

Raina-led India go to Windies

PTI, Mumbai

A depleted Indian cricket team, sans senior players such as Sachin Tendulkar and regular captain Mahendra Singh Dhoni, left for the West Indies on Wednesday to compete in a Twenty20 game and a five-match one-day series, starting June 4.

Led by Suresh Raina, the Indian team boarded a connecting flight to Barbados via London at 0230 hours from the Chhatrapati Shivaji International Airport here.

India will play a Twenty20 in Trinidad (June 4) and five ODIs on June 6 (Trinidad), June 8 (Trinidad), June 11 (Antigua), June 13 (Antigua) and June 16 (Jamaica).

The one-day series would be followed by a three-match Test-rubber in Jamaica (June 20-June 24), Barbados (June 28-July 2) and Dominica (Jul 6-July 10).

The Indian squad for the ODIs and the lone Twenty20 is without nine players who were part of the World Cup winning team under Dhoni.

Age-level swimming from tomorrow

SPORTS REPORTER

Ashian City 27th National Age-level Swimming Championship gets underway with nearly 500 swimmers taking part at the National Swimming Complex in Mirpur tomorrow.

Swimmers, split into five age groups, will compete in 100 events in addition to three more events of diving, which will take place at the Army Diving Pool.

"Even though nominal, we have introduced prize money for the first time in this championship. Gold medal winner will get Tk 500, silver winner Tk 300 and bronze winner Tk 200," said Bangladesh Swimming Federation general secretary Mahbubur Rahman Shahin at a press conference at the National Sports Council conference room yesterday.

Shahin also ensured that timing would be recorded on the electronic board as the experts were repairing the device.

Of an estimated budget of Tk 15 lakh, sponsor Ashian City will provide Tk 10 lakh and the rest will be provided from the fund of the federation.

"Most of the money this time will be spent on the swimmers, team officials and event officials and we will try to increase the amount from next time," said Shahin.

BSF member Amirul Islam informed Tk 10 lakh would be spent for the daily allowance and transport and accommodation purpose as 100 officials have been appointed to conduct 100 events.

Enayet Maksud, general manager, media and communication of Sponsors Ashian City, was happy to be associated with swimming and hoped to continue the tie with swimming.

Barnes from

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out from the shortlist for the job of the South Africa team that will shortly be announced.

BCB has been desperately searching for the successor of Siddons before the Tigers have their next assignment in Zimbabwe in July-August.

It was told that the board has been facing problems finding a high-profile coach as most of the coaches are not willing to take a long-term role, rather they have shown interest to work as a part-time consultant.

The high-profile coaches also have a high financial demand.

NOTICE

Due to unavoidable circumstances, we could not print the CROSSWORD today. We regret any inconvenience.

-Sports Editor

Afridi takes it to the president

Cricket

AFP, Karachi

Former captain Shahid Afridi appealed to Pakistan's president for help Wednesday after his central contract was suspended when he announced his retirement from international cricket.

The 31-year-old all-rounder, dumped as one-day captain following a row with coach Waqar Younis last month, quit international cricket in protest at his treatment by the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB).

In response, the PCB suspended his central contract and revoked all his no-objection certificates, meaning he will not be officially permitted to play overseas.

The move will stop him from playing for Hampshire in England's Twenty20 league and in next month's Sri Lankan Premier League.

Afridi said he had appealed to President Asif Ali Zardari to help.

"I have appealed to the president to intervene urgently, also deal with other issues and save the game from getting into more crises," Afridi told AFP by telephone from Southampton.

Afridi confirmed that the England and Wales Cricket Board stopped him from playing after the PCB revoked its permission.

"The captaincy was not an issue as I have already played under senior players, but it was a matter of self respect and honour which was hurt," said Afridi who refused to speak about the PCB sanctions.

The opposition Pakistan

Muslim League-N party has already submitted an adjournment motion in the national assembly against Afridi's punishment.

Former Pakistan captain Imran Khan, who now heads his own opposition party, said the PCB was not run professionally.

"The board is not run like an institution," Khan told a television channel. "Afridi feels injustice is done so he has taken a decision and you don't change four-five captains in a year."

"Just recently everyone was praising Afridi after he led Pakistan to the semi-final of the World Cup and then suddenly this happened,"

said Khan. "The board is also run on ad-hoc basis like the country," he added.

The Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM), which belongs to the coalition government headed by Zardari's Pakistan People's Party, also objected to the sanctions on Afridi.

"President Zardari should take notice of the biased attitude of the board," said MQM leader Farooq Sattar. "You don't treat national heroes like this."

Sports Minister Shaukatullah Khan lashed out at PCB chairman Ijaz Butt over the "injustice" and said he would discuss the matter with Prime Minister Yousuf Raza Gilani.

Abdul Ghaffar Qureshi, who heads the sports committee in the upper house of parliament, demanded Butt's sacking.

"A change in the PCB is imperative," said Qureshi. "Butt has not allowed any captain to settle so it will be better to sack him."

He accepts code violation

AFP, Karachi

Former Pakistan cricket captain Shahid Afridi, who is locked in a dispute with the sport's administrators in the country, has admitted breaching its code of conduct, an official said Wednesday.

The 31-year-old all-rounder abruptly announced his retirement from international cricket on Monday following a spat with coach Waqar Younis, accusing the leadership of the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) of mistreating him.

In response the PCB on Tuesday suspended his central contract, revoked his no-objection certificates, which he officially needs to play abroad, and stopped his contract payment.

Roger sets up Novak semifinal clash

AFP, Paris



Third seed Roger Federer will meet in-form Novak Djokovic for a place in the French Open final after beating home favourite Gael Monfils 6-4, 6-

3, 7-6 (7/3) in a low-quality quarter-final match on Tuesday.

The 16-time Grand Slam winner, who lost in the last eight last year following four straight final appearances, faces Djokovic after the Serb's scheduled quarter-final opponent, Italy's Fabio Fognini, withdrew through injury.

"He (Monfils) is a superb player, so I knew the danger of this quarter-final," said Federer after his sixth career victory over Monfils.

"I'm very happy to be in the semi-finals." Monfils said the gusting winds on Roland Garros's central court had made life difficult for him.

"My big weakness today was that I wasn't able to serve at all," he said.

"If I'd had more of a serve, I would not have been handicapped. The wind made things really difficult."

Former world number one Federer, the 2009 champion, has made steady progress in the tournament to date and is yet to lose a set.

Second seed Djokovic, however, has beaten the great Swiss in their three previous encounters and requires just one more victory to level John McEnroe's 1984 record of 42 matches unbeaten at the start of a season.

A victory on Friday will also crown the Serb as the new world number one.

"Playing a semi-final here at Roland Garros is a great moment and playing such a great player is what we train for," added Federer.

Federer made an uncertain start amid windy, overcast conditions on Court Philippe Chatrier and was broken to love in his second service game.

The Swiss broke back immediately, however, thanks to a perfectly judged backhand

drop shot that bit and died in the dust, before obliging the ninth-seeded Monfils to fight off three break points in the eighth game.

Seeded outside the top two at a Grand Slam for the first time since Wimbledon in 2003, Federer brought up two set points on Monfils' serve shortly afterwards and then clinched the first set when the world number nine put a forehand wide.

Following an exchange of breaks in the second set, Federer broke for a 4-2 lead when Monfils double-faulted, prompting the Frenchman to fling his racquet to the ground in disgust.

Both men were culpable of some dismal shot-making, but it did not prevent Federer from closing out the set when a stretching Monfils sent a backhand long.

Monfils saved three break points at 4-4 in the third set and two at 5-5, but swiftly fell 6-1 down in the ensuing tie-break and was finally beaten when Federer thrashed a forehand winner down the line.



Swiss tennis star Roger Federer pumps his fist after winning the French Open quarterfinal against France's Gael Monfils at Roland Garros yesterday. PHOTO: AFP

Virtual title decider

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points against Sheikh Russel and Mohammedan. Now I see this match as a last chance to stay well in the hunt and a win against Abahani will put us in pole position," said Maruf.

Muktijoddha lost their rhythm in the second leg and dropped seven points so far and Maruf believes it was due to the forced change in formation after the departure of sick Nigerian Alamu Bukola Okaleken, who however is available for the selection in today's match after recovering from sickness in Nigeria.

Not only Bukola, Mithun Chowdhury, who missed the last two matches for suspension, is also available and Maruf goes back to his previous formation of 4-3-3 keeping Mithun, Bukola and league's top-scorer Sudanese James Moga up front.

At the other hand, Abahani are looking

forward to putting their disappointing AFC President's Cup campaign and a defeat against Rahmatganj in their last match behind by winning against Muktijoddha.

"We gave up hope after a defeat against Rahmatganj but Muktijoddha and Sheikh Jamal's losing points brought a new hope for us and we are now thinking of a victory in today's match in a bid to stay in the race," said Abahani captain Pranotosh Kumar.

Pranotosh himself and fellow defender Ashraf Mahmud Linkon however will miss the game for the booking but fit-again Mehdi Hasan Ujjal may take to field along with four Ghanaian recruits Awudu Ibrahim, Samad Youssif, Twum Frank and Yousif Aminu.

"Even a draw could leave both sides out of the title race which is why we are so keen on winning this match," said the Abahani captain.

Sunny, Dhiman

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the 32 players. Dollar [Mahmud], [Mahbubul Alam] Robin and Forhad [Reza] had to be left out but I think they shouldn't be disheartened," said Akram.

"I have always talked about fitness and performance being the important criterion," he said. "Every player [outside the contracted ones] has a good chance to make it into the final squad."

32-MEMBER CONDITIONING CAMP

Shakib Al Hasan (captain), Tamim Iqbal, Mushfiqur Rahim, Junaed Siddiqui, Mahmudullah Riyad, Jahurul Islam, Naeem Islam, Mohammad Ashraf, Rokibul Hasan, Imrul Kayes, Alok Kapali, Shahriar Nafees, Mohammad Nazimuddin, Shamsur Rahman, Shuvogotohom Chowdhury, Nadi Chowdhury, Nasiruddin Faruque, Sahagir Hossain, Dhiman Ghosh, Nasir Hossain, Nazmul Hossain, Shahadat Hossain, Syed Rasel, Shafiul Islam, Rubel Hossain, Shubhashish Roy, Robiul Islam, Abdur Razzak, Sohrwardi Shuvo, Saqlain Sajib, Elias Sunny and Noor Hossain.

R'ganj, F'ganj

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tell you anything about those problems, but there was nothing uncanny behind this result," said Rahmatganj coach Ali Ashgar Nasir adding that his charges played well in the first half but opponents cashed in on the players' fatigue in the second.

Farashganj coach Kamal Babu gave credit to his players and termed the result as a lucky one for his side.

"It was good to see the boys come from two goals down to draw the match, and we could have even won the game had Zunapio not squandered the final-minute opportunity," said Babu.

The draw moves Rahmatganj to the sixth position with 24 points from 18 matches while Farashganj move up to ninth position with 15 points from same number of matches.



Jamaican sprinter Usain Bolt is at full tilt during the men's 100m sprint at the Golden Spike athletics meet in the eastern Czech city of Ostrava on Tuesday. PHOTO: AFP

Usain bolts past Steve

Athletics

AFP, Ostrava

Jamaican athletics superstar Usain Bolt easily beat compatriot and this season's fastest man over 100m Steve Mullings here on Tuesday at the Golden Spike event.

The 24-year-old world record holder timed 9.91sec, the same time as he ran in the Diamond League event in Rome last week. "My time is not bad, but it could be better. I expected a faster time," Bolt told reporters after the race.

"It's not even close (to ideal). I have a lot of work to do," he added.

Mullings finished in 9.97sec, shy of his season's best of 9.89sec run in April, while Antigua's Daniel Bailey was third in 10.08sec.

Bolt only returned to competition in Rome last Thursday after a nine-month break since he was beaten by American Tyson Gay in Stockholm last August. "I'm coming back after nine or ten months and I'm not going to run 9.8, 9.7. I take a step at a time and a race at a time," said the reigning Olympic and world champion.

Three months before the world championships in Daegu, South Korea, Bolt said he needed more training to make the time "go down in two months."

Earlier on Tuesday, Jamaica's Veronica Campbell-Brown, the reigning double Olympic 200m champion, clocked this season's lead time in the 100m, storming across the line in 10.76sec, ahead of Bahamas veteran Debbie Ferguson and compatriot Schillonie Calvert.

Ex-India policeman to head ACSU

Cricket

AFP, London

A former Indian policeman with experience of tackling corruption is to be the new head of the International Cricket Council's anti-corruption and security unit (ACSU), it was announced yesterday.

Yogendra Pal Singh, 55, takes over from Ravi Sawani, who is retiring having headed up the ACSU since November 2007, the ICC, cricket's global governing body, said in a statement issued from their Dubai headquarters.

Singh, who is from New Delhi, spent 30 years in the Indian Police Service including several years with the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), where he was joint-director in charge of anti-corruption.

His appointment comes at a sensitive time for the ACSU, which has been criticised for failing to unearth major cricket corruption scandals, with England captain Andrew

Trott best in England

AFP, London

Jonathan Trott's run-scoring feats during the past 12 months were recognised when he was named England's cricketer of the year by the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) at a ceremony at Lord's here on Wednesday.

The award, voted for by the British cricket media, is given to the player who has had the greatest impact upon England's performances from the start of the 2010 international season until the end of the World Cup.

In that time the South Africa-born Trott played 32 times for England, scoring 2,246 runs at an average of 68.06.

This included seven hundreds and a highest score of 226, against Bangladesh in a Test at Lord's last year.

His Ashes average of 89 was second only to Alastair Cook, whilst his first over run out of Simon Katich during the second Test Match in Adelaide, helped set England on the road to Ashes victory.

"I am both extremely humbled and proud to have been named England Cricketer of the Year after what has clearly been the most enjoyable year of my cricketing career so far," Trott said.

"It is an honour to represent England and it has been a privilege to be involved in such a successful, hard working team," the 30-year-old Warwickshire batsman added.

Campbell-Brown also set an unofficial world record of 9.91sec on the 100-yard distance measured within the Ostrava race.

Indeed it was a great night for the powerful Jamaican contingent as Marvin Anderson won the 200m in 20.27sec and his compatriot Jermaine Gonzales dominated the 400m in 45.07sec.

South Africa's LJ van Zyl equalled his own world-leading time of 47.66sec in the 400m hurdles while reigning Olympic 110m hurdles champion and world-record holder Dayron Robles from Cuba won in 13.14sec, slower than his world-leading time from last weekend by 0.07sec.

Germany's Matthias De Zordo won a thrilling javelin competition as he recorded his best throw of 85.78m in the final round, squeezing past 2007 world champion, Finland's Tero Pitkamaki.

The men's high jump saw an engrossing duel between Russia's Ivan Ukhov and Germany's Raul Spank with the Russian prevailing after both cleared 2.32m.

American Francena McCorory topped the women's 400m in 50.64sec, beating Czech Denisa Rosolova and United States reigning world champion Sanya Richards-Ross.

Kenyan Paul Kipsiele Koech won the 3000m steeple in 8:02.56 and Germany's Silke Spiegelburg topped the women's pole vault with 4.60m.

Ethiopia's Meselech Melkamu won the women's 10-kilometre race in 31:14.83.

Russia's Maria Abakoumova won the women's javelin with 65.81, beating home favourite Barbora Spotakova, the 2008 Olympic gold medalist in the event.

Strauss saying last month it appeared "woefully under-resourced".

Strauss was leading England in a Test at Lord's last year when three Pakistan cricketers -- then captain Salman Butt and seamers Mohammad Asif and Mohammad Aamer -- were all accused by British tabloid News of the World of conspiring to deliberately bowl no-balls as part of a 'spot-fixing' betting scam.

The trio, who all deny wrongdoing, were banned by the ICC for a minimum of five years each -- verdicts they are appealing at the Swiss-based Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS).

And the players, together with their agent Mazher Majeed, now face criminal corruption charges in England with a court trial set to start in October.

Cricket, with its numerous in-play incidents, is particularly vulnerable to 'spot-fixing' where betting stings can be arranged without having to fix the final result of the match.