

HINDUSTAN TIMES

HR 6
7/12

Mending fences

AT THIS stage, no one can say whether or not the threat to the forthcoming Indian cricket team's tour of Bangladesh is a hoax. The government has correctly delayed the team's departure, even while dispatching officials to make an on-the-spot assessment of the situation. As recently as in August, a devastating bomb attack on an Awami League rally in Dhaka had led to the death of some 20 persons. For this reason there is need to take the threat seriously. The predictable Bangladeshi response will be that the Indian side is over-reacting but what they need to do is not just provide assurances, but outline practical measures that they will take to ensure foolproof security, just as the Pakistanis did earlier this year.

Almost all the countries of the region suffer from the scourge of terrorism. What they need is more cooperation to end the menace rather than to trade blame. Getting a fix on the security associated with the cricket series is also important since it will be a forerunner to the summit of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (Saarc), scheduled to be

held in Dhaka early next year.

The threat to the cricket team is symptomatic of the problems that India faces in its relations with its eastern neighbour. Their engagement, more often than not, is to deal with crises as they come and then return to the policy of benign neglect. In this climate, it is easy for extremist groups like the Harkat-ul Jihad Islami to stoke anti-Indian feelings. But if Dhaka must get serious about terrorism, India clearly needs to do much more to resolve its outstanding problems with Dhaka, including assuaging concerns over the virtually non-existent river-linking project, the subject of water-sharing and Indo-Bangladesh maritime boundary.

At a larger level, it needs to assiduously work towards giving our neighbours a stake in our prosperity, or, to put it another way, persuading them that India is an opportunity, not a threat. We seem to be good at doing it with the US and EU, but somehow when it comes to Bangladesh, a country with whom we share borders and a culture, things don't seem to work.

07 DEC 2004

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

PLAYERS WILL BE KILLED, SAYS ULTRA LETTER

Threat clouds Bangla tour



Sourav Ganguly on his way back from the Eden Gardens' gym in Kolkata on Sunday. — PTI

SNS & PTI

NEW DELHI/KOLKATA, Dec. 5. — Plans for the Indian cricket team to leave for Bangladesh on Tuesday was stalled today after a threat from a little-known militant organisation, the Harkat-ul-Jihad (Huji), to kill Indian cricketers to avenge the killing of innocent Muslims during communal riots that rocked Gujarat in 2002.

The threat, faxed to the Indian High Commission in Dhaka, was dismissed as a "hoax" and "insignificant" by Bangladesh authorities, who, however, assured the Indian government that "no effort will be spared to provide the fullest security to the visiting Indian team."

Official sources said Huji is the last major offshoot in South Asia of the Al-Qaeda. Bangladesh finance minister, Mr Saifur Rahman, currently in New Delhi to attend the World Economic Summit, said: "There is no such organisation in Bangladesh. We have never heard of this organisation before."

Home minister Mr Shivraj Patel has set up an inter-ministerial team that flies to Dhaka tomorrow to help the Bangladesh government take a decision on the tour

that entails two Test matches and three ODIs. The security team will be led by Yashowardhan Azad, an official of the rank of inspector-general who had undertaken a security review before the Indian cricket team's visit to Pakistan earlier this year. The security team, which will visit Dhaka and Chittagong, would also visit the hotels where the Indian team is slated to be put up during its 22-day tour. MEA spokesman Mr Navtej Sarna said, "We would welcome a categoric assurance from the Bangladesh government."

The 15-member Indian contingent, led by Sourav Ganguly, will now leave for Dhaka on Wednesday, instead of Tuesday, as confirmed by the Board of Control for Cricket in India president-elect Mr Ranbir Singh Mahendra. The decision from the BCCI chief came following an advice from the government.

In Kolkata, skipper Sourav Ganguly refused comment on the issue, adding that the players would have to follow any decision that the government and the BCCI arrive at. "It would not be proper for me to make a statement on this issue. Whatever decision is taken by the government and the board, we will follow it," Ganguly told a television channel. As for the security threat, he said: "I have no idea about the group, how threatening it is. The case is sensitive."

"We were planning to do well there. The situation (in Bangladesh) is different from the time we last toured that country. When we get to know the situation there, we will be able to say something," he continued.

BCCI joint-secretary Mr Goutam Dasgupta said in Kolkata that the Indian board has informed its counterpart in Dhaka about the delay in the departure. However, the BCCI and the Indian government are still waiting for a clearance from the Bangladesh government.

Another report on page 14

Supreme Court stays order appointing BCCI administrator

● Appointment of Dalmiya as patron-in-chief also stayed

By J. Venkatesan

NEW DELHI, OCT. 11. The Supreme Court today stayed an interim order passed by the Madras High Court superceding the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) and appointing a retired judge of the apex court, S. Mohan, as interim administrator to manage the Board's affairs.

The High Court order on Friday was on a review petition from the Chennai-based Nethaji Cricket Club. It restrained the newly-elected BCCI office-bearers from discharging their functions.

Passing the orders on a special leave petition filed by the BCCI and the Delhi District Cricket Association (DDCA), a Bench of the Supreme Court, comprising Justice N. Santosh Hegde and Justice S.B. Sinha, also stayed the election/appointment of Jagmohan Dalmiya as BCCI patron-in-chief until further orders.

BCCI stand

Appearing for the BCCI, senior counsel Abhishek Singhvi said the High Court had clearly recorded an undertaking made on behalf of the BCCI that no candidate contesting for the presidentship would be restrained from casting his vote on grounds of residence. He said that when this undertaking had not been violated, there was no occasion for the High

Court to entertain a review petition. Further, there was no justification to conclude that there were irregularities in the election, warranting a bar on the newly-elected office-bearers taking charge. He questioned the *locus standi* of the Nethaji Cricket Club in challenging the BCCI election.

Senior counsel Fali Nariman, appearing for D.C. Agashe, a member of the Maharashtra Cricket Association, who was not allowed to vote in the September 29 BCCI elections, submitted that the Madras High Court had understood the undertaking in the sense that it would pertain to all forms of disqualification. He said no restricted meaning should be given to the undertaking, the breach of which had resulted in Mr. Agashe not being able to vote. As there was a tie between Ranbir Singh Mahendra (who won) and the Union Agriculture Minister, Sharad Pawar, the BCCI president, Jagmohan Dalmiya exercised his casting vote in favour of Mr. Mahendra.

Mr. Nariman quoted from a letter written by Mr. Dalmiya to the Maharashtra Cricket Association prior to his election as the patron-in-chief in which he had stated that there was no objection to Mr. Agashe voting at the special general meeting on September 12. When Mr. Agashe could vote for the election of Mr. Dalmiya as patron-in-chief, how could he be pre-

vented from voting in the BCCI election, counsel asked.

Appearing for the Nethaji Cricket Club, senior counsel Harish Salve said he had no objection to vacating the stay granted by the High Court but in that eventuality, fresh elections should be held immediately.

Mr. Salve said if Mr. Agashe was not allowed to vote because of the Bombay High Court order, a similar order passed by the Company Law Board operated against the DDCA and its representative should not have been allowed to vote.

'Fresh elections if irregularities are found'

The Bench said that "the facts may be in your favour, but it also *prima facie* appears that the High Court could not have passed such an order on a review petition. Everything is not all right with the BCCI, but everything is not right with the High Court order also. If we are satisfied that there were irregularities in the BCCI elections, we may direct fresh elections for the Board".

Senior counsel Gopal Subramaniam appeared for Mr. Dalmiya and he was allowed to file a special leave petition.

The Bench asked all the parties to file their responses and directed the listing of the matter for final hearing on October 26.

H19-1
12/10

SPM of
BCCI

THE HINDU

12 OCT 2004

Mohan locked out of BCCI hub

Third umpire retires hurt

SP...
P...
10/10

H/T

10/10

**CHANDRIMAS.
BHATTACHARYA**

Mumbai, Oct. 9: Yesterday's restraint order stopped the country's newly elected cricket bosses from starting work. Today, the court-appointed interim administrator found that he couldn't either.

Retired apex court judge S. Mohan reached the BCCI headquarters here, only to find the gates locked.

The drama came on a day the BCCI moved a special leave petition in the apex court against Madras High Court's Friday order that restrained the board's new office-bearers from assuming charge.

The board contended that the order had made it difficult to select players for the ongoing series with Australia and could bring Indian cricket to a "standstill".

The hearings will begin on Monday. (See Page 6)

Mohan, who reached the cricket board office at 11.15 this morning, said: "I am very shocked. I have come here out of respect for the high court order and this is the treatment that I get.

"I had come to take over as interim administrator as per the order of the high court but I have been prevented from doing so."

Mohan waited near the BCCI office for about half an



Mohan in front of the BCCI office in Mumbai. (PTI)

hour. He later boarded an afternoon flight for Chennai, saying he was not sure if he would return on Monday to take charge.

The retired judge said the board employees should have known he was arriving to take charge, as they were informed about the high court order. He said he was disappointed as he was here in an official capacity, not to interfere in "matters of cricket", like selection of teams.

"I won't interfere with the game of cricket at all. I will write to everybody concerned — state associations, banks and committees — and say that I have taken over as interim administrator as per the high court order," he said.

Mohan said he could appoint an ad hoc committee if he takes over as administrator and could also look into the row over telecast rights, but he would first have to take charge.

The BCCI denied the allegation that Mohan was deliberately denied access. Secretary S.K. Nair said apart from media reports, there was no communication to the board that the retired judge would be reaching the Mumbai office.

"We were not informed whether he had accorded his consent to such appointment," Nair said.

Dhyaneshwar Agashe, chairperson of the Maharashtra Cricket Association, said the incident was "unfortunate" and that the official reason stated was that "everyone was on leave". "We do not know who was behind it," he said.

Agashe said the head of staff at the BCCI office is responsible for opening or closing the office, but could not be contacted. No other staff member could be contacted either.

A top board member said the official reason was that "the staff was given the day off to compensate for Ganesh Visarjan on September 27".

Agashe, however, said it was highly irregular for all staff members to suddenly go on leave.

■ Aussies sniff win, Sport

New BCCI team bowled out by High Court

HT-1 9/10
9/10/04
S. Mohan

ADMINISTRATOR TO RUN BOARD AFFAIRS TILL CASE IS SETTLED

HT Correspondent
Chennai, October 8

THE MADRAS High Court today restrained the newly elected BCCI office-bearers from functioning, and appointed retired Supreme Court judge S. Mohan as its interim administrator.

Admitting a review petition filed by the Chennai-based Netaji Cricket Club, affiliated to the Tamil Nadu Cricket Association, a division Bench felt that prima facie, the BCCI — by not allowing

Maharashtra Cricket Association's Dyaneswhar Agashe to vote — had breached an undertaking given to the court on September 29 that no one would be disqualified for reasons of residence.

Hence, the Bench decided to grant the interim injunction sought by Netaji Cricket Club and restrain the new set of office-bearers from functioning. The Bench granted leave to Agashe to file a review petition. The Bench, comprising Judges P.D. Dinakaran and K. Raviraja Pandi-

an, asked the board to submit its response within a week. On September 28, Netaji Cricket Club had moved court, seeking the supervision of the BCCI election by a retired Supreme Court judge. Subsequently, Justice Mohan was nominated to do so.

But the single judge's order was modified by the present division Bench after the cricket board gave an undertaking that there would be no discrimination on the basis of qualifications of candidates vying for the

president's post. Following this, the retired judge was asked to withdraw as the supervisor.

In its latest petition, the club contended that the election process had been vitiated because Agashe wasn't allowed to vote by outgoing BCCI president Jagmohan Dalmiya.

None of the present BCCI officials was ready to comment on today's order, saying the matter was sub judice. But they said Madras High Court could be moved against the order.



S Mohan



Jagmohan Dalmiya

Sourav blasted new BCCI boss in 2000

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: A shame to Indian cricket.

That's how Sourav Ganguly once described the man who's now officially his boss—new BCCI president Ranbir Singh Mahendra. The volatile 'maharaj' of Indian cricket didn't mince his words in an interview in 2000. "He (Mahendra) is probably the worst guy I have ever seen in my life. It is a shame that we have had managers like him for India on long tours. He was a shame to Indian cricket," Ganguly said.

Sourav's bitterness goes a long, long way back—all the way to 1991-'92. He was then a wide-eyed teenager, taking his first steps in international cricket in an Indian squad that was hammered 4-0 by the Aussies. Ganguly had a forgettable tour, was accused of having "attitude problems" and spent four long years in the wilderness before fighting his way back.



According to his biography written by Gulu Ezekiel, Ganguly blamed Mahendra, then the team's administrative manager, for spreading misinformation about him. During the tour, sections of the media were full of reports that Sourav was reluctant to conduct 12th man duties, like carrying out drinks and equipment to the field. The damage to his reputation almost ended his international career prematurely.

There's a fascinating sub-text to all this. The reason Mahendra allegedly targeted Ganguly was because the Haryana Cricket Association was then at loggerheads with the Cricket Association of Bengal, headed by Jagmohan Dalmiya—the same man who on Wednesday cast the decisive vote that gave Mahendra the BCCI presidency. Politics certainly makes for strange bedfellows (as we reported in Thursday's edition).

Zee TV moves SC for cricket telecast rights

New Delhi: Zee TV on Friday filed an application before the supreme court seeking telecast rights for the India-Australia test cricket series and a direction to BCCI not to give television coverage rights to Sony TV and Ten Sports. Prasara Bharati said it too would challenge BCCI's decision in the apex court.

BCCI had on Thursday announced that it would itself arrange for live telecast of international cricket matches, beginning with the India-Australia series and said Ten Sports would produce the feed while Sony Entertainment Network would be responsible for telecast, distribution and marketing.

The arrangement was to cover the four-test series between India and Australia beginning on October 6, Platinum Jubilee one-day match between India and Pakistan on November 13 and the two-test series between India and

South Africa in November-December. Zee TV had earlier moved the supreme court challenging the BCCI's decision to cancel the telecast rights awarded to it for the cricket matches to be held in India between 2004 and 2008.

A bench comprising Justices N Santosh Hegde and S B Sinha said as the matter was being heard by a five-judge bench, it could not give any interim order but directed the matter to be posted for hearing before the larger bench on Tuesday.

Meanwhile, Prasara Bharati, stung by the BCCI's decision to award telecast rights to Sony TV, said it would challenge it in the supreme court. "Prasara Bharati had bid higher than Sony in the initial bids invited by BCCI for telecast rights. However, BCCI favoured Sony. We will challenge the issue in supreme court," said Prasara Bharati CEO K S Sarma. PTI

Sachin picked for first 2 Tests

Bangalore: Sachin Tendulkar was on Friday included in the 15-member Indian squad for the first two cricket



Tests against Australia for which the selectors brought back Mohammad Kaif, Zaheer Khan and opener Aakash Chopra.

The national selectors decided to pick Tendulkar, who has been out of action for the last six weeks because of a tennis elbow, after receiving a medical report which stated that he was "progressing well". He will, however, have to pass a fitness test before taking the field in the high-profile series beginning here on Oct 6. PTI

Win by 1, victory complete for Dalmiya

Elora Sen in Kolkata

Sept. 29. — When he's not the king, he's the kingmaker: that's the story, never mind how he rules his fiefdom. Here was a humdinger going right down to the wire in the best traditions of Indian cricket — and politics. And Mr Ranbir Singh Mahendra's ascent to the top perch of Indian cricket here this evening that saw him pip seasoned politician Mr Sharad Pawar by 16 votes to 15, was evidence, if any was needed, that Mr Jagmohan Dalmiya had won through once again.

But the debate that will rage for some time is whether that all-important vote was his casting vote as Board of Control for Cricket (BCCI) president — or the one that the Maharashtra Cricket Association (MCA) wasn't allowed to cast despite vociferous protests from the Pawar corner. Or, indeed, the vote the Rajasthan Cricket Association (RCA) was allowed to cast via Dalmiya-loyalist Mr Kishore Rungta. The parallel with the world of recent Indian politics was eerie (see *Deja vu, Mr Pawar?*).

The highly acrimonious battle for the post of BCCI president that saw the election of Dalmiya-backed Mr Mahendra by its 75th Annual General Body meeting on Wednesday was the culmination of a day-long drama that saw BCCI honchos huddled in a south Kolkata hotel. The AGM was adjourned twice and finally got underway after a six-hour delay and without the Madras High Court appointed judge supervising the elections (see *Justice delayed, denied*).

Notwithstanding the whispers of manipulation doing rounds, the pro-Dalmiya camp won not only the presidentship but also carried the day — apart from Mr Mahendra, Mr SK Nair defeated Mr Niranjan Shah 17-13 to become the new secretary. Mr Gautam Dasgupta was elected assistant

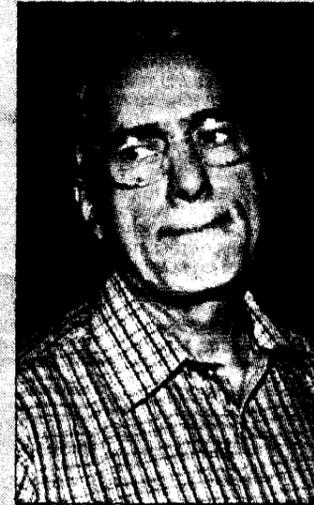
secretary getting the better of Prof. Ratnakar Shetty 16-14 and Mr Jyoti Bajpai was elected treasurer unopposed.

At the heart of the battle was the issue of the disputed representation of the MCA and RCA. And therein lies the tale of the results of today's polls. Mr D Agashe, who had represented the MCA for nearly 20 years, had arrived to vote for the election without consulting Mr BG Deshmukh, former Cabinet secretary and now court-appointed MCA observer. Consent of two observers having been made mandatory for any policy decision of the MCA, Mr Agashe had made a fatal error. Mr Deshmukh's letter, saying that Mr Agashe wasn't eligible to vote, was sent to the BCCI. The other representative from the MCA, Mr SG Thorve, a part of the ad hoc body running the association, never really claimed to be a valid candidate — his sole contention was that Mr Agashe shouldn't be allowed to vote! The fate of Maharashtra strongman Mr Pawar's home state was in Mr Dalmiya's hands who, as the outgoing president, had the power to decide which of the two MCA representatives could vote. And he played it beautifully — after consulting Mr Justice (retd) Bhagawati Prasad Banerjee, he decided that both candidates were ineligible to vote. Round 1 to Mr Dalmiya. The Rajasthan Cricket Association too had two claimants for one vote — Mr Kishore Rungta and Mr Lalit Modi, but the latter was disqualified as he his nomination was "not proper" leaving Mr Rungta the vote.

The Pawar lobby, whose views were being mostly aired by Mr Raj Singh Durgapur, was even till that time confident that their man would pull through. "Even without these two votes, we will win," he said. But he didn't realise that politics — especially of the cricketing kind — just isn't, well, cricket.



THAT'S THE WAY I DID IT: Mr Dalmiya, post-win. — The Statesman



MADE IT! BCCI chief Mr Ranbir Singh Mahendra. — The Statesman



HURTS, DOESN'T IT? Mr Sharad Pawar addresses reporters at the AGM venue. — The Statesman

Central spin to BCCI status: It's a state!

NEW DELHI, Sept. 29. — The Centre today backed Zee Telefilms Limited's contention that the BCCI could be considered a "state" under Article 12 of the Constitution. Intervening during a resumed hearing of the matter, Additional Solicitor-General Mr Mohan Parasaran said the BCCI falls within the meaning of "state" under Article 12, as regards the maintainability of Zee's petition on telecast rights. "We stand by our earlier affidavit on this (in a similar case) in Delhi High Court," Mr Parasaran said. He denied that the government's stand

on the matter was contradictory and said that even in Bombay High Court, the Centre had stated in an affidavit that sports fell in List II of the Constitution, though the BCCI was an autonomous body. The BCCI counsel took exception to what he said was the government's "flip-flop" on the issue and said that it should clarify its stand in a fresh affidavit to the Supreme Court. The Centre's stand strengthens Zee's case as it had sought to make out that since the BCCI was performing the public duty of choosing a national team, it fell squarely within

the meaning of the term "state" under Article 12 and was hence bound by the constitutional obligations laid down in Part III. It therefore cannot act in an unfair and arbitrary manner, Zee's counsel Mr Harish Salve had argued. At the resumed hearing today, Mr Salve again cited from the ICC and the BCCI's constitutions and memoranda of association to back his stand that the BCCI was a "state" in all senses of the term. It was a representative body of the Centre and functions in close association with the former, he said. — Our Legal Correspondent

Gentleman's game? SC judge wonders...

Press Trust of India

NEW DELHI, Sept. 29. — Amidst the exchange of legal bouncers between Zee TV and the BCCI over the telecast rights row, the Supreme Court today wondered whether cricket is still a gentleman's game.

This question was posed by a five-judge Constitution Bench headed by Mr Justice N Santosh Hegde, a keen follower of cricket.

Mr Justice Hegde had kept wickets for the Judges' team when it had played against Bar XI, and, as part of another Bench, adjudicated in the dispute between Ten Sports and Doordarshan over the telecast of India-Pakistan cricket series.

Appearing for Zee TV, Mr Harish Salve gave an example of the large-heartedness of earlier-day cricketers and described how West Indies bowler Charlie Griffith had donated blood for Indian player Nari Contractor after he was taken to hospital on being hit by a bouncer bowled by him. Mr Justice Hegde asked if the game was still played in the same spirit and pointed out to a recent incident in which West Indies captain Brian Lara was felled by a Shoaib Akhtar bouncer.

Saying that Akhtar had immediately apologised, he maintained that the game was still being played in the same spirit. The Bench remarked that the definition of "gentleman" had probably changed in the game!



EASTWARD BOUND

Vijay Singh to take part in BILT Skins golf meet in New Delhi

PS

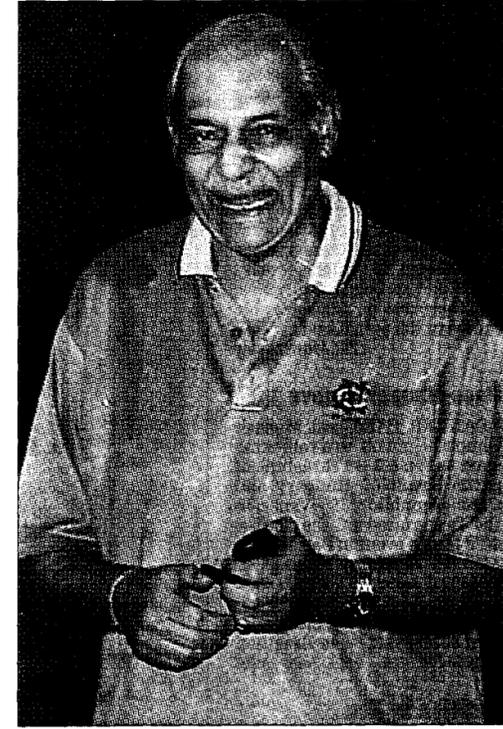
PULL OUT

SPORT

Kolkata, Wednesday, September 29, 2004

FACE-OFF

Jose Mourinho faces former charges in Champions League



SUBHANKAR CHAKRABORTY/HT

KING AND KING-MAKERS: Former board presidents I S Bindra (left) and Raj Singh Dungarpur (extreme right) seem content with preparations. Jagmohan Dalmiya and Kamal Morarka discuss strategy at a city hotel on Tuesday, one day before the board AGM.

Rival candidates no-ball politics

Retired judge to oversee election

HT Correspondent
Kolkata, September 28

THIS ONE'S about politics and sport and how despite statements to the contrary, they continue to be intertwined in India.

Take the BCCI president's elections for instance. One is a political lightweight, the other anything but. Both have more than substantial experience in mainstream politics but, ironically, Ranbir Singh Mahendra and Sharad Pawar insisted politics has nothing to do with the AGM which has by far overshadowed the Australian team's presence in India over the last few days.

Pawar, whose backers never tire of pointing out his ability to swing votes especially from units where a Congress government is in place, played down the political factor. "The Congress has nothing at stake in this election," he said. Founder president of the Nationalist Congress Party, the Maratha strongman added that his being a senior politician doesn't affect anything. "I have been associated with various sports bodies for 35 years. I never faced any problems in managing both."

His opposite number too stressed on the need to keep politics out of this. "I may be a

BCCI AGM procedure

■ One member from each of the 30 affiliated units can take part in the AGM. The representative is chosen by the respective units. He doesn't necessarily have to be the chief or an office bearer of his unit.

■ **TOTAL VOTES:** 31 (30 affiliated units, one president's vote). Plus, the president enjoys the right to exercise a casting vote in case there is a tie.

■ If there is an election, one member proposes a name, which has to be seconded by another member attending the meeting. The other

candidates are nominated following a similar procedure. There is no bar on the number of candidates.

■ A two-member committee is chosen from those present to preside over the election process. In case of two contestants, picking one from each camp is the norm.

■ Usually, it goes to secret ballots, where the members attending the meeting write Yes or No against the name of the candidates on a piece of paper. Each member is given a piece of this ballot paper.

THE VOTERS >>

North Zone: Punjab, Himachal, J&K, Haryana, Delhi, Services, Universities. **West Zone:** Mumbai, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Saurashtra, Baroda, CCI. **Central Zone:** MP, Vidarbha, Rajasthan, UP, Railways. **South Zone:** Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Kerala, Andhra, Hyderabad, Goa. **East Zone:** Bengal, Orissa, Bihar, Assam, Tripura, NCC.

Of course, Dalmiya has one vote as president.

politician, but I have been involved with cricket for nearly 30 years. In that sense, I am more of a sports administrator than a politician," said the son of former Haryana chief minister Bansi Lal.

I S Bindra, the brain behind Pawar's entry to an hitherto uncharted territory, felt

politicians and sport do mix, and mix well. "Mr Pawar has been associated with the Mumbai Olympic Association for over 30 years and has done a good job. There are a number of politicians in sport and it is not just an Indian phenomenon," he said.

For someone known as his *bete noire*,

Bindra said Jagmohan Dalmiya has done an outstanding job but followed that up with the need to gracefully walk into the sunset. "Mr B N Dutt was the best example of this and in my own humble way I have tried to emulate that," he said. His subsequent statement proved to be a clincher on why the PCA backed Pawar.

"To follow in Mr Dalmiya's footsteps, you need a giant, not a pygmy," Bindra said.

Kamal Morarka may think otherwise but both the PCA supremo and former board president Raj Singh Dungarpur felt there is nothing wrong with someone being nominated from outside the zone. "I was nominated from the West Zone (Baroda) when I became president. It's 1-1 now," Bindra said.

Lightweight candidate: Raj Singh

Dungarpur also explained why he thought Pawar was a more suitable candidate than Mahendra. "It is important that the post of the president is not diluted. It would be if Mahendra became president."

"The patron-in-chief will roll over him reducing him to a rubber-stamp. Mahendra is meek and that is why Dalmiya sought him out."

"I hope this election will show whether the BCCI wants a *lakshman rekha* defining where a president's role ends and that of a patron-in-chief's begins," he said.

HT Correspondent
Kolkata, September 28

IF ANY more drama was needed in the BCCI elections, the Madras High Court provided it.

Following a petition by a club, said to be enjoying the patronage of a former board president, affiliated to the Tamil Nadu Cricket Association, the Madras High Court appointed retired Supreme Court judge S Mohan to oversee the elections.

The direction was given by Justice S Ashok Kumar after the club told the court of its apprehension that elections may not be fair.

Dasgupta in the fray

Following a late-night meeting, Jagmohan Dalmiya's group decided to retain all their office-bearers except joint-secretary Ratnakar Shetty. The professor from Mumbai, it was learnt, will make way for Gautam

Dasgupta who will be the Cricket Association of Bengal's representative at the AGM.

A long-time Dalmiya loyalist and one of his most prominent election managers, Dasgupta was India's manager on the recent tour of Holland and England for the Champions Trophy.

So, if there are no elections, S K Nair will continue as general secretary and Jyoti Bajpai, Uttar Pradesh's representative at the two-day meeting, as treasurer. Names of the vice-presidents haven't yet been decided, it was learnt.

Sharad Pawar's backers aren't officially coming out with their list, saying they would first see which way the president's election goes.

But as reported earlier, former board secretary Niranjan Shah and M P Pandove stay frontrunners for the posts of general secretary and joint-secretary respectively.

Hectic activity on eve of BCCI elections

KOLKATA, SEPT. 28. Despite high drama and intense eleventh-hour efforts for a consensus today, the decks appeared to have been cleared for a battle between the Union Food and Agriculture Minister, Sharad Pawar, and the incumbent Jagmohan Dalmiya-backed Ranbir Singh Mahendra in the elections to the post of president of the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) to be held under the supervision of a court-appointed Commissioner here tomorrow.

Mr. Pawar, chief of the Maharashtra Cricket Association, who arrived here today, said: "I have come here to win. For me it is time to keep focussed. Whenever I take part in a contest, I do it to win. Today it is no different. Some people wanted me to contest and I am honouring their request," he added.

Mr. Pawar has been fielded by the Punjab Cricket Association as it is the north zone's turn to propose a candidate for the BCCI president, which would be vacated by Mr. Dalmiya at the end of his three-year term.

On the other hand, Mr. Mahendra of Haryana has already declared his intention to contest, saying he is the rightful claimant to the coveted post since he not only belongs to the north zone, but has been a cricket administrator for 30 years.

The two sides have to garner at least 16 votes to ensure victory out of a total of 31 votes.

Earlier, Mr. Dalmiya held a



PAWAR PLAY IN KOLKATA: With campaigning for the Maharashtra Assembly elections under way, Sharad Pawar takes time off to visit Kolkata for a contest which could see him emerge as India's cricket chief. The elections to the Board of Control for Cricket in India is slated for today. — PTI

closed-door meeting with Mr. Pawar, raising speculation of attempts to reach a consensus to avoid election. Prior to that, he also met Mr. Pawar's supporter I.S. Bindra, a former BCCI president.

Courtesy visit: Dalmiya

After an hour-long meeting, he said: "Please do not read

anything into it. It's a courtesy visit and the election is very much on."

The elections to the posts of president, secretary, vice-presidents (five), joint secretary and treasurer top the agenda on the

opening day of the two-day BCCI Annual General Meeting tomorrow, when the national selection committee would also be reconstituted. Mr. Dalmiya's rivals had declared that a person of Mr. Pawar's stature was required to deal with the telecast controversy.

Mr. Pawar said that "this [telecast controversy] should not go on for long and if it does it will affect Indian cricket, players and State associations." Mr. Mahendra, one of the vice-presidents of the board, is relying on Mr. Dalmiya's clout among a majority of the affiliate units of the Board. — PTI

Former judge to conduct polls

By Our Staff Reporter

CHENNAI, SEPT. 28. The Madras High Court today appointed Justice R. Mohan, retired Judge of the Supreme Court of India, to conduct the BCCI elections, to be held in Kolkata on September 29 and 30.

Justice S. Ashok Kumar passed the order, after hearing a petition, which alleged that the outgoing leadership was trying to bring certain persons to the post with an ulterior motive. The petitioner apprehended that the elections would not be free and fair if it was conducted under the supervision of the BCCI authorities.

CPI(M) backs Pawar:
Page 11

ভেঙে গেল পওয়ারের ডাকা শীর্ষ বৈঠক

ক্রিকেট-যুদ্ধে ফেভারিট দেখাচ্ছে ডালমিয়াকেই

ক্রিকেট-যুদ্ধে ফেভারিট দেখাচ্ছে ডালমিয়াকেই

গৌতম ভট্টাচার্য

খুনের হুমকি নিয়ে বিদায়ী বোর্ড প্রধানের বিরুদ্ধে চাক্ষুণ্যের অভিযোগ দায়ের, চেম্বার্স হাইকোর্ট থেকে বিশেষ কমিশনার বসানোর নির্দেশ নিয়ে আসা, ওমর আবদুল্লাহর পওয়ারের পক্ষে সশরীরে মঞ্চে অবতরণ, সিপিএম নেতৃত্বের প্রকাশ্যে শরদ পওয়ার গোস্টার পাশে দাঁড়িয়ে যাওয়া, প্রতিরক্ষামন্ত্রীর অন্য সুরের বক্তব্য।

নাটক, চমক আর মরিয়্যা চেষ্টিয় একেবারে অন্য মাত্রায় চলে গেল পওয়ার বনাম ডালমিয়া সংঘর্ষ। এর মাঝে দু'পক্ষের একটা শীর্ষ বৈঠকও হয়েছে প্রচুর তিক্ততা সহ ভেঙে যাওয়ার জন্য। মারকাটারি উত্তেজনা আর অবৈধ ট্যাকলের সংখ্যা গুনলে এই নির্বাচন ছাপিয়ে যেতে চলেছে অন্যাবধি সবক'টি ভোটরসকে।

দিনের অধিকাংশ অভিনব উদ্যোগই দেখা গেল পওয়ার গোস্টার পক্ষে থেকে। জগমোহন ডালমিয়ার বিরুদ্ধে অভিযোগ দায়ের, চেম্বার্স আদালতের নির্দেশ, অনিল বিশ্বাসকে দিয়ে সরকারি ভাবে মরাটি পক্ষকে সমর্থন জানানো—সবতেই বেশ হতচকিত লেগেছে বিদায়ী বোর্ড প্রেসিডেন্টের রক্ষণ। কিন্তু চমক আর ভোটের অঙ্ক যেহেতু সম্পূর্ণ আলাদা, বুধবারের ক্রিকেট নির্বাচন শুরু হওয়ার বারো ঘণ্টা আগে ডালমিয়া গোস্টার ফেভারিট হিসাবে শুরু করছে।

পওয়ারের সঙ্গে আলোচনা ভেঙে যাওয়ার পর বেশ রাত করে নিজের গোস্টার গ্রুপ মিটিংয়ে আসেন ডালমিয়া। সেখানে হাজির ছিলেন ত্রিশ সদস্য বিশিষ্ট বোর্ডের ২১ জন। ডালমিয়ার ভোট ধরলে সংখ্যাটা ২২। একত্রিশের ভিতর ২২ জনকে একই ঘরে জমায়েত দেখে অনুগামীদের কেউ কেউ বলতে থাকেন, কাল সকালে শরদ পওয়ারকে একটা পালানোর পথ দিতে হবে। আমাদেরই আবেদন জানাতে হবে, ক্রিকেটের স্বার্থে আপনি নাম প্রত্যাহার করে নিন।

সাধারণত নির্বাচনের আগের রাতে এই গ্রুপ মিটিংয়ে পারস্পরিক শক্তির প্যারেড করা হয়ে থাকে। এখানকার হাজিরাই ব্যালট বক্সের সবচেয়ে বড় সূচক। সেই সূচক অনুযায়ী পওয়ারের খুব আশা থাকার কথা নয়। ডালমিয়ারা যে প্যানেল করেছেন (প্রেসিডেন্ট: রণবীর, সচিব: নায়ার, কোষাধ্যক্ষ: জ্যোতি বাজপেয়ী, যুগ্ম সচিব: বাংলার গৌতম দাশগুপ্ত), তাঁদেরই স্বচ্ছন্দে নির্বাচিত হয়ে যাওয়া উচিত।

তবু ডালমিয়ার গোয়েন্দা দফতর এ বার আগাম অনেক খবরই দিতে পারেনি এবং পঞ্জাবের পাণ্ডব বা মুম্বইয়ের শেঠীর মতো বেশ কিছু বিশ্বাসভঙ্গের কাহিনি যেহেতু ঘটেছে, শেষ বল না হওয়া পর্যন্ত শরদ পওয়ার পরাজিত নন।

মাঠের বাইরে নানা পরিস্থিতির সৃষ্টি করে বিপক্ষ তাঁকে চাপে ফেলে দিচ্ছে অঙ্কে পিছনে থেকেও, এটা বেশ বুঝেছেন ডালমিয়া। আর তাই কোনও বুঁকি না নিয়ে কলকাতা হাইকোর্টের প্রাক্তন বিচারপতি ভগবতীপ্রসাদ বন্দ্যোপাধ্যায়কে রেখে দিচ্ছেন বুধবার নির্বাচনের সময়। আইনি কোনও জটিলতার সৃষ্টি হলে যাতে ঝড়িতি সমাধান পাওয়া যায়। ঠিক এ ভাবেই একবার আইনজীবী নলিনী চিদম্বরমকে নির্বাচনে কাজে লাগিয়েছিলেন তিনি।

ডালমিয়ার আরও একটা বড় আশা, নির্বাচনী সভায় সভাপতিত্ব করবেন তিনি নিজে। বছর দুই আগে চেম্বার্স নির্বাচনে সভাপতির রুলিং কাজে লাগিয়ে এরকমই চার জন ভোটারকে বের করে দিয়েছিলেন তৎকালীন বোর্ড

প্রেসিডেন্ট মুখাইয়া। ইতিহাস যদি একই পথে চলে আশ্চর্য হওয়ার কিছু নেই। যেমন আশ্চর্য হওয়ার নেই যদি হুইল চেয়ার নিয়ে কেউ বোর্ডের নির্বাচনে ভোট দিতে আসেন। মঙ্গলবার রাত পর্যন্ত ত্রিপুরা ক্রিকেট সংস্থার প্রেসিডেন্ট সমীরণ চক্রবর্তীকে আনার চেষ্টা হবে কি না, ভাবা হচ্ছিল। সমীরণ বাবু গুরুতর অসুস্থ, দিল্লির অ্যাপোলো হাসপাতালে চিকিৎসাধীন। কিন্তু এ দিন বামফ্রন্টের প্রকাশ্য সমর্থন পওয়ারের দিকে চলে যাওয়ার পর ত্রিপুরার ভোট নিয়ে সামান্য অনিশ্চয়তা শুরু হয়। তখন সমীরণবাবুই নাকি প্রস্তাব দেন, প্রয়োজনে তিনি রোগশয্যা থেকেই উঠে আসবেন ভোট দিতে।

পওয়ার গোস্টার কংগ্রেস এবং বাম—ক্ষমতাসীন মুখ্যমন্ত্রীদের দিয়ে স্থানীয় ক্রিকেট কর্তাদের প্রভাবিত করার প্রচুর চেষ্টা করেছেন। খুব সফল হয়েছেন এমন প্রমাণ নেই। বরং কয়েকটি ক্রিকেট সংস্থার সচিবেরা বললেন, মুখ্যমন্ত্রী তো বছরে এক দিন অনুরোধ করবেন। তা-ও অন্যকে দিয়ে। সারা বছর বিপদে আপদে,

সংস্থার জন্য নানা সুযোগ সুবিধা আদায়ে যাকে পাই, তাকে ছেড়ে দেব কেন? এদের আনুগত্যে যদি নাটকীয় পরিবর্তন না ঘটে, শরদ পওয়ার তার নির্বাচনী জীবনে কঠিনতম চ্যালেঞ্জের মুখোমুখি কলকাতাতেই হচ্ছেন।

তাঁর কাজ আরও কঠিন করে দেন প্রতিরক্ষামন্ত্রী প্রণব মুখোপাধ্যায়। যে হোটলে পওয়ার তার ঘুঁটি সাজাচ্ছেন, সেখানে বসে প্রণববাবু জানিয়ে দেন কংগ্রেস হাইকম্যান্ড বিশেষ কাউকে ভোট দেওয়ার নির্দেশ দেয়নি। শোনা যাচ্ছে, প্রণববাবুর কাছ থেকে সার্ভিসেসের ভোট আদায়ের প্রতিশ্রুতিও পেয়ে গিয়েছেন ডালমিয়া।

এ দিন ডালমিয়া-পওয়ার বৈঠকের সময় জোর গুজব ছড়িয়ে যায় মরাঠাধিপতি নাম প্রত্যাহার করে নিচ্ছেন। পরে জানা যায় খবরটা ভুল ছিল। জানা যায় পওয়ার আর ডালমিয়া বৈঠকে আগাগোড়া তিক্ততার বাতাবরণ হাজির ছিল। প্রথমে পওয়ার বলেন, আমাকে মেনে নিন, বাকি সবক'টা পোস্ট আপনাদের। ডালমিয়া জানান, তা সম্ভব নয়। পওয়ারের জন্য তাঁরা লড়তে রাজি দু'বছর পরে। এখন তাঁকে অপেক্ষা করতে হবে। আরও বলেন, আজ আপনি ভোটের জন্য অনুরোধ করতে এসেছেন। একটু আগে মুখাইয়া যখন চেম্বার্সের পঞ্চম ডিভিশনের ক্লাবকে দিয়ে মামলা করিয়ে বিচারক আনালেন, তখন আপনি কোথায় ছিলেন? কোথায় ছিলেন যখন চেম্বার্স বৈঠকে দ্রৌপদীর বস্ত্রহরণ করছিল দুঃশাসন? পরের পর প্রার্থীকে বের করে দিচ্ছিলেন মুখাইয়া আর আপনি দ্রোণাচার্য হয়ে বসেছিলেন।

দু'পক্ষে এমনই খটখটি চলছে যে বৈঠক কে ডেকেছিলেন—পওয়ার না ডালমিয়া, তা নিয়েও বিবাদ চলছে। পওয়ার শিবিরের পক্ষ থেকে রাজ সিংহ বলে গেলেন, “ডালমিয়াই গিয়েছে পওয়ারের সঙ্গে দেখা করতে।” ডালমিয়া যটাকে উড়িয়ে দিলেন এই বলে, “কিশোর রুংতার মাধ্যমে উনিই বসতে চেয়েছিলেন। আমার পাড়ায় এসে কেউ যদি দেখা করতে চায়, নিশ্চয়ই যাব।”

রাতে ওমর আবদুল্লাহর আবির্ভাব নাটক আরও জমিয়ে দেয়। ডালমিয়া অনুগামীরা জানতেন জম্মু-কাশ্মীর থেকে তিনি ভোট দিতে আসছেন। কিন্তু নির্বাচনের আগের রাতেই যে তিনি এসে পড়বেন, এতটা আন্দাজ করতে পারেননি কেউ। পওয়ার শিবির থেকে এমনও দাবি করা হচ্ছিল যে

এর পর সাতের পাতায়

ডালমিয়া হত্যার হুমকি দিচ্ছেন, নালিশ জি-কর্তার

স্টাফ রিপোর্টার: জগমোহন ডালমিয়ার বিরুদ্ধে মারাত্মক অভিযোগ এনে বোর্ড নির্বাচন আরও উত্তপ্ত করে তুলল জি টিভি। মুম্বইয়ের একটি থানায় গতকাল রাতে জি টিভি-র প্রধান সভায় চক্র অভিযোগ দায়ের করেন, ডালমিয়া তাঁকে ফোনে প্রাণনাশের হুমকি পর্যন্ত দিয়েছেন। আরও অভিযোগ করেছেন, টিভি স্বল্প নিয়ে বোর্ডের সঙ্গে যে মামলা চলছে, এটা তারই জের।

আর কয়েক ঘণ্টার মধ্যেই তিনি ভোটযুদ্ধে নামছেন শরদ পওয়ারের মতো হেভিওয়েট রাজনৈতিক নেতার সঙ্গে। তার আগে জি টিভি-র এই অভিযোগ শুনে ডালমিয়া যেন আকাশ থেকে পড়লেন। “আমি তো জীবনে একটা মশাও মারিনি। এত দিন বোর্ড প্রেসিডেন্ট থাকার এই মূল্য! আমি জানতাম না। আপনাদের কাছে শুনলাম, এটা যদি সত্যি হয়, এর চেয়ে খারাপ কিছু হতে পারে না,” বলেন তিনি। বোঝাই যাচ্ছে বোর্ড নির্বাচনের গায়ে-গায়ে এই আঘাত ডালমিয়া আশা করেননি।

এটাই একমাত্র নয় যদিও। বোর্ড নির্বাচন নিয়ে এমন অপ্রত্যাশিত আর নাটকীয় মোড় গোটানোর ধরনই। সি পি এম যেমন ঘোষণাই করে দিল তারা এই নির্বাচনে পওয়ারের পক্ষে। দলের পলিটব্যুরো সদস্য এবং পশ্চিমবঙ্গ রাজ্য কমিটির লম্পাদক অনিল বিশ্বাস খোলাখুলি বলে দেন, “আমরা শরদ পওয়ারের প্রতি সহানুভূতিশীল। আমরা চাই তিনি জিতুন।” মুখ্যমন্ত্রী বুদ্ধদেব ভট্টাচার্য অবশ্য বলেন, “আমি ভারতীয় ক্রিকেট নিয়ে উৎসাহী। সৌরভ কেমন খেলল তা নিয়ে মাথা ঘামাই। নির্বাচনে কে এলেন কে গেলেন তা নিয়ে মাথাব্যথা নেই।” অনিলবাবুর কাছে জানতে চাওয়া হয় পওয়ার তাঁর সঙ্গে যোগাযোগ করেছিলেন কি না। অনিলবাবু বলেন, “না, না। উনি আমার সঙ্গে কেন যোগাযোগ করবেন। তবে উনি দিল্লিতে আমাদের নেতাদের সঙ্গে কথা বলেছেন।”

সারা দিন ধরে তাঁর ঘুঁটি সাজাতে ব্যস্ত ডালমিয়া সি পি এম-এর এই সিদ্ধান্তের কথা জানতে না। শোনার পর শুধু বললেন, “তাই নাকি? প্রতিক্রিয়াটা না হয় এখন থাক!”

vv

Prasar Bharati will
telecast matches: BCCI

ESPN? 2/29/04

New Delhi: In another twist to the row over cricket rights, the cricket board on Monday informed the supreme court that the TV coverage of India's domestic series with Australia and South Africa in the coming months would be produced by it with live feed to Prasar Bharati for domestic viewers and international telecast rights to "somebody else".

"We will produce the TV coverage of the matches of the cricket series starting from October 6, including the India-South Africa series that follow immediately thereafter," K K Venugopal, counsel for the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) submitted before the court during the hearing of a petition filed by Zee TV challenging the board's decision to cancel the allotment of telecast rights in its favour.

"Prasar Bharati will do the live telecast for the domestic viewers and the international telecast rights will be given to 'somebody else'," Venugopal said when the

court asked him to respond to the Zee TV's allegation that the board had cancelled the contract in a malafide manner "to benefit a particular sports channel".

A bench comprising Justice N Santosh Hegde, Justice B P Singh and Justice S B Sin-



ha, meanwhile, issued notice to the Centre, BCCI, ESPN-Star and Price Water Cooper Ltd and posted it for hearing on Tuesday before a five-judge constitution bench taking note of the important questions of law raised by the petitioner. Board had on

September 21 cancelled the entire tender process in which Zee had emerged as the highest bidder for telecast of all cricket matches played in India between 2004-08.

Appearing for Zee TV, senior advocate Harish Salve contended that the Indian channel's emergence had ruffled many a feathers, as it was the monopoly of Singapore-based ESPN-Star.

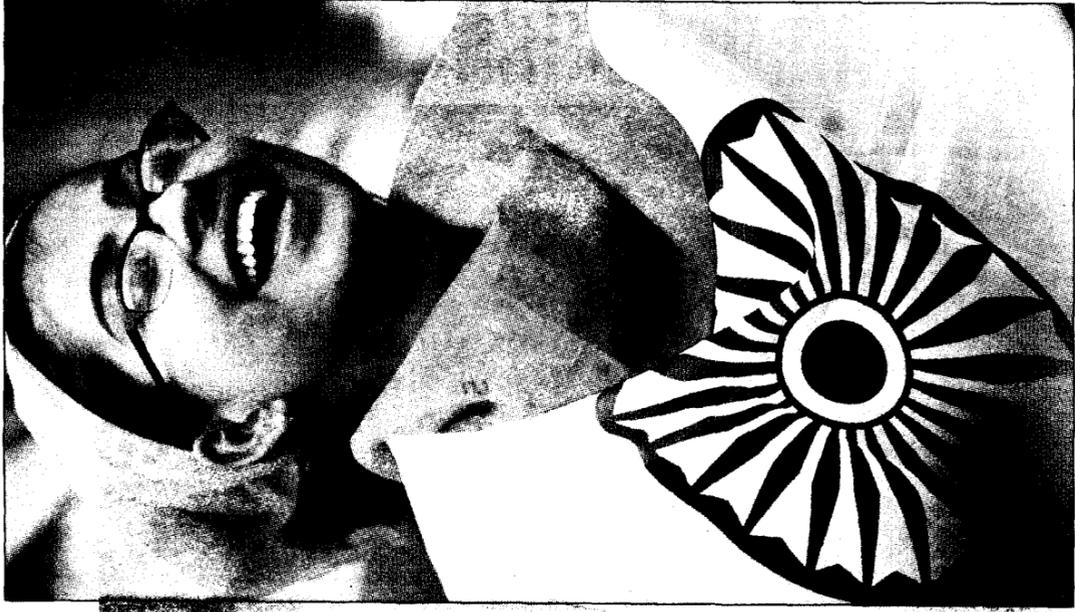
He said that, after the contract was awarded to Zee on the basis of a tender and subsequent bidding, in which the Indian channel emerged as the highest bidder, the board even accepted \$20 million as the first instalment of the \$308 m contract for the four-year period telecast rights.

Zee contended that the cancellation of the contract was not on the ground that it was in the interest of the game but "to benefit one particular sports channel".

Salve said that BCCI had filed an affidavit before the Bombay high court supporting Zee but later went on to cancel the contract. PTI



WINNING



PINDI SNAPSHOTS: The joy of Indian fans and cricketers knew no bounds when Sachin Tendulkar dismissed Danish Kaneria in Rawalpindi to seal a historic series win on Friday. Pakistan skipper Inzamam-ul Haq had no choice but to watch helplessly



That was a dream performance by the Indians, the fulfilment of every Indian captain's secret desire since India and Pakistan have been playing Test cricket. Congratulations.

Contributions have been from all: Rahul Dravid, Lakshminipathy Balaji, Parthiv Patel, Virender Sehwag... However, I have to add that the return of skipper Sourav Ganguly made a big difference in the Rawalpindi Test. The Multan victory was excellent, but look deep and you will notice how dependant we were on massive contributions from two: Sehwag and Sachin Tendulkar.

In Rawalpindi we saw immense teamwork, contributions from more or less everybody in the Indian team. And that is Sourav's contribution. Having noticed him in the last few years, in the World Cup, the home series, the Australia tour and in Pakistan, I have come to admire the way he plays mind games with the opposition.

That is an immense psychological edge for the Indian team, a confidence-booster.

especially for the youngsters. And words of encouragement from the captain always helps.

The way Sourav has been handling the team is ideal. Bishan Singh Bedi had a somewhat similar way, encouraging togetherness among players.

That is in stark contrast with the way Pakistan skipper Inzamam-ul Haq goes about his work. He is basically a laid-back kind of guy not one to express himself much on the field. His personality is such that his aggression shows only in his own batting, not while acting skipper. I did not see him spend time with his bowlers. When he should be coming around to mid-on, mid-off region to be able to run up to the bowler and offer support and encouragement, he let the bowlers be. A pat on the back helps, you see.

But, then, leadership is a quality that one is probably born with. And remember, in an India-Pakistan series the losing side stands to lose its skipper.

And the Shoalib Akhtar issue remains un-

clear. It is difficult to know what sort of an injury he suffered, but by the way he was batting Friday, and by the way he lifted Anil Kumble out of the ground, he looked pretty okay to me, physically.

There is a hint of intrigue here, and the fact remains that Pakistan needed him, out in the middle. He has gone out of the game earlier too. This does not have a good effect on other bowlers in the team, and India also managed to make the best of this lacuna.

You could see that in the Pakistanis' body language. As India started piling up the runs the Pakistanis seemed to be looking towards defeat, already down in their minds.

Indians won in spirit, individual plus the

team. Pakistanis played well merely in patches. India played one bad match and they paid for it, but even in the one-day-ers, their performance has been creditable.

Also, the difference between the bowlers of the two teams was pretty evident. Indian bowlers were able to swing the ball, while the Pakistanis, known for this art, were not. That was surprising. In a five-day match swing bowlers are as effective, if not more, than the fast bowlers. Remember Kapil Dev? He was absolutely lethal.

The Indians today aren't really worried about pace. It is the movement off the seam that has more effect. Rahul Dravid, of course, has always got a measure of this. Once he has dug in, it is easy.

Dravid, I have no hesitation in saying, is

the best player in the world today. I admire his will to perform. Not long ago I regarded Steve Waugh as the best. He was winning matches for the team. Dravid does this, contributing in the crucial games. He has excellent technique, can pace his game well and has proved successful in both varieties of the game. At the end of the day it is how you score that is important. That's the edge.

Lakshminipathy Balaji is one of those bowlers who will get wickets for you, or give away a lot of runs. He bowls up to the batsmen and was able to extract a lot of swing. He uses the away-movers to effect. He has been a good find.

A word about Parthiv Patel. It must have been a tough decision for Sourav, slotting him as an opener. Possibly Parthiv's knock in the second innings was the decider. Sourav wanted a grafter rather than a stroke-player. I was a bit surprised seeing him open. It's not easy for an wicketkeeper to open after having kept.

"Keeping is a thankless job. People normally see the mistakes. But it's part and

parcel of the game. This kid is coming up very nicely. We should encourage this youngster.

The wickets did play a role. I have always seen grass on Pakistani wickets when I played. This time, though, they forgot that if they could bowl so can we.

Grass is needed to bind the wicket in this climate, but the batting technique differs. The Pakistanis prefer the ball coming onto the bat rather than see a moving ball, while Indian batsmen tend to play straighter.

And in batting Pakistan only have Inzamam. Yusuf Youhana is around, but his technique remains suspect.

The Indian team needs a well-deserved rest now, it has been a tough, long tour, and I hope no tournament is suddenly scheduled immediately.

It would be nice to see more youngsters for the smaller tourneys, especially one-day-ers. A rotation policy won't really work for the emotional Indians, but an alternative can be worked out.

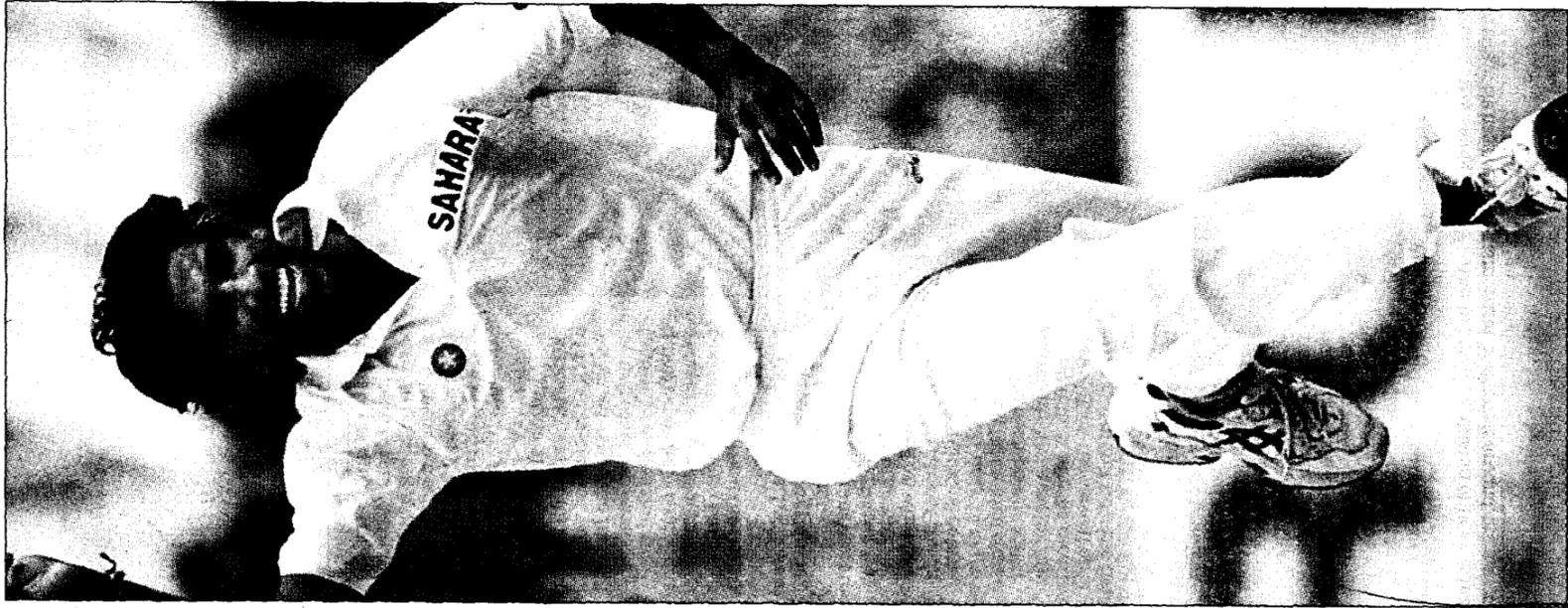
Sourav presence made a big difference

Guest Column

Mohinder Amarnath



Dreams finally comes true



BODY BLOW: Lakshmipathy Balaji after taking the key wicket of Inzamam-ul Haq on the fourth day. (PTI)



CLOSER TO 400: Anil Kumble, who took his tally to 397 with Friday's 4-wicket haul, signals the end of Yusuf Youhana

Rawalpindi: India realised a 50-year dream on Friday, humbling Pakistan in their own backyard for the first time ever in a Test series, the impact of which went far beyond the playing arena.

Sourav Ganguly and his men wrapped up the series 2-1 comprehensively defeating their listless opponents by an innings and 131 runs in the series-deciding third Test here shortly after lunch on the fourth day. It was a double blow to Pakistan who had lost the one-day series 2-3 to India last month.

The die was already cast when the Indian team took the field this morning although Pakistan's captain Inzamam-ul Haq, who has been in brilliant form with the bat, had promised a fightback. That never materialised and the home side, overnight 49 for two, perished for 245. India's mammoth 600 runs against Pakistan's first innings score of 224 in the end proved too much for the hosts.

Over-eager to win a historic series, the Indians dropped as many as seven catches on Friday but such was the dominance of their bowlers that they still emerged easy winners. After Lakshmipathy Balaji (3/108), Irfan Pathan and Ashish Nehra had knocked off the cream of the Pakistan batting line-up, Anil Kumble wrapped up the innings with four for 47 to take his tally to 15 in the series. His overall tally now stands at 397.

The hosts lost the wickets of Kamran Akmal (23), Yasir Hameed (20), Inzamam (9), Yusuf Youhana (48) and Mohammed Sami (0) during the extended pre-lunch session to allow the visitors to come within sniffing distance of victory.

The post-lunch session saw Indians take the remaining three wickets, including that of Shoaib Akhtar who made 28 off 14 balls. Watched by a paltry crowd, a forlorn Pakistan coach

Javed Miandad and a nail-biting Shoaib in the Pakistani dressing room, the Indians erupted in joy when last batsman Danish Kaneria was caught by Sourav off Sachin Tendulkar to end the home side's misery. In the true spirit of the series, the few hundred Pakistanis in the stands applauded the Indians as they hugged each other.

In the process, Sourav not only became the first captain to lead India to a series win on Pakistani soil but also the most successful skipper ever with 15 Test wins, erasing Mohammed Azharuddin's 14 victories.

On this 40-day tour of Pakistan, there were many heroes among the Indians who came and conquered their arch-rivals in both the one-day and the Test series. India toured Pakistan for the first time in 1955 and had to wait for this day for rewriting history.

Virender Sehwag, who bludgeoned his way to a record 309 in the first Test was declared Man of the Series, Rahul Dravid, who made a marathon 270 in this Test was predictably declared the

Man of the Match and veteran Anil Kumble won the 'golden ball' award for his 15 wickets in the series on tracks designed for fast bowlers.

The day did not start the way the Indians had expected as they saw several chances going amiss. Nightwatchman Akmal Kamal survived a chance when he edged between VVS Laxman at second slip and Sehwag at third slip in the very first over from Balaji and then had another stroke of luck when Yuvraj

floored a catch at short leg, Irfan Pathan being the unlucky bowler. Akmal's luck, however, ran out in the third over of the morning when Balaji knocked down his stumps with a beauty of a delivery.

Nehra struck in his very first ball by removing Hameed with Parthiv Patel latching on to a brilliant catch, diving full length to his left. The home team suffered a huge jolt a few minutes later when the in-form Inzamam perished cheaply with the hard working Balaji being the wicket-taker. Inzamam pushed forward but only succeeded in edging to

Patel who took a low catch. Youhana (48) and top-scorer Asim Kamal (60 not out) tried to stem the rot as the two batsmen launched a counter-attack by going for their strokes. But all that went in vain.

In many ways the real bowling heroes for India were the inexperienced medium-pacers — the popular Balaji and lion-hearted Pathan who tore into the Pakistani batting in the first Test in Multan and the decider here on wickets on which the much-vaunted Pakistani fast bowlers failed.

India in 4th spot
India's series win against Pakistan propelled them to fourth spot in the ICC Test rankings, the highest the team has ever been, adds a report from London. The Indians moved up to 102 points behind Australia (127), South Africa (112) and England (103).

In Calcutta, the BCCI announced a Rs 50-lakh bonus for the team. Terming it as a "historic moment", BCCI president Jagmohan Dalmiya said: "I join the rest of the country in congratulating the team."

(AGENCIES)

PAKISTAN		INDIA	
First innings 224		First innings 600	
PAKISTAN Second innings (overnight 49/2) Y. Hameed c Patel b Nehra 20 K. Akmal b Balaji 23 I. Haq c Patel b Balaji 9 Y. Youhana c & b Kumble 48 A. Kamal not out 60 Md Sami c David b Kumble 0 S. Akhtar c Mehra b Kumble 28 F. Akbar c Pathan b Kumble 12 D. Kaneria c Ganguly b Tendulkar 29 Extras (b-5, lb-1, nb-1, w-2) 245 Total (all out in 54 avs) 245 Fall of wickets: 3/64, 4/90, 5/94, 6/175, 7/179, 8/221, 9/244 Bowling: Pathan 15-6-35-1, Balaji 20-2-108-3, Kumble 8-2-47-4, Nehra 6-2-20-1, Ganguly 4-0-18-0, Tendulkar 1-0-1-1			

THEY ALSO SPOKE...

- **MoS Virender Sehwag:** It's great being part of a team which created history... The world was watching and, at the end, we won big. Obviously, aiming for more consistency.
- **MoM Rahul Dravid:** It's the biggest moment of my career... Yes, I was lucky (during the mammoth 270), but when luck comes your way, make the opposition pay.
- **Highest wicket-taker Anil Kumble:** Credit should go to our batsmen, who did a terrific job... The young fast bowlers too... They made it easy for me.
- **Senior-most pro Sachin Tendulkar:** It's been an outstanding team effort... People should focus on how well we played rather than how disappointing Pakistan's performance turned out to be... It's here that I began my career (1989-90) and, so, there's greater significance where I'm concerned.
- **Coach John Wright:** I'm very happy for the boys, particularly as the last series win overseas was over a decade ago... Hopefully, this is another step in the right direction.

— BY OUR SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NOT JUST CRICKET, BUSINESS AND POLITICS ARE WINNERS TOO

Pak Up In Style

Archana Shukla & Raja Awasthi
NEW DELHI 17 APRIL

JOSTLING, heckling, sloganeering -- indeed marketing can get tough at times. This, in fact, went beyond the Pak-up. Packaging, if you may say so, but one with a poor taste.

It was time to cash in on the 'historic' victory of Indian cricket team at the Indira Gandhi International Airport on Saturday evening. And in the rush, the real victory and victors seemed to have faded in the melee of commercialisation as the supporters and members of Samsung India, Sahara group and the BJP jostled one another to hog credit lines.

There was no cheering or sloganeering for Ganguly or Dravid or any of their team mates. The crowd present was there to celebrate their personal victories, it seemed. Indeed, a brand presence in such a euphoric moment would go a long way in ensuring top-of-mind recall, specially when each and every moment was being captured by cameras of not just Indian electronic media, but even to flash across global screens.

Samsung had got around 50 students (each one of them was reportedly paid Rs 500) from various colleges of Delhi for signing

the Jeet Lo Dil chorus. For BJP, it was yet another opportunity to harp on the feel-good factor. And the refrain: 'BJP zindabad' and 'feel-good ne kiya kamal'. And for Sahara, it was yet again a celebration of parivaarhood.

The preparations, in fact, started in right earnest more than two hours before the ETA at 7 pm. It was team Samsung that set the ball rolling. Soon, an 800-strong Sahara 'parivaar' team from various divisions of the group, transported in 15 buses, trooped in. Sporting T-shirts with 'Wah India Wah', you couldn't accuse them of being unfair, though. After all, it was all happening in the 'parivar'. The BJP supporters weren't far behind. They had around one dozen dholwallas with them who danced with gay abandon while shouting for Vajpayee's long life.

Not to be left behind, BCCI had sent its representative Rajeev Shukla, Rajya Sabha MP and board's chairman of the communication and coordination committee, to receive the players. Shukla told ET that the board had announced a bonus of Rs 50 lakh for the cricket team. "It is a historic moment for the nation. A victory over Pakistan on their own soil is beyond every success," Shukla said.



HEROES' WELCOME: ET lensman Jitendra Sharma captures Anil Kumble, Sourav Ganguly, VVS Laxman and Rahul Dravid as they arrive at Taj Palace Hotel in New Delhi on Saturday

Team wins hearts

► FROM PAGE 1

The team hotel (Holiday Inn) too wasn't found wanting in making a gesture: The staff lined up like a battalion and applauded the Dravids. Quite a few autograph books surfaced as well, but that's understandable in our region.

Team India did lose Sourav before the Test, but beginning with the toss, nothing went wrong: An excellent 160-run opening stand between Sehwag and Akash Chopra — who lends much value, the record-erasing 336-run partnership for the third wicket between Sehwag and Sachin Tendulkar, Anil Kumble's eight-wicket haul and Irfan Pathan's passionate effort in both innings.

And, of course, Yuvraj Singh's out-of-this-world run-out of Inzamam on the fourth afternoon.

Despite playing at home, though on a wicket which blunted the attack's potency, Pakistan got crushed under the weight of India's 675 for five declared. Sachin wasn't happy at being left unbeaten on 194, but Dravid's decision stands vindicated.

Incidentally, while Sourav and Kumble left for the airport (en route home) from the stadium itself, the wives of four players—Dravid, V.V.S. Laxman, Ajit Agarkar and Murali Kartik — are landing in Lahore tomorrow.



A jubilant fan in Ambala. (PTI)

Kumble returns on Saturday, by when wife Chetna would have given birth to their first child.

Sourav is going to rejoin once the specialists give the all-clear to his back. "I can't afford to miss all three Tests. I've got to be part of the history this fantastic team is making," he declared. If all goes well, he should play the final Test, in Rawalpindi from April 13.

"Be it for what happened on the field or what's expected on the home front, I'm feeling great," Kumble said.

Today, that sentiment finds an echo in over a billion Indians,

TAKE TWO: HISTORY IN MULTAN; NOW REPEAT IN LAHORE?

REUTERS



The Indian cricket team celebrates after winning the Multan Test against Pakistan by an innings and 52 runs on Thursday. India had never won a Test in Pakistan before.

RSS campaigning for Mamata: BJP

HT Correspondent
Kolkata, April 1

THE RSS is campaigning for the Trinamool Congress in Bengal, state BJP president Tathagata Ray said on Thursday, drawing furious denials from Mamata Banerjee's party which accused its poll ally of trying to queer its pitch.

Tathagata, who has been upset with Mamata for denying the Purulia and Bankura seats to the BJP, said the Trinamool

knew about the RSS campaign but hadn't objected to it.

West Bengal RSS spokesperson Sachin Singha Roy admitted that his organisation was taking part in the poll campaign. "We are not a political organisation, but we can't sit idle during the elections," he told reporters. "The BJP and the Trinamool Congress are backing issues dear to the RSS. We are telling people about this."

Roy said that 1,500 *shakhas* of the RSS, each with about 50

swayamsevakas, had begun a door-to-door campaign in the districts.

A worried Trinamool, anxious to hold on to its secular image and minority vote bank, reacted hurriedly. Party leader Pankaj Banerjee said he didn't know anything about RSS *pracharaks* working for the Trinamool. "We don't need RSS support," he said. "I don't know why Tathagata said such a thing."

Some Trinamool leaders suggested that Tathagata had

kicked up the controversy to damage Mamata's sizeable Muslim vote bank in Kolkata South. "He is getting back at us for denying the BJP the Purulia and Bankura seats," a leader said.

Tathagata, too, made no secret of his unhappiness with Mamata for denying him the two seats. "Had we fought from these two seats, we would have put up a good show. However, in the interest of coalition politics, we had to accept this," he said.

The CPI(M) and the Congress

lapped it all up, saying it was no surprise that the Trinamool, as an NDA partner, would seek RSS support. "The BJP and the NDA are run by the RSS; it's natural that the RSS will campaign for the Trinamool," CPI(M) state secretary Anil Biswas said. He suggested the Trinamool would soon lose its secular character.

Last year, Mamata had sparked a controversy by attending an RSS function in New Delhi and declaring the outfit a 'patriotic' organisation.



MULTAN MASTERS: Ecstatic members of the Indian cricket team celebrate their victory over Pakistan in the first Test at Multan on Thursday. — Photo: S. Subramaniam (Report and photograph on Page 23)

India completes historic win in Multan

MULTAN, APRIL 1. India's five-decade wait for a Test win on Pakistan soil ended in front of virtually empty stands today when the stand-in captain, Rahul Dravid, gleefully caught century-maker Yousuf Youhana at square-leg for the final wicket.

Dismissing Pakistan for 216 in the second innings, India clinched victory by an innings and 52 runs. The win prompted a beaming Dravid to term the triumph "historic and monumental."

Pakistan had long proved to be an insurmountable barrier for Indian

teams since Vinoo Mankad first led a team to that country in 1954. — AP

Greetings and celebrations

PTI reports from New Delhi:

The nation erupted in joy and the Prime Minister, Atal Bihari Vajpayee, sent a congratulatory message to the winning team. Cricket fans were seen bursting crackers in several parts of the country and distributing sweets to celebrate the maiden triumph.

In Kolkata, the hometown of Sourav Ganguly, fans and cricket lovers,

waiting patiently since yesterday for the fall of the last Pakistan wicket, waved the tricolour and raised slogans. They wore masks of Indian cricketers and moved in processions from the neighbourhood of the Ganguly family on Biren Roy Road in Behala to central and northern parts.

There was, however, concern over the condition of the skipper, who suffered a lower back injury during the fifth and final one-day international match in Lahore.

In the Capital, 'Man of the Match' Virender Sehwag's home at Najaf-

garh was thronged by neighbours who congratulated the family members on the success of the team as well the cricketer's historic triple century in the match.

"It's a great news for us. India's win is special and more so since Vee-ru notched a triple century, which is not an easy thing to do," his mother Krishna said.

In Vadodara, Gujarat, traffic came to a halt at several parts as people thronged the streets, burst crackers and waved the tricolour after local boy Irfan Pathan sent back the Pa-

kistan vice-captain Yousuf Youhana.

The one-day specialist, Mohammed Kaif's home town of Allahabad in Uttar Pradesh was no exception as the residents celebrated the historic win.

Congratulatory messages poured in from every corner of the country with cricket administrators, former players and common men all choosing the occasion to greet the team on the historic win.

"I congratulate Rahul Dravid and all the players for their fabulous show and all-round performance,"

the Union Sports Minister, Vikram Verma, said. "Heartiest congratulations on creating history in Pakistan. You have achieved what no Indian cricket team has achieved in the past 50 years. We are proud of you," said Mr. Verma's deputy, Vijay Goel. "India wants the Men in Blue to keep it up," Mr. Goel said.

The Lok Sabha Speaker, Manohar Joshi, said: "The team won the hearts of millions of people of the subcontinent and has made them really proud."

Editorial on Page 10

Vajpayee tells Pak to look beyond cricket

Press Trust of India
Baharaich (UP), March 28

PRIME MINISTER Atal Bihari Vajpayee on Sunday suggested that India and Pakistan move beyond the current cricket diplomacy to give permanence to the thaw in bilateral relations.

"*Jahan pahle bomb se khela ja raha tha wahan ab cricket match khel rahen hain* (earlier, we used to play with bombs but now we are playing cricket)," Vajpayee told an election rally here, adding South Asia was never so peaceful before. But cricket could not be played 365 days, he said in an obvious reference to the ongoing Indo-Pak series and reminded "we are still fighting terrorism."

Blaming the Congress for problems plaguing the country, he said his government had made efforts to solve them. Listing the achievements of his government, Vajpayee said the growth rate had touched 8 per cent, foreign exchange reserves were over billions of



TRILOCHAN SINGH/HT

Former Uttar Pradesh CM Kalyan Singh welcomes Prime Minister A.B. Vajpayee at the Lucknow Airport on Sunday.

dollars and there was plenty of foodgrains.

"We want another mandate for taking the country towards full development," he said.

Referring to the proposed inter-linking of rivers, Vaj-

payee said the project was conceived during the Congress rule but it chose to keep it on the backburner. "We have taken initiative on the project to tide over problems of drought and floods," he said.

But Sena has other ideas

HT Correspondent
Mumbai, March 28

SHIV SENA chief Bal Thackeray on Sunday said he would "allow" Pakistani cricketers on Indian soil only under two conditions — that all Indian cricketers currently in Pakistan return home safely and that Pakistani activities in Kargil are stopped immediately.

Addressing a thinly attended rally to mark the launch of the Shiv Sena-BJP joint election campaign at the Azad Maidan here, Thackeray said he had kept these conditions before a delegation of Muslim individuals who had met him recently.

Thackeray has always been against Indo-Pak cricket matches and has effectively prevented such games in Mumbai by getting either the pitch dug up through Shiv Sainiks or by intimidating the cricket board.

He was also against Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee's decision to allow the Indian team to go to Pakistan and

turned down an invitation from the Pakistani government to watch the first match in Karachi.

Thackeray's speech was rather lukewarm and devoid of any fresh issues. He, however, seemed extremely worried about Sharad Pawar's campaign against Sena-BJP leaders on the Telgi issue. Pawar has been producing documents, including photographs and other material, in support of his allegations that the entire stamp scam occurred during the Sena-BJP regime in Maharashtra and that the leaders of the saffron alliance had skeletons in their cupboard on this issue.

While giving a clean chit to Sena-BJP ministers, in this regard, Thackeray made Pawar the target of his attack by rubbing in Pawar's flip-flop on the issue of Sonia Gandhi's foreign origins.

The Sena-BJP rally was addressed among others by the BJP's Pramod Mahajan, Lok Sabha Speaker Manohar Joshi and the six candidates of the saffron alliance from Mumbai.

Politics puts one-dayers first

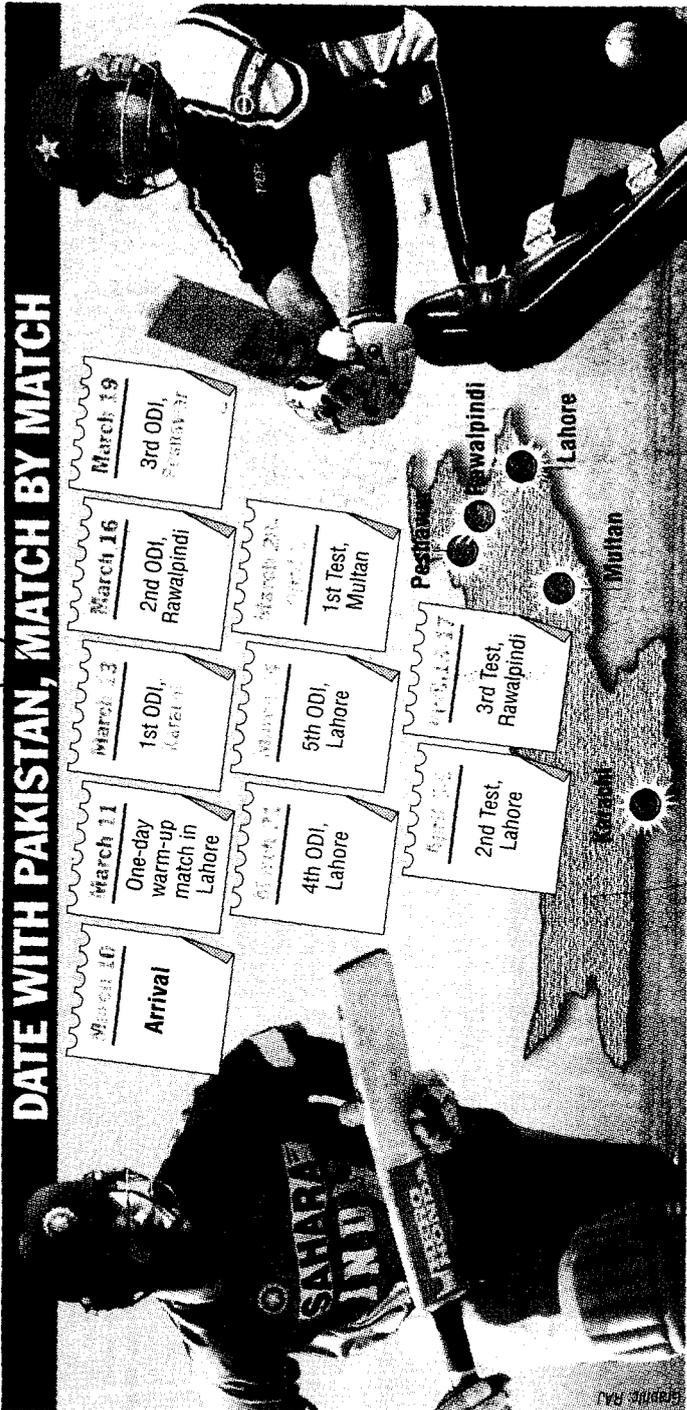
LOKENDRA PRATAPSAHI

Lahore, Feb. 21: With the Board of Control for Cricket in India citing "compelling political reasons", the Pakistan Cricket Board agreed to start Team India's first full tour in over 14 years with the five ODIs. The three Tests will follow.

The PCB, though, insisted that BCCI president Jagmohan Dalmiya go public with the political bit, instead of announcing that cricket considerations influenced this rather dramatic change. The PCB, it may be recalled, had initially opposed beginning with the ODIs as it feared a "dilution" of interest in the Test series.

However, with the elections (to the Lok Sabha and in some states) not far away, the BCCI came under pressure to "ensure" that the tour—specifically the ODIs—didn't affect either the campaigning or even the elections proper, if held by April 17. Clearly, politicians are worried by the drawing power of ODIs.

The BCCI, one understands, conveyed this to the PCB yesterday and an agreement was reached this afternoon, some hours before the itinerary was simultaneously released by Dal-



gets under way on March 13. In recent times, barring Bangladesh, other countries have refused to play there (and in Peshawar).

While Rawalpindi is going to host one ODI, Lahore has got two. In any case, Rawalpindi and this charming metro are staging a Test each, with Multan getting the other. Actually, the Test series will begin in Multan, on March 28.

Somewhat predictably, Rameez had to tackle a barrage of questions on Karachi and Peshawar during his media briefing at the Gaddafi. However, having cut his teeth against some of the fastest quicks in the eighties, he didn't duck and did an excellent job.

"The positive thing is that both venues are going to host the Indians.... For the PCB, it's a good beginning and a platform will be ready when other teams come.... People have a perception about security being a problem.... That's going to gradually go away," he pointed out.

Rameez, though, indicated the Revival Series wouldn't have taken off had India refused to play at all in Karachi and Peshawar. "We just couldn't have accepted that," is how he put it.

■ Players can take family on tour, See Sport

Test venues in discussions with the BCCI. Both centres, though, will host ODIs. Following an Indian request, the PCB changed the Karachi game to a day affair. The ODI in Peshawar, too, is going to be a day game.

Dalmya, by the way, will be present at the National Stadium in Karachi when the ODI series

be versus Pakistan A.

Significantly, in a first for Indian sport, three IPS officers will accompany the team as security coordinators. They are going to be hand-picked by the Union home ministry.

As was reported today by **The Telegraph**, the PCB didn't offer Karachi and Peshawar as

near, the interference from cricket should be minimum."

Sourav Ganguly and Co. will arrive here on March 10—by a chartered flight as there is no regular service that day—and stay till April 18, a day after the Test series ends in Rawalpindi.

The tour opener on March 11, at the Gaddafi, is possibly going to

miya (in Calcutta) and PCB chief executive Rameez Raja (at the Gaddafi).

Dalmya, in fact, specifically said: "Keeping in mind the importance of elections, the ODIs are going to be completed first.... Every politician, irrespective of affiliation, is interested in the game.... As the elections get

General fires his shots like Sachin

Sports by Anir. 7-1 1873



Pervez Musharraf shakes hands with Sachin Tendulkar in Islamabad on Wednesday. (AP) ■ See Sport

INDRANIL MAJUMDAR

Islamabad, March 17: Colin Powell might have missed the match by a couple of days, but if the US secretary of state had arrived around six hours earlier, he would have witnessed cricket diplomacy from short range.

President Pervez Musharraf laid on his charm thick when he spent with Sourav Ganguly and his team nearly an hour on the fifth floor of his official residence in the Sadar area at noon, picking out individual players for informed praise and friendly banter.

"He was just amazing. He is dynamic and seemed well-versed in every bit of information on this series," Sourav told **The Telegraph**.

The Indian and Pakistani teams were received in the Aiwan-i-Sadar banquet hall, where visiting heads of state and government are hosted, in the presidential mansion.

At the Rawalpindi Stadium yesterday, the general had asked for Sachin to be identified to him when Pakistan was batting. Today, he sought the master out for praise. "He congratulated Sachin on his 37th hundred and for completing 13,000 runs in one-day cricket," manager Ranakar Shetty said.

On behalf of the team, Shetty presented the President with an autographed bat and a silver salver.

Musharraf had left the stadium at the break and regretted having missed Sachin's glorious knock.

"You almost won the match for India," he told Sachin, appearing familiar with some of his previous innings as well.

"The President also spoke highly of (Laxmipathy) Balaji's efforts towards the close," Shetty added.

The Indians were treated to high tea later. "He mingled with the players freely," Sourav said.

"Whatever may be the result, when the long series finally ends, it would have helped the two countries to forge more friendly ties and brought people of the two countries closer," Musharraf said.

Cricket has grabbed the attention of American Powell, too, as he travels in South Asia, if not for the game itself, then for its diplomatic value at least.

"Let's hope that the spirit of cricket that we have seen the last few days affects the whole comprehensive dialogue between the two sides," he said in an interview.

Powell and Musharraf meet tomorrow.

So young!

Little Parthiv Patel evokes the obvious question about age. Sourav Ganguly replies he's only 18 but already unmanageable.

"Why should you manage him? You should let the young man manage himself," says Musharraf



What a catch!



Musharraf shows he's more than a casual cricket watcher when he compliments Mohammad Kaif on his spectacular diving catch in Karachi that was a turning point in the match

Weighty laugh

Talking of dives, Musharraf turns to the 200-pound Inzamam-ul Haq to say how he enjoyed the Pakistan captain's desperate attempt to stop the ball in Rawalpindi. Inzy's game; he joins in the laughter



SC keeps series live and kicking on TV

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: Anxious to see that cricket lovers across the country got to watch the Indo-Pak cricket series, the Supreme Court on Wednesday asked the Dubai-based Ten Sports channel to feed live coverage of the series to Doordarshan after the latter deposits Rs 50 crore in the court.

During two hours of hearing, in which attorney-general Soli J Sorabjee and Ten Sports counsel Kapil Sibal were short of crying "howzat", the court directed DD to show the Ten Sports feed half-an-hour before the commencement of the match, during the match and 30 minutes after the end of the match.

A bench of Chief Justice V N Khare, and Justices N Santosh Hegde and S H Kapadia also directed that during the period of telecast, DD would not have any right to insert its advertisements.

It, however, overruled Ten Sports' stand that it "cannot have any settlement with DD" on the issue of sharing its exclusive right to telecast the matches from Pakistan.

When Sibal said that Ten Sports bought the telecast rights in 2002 and DD did not even bid, Sorabjee said there was no question of bidding for the rights then as the armies of the two countries were facing each other.

On Ten Sports' allegation that DD had violated its earlier order, the judges issued notice to the national channel as to why it had shown its own programme during the lunch break aided with its advertisement content.

The role of the Indian cricket control board also came under severe indictment as the bench said this imbroglio on the telecast would not have arisen if the board had secured the rights of the Indian citizen while fixing the fixture for the "historic" series.

"Our cricket board should have ensured that DD got the telecast rights for India. They should have negotiated this aspect with the Pakistan Cricket Board," it said.

Game Show

ARGUMENTS

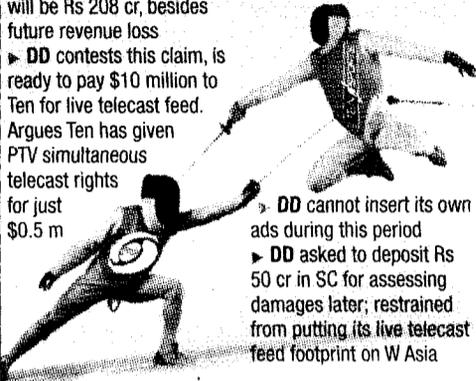
► **Ten Sports** refuses settlement with DD, saying distribution losses alone will be Rs 208 cr, besides future revenue loss

► **DD** contests this claim, is ready to pay \$10 million to Ten for live telecast feed.

Argues Ten has given PTV simultaneous telecast rights for just \$0.5 m

VERDICT

► **Ten Sports** to provide live telecast feed to DD. Final hearing on April 15



► **DD** cannot insert its own ads during this period
 ► **DD** asked to deposit Rs 50 cr in SC for assessing damages later; restrained from putting its live telecast feed footprint on W Asia

Out-of-court settlement still possible, says Ten

New Delhi: Hours after the supreme court verdict on the Ten Sports tangle with Prasar Bharti, the Dubai-based sports channel said it would comply with the order and provide signals for the entire Indo-Pak cricket series to DD. Addressing a press conference, Lalit Modi, president, Modi Enterprises, reiterated, "The option of an out-of-court settlement with DD is still open. If and when Prasar Bharti comes up with a proposal, we are willing to examine it." Modi also indicated that the possibility of Ten Sports re-negotiating with advertisers was still open. Ten Sports' distribution arm Modi Entertainment has said its "initial damages" on account of cable distribution are Rs 208 crore. Ten Sports is working on its final damages which will be made available to the court at the next hearing. **TNN**

The bigger picture

By Siddharth Varadarajan/TNN

New Delhi: The uncertainty over the telecast of the ongoing Indo-Pak cricket series would never have come into the picture had there been an Indian law reconciling market principles—which govern the sale of TV rights—with the right of the public to see "events of national interest" free of cost.

India is one of the few countries with a vibrant pay-TV sector not to have a regulatory framework. Countries like Britain, Ireland, Denmark, Italy, Germany and South Africa all have broadcast laws covering the telecast of national sporting (or cultural) events. TOI brings you a detailed country-by-country picture of how "national interest" is dealt with in broadcast laws. **P 13**



Ganguly lays mind field for Shoaib

By Dinesh Chopra/TNN

Rawalpindi: To win, you play not only on the field, but off it too, for cricket's not only a battle of the bat and ball but also a war of nerves. And Sourav Ganguly seems to be doing just that, if his recent actions are any indication.

His jibe at Shoaib Akhtar's dodgy action on Tuesday is being seen as nothing but an attempt to get under the Pakistani speedster's skin and thereby dent the Pakistan team's confidence. Sources told TNN that the plan was discussed at a team meeting before Sourav went public. Asked about his opinion of the speedster's bowling action at the post-match press conference at the Pindi Cricket Ground, Sourav remarked, "We've all watched it on TV and we all know how it looks like. I don't need to say anything else."

A member of the team said: "We thought if we could dent Shoaib's confidence, the entire Pakistan team could be deflated. So, there is a conscious effort to keep reminding him of his suspect action on and off the field."

"These are all mind games," said chief selector Wasim Bari. "Ganguly is renowned for these tactics. Shoaib has played all over the world and no one has questioned his action."

Gen gets close look at WMDs



Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf meets Sachin Tendulkar in Islamabad on Wednesday

By Dinesh Chopra/TNN

Sachin's the best: Inzy

Islamabad: It was time for some more kebabs. But this time they were being served at the Awan-e-Sadar in the President's House. The occasion was special as the Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf hosted a reception for the Indian and Pakistani teams on Wednesday.

Just five minutes drive from Hotel Marriott, where the teams are put up, the President's House and the adjoining areas were sealed with the Blue Book security, reserved for the President and the PM in Pakistan.

Team manager Ratnakar Shetty introduced the members of the Indian contingent to the president. This was followed by Pakistani team manager Haroon Rashid doing the same.

The teams were received by the president's protocol officers and were then led to the main hall where he appeared after ten minutes attired in his army uniform. He specially picked up Shoaib Akhtar and Sachin Tendulkar, the two stars of the Indian and the Pakistani teams respectively calling them "weapons of mass destruction".

Rawalpindi: "He is the best batsman in the world today," said Pak captain Inzamam-ul-Haq praising Sachin Tendulkar, who scored a brilliant 141 in the second one-day international on Tuesday. "Sachin thoroughly deserves the honour of being the first to score 13,000 runs in ODIs. The amount of hard work he's put in for this landmark is amazing. It takes a long time to get there."

Sachin said his century would have carried greater value if his team had won. "It wasn't an easy track to bat chasing a big total under lights," he said. "The ball stopped and came on slow. You had to be selective in your shots. Their bowlers did pretty well and pushed the ball through and made it difficult for us."

Sachin said that he was unaware that he had reached 13,000 till after he was dismissed in the 39th over. "I'm feeling very good being back in Pakistan. The hospitality is great and I'm enjoying it," he said. **Reuters**

Ten Sports relents after hectic parleys

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, MARCH 16. After threatening to black out today's India-Pakistan cricket match in Rawalpindi on its own platform and Doordarshan, and keeping Prasara Bharati guessing all night, Ten Sports bigwigs made a turnaround this morning and decided to abide by the Supreme Court orders to 'simulcast' the fixture on the national network to "continue to do business in the country."

While the future of its business in India made Ten Sports decide in favour of cutting its losses by way of the subscription base, the Dubai-based owner of the satellite channel, Abdulrahman Bukhatir, announced the company's decision to the media in the morning after hectic parleys with his lawyers and the intervention of the Union Minister for Law, Arun Jaitley.

Concerned at the way "our rights investments have been damaged over the recent past," Mr. Bukhatir — who flew in here on Monday after the Government used its discretionary powers and issued him a 'visa-

on-arrival' to facilitate his entry into the country on short notice — said: "Ten Sports has been unilaterally compelled to share its exclusive rights with third parties without any pre-determined agreements or adequate compensation."

Hopeful that "the Supreme Court and the Government of India will act fairly in ensuring proper compensation for rights Ten Sports has had to share," Mr. Bukhatir said the developments in India vis-à-vis the Indo-Pakistan series "are a fundamental blow to the system

of intellectual property rights which has developed internationally."

With the Government determined to ensure that the matches are made available on Doordarshan at any cost, its mediators apparently minced no words in telling the Ten Sports managers that they would have to show today's fixture if they wanted to do business in India which, after all, is the biggest market in the region; — a condition no satellite channel can afford to ignore. As one official put it, "it would have

been catastrophic for Ten Sports not to comply since the Supreme Court's order was only for the Rawalpindi match." All day there was talk of a possible out-of-court settlement between Prasara Bharati and Ten Sports, but no headway had apparently been made in this direction till late evening as both parties prepared for another day in court on Wednesday. While the Government is ready to offer a "reasonable amount" of money to Ten Sports for telecast rights to the remaining matches or have a revenue sharing arrangement

with the Dubai-based company — which has exclusive radio and television rights of the series — a major concern of the satellite channel is theft of its signals.

Though Ten Sports had expressed concerns about their signals being available to anyone freely since the Doordarshan used PANAM-SAT 10 to telecast the match, the public broadcaster apparently used the same satellite with a global footprint as, according to officials, it was "technically not possible to switch over to INSAT-2E" at short notice. Even on INSAT-2E, the signals will not be confined to India's borders as the satellite has a footprint extending over the South Asian region. To prevent such a theft, Ten Sports is sticking to its original offer of providing signals to areas with low cable penetration provided they do not fall along the borders.

But Doordarshan maintained that the logistics of carrying out such an exercise itself would take a while — "by when the series will be over" — and is hoping to cut a deal that would allow the national broadcaster telecast rights.

Editorial on Page 10

Centre mulling over ordinance

By Our Legal Correspondent

NEW DELHI, MARCH 16. The Centre is considering promulgation of an Ordinance to ensure the telecast of the cricket matches between India and Pakistan in the event of the Dubai-based television channel, Ten Sports, deciding not to give live signals to Doordarshan for telecasting the matches. Highly-placed sources told *The Hindu* that the Government was watching the situation since the matter was now pending in the Supreme Court.

On Monday, senior counsel Kapil Sibal, appearing for Ten Sports, told the court that he

could not give an undertaking that the telecast would be guaranteed if the Government insisted on telecasting on Ten Sports and Doordarshan at the same time. The telecast rights were owned by Taj TV Ltd., Dubai, and his client, Taj Television India (Pvt.) Ltd., being a subsidiary, did not have the telecast rights, Mr. Sibal had said. However, Ten Sports today agreed for the telecast and the match was shown live on Doordarshan with the Ten Sports logo and advertisements. Sources said that if there was no agreement on the issue during the resumed hearing of the case tomorrow, the Government would be left with no alternative but to promulgate an ordinance.

Core issue is cricket, not Kashmir

Jinnah's city wins argument

Avirook Sen
Karachi, March 14

THERE MUST be something pretty compelling happening for a whole city — a melting pot of over 14 million people — to change its behaviour pattern. But Karachi has held its (sometimes corrosive) passion firmly in a bladder in its underbelly for 48 hours now. They like all the harmless tripe about peace and brotherhood here, but it's clear what they like even more: to watch a cricket match peacefully.

The last time India played in Karachi in 1997, the match was marred by stone-throwing as India chased their target. Pakistan were close to forfeiting it before the crowd was brought under control. India won, but (after all, this is a season for cliches) cricket didn't. Now, India has won again and it is well past midnight Saturday but the eating joints and hangouts at Port Basin are open. Without exception, every conversation goes: Indian? *Mubarak ho*.

The cabbies tell you that and waiters who stick menus that horrify vegetarians tell you that. The thing is, people who have no dollars to extract out



GUNS 'N' ROSES: Sourav Ganguly arrives at his Islamabad hotel surrounded by a sea of security.

of you tell you that as well.

But let's not be foolish. This has got to be temporary. A newly acquired friend says, "I doubt if the bladder would hold up over five days." Well, who knows, but for now Karachi is basking in the compliments it's getting. No less a person than Jagmohan Dalmyia promised a five-day Test match soon. It's also getting an arm-ache slap-

ping its own back: Sind Governor Ishratul Ibad Khan said the crowd negated "the wrong perception being propagated about Karachi in the Western media".

Truth is, there are two Karachis. And only one — God knows how — was let into National Stadium on Saturday. The other can be found in various places around town — even on Saturday, Karachi's 'good day'.

It's nearly two in the morning but there's a lot of noise at the beachfront. On Sea View, there are bunches of young men — only men — their bikes revving with no particular purpose. It's here, down Karachi's smoothest roads, that they race cars, and play games of 'chicken' (stupid dare games which could prove fatal). They do all this because

there's nothing else to do, not even movies to watch.

So what does that leave? Cricket, of course. Saturday's game wasn't just about India and Pakistan. It was about Jinnah's city, relegated to the fringes of the cricketing map, trying to make a case for itself. Its arguments were restrained — and compelling.

See also HT Sport

THE DAY AFTER

■ Not a fine feeling

Sourav and Inzamam fined 20 per cent of their match fees for slow over-rates in the Karachi tie. Other players fined up to 10 per cent of their earnings

■ Party with Prez

Indian team invited by Musharraf to a tea party on March 17

■ Telecast war

Ten Sports alleges DD deleted its logo and ads during match telecast and that DD signal was stolen by several countries as it was not encrypted

■ Media mood

Pakistani media praises Sourav's boys. 'They don't panic even when pushed to the wall,' says a report

Pervez spoils spirit of Karachi camaraderie

Vinod Sharma
New Delhi, March 14

JUST WHEN ordinary Indians and Pakistanis were slapping each other's backs over the peaceful conduct of the Karachi ODI, President Pervez Musharraf soured the newfound spirit of bonhomie. He told a largely Indian audience in Delhi via a satellite address that New Delhi, in marked change of stand, had accepted in the joint statement issued in Islamabad after the January meeting between Vajpayee and Musharraf that Kashmir was the "central" or "core" issue between the two countries and that Islamabad was a party to the dispute.

While the general's observation caused "as much mirth as concern" among Pakistan watchers in Delhi, the ministry of external affairs (MEA) recalled in a carefully worded rejoinder that the January 6 joint press statement in Islamabad had not referred to any so-called central or core issue. The understanding was to "address all bilateral issues, including J&K".

The MEA warned Islamabad that any unilateral interpretation of the press statement would be counter-productive in building trust or taking the peace process



'Don't bash us, Ash'

PRESIDENT PERVEZ Musharraf has made a personal appeal to Aishwarya Rai, asking her not to act in films that show Pakistan in poor light. "I would request (you) not to act in such films because they will be most unrealistic," Musharraf told the actress during a live satellite programme where they could see each other.

See Page 3

forward. Engaging in public rhetoric (displayed by Musharraf) was contrary to the understanding and restraints observed by the two sides since January, it said.

Cheers for cricket, eye on polls

One Rahul roots for another

LOKENDRA PRATAP SAHI

Karachi, March 13: For a while this morning, the Rahul Dravids were upstaged by siblings Rahul Gandhi and Priyanka. The latter's husband, Robert Vadra, was around too and the trio's every movement at the National Stadium evoked attention worthy of the hottest stars in Bollywood and Lollywood.

Of course, also very visible were about a dozen SPG personnel, who sanitised the areas visited by the lovely Priyanka and Co. Stop No. 1 was Pakistan board chairman Shaharyar Khan's box and, then, came a brief contact with the *janata*. Later, they sat in the press gallery for well over an hour.

At the break, it was back to the chairman's hospitality.

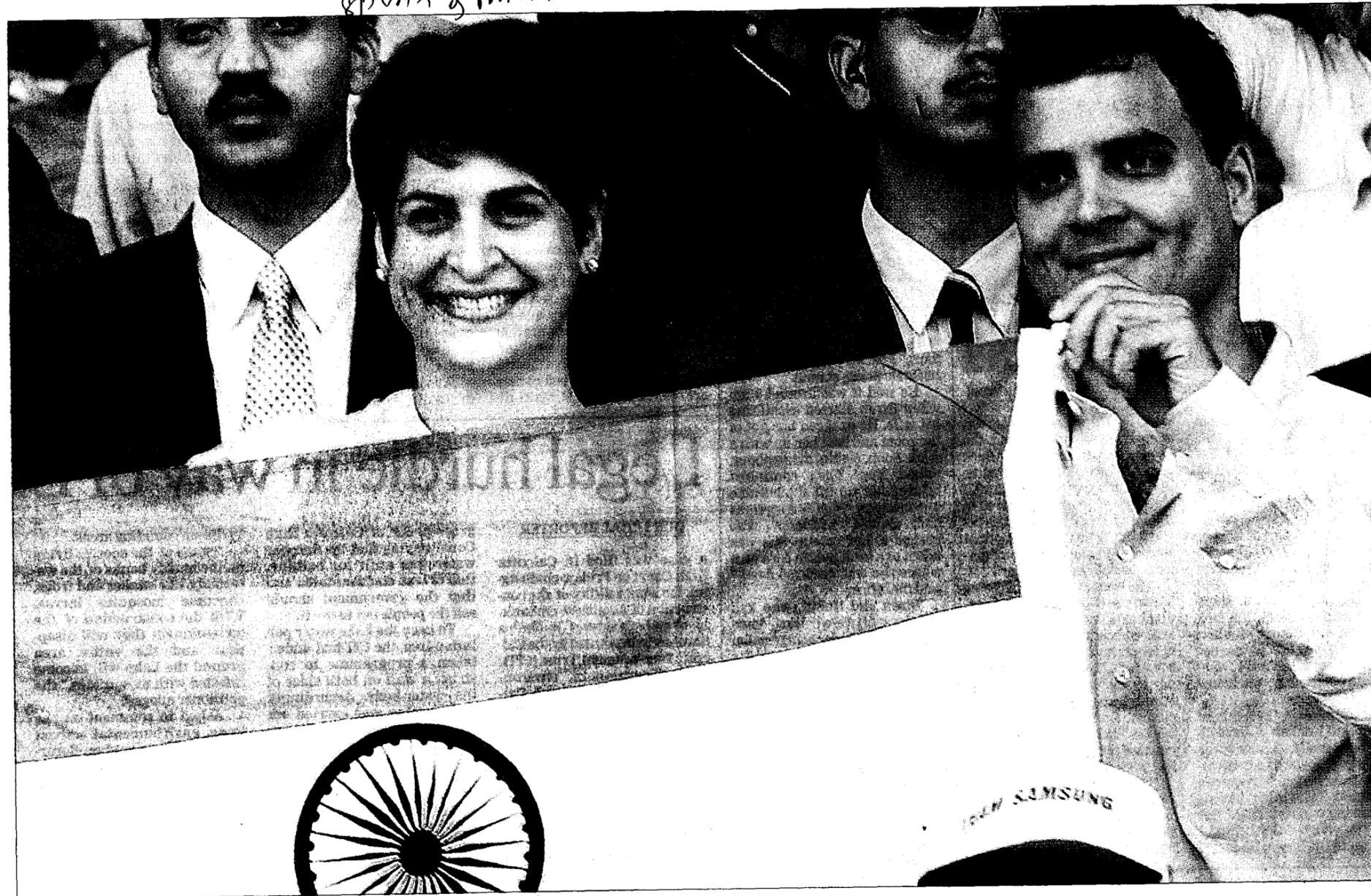
The cricket bit apart, the visit had an element of a public relations exercise. And, if the response (of the public and the media) is an indication, the salwar-kameez sporting Priyanka starred in a blockbuster.

Despite having gradually emerged a public figure, Priyanka remains very shy. In fact, when The Telegraph asked (in the chairman's box) whether she had a favourite in Team India, her initial response was a smile only.

It's when the question was repeated that Priyanka said: "Actually, I'm for the entire team but, if you insist, I reckon it's Sachin Tendulkar..." Elder brother Rahul was more reticent. However, he too picked Sachin as his "favourite".

The trio, by the way, came armed with the Tricolour and the India hat. While Robert, wearing a suit as opposed to Rahul's shirt-trouser combination, seemed to cheer more vociferously, Priyanka quite enjoyed holding up the Tricolour.

As first reported in these columns, they have been accorded state guest status. They return home from here itself.



COLOURS OF VICTORY: Priyanka and Rahul cheer Team India in Karachi on Saturday (AFP)

Karachi pitch to sell peace, bond with youth

RASHEED KIDWAI

March 13: When the target is "young India", cricket has to be the link.

10 Janpath insiders have confirmed that the GeNext Nehru-Gandhis will have "some participation" in election 2004 and that Rahul and Priyanka's presence in Karachi is part of a well thought-out strategy.

As cricket cuts across all barriers, the idea, sources said, is to bond with the youth in a country where 52 per cent of the population is below 25. The other plan, they added, is to send a subtle

message to the minorities that like Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee, Sonia Gandhi's "family", too, has a "cherished desire" to restore India-Pakistan relations.

The strategy was worked out at a series of informal meetings within the family and with "well wishers", who included apolitical persons.

The sources said broader contours of Priyanka's and Rahul's participation in politics are being worked out. One of the plans involves a sort of "carpet-bombing" in 100-odd constituencies where the Congress has a strong

presence or finished a close second last time to take its tally beyond 150 seats.

About 30 of these constituencies will be in Uttar Pradesh which, party strategists believe, would "make or mar" Sonia Gandhi's chances of becoming Prime Minister. Constituencies in Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Kerala, Assam, Rajasthan, Orissa, Chhattisgarh and Delhi have also been marked out.

Another plan being worked out involves Rahul and Priyanka as candidates — a pressing demand from the rank and file. Invitations from down south to

Amethi and Rai Bareilly have been pouring in for the siblings.

The third envisages a scenario in which Rahul is a candidate while Priyanka focuses on campaigning. However, an equally enthusiastic section wants Priyanka to contest and Rahul to campaign. This section feels that if Priyanka contests, it would result in "long time benefits" for the party.

Sources, however, said Priyanka and Rahul are somewhat apprehensive. According to their assessment, entry in politics is not merely a question of adorning public offices or keeping the

"family flag" flying high. Sources close to them said they have been thinking of the larger question — their future role and their ability to "do justice" in the face of the exaggerated expectations from Congress workers.

They are also thinking about the time after the elections, the sources added.

What happens if the party fares badly, triggering bitterness and bickering within the "Congress parivar"? As a source close to the family said: "There is no problem about the entry. It is the exit route that is bothering."

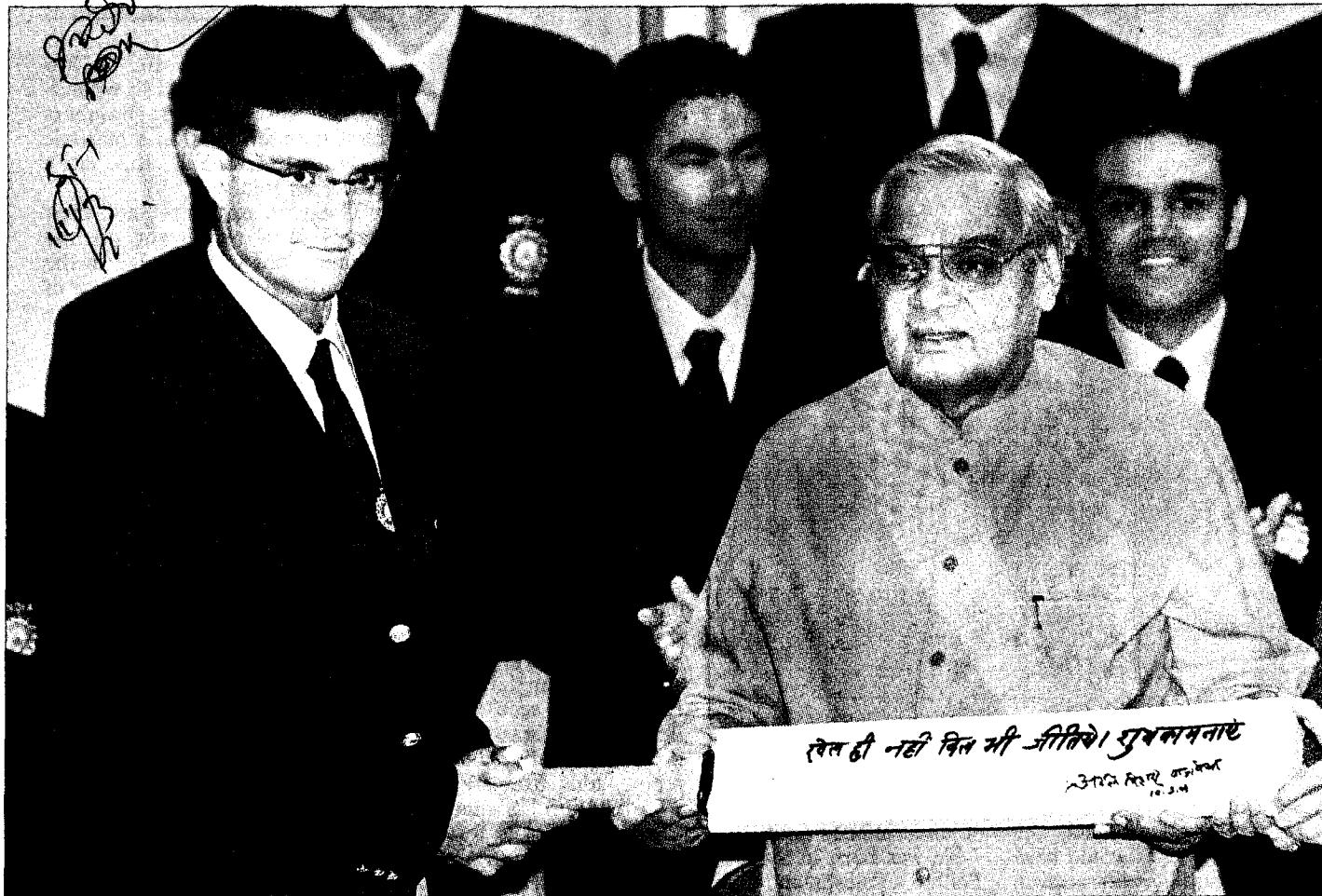
But, for the moment, it is

cricket — and its mass appeal — that the party is trying to cash on. Rahul loves the game.

On November 4, 2001, Rahul was seen bowling gentle off-spinners at the Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium in Delhi in a friendly between 10 Janpath and scribes covering the Congress beat.

Packed with the athletic Special Protection Group guards, the 10 Janpath team trounced the media side by eight wickets with his brother-in-law Robert Vadra doing an Inzamam-ul-Haq, getting himself run out. Rahul picked up two wickets and scored 25 runs.

Winsome willows, win hearts too



The Prime Minister presents a bat with a goodwill message scribbled on it to Sourav Ganguly in New Delhi on Wednesday. — AFP

NEW DELHI, March 10. — This was one farewell straight from the heart. Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee today urged the Indian cricketers to not only win the matches in Pakistan but also win the hearts of the people there. "*Khel hi nahin, dil bhi jeetiye* (Not only the game, win hearts as well)," the Prime Minister wrote on a bat he presented to skipper Sourav Ganguly, when the team called on him this morning before leaving for Lahore.

The cricketers also presented Mr Vajpayee a bat signed by all of them as a memento. The Prime Minister shook hands with Ganguly and the rest of the team and posed for group photographs with them, while the Delhi Police band played in the background.

As the Men in Blue arrived in a tourist bus named "Gaurav", rows of schoolchildren lined up at the Prime Minister's 7, Race Course Road residence, cheering and waving

placards wishing their heroes in the Indian team good luck.

The placards had messages like "Best of Luck" and "*Atal ne diya cricket ka uphaar, India-Pakistan sadbhavana ka prachar*" (Atal's cricket gift spreads harmony in India and Pakistan).

Before calling on the Prime Minister, police and IB officers gave the team a detailed briefing on security aspects and how to conduct themselves in the event of any attack. — SNS

Telecast row

NEW DELHI, March 10. — Days before the Indo-Pak cricket series, the government is turning to persuasion and if that fails, stronger measures, to get *Ten Sports* to part with terrestrial rights for the matches. The Centre, while not interested in commercial issues, wants 55 per cent of Indian households that do not get cable-connections, to get the telecast on Doordarshan's terrestrial channel. — SNS

Shunting goodwill, hunting for victory

LAHORE, March 10. — On his arrival here for a historic series, Indian cricket captain Sourav Ganguly today declared that his team will play to win in all their matches against Pakistan. He indicated clearly that he for one did not think that the goodwill factor would dilute his team's determination to put it across the hosts. "I do not agree that winning is not important. It is important to win the series. It is a cricket match and both teams will try to win," he said. Ganguly was responding to remarks by Pakistan coach Javed Miandad that winning and losing was irrelevant and the only winner in this goodwill series would be the game of cricket, but he could as easily have been making sure that his team mates didn't get too carried away by the Prime Minister's emphasis on peace and good cheer. Cricket, the skipper gently seemed to suggest, was slightly more important than all that.

On matters of the field, the suave Indian captain said he had a simple plan to stop "Rawalpindi Express" Shoaib Akhtar in his tracks — "(We'll) pull the chain!" He added, on a more serious note, "we don't have a special strategy to counter Shoaib. We'll play each ball on merit. Asked what the Prime Minister had told him and his teammates during a meeting earlier in the day in Delhi, he said: "He wished us good luck and said he would follow the games on TV." Team India will play five ODIs and three Tests in this, the first Indo-Pak series in 15 years. India will play a warm-up game here tomorrow before the first ODI in Karachi on Saturday. — PTI (Full coverage on page 12)



Sourav at Lahore airport. — AFP

Years of wait end with 30-minute delay

Takeoff deferred in safety drill

LOKENDRA PRATAPSAHI

Lahore, March 10: Whatever the official explanation, the departure of Indian Airlines' special flight (IC 1845) from New Delhi this afternoon, carrying Sourav Ganguly's Team India for the first full tour of Pakistan in over 14 years, was delayed by half-an-hour for "security reasons".

According to **The Telegraph's** sources, the Airbus 320 left at 1.30 pm (IST) and not as scheduled because the Indian security agencies wanted to "eliminate the possibility of a time-specific explosion" on the route to be taken by the team after landing at the Allama Iqbal International Airport here.

"The world had come to know the flight would leave at 1.00 pm. And, so, people inimical to the growing relations between Islamabad and New Delhi could have planned something coinciding with the scheduled arrival. The 30-minute delay, therefore, was meant to thwart any time-specific mischief," a source said.

Nothing untoward happened — perhaps nothing can, given the incredible level of security scripted by President Pervez Musharraf's secretariat. To start with, there was a dummy team bus and a decoy convoy in place at the airport. Besides out-



Pakistani commandos flank Sourav Ganguly as he arrives at a news conference in Lahore on Wednesday. (AFP)

riders and commandos, the bus carrying the players was flanked by armed policemen on mobikes.

Apparently, "protection on the flanks" was insisted upon by Yashovardhan Azad, the IG who made a recce trip to Pakistan last month. One understands he also insisted that traffic come to a halt at "all intersections" crossed by the Indians. The second drill seeks to eliminate the risk of a suicide bomber ramming into the team bus.

Further, it is learnt that the Indian security agencies have re-

quested their counterparts to "doubly verify" the antecedents of all drivers and helpers assigned to Sourav and Co.

At the hotel (Pearl Continental), it is difficult for even a fly to sit on Sourav's shoulders as he is being guarded by six commandos, all armed and wearing black T-shirts proclaiming "No Fear". That is the motto of the personnel drawn from the most elite wing of Punjab Police.

The players have been cautioned against going out alone. Moreover, there is a directive

from the home ministry in Delhi to avoid sightseeing and shopping in Karachi and Peshawar.

The dos and don'ts were conveyed at a briefing by the home ministry this morning, where Azad held centre stage. That had been preceded by a "background and tips" from a senior foreign ministry mandarin.

Only two IPS officers — Azad himself and Manoj Lal, an additional commissioner in New Delhi — have accompanied the team.

■ See Sport and Page 5

Sourav chain for Shoaib

OUR SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

Lahore, March 10: The most eagerly awaited touchdown in these parts occurred at 1.45 pm (local time) and the cynosure was an Indian Airlines Airbus 320, bearing Sourav Ganguly's team, on a special flight numbered 1845 from New Delhi. For a million reasons, that moment is going to remain special.

Sourav, who was seated next to John Wright in the first row — the partners across the aisle were Sachin Tendulkar and Rahul Dravid — took his time getting up once captain A.K. Malhotra directed his crew to "disarm the doors".

Perhaps, Sourav was reflecting on his aggressive "we will rewrite history" remark in Calcutta yesterday. Or, he could have been marvelling at the very contemporary Allama Iqbal International Airport. The old facility, after all, had been anything but international.

Whatever, Sourav walked off ramrod-straight and even if the Inzamam-ul Haqs were not aro-

und, made a statement with that confident body language. Later, at the first media conference in Pakistan addressed by a (senior) India captain in almost seven years, he struck the right notes.

The opening question — "who is responsible for no Test cricket between the two countries, in Pakistan, for over 14 years?" — was intended to be a vicious bouncer. Sourav, though, coolly let it pass: "I'm not sure... Let the manager (Ratnakar Shetty) answer that... But, yes, it's good to be here."

Shetty advised the media to focus on cricket only. That did not go unheeded.

Talking of the two teams, Sourav insisted "consistently better cricket" would determine the winner. Of course, he declined to be drawn into the debate over favourites. Yet, he promised intensity that would match what had been on display in the classic four-Test series in Australia.

Given his own passionate approach, it is not surprising that Sourav disagreed with Pakistan coach Javed Miandad that "good-will" is going to be the favoured

flavour over the next five-six weeks. "Both teams will be competing to win," he said.

Predictably, there were questions about Shoaib Akhtar and the impact he may have. In a departure from his customary so-very-serious answers, Sourav had the huge turnout splits when he responded to a query ("how are you going to deal the Rawalpindi Express?") saying: "Pulling the chain, perhaps!"

Earlier in the day, Sourav and his players were wished "good luck" by Prime Minister Iqbal

Bhari Vajpayee on the lawns of Race Course Road. The 45-minute interaction also saw bats exchanged. Team India gave one (plus the tour tie) to Vajpayee, who, in turn, offered one with a message which mirrored his sentiments: "*Khel mein jeetna hai, lekin dil bhi jeetna hai* (Games must be won, but so must hearts)."

Vajpayee spent some time speaking to Wright and, as a result, the coach was subjected to leg-pulling by his wards: "So, John, have you been offered a ticket somewhere?"

মাঠে-বাইরে ঝামেলা হলে ফিরে আসবেন সৌরভেরা

নয়া দিল্লি, ২৬ ফেব্রুয়ারি—মাঠে বা মাঠের বাইরে কোনও রকম ঝামেলা-ঝগড়া হলে ফিরে আসবে ভারতীয় দল। এই শর্তই পাক বোর্ডের সঙ্গে মঠ স্বাক্ষর করেছে ভারতীয় বোর্ড। চুক্তি অনুযায়ী, খেলোয়াড়দের নিরাপত্তা নিশ্চিত হওয়ার আশঙ্কা রয়েছে বলে বোর্ড মনে করলে তৎক্ষণাত্ দল তুলে নেওয়া হবে। সে ক্ষেত্রে পাকিস্তান বোর্ড ক্ষতিপূরণ দাবি করতে পারবে না। বোর্ড বলেছে, খেলোয়াড়দের পাকিস্তান সরকারের আশ্বাসে পাঠানো হচ্ছে, নিরাপত্তার কারণে সফর ভেঙে গেলে দায়ও পাকিস্তানের। এ দিকে, শর্তে রাজি হলেও দুশ্চিন্তায় পড়েছে পাকিস্তান বোর্ড। এক দিকে, বিষয়টি পুনরিকেন্দ্র করাতে জগমোহন ডালমিয়াদের কাছে আর্জি জানানো হয়েছে। অন্য দিকে, দর্শকদের সংঘত রাখার সমস্ত ব্যবস্থা নেওয়া হচ্ছে। পাকিস্তান বোর্ডের চিফ একজিকিউটিভ রামিজ রাজা আজ জানান, চুক্তি সই করে ফেরত পাঠানোর সময়ে বক্ষকবচ হিসাবে পাক বোর্ড একটি নতুন শর্ত যোগ করেছে— স্রেফ আবেগের বশে বা তাড়াতাড়ি সফরের মাঝপথে চলে যাওয়ার মতো চরম কোনও সিদ্ধান্ত যেন নেওয়া না হয়। “আমরা চাই সফরের তাৎপর্য না হুলে দুই বোর্ড এবং খেলোয়াড়েরা সিদ্ধান্ত নিক। সেটা ঠান্ডা মাথায়, যুক্তি দিয়ে পরিস্থিতি বিশ্লেষণ করে নেওয়া হোক,” বলেছেন রামিজ। পাক বোর্ডের অনুরোধ রাখা নিয়ে ডালমিয়া মন্তব্য করতে চাননি। বলেছেন, “চুক্তি প্রকাশ্যে নথি নয়। এটা বোর্ডের ব্যাপার। সফর শুরু করার আগে অনেক কিছু পাঠাতে পারে।”

পাক বোর্ড অবশ্য ডালমিয়ার সঙ্গে একমত নয়। তাদের উদ্বেগ স্পষ্ট ধরা পড়েছে রামিজের কথায়। বলেছেন, “কোনও অজুহাতে সফর মাঝপথে বন্ধ হলে তার প্রভাব সুদূরপ্রসারী এবং মারাত্মক হবে। এর সঙ্গে শুধু ক্রিকেট নয়, দুই দেশের সম্পর্কও জড়িত।” খোদ প্রেসিডেন্ট পারভেজ

মুশারফ নিরাপত্তার আশ্বাস দেওয়ার পরেও ভারতীয়রা কেন আস্ত রাখতে পারছে না, সেটা রামিজদের ভাবাচ্ছে। তাঁরা বলেছেন, “সম্ভবত অজানা কোনও বিপদের ভয়ে পাকিস্তান আশার ব্যাপারে কট্টা হয়ে আছেন ভারতীয় খেলোয়াড়েরা। বোর্ডের কাছে কিছু সুনির্দিষ্ট আশ্বাস দাবি করেছেন তাঁরা। আর খেলোয়াড়দের সেই দাবি মেনেই এই শর্ত আরোপ করেছে ভারতীয় বোর্ড। এই উদ্বেগটা আমরা বুঝি। তাই কোনও আপত্তি ছাড়া মৌ সই করে ফেরত পাঠানো হয়েছে।”

তবে ভারতীয় বোর্ডের বাধ্যবাধকতা বোঝার পাশাপাশি রামিজদের নিজেদের গরজও রয়েছে। আর্থিক দিক দিয়ে বিপর্যস্ত পাকিস্তান বোর্ডের অর্থনৈতিক পুনরুদ্ধার এখন পুরোপুরি ভারত সফরের উপরে দাঁড়িয়ে। সফর থেকে অন্তত একশো কোটি টাকার বাণিজ্য আশা করছেন রামিজরা। সফর সফল করার জন্য তাই অনেক দূর যেতে রাজি তাঁরা। কিন্তু নিরাপত্তা এমন একটা প্রশ্ন যা নিয়ে জোর গলায় কোনও মন্তব্য করা চলে না। রামিজ বলেছেন, “সফর নির্ধারিত করার জন্য প্রশাসনিক দিক থেকে সমস্ত ব্যবস্থা আমরা নিচ্ছি। পাকিস্তান সরকার খেলোয়াড়দের নিরাপত্তার দায়িত্ব নিচ্ছে। আমাদের তরফে কোনও ফাঁক, কোনও ক্রটি রাখা হচ্ছে না। কিন্তু এত কিছু পরেও ভবিষ্যতে কী হয়, সেটা কেউই বলতে পারে না। নিরাপত্তার কারণে সফর বানচাল হলে ক্ষতিপূরণ চেয়ে আই সি সি-র দ্বারস্থও হওয়া যাবে না। বিরতি ক্ষতি স্বীকার করা ছাড়া উপায় থাকবে না আমাদের।”

ইতিমধ্যেই ভারতীয় বোর্ডের দাবি মেনে দেশের সেরা ক্রিকেট কেন্দ্র করাচি থেকে টেস্ট সরাতে রাজি হয়েছে পাকিস্তান। রামিজ জানিয়েছেন, ভারতীয় গোয়েন্দা রিপোর্টে এমন কিছু বিপদের উল্লেখ ছিল যা পাকিস্তান বোর্ড অগ্রাহ্য করতে পারেনি। ভারতীয়রা কোনও অবস্থাতেই ওই কেন্দ্রে

পুরো পাঁচ দিন থেকে ক্রিকেট খেলাতে রাজি ছিল না। “গোয়েন্দা রিপোর্ট আমাদের পক্ষেও অগ্রাহ্য করার উপায় ছিল না। তাই করাচিতে টেস্ট খেলার জন্য চাপাচাপি করা হয়নি। গোটা সফরই তা হলে বাতিল করে দিত ভারত,” বলেছেন রামিজ। করাচিতে খেলার অভিজ্ঞতাও সুখের নয় ভারতীয় খেলোয়াড়দের। ১৯৯৭-এ এক দিনের ম্যাচে ক্লিন্ট দর্শকেরা পাথর ছুড়ে খেলা বন্ধ করে দিয়েছিলেন। মাঠ ছাড়তে বাধ্য হয় ভারতীয় দল। ভারতের শেষ টেস্ট সফরে একে পাকিস্তানি দর্শক মাঠে ঢুকে শাসিয়ে গিয়েছিলেন ভারতীয় অধিনায়ক শ্রীকান্তকে। নতুন শর্তে বলা হয়েছে, দর্শকেরা যেখানেই গোলমাল করুন, করাচিই হোক বা লাহোর বা অন্য কোনও জায়গা, নিরাপত্তার কারণে সফর বন্ধ করে দেবে ভারতীয় বোর্ড।

সফর নিয়ে নতুন জটিলতায় অবশ্য দুই দেশের দর্শক উৎসাহে এতটুকু ভাগা পড়েনি। সৌরভদের উৎসাহ জোগাতে সীমান্ত পার করায় অগ্রহীদের সংখ্যা প্রতিদিন বাড়ছে। অবস্থা এমনই যে এক দিনের সফরের জন্য দর্শকের সংখ্যা নির্ধারিত করে দিতে হয়েছে পাক স্বরাষ্ট্র দফতরকে। পাঁচটি এক দিনের ম্যাচের জন্য সব মিলিয়ে ভারতীয় সমর্থকদের ৮,২৫০টি ভিসা দেওয়া হবে, জানিয়েছেন স্বরাষ্ট্র দফতরের সচিব তসনিম নুরানি। তাঁর কথায়, “ভারতীয় সমর্থকদের প্রথমে পাক বোর্ডের ইন্টারনেট সাইটে থেকে টিকিট কাটতে হবে। তার পরে সমস্ত প্রশাপ-সহ দিল্লিতে আমাদের কনসাল্টেটে আবেদন করলে ভিসা দেওয়া হবে।” তবে নির্দিষ্ট ম্যাচের জন্য নির্দিষ্ট সংখ্যক ভিসা মঞ্জুর হবে। সব থেকে বেশি, আড়াই হাজার ভিসা দেওয়া হবে লাহোরের দুইটি এক দিনের ম্যাচের জন্য। করাচি ম্যাচে দেড় হাজার, রাওয়ালপিন্ডির জন্য এক হাজার এবং পেশোয়ারে সাড়ে সাতশো ভিসা দেবে পাকিস্তান।

India wins Test venue battle

PESHAWAR AND KARACHI OUT, TOUR BEGINS ON MARCH 10

HT Correspondent
Kolkata, February 21

THE COMPLEX task of pleasing everyone from the fan in Pakistan to the Election Commissioner in India while fixing a cricket tour itinerary has been achieved. Jagnohan Dalmiya said on Saturday that India will reach Pakistan on March 10 for five One-day and three Tests in an uninterrupted schedule agreed by both countries.

The One-day squad will be chosen here on March 3 and will assemble in New Delhi five days later where they will be briefed by the home and external affairs ministries on the do's and don'ts and about security. A chief security liaison officer and two others appointed by the home ministry will accompany the squad. The Test side will be chosen at a yet-undecided date.

When the teams line up in Karachi on March 13 after 14 years, Dalmiya too will be present. As an exception, the cricket board will allow players' families to join the touring party from the start or any time thereafter. Usually they arrive during the second half of a tour.

Dalmiya said he respects the sentiments of the people in Karachi and Peshawar, where Tests aren't being held on the home ministry's recommendations, and hoped things would change in the future. Of the four cities cleared by the ministry for Tests, Faisalabad may have been left out by Pakistan because it doesn't have adequate hotels. A report from Islamabad quoted Pakistan Cricket Board CEO Rameez Raja as saying that had the



DATE SET, GO: Sourav Ganguly and Inzamam-ul-Haq

PCB insisted on holding Tests in Karachi and Peshawar, the tour might have been called off.

It wasn't without reason, therefore, that Dalmiya thanked Raja and Shahryar Khan (PCB chairman) for being patient and accommodating India's numerous requests.

Announcing the details at a chaotic press conference, Dalmiya listed two reasons why convention was done away with and the One-dayers scheduled before the Tests. Having played a tri-series last, the team is more clued into the shorter version of the game, he said. It will also mean that those nursing injuries will get some more time to recover for the serious business of Test cricket.

But probably the most important reason was the impending general elections and the possibility of One-dayers — given the passion they generate — interfering with the process. "We understand the importance of general elections and appreciate that politicians cutting across party lines have supported the tour. We asked the Election Commission for tentative dates and decided to hold the One-dayers first to ensure that the tour causes minimum interference with the election process," Dalmiya said.

For the cricket lover with money to spare for a trip to Pakistan, Dalmiya said visa rules would be relaxed and the nitty-gritty is being worked out by the two governments.

The BCCI boss felt the schedule was not so jam-packed. "Between the Tests there is a three-day gap. So it's not all that cramped. Moreover, during the Australia tour, we saw how the players tended to lose their rhythm during long gaps."

Given the sensitive nature of this tour, he said, players might be advised on the importance of keeping their cool on the field. "They are all experienced cricketers, but if required, we'll speak to them on this."

With the players, except captain Sourav Ganguly, engaged in the Duleep Trophy, there is no need to hold a conditioning camp, he added.

■ See also HT Sport

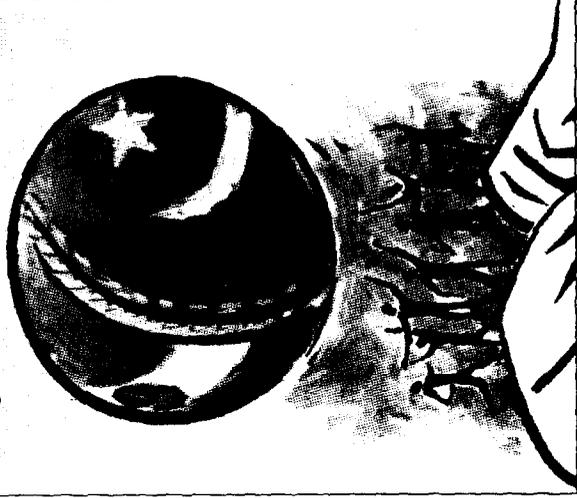
BILL OF FARE

Tour duration 40 days (March 10-April 18)

- ▶ March 11 Warm-up game
- ▶ March 13 First ODI, Karachi
- ▶ March 16 Second ODI, Rawalpindi
- ▶ March 19 Third ODI, Peshawar
- ▶ March 21 Fourth ODI, Lahore
- ▶ March 24 Fifth ODI, Lahore
- ▶ March 28-April 1 First Test, Multan
- ▶ April 5-9 Second Test, Lahore
- ▶ April 13-17 Third Test, Rawalpindi

HIGHLIGHTS

- ▶ ODI squad selection on March 3
- ▶ Family members can accompany players throughout the tour



22 FEB 2004

15 FEB 2004

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

Cricket on a political pitch

WHEN TV programmers plan debates about playing cricket with Pakistan and want an odd-ball sort with a contrary view, I'm the man they call. The reason for this is quite simple: for years and years, I've been almost the only person who opposes playing cricket with Pakistan and can speak correct English. It is always instructive that when I decline the invitation, my place on the programme is nearly always taken by some venomous Shiv Sena midget or a sangh parivar type in saffron robes.

Sadly, the debate about cricket with Pakistan has usually been conducted as a battle between English-speaking liberals (aggressively pro) and hardcore Hindutva types ("Play cricket? Hell, no! Why don't we just bomb them all instead?")

The liberals have, broadly, taken the sport-has-nothing-to-do-with-politics line which, ironically, was first popularised by lots of dodgy apartheid-loving blonde South Africans after their country was booted out of every sports tournament.

Those on the other side, however, have rather destroyed their own case by rejecting logic and concentrating instead on demonising Pakistan. And whenever they've lost the argument, they've done something silly like digging up the pitch to demonstrate that they are bad losers.

My view has been based on consistency and precedent. For many many years, we refused to play sport with South Africa be-

cause we disapproved of apartheid. We refused also to even play tennis with Israel because we thought that it was being unfair to the Palestinians.

Nor were we alone in taking such stands. In 1990, the US boycotted the Moscow Olympics to protest the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. And no cricket-playing nation would play South Africa.

So, it is a little late in the day to say that politics and sport shouldn't mix. They always have.

Moreover, there is evidence to suggest that the boycotts worked. Take South Africa. It is now almost universally accepted that one of the things that convinced the ruling white minority that its days were numbered was the unwillingness of the world to have anything to do with South Africa.

When the boycotts really began to hurt (and the sport boycott hurt the most), the whites started reconsidering their future.

My point has been: if we've always mixed politics with sport, if sports boycotts have worked; and if we've regarded something like Israel's treatment of the Palestinians as a good enough reason to refuse to play sport with the Israelis, then surely — in the interests of consistency — there is a strong argument for saying that we should boycott a country that is sponsoring terrorism in India and is responsible for the deaths of thousands of Indian civilians.

In fact, the global boycott of Pakistani cricket venues has contributed to the growing feeling in Islamabad that Pakistan is isolated

ed and should re-examine its policies. Take the attitude of the Pakistan cricket board to the proposed Indian tour. While we are adopting a let's-wait-and-watch attitude, the Pakistanis are desperate. Their board is bankrupt and only an Indian tour can save them from complete collapse.

So, given the nature of my views, I should be among those who support the Home Ministry's campaign to get the tour cancelled.

Except that it is not so simple, this time around.

For a start, nobody is saying that we should tour Pakistan because politics and sport don't mix. Quite the opposite. Advocates of the tour are saying that we should tour Pakistan for reasons that are entirely political.

In essence, the argument goes something like this: both countries want to be friends but no substantive progress is possible — in the middle term at least — on what Pakistan considers the core issue. We won't cede an inch of Kashmir and they are committed to claiming that Kashmir is really a part of Pakistan. So, if we have to improve relations while ignoring Kashmir, then we need to resort to powerful gestures. No gesture will have as much impact as a cricket tour in a cricket-crazy subcontinent. The month-long tour will be such that the people of both countries will feel that a breakthrough has been made, even if there's been no progress on Kashmir.

It is not a bad argument (though

I'm not sure I accept that a cricket series will lead to bonhomie; it could actually sharpen nationalist feelings on both sides) because it avoids all the usual nonsense about keeping-politics-out-of-sport, which I abhor, and frames its appeal in terms of realpolitik.

So, why should there be a controversy over this tour? Well, there are two reasons, one stated and one unstated.

The stated reason has to do with security. Will our boys be safe in Pakistan? After all, even General Musharraf has faced two assassination attempts. So can we afford to risk the lives of our players?

It is not an argument without merit. It is dangerous to play cricket in Pakistan — other countries have had to abandon tours after bomb explosions in the past. Many Indian cricketers have genuine fears about their own safety. And yes, two months is a long time so there could be an incident.

But there are several counters to it. One: it has long been India's position that we must never allow tours to be cancelled for fear of terrorist acts. Given that there are terrorist attacks in our own cities on a fairly regular basis — remember the blast which took out the windows of Bombay Taj last year? — this could well be used as an excuse by other countries not to tour India. During the 1996 World Cup when terrorism in Sri Lanka was at its height and other countries refused to play there, we made a great show of sending a team to Colombo to show solidarity. To chicken out of

a Pakistan tour now on security grounds would be to abandon that long-standing position.

Two: yes, Pakistan is a dangerous place. But it was a pretty dangerous place even when the tour was planned. What has happened between then and now for security concerns to suddenly become so important?

Three: the opposition to the tour is coming almost entirely from the Home Ministry. This first took the form of covert leaks to house-trained journos and then a hapless Minister of State was put on TV to officially re-assert the Advant-line.

The Home Ministry has access to intelligence (through the IB) about what goes on in India. It does not, however, have access to intelligence from foreign countries. That intelligence is gathered by R&AW which does not report to the Home Ministry. And as far as I can tell, R&AW thinks that the risks are manageable. So what does the Home Ministry base its concerns on?

And four: the Home Ministry's position is not that the tour should be cancelled, only that it should be postponed till after the election. This makes no sense to me. Why should the security situation in Pakistan suddenly change after our election? And if that doesn't happen, why is it okay to risk the lives of our cricketers a month or so later? Surely, if we care about their safety, that concern should persist for all time, not just for two months?

Which, of course, brings us to the real reason (the unstated one)

for the Home Ministry's opposition. It has less to do with security and more to do with politics.

The BJP is going into the election campaign on the basis of an ephemeral, intangible, feel-good factor. It wants us to believe that India Is Shining, that we are the champions, that we've never had it so good, that this is a new golden age.

The danger with this kind of politically-induced euphoria is that it doesn't take much to burst the bubble. One set of reverses — say, a stock market scam — and the mood of the country can alter dramatically, from euphoria to despair.

The BJP's current fear is this: suppose we tour Pakistan before the elections and they cream us? Suppose our team loses test after test; that it is humiliated in one-day match after one-day match?

In this mad, cricket-obsessed country where we worship our cricketers when they win and stone their homes when they lose, what will a series of defeats do to the euphoria? Will we still feel good? Will India keep shining even after our team suffers defeat after defeat?

That's a risk that the BJP is not prepared to take. Far better to reschedule the series so that it is held after the elections. Then, the defeats, if they do occur, will not jeopardise the government's chances of re-election.

In the final analysis, that's what this controversy is about. Not about security. And certainly not about cricket.

It is about electoral politics.

Two: yes, Pakistan is a dangerous place. But it was a pretty dangerous place even when the tour was planned. What has happened between then and now for security concerns to suddenly become so important?

Three: the opposition to the tour is coming almost entirely from the Home Ministry. This first took the form of covert leaks to house-trained journos and then a hapless Minister of State was put on TV to officially re-assert the Advant-line.

The Home Ministry has access to intelligence (through the IB) about what goes on in India. It does not, however, have access to intelligence from foreign countries. That intelligence is gathered by R&AW which does not report to the Home Ministry. And as far as I can tell, R&AW thinks that the risks are manageable. So what does the Home Ministry base its concerns on?

And four: the Home Ministry's position is not that the tour should be cancelled, only that it should be postponed till after the election. This makes no sense to me. Why should the security situation in Pakistan suddenly change after our election? And if that doesn't happen, why is it okay to risk the lives of our cricketers a month or so later? Surely, if we care about their safety, that concern should persist for all time, not just for two months?

Which, of course, brings us to the real reason (the unstated one)

for the Home Ministry's opposition. It has less to do with security and more to do with politics.

The BJP is going into the election campaign on the basis of an ephemeral, intangible, feel-good factor. It wants us to believe that India Is Shining, that we are the champions, that we've never had it so good, that this is a new golden age.

The danger with this kind of politically-induced euphoria is that it doesn't take much to burst the bubble. One set of reverses — say, a stock market scam — and the mood of the country can alter dramatically, from euphoria to despair.

The BJP's current fear is this: suppose we tour Pakistan before the elections and they cream us? Suppose our team loses test after test; that it is humiliated in one-day match after one-day match?

In this mad, cricket-obsessed country where we worship our cricketers when they win and stone their homes when they lose, what will a series of defeats do to the euphoria? Will we still feel good? Will India keep shining even after our team suffers defeat after defeat?

That's a risk that the BJP is not prepared to take. Far better to reschedule the series so that it is held after the elections. Then, the defeats, if they do occur, will not jeopardise the government's chances of re-election.

In the final analysis, that's what this controversy is about. Not about security. And certainly not about cricket.

It is about electoral politics.

COUNTERPOINT

Vir Sanghvi



THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

15 FEB 2004

The BJP's current fear is this: suppose we tour Pakistan before the elections and they cream us? Suppose our team loses test after test; that it is humiliated in one-day match after one-day match? ... Will we still feel good?

Vajpayee nod for Pak tour

NEW DELHI, Feb. 14. — Ending days of suspense caused by security concerns and political considerations, the Prime Minister today gave the green signal for the Indian cricket team's tour of Pakistan. It's being seen as yet another indication of Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee's desire to further the peace process with Pakistan despite risks.

The decision followed Mr Vajpayee's meeting with Mr LK Advani, Mr Yashwant Sinha, Mr Jaswant Singh and Mr Brajesh Mishra in the morning. "The dates will be decided by the cricket boards," Mr Sinha said after the meeting. In Kolkata, BCCI chief Mr Jagmohan Dalmiya said the board would not force any player to undertake the tour against his wishes and that the tour would start in the first week of March as scheduled (See page 14).

At the meeting, the Prime Minister and his colleagues mulled issues raised about the tour — including the players' security and the upcoming polls. What clinched the decision in favour of the much anticipated tour were apparently positive inputs from a three-member team of officials from the home ministry and BCCI. "The team found the security in Pakistan adequate for the players... It doesn't make sense to cancel such a game that's so important to our diplomatic ties," said minister of state for home Swami Chinmayananda.

Factors such as the BJP's fears of a "feel-bad" effect of an Indian defeat on the polls, a chorus joined by the RSS, had — apart from the Union home ministry's reported negative assessment of the security situation — been touted as possible deterrents to the tour. Meanwhile, Pakistan heaved a sigh of relief, with the country's cricket board chief saying the go-ahead would have a "positive impact". At home, the BJP hailed the decision but the Congress accused the government of trying to "politicise" sports. — SNS

"It is truly a Valentine's Day gift for Musharraf," Najam Sethi,

Friday Times, Lahore

PM ON PEACE PITCH HITS HATE BALL FOR SIX



Chand

জট খুললেন অটল, পাকিস্তান যাচ্ছেন সৌরভেরা

স্টাফ রিপোর্টার, নয়াদিল্লি, ১৪ ফেব্রুয়ারি—রুদ্ধশ্বাস টেনশনে ইতি টেনে ভারত ও পাকিস্তানের মধ্যে ক্রিকেট-জট খুলে দিলেন প্রধানমন্ত্রী অটলবিহারী বাজপেয়ী। আজ সকালে নিজের বাসভবনে তিনি এই নিয়ে জরুরি বৈঠক ডেকেছিলেন। বৈঠক সেরে সকালেই বিদেশমন্ত্রী যশবন্ত সিনহা জানিয়ে দেন, পূর্বনির্ধারিত সূচি অনুসারেই খেলার ব্যাপারে কেন্দ্রীয় সরকার সম্মতি দিয়েছে।

প্রায় এক সপ্তাহ আগে প্রধানমন্ত্রী, উপ-প্রধানমন্ত্রী, অর্থমন্ত্রী ও বিদেশমন্ত্রী ঠিক যেভাবে বৈঠক করে পাক সফর পিছনোর সিদ্ধান্ত নিয়েছিলেন, আজ একইভাবে সেই চারজনই বৈঠক করে পুরনো সিদ্ধান্ত বদলেছেন। ক্রিকেট বোর্ডকে সফর পিছনোর পরামর্শ দেওয়ার কথা উপ-প্রধানমন্ত্রী লালকৃষ্ণ আডবাণী প্রকাশ্যে জানানোর পরে কেন সরকার সবুজ সংকেত দিল, তার কোনও সরকারি ব্যাখ্যা অবশ্য আজ মেলেনি। যশবন্ত কেবল এইটুকুই বলেছেন যে, “সমস্ত দিক খতিয়ে দেখে আমরা এই সিদ্ধান্ত নিয়েছি।” তবে এটা স্পষ্ট যে, সফর পিছিয়ে দেবার সরকারি প্রস্তাবের কথা প্রকাশ্যে চলে আসায় দেশ

জুড়ে ক্রীড়ামোদীদের মধ্যে নেতিবাচক প্রতিক্রিয়া সৃষ্টি হয়। এই অবস্থায় আডবাণীর মতামতকে খারিজ করে দিয়ে প্রধানমন্ত্রী আজ এই সবুজ সংকেত দিলেন।

সচিন-শোয়েবের স্বৈরত্বের মধ্যে যে নাটকীয়তা ও টেনশন আসন্ন, রাজধানীতে গত কয়েক দিন সফর চূড়ান্ত করার ব্যাপারে প্রায় একই নেপথ্য-নাটক ঘটে গিয়েছে। কেন্দ্রীয় সরকার সূত্রে খবর, সফর যাতে হয় তার জন্য জগমোহন ডালমিয়া ঘনঘন কথা বলেছেন বিজেপির সাধারণ সম্পাদক প্রমোদ মহাজন, কেন্দ্রীয় আইনমন্ত্রী অরুণ জেটলি ও বোর্ডের সদস্য, প্রাক্তন সাংসদ, রাজীব গুরুর সঙ্গে। এঁরা প্রধানমন্ত্রীর দফতরের সঙ্গে নিরলস যোগাযোগ রেখে সমস্যা মেটানোর চেষ্টা করেছেন।

গত কাল সন্ধ্যায় বৈঠকে বসেন, আডবাণী ও অরুণ জেটলি। এই টানাপোড়েনের মধ্যে দিল্লি এসে হাজির হন পাকিস্তানের ফ্রাইডে টাইমস সংবাদপত্রের সম্পাদক নাজিম শেঠি। কেন্দ্রীয় সরকার সূত্রে খবর, পাক প্রেসিডেন্ট পারভেজ মুশারফের দূত হিসাবে তিনি প্রধানমন্ত্রীর দফতরের বেশ কিছু শীর্ষ কর্তার সঙ্গে কথা বলেন। নাজিম দু’তিনদিনের মধ্যে

আডবাণীর সঙ্গেও দেখা করবেন।

গোটা ঘটনায় অবশ্য আডবাণীর ভাবমূর্তি জনমানসে টোল খাওয়ার সম্ভাবনা

থেকে গেল। যদিও প্রধানমন্ত্রীর সঙ্গে বসেই সফর পিছনোর সর্বসম্মত সিদ্ধান্ত নেওয়া হয়েছিল, কিন্তু রাজধানীতে এই ধারণা

ইতিমধ্যেই তৈরি হয়ে গিয়েছে, যেন আডবাণীই সফরের বিরুদ্ধে ছিলেন। বিশেষত, আডবাণী যেভাবে স্বরাষ্ট্রমন্ত্রকের

আপত্তির কথা প্রকাশ্যে বলে দেন, তাতে আলোড়ন সৃষ্টি হয়। পাকিস্তানে সৌরভ-সচিনেরা কবে

খেলবেন তা ঠিক করার ভার পুরোপুরি ক্রিকেট কন্ট্রোল বোর্ডের ঘরে পাঠিয়ে দিলেও কেন্দ্রীয় সরকার কয়েকটি স্থানের নিরাপত্তা সম্পর্কে নিজেদের দৃষ্টিভঙ্গির কথা জানিয়েছে। যেমন, করাচি এবং পেশোয়ারে না খেলার ব্যাপারে জগমোহন ডালমিয়াকে ‘পরামর্শ’ দিয়েছে সরকার। তবে এ ক্ষেত্রেও কোনও লিখিত বার্তা পাঠানো হয়নি কলকাতায়।

সরকারি ভাবেও এই রকম কোনও পরামর্শ দেওয়ার কথা উড়িয়ে দিয়ে বলা হয়েছে, এখন সফরের খুঁটিনাটি চূড়ান্ত করার দায় পুরোপুরি ক্রিকেট কন্ট্রোল বোর্ডের। সরকার এর মধ্যে কোনও রকম হস্তক্ষেপ করবে না। কোথায়, ক’টা ম্যাচ হবে, সবটাই ঠিক করবে দুই দেশের বোর্ড। স্বরাষ্ট্র মন্ত্রকের প্রতিমন্ত্রী স্বামী চিন্ময়ানন্দ বলেছেন, “ভারতীয় ক্রিকেটারদের জন্য উপযুক্ত নিরাপত্তা-ব্যবস্থা নেওয়া হচ্ছে বলে গত দু’দিনে আমরা রিপোর্ট পেয়েছি।” ভারতীয় সরকারের সবুজ সংকেতকে স্বাগত জানিয়ে পাকিস্তান দূতাবাসের ডেপুটি হাইকমিশনার মুনাবর শেঠি বলেছেন, “ক্রিকেট সিরিজ যে ফের চালু হবে, তার সিদ্ধান্ত দুই প্রধানমন্ত্রী মিলেই

অতীতে ঠিক করেছিলেন।”

গত কয়েক দিন ধরে বিভিন্ন স্তরের আলোচনার মাধ্যমে বাজপেয়ী য.তে পুরনো আপত্তি খারিজ করে সবুজ সংকেত দেন সেই চেষ্টা চালানো হয়। সফরে যাওয়ার পক্ষপাতীরা এটাই বোঝানোর চেষ্টা করেন, ভারত ও পাকিস্তানের মধ্যে বর্তমানে যে সুসম্পর্ক তৈরি হয়েছে, খেলা না-হলে তাতে চিড় ধরতে পারে।

পাকিস্তান সফর বাতিল হলে ভোটের আগে দেশের সংখ্যালঘু সম্প্রদায়ের মধ্যেও নেতিবাচক মনোভাব তৈরি হতে পারে, এটাও ছিল আর একটা যুক্তি।

বলা হয়, পাতিয়ালায় পাকিস্তানের পঞ্জাব প্রভিন্স ও ভারতের সীমান্তবর্তী রাজ্যটির মধ্যে একটি ক্রিকেট ম্যাচ হবার কথা। যেখানে ওয়াসিম আক্রাম ও কপিল দেব দু’দলের অধিনায়ক হবেন। ভারতের দু’টিহীনদের একটি ক্রীড়া দলও পাকিস্তানে খেলতে গিয়েছে। তাই প্রশ্ন উঠছে, অন্য সব বিষয়ে যখন সরকার ছাড়পত্র দিচ্ছে, তখন কেবল সচিন-সৌরভদের বেলায় কেন এত রাখচাক?

আরও একটি যুক্তি উঠে এসেছে। সেটা এর পর পাঁচের পাতায়

কাউকেই জোর করবে না বোর্ড, সফর ছোট হচ্ছেই

স্টাফ রিপোর্টার: সরকারের দিক থেকে বল আবার ক্রিকেটারদের কোর্টে গড়িয়ে দিল ভারতীয় বোর্ড। সরকারি ঘোষণার কয়েক ঘণ্টার মধ্যে কলকাতায় জগমোহন ডালমিয়া বলে দিলেন, ক্রিকেটারেরা খেলতে যাচ্ছে। যুদ্ধ করতে নয়। পাক সফরে যাওয়ার জন্য কাউকে জোর দেওয়া হবে না।

যা দাঁড়াল, ক্রিকেটারদের এখন নিজেদেরই সিদ্ধান্ত নিতে হবে, তাঁরা পাকিস্তানে যাবেন না নিরাপত্তার প্রশ্নে অটল থাকবেন। এমনিতে সৌরভদের দলে এই সফরকে ঘিরে খুব একটা আগ্রহ তৈরি হয়েছে বলে খবর নেই। অধিনায়ক-সহ দলের অনেকেই শনিবার লক্ষ্মীতে। ভারতীয় দলের স্পিনসর সহায়ার কর্ণধার সুব্রত রায়ের ছেলের বিয়ের অনুষ্ঠানে। সোমবার ডি ডি এস লক্ষ্মণের বিয়েতেও অনেকে যাবেন। মনে করা হচ্ছে দুই বিয়ে বাড়িতে ক্রিকেটারদের সম্মেলনে সৌরভদের সিদ্ধান্ত ঠিক হয়ে যাবে।

বোর্ড প্রধান অবশ্য তার আগে একপ্রকার হুমকিই দিয়ে রাখলেন সচিনদের। “কেউ যদি নিরাপত্তার অভাব বোধ করে তার অধিকার আছে সরে দাঁড়ানোর,” বলেন ডালমিয়া। তারকা ক্রিকেটারদের অনেকে পাকিস্তানে যেতে চাইছেন না। অনিচ্ছুকদের দলে সচিন তেড্ডুলকরও আছেন। ডালমিয়া কারও নাম না নিয়ে বলেন, “মাঠের মধ্যে জুনিয়র, সিনিয়র, গুরুত্বপূর্ণ, কম গুরুত্বপূর্ণ বলে কিছু নেই। ও সব মাঠের বাইরের বিশ্লেষণ। হতে পারে কেউ হয়তো বেশি ভাল। কেউ হয়তো ততটা ভাল নয়। কিন্তু মাঠের মধ্যে ভারত খেললে এগারো জনেরই সমান গুরুত্ব।”

তবে নিরাপত্তা এবং অবশ্যই ক্রিকেটারদের ক্লাস্তির কথা ভেবে পাক সফর ছোট হওয়া একপ্রকার নিশ্চিত। আগে ঠিক ছিল মার্চের ৪ কিংবা ৫ তারিখে রওনা হবে দল। এখনও সেই চেষ্টা চালিয়ে যাওয়া হচ্ছে। তবে সফর আরও কিছু দিন পিছিয়ে যাওয়ার সম্ভাবনাও উড়িয়ে দেওয়া যাচ্ছে না। শোয়েবদের দেশে তিনটি টেস্ট ও পাঁচটি এক দিনের ম্যাচ খেলার কথা সৌরভদের। সব মিলিয়ে প্রায় চল্লিশ দিনের সফর ছিল। সেটাকে কাটছাট করা হতে পারে। প্রথম টেস্ট সিরিজ খেলে নিয়ে নির্বাচনের পরে

এক দিনের ম্যাচ খেলতে যাওয়ার বিকল্প পথও খোলা রাখা হচ্ছে। নির্বাচনের দিন ক্ষণ জানান পরেই চূড়ান্ত সিদ্ধান্ত হবে। আর পাকিস্তান সফরের জন্য ভারতীয় দল নির্বাচন হয়ে যেতে পারে এ মাসের শেষার্শে। আপাতত করাচি এবং পেশোয়ারকে টেস্ট কেন্দ্র করা নিয়ে ভারতীয় বোর্ডের একাংশের সায় নেই। পাকিস্তানে ক্রিকেট কেন্দ্র গুলির মধ্যে করাচি এবং পেশোয়ার সবথেকে উত্তেজনাগ্রন্থ। বোর্ডের মধ্যে কেউ কেউ এমন যুক্তিও তুলছেন যে করাচিতে কোনও দেশই খেলতে চায়নি ইদানিং কালে। পাঁচ দিনের টেস্ট মানে অন্তত সাত দিন সেখানে থাকার হ্যাঁপা। পাকিস্তান বোর্ডকে তাই বলা হতে পারে যে করাচি বা পেশোয়ারে টেস্ট না করে ওয়ান ডে দেওয়া হোক। স্বরাষ্ট্রমন্ত্রক থেকে যোগাযোগ করে যেমন জানানো হয়নি সফর পিছিয়ে যাচ্ছে, সফর হচ্ছে এমন বার্তাও সরকারি ভাবে এখনও পাননি ডালমিয়া। তবে এ বার আর দু’দিনের

এর পর পাঁচের পাতায়

ANADABAZAR PATRIKA 15 FEB 2008

Board wants clear directive from Centre

Pradeep Magazine
and Shekhar Iyer
New Delhi, February 13

TIRED OF being pressured through "nothing official about it" methods to stop India's Pakistan tour from going ahead in March, BCCI chief Jagmohan Dalmiya told *Hindustan Times* on Friday he "needs a clear directive" from the home ministry whether the Centre wants the tour cancelled or postponed. "I won't let anyone fire from my shoulders," Dalmiya said.

The misgivings in a section of the government over whether the team should go to Pakistan have never been officially conveyed to Dalmiya. "I have heard nothing from the government so far. I get to know what I am being told by the government from the papers I read," the BCCI chief said.

Sources close to Dalmiya said he's told them he would abide by whatever the government eventually decides, but that he would also reveal the "real reasons" for the tour being cancelled or postponed if the BCCI is forced to announce such a decision.

Dalmiya is the only person who's been willing to go on record on an issue that gets murkier by the day. First, agencies under the MHA cited the security threat to players as a reason for cancellation. When every other body concerned, including the RAW (and even Pakistan-based terror outfits), said the fears were unfounded, a more plausible reason for the opposition to the tour came to light: the sensitive issue of Indo-Pak cricket would affect the coming polls.

At a meeting in the PMO on Thursday, there was concern that politics would have to compete against cricket during the campaign — voters would rather watch the matches than watch their *netas*. While this was discussed as a no-win situation for all parties, there were issues beneath this that specifically af-

Slog before start



BOUNCER Pakistan Board threatens to approach ICC for sanctions against India if the tour is cancelled

NO-BALL Indian officials at Wagah stop kabaddi team from entering Pakistan for a series because players didn't have special permission to cross border on foot

ected the BJP. The possibility of communal tension during the tour came up. It was felt that this could prove a huge embarrassment for the government.

But a greater embarrassment, according to the no-tour lobby, would be to go to Pakistan and lose. The feel-good wave the BJP is riding would vanish, it said.

Now, a new proposal is doing the rounds: have a short "peace series" of one-dayers now and go on the 40-day tour after the polls. There is a problem with this: India's schedule next year is set and it would be logistically impossible to accommodate a tour.

Eventually, it will be up to the Prime Minister to decide the fate of this idea — and the tour. He hasn't revealed his mind yet.

Dalmiya hasn't heard about the proposed "peace series". He will read about it in the *HT*.

Militants won't play spoilsport

BCCI ALSO SATISFIED WITH PAK MEASURES

Mubashir Zaidi
Islamabad, February 11

MILITANT GROUPS have denied that they have any intention of mounting attacks against the Indian cricket team when it tours Pakistan. And the Pakistani Interior Ministry has also discounted the threat of a terrorist strike.

Spokesmen of the Khuddamul Islam (formerly Jaish-e-Mohammed), Jamaat-ud-dawa (formerly Lashkar-e-Tayyeba) and Hizbul Mujahideen said they would not disrupt the tour.

A Jaish spokesman said Islamabad's crackdown has paralysed the outfit and the accusation that it has plans to attack the Indian team is a "propaganda stunt" by the Indian government.

Jamaat-ud and Hizb spokesmen said they do not and will not target civilians. The Jamaat-ud spokesman also said India might be using the bogey of a militant strike to "shy away from facing the Pakistani team".

The Pakistan interior ministry said the only possible threat is that of a suicide bombing and the tour is 99 per cent secure. Given the attack on Pervez Musharraf, officials say, nothing can be completely ruled out.

But the security blanket is pretty all-encompassing. Interior ministry officials say a 100-strong security team incorporating anti-terrorist commandos will be present at all match venues. Spectators will be thoroughly screened at the gates and allowed to carry only posters. They will not be allowed to get anywhere near the players.

Despite these measures, there are obvious misgivings in India. One section in the government

is trying to put obstructions in the way of the tour, citing past threats. But RAW has told the government that though the threats can never be completely discounted, the tour, which is a significant part of the peace process, should go ahead.

Sources in New Delhi say the three-member team — comprising two BCCI officials and an IB official — now in Pakistan to review security has asked the authorities to provide information about owners, partners, promoters and staff of hotels where the Indian team will stay. The Pak authorities have promised to oblige.

Pakistan has, however, turned down the suggestion that Indian security teams man the inner cordon of hotel security (as they did for A.B. Vajpayee), say intelligence sources.

The three-member Indian delegation that's in Pakistan to review security for the forthcoming tour is satisfied with the arrangements being planned. But some of the players are concerned about the psychological pressures that too much security can bring about.

The impression the players have is that they will be cooped up in their hotel rooms on the tour and allowed out only for practice sessions.

A senior Indian player told HT on Tuesday that it would "in any case be a tough tour" and "if we have to be confined to the hotel or ground, it will be tremendously draining mentally". But Pakistani Cricket Board official dispelled this fear: "We have made it very clear that this won't be the case."

(With inputs from Kadambari Murali/Chandan Nandy and Rajnish Sharma)

TO SAY WE'RE GOING TO TARGET THE INDIAN TEAM IS JUST INDIAN PROPAGANDA'

Naqshbandi, spokesman for Khuddamul Islam (formerly JAISH-e-Mohammad, whose commander Masood Azhar, right, is on the run)

'It may be a ploy by India to avoid facing the Pakistan cricket team'

Abu Zaid, spokesman for Jamaat-ud-Dawa (formerly LASHKAR-e-Tayyeba)

'We only target Indian security forces'

A spokesman for HIZBUL-Mujahideen



MEANWHILE, there's a tussle within the Indian govt on whether the tour should go ahead. Agencies under the Home Ministry have been cautiously negative. But RAW is cautiously positive

News analysis P5

THREE KEY ISSUES

1 Will the players be SAFE?

Pak seems determined to ensure this. The BCCI team has said it's satisfied as of now

2 Will the security be STIFLING?

It will be tight, says Pak. But if players want to move around, all they need to do is give an hour's notice

3 Will TRICKY VENUES be changed?

Pak is open to this. But even in Peshawar, (the most tricky) the BCCI team hasn't found cause for concern

US body puts India on list of intolerant countries

S. Rajagopalan
Washington, February 11

THE US Commission on International Religious Freedom has again recommended the inclusion of India to the list of "countries of particular concern (CPC)". The recommendation, however, was not unanimous, for four of the commission's nine members were against the move.

The commission justified the recommendation on grounds of "continuing violence against Muslims and Christians" and the Indian government's failure to adequately address the Gujarat killings.

But Chairperson Michael K. Young, Vice-chairperson Felice D. Gaer, only Indian member Preeta D Bansal and Archbishop Charles J Chaput said it would be "inappropriate at this time" to include India in the CPC list.

"India has the legal and democratic traditions to deal with religious intolerance and should be strongly encouraged to do so," the four said in their note of dissent.

But the dissenters too were harsh on India's record of continuing attacks on religious minorities. "We remain deeply concerned over incidents of religiously-based violence in Gujarat and other parts of India that have resulted in loss of life, physical abuse, displacement and other abuses," the four dissenters' note said.

"Moreover, we are very concerned that justice has not been done for the victims of the violence against Muslims that took place in Gujarat in early 2002, and that incidents of mob violence against Christians, Muslims and other religious minorities have continued in parts of the country," the note said.

GRAPHICS: ASHUTOSH SAPRU

ভোট এল, ক্রিকেট দল পাকিস্তানের ছাড়পত্র পেলেন

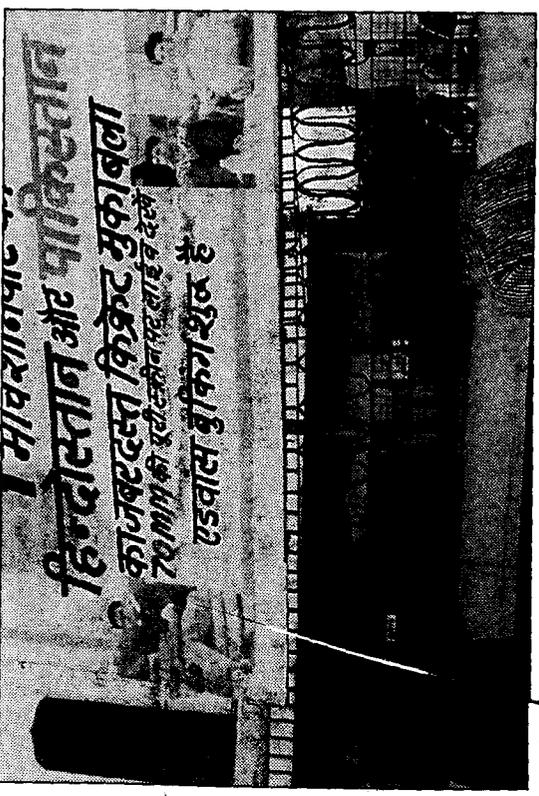
২৫শে আগস্ট ১৯৫৭

শিব সৈনিকদের আপত্তি সত্ত্বেও ভারতীয় ক্রিকেট দলের পাকিস্তান সফরে সম্মতি দিয়ে বি জে পি তার উদার ভাবমূর্তিকে শক্ত করতে পেরেছে। মুসলিমদের একটা বড় অংশকে বি জে পি সন্তোষিত করে তাদের মনোভাব পাল্টাতে এই সিদ্ধান্ত অনুপ্রেরণা দেবে না কি? লিখছেন বোরিয়া মজুমদার

তার আগে নয়। তা, এখনও যখন বিপাকিক সম্পর্কের উন্নতি সম্ভাবনা মাত্র, নাও হতে পারে' কথাটা যখন একেবারে ভিত্তিহীন হয়ে পড়েনি, তখন কী এমন হল যে সরকার তার ঘোষিত নীতি থেকে সরে এল? বলা যেতেই পারে, ভারতীয় ক্রিকেট দলের পাকিস্তানের প্রস্তাবটিকে সমর্থন জানানো হল নির্বাচনের ঠিক আগে বি জে পি নেতৃত্বের রাজনৈতিক 'মাস্টার স্ট্রোক'। শিব সৈনিকদের আপত্তি সত্ত্বেও এই সফরে সম্মতি দিয়ে বি জে পি তাদের উদার ভাবমূর্তিকে শক্ত করতে পেরেছে। এপ্রিলের তোটে মুসলিমদের একটা বড় অংশকে বি জে পি সন্তোষিত করে তাদের মনোভাব পাল্টাতে এই সিদ্ধান্ত অনুপ্রেরণা দেবে না, এ কথা কে বলতে পারে? অন্য দিকে, যখন আমেরিকা এবং ব্রিটেনের মতো দেশগুলো বেশ

তুলেছিলেন। অন্য সময়ে সরকারও এ ধরনের ঘটনায় বিচলিত হত। এখন কিন্তু সরকারের বক্তব্য, এই সফর সম্পূর্ণ ভাবে বি সি সি আই-এর ব্যাপার। সফর বাতিল করতে চাইলে বি সি সি আই করুক, সরকার অন্তত তখনও বলতে পারবে যে তারা পূর্ণ সমর্থন করেছিল যাতে দু'দেশের জাতীয় দলের মধ্যে খেলা, তাদের নিজেদের মার্জিত, আবার শুরু করা যায়। জাতীয় জীবনের সবচেয়ে গুরুত্বপূর্ণ ঘটনা হল নির্বাচন। সেই নির্বাচনকে যা এ ভাবে প্রভাবিত করতে পারে, তাকে কি নিষেধ করা বা বিলম্ব করা চলে? না কি ক্রিকেট ভারতীয় জনজীবনে খেলা ছাড়াও আরও অনেক কিছু? এখনও কেন ক্রিকেটের রাজনৈতিক বা অর্থনৈতিক তাৎপর্য বিবেচনা করতে গেলে শঙ্কতে হবে,

যে অঙ্গকারের ছবি এই যোগাজিনে আঁকা হয়েছে তাকে আক্রমণ করার উপায় কিন্তু হাতের কাছেই রয়েছে—ক্রিকেট। এই একটা ক্ষেত্রে ভারত সদর্থেই বিশ্ব শাসন করছে। ভারতীয় দল পাকিস্তানে গেলে তারা ধন্য হয়, সিন্ড ওয়-র অবসরের শ্রেষ্ঠ বাণিজ্যিক ফসল ভারতের বাজার থেকেই তুলতে হয়, ম্যাঞ্চু হেডেন বিশ্ব রেকর্ড করলে তাঁর এজেন্টকে প্রথমেই ভারতে ছুটে আসতে হয় কেন কোম্পানি তাঁকে ব্যবহার করতে ইচ্ছুক জানতে। আর, আবার ক্ষমতায় ফিরে আসতে চাইলে ভারতীয় ক্রিকেট দলকে ঠিক সময়ে পাকিস্তানেও পাঠাতে হয়। 'লগান'-এর ভূবন ঠিকই বলেছিলেন, ইংরেজদের কাছে এটা শুধুমাত্র খেলা হতে পারে, আমাদের কাছে আরও অনেক কিছু। ক্রিকেট ভারতীয়দের কাছে অস্বস্ত সত্যি সত্যিই 'জীবন'।



৩য় খেলা! বিশ্বকাপ ক্রিকেটে (১০০২) ভারত পাকিস্তান ম্যাচ টিকেট কেটে বড় পর্দা য় দেখার আনন্দ। অমৃতসর

কিছু বছর ধরে ক্রমাগত ভারত-পাকিস্তান সম্পর্কের উন্নতি চেষ্টা এসেছে এবং পাকিস্তান প্রেসিডেন্ট বার বারই বলেছেন, ভারতই এই উন্নতির পথে অগ্রবায়, তখন এই সফর সমর্থন—যা কি না পাকিস্তানি অর্থনৈতিক বিশদ ভাবে সাহায্য করবে—আন্তর্জাতিক রাজনীতির বাজারে বি জে পি-র ভাবমূর্তি ঝালকটা হলো পাল্টে দেবে। গভীর রাজনৈতিক তাৎপর্যটিই সফরের কোনও নামকরণ করার ব্যাপারে ভারতীয় বোর্ডের সামনে বড় অন্তরায়। বোর্ডপ্রধান ঠিকই বলেছেন, 'ফ্রেডশিপ ট্যুর' বা 'মেরী সফর' নামটি বেশ গোলমালে কয়েক বছর বাদে যদি রাজনৈতিক কারণে এই সফর বন্ধ হয়ে যায়—যা কি না হতেই পারে—তখন প্রশ্ন উঠবে, 'ফ্রেডশিপ'-এর লগটা কী? এই সফরের রাজনৈতিক তাৎপর্য আরও গুরুত্বপূর্ণ হয়ে ওঠে যখন দেখা যায় যে, পাকিস্তানি প্রেসিডেন্টের ওপর আক্রমণ আমাদের ক্রিকেটাররা কিছুটা হলো বিচলিত হয়ে পড়েছিলেন এবং অনেকে সফর পিছিয়ে দেওয়ার বা বাতিল করার কথাও

বিস্তারিত পর মানুষ এমন বর পায়— ভারতীয় দলের পাকিস্তান সফর ছাড়পত্র পাওয়ার পরে পাকিস্তান সরকার বা সে দেশের জনগণ নিশ্চয়ই এমনটাই ভাবছেন। গত কয়েক বছরে অস্ট্রেলিয়া, নিউজিল্যান্ড ও ভারত পাকিস্তান সফর বাতিল করার সে-দেশের ক্রিকেট সংস্থার প্রচুর আর্থিক লোকসান হয়েছে। ভারতীয় উপমহাদেশে ক্রিকেটের গুরুত্বের কথা মাথায় রাখলে বলাই যায় যে, এই দলান শুধু ক্রিকেট বোর্ডের নয়, পাক রাষ্ট্রশক্তির র বেশ বড় আঘাত। ক্রিকেট নামক সোনার হাঁসটি গর করতে না পারলে যে এই উপমহাদেশে আর্থিক র সমৃদ্ধ সম্ভবনা, সেটা না বলালেও চলে। তাই এই ১০ দেশের কাছে আশীর্বাদের মতো।

ত পাকিস্তান, ভারত-পাকিস্তান বিপাকিক সম্পর্কে উন্নতির সম্ভাবনা দেখা যাচ্ছে তার সঙ্গে সঙ্গতি ধই এই সিদ্ধান্ত। দিল্লি-লাহোর বাস চালানোর গাই ক্রিকেট দু'দেশের মেলী বাড়াবে আশা করে নীতিবিদরা এই সফর সমর্থন করেছেন। মুক্তিটি াত সত্য, পুরোপুরি নয়। গত তিন বছরের মধ্যে

কেন অথবা জটিল করছ, তোমাদের জন্য ক্রিকেট আর খেলা থাকল না! ইংরেজ সাংবাদিক সাইমন বার্নস ঠিকই বলেছেন, যে দিন থেকে মাঠে জাতীয় সংগীত বাজানো শুরু হয়েছিল, সে দিন থেকেই কিন্তু খেলা আর খেলা নেই, তা এক ধরনের জাতীয়তাবাদী পরিচয়ের নিশানা বা হস্তিয়ার।

কেন অথবা জটিল করছ, তোমাদের জন্য ক্রিকেট আর খেলা থাকল না! ইংরেজ সাংবাদিক সাইমন বার্নস ঠিকই বলেছেন, যে দিন থেকে মাঠে জাতীয় সংগীত বাজানো শুরু হয়েছিল, সে দিন থেকেই কিন্তু খেলা আর খেলা নেই, তা এক ধরনের জাতীয়তাবাদী পরিচয়ের নিশানা বা হস্তিয়ার।

লেখক ইপ্সাভে ডিমস্টকোট
বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়ে ইন্টারন্যাশনাল রিসার্চ সেন্টার কর
স্পোর্টস-এর সহ-অধিকর্তা