

'Age shouldn't be a defence for Aamer'

AFP, Cardiff

Pakistan associate manager Shafiqat Rana said on Monday that teenage quick Mohammad Aamer's age should have no effect on any possible punishment if spot-fixing claims against the 18-year-old were proved.

"I think it should be the same with everybody, if he breaks the law," Rana told reporters at Sophia Gardens here on Monday where Pakistan play the second of two Twenty20 internationals against England on Tuesday.

Rana, asked "even if he [Aamer] is so young?" replied: "It doesn't matter. They [cricket fans in Pakistan] want everything in the best spirit of the game."

His remarks came just a day after International Cricket Council (ICC) chief executive Haroon Lorgat said: "In my own honest personal view, yes I would think age would come into account in these matters."

"But that is something the independent tribunal will have to decide upon."

Meanwhile Rana also welcomed a reported probe into players' finances by the Pakistani tax authorities.

"I think it is a good thing from the Pakistan government. It was there in their [the government's] mind before we came over. I think it's a good thing, it will open things out so they [the players] will be very careful."

Shahid Afridi, Pakistan's one-day captain, added: "It should be done and it's good for cricket."

Pakistan Test captain Salman Butt, Aamer and Mohammad Asif were all suspended by the ICC last week after a report in British tabloid News of the World allegedly caught a 'fixer' organising no-balls to order involving the trio during last month's Lord's Test against England.

Treason hearing delayed

AFP, Lahore

A Pakistan court Tuesday adjourned a hearing into treason allegations against seven national cricket players, the sports minister and cricket chief, over a 'spot-fixing' scandal, lawyers said.

Chief Justice of Lahore High Court Khawaja Mohammad Sharif adjourned the hearing until September 22 after a sports ministry official said the case was premature while investigations were ongoing.

The cricketers are alleged to have been paid to bowl no-balls at pre-determined times in the fourth Test against England, which Pakistan lost by an innings on August 29.

Local lawyer Ishtiaq Ahmed filed the treason case last week, calling for life bans and confiscation of all the players' assets if they are found guilty.

"The sports ministry official Saad Ahmed informed the court in a written statement that investigations into the fixing scandal were in progress and it was premature to say that they were involved in corruption," the petitioning lawyer Ahmed told AFP.

He said he had been asked by the court to respond to the ministry official's statement in writing.

Usually in Pakistan, court procedures are long and decisions takes years. A legal expert said that if the accused failed to appear three times in a row a ruling could be made in their absence.

Twitter makes

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before signing up to them." Rod Bransgrove, the Hampshire chairman, also warned of the risks of using social media. "Hampshire Cricket regrets the entire incident which, although thoroughly out of character for Dimitri Mascarenhas, breaches the club's code of conduct," he said. "Further, it will be warning all players about the dangers of conducting personal or private dialogue on publicly-available media."

"The fine has been set at this high level as I feel there is little point in imposing a ban, given the long-term nature of his injury. In coming to this conclusion I have taken into consideration Dimi's previous exemplary record. However, as club captain he understands that his actions carry more responsibility than others."



Maria Sharapova of Russia reacts after losing to Caroline Wozniacki of Denmark in their US Open fourth round match at Flushing Meadows on Monday.

Caroline crushes Maria

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serve returns. Wozniacki said that her run into the final last year had given her healthy doses of confidence and experience.

"I definitely think I've improved a lot, not only physically, but also I believe in myself more," she said.

"I believe I can do it. Also I think I can mix up my game a little bit more than I could last year."

Kanepi, who matched her run into the Wimbledon quarterfinals in July, said that her 0-6 start to her match against Wickmayer did not totally surprise her.

"I have problems starting the matches. Sometimes I'm

very slow. Then sometimes it's too late to get going. I think I'm getting better now. But, still, it's the point where I have to improve," she said.

"Then in the third set I think I was like in the zone or something. I was just fighting every point. I tried to relax, also not think about the win. I played well."

Cibulkova matched her run into the quarterfinals at the 2009 French Open with a second win this year over Kuznetsova, who won the title here as a 19-year-old in 2004.

At just 5 feet 3 inches (1.59 metres), one of the smallest players in the tournament, she said that her stature gave her other advantages that had worked well in New York.

"I'm pretty fast on the court," she said.

"I have no problem with long rallies, and I really like to step into the court and play fast and not give time to my opponent."

"I'm still working on my serve, because it still can be better. My game is just trying to play fast and not let my opponent push me."

The quarterfinal line-up in the bottom half of the draw was decided on Sunday with defending champion Kim Clijsters set to play Australian fifth seed Samantha Stosur and third seed Venus Williams paired with French Open champion Francesca Schiavone of Italy.

Hameed could be quizzed too



AGENCIES

Merely disowning the match-fixing allegations he made against his Pakistan teammates would not be enough for Yasir Hameed as the opener could be questioned by the ICC's Anti-Corruption and Security Unit for his statements in a tabloid sting operation.

In the video of the sting operation carried out by a British tabloid, Hameed had alleged that his teammates were "fixing almost every match" but later backtracked claiming that he was tricked into making the statements and blackmailed to stand by them by the undercover reporter who spoke to him.

But just a denial would not be of much help as the ACSU could ask him to explain the comments in the video, according to a report "The Daily Telegraph".

"If Hameed is contacted by the ACSU he may have to face an independent commissioner who the ICC plan to appoint to head what will be the biggest ever probe into corruption in cricket," the newspaper reported.

But Hameed's reliability as a potential witness in the corruption scandal that has shaken the foundations of the game has been questioned by his own teammates.

Pakistan's ODI and Twenty20 captain Shahid Afridi has called him unreliable, saying, "He [Hameed] is 30-31 but mentally he is 15-16."

"I don't know who he was sitting with or in what situation he gave this message but we have know him for a long time. We know we can expect anything from him and he does this kind of thing. People know what type of character he is," he added.

Roger rolls on

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After an early exchange of breaks in the third set, Federer denied Melzer on four break points in the fifth game to hold, then broke for a 4-2 edge, saved three more break points to hold for a 5-2 edge and held again to win the match.

Montanes won the only break point he managed against Soderling all day with a forehand winner in the fifth game of the first set to win it, but an errant backhand by the Spaniard handed Soderling the only break of the second set.

Soderling seized command from there dominating the third set and breaking in the fifth and final games of the last.

longer the match went," Soderling said. "After the first set I played better. It was a good match for me."

Fish surrendered two early breaks to drop the first set and another in the fifth game of the second set, but responded in the next game by earning three break points, only to see Djokovic save them all and hold to 4-2.

"Whenever I had a chance I used it. I was returning really well, making him play an extra shot, and I was serving well," Djokovic said.

Djokovic held twice more to claim the second set and broke Fish three times in the third to improve his record to 6-0 against Fish.

Niaz 22nd, Zia 40th in Malaysia

SPORTS REPORTER

GM Niaz Murshed became 22nd in the 7th IGB Dato Arthur Tan Malaysia Open Chess Championship after winning the final round board at the Cititel MidVally, Kuala Lumpur yesterday.

Niaz beat Indian GM Arun Prasad in the ninth round to collect six points from nine games while GM Ziaur Rahman had to be content with 40th place having secured five points from nine games.

GM Cao Sang of Vietnam emerged champion, while GM Zhou Weiqi of China finished second, both having seven points.

Junior champion Abdullah Al Saif became 108 with 3.5 points after Beating Munir Aziz Bin Ahmed of Brunei.

Siddons shifts

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"He must be determined to join the team of coaches in our mission to have some great performances in the World Cup."

"We are a young team who are very much in the developmental stage and as such the player need a lot of specialist one-on-one coaching to help them achieve their full potential in the future," said Siddons.

He also admitted that apart from a bowling coach, who is presumed to be helping the fast bowlers mostly, he also would like the assistance of a spin bowling coach.

"It would be ideal to have a fast bowling coach during the camp, but it would also be great to have a spin bowling coach as well. We have to strengthen our fast bowling department and also continue to develop our spinners, as they are our strength at the moment," he said.

"However I'm always very aware that there are limitations that may make this impossible. Finance may be just one of them," he said jokingly.

Riches elude poor Pakistanis



AFP, Karachi

For millions of dirt-poor Pakistani boys, a professional cricket career is an escape route into a world of glamour, celebrity and untold riches.

But it can also represent a fast-track on the road to ruin as the corruption scandal which has engulfed the international team has so dramatically highlighted.

Many of the country's best players - like Mohammad Asif and Mohammad Aamer, currently under investigation in the 'spot-fixing' scandal - hail from small villages, from poor and uneducated backgrounds.

Pakistani players' agent Salman Ahmed believes it is a lack of grooming and guidance that leaves players stumped by excessive money and open to manipulation.

"An 18-year-old who bursts into the limelight and the glamour world needs special grooming. Not only in terms of cricket, but manners and awareness of good and bad," said Ahmed, whose Portfolio World has had a contract with the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) since January 2009.

"Most importantly, wealth managers should be introduced to them, to these boys, who at one time could not buy a Pepsi and today are brand ambassadors for it," added

Ahmed, referring to Aamer. Former PCB chairman Tauqir Zia managed to establish the National Cricket Academy in Lahore seven years ago, where courses to educate the players were finally introduced.

But many commentators believe that players' focus on the remuneration details in a contract and ignore the code of conduct.

Big money came to Pakistan cricket only after Australian media tycoon Kerry Packer hired a dozen of them for his World Series of Cricket in 1978.

Before the Packer circus, the only money-earning avenues for Pakistani players were stints in county cricket in England.

Currently, Pakistani players can earn money through central contracts, soft-drink and mobile phone sponsorship and endorsements.

Players in the A category of central contracts get 250,000 rupees (2,905 US dollars) a month; B category brings 175,000 (2,035 US dollars) and in C they get 100,000 (1,161).

In addition, a top category player gets 350,000 rupees (4,066 US dollars) for playing a Test match and 300,000 (3,485) for an ODI and 250,000 (2,904) for a Twenty20 match.

Players in the corresponding categories get 50,000 (581) less in each form of the game.

There are special win bonuses and cash awards on performances, opening up

riches largely unseen in a country where 74 percent of the population survive on less than two dollars a day, according to the World Bank.

"An average player in the national team can make from 100,000 to one million dollars a year, depending upon his popularity and seniority," said Ahmed.

Endorsements for bats can range from 30,000 dollars to 100,000 dollars per annum, while top players like Shahid Afridi and Shoaib Akhtar can easily make 25,000 to 150,000 a year through commercials.

But compared to the superstars of the Indian game, these sums are modest.

Indian captain Mahendra Singh Dhoni earlier this year signed a three-year endorsement worth 2.1 billion rupees (42 million dollars).

It was in India where Pakistani players looked set for life when they featured in the inaugural edition of the Indian Premier League (IPL).

Four out of eleven Pakistani players were bought at the IPL auction for over 400,000 dollars a season, with Afridi topping the chart with 675,000 followed by Asif with 650,000.

But Pakistani players were then hit hard when they were banned from the next two IPL seasons after relations between India and Pakistan came to a flash point following the terrorist attack on Mumbai, an atrocity which New Delhi blamed on mili-

tants based across the border. Many observers believe that those losses in the IPL forced the Pakistani players to find short cuts to boost their incomes and fell into the trap of the illegal bookies.

"All Pakistan players need is guidance and stability, this will bring loyalty and eliminate any shortcuts which one might need to take to fulfill dreams, aspirations, and at times, unlawful desires," said Ahmed.

2012 OLYMPICS Lord's to host archery

AP, London

Organizers say Lord's cricket ground has been granted permission to begin making changes for the archery competition at the 2012 Olympics.

Temporary facilities and structures such as a range and seating for 5,000 spectators can now be installed at the famous ground. Archery will be held for a week at Lord's during the London Games, and Monday's decision on preparations was largely a formality.

London Organizing Committee chairman Sebastian Coe calls Lord's a "world-class venue" that will provide a "spectacular and innovative setting."

Argentina end England's unbeaten run



AFP, Rosario

With both England and Argentina in the semifinals and the result irrelevant, England turned on their best performance of the tournament, yet lost 2-0 to Argentina in the last Pool B match at the women's field hockey World Cup here on Monday.

The result gave Argentina a clean sweep of the pool.

"The gap between us has closed although Argentina is still better than us but we have developed and have become better quicker than Argentina has improved," said England coach Danny Kerry.

Noel Barrionuevo scored from Argentina's second penalty corner early in the first half and England pressured Argentina's defence yet made few shots on goal and earned no penalty corners.

Late in the match Daniela Sruoga picked Helen Richardson's pocket and drove inside the right post for Argentina's second goal.

Kerry commented on Argentina's defensive approach.

"I was surprised how defensive Argentina played with five and six players behind the ball but even so we contained Argentina from start to finish and I am very happy with that performance," Kerry said.

Argentina coach Carlos Retegui denies his defensive structure made England look good.

"England did not have any shots on goal or any penalty corners so Argentina did not make England look good today," Retegui said.

Focus turned to minor placings in Pool B as China won 6-0 over Spain and South Korea defeated South Africa 5-3.

South Korea took third place in Pool B, China fourth, South Africa fifth and Spain last.

South Korea will play in the 5-6 classification match, China 7-8, South Africa 9-10 and Spain 11-12. In China's last pool match against Spain, Li Hongxia fired in a backstick goal from the top of the circle early in the match and Spain pressured China's midfield in the first half yet failed to convert any of the four first half penalty corners.

China skipper Fu Baorong created a goal from a midfield turnover to drive into the circle and shoot between the pads of Spain goalkeeper Maria Lopez de Eguilaz.

Spain lost heart and structure as China won four penalty corners and Ma Yibo converted all four with powerful flicks for her first goals of the tournament.

"It was so late in the tournament for China to score goals and come into some form and I hope it will help to move up the table above South Korea on goal dif-

ference," Kim said without knowledge of South Korea's win over South Africa.

Spain skipper Nuria Camon said the team is disappointed not to have won a pool game but will stay united for the classification match.

South Africa looked to be heading for one of the upsets of the tournament when Sulette Damons scored very early in the first half and although Lee Seon Ok equalized with a penalty stroke just before the break, South Africa sped to a 3-1 lead with two rebound goals by Cindy Botha.

South Korea overpowered South Africa with 4 goals in 12 minutes by Kim Bo Mi, Cheon Seul Ki, Kim Young Ran and Park Mi Hyun to win 5-3.

South Africa skipper Marsha Marescia attributed the loss to inexperience.

"Losing in the last 15 minutes when we were ahead 3-1 is a sign of our inexperience and Korea being physically more prepared to be able to play fast, physical hockey at the end of the pool round," Marescia said.

Korea coach Kang Keon Wook was pleased to be playing for fifth place but has his eyes fixed on Guangzhou, China.

"Our next aim is to win gold at the Asian Games in China in November," Kang said.

In the final Pool A matches Tuesday, New Zealand meet India, Netherlands play Japan and Australia face Germany with the winner into the semi finals.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS

1 Disband, briefly
6 Station
11 Mexican state or river
12 Umbrella-capped mushroom
14 Trumpet's cousin
15 Actor Wilde
16 Fuss
17 Delta deposits
19 Palin-dromic preposition
20 Rorschach art
22 Crucial
23 Killer whale
24 Become established
26 Calming agent
28 Prickly husk
30 "Mayday!"
31 — glass

DOWN

1 Random drawing?
2 Take hold
3 Calendar abbr.
4 Tramcar loads
5 Wax-and-dye method
6 Fingers or toes
7 Holly-wood clashers
8 Standard
9 Cantankerous
10 Canonical hour
11 Strike-breakers
13 Under-standable
18 Meadow
21 Leg bone
23 Refuge
25 Sister
27 Journal
29 Umpire
31 "The final frontier"
32 Forbidden acts
33 Insight
34 Delve
36 9-Down, but more so
37 Managed somehow
38 English composition
41 Straight (Pref.)
44 Flex
45 Village
48 Born
50 On Soc. Sec., maybe

Solution time: 27 mins.

FACTS	SPY	ASH
OHARE	IOU	PTA
GAMUT	MEMBERS	
BEATIT	IRAN	
PRE	TRA	EGYPT
OURS	INLET	
INSULT	ICONIC	
PAEAN	EURO	
AZTEC	BEE	MEW
FAIR	PUN	JAB
TEEBERS	EGEST	
TEE	CURIO	
RED	APR	TESTY

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CRYPTOQUIP

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Y X G D Z S X G E W S P N Q S
Q U B W B Q O U M O E P W - Y G A A E ?

Yesterday's Cryptoquip: COMMON WORDS FROM FOLKS WHO COMPLETELY ADORE ITALY'S CAPITAL: "THERE'S NO PLACE LIKE ROME."
Today's Cryptoquip Clue: K equals P