

ASIAN ATHLETICS Tamil Nadu's objection to host event

AFP, Chennai

India's southern Tamil Nadu state on Thursday refused to host the Asian Athletics Championships because of the participation of Sri Lanka which it accuses of war crimes.

Chennai, the state capital, was due to host the event in July, but Tamil Nadu Chief Minister J Jayalalitha said Sri Lanka must not be allowed to take part.

Jayalalitha, whose state has a large Tamil population, accuses the Indian Ocean island nation of committing "genocide" against its Tamil minority.

The Tamil Nadu government wrote to the Asian Athletics Association (AAA) stating that the participation of Sri Lankan athletes would "hurt the sentiments of the Tamil people", Jayalalitha said.

"Since the state government has not received any favourable reply from the AAA, it would not be advisable to hold the meet in Tamil Nadu involving the participation of Sri Lankan athletes," Jayalalitha said in a statement.

Many politicians in Tamil Nadu have been critical of the Sri Lankan government over its military campaign that defeated separatist Tamil Tiger rebels in 2009.

Rights groups say up to 40,000 civilians were killed by security forces in the last months of a no-holds-barred offensive that ended Sri Lanka's decades-long fight against Tamil separatists.

Sri Lanka denies causing civilian deaths. India last hosted the Championships in 1989.

Ponting given Mumbai reins

CRICINFO, Mumbai

Mumbai Indians have appointed former Australia captain Ricky Ponting as their captain for the sixth edition of Indian Premier League (IPL), which starts from April 3.

Ponting, who retired from international cricket at the end of 2012, was bought at the base price of 400,000 dollars during the player auction earlier this month. Despite the buzz circulating around Sachin Tendulkar to be re-appointed as the captain ahead of the auction, the new Mumbai think-tank of mentor Anil Kumble and coach John Wright have zeroed-in on Ponting to lead the side.

Thais on top

FROM PAGE 16

Brought no new beginnings, for the moment at least, for Siddikur as yet again he was far behind the pack after the first day with a one-over-par 73. Bangladesh's only winner on the Asian tour traded three birdies for four bogies, while fellow Bangladeshi Jamal Mollah fared even worse with a two-over-par 74.

Dual debut

FROM PAGE 16

The champion team will receive Tk 35 lakh as prize money while the runners-up team will get Tk 15 lakh. The man-of-the-tournament will get Tk 2 lakh and Tk 1 lakh each will be received by the highest run-getter and highest wicket-taker.



Italian Roberta Vinci celebrates beating Australia's Samantha Stosur in the quarterfinals of the Dubai Open in the Gulf emirate yesterday. PHOTO: AFP

Stosur keeps losing

Tennis

REUTERS, Dubai

Samantha Stosur's season of woe continued at the Dubai Championships when she crashed out in the quarterfinals following a 6-2, 6-4 defeat by Italian Roberta Vinci on Thursday.

The Australian has lost more matches than she has won this year, with her win-loss record standing at 5-7, after she produced an error-strewn performance under the searing desert sun that left her frequently yelling in frustration.

Vinci, 30, broke in the opening game and was always in control against a player who has failed to win a title since triumphing at the US Open in September 2011.

The Italian has now beaten top-10 ranked players in successive matches -- she defeated Angelique Kerber on Wednesday -- and has yet to drop a set in Dubai.

World number nine Stosur towered over the diminutive Vinci, but she was guilty of trying to be too aggressive, clubbing a succession of backhand returns into the net.

Vinci, part of world No. 1 doubles pairing along with compatriot Sara Errani, is a percentage player, relying more on her

opponent's mistakes than going for winners herself and Stosur's approach played into the Italian's hands.

Serving at 4-2 down, Stosur ran to the net but Vinci, world No. 17, played an angled backhand dropshot winner for a breakpoint.

The Italian duly converted after Stosur, backpedalling from the net, hit a smash long. Stosur then surrendered the set with another errant backhand.

The Australian broke for the first time early in the second set as Vinci played a forehand long and also changed tactics, slowing the game down and matching Vinci's backhand slice.

But the Italian responded with an immediate break back, taking Stosur to deuce before the latter struck successive forehands wide.

Stosur was frequently left stranded in mid-court, either arriving too late to block off Vinci's passing shots or coming forward too soon and allowing herself to be lobbed.

The Italian broke again for a 4-3 lead after another Stosur error and served out the match.

Vinci will now face her friend Errani, who defeated Nadia Petrova of Russia 6-4, 0-6, 6-3 later yesterday, in Friday's semifinal.

Last chance for Afridi

Cricket

AFP, Lahore

Pakistan on Wednesday recalled Shahid Afridi to its one-day squad for the series in South Africa, with the country's selectors saying the all-rounder has a last chance to prove himself.

The 32-year-old was omitted from last year's one-day series in India after his performance with both bat and ball slumped.

But Pakistani cricket officials said he would return to the 16-man one-day squad, and he also retained his place in the 15-man squad announced for the T20 Internationals.

"We thought that the team needed a spinner to back [Saeed] Ajmal in the one-day series and this could be Afridi's last chance to prove his credentials," chief selector Iqbal Qasim told reporters. Misbahul Haq will lead

the team in the one-day matches in Bloemfontein (March 10), Centurion (March 15), Johannesburg (March 17), Durban (March 21) and Benoni (March 24).

Opener Mohammad Hafeez will lead the

SQUADS

T20

Mohammad Hafeez (captain), Nasir Jamshed, Shoaib Malik, Kamran Akmal, Shahid Afridi, Saeed Ajmal, Mohammad Irfan, Wahab Riaz, Umar Akmal, Umar Gul, Ahmed Shahzad, Umar Amin, Zulfiqar Babar, Asad Ali, Junaid Khan.

ODI

Misbahul Haq (captain), Mohammad Hafeez, Imran Farhat, Nasir Jamshed, Kamran Akmal, Umar Akmal, Shoaib Malik, Shahid Afridi, Asad Shafiq, Younis Khan, Saeed Ajmal, Umar Gul, Wahab Riaz, Abdul Rehman,

in the two Twenty20 matches to be played in Durban on March 1 and in Centurion on March 3.

Paceman Sohail Tanveer is the only omission in the Twenty20 team which toured India, being

replaced by another left-arm paceman Wahab Riaz.

"Pakistan's recent one-day showings are good as they have beaten India in India," said Qasim of Pakistan's 2-1 victory in India in January. "I hope they improve their performance from the Tests."

Pakistan have lost the first two of the three Test series, with the final match starting in Centurion on Friday.

All-rounder Abdul Razzaq, dropped after the World Twenty20 in Sri Lanka in October last year, was left out of the side again.

Salahuddin

FROM PAGE 16

midfielder. The president also shared his experiences of his playing career in Hong Kong and urged them to be more professional.

The players demanded to be brought under the federation payroll, and also wanted a reduction in the number of foreign players in the domestic league.

Bangladesh will compete against Palestine, Nepal and Northern Mariana Island.

Champions of each five groups and two best runners-up out of all the five groups will advance to the eight-team final to be held in Maldives in 2014. In the last edition Bangladesh qualified for the final round and were eliminated from the group stage in the finals.

Meanwhile, Dutch coaches Lodewijk de Kruij and Rene Koster are scheduled to arrive here this morning and they are supposed to conduct the training in the afternoon.

New twist in Pistorius case

Athletics

AFP, Pretoria

The lead detective in the Oscar Pistorius investigation faces seven charges of attempted murder, South African police revealed Thursday, leaving the prosecution case against the star sprinter in tatters.

Police made the shock announcement as Pistorius himself suffered a new blow when US sportswear giant Nike said it has suspended its contract with the double amputee champion known as "Blade Runner".

Pistorius was back in court on Thursday for the third day of a bail hearing over the Valentine's Day shooting of his 29-year-old model girlfriend Reeva Steenkamp.

Detective Hilton Botha, whose testimony was repeatedly challenged by defence attorneys on Wednesday, is facing charges for shooting at a minibus taxi in 2009, police said.

"We were only informed yesterday that attempted murder charges against Hilton Botha have been reinstated," police spokesman Neville Malila told AFP.

Pistorius's lawyers had torn into Botha's police work at Wednesday's hearing, undermining his witnesses and forcing him to agree that the Olympian's version of events fitted the crime scene.

"It sounds consistent," Botha told the court.

Prosecutors allege it was a premeditated killing, but Pistorius has said he mistook Steenkamp for an intruder when he shot repeatedly through a locked bathroom door in the dead of night and did not intend to kill her.

The law graduate and cover girl was found by medics covered in bloodied towels and wearing white shorts and a black vest, with bullet wounds to her head, elbow and hip.

On Thursday, defence lawyer Barry Roux again pilloried Botha and what he called "disastrous shortcomings in the state's case".

The Olympian and Paralympian sprinter, who has been in custody for a week, could face months or perhaps years in pre-trial detention if he does not win bail.

Arguing that Pistorius would be a flight risk, the prosecution quoted a magazine article in which the runner claimed to "have a house" in Italy.

But his coach Ampie Louw told AFP the property is actually a training facility built by the local government and a hotel, where the athlete goes regularly to train and unwind.

"We all call it home... but the hotel has been a family business for years," he said.

Louw said that if Pistorius is granted bail he wanted to get the runner -- who became a hero to millions when he became the first double amputee to compete at the 2012 Olympics -- back on the track.

"I'm going to speak with him and try to get him going."

Pistorius's career has been put on

hold since the shooting, forcing him to cancel a number of races.

As the controversy over the police investigation swirled, Botha admitted in the witness stand on Thursday: "I'm sure it could have been handled better."

Botha has conceded he did not wear protective clothing when Pistorius's forensic team visited his luxury Pretoria home where the killing took place, which may have contaminated the scene.

He was further forced to admit that police had not seen a bullet that hit the toilet basin and which was only discovered four days later by the defence forensic team.

Pistorius's family said in a statement it was "satisfied" with the bail hearing, but "finds the contradictions in Botha's testimony extremely concerning".

Prosecutors also later backtracked on allegations that a police search had found testosterone and needles in a dresser in Pistorius's bedroom.

"We can't tell what it is," national prosecuting authority spokesman Medupe Simasiku said. "We can't confirm or deny it until we get the forensic report."

The athlete, who off the track has had a rocky private life with stories of rash behaviour, beautiful women, guns and fast cars, has built up a powerful team of lawyers, medical specialists and public relations experts for his defence.

The hearing has been adjourned until Friday, with no bail decision.

Top detective assigned to Oscar case

AFP, Pretoria

South African police tapped a top detective to take over the bungled Oscar Pistorius investigation Thursday after it emerged the officer assigned to the case faces attempted murder charges.

"We recognise the significance, the importance and the severity of the matter," commissioner of the South African Police Service (SAPS) Mangwashah 'Riah' Phiyega said.

She assigned the case to top-ranking detective lieutenant general Vinesh Kumar Moonoo.

"He is the most senior detective in the SAPS environment. This matter will receive attention at the national level."

The Pistorius prosecution has been severely undermined by revelations that Hilton Botha, the original case officer, has to answer seven attempted murder charges for shooting at a minibus taxi in 2011.

Pak pride at stake

Centurion Test from today

Cricket

AFP, Centurion

Pakistan captain Misbahul Haq said on Thursday that the visitors were expecting another tough challenge against South Africa's fast bowlers as they seek to salvage pride in the three-match Test series.

The visitors go into Friday's third and final Test at SuperSport Park two-nil down after defeats in Johannesburg and Cape Town yet were determined to come away with a favourable result.

Misbah, however, said that with South African pitches the most pace-friendly in the world, they would have their work cut out.

"Wanderers and Centurion have pace and bounce. This [Centurion] pitch is hard and it might have more bounce. All over the world wickets are getting slower, even in Australia nowadays you don't find wickets like that," he said.

South Africa captain Graeme Smith said there would be no let-up from his team, especially because South Africa's next series is away against Pakistan in the United Arab Emirates at the end of the year.

"We've got a lot of respect for Pakistan," said Smith. "They've got a really good bowling attack and they have some key performers. We saw in [the second Test in] Cape Town that if they perform well they

can put us under pressure.

"This is a big Test for us considering that we are going to Abu Dhabi and Dubai where we expect the conditions to suit them a lot. We want to make an impact again and take that confidence there."

Misbah said Pakistan needed to improve their consistency in both batting and bowling.

Inexperience and the pressure put on his players by the South Africans had contributed to Pakistan's poor performances, he said.

Left-arm fast bowler Junaid Khan, who missed the second Test in Cape Town because of a thigh strain, remains a doubtful starter.

"He's feeling better but because he has not done any practice it is very difficult to tell you right now," said team manager Naveed Cheema.

TEAMS
SOUTH AFRICA (likely): Graeme Smith (captain), Alvaro Petersen, Hashim Amla, Jacques Kallis, AB de Villiers, Faf du Plessis, Dean Elgar, Robin Peterson, Vernon Philander, Dale Steyn, Rory Kleinveldt.

PAKISTAN (from): Misbahul Haq (captain), Mohammad Hafeez, Nasir Jamshed, Azhar Ali, Younis Khan, Asad Shafiq, Sarfraz Ahmed, Umar Gul, Saeed Ajmal, Junaid Khan, Mohammad Irfan, Imran Farhat, Tanvir Ahmed, Ehsan Adil, Abdur Rehman, Faisal Iqbal, Rahat Ali.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS

1 Rest-room, for short

4 Back talk

8 Blunders

12 Yale student

13 Friends, old style

14 Manner of walking

15 Gut level

17 Sans siblings

18 Feline

19 Snake or lizard

21 Untamed horse

24 Apiece

25 Second person

26 Wheel center

28 Basic assumption

32 Piquancy

34 Afternoon beverage

36 Water conduit

37 Come in

39 Sprite

41 Stitch

42 Tin Man's need

44 Aft-rock band, Bare-naked —

46 Cheesy paper

50 Make marginalia

51 Vivacity, musically

52 Hun opponent

56 Enthusiastic

57 Send forth

58 Fish eggs

59 Optimistic

60 Antitoxins

61 Agent

DOWN

1 Third O.T. bk.

2 Boxer Muhammad

3 Baron's superior

4 Draw

5 Melody

6 Celebrity

7 Drag (Var.)

8 Braggart's journey?

9 Hindu princess

10 Streamlet

11 Eyelid woe

16 Has the skill set

20 Co-track part

21 Memory measure

22 Reddish horse

23 No longer stylish

27 Spell-down

29 Guests

30 Duel tool

31 Nightly telecast

33 Earth science

35 Every last crumb

38 Carnival city

40 Tex-Mex treat

43 18-Across' aneard

45 Follow relentlessly

46 Slope transport

47 Jason's ship

48 Life stories, briefly

49 Exemplar of thinness

53 Round Table title

54 Upper surface

55 "Yoo-hoo!"

Solution time: 25 mins.

Yesterday's answer: 1-17

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	
12				13				14			
15		16						17			
		18				19	20				
21	22			23		24					
25			26		27		28		29	30	31
32			33		34		35		36		
37			38		39		40		41		
			42		43		44		45		
46	47	48			49		50				
51				52		53				54	55
56				57					58		
59				60					61		

CRYPTOQUIP

OCIS SF ZKEGRCWU WFLU
ZKZZBUW CS EFGV-TFSSFL
ZEBGUW? RUCY FI YFOI
SF SRU TCEVBI' TCWULUIS.

Yesterday's Cryptoquip: SUPPOSING A FORMER U.S. PRESIDENT HAD SEVERAL FEMALE FOXES, HE MIGHT NAME THEM NIXON'S VIXENS.

Today's Cryptoquip Clue: F equals O