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Wendee Sakran/Gulf News

- Kapil Dev (centre) with Ajay Sethi, chairman of Channel 2 Group Corporation, and Abdullah Mohammad Al Murad, Chairman of Al Murad Group, addressing the media yesterday.

‘India-Pakistan matches should have pressure’

Kapil feels nobody in the world has played cricket like Indian skipper Kohli did in last five years

DUBAI

BY K.R. NAYAR

Chief Cricket Writer

Kapil Dev played cricket to entertain. He enjoys to regale with his frank views on the game as well as on players.

After a function held to celebrate Channel 2 and Channel 4 Radio network's 15 years of cricketing entertainment partnership that will bring oncoming Unimoml Asia Cup to the fans, Kapil spoke to Gulf News in his inimitable style.

When asked about the pressure that is likely to be there on the players during the India Pakistan clashes in the Asia Cup and how one should handle it, he said: "India Pakistan matches should have pressure. The best players perform better under pressure. I believe that if there is no pressure on a sportsman then there is no point. It is the pressure that often brings the best out of players. It is fun to have a bit of pressure."

Based on his experience, does he have any advice to Indian cricketers on how to win the Asia Cup? His response was: "Never give advice unless needed or asked. This is a lesson I learnt from [Sundil] Gavaskar."

Equally forthright was Kapil to the query on whether Virat Kohli's absence will affect the India team in the Asia Cup. "I feel no team should depend on one player. Sometimes the best player will not be there and the team should show the will to manage and win. Playing as a team is very important."

So what is it that is needed to win the Asia Cup? "Play as a unit," said Kapil, who had produced a hat-trick in the 1991 Asia Cup final in Kolkata against Sri Lanka. When asked to comment on his hat-trick he said: "When you play for so many years such performances are bound to happen. Remember, in cricket you will make zeros and sometimes you will go on to make hundreds. It is part of the game."

Work for the country

Kapil recalled of his days playing in Sharjah against Imran Khan, who is now the Prime Minister of Pakistan. When asked how it will be for Pakistan cricket team that will have a Prime Minister watching their performance, Kapil said: "I think Imran should look after the country rather than at his cricket team. There are a lot of people to look after the team. It is important he looks after his country and so I wish him all the luck."

Kapil is delighted with the rise of Kohli and his fighting qualities. "Kohli is a brilliant cricketer who has taken the challenge. We had Gavaskar, Sachin Tendulkar and Rahul Dravid but we did not expect to have a hero in every decade who will go on to become bigger than any other player. The way Kohli has been playing for the last five years, nobody in the world has played cricket like him."

Kapil also reacted strongly over media comparing him to young Indian all rounder Hardik Pandya. "The media is talking too much comparing him to me. Let him play his game. The best part is that he has the talent, so just give him time. If he is good he will come out good. So please don't put pressure on this youngster."

Does he have a message to youngsters who want to emulate him. "They should aim to emulate a player much better than me. Every generation you will have a better player. They should possess the passion to play for the country and just enjoy themselves."