

'Bhajji should apologise'

PTI, Amritsar

Taking serious exception to Harbhajan Singh's Ravana act during a television dance reality show, the Akal Takht has demanded a public apology from the maverick cricketer.

"To wear a tilak (vermillion) on the forehead and to dress like Ravana and dance with a woman publicly is highly disgusting. The act was shown on several TV channels and the Sikh community can never tolerate such behaviour," Jathedar Giani Gurbachan Singh said.

Singh was referring to the 28-year-old's performance with television actress Mona Singh during the show 'Ek Khiladi, Ek Hasina' aired this week.

The Jathedar claimed that Harbhajan's act had hurt the sentiments of Sikh community and he should come out with an apology while respecting the tenets of Sikhism.

"So far, no one has lodged a written complaint with the Akal Takht. However, anyone can file a complaint and suitable action against the cricketer can be initiated," he said.

The cleric said that since Harbhajan is not a baptized Sikh, he would not be summoned by the Akal Takht, the temporal body of Sikhs.

Windies' no to Pak tour

CRICINFO, undated

The Pakistan Cricket Board's (PCB) efforts to arrange a home series have been dealt a blow as West Indies have opted not to tour next month because of security concerns. Senior players had already expressed concerns about visiting Pakistan and the decision comes a week after the West Indies women's team called off the Pakistan leg of their Asian tour.

Donald Peters, the chief executive of the West Indies board, said negotiations are on to reschedule the tour.

"We are in talks with the PCB at present with the hope of getting the tour deferred to another date, but at this time we are not going to tour the country," Peters told Caribbean Media Corporation Sport.

"At the end of the last (WICB) board meeting, the directors wanted a security report on the situation in Pakistan and I contacted the PCB. I had requested a security plan from them that was okayed by their police and military."

"They got this plan and sent it to me and we were then looking further at getting an independent security firm but this was not done because we had decided that at this point it was not really safe for the players to go to Pakistan."

Pakistan have already had two high-profile postponements this year: Australia's tour was put off, as was the Champions Trophy. They have not played a home Test since October 2007 and the only tournaments they have hosted this year are the Asia Cup and ODI series against Bangladesh and Zimbabwe.

Chittagong MSC

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was saved by home goalkeeper Uttam.

Mohammed coach Nazrul Islam Ledu said that absence of two key players including Ugandan forward Idris at the opponents tent was a blessing for his boys.

"We have grown stronger than earlier and we hope to secure at least sixth place in this season," said Ledu, whose side moved up to the fifth place.

Rahmatganj coach Syed Golam Jilani admitted that his side were outplayed by the home side who deserved the win.

TEAMS

CTG MOHAMMEDAN: Uttam, Sharif, Dhiman, Shawkat, Pradip, Doe (Lincoln), Daulat, Pavel (Jitu), Toudih (Chowmin), Ridon and Raphael.

RAHMATGANJ: Ali, Shipon (Rimon), Ashraf, Jahangir, Imrose (Babon), Francis, Kabir, Hanif, Ripon (Zaku), Joarder and Piklu.

Asif appearing

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Council (ICC) and any ban would automatically be adopted by the Pakistan Cricket Board as well.

His B sample also tested positive for nandrolone in August, but his lawyer says a disparity with the quantity found in the A sample has given Asif confidence.

Asif also tested positive for nandrolone in 2006, along with fellow paceman Shoaib Akhtar. He was banned for one year and Akhtar for two, but the bans were overturned on appeal.

Asif further faces a possible ban or fine from the Pakistan Cricket Board after he was detained in Dubai, while returning from the IPL, on charges of possessing an illegal drug.

He was held for 19 days before police deported him.

The IPL's drugs tribunal comprises former India captain Sunil Gavaskar, Ravi Bapat, the former vice chancellor of India's Maharashtra University of Health Sciences, and lawyer Shishu Gupta.



Action from yesterday's Citycell B. League match between Chittagong Mohammedan and Rahmatganj at the MA Aziz Stadium in Chittagong.

Stanford tie in doubt

CRICINFO, undated

AFP, London

Plans to stage the world's richest cricket match in Antigua next month were thrown into disarray on Tuesday when the West Indies Cricket Board (WICB) lost a dispute with sponsors Digicel in London's High Court.

As a result of the defeat, the WICB was been told it will have to withdraw its sanction for the 20-million-dollar 20/20 match between the Stanford Superstars XI and England on November 1.

That could mean that either the match will have to be called off or that the Stanford Superstars side will be weakened by the withdrawal of most of the leading West Indian players.

The WICB had previously

agreed to make all their players available to play for Texan billionaire Allen Stanford's select side.

But Digicel went to the High Court in a bid to establish that, as the contracted official sponsor of the WICB until 2012, it enjoyed commercial rights associated with a game that was, in effect, a West Indies XI v England.

The High Court upheld that argument and ruled that the Board would be in breach of its contract with Digicel if it sanctioned the match without granting commercial rights to its sponsor. The WICB was also ordered to pay costs.

WICB chief executive Dr Donald Peters confirmed the court defeat.

"We understand the arbitrator has ruled against the West Indies Cricket Board and at this point we are trying to evaluate what the terms of the ruling are before we make any statement," Peters told

Britain's Press Association.

He added: "As soon as my board has been informed there will be a statement."

The WICB and Digicel began arbitration proceedings under the auspices of the High Court last Friday but were unable to agree a negotiated resolution of the dispute.

In return for putting up the money for the match, Stanford 20/20 had wanted to find their own sponsors for the match, bypassing Digicel.

The fate of the match and several warm-up encounters involving Middlesex and Trinidad and Tobago, now depends on the outcome of negotiations between Digicel and Stanford over the next few days.

Sky Television, which is planning to broadcast the matches, said it was confident that a solution would be worked out to allow them to go ahead.

ICC's concern for Tests

PTI, Dubai

In a bid to prevent Test cricket from getting overshadowed by the immensely popular Twenty20 version, the International Cricket Council (ICC) yesterday said it would consider revamping the Future Tours Programme (FTP) to ensure that the longer version of the game "remains strong".

"We at the ICC have been looking at how we can revamp the Future Tours Programme to give Test cricket more context. Initial discussions at ICC Board level have been very encouraging with everyone agreeing in principle to the idea," ICC CEO Haroon Lorgat said in a statement.

Lorgat said although he is confident that Test cricket will remain the top form of the game despite the Twenty20 frenzy but still it was the governing body's responsibility to ensure that the situation never gets out of hand.

"I know that Tests in England and some other places are nearly always well supported. It is a challenge for all of us who love the game and who love Test cricket in particular to ensure Tests all over the world are watched by high numbers of spectators."

"We all have a responsibility to make sure Test cricket remains strong and that all three formats of the game can successfully coexist internationally," he said.

Lorgat's comments come in the wake of twenty20's growing appeal among the fans and the mega success of the inaugural Indian Premier League that prompted concerns about the state of Test cricket which is battling thin crowds all over.

SQUAD

Shoaib Malik (captain), Salman Butt, Shoaib Khan, Khalid Latif, Younis Khan, Misbahul Haq, Shahid Afridi, Kamran Akmal, Shoaib Akhtar, Sohail Tanveer, Umar Gul, Fawad Alam, Anwar Ali, Sohail Khan, Abdur Rauf.

Siddons asks Ashraf

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Batsman Nayeem Islam is all set to make his international debut while another, Mahbubul Alam, has an outside chance after paceman Shahadat Hossain hurt his left palm during practice and the think-tank will only decide on him today morning. Shahadat bowled at the nets yesterday but was seen concerned with the injury.

"We are close to an eleven and we will decide tomorrow morning," said Siddons.

New Zealand captain Daniel Vettori predicted a high-scoring game and said that it would be wise

to bat first.

"We haven't had a look at the wicket for the last couple of days but from what I have seen of it and from previous experience I think it will be a flat track with runs in it."

"We are starting very early and I don't know how the conditions will be but generally in the Subcontinent you would want to bat first. I believe it will be possible to get 280-300 on this wicket," said the left-arm spinner.

The Black Caps are likely to play all their other spin option -- off-spinner Jeetan Patel while dashing opener Jesse Ryder, who missed the

England tour due to a nightclub brawl, is likely to open with Jamie How.

Brendon McCullum, who endeared himself to the subcontinent after a scintillating 158 in the IPL opener for Kolkata Knight Riders, is likely to bat at number five.

Ashraf himself recognised the threat of McCullum and said that it would be imperative to remove him early.

Why this cause for concern? The last time McCullum batted against Bangladesh, New Zealand finished the match in record time.

C'WEALTH YOUTH GAMES Bangladesh team leave today

SPORTS REPORTER

The 11-member Bangladesh contingent for the 3rd Commonwealth Youth Games will leave Dhaka this morning by a Jet Airways flight.

Officials of the Bangladesh Olympic Association (BOA) will be present at the Zia International Airport to see off the team headed by Chief de Mission and BOA Deputy secretary general Anisur Rahman Dipu.

Bangladesh will take part in four disciplines -- swimming, weightlifting, shooting and boxing. The contingent will return home on October 19.

The eight-day Games kick off on October 12.

BD-NZ SERIES

BRAC Bank title sponsors

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh-New Zealand series will be named the BRAC Bank Series 2008, the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) announced at the press conference at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

BRAC Bank won the title sponsorship of the three one-day international and two-Test series from BCB's marketing agent Adtouch, who had acquired the right from the board for Tk 55 lakh (US\$ 85,000).

"The announcement has been delayed for this is a tour outside the International Cricket Council's FTP (Future Tours Programme) and also for the present political scenario of the country," told BCB member and vice chairman of marketing and commercial committee Shakil Kasem.

Although the three parties were present at the press conference, the BCB, Adtouch and BRAC Bank did not disclose how much the title sponsors actually spent to win the rights.

Kasem added that due to the late announcement, the title sponsors would only get coverage from the opening day of the series.

"We have come forward knowing that the exposure would not be maximum. But it is a good opportunity for us to get involved with cricket and we are looking for a long relationship with the game in future," told BRAC Bank CEO and managing director AEM Muhaimeen.

Adtouch directors Tareq Ali and Qazi Aynul Islam were also present.

Meanwhile, famous local ice-cream manufacturers Igloo have become the official ice-cream of the series.

They will provide Tk one lakh to the board for getting the rights of selling ice-cream from 30 points for the crowd in Dhaka and Chittagong at factory price.

Stop retirement

FROM PAGE 17
that the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) had struck a deal with Ganguly to give him a graceful exit, provided he agreed to quit after the series.

Kumble's 616 wickets from 130 matches makes him the third most successful Test bowler after Sri Lankan Muttiah Muralidaran (756) and Shane Warne of Australia (708).

The leg-spinner claimed all 10 wickets in an innings against Pakistan in New Delhi in 1999, only the second bowler to achieve the feat after Englishman Jim Laker.

Meanwhile, Australian captain Ricky Ponting said the tourists were hoping to take advantage of the distractions in the Indian team over Ganguly's retirement.

"It creates distractions, there's no doubt about that," Ponting told reporters.

"Yesterday afternoon and today the Indian team will have faced a fair share of different distractions to what they're used to."

"Everyone would have wanted to talk about Sourav's retirement, so they will be facing that now for the next few weeks."

"One thing it will do is it will probably take a bit of pressure off Sourav and put it back on some of the other guys in their side, that's the way I see it."

Battle Royale

FROM PAGE 17
all the humidity around, it should help the seamers a bit," said Ponting.

TEAMS

AUSTRALIA (from): Ricky Ponting (captain), Matthew Hayden, Simon Katich, Michael Hussey, Michael Clarke, Shane Watson, Brad Haddin, Cameron White, Brett Lee, Mitchell Johnson, Stuart Clark, Jason Krejza.

INDIA (from): Anil Kumble (captain), Virender Sehwag, Gautam Gambhir, Rahul Dravid, Sachin Tendulkar, Sourav Ganguly, Venkatesh Lakshman, Mahendra Dhoni, Harbhajan Singh, Zaheer Khan, Ishant Sharma, Amit Mishra, Munaf Patel.

Umpires: Rudi Koertzen and Asad Rauf.

Drop drove Sourav

CRICINFO, undated

CRICINFO, undated

A day after announcing his retirement from international cricket, Sourav Ganguly said the decision came at the right moment.

"I just felt it was time for me to go," Ganguly said yesterday on the eve of the first Test against Australia in Bangalore.

Ganguly said he had not rushed into the decision and had arrived at it after he was ignored for the Iran Cup. "Obviously I can't deny the fact that I was disappointed after the Iran Cup selection. To be honest, I felt I'd two outstanding years except the Sri Lanka series," Ganguly said.

For the record, Ganguly has

scored 1,667 runs in 21 matches at 45.05 in the last two years. Still he undercut the sense of sadness with wit.

Asked as to why he was the most scrutinised among the Fab Five, Ganguly smiled and replied, "Probably people didn't like my face."

On Tuesday, after briefing the media, Ganguly made the surprise announcement to call it a day. He said he didn't want the attention focused on him since the series was the priority. "I didn't want to make much of a fuss and that's why I announced it at the end of the press meet because the series is more important," Ganguly said.

Asked if there was a sense of relief now, Ganguly said, "The pressure of doing well will always be there and that probably brings

the best out of everyone. Whether it's a relief or not, all I can say is I've not been sad."

Ganguly also rubbished all the rumours about him intending to stick around for a couple more years. "I've not said anywhere that I wanted to play for two years. It was picked from an interview a year ago after I played against Pakistan," Ganguly said.

Well aware of the fact that a lot of speculation will surface about his decision, Ganguly said he wasn't bothered about it. "I know what is the right thing and you will find out in due course," he said.

Picking his debut, at Lord's in 1996, as the best moment of his career, Ganguly said if there were any unfulfilled expectations, it was the India's loss in the 2003 World Cup final.

Ricky insulted by Virender claims

CRICINFO, undated

CRICINFO, undated

Ricky Ponting, the Australian captain, is insulted by claims from Virender Sehwag that Australia cheated during their acrimonious SCG victory in January. Sehwag said there was no point in having a catching pact for the four-Test series, which starts in Bangalore on Thursday, because it wasn't applied properly on the previous occasion.

"That's fairly insulting," Ponting said. "In the first innings [at the SCG] I didn't claim a catch because I wasn't 100 per cent sure."

"It's amazing how they've picked out a lot of negatives from that game and don't seem to be speaking about the Perth Test [the third match of that series, which Australia lost], where we probably had the same things happen to us. Not one member of the Australian team has spoken about it. We go about our cricket in different ways."

Kumble, however, downplayed the issue. "I'm not really aware of what he [Sehwag] said. That's all in the past. Let us not dwell on the past."

Sehwag said the Australians

appealed for one-bounce dismissals at the SCG. "We'd have won the Sydney Test match if they hadn't claimed catches taken off half-volleys in that game," Sehwag told ESPN-STAR.

India lost by 122 runs after Michael Clarke, who picked up a contentious take off Sourav Ganguly on the final day, collected three wickets in the final over. Shortly after, Anil Kumble said only one team played the match in the spirit of the game. The fixture was also controversial for a series of umpiring mistakes, excessive appealing, batsmen not walking to thick edges and the race row between Harbhajan Singh and Andrew Symonds.

Kumble said on Wednesday the Sydney affair would not affect either team in this series. "Let's not sit and dwell on what has happened in the past," he said. "I'm sure this series will be played in the right way."

Ponting said the fact India were still talking about the defeat was a good sign for Australia. "I'm not sure what they are trying to achieve," he said. "It was a Test we won, a crucial Test for the overall series. As I said at the time, it was one of the best moments I've had on a cricket field. To win the way we did was an outstanding effort by the team."

NCL ready

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Lipu expected a 'healthy competition' this year.

"We have prepared good wickets where the ball will carry. It would be a good stage where bowlers and batsmen will be able to prove themselves," hoped former national cricket captain Lipu.

"We will try to provide grass-top pitches this time and apart from the venue in Khulna, all the grounds are in sound condition."

Lipu added that they were aware of last season's poor umpiring and asked the umpires' committee to appoint the best available umpires this time.

This year's tournament will also see the NCL return to Sylhet division after five years as the Sylhet District Stadium has been prepared for top level cricket. Sylhet last hosted National league games in the 2003-04 season.

Barisal, as usual, will play their home matches not at home but at Dhaka Fatulla Stadium and the Shaheed Chandu Stadium in Bogra. Last time a venue at Barisal was used during the 2003-04 season.

Sponsor Ispahani Mirzapore Tea is expected to provide Tk 35 to 40 lakh out of the Tk 4.73-crore estimated budget. The budget of the last season was Tk 4.30 crore.

Meanwhile, mobile content provider Wintel will deliver the scores of the league matches as well as different domestic tournaments to be organised by BCB to mobile phone subscribers.

Chief selector Rafiqul Alam, chairman of Ispahani Group of Companies Mirza Ali Behrouze Ispahani were also present.



Ispahani Group of Companies chairman Mirza Ali Behrouze Ispahani (2nd from R) and BCB tournament committee chairman Ghulam Mohammed Alomgir (2nd from L) attend a press conference at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

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CRYPTOQUIP

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QVVP OZAMJTOJFM. NVT
GLHUM LGGZPLJMZBN. AZM
VQQ MUZ STOHOZ JBJOG
Yesterday's Cryptquip: IF A DRIED GRAPE
DECIDED ON A PURPOSE OR CALLING IN LIFE,
COULD YOU SAY IT'S A RAISIN D'ETRE?
Today's Cryptquip Clue: Q equals F