

Test venue row

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He brushed aside speculation that Pakistan's rejection of Ahmedabad would lead to the tour being cancelled.

"That limit will not be reached. It's our request to change a venue and that's based on fears of safety and security. We still wait for the Indian board's reply and will never want the language of ultimatum (used) in this matter," he said.

The two countries resumed bilateral cricket ties in March-April last year when the Indian team made their first full tour of Pakistan in almost 15 years, winning both the Test and one-day series.

India refused to play a Test in the volatile city of Karachi and instead played a one-day game there.

"It's not a tit-for-tat thing. Our team inspected venues in India last month and reported that it would not be safe to play a Test in Ahmedabad," the PCB chairman said.

PM distributes

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Prime Minister said the country's cricket players have of late set up a new history of victory by winning a one-day international against India and also Test and one-day series against Zimbabwe.

Held at the International Conference Centre, the Prime Minister handed over a gold medal and a cash award of Taka twenty thousand to each of the recipients.

The recipients are M Milzar Hossain in athletics, Enayetur Rahman Khan and Shahidur Rahman Chowdhury (Santu) in football, ASM Farooq in cricket, Abdul Malek Chunu in hockey, Mahbubur Rahman and Laila Nur Begum in swimming, Nasimul Hasan Kachi in table tennis, Khurshida Aktar Khushi in judo, Abdul Halim in boxing, and Sadek Hossain Khoka MP.

State Minister for Sports and Youth Fazlur Rahman and secretary in charge of the ministry of youth and sports Syed Sajuuddin Ahmed also spoke on the occasion.



Did U Know?

American Tiger Woods was first golfer to hold all four major titles simultaneously.



Diego Maradona

(Argentine football legend)
"Wayne Rooney is a phenomenal talent and has already achieved a lot. He could go on to be as great as Bobby Charlton and help England win the World Cup."



TAKE IT AND HELP OTHERS: Former Australian captain Steve Waugh holds a handcrafted bat during an auction in Kolkata yesterday to raise funds for tsunami victims.

End of Lehmann?



AFP, Sydney

Veteran batsman Darren Lehmann was omitted Thursday from Australia's one-day squad to tour New Zealand, putting the future of the 35-year-old cricketer's international career in serious doubt.

Out-of-form opener Matthew Hayden was included in the team after being left in the stands during the tri-series finals against Pakistan last week, while batsman Mike Hussey and young all-rounder James Hopes were added to the 14-man squad.

Australia is slated to play five one-day internationals and three Tests during their tour of New Zealand, which begins with a Twenty20 match in Auckland on February 17.

Lehmann's career has looked on the rocks since he was dropped from the Australian side for the final Test against Pakistan last month.

His prospects worsened as he put in three single-digit performances, including a first ball duck, during the recent tri-nation one-day series.

Chief selector Trevor Hohns said it had been very difficult dropping Lehmann, one of the most respected and popular members of the Australian team, but that the team needed to look to the future, especially with the Ashes series

coming up in July.

"Unfortunately it's one of those tough calls that as selectors we have to make but it is time for us to move forward," Hohns said.

"Darren has been a wonderful player for Australia over a long period of time.

"However as a selection panel we have to start looking to the future. At 35, age is not on Darren's side and it is fair to say that his performances of late were becoming a concern," he said.

Lehmann, however, did not give up hope for a comeback, saying Hohns had told him "there is still a chance that I'll play Test cricket".

Lehmann said Hohns explained that selectors were looking at younger one-day cricketers with an eye on the 2007 World Cup in the West Indies.

"He just said it's time to move on, and I really understand that," Lehmann said.

"Selectors have the toughest job, it's a pretty thankless job and I understand where they're coming from and what they're working to," he said.

"If it's over, it's over - there is nothing I can do about it," he said.

Lehmann has played 27 Tests for Australia, averaging 44.95, and 117 one-day matches, scoring 3,077 runs at 38.95.

Hohns said Lehmann's replacement, the West Australian Hussey, "has been knocking on the door for some time".

"He has scored runs consistently

at domestic level and we feel that if given the opportunity, could do a very good job for Australia, particularly in the middle order," he said.

Hussey made his one-day debut in Perth last year and Hohns said his inclusion for New Zealand was "a reward for consistency".

Hopes, a 26-year-old Queenslander, was a surprise inclusion, substituting for Shane Watson who was ruled out of the team with a side strain.

"James Hopes is an exciting prospect - another young talent who we have been keeping a close watch on," Hohns said.

"He has put some excellent performances on the board for Queensland throughout the year and we feel that this opportunity will fast-track his development."

Hussey scored 362 runs in the 2004-05 domestic season at an average of 40.22, while Hopes has scored 291 runs at 36.37 and claimed 11 wickets at 29.18.

Australia's Test squad for New Zealand is due to be announced at the end of February, Cricket Australia said.

ONE-DAY TEAM

Ricky Ponting (captain), Adam Gilchrist, Matthew Hayden, Damien Martyn, Andrew Symonds, Michael Clarke, Simon Katich, Mike Hussey, James Hopes, Brad Hogg, Brett Lee, Jason Gillespie, Michael Kasprovic, Glenn McGrath.

"He has scored runs consistently

Gaibandha cricket

OUR CORRESPONDENT

Gorsthanpara Krira Sangstha defeated Sepient Sporting Club by 27 runs in First Division Cricket League at Gaibandha Stadium yesterday.

Gorsthanpara batted first and scored 128 all out in 46.1 overs. Sepient Sporting Club were dismissed for 101 in 28 overs.

ICC to consider

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"The Aussies are very good at putting pressure on the umpires," he said in New Zealand's Dominion Post, singling out Shane Warne and Adam Gilchrist but also mentioning Glenn McGrath and captain Ricky Ponting.

"Shane Warne's the best. He will talk and talk. Warne makes it very obvious to the umpires what he is trying to do. He tells the umpires what he is setting up and it does generate pressure," Richardson said, speaking a week before Australia begins a tour of New Zealand.

Australian coach John Buchanan has rejected the accusations.

"There are procedures in place to deal with any sort of problems like that," Buchanan said.

"The referee and umpires would have stepped in if that was the case."

Together

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"throwing" by an Australian umpire. His verbal duels with former Sri Lankan skipper Arjuna Ranatunga have also not endeared him to the fans.

But this time around the Australian spinner was besieged by more than 100 fans when he visited Galle, while on Thursday more than 200 schoolboys waited to take tips from him and Muralitharan.

"It's important for a spin bowler to be a friend of his captain. Otherwise, he will not get to bowl," a smiling Warne told the boys who had gathered in the hot sun to see the Australian legend.

"The two other things that you must do is stay on bowling without losing patience and always have a plan to get the batsman out."

Warne said he was happy to see so many potential spin bowlers, adding, "we do not get to see so many in Australia. It is good for cricket".

"We are interested in fast bowling, but are thrilled to see Warne and Murali," said a 16-year-old student.

Waugh's money

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Australia finally clinched their first Test series in India in 35 years when they beat the hosts 2-1 in a four-match series in 2004.

They also thrashed Pakistan in a recent home Test series and a triangular one-day tournament, also involving the West Indies.

"Pakistan are a team with a bunch of very talented cricketers but they did not pose much challenge to Australia during the recent series," said Waugh.

"There were moments of brilliance, but they could not sustain the pressure. They surely lacked consistency and could not carry on the momentum.

"But I'd still say that they are a very talented side and if they play up to their potential it will be a close series in India."

Waugh also welcomed the International Cricket Council's new ruling allowing bowlers to straighten their arms by up to 15 degrees.

"Previously, the decision on whether a bowler was chucking depended on personal judgement. Different match referees and umpires saw it differently," he said.

"One may still have his own viewpoint on what constitutes chucking, but now at least people know clearly what the rule is. Anything below 15 degrees is legal and above 15 is illegal."

BCCI still in disorder



REUTERS, Mumbai

Pakistan's first Test tour of India in over six years is mired in confusion and controversy with only two weeks to go for its planned start.

The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) is yet to finalise match dates, there is uncertainty surrounding the venues and a court battle is on over who should get the broadcast rights.

The muddle has left cricket fans shaking their heads and saying: "This happens only in India!" -- a sentiment often inspired by the cricket board, which is itself embroiled in a court battle over its elections.

Even if the BCCI clear the air in its meeting in New Delhi on February 17, it will give them just over a week to work out logistics and organise flights, accommodation and ticket sales before Pakistan arrive on February 25.

The board is confident it will manage.

"Things are taking time, but we hope to sort everything out in our

working committee meeting," said Karunakaran Nair, secretary of the BCCI.

"We've already got a plan, things only need to be finalised."

There are, however, several road blocks along the way before the three Tests and five one-dayers start.

The biggest problem is over holding a Test in Ahmedabad, the volatile main city in the western Gujarat state which was rocked by India's worst communal riots in a decade in 2002.

The Pakistan Cricket Board has requested the match be shifted, though their decision has led to some Hindu hardline groups calling for cancellation of the tour if Pakistan refuses to play in Ahmedabad.

To add to the chaos, fans still do not know if they will be able to watch the series on television.

The BCCI backed out of its four-year, 308-million-dollar deal with India's biggest listed media firm, Zee Telefilms, in September after it was challenged in court by unsuccessful bidder and rival ESPN STAR Sports, owned by Walt Disney Co. and News Corp.

"The dates and the venues will be done. But we're still not sure about the TV rights. It's a court matter, so we need feedback from our legal experts," Nair said.

India's top court last week dismissed a petition by Zee though the Madras High Court on Wednesday told the BCCI not to finalise any deal till its hearing on February 17.

A similar confusion had threatened the Australia series last October before the court allowed the BCCI to sell the rights to Sony Entertainment and Dubai-based TEN Sports.

Cricket corners more than three-quarters of all sports advertising money in India, and while the series is the most lucrative sports property this year advertisers are weary of the wrangling and indecision that have dogged the broadcast rights in recent months.

"You can't afford to give India-Pakistan a miss, but there's a lot of frustration," said Ravi Kiran, general manager, Starcom Worldwide, the media buying arm of Leo Burnett.

"We'd rather get a quick decision."



Chief of the Naval Staff Rear Admiral Muhammad Hasan Ali Khan (R) hands over the trophy to Quarter Deck team which won annual athletics competition of Bangladesh Navy College at the Sailors' Colony playground yesterday. The Quarter Deck team with a haul of 68 points became champions while Main Deck finished runners-up with 61 points.

Intriguing last day

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taking three wickets. Shahin made 69 off 187 balls, studded with seven boundaries before being the ninth man out leaving Khulna chasing 230 for victory. The hosts batted cautiously to reach 85 for two at close.

R A J S H A H I v CHITTAGONG

Half centuries by captain Khaled Mashud and Hassanuzzaman Rosel took Rajshahi to a commanding position against Chittagong at the Shaheed Chandu Stadium.

They were 176 for six at stumps with Mashud unbeaten on 50.

Chittagong, who resumed Day Three on 168 for seven, were all out for 214 in their first innings giving Rajshahi a 113-run lead. But pacemen Tareq Aziz and Gazi Alamgir shared four early wickets to reduce Rajshahi to 28-4.

Mashud, who thrives under these situations, then added 113 with Rosel for the sixth wicket. Rosel dominated the partnership with 57 off 107 balls (9x4). It was his second fifty of the game.

Bangladesh keeper Mashud, who made only five in the first innings, hit four fours in his 162-ball knock.

SCOREBOARD

Scorecards of the three matches on the third day of the 6th Ishpani Mirzapore Tea National Cricket League yesterday:

DHAKA-SYLHET

DHAKA: First innings 325 SYLHET: First innings (overnight 181-5)

Table with columns: Player, Runs, Wickets, Overs. Includes players like Himel c Anwar b Mehraj Jr, Mabud run out, Sadiqur c Ashraf b Arafat.

ENGLAND

Trescott c Kemp b Pollock 4 Jones c Gibbs b Nel 37 Vaughan c Prince b Boje 70 Strauss run out (Boucher) 20 Pietersen not out 100

SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard of the fifth limited-overs international between South Africa and England at Buffalo Park in East London Wednesday:

SOUTH AFRICA

Smith not out 115 De Villiers c Jones b Gough 2 Kallis c sub (Bell) b Ali 49 Gibbs c Pietersen b Ali 8 Prince run out (Hoggard) 34 Kemp b Gough 80 Boucher b Gough 0 Pollock run out (Solanki) 2 Boje not out 10 Extras: (lb-3, nb-4, w-4) 11

BARISAL: First innings 194

KHULNA: First innings 134 BARISAL: Second innings (overnight 88-5)

Table with columns: Player, Runs, Wickets, Overs. Includes players like Inman b Manju, Hannan b Mashrafe, Humayun c Manzarul b Manju.

Bowler O M R W

Mashrafe 14.3 5 23 3 Manjurul 15 5 30 3 Dollar 3 0 14 0 Manzarul 12 2 28 0 Razzak 17 4 39 3 Jamal 11 2 23 1

KHULNA: Second innings

Sadat c Shahin b Anis 4 Shaful batting 25 Sajjad lbw b Salahuddin 15 Jamal Babu batting 38 Extras: (lb-1, nb-1, w-1) 3 Total: (For 2 wickets in 52 overs) 85 Fall of wickets: 1-4, 2-32.

Bowler O M R W

Anis 11 2 18 1 Sonnet 6 3 8 0 Salahuddin 12 4 13 1 Mosharrif 7 4 7 0 Humayun 6 1 9 0 Nadif 10 3 29 0

RAJSHAHI-CHITTAGONG

RAJSHAHI: First innings 327 CHITTAGONG: First innings (overnight 168-7)

Table with columns: Player, Runs, Wickets, Overs. Includes players like Masum c Shahzada b Forhad, Nazimuddin c Naem b Sumon, Ehsanul c Jahurul b Sumon.

Bowler O M R W

Shahzada 31 14 45 1 Forhad 9 3 30 1 Sumon 18 7 61 3 Saifullah 22.1 4 55 3 Nuruzzaman 6 0 10 0 Naem c lbw b Tareq 3 Jahurul c Sabbir b Tareq 3 Nuruzzaman c Kuntal b Alamgir 6 Rafiqul b Alamgir 10 Forhad c Kuntal b Aftab 20 Mashud batting 50 Rosel lbw b Sabbir 57 Anisur batting 1

DHAKA: Second innings

Javed b Nazmul 10 Mehraj Jr lbw b Nazmul 6 Al Shahriar c Mabud b Tapash 0 Ashraful batting 31 Halim b Tapash 4 Anwar batting 12 Extras: (lb-5, lb-1, nb-6) 7 Total: (For 4 wickets in 19 overs) 70 Fall of wickets: 1-10, 2-20, 3-23, 4-29.

Bowler O M R W

Nazmul 6 1 26 2 Tapash 7 0 20 2 Nabil 3 1 6 0 Sadiqur 2 0 11 0 Rezaul 1 0 1 0

KHULNA-BARISAL

Table with columns: Player, Runs, Wickets, Overs. Includes players like Sabbir 10, 3, 25, 1.

UCB defends quota policy

REUTERS, East London

United Cricket Board (UCB) of South Africa chief executive Gerald Majola has moved to end speculation that South African cricket is losing top players because it is politically driven.

Several South Africans, including England's Kevin Pietersen, have left the country in recent years.

Majola told a news conference he did not believe South African cricket would lose a significant number of players.

"I don't think a lot of players will go," Majola said. "Dale Benkenstein is playing in England (for Durham), but he is still available to play for South Africa."

"There will always be peripheral players, but I believe we will keep our best players."

Former Test batsman HD Ackerman will captain English county Leicestershire this season, and left-arm spinner Claude Henderson and fast bowler Deward Pretorius play for Leicestershire and Warwickshire.

"They are not considered overseas players because of a trade agreement between the European Union, and African and Caribbean countries.

South African-born Pietersen, whose mother is English, moved to England four years ago after becoming disenchanted with what he regarded as South Africa's racial selection policies.

"It was probably easier for Pietersen to make the England team than the South African team, and congratulations to him," Majola said.

Pietersen scored 100 not out of 69 balls in the fifth one-day international in East London on Wednesday, the fastest limited-overs century by an England player.

Majola denied that South Africa practised quota selection.

"We don't have quotas, we've never had quotas, we have targets," he said.

"In 10 years' time the majority of this team will be black, that is our target."

"Our mandate to the selectors is to pick the best team, and we put our best team on the field."

Majola said the UCB's transformation policies encompassed more than racial issues. "People look at transformation as a colour issue, but they don't see the number of Afrikaners coming through as a victory," he said. "It's all about equality of opportunity."

CROSSWORD

By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS 38 Venomous 1 Sepulcher 5 Agt. 8 Call off 12 Suitable 13 Corn spike 14 Kleine Nacht-musik 15 Plumbing problem 16 Prompt 17 Dec. 18 holiday 20 Inventor's protection 22 La follower 23 Come together 24 Lapidary's supply 27 King of Siam's pet word 32 "my brother's keeper?" 33 Jamaican music 34 Family member 35 Peak, maybe

CRYPTOQUIP

VI LXJ YRUQ KRAZ AQTTVW T R C W Q K J I I Q Q H J S A . V W X Q A A S Z R S Y Q R G A L J X X C G L J X C U Q Q H . Yesterday's Cryptoquip: I'M VERY HAPPY WITH MY NEW SOUPED-UP STEREO SYSTEM. IT WAS A SOUND INVESTMENT. Today's Cryptoquip Clue: Q equals E

SA take unbeatable lead

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They reached 61 for two in the 16th over. Vaughan made a solid 70 but it took him 94 balls and it was only when Pietersen started hitting out that South Africa had any cause for concern.

Pietersen should have been stumped for 16 when he jumped out of his crease and missed a drive against left-arm spinner Nicky Boje but wicketkeeper Mark Boucher missed an easy chance. He was dropped on 84 when substitute Jacques Rudolph dropped him at long-on off the first ball of the final over from Nel.

"We've done what we needed to do," said Smith.

"It was difficult at the end, the ball was wet and it wasn't easy to grip it. I thought the bowlers did their job. We're starting to gain confidence in a lot of areas and we're playing some very good cricket."

SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard of the fifth limited-overs international between South Africa and England at Buffalo Park in East London Wednesday:

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Total: (For 7 wks in 50 overs) 311

Fall of wickets: 1-10, 2-100, 3-119, 4-181, 5-298, 6-298, 7-300

Did not bat: Ntini, Nel

Table with columns: Bowler, O, M, R, W. Includes Gough 10 0 52 3, Hoggard 9 0 74 0, Ali 9 0 66 2, Collingwood 10 0 53 0, Trescott 3 0 17 0, Giles 9 0 46 0

ENGLAND

Trescott c Kemp b Pollock 4 Jones c Gibbs b Nel 37 Vaughan c Prince b Boje 70 Strauss run out (Boucher) 20 Pietersen not out 100

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