

INDIA, PAKISTAN DEADLOCK CONTINUES ON CRICKET SERIES

DUBAI: The deadlock over a proposed series between arch-rivals India and Pakistan continued despite a meeting between the heads of the two boards in Dubai yesterday, described as "fruitful" but without a breakthrough.

The newly-elected president of the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) Shashank Manohar, who is in Dubai to familiarise with the working of the International Cricket Council (ICC), invited Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) chairman Shaharyar Khan for a meeting at the ICC headquarters.

The meeting was also attended by

PCB Executive Committee head Najam Sethi and Giles Clarke, the president of the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB). Khan said the meeting with Manohar had been "fruitful." "We had a fruitful meeting in which Sethi was there, Clarke was there as facilitator, it was a fruitful meeting and the decision is that Clarke will brief the media tomorrow," Khan told media.

"We have also decided that there will be no further briefing. I am not in a position to say more than this." Earlier in the day, Manohar told The National newspaper that India have not received a reply

from the PCB on a proposal to play the matches in India.

"We want to play in India. That is the thing," Manohar said. "Presently, we gave an option to Pakistan asking them whether they will come to India. Pakistan was to get back to me, they haven't got back to me. So I don't know what is the position."

Khan maintained his team will not travel to India and would play the series in the United Arab Emirates (UAE), as agreed under the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed last year. Khan said a final decision on the series

will only be taken by the Pakistani government. "The matter is now political," Khan said on Friday. "Pakistan's prime minister Nawaz Sharif has directed us that any decision will now be taken by the government and not by the PCB."

Pakistan and India have not played a bilateral series since 2007. India stalled cricketing ties in the aftermath of 2008 terrorist attacks on Mumbai, which were blamed on militants based in Pakistan.

Under the MoU both the boards had agreed to play six series between 2015-2023, with four series to be hosted by Pakistan. But all series were subject to

clearance from the respective governments.

The December-January series comprises two Tests, five one-day and two Twenty20 internationals but with time running out the series could be shortened to limited over matches. There are reports that another neutral venue-Sri Lanka or Bangladesh-could also be considered, if India continued to refuse UAE as a venue.

The PCB had hoped that mediation by Clarke, also in Dubai to meet Manohar later Sunday, could help ensure a breakthrough on the fate of the series. — AFP

ICC TO EXPLORE OLYMPIC INCLUSION FOR CRICKET

DUBAI: Cricket's administrative body yesterday said that after a positive meeting with the officials of the International Olympic Committee it will explore ways to remove hurdles for the sport's inclusion at the Summer Games.

The sport's shortest format Twenty20 cricket has already been a part of the last two editions of Asian Games in Guangzhou (China 2010) and Incheon (South Korea 2014) but efforts to be included in the Olympic programme are far from being finalised.

The chief executive of the International Cricket Council (ICC) David Richardson and general manager cricket Geoff Allardice recently met IOC chief Thomas Bach in Lausanne, Switzerland to discuss cricket's inclusion at the Summer

Olympics. "We met the IOC president and we have really explored the possibilities, at least we are talking, and we are open to the opportunity if it's worthwhile to include cricket in Olympics," Richardson told BBC radio.

Richardson said it wasn't easy to get the nod. "If the ICC is committed then we have to overcome the hurdle of the IOC accepting cricket because there are a lot of other sports that want inclusion in the 2024 Olympics," said Richardson. "But it's not as simple as that and there are lot of issues that you need to consider and the Olympics might not want cricket, they don't want second rate teams and they don't want Micky Mouse format, they want our major format, the Twenty20," said Richardson. — AFP

TWENTY20 HELPS ASYLUM SEEKERS BREAK DOWN BARRIERS DOWN UNDER

SYDNEY: A shared love of cricket is helping a team of Sri Lankan asylum seekers break down barriers and build relationships in Australia, even among some of the most fervent supporters of the country's hardline immigration policies.

The team's name, Ocean's 12, is a tongue-in-cheek reference to the way many of the players arrived in Australian waters, part of a wave of Tamils who made the journey to Christmas Island on overcrowded, rickety boats.

"Horrible, starving, no water, big waves," opening batsman Praveen Uruthiran said of the journey, which cost him \$2,000 and involved 22 days at sea with 120 other people. Like his team mates, Uruthiran ended up in Villawood Detention Centre in Western Sydney with hundreds of others, unable to work or study while their asylum applications were processed.

Some of the team had been in the centre since arriving in Australian waters six or seven years previously when Last Man Stands, who run eight-a-side leagues around the world, started running a competition for detainees.

They then struck upon the idea of organising an "exit side" made up of asylum seekers who had been released from the centre on restrictive temporary protection visas to play in the main Sydney league. "When the guys first came out of the detention centre and first got involved in the competition, they were all really shy, their English was poor, they had no confidence at all," recalled Last Man Stands organiser Rob Stevenson. "The early games they played, they really weren't a good side. I remember playing against them the first couple of times and you could see the talent was there, but they didn't have the confidence to express themselves on

the cricket pitch." Stevenson said that changed when they began to build friendships.

Impressive improvement

"As a result of playing together, making new friends, feeling more part of Australia, they have emerged into an exceptional cricketing side and that's great to see," he added. The team showed impressive improvement over the first two years and in March Ocean's 12 became champions of Sydney. Team captain Stephen Nathan, an engineer, left Sri Lanka in the wake of the country's civil war.

"I couldn't stay there," says Nathan, who is still unable to work in Australia under the terms of his visa. "We are really enjoying playing cricket," he told Reuters after Ocean's 12 had beaten a charity side by 84 runs on the back of an 18-ball half century from Praveen. "We are very happy to play with Australian people. They are sportsmen all, so they are very (welcoming). "And it gives me peace of mind."

The team, who are helped financially by Blue Mountains Refugee Support and Last Man Stands, is not only the best team in the Sydney area, it has become one of the most popular. "These guys play right out in Western Sydney and there's a lot of guys there, white Australians, who really have a pretty poor opinion of asylum seekers and the whole boat-people thing," Stevenson said.

"But what you find, when these guys come to games, they bring along food, they help out other teams, they're always polite and now they're by far the most popular team in Western Sydney and all the other teams love them. "So it's great to see sport transcending the political and social boundaries, and all these other Aussies seeing them as just like them, they love cricket and so do we." — Reuters



MIAMI: Miami Heat guard Dwyane Wade, left, strips Philadelphia 76ers forward Robert Covington (33) of the ball during the second half of an NBA basketball game Saturday, in Miami. The Heat defeated the 76ers 96-91. — AP

HEAT ESCAPE, TOP 76ERS 96-91 TO KEEP PHILADELPHIA WINLESS

MIAMI: Dwyane Wade scored 27 points and the Miami Heat survived a major scare from winless Philadelphia, rallying from 17 points down to beat the 76ers 96-91 on Saturday night. Hassan Whiteside scored 13 points and added nine rebounds and eight blocks for the Heat, who went on a 19-2 run in a seven-minute stretch of the fourth quarter to escape. Chris Bosh also scored 13 for Miami. Philadelphia is now 0-14 this season - the ninth-worst start in NBA history - and has dropped 24 consecutive games going back to last season. Few of those were as winnable as this was, but the 76ers simply folded in the final minutes. Isaiah Canaan scored 22 for Philadelphia, and Robert Covington finished with 21.

KNICKS 107, ROCKETS 102

Kristaps Porzingis had 24 points, 14 rebounds and seven blocked shots to lead New York over slumping Houston. The Knicks (8-6) won their fourth straight overall. They also snapped an 11-game losing streak against the Rockets and a 10-game skid when playing in Houston. The Knicks didn't get their eighth win last season until Jan. 23, when they were 8-36. James Harden had 24 points, 10 assists and seven rebounds as the Rockets lost for the sixth time in their last seven games.

CAVALIERS 109, HAWKS 97

Kevin Love scored a season-high 25 points, LeBron James added 19 and Cleveland beat Atlanta. The teams met for the first time since the Cavaliers swept the Hawks in the Eastern Conference finals, and it didn't take long for Cleveland to continue its dominance. The Cavaliers took control after trailing 17-16 midway through the first quarter. Cleveland quickly built a 10-point lead, stretched the margin to 57-40 late in the first half and the Hawks never recovered. Hawks coach Mike Budenholzer was ejected in the second quarter after making contact with an official. Budenholzer was given a technical for arguing a call, bumped referee Ben Taylor after stepping on the floor and was quickly tossed.

WIZARDS 97, PISTONS 95

Nene scored 18 points and Otto Porter added 17 as Washington beat Detroit. The Wizards had the ball and a two-point lead with 9.2 seconds left, but Porter was called for a five-second violation on the inbound attempt. That gave Detroit a last chance, but

Marcus Morris missed a 3-pointer at the buzzer. Marcin Gortat finished with 14 points and eight rebounds, while Ramon Sessions had 14 points and nine assists off the bench. Washington's reserves outscored Detroit's 51-15. Reggie Jackson led the Pistons with 20 points and nine assists, while Morris had 18 points and nine rebounds. Andre Drummond failed to get a double-double for the first time this season, finishing with eight points and 13 rebounds. He also didn't get an offensive rebound in 37 minutes.

SPURS 92, GRIZZLIES 82

Kawhi Leonard scored 19 points, Tony Parker had 18 and San Antonio snapped Memphis' four-game winning streak. Manu Ginobili added 15 points for San Antonio, which is unbeaten in six home games. Tim Duncan had 10 points, including a pair of running floaters in the lane in the final 90 seconds to seal the victory, as well as 10 rebounds. Mike Conley had 16 points and Courtney Lee added 15 points off the bench. Memphis' only lead came on Tony Allen's 20-foot jumper to open the game. Neither team had its starting power forward. LaMarcus Aldridge was a late scratch with a sprained left ankle, his first missed game with San Antonio. Memphis' Zach Randolph was in uni-

form, but did not play in his second straight game due to right knee soreness.

KINGS 97, MAGIC 91

DeMarcus Cousins had 29 points and 12 rebounds as Sacramento held off Orlando. Rajon Rondo added 13 points, nine assists and seven rebounds for the Kings, who had lost two in a row. Marco Belinelli chipped in 13 points off the bench. Trailing 65-61, the Kings outscored the Magic 22-2 in the final 5:03 of the third quarter to take an 83-67 lead into the fourth. Sacramento led by as many as 16 points in the final period. Orlando surged within 87-80 in the fourth, but after Evan Fournier was called for a technical for arguing an offensive foul, the Kings got the lead back up to double digits. Tobias Harris led the Magic with 24 points. Fournier added 17.

PACERS 123, BUCKS 86

C.J. Miles scored a season-high 21 points to lead Indiana over Milwaukee. Paul George had 20 points and seven rebounds, and Jordan Hill added a season-high 20 points off the bench for the Pacers (8-5), who have won five of six. Greg Monroe had 11 points and 14 rebounds for the Bucks (5-8), who have lost three straight and five of six. Jabari Parker and O.J. Mayo each finished with 10 points. — AP

NBA Results/Standings

Sacramento 97, Orlando 91; Indiana 123, Milwaukee 86; Cleveland 109, Atlanta 97; Washington 97, Detroit 95; Miami 96, Philadelphia 91; NY Knicks 107, Houston 102; San Antonio 92, Memphis 82.

| Eastern Conference | | | | Western Conference | | | |
|--------------------|----|----|------|--------------------|---------------|----|------------|
| Atlantic Division | | | | Northwest Division | | | |
| | W | L | PCT | GB | | | |
| Boston | 7 | 5 | .583 | - | Oklahoma City | 7 | 6 .538 - |
| NY Knicks | 8 | 6 | .571 | - | Utah | 6 | 6 .500 0.5 |
| Toronto | 8 | 6 | .571 | - | Denver | 6 | 7 .462 1 |
| Brooklyn | 2 | 11 | .154 | 5.5 | Minnesota | 5 | 8 .385 2 |
| Philadelphia | 0 | 14 | 0 | 8 | Portland | 5 | 9 .357 2.5 |
| Central Division | | | | Pacific Division | | | |
| Cleveland | 10 | 3 | .769 | - | Golden State | 14 | 0 1.000 - |
| Chicago | 8 | 4 | .667 | 1.5 | Phoenix | 7 | 5 .583 6 |
| Indiana | 8 | 5 | .615 | 2 | LA Clippers | 6 | 6 .500 7 |
| Detroit | 7 | 6 | .538 | 3 | Sacramento | 5 | 9 .357 9 |
| Milwaukee | 5 | 8 | .385 | 5 | LA Lakers | 2 | 10 .167 11 |
| Southeast Division | | | | Southwest Division | | | |
| Miami | 8 | 4 | .667 | - | San Antonio | 10 | 3 .769 - |
| Atlanta | 9 | 6 | .600 | 0.5 | Dallas | 9 | 4 .692 1 |
| Washington | 6 | 4 | .600 | 1 | Memphis | 7 | 7 .500 3.5 |
| Charlotte | 7 | 6 | .538 | 1.5 | Houston | 5 | 9 .357 5.5 |
| Orlando | 6 | 7 | .462 | 2.5 | New Orleans | 2 | 11 .154 8. |



PERTH: New Zealand's Martin Guptill (L) plays a shot on the final day of a cricket tour match between New Zealand and Western Australia in Perth yesterday. — AFP