

## 'Preaching more than playing'

AFP, Islamabad

The Pakistan cricket team's media manager said some players' fixation on religious activities resulted in their dismal performance in the World Cup, reports said Saturday.

PJ Mir made the observation to reporters after submitting his statement to the evaluation committee of Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) in Lahore, which is reviewing the team's performance in the Caribbean.

"I could not disclose the fact before, but today (Saturday) I informed the media that most of the members had no focus on cricket. Their fixation was on preaching, affecting the team's preparation," the English daily Dawn quoted him as telling reporters after the Friday hearing.

Mir said some members of team had "no drive for the game and were much more active in preaching and praying."

"I have video footage which will prove me right and I will handover those tapes to the Pakistan Cricket Board," he said.

"It was beyond the limit, this religious influence, and the players were even made to offer prayers during the flights," he said without naming who had forced the team members to pray.

The newspaper said Mir's bold statement was seen as an attempt to check the growing religious extremism within cricket in Pakistan amid reports that the PCB had devised a plan to rid the team of extremism.

The world number three side were dumped out of the World Cup by minnows Ireland on March 18. A day later their coach Bob Woolmer's strangled body was found in his room on the 12th floor of the Jamaica Pegasus Hotel in Kingston.

## Pak players to be questioned

PTI, London

After being cleared initially, Pakistani cricketers are once again under the scanner in the Bob Woolmer murder case for "ambiguities" in their statements to Jamaica Police, which is planning to send a team of investigators to question them on the alleged inconsistencies.

Jamaica's Deputy Commissioner of Police Mark Shields has said a close examination of the players' statements has revealed "inconsistencies" but denied any of the Pakistani cricketer was being viewed as a suspect.

"Having reviewed the witness statements it is probable that we will need to clear up further ambiguities. We may have to take further statements," Shields told 'The Daily Telegraph'.

Shields, however, refused to confirm the strength of the team that would go to Pakistan and also did not specify the exact time of their leaving for the sub-continent.

The former Scotland Yard also did not elaborate on the nature of "ambiguities" in the statements but said they may just be nothing more than "innocent mistakes".

"It may be those ambiguities are cleared up by the Pakistan liaison officers (arriving in Jamaica) so it may not be necessary to travel, but I'm saying that it's probable that at some point we may have to go and take further statements," he said."

## England on

FROM PAGE 17 has been restricted by an arm injury -- bowling his lively medium-pacers during practice on Friday, it seems as if batsman Brad Hodge will now take Watson's place.

Sunday's fixture could be Glenn McGrath's final match against England, with the 37-year-old Australia fast bowler due to retire after the World Cup.

"It would be perfect, get a few wickets, knock them over, get the two points and move on," said McGrath, who in 32 one-dayers against England has taken 50 wickets at just over 23 apiece.

"But it's not going to be as easy as that," added McGrath, who earlier this year broke the rib of England star batsman Kevin Pietersen.

"They've played some pretty decent cricket against us in Australia. But we've got over that and at this whole tournament, no team has really got close to us so far."

### TEAMS

**AUSTRALIA** (probable): Adam Gilchrist, Matthew Hayden, Ricky Ponting (captain), Michael Clarke, Andrew Symonds, Michael Hussey, Brad Hodge, Brad Hogg, Nathan Bracken, Shaun Tait, Glenn McGrath.

**ENGLAND** (probable): Michael Vaughan (captain), Andrew Strauss, Ian Bell, Kevin Pietersen, Paul Collingwood, Andrew Flintoff, Ravi Bopara, Paul Nixon, Sajid Mahmood, James Anderson, Monty Panesar.

**Umpires:** Billy Bowden and Rudi Koertzen.



BCB vice-president Aziz Al Kaiser Tito (2nd R) shakes hands with GrameenPhone media manager Moyeen Tareq after a press conference at a local hotel yesterday.

# GP beats Nimbus

Cricket

### SPORTS REPORTER

GrameenPhone made the highest bids in two packages on Saturday including the major one of the title sponsorship for Bangladesh's upcoming home series against India to be held next month.

The country's leading cellular phone company increased the amount to Tk 2.50 crore in addition to Tk 51.8 lakh as prize money in their revised bid while India-based Nimbus Sports International stood by their previous amount of Tk 1.73,88,000 for title sponsorship rights (Package-1) for the two Tests and three one-day internationals.

The two organisations submitted their bids on Thursday for the Title Sponsorship and In-Stadia Advertising Rights for the series but Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) went for a re-bid as they failed to fulfil expectations.

Package-1 covers the title sponsorship rights, including the highest run scorer and highest wicket-taker awards for both the ODI and Test series, fastest fifty awards for the

ODI series, a number of ground boards, naming of site-screens and two wicket floor mats.

Package-2 includes the right for naming 26 perimeter boards around the ground and mid-wall rights (wall between upper and lower gallery) at the Mirpur Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium. GrameenPhone offered Tk 50 lakh compared to Tk 43.47 lakh by Nimbus.

Nimbus won the right for the Package-3 with an offer of Tk 35,39,700 against Tk 31 lakh quoted by their opponents and this package covers two bowling ends, four mid-wicket pitch-mats and boundary-rope branding.

"The amount is not as much as we expected but in the end we are satisfied with the bids. It is the highest amount the board is going to receive from local organisation for sponsorship rights," said Aziz Al Kaiser Tito, the BCB vice-president and chairman of the marketing committee. The previous highest was Tk 1.20 crore for the Zimbabwe and Scotland series held at the end of last year.

He also informed that the agreement would be signed with both GrameenPhone and Nimbus Sports in a few days after consultation with the legal experts.

"Tendering process is difficult but we preferred it since it's transparent. The bids might have been much higher if Indian companies took part but their market faced a setback following India's early exit from the World Cup," Tito remarked.

India arrive in Dhaka on May 7 and open their campaign with the first one-day in Dhaka on May 10. The next limited-overs matches are scheduled for Dhaka and Chittagong on May 12 and 15 respectively.

The first Test will begin in Chittagong on May 18 while the two teams return to Dhaka for the second and final Test from May 25.

BCB vice president and CCDDM chairman Gazi Golam Dastagir, joint secretary Reazuddin Al Mamun and chief executive officer Mahmudur Rahman were, among others, present on the occasion at a local hotel.

## Botha unlikely for NZ game

BBC ONLINE, undated

Ireland all-rounder Andre Botha is doubtful for Monday's World Cup Super 8 game against New Zealand after injuring a hamstring in training.

Botha was taking part in a game of touch rugby in Georgetown when he felt his right hamstring tighten.

He missed the practice session which followed and Ireland are now waiting to learn the extent of the problem in the hope that he will recover quickly.

"The next 48 hours are crucial," said team physio Iain Knox.

Botha's steadiness with bat and, especially, ball has been a big factor in the team's success so far in the Caribbean.

He took 2-5 from eight overs as they stunned Pakistan in the first round and although they have not won a game since then, they have remained competitive in their most recent matches against England and South Africa.

If Botha misses the New Zealand game, it could mean a first World Cup outing for Dubliner Kenny Carroll, who has not played since the warm-up win over Canada in Trinidad on March 8.

Meanwhile, the team have been sent a good luck message by the Duke of York, who met team officials during a visit to Guyana.

"I've been following the competition on the television, and like everyone else I'm delighted that you have reached the Super 8s phase," he said.

"You have certainly enhanced the Cup with your spirit, and it's great to see a team with a smile on their faces."

"I wish you every success in the rest of your games, and hopefully you'll pull off another memorable victory."

## Dravid stays

FROM PAGE 17 Announcing these decisions, Srinivasan said the Board had also decided to do away with the zonal system of selection in a year's time; they will be replaced by fulltime selectors chosen on the basis of their eligibility based on factors including stature as a player.

The subject of player earnings appeared to be the main focus of the meeting, and it was decided to replace the system of graded contracts with a standard fee for all, and additional bonuses for series wins. However, no figures were mentioned in this regard. This effectively means that seniors and juniors all earn the same, the difference being in what they earn from endorsements.

There, too, the board has cracked down: Each player will be allowed a maximum of three endorsements a year but will not be allowed to shoot any commercials up to two weeks prior to any series. Also, not more than two players can endorse the same product. However, Srinivasan stressed that these were decisions taken looking ahead, as a plan for the future.

With a view to improving domestic cricket, it was decided that all international players would play a specified number of domestic games every season; the Ranji Trophy Elite group would be reduced from 15 teams to 10 by 2008-09; all state associations have asked to prepare "fast and lively" wickets; the home and away rotation system has been scrapped for all tournament semifinals and finals; these venues will be chosen by the Board.

"We have instructed the selection committee to send a young team to Bangladesh with an experienced captain," Srinivasan told reporters at the end of a two-day review of the World Cup performance.

# Ex-skipper want less ads

AFP, Mumbai



Friday while reviewing the team's World Cup debacle.

Seven ex-captains, summoned by the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) to chart a future course of action, also wanted the team's international commitments curtailed to prevent burn-out.

The BCCI met the former skipper -- Mansur Ali Khan Pataudi, Chandu Borde, Sunil Gavaskar, Kapil Dev, Srinivas Venkataraghavan, Ravi Shastri and Krishnamachari Srikkanth -- on the first day of a two-day brainstorming session here.

A BCCI release issued after the meeting said the captains had suggested 10 measures to improve cricket in the country after Rahul Dravid's men were knocked out of the World Cup in the first round.

The players must not only limit the number of endorsements, but also take the BCCI's permission and submit a copy of the contract before

signing a new commercial deal.

Indian players are much sought after by companies for endorsing their products in a country where cricket is the most popular sport.

Superstar Sachin Tendulkar, widely regarded as one of the world's richest cricketers, reportedly has sponsorships worth 400 million dollars.

The former captains said the BCCI should take steps to curtail Test and one-day engagements and recommended that a pool of 30 players be rotated so that a cricketer does not play more than 80 days in a year.

India are due to play a minimum of 15 five-day Tests and at least 40 one-dayers over the next 12 months starting with a tour of Bangladesh in May.

The domestic system should be made stronger, the captains said, adding the international calendar be adjusted so that star players play six to eight weeks of domestic matches.

The captains also recommended that the slow wickets around the country be replaced by sporting pitches so that batsmen do not struggle when confronted by fast wickets abroad.

The system of appointing five honorary selectors be abolished, the captains suggested. Instead,

there should be full-time paid selectors drawn from the vast pool of former players.

The second-string 'A' teams should tour Australia, New Zealand, South Africa and the West Indies on a regular basis so that younger players get a chance to play on good wickets before being drafted into the national side.

The recommendations were ratified by the influential working committee of the BCCI on Saturday.

## Akhtar, Asif advised to rest more

CRICINFO, undated

Shoaib Akhtar and Mohammed Asif have been advised further rest for two weeks to allow time for their injuries respective injuries to heal properly.

Shoaib's knee troubles and Asif's elbow injury forced their withdrawals from the World Cup and they have been advised to rest for a couple more weeks before they can return to training.

"They need at least two more weeks of rest before they are examined again by our medical panel," Zakir Khan, the board's director of cricket operations, told Reuters.

"The medical panel will decide when they can resume training," he added.

The bowlers tested positive for a banned steroid last October in out-of-competition tests conducted by the board. They were initially banned but then cleared by an appeals panel a month later.

At the time there was intense speculation that they were pulled out of the tournament because of fears that the may still be carrying traces of the steroid Nandrolone in their bodies and thus may have tested positive in the Caribbean. The PCB has consistently rubished the speculation.

In the absence of the new-ball duo, Pakistan crashed out of the World Cup after successive losses to West Indies and Ireland.

## Bashar plays

FROM PAGE 17

"Nafees needed a break and the decision was taken only after talking to the batsman himself. We had a word with him, and he thinks the break will help him," said Bashar.

Paceman Tapash Baisya has also been ruled out of the World Cup with an ankle injury and his replacement Forhad Reza will only arrive next week.

Bashar hoped his bowlers come good against South Africa and England.

"When we played India, we were up against those considered the best players of spin. It's all about how you play on the day. But South Africa don't play on slow tracks often and we must exploit that," said the captain.

Bangladesh have no points from two matches and after taking on South Africa, they meet England (April 11), Ireland (April 15) and West Indies (April 19).

## Kim, Lim take golf titles

SPORTS REPORTER

JH Kim clinched the men's event while MH Lim won in the women's group in the Korean Cup golf tournament held at the Kurmitola Golf Club yesterday.

KM Kwon and H Kwon both finished second in their respective events among the 567 golfers who took part in the competition that began on Friday.

Director General of Forces Intelligence Major General Sadique Hasan and president of the Korean community in Bangladesh Yon Lee distributed prizes among the winners.



PHOTO: COURTESY

Winners of the Korean Cup Golf tournament pose with chief guest Principal Staff Officer of the Armed Forces Division Major General Md Jahangir Alam Choudhury during the prize giving ceremony at the Kurmitola Golf Club on Friday.