

Ash rises like a phoenix

Cricket SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh captain Mohammad Ashraf returned among runs with a blazing hundred at the right time as Gazi Tank managed a 15-run victory over Victoria...

bowlers to the sword during his 21-ball 46 as the right-hander clobbered two fours and four sixes while Tamim played a patient knock of 59 that featured seven boundaries in 80 balls.

Opener Raseel Al Mamun top scored 56 off 77 balls with three fours and two sixes while number nine Shafaq Al Jabir added 34 off 35 balls that saw two fours and three sixes.

GAZI-VICTORIA Ashraf had been struggling with the bat after an impressive show in the Twenty20 tournament and it was the perfect time for the right-hander to come up with a big score ahead of the coming home series against Pakistan.

After a solid 61-run opening partnership between national opener Imrul Kayes (67) and Mohammad Anwar (23), the ace batsman took charge during his unbeaten hundred. Ashraf smashed 12 boundaries in a 72-ball knock as Gazi posted a mammoth 296-4.

Mohammad Mithun was the other notable scorer with a 37-ball 42 that featured four boundaries and a six while Prvanjan Mallick was not out on 31.

Three Gazi batsmen fell to run-outs while Tariqul Islam

took the other wicket. Victoria made a valiant reply before they were bundled out for 281 runs.

Amit Majumder (40) and Arman Hossain (33) made a flying start by associating 56 runs in 6.3 overs. And then Sharifullah made 68 off 74 balls with five fours and Arafat Salahuddin's whirlwind knock of 60 which came from 29 balls was still not good enough to chase down the huge total.

Victoria also had three vital run outs victims and it was Faisal Akhter who made the chase difficult when the number four batsman played nearly 100 balls to score 43 runs.

ABAHANI: 238-9 in 50 overs (Tamim 59, Imran 34, Sahagir 27, Nasir 22, Mashrafe 46, Zia 22, extras 7; Alamgir 2-51, Golam Hossain 3-29).

CITY: 206-9 in 50 overs (Mamun 56, Nadim 26, Rashedul 28 not out, Shafaq 34, extras 15; Arafat Sunny 2-32, Nazmul 3-29).

GAZI: 296-4 in 50 overs (Imrul 67, Anwar 23, Nafis 14, Ashraf 100 not out, Mithun 42, Nayeem 32 not out, extras 19; Tariqul 1-46).

VICTORIA: 281 all out in 50 overs (Amit 40, Arman 33, Faisal 43, Sharifullah 68, Salahuddin 60, extras 13; Nayeem 4-44).

Result: Gazi Tank won by 15 runs.

Hail the brave bus driver

AFP, Lahore

The Sri Lankan cricket team Tuesday hailed their bus driver for saving their lives after a deadly ambush left eight people dead and seven players wounded.

The team bus was attacked on its way to the Gaddafi Stadium where they were due to resume the third day's play in the second and final Test.

The match was abandoned after the incident and the Sri Lankan team and officials were evacuated from the stadium in Pakistan Air Force helicopters. The tourists were due to fly home in a specially-chartered plane late Tuesday.

Manager Brendon Kuruppu praised team bus driver Meher Mohammad Khali for saving the players.

"I was on a phone call and I saw two men coming out from somewhere and opening fire," Kuruppu told AFP.

"We all went down, we could hear the firing going around, there was pandemonium in the bus but the bus driver kept his cool and saved us."

Skipper Mahela Jayawardene also extended his gratitude.

"We owe the team bus driver our lives for his remarkable bravery in the face of direct gunfire," he said in a statement.

"Had he not had the courage and presence of mind to get the bus moving after the initial attack then we'd have been a far easier target for the terrorists."

Jayawardene passed on the team's "deepest and heartfelt condolences" to the families of the people who were killed in the attack.

Kuruppu said they had never before faced any security problems in Pakistan.

"We were getting good security and there were no problems but these incidents were highly condemnable and our players are left shocked."

"Cricket takes a back seat when such incidents happen," said Kuruppu who has played four Tests and 54 one-dayers for Sri Lanka.

Plane sent to evacuate players

AFP, Colombo

Sri Lanka was Tuesday sending an aircraft to evacuate the nation's cricket team from Lahore following an attack that wounded seven players and a coach, an official said.

A Sri Lankan Airlines plane carrying Sri Lanka Cricket chief Duleep Mendis, player representative Pramodaya Wickremasinghe and a medical team was due to leave shortly, Sri Lanka Cricket official Charith Senanayake said.

"We are hoping to bring the team back to Sri Lanka by midnight today," Senanayake said.

Sri Lanka's president Mahinda Rajapakse, who is on an official visit to Nepal, had earlier sent his foreign minister Rohitha Bogollagama to arrange the evacuation from Lahore.

The Sri Lankan team was in Pakistan in place of the Indian team, which had pulled out of a scheduled tour following the November attacks in Mumbai, which India blamed on Pakistan-based militants.

Up to 12 gunmen attacked the team's convoy near the Gaddafi stadium with rockets, hand grenades and automatic weapons, triggering a 25-minute gun-fight with security forces.

Seven Sri Lankan players, including skipper Mahela Jayawardene, were hurt, along with an assistant coach, Briton Paul Farbrace.

Liza gets closer to leaders

SPORTS REPORTER

Masuda Begum joined the casualty list in yesterday's eighth round of the 30th Parachute National Women's Chess Championship.

Masuda, previous round's co-leader, lost to Shamima Akhter Liza as holder IWM Rani Hamid and Sharmin Sultana Shirin stayed atop with seven points each.

Hamid defeated Jahanara Haque Runu while Shirin beat Farjana Hossain Anne at the federation hall-room. In other eighth round matches, WFM Zakiya Sultana beat Protiva Talukder, Nazrana Khan Eva beat Rokhsana Tili and Ahely Sarkar beat Amena Khatun.

Liza, last year's runner-up, followed the joint leaders closely with 6.5 points.

India win in rain

Cricket AFP, Napier

The strike power of Virender Sehwag, Mahendra Singh Dhoni and Suresh Raina delivered India a 53-run win in a rain-marred opening one-day international against New Zealand here Tuesday.

It was the perfect response from India after they lost the two Twenty20 matches which opened their tour.

With the match first reduced to 38 overs each, under the Duckworth-Lewis system New Zealand were set an imposing target of 278 in reply to India's 273 for four.

They were already watching the run rate rise at an alarming pace when a second rain disruption revised the target to 216 from 288 overs, meaning New Zealand needed 105 from the remaining 71 overs.

They flayed away, but the game was already gone and at the close New Zealand were 162 for nine.

The damage was done at the start when opener Sehwag set the pace with a typically aggressive 77 and Dhoni provided stability through the innings with an unbeaten 84.

But when it became obvious the run rate would be crucial after the first two-hour rain break, Raina blazed away for 66 off 39 balls to put India in a secure position.

The pre-match hype had focused on Sachin Tendulkar's first appearance on tour, but his was a subdued performance by comparison.

He was removed in the 10th over for 20 when the big-hitting Sehwag had pushed the team score to 69.

The early dismissal of Tendulkar, caught behind by Brendon McCullum off Ian Butler, gave New Zealand their only bright moment in the game.

Sehwag and Dhoni upped the tempo and reached 121 in the 19th over, until Sehwag's punishing spell ended when he belted Vettori towards the boundary only to see Ross Taylor take a magnificent catch diving to his left.

Raina increased the pace

further as he clubbed five boundaries and four sixes putting on 110 in 74 balls for the fourth wicket with Dhoni until he was caught by Iain O'Brien off part-time bowler Grant Elliott.

When New Zealand started their innings they never looked like reeling in the run rate.

They faced 11 dot balls before McCullum, the hero of the Twenty20s, was out for a duck and New Zealand were one down for none.

By the 16th over, New Zealand were 81 for three, the run rate was over nine, and Jesse Ryder and Taylor had joined McCullum back in the pavilion.

Martin Gupthill put some backbone into the innings with 64 off 70 deliveries, the only New Zealand batsman to reach 50, but his dismissal sparked a dramatic collapse with four wickets falling in five balls.

Harbhajan Singh had Gupthill caught by Gautam

Broom was stumped by Dhoni. Kyle Mills survived one ball, to deny Harbhajan the hat-trick, before he was caught by Sehwag at slip and Ian Butler holed out in the deep to Zaheer Khan on the first ball of the next over.

At 132 for nine it was left to Vettori and O'Brien to bat out the remaining four overs.

The second match of the five-game series is in Wellington on Friday.

SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard in the rain-shortened first one-day international between New Zealand and India at McLean Park in Napier on Tuesday:

Table with columns: Bowler, O, M, R, W. Includes players like Sehwag, Dhoni, Raina, and Vettori.

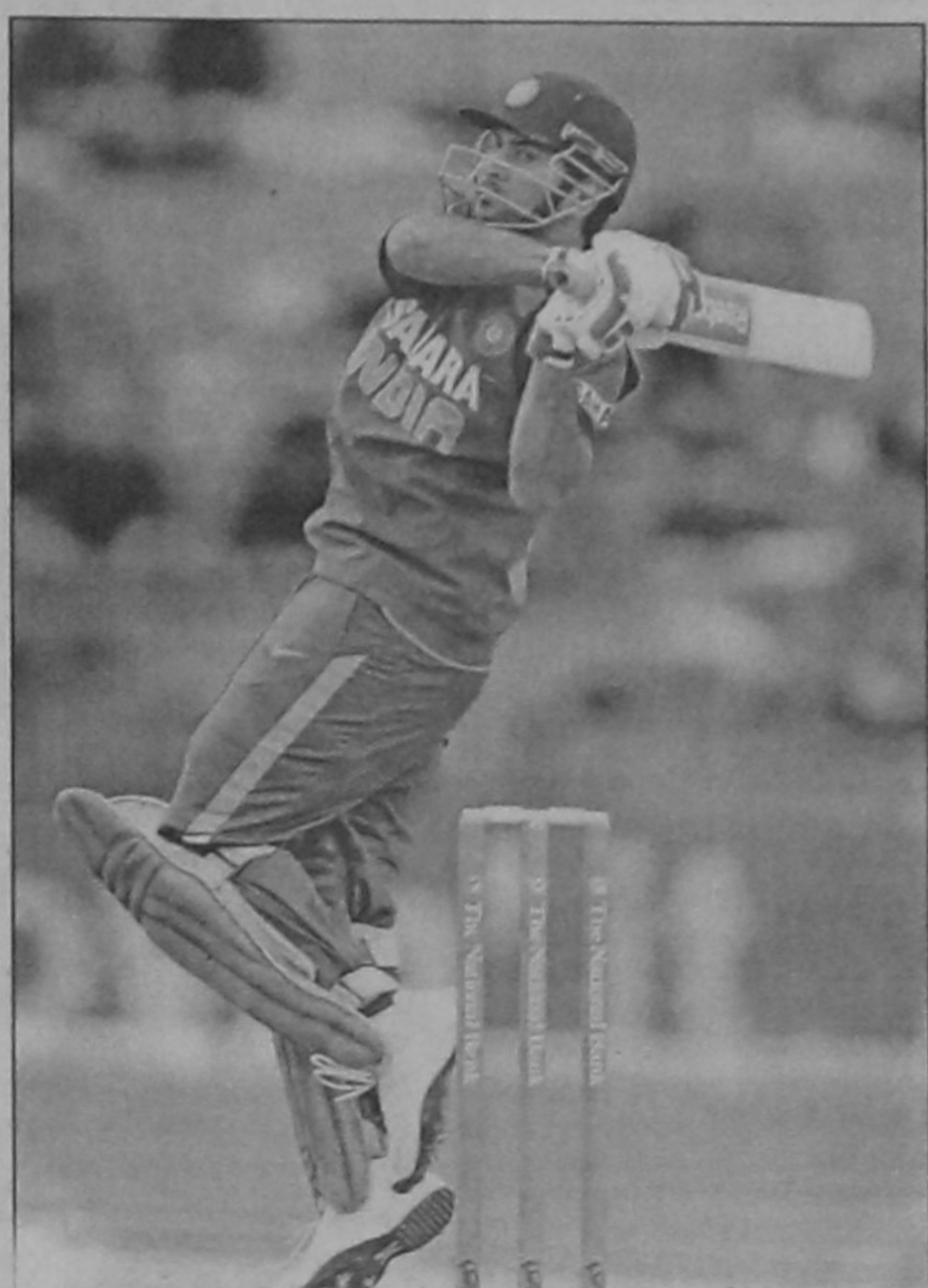
Total: (For 3 wks in 38 overs) 273. Did not bat: Gambhir, Kumar, Harbhajan, Zaheer, Patel. Fall of wickets: 1-69, 2-121, 3-131, 4-241.

Table with columns: Bowler, O, M, R, W. Includes players like Mills, O'Brien, Butler, Oram, Vettori, Ryder, Elliott.

NEW ZEALAND

Table with columns: Bowler, O, M, R, W. Includes players like Sehwag, Kumar, Gupthill, Gambhir, Harbhajan, Taylor, Tendulkar, Pathan, Elliott, run out, Oram, Dhoni, Yuvraj, Broom, Dhoni, Harbhajan, Butler, Patel, Zaheer, Mills, Sehwag, Harbhajan, Vettori, not out, O'Brien, not out, Extras, Total, Fall of wickets, Extras.

Table with columns: Bowler, O, M, R, W. Includes players like Zaheer, Kumar, Patel, Yuvraj, Pathan, Harbhajan. Result: India won by 53 runs under Duckworth-Lewis and lead the five-match series 1-0. Man-of-the-match: Mahendra Singh Dhoni. Toss: India.



India captain MS Dhoni hooks upppishly during their first ODI against New Zealand in Napier on Tuesday.

Cook ensures draw

Cricket AFP, Bridgetown

Alastair Cook broke his drought of Test hundreds to collect his eighth Test hundred and earn England a draw in the fourth Test against West Indies on Monday.

glorified batting practice in an unbroken stand of 150, after Owais Shah was adjudged lbw to Suleiman Benn for 21 about 20 minutes at lunch.

In the final over before tea, Pietersen reached his landmark from 74 balls, when he swept Hinds to deep fine leg for a single.

But the match was long over as a genuine contest and the two sides decided early to put everyone out of their misery.

Before lunch, Cook had passed 50 for the fourth straight time in the series on a largely uneventful morning, as England reached 115 for one.

Cook reached his landmark from 86 balls, when he square drove left-arm spin bowler Suleiman Benn through backward point for his eighth boundary, but he was fortunate to have survived until the interval.

On 38, Cook offered a difficult chance off Benn to Brendan Nash running back at mid-wicket.

But England captain Andrew Strauss was not that blessed, and he was bowled for 38 when he dragged a drifter into his stumps off West Indies captain Chris Gayle, bowling his uncomplicated off-spin.

After lunch, England lost Shah, when he was struck on the boot by a delivery playing defensively forward.

For the rest of the period, Cook and Pietersen filled their troughs, but there was an

anxious moment for Cook when he was 58, and West Indies asked that a bat-pad catch to short leg fielder Hinds be referred to the video umpire.

The result of third umpire Daryl Harper's inspection of the video were as inconclusive as the result.

SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard at stumps on the fifth and final day of the fourth Test between West Indies and England at Kensington Oval on Monday:

ENGLAND: First innings 600-6 declared (Strauss 142, Bopara 104)

WEST INDIES: First innings 749-9 declared (Sarwan 291, Ramdin 166; Swann 5-165)

ENGLAND: Second innings (overnight 6 for no loss)

Table with columns: Straus b Gayle, Cook not out, Shah lbw b Benn, Pietersen not out, Extras, Total, Did not bat, Collingwood, Bopara, Ambrose, Broad, Anderson, Swann, Sidebottom, Fall of wickets.

Bowler O M R W. Includes players like Edwards, Powell, Benn, Taylor, Gayle, Hinds, Sarwan.

Result: Match drawn. Man-of-the-match: Rannarash Sarwan.

Terror strikes

FROM PAGE 17

opening ceremony on February 19, 2011 while the final will be played in India and the two semifinals shared by Pakistan and Sri Lanka.

Australia and New Zealand are already on standby if South Asia is unable to organise the tournament.

Popular television cricket commentator Harsha Bhogle said the uncertainty worried him.

"I feel sorry for cricket lovers in Pakistan, but the attacks have shown it is not a place for international matches right now," Bhogle told AFP.

"I can't say what will happen in the future, but I know teams will think twice before

coming to play in the region."

The attacks came even after the Pakistan government provided what it said was "fool-proof" and "presidential-style" security to the visiting cricketers.

Sri Lanka had agreed to the tour after India pulled out of a scheduled Test visit to Pakistan earlier this year following worsening relations between the two nations over the Mumbai attacks.

The split tour -- Sri Lanka played a one-day series in Pakistan last month without incident before returning for the Tests -- was organised even as other teams were refusing to visit the troubled nation.

World champions Australia led the boycott call, later joined by England, South Africa and New Zealand, forcing the ICC to shift the Champions Trophy out of Pakistan.

That eight-nation tournament, the second biggest after the World Cup, was due to be held in September last year, but will now take place this October at a venue yet to be decided.

Australia's uncompromising stance also forced their one-day series against Pakistan starting next month to be shifted to the United Arab Emirates.

Pak terror

FROM PAGE 17

short a tour of Pakistan after a suicide blast outside their team hotel killed 14 people, including 11 French naval staff.

September 2003: A bomb blast in Karachi forced South Africa to postpone a tour of Pakistan. They agreed to tour a week later but refused to play in Karachi, Pakistan's biggest city.

October 2005: England refused to play a Test in Karachi over security fears but played a one-day in the city.

October 2007: South Africa refused to play a one-day game in Karachi following an assassination attempt on former prime minister Benazir Bhutto. The match was shifted to the central city of Multan.

March 2008: Australia refused to tour Pakistan over security fears. The tour is scheduled to take place in Abu Dhabi and Dubai in April-May this year.

March 2009: Sri Lankan team attacked by gunmen, forcing the suspension of the second Test after two days of play.

MU look

FROM PAGE 20

that you can be successful. "This team has done great things away from home this season and there is no reason why we cannot do it again."

Tottenham must recover quickly from the agony of losing the League Cup final shoot-out as they host fellow strugglers Middlesbrough.

Cricket world

FROM PAGE 17 were approached and agreed to fill the void.

Australia, who have also refused to tour the troubled South Asian country, said the attacks would have a lasting and damaging impact on future series in Pakistan.

"It is very sad that it has come to this for all the cricketers and Pakistan cricket in particular," said Australian Cricketers' Association chief Paul Marsh.

"This is not their doing but I am sure the fallout from this is going to have a lasting impact on Pakistan cricket and the future of the game in Pakistan."

Cricket Australia chief executive James Sutherland said he was equally stunned.

"Australian cricket has many friends in Sri Lanka and in Pakistan and we sincerely hope they are all safe after this awful incident," Sutherland said.

Former Sri Lanka coach Tom Moody, an Australian, said he was "saddened" by the orchestrated ambush in the upmarket district around Lahore's Liberty Square.

"My thoughts and prayers are not only with my friends in the Sri Lankan cricket team, but with the families of everyone that has been killed or injured in today's attack," said Moody, who coached the national team from 2005 until just after the 2007 World Cup.

Bangladesh cricket chiefs, co-hosts of the 2011 World Cup with India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka, said they were "deeply concerned" by the attack.

"The Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) is deeply concerned at this unprecedented attack on cricket, which is a symbol of hope and aspiration for millions in the sub-continent and around the world," a BCB release said.

"We are saddened by the unfortunate events and express solidarity with the players, match officials and victims of the attack."

Former England cricketer Dominic Cork, who was in Lahore commenting on Sri Lanka's now abandoned second Test against Pakistan, said no more international cricket should be played in the country and vowed never to return.

Pak greats fear exodus

Cricket AFP, Lahore

Former Pakistan cricket greats condemned Tuesday's brazen attack on the Sri Lankan team, fearing the country will lose the chance to host the 2011 World Cup.

Eight people were killed and seven Sri Lankan cricketers wounded when up to 12 gunmen attacked the squad's convoy near the Gaddafi stadium in Lahore with rockets, hand grenades and automatic weapons, police said.

"It is going to be very difficult for us to now convince teams that they can play the World Cup in Pakistan safely," said Miandad, who resigned recently as director general of the Pakistan Cricket Board.

Former spinner Iqbal Qasim said the incidents had shaken the cricket-loving nation.

"What to say of cricket? These events have hit the most vibrant city in Pakistan. For the time being we feel everything has come to a dead end. There will be no cricket at home and we have to play our cricket at neutral venues."

New Zealand previously

cricket in Pakistan.

"It is a big tragedy. Something like this should never have happened. We talk about foreign teams being provided top security but after what happened today I don't see any team coming to Pakistan for a while," he said.

"Even the International Cricket Council (ICC) will now find it hard to allow the World Cup matches to be held in Pakistan. It is gone," Waqar added.

Another former captain, Javed Miandad, said Pakistan cricket had been badly hurt.

"It is all gone," he said.

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New Zealand previously

cut short a tour when a suicide bomb blast outside their team hotel in Karachi killed 19 people in May 2002.

Five minutes

FROM PAGE 17

Alam said when he and his players arrived near the scene security officials stopped them and advised them to return.

"There were firing at the roundabout and we had to take a U-turn and we returned back to hotel. It is shocking and awful," said Alam, a former national captain.

Current Pakistan captain Younis Khan and some other members of the squad went to the airport to comfort their opponents, he said.

"I asked some of the players to go to the airport and console the Sri Lankan players," said Alam.

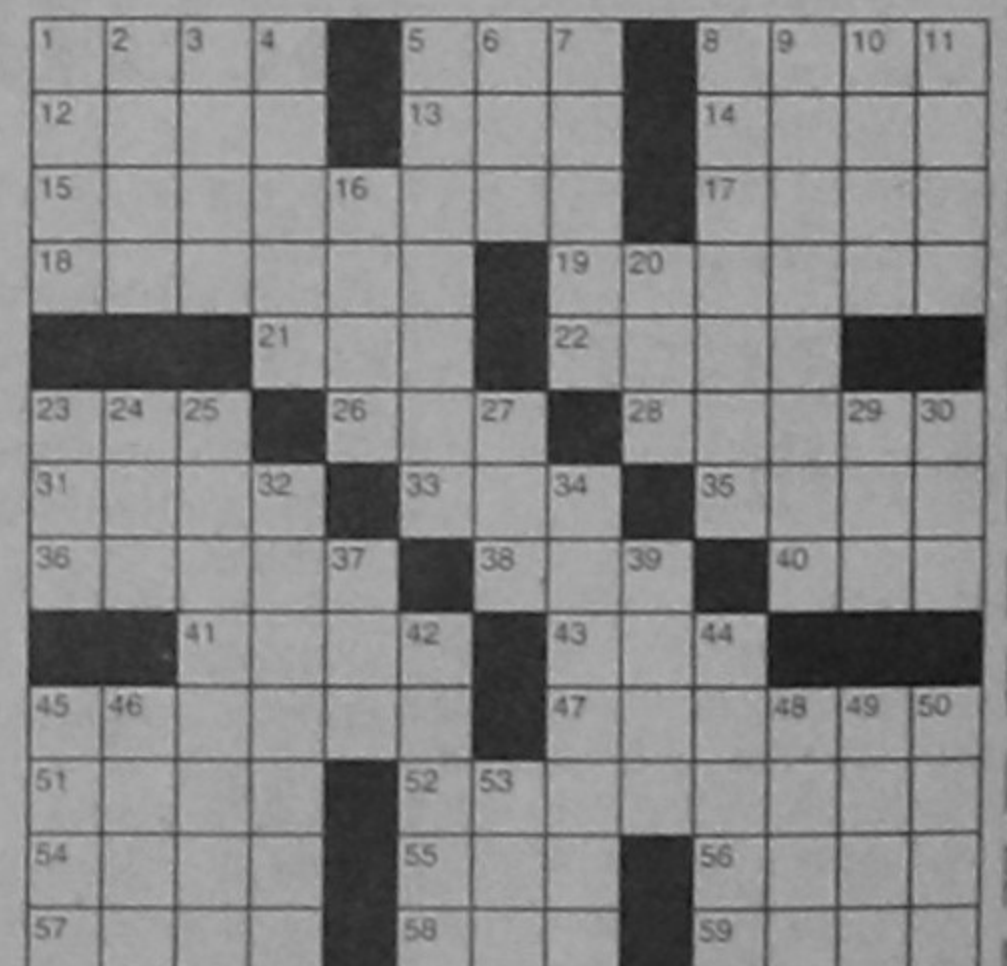
Another former captain, Wasim Bari, saluted the Sri Lankans for their support.

"Roshan Mahamama (a former player) and Ranjeet Fernando, who is here as commentator, supported Pakistan in this horrible times and said that the world must support Pakistan."

"We need this support because it would be very easy to leave Pakistan, but the world must not do that."

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

Crossword puzzle grid with clues for Across and Down words.



CRYPTOQUIP

RD UDT YTIIDYV FXV MGZFDHU FXGF JGPTMGZFTHYV YKVVIEPW IEKKY JEWXF AV RYVEWPGFVR G YKTJAVH JEKK? Yesterday's Cryptogram: IF YOU GO BACK ON YOUR PROMISE TO KEEP IN TOUCH, YOU MIGHT SAY THAT'S A BREACH OF CONTACT. Today's Cryptogram Clue: K equals L.



Did U Know?

Archery was first introduced in the Olympics in 1900, discontinued in 1924 and reintroduced in 1972 in the Munich Olympic Games.