

# Sehwag eyeing revenge

AFP, New Delhi

Key Indian opener Virender Sehwag is fully fit and raring to go, local media reported on Friday, boosting the country's chances of glory at the World Cup.

Sehwag, 32, was ruled out of India's recent one-day series against South Africa due to a shoulder injury, raising doubts over his fitness ahead of the tournament, which starts on February 19.

"I was feeling some pain in my shoulder," Sehwag told news channel CNN-IBN. "So (I thought it was) better to quit the South Africa one-dayers. "I didn't want to get injured during the South Africa tour and miss the World Cup. So I came back and went to Germany to see a couple of doctors. I got a couple of injections and now I'm fine.

"I am going to the National Cricket Academy (in Bangalore) and will spend a couple of days there to check everything - if I can bowl and throw also but if I

can't, then I'll let them know. "But at the moment I'm fully fit."

Sehwag, with 7,380 runs from 228 one-day internationals, is seen as key to

India's batting fortunes at the showpiece event, being co-hosted by India, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh.

The aggressive right-hander said the team were upbeat about their opening tie against Bangladesh in Dhaka. India lost to the minnows in the 2007 World Cup in the Caribbean, a defeat that eventually led to their early exit from the tournament.

"Because we're playing the opening game against them in Bangladesh, Bangladeshi people are expecting them to beat us again," Sehwag said. "But this time we have prepared well.

"You can say it is a revenge game for us and we won't take the game lightly. We will give our best shot and we will come hard on Bangladesh."

India, World Cup champions in 1983 in England, have been placed in Pool B alongside South Africa, England, Bangladesh, West Indies, Netherlands and Ireland.



PHOTO: STAR FILE

India opener Virender Sehwag is eyeing revenge for their 2007 World Cup defeat when they meet the Tigers in the opening match of this World Cup on February 19 in Dhaka.

## Pakistan trio charged over corruption

AFP, London

Pakistan cricketers Mohammad Aamer, Mohammad Asif and Salman Butt, together with their agent, have been charged with corruption offences, England's prosecution service said on Friday.

The charges relate to alleged incidents during a Test match against England last year when Britain's News of the World tabloid claimed the players, together with agent Mazhar Majeed, were willing to deliberately bowl no-balls.

The newspaper alleged the players had colluded in a spot-fixing betting scam.

Simon Clements, head of the Crown Prosecution Service Special Crime Division in a statement, said: "We have decided that Mohammad Aamer, Mohammad Asif, Salman Butt and their agent, Mazhar Majeed, should be charged with conspiracy to obtain and accept corrupt payments and also conspiracy to cheat.

"These charges relate to allegations that Majeed accepted money from a third party to arrange for the players to bowl 'no balls' on 26 and 27 August 2010, during Pakistan's Fourth Test at Lord's Cricket Ground in London."

The statement said the three Pakistan players had been asked to appear in court in London on March 17. They have been told to return "voluntarily" to Britain for the hearing or prosecutors will seek their extradition.

Britain-based Majeed must also appear on the same date at the same court, City of Westminster Magistrates.

The Pakistan trio are currently provisionally suspended from international cricket but a separate International Cricket Council (ICC) tribunal is on Saturday due to announce its conclusions following its own probe.

## Siddikur

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Asian Tour, turned in 32 before adding three birdies on his homeward nine. His birdies were all within the region of six to 10 feet and he was beaming with confidence with the comfortable lead.

"It was an excellent day with another great round of putting. I played very well in the first round and that gave me more confidence to go out and just shoot another low number," said Siddikur.

"If I continue to play like I did, I believe it will be easy for me to win. I'm feeling confident and feel like I have one hand on the trophy," he added.

## Tim injury worries Andy

AFP, Melbourne



England coach Andy Flower says Tim Bresnan's tour-ending calf injury is the biggest worry for his team ahead of the upcoming World Cup.

The English play the final one-day international of their marathon Ashes tour at Perth's WACA Ground on Sunday, before heading home for what is only a brief break for most of the players.

The 15-man English squad for the World Cup departs on February 12 and five members of that squad are currently injured, including Bresnan.

Disconcertingly, all five are valuable members of the attack, the others being Paul Collingwood (back), Stuart Broad (stomach), Graeme Swann (back), Ajmal Shahzad (hamstring), while Chris Tremlett would probably be the obvious late inclusion if any of that group failed to prove their fitness, but he too is sidelined by a side strain.

Flower said Bresnan's calf was the biggest concern.

"Probably it's Bresnan, considering the sight of his injury, just above his Achilles tendon in his lower calf," Flower said when asked which player was in most doubt.

"But he's not a man who has suffered injuries, well not many injuries, in the past and hopefully he will recover very quickly and be ready somewhere near the start."

Flower admitted the injuries were far

from ideal so close to the tournament, which starts in under three weeks.

"Of course the timing of them getting back to full fitness is important for the start of the World Cup," Flower said.

"We can't be absolutely certain of that at this stage but we are monitoring them on a daily basis."

The Ashes tour has dragged on beyond three months and Collingwood was the fifth player to fly home during the seven-match ODI series, while Broad was sent back to the UK during the Test series.

Flower had no doubt the length of the tour was the reason for the spate of injuries and that England's World Cup preparation had suffered as a result.

He said he would like to be consulted on his team's playing schedule in future, although he admitted this wasn't always feasible.

"Without a doubt the length of the tour is a reason for the injuries," he said.

"We've been here over three months now and with the intensity at which the guys play their cricket, and with the intensity that we demand in training, it is no surprise that people will pick up injuries and break down at the end of a long, hard tour.

"It would be quite sensible to look at how these tours are set up, especially this close to a World Cup, however, these are the schedules that we are given and we will deal with them as well as we can."

## Where have all the beggars

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bearded Khan.

Firoz Bhuiyan (65), who has been selling envelopes, pens, refills etc in front of the General Post Office (GPO) since 1980 was evicted on January 28, was seen selling only envelopes by walking around the footpath and said that his per day income has reduced to Tk 50 to 100 from Tk 500 to 1000.

"Now I am taking peanuts for lunch instead of a 40-taka meal and I am planning to go back to my home district Narsingdi to find some work there to live on," said the 65-year old hawker.

"As we are not allowed to sell our garment wares on footpath, the owner may release me for one month till the end of World Cup and in that case I have to remain jobless," said a frustrated Ferdous (20), who came from Chandpur to work for Tk 4,000 per month.

Khan, Firoz and Ferdous are among more than 5,000 vendors and hawkers who live on the daily selling of a number of commodities as the footpath market (although illegal) on both sides of the stadium are popular for those who are looking for a bargain.

Not only the hawkers around the Bangabandhu National Stadium, nearly 25,000 vendors, cobblers, key makers, vegetable and fruit sellers, rickshaw stands and tea stalls have already been evicted from the footpaths on the major roads. Some 50,000 more vendors are on the verge of facing the same fate as the Dhaka City Corporation wants to ensure

a beautiful city to foreigners, who are likely to gather to watch the 14-nation cricket extravaganza in Bangladesh.

"Making all footpaths free from the illegal hawkers is an ongoing process of the Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) and ahead of the World Cup, it has been enhanced to make the city clean and secure during the world cup," DCC executive magistrate Khalil Ahmed told The Daily Star yesterday. "A city is a mirror of a nation and ninety percent inhabitants of the city are happy after making the footpath free from the hawkers and the initiative has also reduced eve-teasing as well as pick-pockets," Ahmed said. "However, we are going slowly keeping the things in mind that the hawkers and vendors survive through their daily selling as well as low-income groups who also prefers those markets."

"The authorities told us that they want to clean up Dhaka for the foreign guests and showcase Dhaka as a beautiful city but they are doing that by taking away the livelihood of poor people like us," said Kamal Siddique, convenor of the Bangladesh Chinnomul Hawkers Committee.

Kamal, however, categorically accepted the government decision in the greater interest of the nation as they will be kept away from the footpath only for one month.

The leader of the hawkers union claimed that a total of 235,000 hawkers and vendors would be evicted ahead

of the World Cup as people come here from all over Bangladesh for their livelihood and most of the evicted hawkers and vendors have already left and have gone back to their villages.

He also suggested the government to rehabilitate the street vendors disbursing funds that the government gets from UN and other international organizations as a climate-compensation donation since most of the hawkers and vendors of the city are affected by river erosion, drought, cyclone and hurricanes.

Still some hawkers and vendors were yesterday seen trying to set up their shops on the footpath avoiding the police eyes and Hossain Ali, a wallet seller, was one of them as he is the sole bread-winner of his nine-member family.

## Spin is king

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And his observation is also that Riyadh and Naeem, the two off-spin all-rounder, have also improved a lot and brought different variation to their bowling.

"Both the bowlers can now spin the ball and have good control of flighted deliveries. And in one-day cricket the most important thing is how accurate you are in your bowling," observed Salahuddin adding that Shuvo has to improve his bowling.

In the consideration of current form of the spinners there is a bright picture for the Bangladesh team and it's time to deliver at the big occasion now.

## ICC warns against fraud emails

AFP, New Delhi

Cricket's governing body on Friday warned the public to beware of fraudulent emails that seek personal details to give away non-existent cash rewards ahead of the World Cup.

The International Cricket Council said tricksters have been sending out emails to announce prizes supposedly won in sweepstakes and other competitions organized by it.

Recipients are asked to provide bank account information and told to wire funds to a third-party bank account in order to facilitate their receipt of the award, the ICC said.

"The ICC wishes to place on record that neither does it conduct or authorise any such sweepstakes or prize promotions, nor does it appoint any third parties to do so," the governing body said in a statement.

"Further, the ICC will never ask you to send or confirm personal information via e-mail or to wire funds to a bank account for award eligibility."

The ICC said such emails should not be replied to and recipients should notify the local law enforcement agency.

Numerous competitions are being organised in the media and by businesses in the run-up to the World Cup which opens in India, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh on February 19.

## Maria's rare Fed Cup show

AFP, Paris

Maria Sharapova hopes her first Fed Cup outing in three years will help erase the misery of her latest Grand Slam blow-out.

The three-time major winner, and former world number one who has struggled to rediscover her best form since a 2008 shoulder injury, suffered a tame fourth round defeat at the Australian Open.

Her straight sets defeat to Germany's Andrea Petkovic in the heat of Melbourne has now given way to the chilly streets of Moscow where Russia open their 2011 Fed Cup World Group campaign against France on Saturday.

## IPL window

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apparently sought permission from the BCCI since IPL rules did not allow unsold players to be signed. The BCCI then sent a letter to the ten franchises asking if they have any objections to the proposal and gave them until February 3 to respond. However, Mehul Shah, one of the co-owners of the Kochi franchise, told ESPNcricinfo they had not asked the board for permission to sign Ganguly.

Meanwhile, Pandey, the most sought-after uncapped Indian player, was reportedly in discussions with a number of franchises, including his original franchise, the Royal Challengers Bangalore. Bangalore subsequently complained to the IPL that the player had demanded more money than the rules allow. After determining that the players' agent had been in talks with a number of teams, the IPL decided to punish Pandey at its meeting in Mumbai on Friday.

The uncapped players have been placed in fixed price brackets by the IPL - those players who made their first-class debut in the last two years will be paid Rs 10 lakhs (\$22,000); those in the field for two to five years would get Rs 20 lakhs (\$44,000) and those with more than five years' experience Rs 30 lakhs (\$66,000).

# Afridi named captain

AFP, Lahore



replaced by Test captain Misbahul Haq.

Pakistan last week announced a 15-man squad for the mega event, to be jointly hosted by India, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh from February 19, but had delayed the appointment of a captain.

"PCB (Pakistan Cricket Board) announces Afridi as captain of Pakistan team for the World Cup. Misbah has been announced as vice captain for the event," the board said in a statement.

PCB chairman Ijaz Butt said the decision had widespread backing.

"I had detailed discussions with team management and players in New Zealand regarding captain and vice captain and am pleased to state that everyone fully endorsed these decisions," Butt was quoted as saying in the PCB statement.

The PCB's decision to delay naming the captain had been criticised by former

Shahid Afridi will lead Pakistan at the World Cup, cricket chiefs said on Friday, quashing rumours that he might be



SHAHID AFRIDI

players and fans.

"It doesn't make a difference whether Misbah leads the side or I lead the side because we both are playing for our country, I have never been after captaincy," Afridi said earlier this week.

Misbah had backed all-rounder Afridi as captain.

"I think Afridi has done a great job as captain and he has kept the team together and every player is contributing and wants to do well. He has led well," Misbah said after his man-of-the-match performance in New Zealand on Tuesday.

Afridi, 30, who was banned for two matches on charges of ball-tampering in only his second match as

skipper in January last year, has led Pakistan in 20 one-day matches, winning nine, losing ten with one ending in no result because of rain.

Pakistan are in Group A of the World Cup and open their campaign with a match against Kenya at Hambantota, Sri Lanka, on February 23.

They go into the tournament on good form after wrapping up the current six-match one-day series against New Zealand with a game to spare.

## 'Aus the team to beat'

AFP, Perth



After embarrassment at the Ashes, Australian paceman Mitchell Johnson says the defending champions are still the side to beat at the upcoming World Cup.

Australia's horrific 3-1 belting in the Ashes series has given way to a dominant performance in the seven-match one-day international series against England, with the home side leading 5-1 against the tiring tourists.

The final match is being played at the WACA Ground in Perth on Sunday, and the hosts have decided to rest captain Michael Clarke, coming off his best batting form in two months, and star all-rounder Shane Watson.

The pair have been replaced by local batsman Adam Voges and forgotten spinner Jason Krejza.

It is Australia's last match before their World Cup defence, in which they will be aiming at a fourth straight title, and their preparation hasn't gone smoothly despite the one-sided ODI series scoreline.

The final make-up of Australia's 15-man World Cup squad remains shrouded in mystery, with squad members Ricky Ponting (finger), Mike Hussey (hamstring) and

Nathan Hauritz (shoulder) all battling serious injuries.

Reserves Shaun Marsh (hamstring) and Xavier Doherty (back) are also unfit, but Johnson said confidence in the camp was rising all the time.

"It is a bit of a different side, but there are a lot of guys there who have played one-day cricket for Australia," Johnson said.

"The guys coming in like Voges and Krejza have done well for their states as well.

"I think we've still got a well-balanced one-day side going into this last game, and we are taking a lot of confidence into it and then onto the World Cup.

"We are still the number one one-day side in the world so hopefully we win this series 6-1."

Australia enter the World Cup as the number one ranked side in one-day cricket, but if they need any proof that pre-tournament form doesn't count for much they only need look back to their 2007 campaign.

They lost their last five ODIs before the World Cup in the West Indies, but then went through the tournament unbeaten.

They have won their last 23 World Cup matches, their only blemish in their last 29 games the famous tie with South Africa in the semi-final at Headingley in 1999, which still enabled the Australians to advance to the final.

## Waqar wants winning end

### Final ODI against NZ today



PTI, Karachi

The Pakistan coach Waqar Younis, is keen to end the one-day series against New Zealand on a winning note after his team wrapped up the series on Thursday in Hamilton.

Waqar said that the series win was a great boost for the team ahead of the World Cup and the side had developed into a confident fighting unit under the captaincy of Shahid Afridi.

Waqar comment's came after Pakistan manager, Intikhab Alam said that the captaincy debate was over and the flamboyant all-rounder would be leading the team in the World Cup.

"Yes Afridi will lead the team in the World Cup but the Pakistan Cricket Board will make an official announcement on Friday," he said.

Waqar said that Afridi had done well to

blend out a good one-day combination for the World Cup. "The biggest plus point is that our fielding has finally shown signs of improvement and we took some great catches and executed run-outs in the series," Waqar said.

But the former Pakistan captain cautioned his players to remember that the pressure would be greater in the World Cup and the opposition would also be tougher. "Right now, I have told the players to just focus on the last one-day match because we must end this series with a win and a 4-1 margin."

"Waqar said he was upbeat about the World Cup because the bench strength of the Pakistan team was also capable of winning matches. We are not playing Saeed Ajmal since he has a finger injury and we didn't want to take any risks with him so close to the World Cup."

"But in the final match we might give outings to Asad Shafiq and Abdul Rehman," he added.



PHOTO: COURTESY

Chief of Army Staff General Md. Abdul Mubeen (4th from R) inaugurates the Sony National Tennis Tournament 2011 at the National Tennis Complex in Ramna yesterday.