

## Silva's ouster sets the heather on fire

## Ranatunga quits in protest

COLOMBO, Apr 7: Five top Sri Lankan cricket selectors resigned Thursday hours after skipper Arjuna Ranatunga quit, amid a worsening crisis over the removal of vice-captain Aravinda de Silva for next week's tour of Sharjah, reports AFP.

Former Test stars Duleep Mendis, Ranjan Madugalle and Roy Dias together with Daya Sahabandu and K M Nelson wrote to Sports Minister Nanda Mathew informing him of their decision to resign from the seven-member selection committee.

The five officials expressed displeasure about the decision to dump the in-form batsman De Silva and four others without providing them an opportunity for a second physical fitness test.

In a joint letter of resignation, the five said they had decided to quit because of the refusal of Sports Medicine Unit (SMU) of the Sports Ministry "to consider our appeal for another test."

"We believe that we would not be in a position to carry out our duties in a just and fair manner, and consequently were unable to select the best combination of players to represent the country at the forthcoming Sharjah tournament," the five selectors said.

They said that some of the players who were dropped on physical fitness grounds had performed "exceptionally well" in the domestic cricket tournaments. De Silva scored a double hundred in the premier domestic tournament last month.

The others who were left out of a 14-member squad to Sharjah were Test spinner Don Anurasiri, pace bowler Ravindra Pushpakumara, Sanjeewa Ranatunga and Ajith

## Pele pulls in his horns

ROME, Apr 7: Soccer legend Pele on Wednesday glossed over differences with FIFA president Joao Havelange and applauded the decision to grant him another four-year term as head of the game's world governing body, reports Reuter.

"I think these four more years represent a tribute to what Havelange has done for world soccer," Pele said of his fellow Brazilian.

"He is like a father to me and it's obviously good for Brazil too," added Pele, the man who inspired the "beautiful game" which swept the Brazilians to World Cup triumphs three times between 1958 and 1970.

The FIFA boss caused controversy in December when he barred Pele from the World Cup draw in Las Vegas over a row between the former player and Ricardo Teixeira, Havelange's son-in-law and head of the Brazilian Soccer Confederation (CBF).

The ban on the game's favourite son provoked fierce press criticism of Havelange's autocratic style and led to rumours of a move to oust the 77-year-old, head of FIFA since 1974.

But the five continental federations who comprise FIFA on Tuesday agreed to support Havelange's candidacy for a sixth and final four-year term.

The European Football Federation (UEFA) dropped plans to propose Italian Antonio Matarrese as a rival candidate after receiving unspecified guarantees from the ruling body.

Havelange will be reelected unopposed at the FIFA congress in Chicago on June 16, the eve of the World Cup finals.

In Rome on promotional work for a World Cup sponsor, Pele said he felt Argentine start Diego Maradona was wrong to try to play on the finals.

"I don't think that he will be in the right shape physically or mentally. He should have retired last year," Pele said.

Maradona, who led Argentina to victory in the 1986 finals and runners-up spot in 1990, has a history of drug abuse and has hardly played since quitting the Newell's Old Boys Club in February.

The Argentine's most dangerous shooting since then has been with an airgun, injuring four reporters after blasting away at reporters camped outside his house two months ago.

Pele, who ended his great career with the New York Cosmos in the ill-fated North American soccer league in the 1970s, tipped Colombia as one

when picking teams for both foreign and home series," said Miandad.

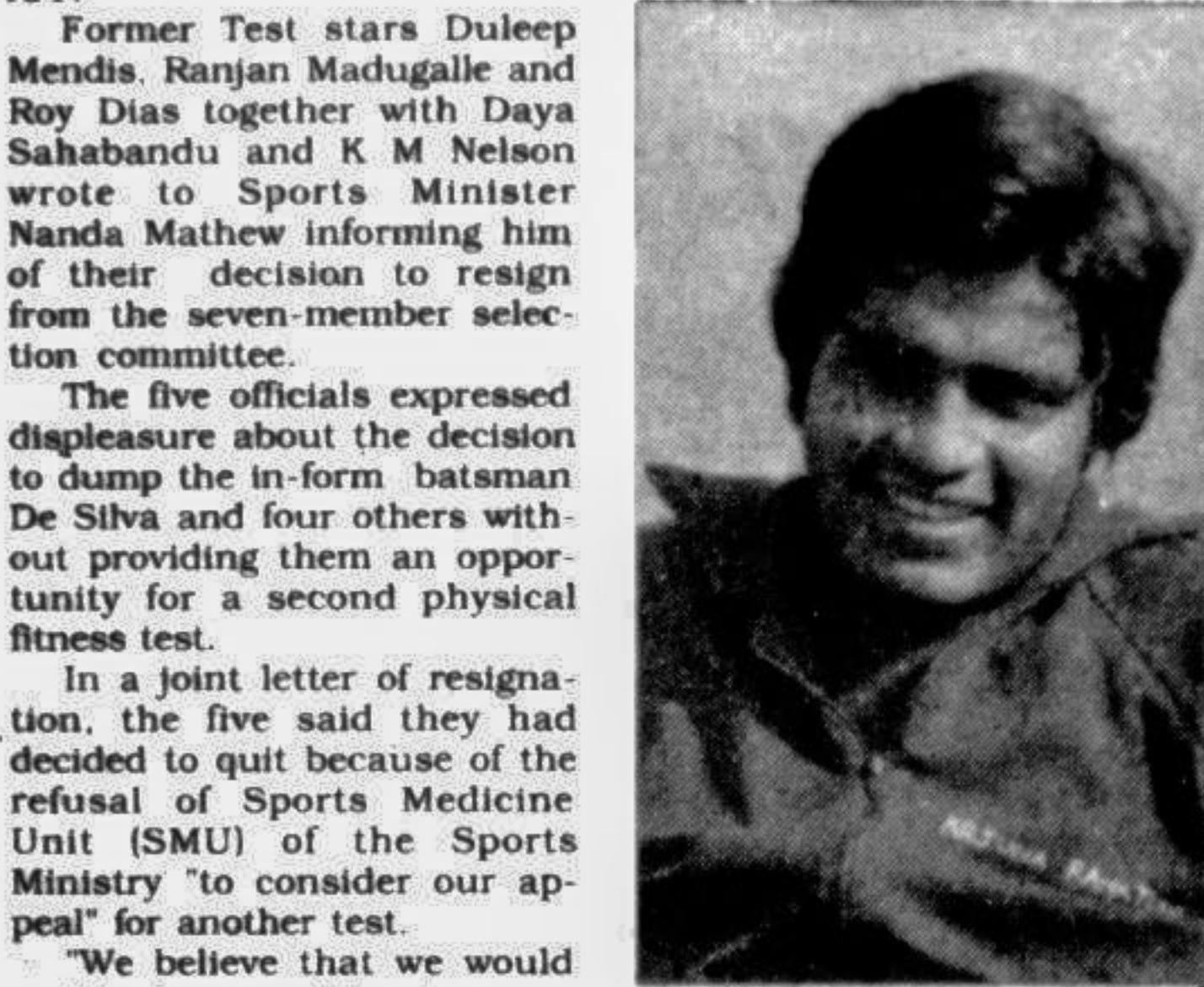
Supporters said they would organise protests and hunger strikes to force BCCP officials to reverse their decision to exclude Miandad from the 14-member squad for Sharjah.

BCCP officials said Miandad's performances had not been what was expected of him.

Miandad was excluded from

Ekanyake. The physical check was ordered by Minister Mathew, who is empowered to appoint selectors and reject or accept team selections. There was no immediate reaction from Mathew's office or the cricket board.

The chairman of selectors, Anuradha Polonowita, and another selector, T B



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Kelelgamuwa have stayed back in the committee.

The latest cricket controversy caused serious doubts over Sri Lanka's participation in the six-nation Australasia Cup tournament in Sharjah from April 13 to April 22.

The selectors' resignation followed skipper Arjuna Ranatunga's decision to pull out of the Sharjah tour, protesting the decision to axe De Silva purely on his failure to pass a fitness test.

"It's very difficult for me to go on this tour. My conscience is clear on this. I cannot accept the way the fitness test was done and its outcome," Ranatunga told AFP Thursday.

"It's very unfair and demor-

alising. When you have a world class player like Aravinda, why keep him out? If he can score a double hundred, an improper fitness test should not be the criteria for selection," Ranatunga said.

The Australasia Cup will also feature teams from Australia, New Zealand, Pakistan, India and the United Arab Emirates.

Former cricket administrators opposed to the action against De Silva said the fitness test was merely a cover to carry out a "well-planned conspiracy" to remove outspoken players like Ranatunga and De Silva.

The 28-year-old De Silva's exclusion also followed severe criticism of the diminutive batsman by a six-member committee that probed Sri Lanka's humiliation in India.

The committee also slated Ranatunga for "ineffective captaincy."

Linith Ratnayake, a doctor, who carried out the examination, said that most players did not satisfy international physical fitness requirements but the ministry was forced to lower the standard in order to field a team for Sharjah.

De Silva obtained a 35 per cent score which was well below the pass mark of 50 per cent.

De Silva, however, has questioned the validity of the test which came in the wake of growing criticism over the team's disastrous show during their January tour of India. Sri Lanka lost all three Tests by an innings inside four days.

"I think I am pretty fit. I don't have any injuries and I have been performing well in the (domestic) matches," De Silva said, a veteran of 131 one-day internationals and 41 Tests.

The players were tested for speed, strength, balance, flexibility, cardio-vascular and muscular endurance.

They could capitalise on England's vulnerability following the West Indies tour.

"I do tend to think we'll score more than 46 in a Test match," said Hadlee, making a sharp reference to England's dismal Test innings score in their current series against the West Indies in the Caribbean.

New Zealand has only won two Tests in England, with Hadlee playing in both victories in 1983 and 1986.

"We've had our moments, but this side could even do better than that. You only need one Test win and you've already matched the record for a New Zealand touring side."

He said following the southern summer, critics of the New Zealand team had to realise that sometimes the teams they were playing were simply better. Hadlee attributed New Zealand's downfall this season to three bowlers, Australian leg-spinner Shane Warne and the Pakistani pace duo of Wasim Akram and Waqar Younis.

"Only those three undid us, other than that, no-one else was a threat," he said. "We lacked a bit of confidence and obviously technique was a problem but we haven't had Martin Crowe, and Danny Morrison and Chris Cairns have had injury problems."

Miandad played 124 Tests, scoring 8,832 runs with the help of 23 centuries and 43 half-centuries, and held 93 catches. He is the third-highest Test run-scorer in history behind Allan Border of Australia and India's Sunil Gavaskar.

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