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'Oman deserves to host international tourneys'

The three ICC Regional Development Officers, Iqbal Sikan- der, Venkatapathy Raju and Aminul Islam, who are here to conduct the ICC Level 2 coaching course, were all praise for facilities and cricket development in Oman

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MUSCAT: Impressed with the facilities and cricket development that took place in Oman, three of the International Cricket Council (ICC) Regional Development Officers are of the opinion that Sultanate should get more support to take the game forward, including the rights to host international tournaments.

The trio — Pakistan's Iqbal Sikan- der, India's Venkatapathy Raju and



IMPRESSED: ICC Regional Development Officers Iqbal Sikan- der, Venkatapathy Raju and Aminul Islam with the young cricketers of the Al Hail School of Cricket during their visit to the academy on Saturday.

Aminul Islam of Bangladesh — who are here to conduct the ICC Level 2 coaching course organised by Oman Cricket, spoke to Times Sport on Saturday night after a hectic day of activities, conducting the course and visiting the facilities, including that of privatelyowned Al Hail School of Cricket.

Iqbal Sikan- der, who is not new to Oman having visited the country on various assignments, said: "The in- frastructure is fast developing here. Oman can now boast of two venues with proper turf grounds. Then we have other private academies like Al Hail who have come up with their own green grounds. On the field too they have been doing reasonably well both in the T20s and the 50- overs tournaments, especially in the ICC World Cricket League division," he said.

"Looking at these facilities and considering the overall develop- ments, I think Oman deserves to

host the international tournaments. ICC Asia is already considering the plans to allot few tournaments to Oman," Iqbal said.

"Oman should at least get one tour- nament per year," Iqbal said while adding it could be a regional T20 tournament or a ICC World Cricket League event. "But they (Oman) surely deserve to host a tourna- ment."

Venkatapathy Raju, who is on his first visit to the Sultanate, echoed Iqbal's views on Oman's cricket fa- cilities.

"This is my visit to Oman but at least the national team are not new to me. I have been following the performances and I have watched them play in recent events in the UAE," the former India spinner said.

"But now after having the opportu- nity to visit some of the facilities, after coming here to host the

coaching course, I am really im- pressed by the facilities and I should say we all should appreciate the support Oman Cricket has been re- ceiving as well as their own efforts in the development work," Raju added.

"Credit should be given to all those who are involved with cricket in Oman and those who are supporting them. They are going out of their way to support cricket here.

"The two venues with turf grounds are no doubt great. Once they get all other aspects in place, they will have to maintain the standards and keep improving. I am also im- pressed with the other grounds as well. They are properly levelled and can be developed into green grounds in future," Raju said.

"But I should say, it's great to see the under-19 boys getting the op- portunity to play on turf pitches on lush green grounds," the Hyder-



POSITIVE: ICC Regional Development Officers Venkatapathy Raju, left, Iqbal Sikan- der, second right, and Aminul Islam, right, with Al Hail School of Cricket official Moulis Bakh Al Balushi.

abadi added. taken care, I think Al Hail will develop into the third cricket venue of Oman," he ex- plained.

Speaking about the ongoing ICC Level 2 coaching course, Iqbal said: "The course is being conducted as part of the development process... to educate and enhance the knowledge of the coaches."

"It's ICC Asia's decision to have a course here on Oman and help the coaches," he said.

The course which runs till Wednes- day has attracted coaches from countries like Iran, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Bahrain and UAE besides Oman.

Aminul Islam, who has recently be-

come a ICC Regional Development Officer, was impressed with the en- thusiasm of the participants.

"They (the participants) know the game. Most importantly they have played the game at some level and they have already passed their Level 1 course. This course is aimed at up- grading their knowledge," the for- mer Bangladesh captain said.

"They are very enthusiastic. I have no doubt they learn from this course and will go on to impart training to the future players for their respec- tive countries."

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