



Press release

INDIA AND PAKISTAN FIGHT AIDS THROUGH CRICKET

London/Geneva, 13 April 2004 – Players from the India and Pakistan cricket teams will wear the symbolic red ribbon as part of international cricket's commitment to raise awareness about HIV in today's third Test match, being held in Rawalpindi, Pakistan. As part of this ground-breaking initiative, the team captains will also be accompanied by an HIV-positive person for the coin toss before the match.

UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan sent a personal message to the Indian and Pakistani players to mark today's historic Test match. "As role models you can encourage young people to protect themselves from HIV and your leaders to pay more attention to the epidemic," said Mr Annan. "AIDS is a common enemy that both India and Pakistan have to fight together."

ICC President Ehsan Mani explained that in the time it takes to play a Test match, around 4,000 people will become infected with HIV in South Asia alone. "It is a very positive step that on the occasion of this historic series the players from India and Pakistan have united to raise awareness of AIDS, an issue of severe global concern," said Mr Mani, thanking the teams for their support. "The threat of AIDS in many cricket-playing countries is acute. It is in keeping with the spirit of cricket that the ICC and its members exercise this social responsibility."

Pakistan Cricket Board Chief Executive Ramiz Raja said the players were aware of the important role they can play in raising awareness of the epidemic. "In this part of the world we have been guilty of hiding from the threat of HIV and AIDS. Now the players have given this initiative their full support and I hope it will have a positive impact."

These awareness-raising activities are part of the "Run Out AIDS" campaign, launched by the ICC and UNAIDS in September 2003. The ICC/UNAIDS partnership is the first major partnership between UNAIDS and an international sports body.

"By wearing the red ribbon, the cricket players are sending a powerful message across the world and are helping to break down the walls of stigma and discrimination surrounding HIV," said Dr Peter Piot, Executive Director of the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS). "Of the estimated 40 million people living with HIV worldwide, over 12 million live in cricket-playing countries."

Since the launch of the ICC/UNAIDS partnership, many cricket teams and players have become personally engaged in the fight against AIDS. The coin toss by an HIV-positive person at the start of New Zealand's first Test match in India in October 2003 was hailed as a positive leap in India's prevention efforts and a vital step in reducing stigma.

On the occasion of World AIDS Day 2003, the national cricket teams from England, New Zealand, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, West Indies, and Zimbabwe wore the red ribbon during their matches. At the ICC U/19 Cricket World Cup in Bangladesh earlier this year, all of the teams participating in televised matches also supported the cause.

More than 20 million people have already died of AIDS since the beginning of the epidemic. Today's global epidemic is far worse than what was predicted ten years ago. AIDS killed more than three million people in 2003 and an estimated five million more became infected — bringing to some 40 million the number of people currently living with HIV worldwide. In India and South Africa, two of the major cricket-playing countries, over 9 million people are living with HIV.

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