

INDIA'S MANOHAR TO STAY ON AS ICC CHAIRMAN

DHARAMSALA: India's Shashank Manohar has deferred his resignation as the chairman of the International Cricket Council to see through a reform programme, the game's world governing body said yesterday.

Manohar quit earlier this month in the middle of an overhaul of the ICC's governance designed to reduce the power of cricket's most powerful nations—India, Australia and England. He agreed to withdraw his resignation temporarily after the ICC board asked him to see through the restructuring.

"In a significant show of support for Manohar the board asked him to withdraw his resignation or at the very least defer it until the ongoing process relating to governance and financial restructuring are

completed," the ICC said in a statement. Manohar ended his two-year stint as ICC chairman just eight months into the job after the divisions between the powerful Indian board and most of the rest of the game erupted into the open.

India had last month voted against a proposed shake-up of the ICC, fearing a curb of its earnings and clout as a result of the changes to the organisation's financial and governance structure.

Manohar had argued that the reforms would ensure "a more equitable distribution of revenues" and greater equality in the game by attaching the same weight to each member nation's vote in board meetings.

The ICC statement yesterday quoted the 59-year-

old former head of the Indian board as saying it was his duty to ensure a smooth transition.

"I respect the sentiments expressed by the directors and the confidence they have reposed in me," he said. "In the light of this, and although my decision to depart due to personal reasons has not changed, I am willing to continue as chairman."

The Indian cricket board said it had shared its concerns over the new financial model with Manohar prior to his resignation. "It is important that the current issues are resolved to everyone's satisfaction," said Vikram Limaye, an administrative member of the Board of Control for Cricket in India. "We are committed to working with ICC for a satisfactory resolution of these issues." —AFP

WEST INDIES LOOK TO REVIVE FORTUNES AGAINST PAKISTAN

BRIDGETOWN: World champions West Indies will be seeking to erase the recent memory of a pitiful showing in the United Arab Emirates when they commence a T20 International series against Pakistan at Kensington Oval in Barbados tomorrow. With their strife-torn squad obliterated in all three matches at the start of the campaign in the UAE last September, Carlos Brathwaite's team has the opportunity to make an immediate statement on home soil against a Pakistan side that has also been inactive as a national unit since those comprehensive triumphs in Dubai and Abu Dhabi.

However, a cloud hangs over the visitors in the aftermath of a corruption scandal that emerged during last month's Pakistan Super League with five players, including regular internationals Sharjeel Khan and Mohammad Irfan, prevented from leaving their homeland as investigations continue into spot-fixing allegations.

Their absence presents an opportunity, either for players emerging from a period in the wilderness, like opening batsman Ahmed Shehzad and veteran all-rounder Mohammad Hafeez, or newcomers like Shadab Khan and Fakhar Zaman to stake their claims to regular international duty.

Sunday's match is the first of four—a rarity in bilateral T20 International series—with the remaining three at the Queen's Park Oval in Trinidad at the end of the week.

Yet for all the excitement and hype generated by cricket's most abbreviated and lucrative format, it is fair to suggest that both teams will have a greater level of focus and intensity in the three-match One-day International series that follows in Guyana, especially with the West Indies desperate to stay in the hunt for an automatic qualifying spot for the 2019 Cricket World Cup in England.

HUMILIATION

Trounced 3-0 in their own backyard by the English just two weeks ago, including a 186-run humiliation at Kensington Oval in the final match, the two-time former World Cup winners continue to languish in ninth spot in the rankings on 84 points, five behind the Pakistanis, who will want to ensure they maintain that eighth spot and even improve to advance automatically to the World Cup.

Pakistan have already pipped the West Indies for the last available spot at June's Champions Trophy in England, and although the Caribbean side will still have the chance to get to the World Cup via the qualifying tournament in Bangladesh next year, failing to qualify as one of the top eight teams will be seen as yet another embarrassment for the one-time undisputed kings of the game. In what is believed will be his final series before bowing out of the international game, Misbah ul Haq will then lead Pakistan in three Tests at the conclusion of the ODI duel as the visitors seek to make history by winning a Test series in the Caribbean for the first time.

Pakistan briefly reigned at the top of the Test rankings during the series against the West Indies in the UAE last November, although defeat to Jason Holder's men in the final Test in Sharjah not only halted their quest for a clean sweep of the entire campaign but triggered a decline with the Pakistanis being swept in two Tests in New Zealand and three in Australia. — AFP



DHARAMSALA: Tibetan spiritual leader the Dalai Lama talks with Australian cricket team captain Steven Smith during an interaction with the team at the Tsuglakhang temple in Dharamsala, India, yesterday. — AP

CRICKET

INDIA'S KOHLI IN DOUBT FOR AUSTRALIA SHOWDOWN

DHARAMSALA: Injured Indian skipper Virat Kohli said yesterday he would play the fourth Test against Australia only if he was 100 percent fit, keeping up the suspense over his participation in the series decider.

Kohli, who injured his shoulder during the drawn third Test in Ranchi, said he would undergo fitness tests before taking a final call on whether to take the field in the fourth and final Test which begins Saturday.

"Obviously if I am 100 percent fit for the game (that) is the only condition on which I will take the field," Kohli, 28, said at the pre-match press conference in Dharamsala.

"The physio can explain better (the risks of playing despite carrying an injury). I don't know the magnitude of the risk but all I know is the fitness tests, if I go through them I will take the field." On Thursday the Indian team management rushed in uncapped batsman Shreyas Iyer as a cover for Kohli, who has led India to victory in nine of their last 12 Tests at home.

Kohli has had a disappointing series against Australia, managing just 46 runs in the first three Tests of a series between the world's top two sides which is tantalisingly poised at 1-1 as it reaches its climax.

Kohli, who batted in the nets Friday, said the full extent of an injury could only be known in match conditions and that he would strictly follow the advice of the physiotherapist. "Those are the things you need to keep in mind, the physio wants to give it a bit more time till I test myself," said the right-hander.

"And probably we will take a call on it later tonight or tomorrow (Saturday) so I think we will have to give that much time more for me to make that call with the physiotherapist."

'RAHANE MORE CHILLED OUT'

Rival captain Steve Smith said India would still be in very good hands if Kohli was forced out of action, with Ajinkya Rahane having proved his credentials as a stand-in during the Ranchi Test.

Kohli was off the field during most of Australia's first innings in Ranchi but he did come out to bat at his usual number four position and took the field during Australia's second innings.

"He (Rahane) is probably a bit more chilled out on the field, probably not as emotional but I think he understands the game really well," said Smith. "I have been fortunate enough to play a fair bit of cricket with Ajinkya and I think he reads and understands the game really well."

Smith and Kohli have been at loggerheads since the Indian skipper accused his opposite number of systematically abusing the Decision Review System (DRS) during the second Test in Bangalore. Kohli, who has been compared in the Australian press to US President Donald Trump, has especially come under scrutiny both over his form and his conduct under pressure.

Smith however sought to put the controversies on the back burner, saying the team was focused on playing good cricket over the next five days.

"As I said, it's an exciting time for this team. For me it's not about worrying about the end or the result," said Smith, as Australia chase their first Test series win in India in 13 years.

"It's about focusing on our process and making sure we do those really well. If we can do again and do it for a little bit longer than we did in Ranchi or Bangalore, then hopefully the result will take care of itself." — AFP