think it's right that the matches should have official status. Even the matches between the Rest of the World and Australia, which I'm really looking forward to, should not count for the records because it's not one country playing another," he said.

"I don't think it's right that the matches should have official status. Even the matches between the Rest of the World and Australia, which I'm really looking forward to, should not count for the records because it's not one country playing another," he said.

"I don't think it's right that the matches should have official status. Even the matches between the Rest of the World and Australia, which I'm really looking forward to, should not count for the records because it's not one country playing another," he said.

"I don't think it's right that the matches should have official status. Even the matches between the Rest of the World and Australia, which I'm really looking forward to, should not count for the records because it's not one country playing another," he said.

"I don't think it's right that the matches should have official status. Even the matches between the Rest of the World and Australia, which I'm really looking forward to, should not count for the records because it's not one country playing another," he said.

"I don't think it's right that the matches should have official status. Even the matches between the Rest of the World and Australia, which I'm really looking forward to, should not count for the records because