

Pak welcome foreigners

AFP, Bhurban

Pakistan on Sunday stepped up efforts to raise domestic cricket standards by seeking the participation of foreign players and making a percentage of local events mandatory for cricketers.

Players from India and Sri Lanka would be the main targets to join in local events which are marred by an absence of leading home players engaged in international tournaments.

"International cricket encroaches upon our domestic events and in an attempt to make domestic cricket attractive we have decided to invite foreign players into our tournaments," said Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) chairman Nasim Ashraf.

Former captain Inzamam-ul-Haq last month urged Pakistan to raise the standard of first-class cricket, which produces half-cooked players who struggle at international level.

"Through the central contracts given to the home players they are now bound to play in domestic events and we will make sure they feature in at least 75 percent of these events," said Ashraf.

The PCB chairman warned any player not featuring in the required number of domestic matches would not be eligible for international cricket.

"The fee for playing first-class matches will be raised and the PCB will provide money to the regions to hire cricketers," said Ashraf, who took over in October last year.

The prestigious Qaid-e-Azam Trophy will now be the only first-class tournament participated in by eight private departments and 13 regional teams, Ashraf said.

Previously departments and regions featured in separate tournaments.

The PCB also resisted calls from former greats like Imran Khan and Ramiz Raja, who said the departments should be banned.

"Departments give economic security to the players by employing them and we hope that the steps taken will strengthen our first-class cricket, which is the first step towards getting good results at international level," said Ashraf.

Prep starts

FROM PAGE 17 Bangladesh (IPSB) will jointly hold the mega-event, with the opening ceremony to be held in the Bangladeshi capital Dhaka and the final due to take place in India.

Pakistan and India hosted the World Cup in 1987, while Sri Lanka did the honours in 1996.

Officials were expected to select a chairman for the organising committee, with Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) chairman Sharad Pawar likely to get the nod, Pakistan Cricket Board official Salim Altaf told AFP.

The committee's operations are to be based in Lahore, said Altaf, a former fast bowler who is now the PCB's director of special projects.

Officials were expected to discuss the possibility of shortening the World Cup, after criticism of the 47-day tournament held in the Caribbean three months ago.

"The final decision would come from the ICC but we can discuss every possible thing which could make the 2011 event attractive and acceptable," said Altaf.

The quartet of South Asian countries was awarded hosting rights for the 2011 event at the expense of Australia and New Zealand, who will now run the event in 2015.

India will host 22 matches, including the final, while Pakistan will stage 14 games including one semifinal. Sri Lanka will host nine matches with one semifinal, and Bangladesh will be hosting six matches.

Hamilton

FROM PAGE 20 second row with the Brazilian even spending a few seconds on top of the pile before the McLarens came to the fore.

Fifth on the grid was the BMW Sauber of Nick Heidfeld while Heikki Kovalainen took the best grid spot of his career in sixth for Renault.

Seventh was the highly impressive debutant Sebastian Vettel in the second BMW Sauber while Jarno Trulli showed signs of a Toyota revival in eighth.

Mark Webber failed to match his normal qualifying form in ninth for Red Bull while Giancarlo Fisichella completed the top ten in the second Renault.

British veteran David Coulthard suffered a spin at turn eight in first qualifying and had to rely on all his guile to make it into the second session. He could not make it count twice though and ended up 11th in his Red Bull.

Anthony Davidson was content with 16th for Super Aguri, two places ahead of his teammate the Montreal hero Takuma Sato.

But Jenson Button was far less satisfied with 13th. He had a nasty scare in session one though when he became stranded on the weighbridge and only just made it into the next part in his Honda.



Gautam of Ajax Sporting Club plays a shot against Regan of Mohammadpur Boys (not in picture) during their match of the AB Bank Table Tennis League yesterday.

Who's next for NZ?

Cricket

INTERNET, undated

Three players appear to have the inside running to take the New Zealand Cricket (NZC) contract vacated by Hamish Marshall.

Daryl Tuffey, Craig Cumming and Mathew Sinclair are understood to have just missed out on the central contracts announced at the start of the month and could see themselves offered a \$45,000 lifeline.

In a shock announcement on Friday, Marshall declined the offer of a central contract to pursue opportunities overseas. That may open the door again for Sinclair or Cumming, although Cumming nominated Sinclair as the one he expected to gain a contract after originally being omitted.

Marshall, 28, is currently registered as an overseas player with Gloucestershire but he carries an Irish passport, meaning he can remain as a local 'Kolpak' player. He has not played test cricket since the

tour of South Africa last April and was a late addition to New Zealand's squad at the World Cup, where he featured in three matches and scored one half-century.

New Zealand manager Lindsay Crocker said the selectors would make a decision early next week.

The obvious choice is the player numbered 21 on their original list but, if that is Tuffey, it might not make sense to replace a specialist batsman with a bowler. The next batsman on the list would almost certainly be Cumming or Sinclair, with Cumming probably having the inside running based on the past two tests and his ability to open, undoubtedly New Zealand's Achilles heel.

However, he has told the Otago Daily Times that he would be surprised to be offered a contract and expected that Sinclair would be offered it instead. Sinclair has indicated he is looking offshore to further his career, though his lack of a UK passport might hinder him.

Others in the frame could be Hamish's twin brother James but he also holds an Irish passport and the

Herald on Sunday understands he could also investigate opportunities in the United Kingdom, which would also rule him out of New Zealand consideration.

The England and Wales Cricket Board is reducing the number of overseas players allowed per county next season from two to one, making players such as the Marshalls attractive to coaches and marketers.

One of the problems facing NZC is an unavoidable one. Players ranked 17 to 20 receive a retainer of \$45,000, which is fine only if it is being regularly topped up by the \$6000 and \$2500 payments awarded for tests and one-day internationals respectively.

However, those ranked in that low tier are there for a reason: they are fringe players at best and would expect limited opportunities only. Players' Association manager Heath Mills said the contract system was robust and well regarded by players and administrators.

Bedi lashes

FROM PAGE 17 positive. I remember the time I was called by the then NCA director Brijesh Patel, along with Erapalli Prasanna and VV Kumar, to train spinners there. We did not hear at all from NCA chairman Gavaskar before, during or after the camp. I also recall his presiding over a captains and coaches meeting where he gave me the impression that he was not even listening.

"I can't forget the time he once told a team meeting 'The day I stop thinking of money, I will stagnate'."

Gavaskar has been embroiled in a few controversies in the last few years, one of them involving writing about how John Wright, India's former coach, was abused by the players only after Wright's term ended. More recently he suggested John Emburey as a candidate for the job of Indian coach despite the fact that his coaching credentials were less than impressive.

Random

FROM PAGE 20 Portsmouth (Collins Mbesuma, Benjani Mwaruwari, Aliou Cisse), two to Middlesbrough (Ayegebeni Yakubu and Fabio Rochembach), and one remains undisclosed.

Zahavi's lawyer Ehud Shochatovitch said: 'My client believes he has been targeted because he is successful and enjoys a high profile in the football world.'

The Premier League will now send the findings to the FA and FIFA who will decide whether to take disciplinary action.

An FA spokesman said: 'The FA will give full consideration to its contents and the documentation that is due to be passed on by the

Enamul, Nasir stay on top

SPORTS REPORTER

IM Enamul Hossain and FM Sheikh Nasir Ahmed drew both their games to remain on top of the premier group in the Destiny International Rating Chess competition at the Federation hallroom yesterday.

Enamul drew with Abu Sufian Shakil while Nasir drew with Minhazuddin Ahmed as they moved to six points after the eighth round.

In the primary group, Hasan Imam, Kazi Taherul Islam and Amir Hossain are sharing the lead with 6.5 points each.

LOCAL SNIPPETS

FROM PAGE 17 Ahmed (Narayanganji), Mobasshir Khan (Rajshahi), Rabiul Islam (Sathkira), Arifuzzaman (Rangpur), Moniruzzaman (Chittagong), Sajid Islam (Rangpur) and Kamrul Islam (Chittagong).

PINK CITY TALENT HUNT An evaluation programme will be held at a local restaurant today in connection with the talent hunt programme, sponsored and organised by The Pink City, called 'Cricket Medhar Khoje'.

Out of 16,000 participants, 16 cricketers were chosen last year while 14 others were kept under consideration.

Among the organisers, Jalal Ahmed Chowdhury and former national captain Khaled Mahmud will be present while chairman of The Pink City Lutfullah Hossain will moderate at the occasion.

Hattrick wedding

FROM PAGE 20 Beckham, but the Real Madrid and England midfielder could not attend. He was on club duty in Spain.

Brother Phil Neville performed best man duties. Their father Neville Neville was master of ceremonies.

Manchester United's England striker Wayne Rooney and his fiancée Coleen McLoughlin -- the queen of the WAGs for the tabloids - turned up, with one newspaper saying their outfits seemed straight out of a 1970s sitcom.

United heroes Ryan Giggs, Bryan Robson and Paul Scholes also attended.

Gerrard married former nail technician Alex Curran at Cliveden House Hotel in Berkshire, west of London.

Michael Owen, Peter Crouch, Jamie Carragher, Rio Ferdinand, Theo Walcott, Jamie Redknapp, John Arne Riise, Robbie Fowler, Harry Kewell and Ashley Cole were among the football talent attending, while Tottenham midfielder Danny Murphy was the best man.

A magazine was reported to have paid 800,000 pounds for the photograph rights.

Meanwhile midfielder Carrick married childhood sweetheart and pilates instructor Lisa Roughhead at the exclusive Stapleford Park Hotel in Leicestershire, in the English East Midlands, with Joe Cole and Robbie Keane in attendance.

Best buys

FROM PAGE 20 to become the most expensive signing in the history of the Premiership, did not feature at all.

The Ukraine international struggled to adapt to the Premiership and that was underlined by the study's findings, which claim his value to Chelsea was minus 10 million pounds.

His average performances, plus injuries, resulted in him missing the Champions League semifinal exit to Liverpool and the FA Cup final victory over Manchester United.

Controversial Hammers signing Tevez also featured in the table at seventh.

Tevez, who arrived at West Ham from Corinthians in Argentina, only made 19 starts and scored just seven goals but it was the timing and significance of those goals which pushed him into the top 10.

His goals against Wigan and Manchester United helped West Ham stay in the Premiership and collect a 50 million pounds payout.

C'paul defies

FROM PAGE 17 Ganga c Cook b Sidebottom Gayle lbw b Hoggard Smith b Sidebottom Morton c Sidebottom b Harrison Chanderpaul not out Bravo b Hoggard Samuels b Sidebottom Ramdin c Collingwood b Sidebottom Powell c Prior b Harrison Edwards b Sidebottom Collmore lbw b Panesar Extras: (b-4, lb-13, nb-1) 287 Total: (All out in 17.1 overs)

Fall of wickets: 1-0, 2-32, 3-34, 4-55, 5-141, 6-199, 7-219, 8-220, 9-229.

Bowler	O	M	R	W
Sidebottom	29	10	88	5
Hoggard	26	8	58	2
Harrison	25	4	78	2
Panesar	13.1	2	34	1
Collingwood	4	1	12	0

Revenge on KP's mind

Cricket

AFP, Chester-Le-Street

Kevin Pietersen has said he wants to be a member of an England side that 'demolishes' Australia in two years time after the team's 5-0 Ashes humbling during the northern winter.

South Africa-born batsman Pietersen, 26, could not prevent Ricky Ponting's men regaining the Ashes in emphatic style at the first opportunity after England's 2-1 home success in 2005.

But Pietersen has promised the memory of their recent thrashing will inspire the team to success when the Ashes are next up for grabs, in England, in 2009.

"People are still hurting from the winter. But I don't think it did England too much harm, this winter," Pietersen told BBC Radio Five Live's Sportsweek programme on Sunday.

"Yes, we got hammered in Australia and the World Cup (where England failed to reach the semifinals) wasn't good for us, but we are hurting."

"Inside, we are hurting and it is the same sort of pain we want to inflict on a lot of countries that tour England, and it is the same pain we want to inflict on the Australians in 2009, so it wasn't all that bad."

"The way we are playing our cricket now is the way we want to play and the way we want to demolish the Australians in 2009."

Hampshire batsman Pietersen added: "I just basically think it's that killer instinct, that ruthlessness that the Australian team showed us in Australia this winter."

"They were at our throats -- that's what we want to do, we want to be mentally right, we want to be physically right and we just want to keep asking questions ball after ball, session after session," explained Pietersen, who said new England coach Peter Moores wanted the side to have a hard edge.

"A team has to back down at some stage and that is something Peter is very, very positive about and keen on doing."

"As soon as you turn up at the ground, you are in the right frame of mind, you have got positive energy, positive vibes chucking around the dressing room," Pietersen explained.

"Positive energy breeds positive performances," said the attacking batsman, captained at Hampshire by former Australia leg-spinner Shane Warne.

England have won their first Test series since the Ashes, going 2-0 at home to the West Indies in a four-match contest ahead of the final, ongoing Test here at Riverside.

Pietersen's form has been a key factor in England's success against a struggling West Indies side. He scored a hundred in the first Test at Lord's and followed that

up with a Test-best 226 in England's innings win in the second match of the campaign at Headingley.

This series he has so far scored 438 runs at an average of nearly 88 but Pietersen said he hoped for better things to come in international cricket.

"I think this is my 27th Test match, I have played 50-odd one day internationals -- I am still pretty young in my career. I have probably got another seven or eight hopefully another 10, years of playing for England, playing at the highest level."

"It has been a nice start, I have enjoyed it," added Pietersen, who has already scored eight Test hundreds at an average of more than 53. "Nobody goes through their career blasting it all day every single day."

"I am just appreciating the good times at the moment and just concentrating on the simple things."

"The simple things for me are making sure I prepare right and making sure I am mentally tuned in. My life has panned out for me and however it goes from here on in, I don't want to ever wake up on the morning of a Test match thinking I haven't prepared right."

Contracts intact for players

Cricket

AFP, New Delhi

India's cricketers will head for a tour of England on Wednesday with their annual graded contracts back in place following a flip-flop by the sport's administrators.

The Indian cricket board had cancelled the graded contracts -- ranging from 49,000 dollars to 122,000 dollars -- after the team's humiliating first-round exit from the World Cup in the Caribbean in March.

The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) instead suggested a flat annual retainer of one million rupees (about 24,400 dollars) besides the usual match fees and hefty win bonuses.

But the graded contracts, which were re-instated following negotiations last week between the BCCI

and players' representatives, led by captain Rahul Dravid.

The contracts for 17 players, announced on Sunday, will date back to October, 2006 and remain valid until September 30 this year, when they will again come up for renewal.

Opener Virender Sehwag, spinner Harbhajan Singh and seamer Irfan Pathan, who were all axed for the England tour due to poor form, were demoted from the elite Grade A to Grade B.

Senior batsman Venkatsai Laxman was also taken off Grade A, which now includes left-handed batsman Yuvraj Singh and wicket-keeper Mahendra Singh Dhoni.

Batsman Mohammad Kaif and spinner Murali Kartik were not given contracts, while injury-prone seamer Munaf Patel was handed a Grade C contract for the first time.

The Grade A players will get an annual retainer of five million rupees, followed by Grade B with 3.5 million rupees and Grade C with

two million rupees.

The match fees range from 6,100 dollars for Tests and 4,000 dollars for one-day internationals.

India are scheduled to play three Tests and seven one-day internationals on the England tour which commences in mid-July.

Before that, India will play three one-dayers against South Africa and one each against Ireland and Pakistan in Belfast and Glasgow from June 23 to July 3.

Graded players: Grade A: Rahul Dravid, Sachin Tendulkar, Sourav Ganguly, Yuvraj Singh, Mahendra Singh Dhoni, Anil Kumble.

Grade B: Venkatsai Laxman, Virender Sehwag, Harbhajan Singh, Ajit Agarkar, Irfan Pathan.

Grade C: Wasim Jaffer, Gautam Gambhir, Suresh Raina, Zaheer Khan, Shanthakumaran Sreesanth, Munaf Patel.



International Master Enamul Hossain Rajib of Chittagong Mohammedan makes a move against Abu Sufian Shakil of Destiny during their board of the Destiny International Rating Chess Tournament at the Chess Federation Hall yesterday.

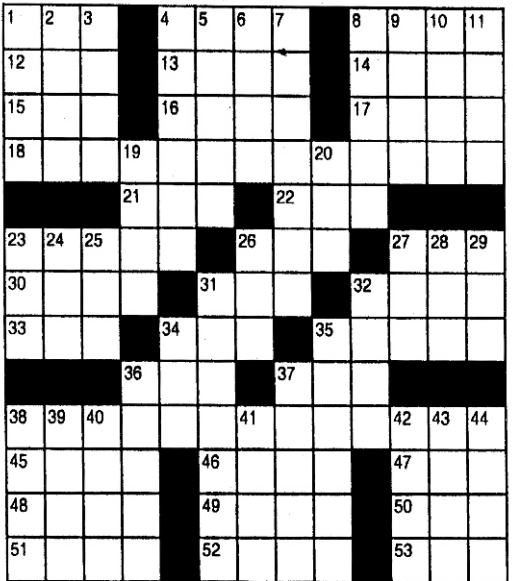
CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS
1 Wanted-poster abbr.
4 Throat clearer
8 Impale
12 In the thick of
13 Prolonged sleep
14 "The Music Man" locale
15 Put off paying
16 Invent a word
17 Succeed at riot-culture
18 TV show set in Arlen, Texas
21 Mule's daddy
22 Feedbag lidbit
23 Dangle a carrot
26 Supporting
27 Indispensable
30 Woodwind
31 Spitalball
32 Jazz style
33 -- Wan Kenobi

DOWN
1 Uncontrollable
2 Chinese gooseberry
3 Mideast gulf
4 Approach aggressively
5 Stock footage?
6 Send forth
7 Boy's eventual status
8 Vision
9 Actress
10 MP's
11 Wall loudly
19 Yawn

20 Corn spike
23 Excessively
24 Undergo recession
25 "Ostentatious?"
26 Enthusiast
27 DIY buy
28 Enos' granny
29 "Undeniably"
31 Brunch entree
32 Predicaments
34 Expert
35 Like wet snow
36 Correspond
37 "All My Children" role
38 Caffeine-rich nut
39 "American"

Solution time: 27 mins.
BED AFF CRUDE
ON SRO LOSER
AVE TOP BANANA
ROD OPIUM
DISH ENS SAND
TLE TOPGUN
IMAGE BITOTA
TOPHAT PIN
SEES APLER
TOP SECRET ALP
ORION RCA COE
TREND YEN HOD



CRYPTOQUIP

Q I YRUQMIQAU, WYYCXAF
CXJY XU LXLA'U EKQIFY
YAZMFK WZI WXCCYUR,
LYEXLYL UZ IQXRY UKY

RUYQJR.
Yesterday's Cryptquip: SUPPOSING YOU HAD YOUR PICTURE TAKEN BY A BIG ALASKAN BEAR, I'D CALL THAT A KODIAK MOMENT.
Today's Cryptquip Clue: L equals D