

## No home pressure: Dravid

PTI, Mumbai

Skipper Rahul Dravid has brushed aside suggestions that Indian players would be weighed down by the pressures of performing in front of home crowd in the Champions Trophy, saying his team was looking forward to the ten-team event beginning today.

"The Indian team and the whole country is really excited about the ICC Champions Trophy and we cannot wait to get into the competition, to play and see the excitement of the crowds and the public," Dravid was quoted as saying by the ICC's 'CricketQuarterly'.

"It's exciting to be the home team in an event of this magnitude but we don't look on that as creating added pressure. All we are looking to do is play good one-day cricket and achieve the right results," the Bangalore stalwart said.

But the Indian skipper is wary of putting the cart before the horse, by focusing on the end result before they start their campaign (at Jaipur against England on October 15), which he thinks might put unnecessary pressure.

## Faisal given all clear

REUTERS, New Delhi

Pakistan batsman Faisal Iqbal has been cleared to replace banned skipper Inzamam-ul Haq in the squad for the ICC Champions Trophy starting in India on Saturday.

The tournament's technical committee cleared the request after Inzamam was banned for four one-day matches over the Oval Test fiasco in August, an ICC statement said on Thursday.

Inzamam was cleared of ball-tampering but penalised for bringing the game into disrepute after his team refused to return to the field in protest at a decision by umpires Darrell Hair and Billy Doctrove to dock them runs for tampering.

The Committee said Australia's request to call up off spinner Dan Cullen for injured fast bowler Stuart Clark in the 14-player squad was expected to be approved later.

Zimbabwe have also been allowed to replace batsman Yusuf Sibanda with 19-year-old Tafadzwa Mufumbis, who has played just three one-dayers.

The 22-year-old Sibanda, with 42 one-dayers to his credit in an inexperienced team, is playing club cricket in Australia.

All Champions Trophy games, day-night affairs, would start 15 minutes later at 1430 hours local time (0900 GMT) to help the broadcasters, it said.

The tournament runs from October 7 to November 5.

## Hasina beside

FROM PAGE 17 today in front of the National Shooting Complex everyday.

Meanwhile, the national cricketers now in India, expressed their shock and disappointment over the incident. Captain Habibul Bashar on behalf of the entire squad strongly condemned the brutal attack that has left the career of Asif – one of the country's top sportsmen – in jeopardy.

The players are deeply saddened by the incident and consider such action on sportsmen as inexcusable. The team wished Asif a speedy recovery from his physical and mental trauma.

Although all concerned persons have come forward in support of the ailing, State Minister for Youth and Sports Fazlur Rahman's silence for five long days has stunned the sports arena. Surprisingly, the sports minister has not only made any comments but also failed to visit them.

## Tigers eyeing

FROM PAGE 17 game," said the soft-spoken Sri Lankan skipper during the press briefing at the venue.

"And most importantly we were beaten by them in recently. We are totally aware of that loss, so we'll play as hard as we played against the other teams. Our main target is to make a winning start in the competition and then qualify to the main stage," said Jayawardene who informed that they are almost decided about the final line-up but wants to take more time to declare it.

Coach Tom Moody was excited with his side's recent success and expressed his hope that they will continue it in today's match.

"Yes, we did lose to India here as a group, the current team have been playing very good cricket. We have a good mixture of experience and young players," said the Australian who has taken the fact of playing the preliminary round positively.



PHOTO: AFP  
West Indies captain Brian Lara (C) wears a traditional Ghandian thread garland during their visit to the Gandhi Ashram in Ahmedabad on Friday.

## Mohali matches in jeopardy



CRICINFO, undated

Just two days before the Champions Trophy kicks off at Mohali, the Punjab Cricket Association (PCA) has said it will not sign the Host Venue Agreement with the International Cricket Council (ICC) unless given definite assurance of compensation for losses incurred.

Mohali will host five matches – Saturday's qualifying fixture between Sri Lanka and Bangladesh, three league games, and a semifinal – but Inderjit Singh Bindra, the PCA president, has warned that unless the ICC agreed to his association's terms and conditions the matches would have to be played elsewhere.

According to Bindra, the PCA would lose approximately 197,000 dollars for each match since the television and the ICC held in-stadia rights. "It is not possible for us to bear such heavy losses. Most of the rights are with them, the only thing

we have is the ticket money," he told reporters. "As of now, the match [on Saturday] will go on. Since the ICC is going ahead with the match, this explicitly means that they have accepted our stand. The ICC wants us to make certain commitments which we are not ready to accept. We have made our points clear to them, but they have not accepted these conditions in writing."

The Host Venue Agreement states that 70 per cent of the revenue from seats sold goes to the host venue, and the rest to the ICC. Bindra, however, was worried that the PCA would not be able to recover the costs spent on conducting the matches as all advertisement rights, including in-stadia and media rights, lie with the ICC.

Mohali has been chosen in accordance with the Indian board's rotation policy, but Bindra stated this had set the PCA back by a further 18,600,000 dollars.

"The Champions Trophy matches have been thrust upon us and we stand to suffer a huge loss because we lose an international match according to the BCCI's rotation system," Bindra said. "An ICC event would fetch us nothing."

Though he did not publicly explain the conditions, Bindra was clear in his ultimatum: "Either you accept [our conditions], or choose another venue."

The timing of the PCA's statement has raised eyebrows because all four Champions Trophy venues were named more than six months ago based on the fact that these stadiums had no contractual or hospitality conflicting with the ICC's commitments. An ICC spokesperson reacted with surprise: "We cannot comment on this at the moment as we don't know exactly what the PCA's bone of contention is. All we know is that the PCA had agreed to fulfill its commitments when the ICC was looking for 'clean' venues."

In related news, the Rajasthan Cricket Association (RCA) looks likely to receive 770,000 dollars towards operational costs and security arrangements for the tournament. The Rajasthan government, which funded the setting up of floodlights, will be charging the RCA 548,000 dollars for each of the six matches being held there.

## Federer fights on



AFP, Tokyo

World number one Roger Federer dropped a set to a player ranked over 100 for the first time this season before beating local hope Takao Suzuki for a berth in the Japan Open semifinals Friday.

The Swiss top seed, playing his first event since winning the US Open, got off to a slow start before rallying to a 4-6, 7-5, 7-6 (7/3) victory.

"He played too quick, too good at the beginning to get on top on me, simple as that, and he had a better start, so that definitely helped him," said Federer.

"He's ranked top 1,000 and we all know he doesn't play like 1,000. I can see the headline 'Federer losing to a guy in top 1,000.' That's not so much fun, so I'm happy I won to save my image."

Federer saved two break points in the opening game, but he failed to save a 15-40 break point against him in the third game when the Japanese employed some successful chip-and-charge tactics. It eventually cost him the set.

But the 25-year-old soon found his feet and never gave Suzuki another break opportunity.

"I was kind of relaxed in the third set, because I was up all the time, and I felt I was holding my serve more comfortably, and I had many chances on his serve. I actually played a solid match in the end," said Federer.

"I knew going into it was going to be difficult to play against him with his fans here, his attacking style. The surface is really quick and it's perfect for him. At the beginning he was playing perfect tennis."

"His serve was really incredible for a little guy, and the way he volleys and moves made it hard for me.

I'm not surprised at all," added Federer.

In the semifinals, he will play either Benjamin Becker of Germany or Jarkko Nieminen of Finland.

Earlier, Tim Henman and Mario Ancic set up a quarterfinal clash against each other after the Briton beat Juan Martin Del Potro of Argentina 7-6 (7/3), 6-3 and the Croat ended the hopes of Germany's Rainer Schutte 6-2, 4-6, 6-4.

Henman hit seven aces against Del Potro's two, and said he was happy with the way he was playing.

"Even when I was a break down in the first set, I was hitting the ball well. I created a lot of opportunities. So I just stayed patient. I played better and better as the match went on, so I'm really pleased," said the 32-year-old.

"I really think the conditions suit me well."

## Freddie inspired

FROM PAGE 17 had got the job I would have fallen back into line behind him."

Vaughan, who will travel to Australia in the hope of playing the final two Ashes Tests as he recovers from a knee injury, is still the team's captain-in-waiting according to the selectors.

But Flintoff is adamant he is not just keeping the seat warm for Vaughan's return.

Flintoff said: "I've been named captain for the Champions Trophy and the Ashes and I'm not looking any further than that."

"It's going to be hard and, as for long term plans, I'm not looking past the Ashes."

"I've been given the England captaincy for this trip. I'm not a stand-in, I'm taking the side out there and I'm going to captain them for this period of time."

"Later on I'm sure it's something that will get addressed over the next few months."

"I'm not sure where Michael is at with his fitness at the moment, but the sooner we get him back in England the better because he is a class performer."

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winning heroics with bat and ball.

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"I was informed it was not and I trust the ICC," he said.

"I was informed that not all the elite umpires would be chosen. Not everybody can be chosen for every tournament or every series."

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## Back to 2 points

PTI, Mumbai

Absence of bonus points, a win fetching only two points as compared to four or five in a regular ODI series featuring more than two countries and a bowl out to determine the winners in case of a tie in the semis or final are some of the novelties which would be seen during the ICC Champions Trophy commencing today.

Another condition states that an hour before start of play, the rival teams should provide a list of the eleven players and the nominated 12th man in writing on the team-sheet provided by the ICC for this purpose to the ICC Event Coordinator.

Immediately prior to the toss, the ICC Match Referee shall check with both team captains that the players nominated on the team sheets are correct. But no player may be changed after the toss without the consent of the opposing team captain.

But the teams are entitled to change their players at any time prior to the toss provided it is done so in writing to the ICC Event Coordinator or the ICC Match Referee.

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"Younis's decision to turn down the captaincy shows a lack of attitude and we need to change this attitude if we want to be world-beaters," said Woolmer.

"I am a firm believer that things happen for the good but we must learn quickly because the people of Pakistan have high expectations of this team and the World Cup is getting nearer," said Woolmer, referring to the four-yearly tournament.

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