

Cricket Cranes using Mumbai tour to shape bright future

BY INNOCENT NDAWULA

BOISAR, MUMBAI. Uganda's historic cricket tour to Mumbai has so far been defined by dominant performances on the field. The Cricket Cranes swept MCA Colts XI 4-0 in the 50-over series, adapted impressively to Indian conditions and boosted confidence ahead of major ICC assignments later this year.

But away from the scoreboards and celebrations, Cricket Uganda officials have quietly been working on something potentially even more important - building partnerships aimed at shaping the future of Ugandan cricket. Led by Cricket Uganda chairman Jackson Kavuma, the Ugandan delegation including Head of High Performance & Pathways Richard Okia, coach Steve Tikolo and team manager Charles

Waiswa have used the Mumbai Tour not only to compete but also to strengthen relationships within India's cricket ecosystem. One of the key engagements came during a visit to the Omtex I Can We Can (ICWC) Cricket Institute in Saphale, Mumbai where discussions focused on strengthening Uganda's high-performance structures from grassroots to senior national teams.

Future thinking

The meeting attended by Omtex Founder Pravin Raut alongside directors Vijay Patel and Rajesh Mahtre explored possible collaboration in sports science, rehabilitation, coaching education, player development and technical support. Raut believes Uganda already possess the raw talent required to compete internationally but says modern cricket

increasingly demands scientific support systems. "You have the talent but we want to add the scientific block onto your programmes," Raut said.

"That is how cricket is played all over the world now. It is data-driven and we believe as Omtex we can help Uganda become a better cricketing nation." The Cricket Uganda delegation toured the expanding facility which features multiple wicket surfaces, indoor practice areas, rehabilitation facilities, swimming pools and accommodation for academy players and visiting teams.

For Okia, the relationship could benefit Uganda beyond elite player development alone. "We want Omtex to be our one-go-to centre in terms of building our players and non-playing staff," Okia explained. "Right from the groundsmen learning



Shared Ambitions. Cricket Uganda chairman Kavuma shares a moment with Omtex ICWC Institute Founder Raut alongside Director Vijay after discussions. PHOTO/INNOCENT NDAWULA

how to prepare different wickets to our physiotherapists and coaches staying in sync with experts here, there is so much for us to benefit from."

Thinking alike

Coach Tikolo also welcomed the opportunity to expose Ugandan players and coaches to professional high-performance environments.

"As a national team coach, it is things like this that I love to see in the set-up," Tikolo said.

"Programmes like this motivate both players and coach-

es to work more. The presence of facilities is a driving factor." The relationship between Uganda and Omtex stretches back to 2020 with Uganda being among the earliest cricket programmes to visit the institute after its establishment. That connection has created a strong sense of mutual appreciation. "Uganda were the first country to visit Omtex when we opened up and we look at you as our own," Omtex director Vijay Patel said. "Your progress, especially playing at the 2024 World Cup is our joy."