

British anxiety

AFP, London



Fears grew Wednesday about the participation of British nations in the Commonwealth Games after England said the event was on a "knife-edge" and Scotland delayed its team's departure to New Delhi.

Wales gave the organisers a deadline of Wednesday to confirm that the athletes' village and venues were "fit for purpose" while the Channel Island of Jersey also said it was considering postponing its team's leaving date.

Scottish competitors had been due to begin leaving on Thursday, but the team said it was putting back its departure "by a few days" to give Indian officials a chance to address its concerns about the state of the athletes' village.

Scotland team officials already in India have been shocked by the state of the athletes' village, calling their allocated accommodation blocks "unsafe and unfit for human habitation".

"By delaying the arrival of our athletes by a few days, we hope to give the Delhi 2010 Organising Committee the necessary time to address the concerns that have been raised," Commonwealth Games Scotland chairman Michael Cavanagh said.

He demanded "urgent action" on the situation, but insisted that Scotland still wanted to take part in the

multi-sport event.

"Scotland is hugely committed to the Commonwealth Games," he said.

"Whilst this is an untimely alteration to their [the competitors'] plans, it will ultimately cause less disruption to their final training and preparation than if they were to arrive in the Games Village which is not yet fit for purpose and fully functional."

The chairman of England's Commonwealth Games team said the problems with the athletes' village had left the October 3-14 competition "on a knife-edge" and facing "a critical 24 to 48 hours".

Team management are monitoring the situation before making any decision.

Commonwealth Games England chairman Andrew Foster said: "The next 24 to 48 hours is the critical time which will tell us whether the village -- which is where the main problem is now -- has got enough accommodation for everybody to come into it."

"We're at an absolutely vital time [regarding] whether the major teams go."

"Our staff have been round all 17 sports venues and they are in good order, so the key remaining feature which there's a problem with is the village. The other problems have been resolved."

"It's a situation that hangs on a knife-edge."

Foster admitted a substantial amount of work remained to be done at the village,

but insisted a last-minute rush to complete the facilities could still bear fruit.

"It is not certain and we will not be sending our team unless we are confident," he said.

"There still is a serious chance, if the Indian government and the organising committee throw thousands of people at the village -- which is what they quite often do in India -- that this could still be salvable."

Team Wales said that after a footbridge collapsed near one venue on Tuesday and a false ceiling fell down on Wednesday at the weightlifting venue it had to "examine how safe it is to bring athletes into this environment."

"We have given the Organising Committee a deadline of this evening to confirm if all venues and the Games Village are fit for purpose," the statement said.

Alan Cross, secretary of the Commonwealth Games Association of Jersey, said officials were considering delaying the departure of the island's 33-strong team on Thursday until closer to the start of the games.

"At the moment we are sending a team but the decision we face is when to go out," Cross told AFP. "We're looking at delaying departure because we're still very concerned about accommodation out there."

"If it's not going to be ready we would rather depart later."



PHOTO: AFP

Wayamba Elvens bowler Ajantha Mendis (L) gives a high five to a teammate after dismissing Central Stags' Jamie How during the Champions League Twenty20 match at St. George's Park in Port Elizabeth yesterday.

DPMS win Div I title

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Manikganj

Dashara Palli Mangal Samity clinched the title of the Hafizul Islam Khan Uttu Smriti First Division Football League with a 2-1 victory over Manikganj City Club at the Shaheed Miraz-Tapan Stadium yesterday.

DPMS ended with 19 points from eight matches while Manikganj City Club confirmed runners-up position with 14 points from seven matches.

After a barren first half, Aminur put Dashara Palli ahead in the 74th minute and Ghanaian Frank doubled the margin after six minutes.

Liton Barman reduced the margin in the 88th minute for City Club.

DRU football

SPORTS REPORTER

DRU-Raid Securities Media Football got underway yesterday at the Handball Stadium.

On the opening day, Jugantor beat Manabjabin 2-1, Channel I thrashed Janapad 3-0, Banglavisian crushed New Age 4-0, Sokaler Khobor defeated Karatoa and Inquibab outplayed Bhorer Dak 4-0.

State minister for youth and sports Ahad Ali Sarker inaugurated the media football tournament while DRU president Shamim Ahmed, general secretary Pathik Saha and DRU sports secretary Kamruzzaman Hiru were present among others.

Wayamba

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"It was a disastrous batting performance," said How.

"We've learned some pretty good lessons and hopefully we'll be back a lot stronger."

SCORES IN BRIEF

WAYAMBA: 144-6 in 20 overs (Jayawardene 20, Udawatte 23, Mubarak 30; Mason 2-16).

CENTRAL STAGS: 70 in 15.3 overs (Udana 3-22, Mendis 3-14, Herath 2-7).

Result: Wayamba won by 74 runs.

Iran put

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Jordan did not show the desperation to reduce the margin, albeit when an unmarked Shahnaz threatened in the 60th minute. But this time the India goalkeeper came out flying and brought down Shahnaz outside the box to earn a yellow card, but most importantly keep the margin clear.

The margin could have been greater had a long-range effort from Jabamani not rattled the Jordan crossbar in the 71st minute.

Coaches of both sides said they still have a good chance of moving to the second round depending on their final match.

RCB hop into semis

AFP, Johannesburg



The skill and experience of Anil Kumble and the precocious talent of Virat Kohli took the Royal Challengers Bangalore to the semifinals of the Champions League Twenty20 tournament with a six-wicket win over the Highveld Lions on Tuesday night.

Bangalore restricted the Lions to 159 for six in their 20 overs and reached the winning target with six balls to spare in a match which was effectively a quarterfinal, with the winners assured of joining Group B winners, South Australian Redbacks, in the last four.

At the Wanderers Stadium, Bangalore captain Kumble, 39, produced a superb spell of one for 13 in four overs, putting a brake on what had been a fast Lions scoring rate and dismissing Lions danger man Alviro Petersen.

Kohli, 21, made an audacious 49 not out off 29 balls to see the Indian Premier League team home on net run rate after they finished tied on points with the Lions and Mumbai Indians.

The Lions dominated the early part of the match. They raced to 57 for two in the first six overs, with captain Petersen and Vaughn van Jaarsveld both in superb form before Kumble came on to bowl.

Van Jaarsveld was unlucky to be run out for 24 in the eighth over, slipping in mid-pitch. Petersen went on to score 45 off 29 balls before he swung across the line and was bowled by the veteran Indian leg-spinner.

On a good batting pitch, the Lions were probably 20 runs short of a total that could be defended by an inexperienced bowling line-up. Manish Pandey and Rahul Dravid got Bangalore off to a solid start, putting on 53 in eight overs but the Challengers also had a mid-innings stutter before Kohli's clean hitting proved decisive.

SCORES IN BRIEF

HIGHVELD LIONS: 159 for 6 in 20 overs (Petersen 45, Van Jaarsveld 24, McKenzie 39, Frylinck 22 not out; Kumar 2-23)

ROYAL CHALLENGERS BANGALORE: 160 for 4 in 19 overs (Pandey 44, Dravid 33, Kohli 49 not out) Result: Bangalore won by six wickets.

Pakistan's NZ tour on



AFP, Wellington

New Zealand Cricket on Wednesday confirmed Pakistan would tour later this year but admitted concerns at how the public would react to the visitors following their scandal-tainted trip to England.

New Zealand Cricket chief executive Justin Vaughan dismissed a British newspaper report that sports chiefs were considering scrapping the Pakistan tour and seeking the West Indies or Sri Lanka as replacements.

Vaughan said the Pakistan trip was locked in under the International Cricket Council's (ICC's) Future Tours Programme and would go ahead as planned.

"You can't just do that [change opponents] the way the Future Tours Programme is structured," he told the New Zealand Herald.

"It's not a process where you can say 'we'd rather have someone else'. It doesn't work that way."

Pakistan are due in New Zealand late

December for an 11-match tour that runs until early February.

Vaughan admitted he was concerned about how New Zealand fans would view the Pakistan team and the level of interest in watching a contest where one side was under a cloud following corruption allegations.

However, he said research showed the main motivation for New Zealand fans was seeing their home team in action, regardless of the opposition.

"These recent reports [from Britain] haven't done us any favours," he said.

New Zealand skipper Daniel Vettori this month called for corrupt players to be banned for life, saying otherwise crowds would question every result, even if it was legitimate.

Pakistan's England tour has been plagued by corruption allegations since the News of the World reported that spot-fixing took place in last month's fourth Test at Lord's.

The ICC has suspended three Pakistan players, Salman Butt, Mohammad Aamer and Mohammad Asif while the allegations are investigated.

Games lose star shine

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Indian media on Wednesday described the complaints about "filthy" and "uninhabitable" conditions at the showpiece athlete's village as a national embarrassment, calling for those responsible to be held accountable.

Games organisers have downplayed the mounting concerns at home and abroad about the event and said they still expected a "very good" field of athletes.

New Delhi is expecting to host some 7,000 athletes and officials from countries and territories mostly from the former British empire for the multi-sport event.

But Australia warned that more competitors could withdraw, after world discus champion Dani Samuels made a tearful withdrawal over health and security worries on Tuesday.

Minister for Sport Mark Arbib said Australia's Commonwealth Games chief Perry Crosswhite was expecting "a number more" to follow and that he would be imposing tough rules restricting athletes' travel in New Delhi.

A home-grown Islamist group on Sunday claimed responsibility for a shooting on a tourist bus outside New Delhi's Jama Masjid that injured two Taiwanese nationals, prompting a number of Western countries to issue travel warnings.

The Indian capital has also been in the grip of an outbreak of dengue fever, caused by mosquitoes breeding in stagnant pools of water that have accumulated on games construction sites.

The Commonwealth Games Federation on Tuesday blasted the

official accommodation as "uninhabitable" with rubble in doorways and malfunctioning toilets, along with electrical and other problems.

Officials from some teams have even taken to cleaning the facilities themselves to bring them uptodate.

The revelations come after a series of delays and missed deadlines for venues, plus a catalogue of claims about corruption, dubious contracts and the use of poor-quality materials -- seven years after India was awarded the stars.

STARS OPTING OUT

Usain Bolt (JAM) -- 100m and 200m world record holder. Asafa Powell (JAM) -- defending Commonwealth 100m champion. Paula Radcliffe (ENG) -- marathon world record holder.

Jessica Ennis (ENG) -- world and European heptathlon champion. Christine Ohuruogu (ENG) -- Olympic 400m gold medalist. Phillip Ido (ENG) -- world triple jump champion.

Dani Samuels (AUS) -- world discus champion. David Rudisha (KEN) -- 800m world record holder. Asbel Kiprop (KEN) -- Olympic 1500m champion. Linet Masai (KEN) -- world 10,000m champion. Shelly-Ann Fraser (JAM) -- Olympic 100m champion.

Chris Hoy (SCO) -- multiple world and Olympic cycling champion. Victoria Pendleton (ENG) -- world and Olympic cycling champion. Stephanie Rice (AUS) -- triple Olympic gold medal swimmer. Andy Murray (SCO) -- tennis player.

Lleyton Hewitt (AUS) -- tennis player

Samantha Stosur (AUS) -- tennis player

Beth Tweddle (ENG) -- world champion gymnast

Local surfers

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Zafar went amid a raucous roar from the crowd to show his skills on the surfing board and that one show was enough to earn him the position of the group champion.

Apart from Zafar, Rashed, Aziz, Jewel, Nasima, Nahida and Amena also delighted the local crowd with their exploits.

Eighteen competitors won prizes in three categories. Farhad Hossain became champion in the men's event, Nasima Aktar in the junior beginners' category while Muhammad Selim won the child's body-board category.

Nasima and Selim, who happen to be siblings, were excited having grabbed cheques of Tk10,000 each.

GP connects

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Federation, we came forward to be a part of an international tournament. The live coverage of the matches at the state-owned television has encouraged us to sponsor the event."

Replying to a query, he said, "It is an experiment for us since this is the first time we are getting involved in the country's football at any level."

Barisal

FROM PAGE 17

these small 'stars' like [Asif Ahmed] Ratul, [Sohag] Gazi, [Kamrul Islam] Rabbi can perform this year," said Shahin.

Some have pointed out that the change in Bangladesh Cricket Board's policy to let the divisions select its team would harm teams like Barisal and Sylhet. But as Gazi Ashraf Hossain, the tournament committee chairman, pointed out last week, this empowering would do them good in the future. It is hoped by the board that in time, due to the lack of big name players, they would start producing better players from the divisions.

"Barisal is a player factory at this level. It has always produced run-scorers and wicket-takers. Rokibul [Hasan], Marshall Ayub and Sajidul Islam have all done really well for Barisal and then they have gone on to play better cricket," said Shahin.

Smaller teams at club, division or international levels have always banked on individual performances to lift the team from the mire and it is no different with Barisal. But now they are left at their own devices, in which way they react is for all to see.

For a few years, Kournikova was the "hot tennis player" not "the tennis player who's hot." When she made a deep run at Wimbledon in 1997 at the age of 16, it was supposed to be a harbinger of tennis greatness to come. Kournikova was a product of Nick Bolletieri's famed tennis school and had become the youngest winner of the prestigious Junior Orange Bowl tournament. She was cute, sure, but there was the expectation that she'd be able to back up the hype that developed because of her looks.

It never happened, of course, and now Kournikova carries around her lack of a WTA singles title like a scarlet letter. There's a segment of the sporting public that resents Kournikova's off-court success because they don't believe she earned it on the court, but the fallacy of that logic has never made sense. Kournikova got into the public consciousness because she accomplished something. She wasn't Serena Williams or Chris Evert, but getting to No. 8 in the world and winning two

Tough day

FROM PAGE 17

Like the men's team, Bangladesh women's team also lost to top-seeded Russia by 4-0 sets as WFM Shamima Akter Liza lost to IM Nadezhda Kosintseva, Sharmin Sultana Shirin lost to GM Alexandra Kosteniuk, WIM Rani Hamid lost to Alisa Galliamova and Nazarana Khan Eva lost to WGM Valentina Gunina.

Anna still in spotlight



INTERNET

It seems like a long time ago now, but there was a point when Anna Kournikova was most famous for playing tennis. Now the Russian beauty is best known for her swimsuit spreads (another of which appears in this month's issue of Maxim), high-profile relationships and for being the go-to reference for any overhyped athlete with a pretty face, but it wasn't always that way.

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Grand Slam doubles tournaments are achievements of which to be proud. She did something. Can Kim Kardashian, Paris Hilton or Snooki say the same?

Say what you will about Anna, but if you're reading this sentence right now, you're clearly interested in her as well.

Still only 29 years old (two months older than Roger Federer), Kournikova has been off the WTA tour since 2003. She still finds time for tennis, having played on the fan-friendly World Team Tennis circuit for the past eight summers (she currently is the headliner of the St. Louis Aces) and occasionally playing exhibitions (earlier this month,

she and former doubles partner Martina Hingis faced off against Mats Wilander and Pat Cash at the US Open).

Kournikova recently became a US citizen, a decision she made because of her work with the USO. "You know, I've always considered myself half Russian and half American," she said in an Australian Daily Mail story. "It never seemed to really matter if I had a passport or not. But when I started working with the USO and the troops overseas, it just seemed the logical next step."

She has dated singer Enrique Iglesias for eight years, but the two have no plans to marry.



ANNA KOURNIKOVA

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS 37 Armoire contents, maybe 40 Tom's pal 41 Gorge Give off 47 Sch. org. Midmonth day 50 Protracted evidence 52 Grazing areas 53 Palm starch 54 Dead heat 55 Harvard rival

2 Flower potentate 3 Eastern rough 4 Become face 5 Pop work 6 One of the Gersh-wins 7 Abominable Snow-man's cousin 8 Kind of wool 9 Vatican VIP 10 High periods 11 Encountered

23 Collection of diamonds? 24 Type-face 25 Old Norse work 26 Reply to "Shall we?" 27 Reed instrument 28 Emollient 32 Big win in Vegas 33 Ponderously 35 USMC rank 36 Forensic ID 38 Expenditure 39 Angry 42 Concept 43 Conan of NPR 44 Being, to Brutus 45 Golfer Ernie 46 Kiwi's extinct cousin 48 Mai (cocktail)

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CRYPTOQUIP

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Yesterday's Cryptoquip: IF A PERSON FINDS IT DELIGHTFUL TO GET KNOCKED TO THE GROUND, COULD YOU SAY HE'S TACKLED PINK? Today's Cryptoquip Clue: M equals F