

## India okay Karachi as Test venue

REUTERS, New Delhi

India has conditionally cleared the national cricket team to play a Test in Karachi during their tour of Pakistan starting next month, a Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) official said on Tuesday.

"The tour has been cleared (by the government). Karachi has also been cleared to play a Test, provided certain security conditions are met," Rajiv Shukla, chairman of the BCCI's media committee, told reporters.

"The government informed us yesterday," he said.

Teams touring Pakistan have been reluctant to play Tests in the cricket-mad port city of Karachi due to security concerns.

The Indians refused to play a Test in the city when they toured Pakistan last year, crossing the border for a series after a 14-year absence.

Shukla said a team comprising security and cricket board officials would travel to Pakistan to make a first-hand assessment of the situation in the volatile city.

Although a major cricket venue, Karachi has been the scene of a series of bomb blasts in recent years.

Only two Tests have been staged in Karachi in the last five years with teams particularly hesitant to play there after the September 11, 2001 attacks in the United States.

Last year, the Indian government cleared the team to play only a one-day game in Karachi at the last moment, but the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) had requested that their neighbours should agree a Test match this time.

The PCB chairman Shaharyar Khan had travelled to Mumbai this month to persuade his Indian counterparts on the issue.

India are scheduled to play three Tests in Lahore, Faisalabad and Karachi and five one-dayers in Peshawar, Rawalpindi, Lahore, Multan and Karachi during their tour.

SA Archery C'ship in Dhaka

BDNEWS, Dhaka

The First South Asian Archery Championship will be held in Dhaka from February 8.

A total of 96 players from India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Bhutan and hosts Bangladesh will take part in the five-day meet, said Rajiv Uddin Ahmed, general secretary of South Asian Archery Federation at a press conference yesterday.

Each team contains 16 players -- eight men and eight women.

The participants will compete in two events named recurve bow and bamboo bow at the Old Airport venue.

Div I cricket

SPORTS REPORTER

Sagar slammed his second ton as Young Pegasus registered a massive 94-run victory over Eskaton Sabuj Sangha in the First Division Cricket League at the Dhaka University ground yesterday.

Pegasus rode on a 113 by Sagar to amass 292-7 in allotted 50 overs and then dismissed Eskaton for 198 in 46 overs. Sagar had earlier hit his first hundred against Surjo Tarun.

At the City Club ground, Uttara Sporting Club thrived on two half-centuries by Gary (68) and Babu (56) to score a huge 283 for 9 in 50 overs to beat Dhaka Wanderers (247 all out) by 36 runs.

V-Day hockey

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Army and Bangladesh Police won their respective matches in the Victory Day hockey competition at the Maulana Bhasani National Stadium yesterday.

Army beat Sonali Bank 2-1 while Police defeated Bangladesh Air Force 3-2.

BU storm

FROM PAGE 16

TEAMS

BROTHERS UNION: Mohammad Ali, Pranotosh, Masud Rana, Siraji (Al Mujahid), Arup Kumar, Inani, Felix (Tapu), Liton (Rikta), Shuvro, Jislan and Paul.

BANGLADESH ARMY: Monirul, Tutul, Rashedul Hasan, Mizanur Rahman, Didarul Haque, Abu Nayeem (Shahidul/Monwar), Atiqul, Silan Khan, Shaheen (Mamun Reza), Raqibul and Anwar.

Referee: Mansoor Azad.

India cricket

FROM PAGE 16

"Sahara today is synonymous with Indian cricket," he said. "We got value for money during the deal that is coming to an end now."

The new BCCI regime, headed by political heavyweight Sharad Pawar, hoped to raise another 80 million dollars a year through the sale of television rights for international matches in India.

Bids for the TV rights will be finalised by the end of the month, Shah said.

Crick-mad India, with huge television audiences, is the biggest market for the sport in the world.

## Blatter thinks otherwise

Football

AFP, Zurich

FIFA chief Sepp Blatter, facing court action by clubs angry at receiving no compensation for players injured in international matches, said Tuesday clubs should be paid for releasing players.

"My opinion is that clubs deserve a minimum of respect for releasing players and they should be paid from the allocation," he told a press conference.

He pointed out that FIFA will allocate seven million Swiss francs (4.5 million euros/5.4 million dollars) to every one of the 32 finalists in the 2006 World Cup, with the winners picking up 24 millions (15.5 million euros/18.5 million dollars).

"National associations should not only pay their players but think about the clubs," he said.

Blatter said the FIFA executive committee would discuss the subject on March 17-18.

Asked if the French federation would have to pay Chelsea for players released for the World Cup, he replied: "Yes if the principle is established."

But he balked at the idea of African countries paying rich European clubs like the English champions.



SEPP BLATTER

ago, with FIFA expecting to make a profit of around 110 million euros.

French champions Lyon and Belgian side Charleroi, backed by the G14 group of elite European clubs, have already started court proceedings against FIFA for being forced to release players who were

then injured in what they call meaningless matches.

The G14 group wants FIFA to provide insurance and compensation to clubs for players who are injured while representing their countries.

It says FIFA's regulations are an abuse of the body's dominant position.

FIFA refuses to recognise or negotiate with the G14 group.

G14 argues that FIFA's refusal to contribute towards players' salaries - even though clubs lose money when they suffer injuries in international matches - is illegal.

FIFA are accused of being in breach of European Union law by abusing their dominant market position.

The clubs are seeking a share of FIFA's revenues from the World Cup.

Some national federations pay for their players to be released for international duty. German clubs receive 6,000 euros per player from the German federation but poorer federations, particularly in Latin America and Africa, cannot afford to.

The G14 says clubs are not asking for money every time a player is released but a percentage of the income from major competitions.

## English pride at stake Final ODI against Pakistan today

Cricket

AFP, Rawalpindi

England will play for pride and points in the international rankings in the fifth and final one-day match against Pakistan here on Wednesday after losing the series.

"It is not an ideal situation to go into the last match with the series already decided, but a lot of ranking points are up for grabs and a lot of pride in how we play," said acting captain Marcus Trescothick, after his team's narrow 13-run defeat late Monday.

Pakistan took an unassailable 3-1 lead, surviving a late-order England rally through Kabir Ali (39 not out) and Ian Blackwell (29) who added 50 for the ninth wicket after the home team managed a modest 210.

Alli then partnered last man James Anderson in a 33-run stand before paceman Shoaib Akhtar had Anderson caught in the slips by Younis Khan with 11 balls left in the fourth match.

England currently lie seventh in the ten-team International Cricket Council (ICC) one-day rankings. They are in danger of being relegated to the qualifying rounds of

next year's ICC Champions Trophy.

Sides outside the top six in the ICC rankings next April 1 will have to play a qualifying round and England only have two more matches against India after the Pakistan series to avoid relegation.

The other four will have to take part in a qualifying round, with only two progressing to the tournament.

Fittingly, Pakistan can move above South Africa into second place behind Australia if they beat England by a margin of 4-1.

England have crashed to defeat in both the Test and one-day series against Pakistan just four months after their Ashes triumph against Australia.

"You don't become a bad team overnight and there are definite issues to address," said Trescothick. "We have not adapted to situations as well as we have done before."

"Whether that's a comedown from the Ashes I don't know, but you have to work even harder going into the next series, as people are waiting for you."

Trescothick said his side had been in a good position to win after dismissing Pakistan for 210 on Monday.

"Yeah, I think we were in a very

good position to win, chasing 211. It did spin more than expected, but we didn't get partnerships going, lost wickets at the top of the order and it didn't go the way we wanted it to go," he said.

Pakistan captain Inzamamul Haq was delighted to clinch the series.

"It is a fantastic win in a crucial match. Now we can try out one or two young players in the final match but the intensity to win the match will remain the same," he said.

TEAMS

PAKISTAN (from): Kamran Akmal, Salman Butt, Younis Khan, Mohammad Yousuf, Inzamamul Haq (captain), Shahid Afridi, Abdul Razaq, Shoaib Malik, Navedun Hasan, Shoaib Akhtar, Danish Kaneria, Mohammad Sami, Arshad Khan.

ENGLAND (from): Markus Trescothick (captain), Matt Prior, Andrew Strauss, Vikram Solanki, Paul Collingwood, Andrew Flintoff, Geraint Jones, Ian Blackwell, Liam Plunkett, James Anderson, Steve Harmison, Ian Bell.

## Inzy wants hard, bouncy pitches for India Tests

Cricket

CRICINFO, undated

Pakistan will look to prepare hard and bouncy pitches for the Test series against India next month, according to Pakistan skipper Inzamamul Haq.

"The pitches will be different to the ones we played on against England. We will like to have tracks with more bounce and pace in them as we now have a pace attack capable of taking full advantage of such tracks," he said in Rawalpindi on Sunday.

Last year when India toured Pakistan the Test pitches were better suited for the visiting seam bowlers who with their reduced pace took more advantage of the little grass on the soft surfaces. English curator Andy Atkinson had supervised the preparation of the pitches. Agha Zahid, the chief curator of the Pakistan Cricket Board who has prepared the pitches for England series, said that for

Pakistani bowlers hard and bouncy tracks were more suitable.

"Our bowlers have more pace and leaving grass on the wickets are not useful for the team. Our bowlers need hard and bouncy tracks where they can gain that extra pace and make the ball swing in the air," he explained.

Zahid said that preparation of the pitches for the Tests in Lahore,

Faisalabad and Karachi would not be an easy task and would start at least 10 to 12 days before the match itself.

"The weather is now very cold and the temperatures continue to drop. In such conditions it is very difficult to keep the pitches dry of moisture and dew and to get some live grass on the surface. At times when it is freezing we even have to use heaters to keep them dry of dew and we now cover the wickets from late night to ensure the pitch retains its heat."

Pakistan beat England in the Tests at Multan and Lahore on the final days with even the second Test at Faisalabad going to the end with the home side needing just four more wickets to secure a win.

The chief curator said for him the most satisfying thing was that the Tests had gone to the wire and two results had been produced.

"In my 30 years game I have not witnessed such a Test series where the matches have been close and played to the end with the result not clear. It is good for cricket and for the Pakistan team."



INZAMAMUL HAQ

## Rudolph denies Australia

FROM PAGE 16

Rudolph, with his fifth Test century, will clearly be hard to overlook.

SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard at the end of the first Test between Australia and South Africa at the WACA ground in Perth on Tuesday:

AUSTRALIA: First innings 258 (Ponting 71, Hodge 41, Langer 37, Ntini 5-64, Nel 3-29)

SOUTH AFRICA: First innings 296 (De Villiers 68, Boucher 62, Smith 34, Pollock 34; Lee 5-93, Warne 3-92)

AUSTRALIA: Second innings 528 for 8 declared (Hodge 203 Hussey 58, Ponting 53, Langer 47, Gilchrist 44; Langeveldt 3-117, Pollock 2-98)

SOUTH AFRICA: Second innings (overnight 2-85)

Smith lbw b Bracken 30  
De Villiers c Hodge b Warne 12  
Gibbs c Warne b Lee 33

Rudolph not out 102  
Prince lbw b Warne 8  
Kemp c Ponting b Warne 55  
Boucher not out 13  
Extras: (b-18, lb-13, nb-3) 34  
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## Hagi escapes jail term

AFP, Istanbul

Former Romania international George Hagi escaped jail Tuesday when a court gave him a suspended fine for kicking and spitting at a referee in a Turkish league match four years ago.

The 40-year-old was originally sentenced to 17 months in jail for the attack during the 2001 game between Istanbul outfit Galatasaray and Ankara club Genclerbirligi.

But the judges then handed him a fine of 2,857 Turkish Liras (1,770 euros, 2,125 dollars) which was suspended on the grounds that the defendant was unlikely to commit criminal activity in the future, the Anatolia agency reported.

Hagi played for Galatasaray between 1996 and 2001, during which the club won four league titles, the UEFA Cup and the Super Cup.

He later came back in March 2004 to train Galatasaray, but resigned in May following weeks of speculation that he would be axed for falling foul of the management and fans.

## Figo hopes big

AFP, Lisbon

Inter Milan star Luis Figo is confident that Portugal, runners-up in Euro 2004, can win next year's World Cup in Germany.

"As a player I expect to take part in a great championship. As far as the team is concerned, I believe Portugal can win the World Cup in Germany, although the big favourite is Brazil," he told the Record sports daily.

The FIFA World Player of the Year in 2001 has said he will retire from international football after the World Cup finals in Germany.

Figo, 33, announced he was taking an indefinite break from international football shortly after Portugal's 1-0 loss to Greece in the final of the Euro 2004 in Lisbon.

But in May Portugal coach Luiz Felipe Scolari, who led his native Brazil to the World Cup in 2002, recalled Figo for World Cup qualifiers against Slovakia and Estonia after the player said he was ready to return to the squad.

Portugal are in Group D along with Iran, Mexico and debutants Angola in the first round of the 2006 World Cup.

Curse of the 17th

REUTERS, Rome

Florentina striker and Serie A top scorer Luca Toni has blamed supernatural forces for his inability to score his 17th goal of the season.

The Italy international started off the season at a phenomenal rate, scoring 16 goals in Florentina's opening 13 Serie A matches.

In the three games since, however, he has failed to score, hitting the post and the bar in a 2-1 defeat to Juventus, missing a penalty in a 1-0 win over Treviso and then hitting the post again in a 1-1 draw with Empoli on Sunday.

In Italy the number 17 is considered unlucky, just as 13 is in England and the United States.

"I admit it: I'm starting to believe in the curse of the 17th goal," Toni was quoted as saying in La Gazzetta dello Sport on Tuesday. "I'm a fairly superstitious person."

But the numerical barrier was only half the problem, he said.

Toni has also lost his lucky charm -- a small red horn that usually hangs from the rear view mirror of his car.

"The horn isn't there any more," he said. "I broke it. Or rather I lost the bit you need to hang it up. It all happened after the game against Juventus."

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## A class apart

Football

AFP, Zurich

Ronaldinho's second successive award as world player of the year here on Monday simply confirms him as head and shoulders above the rest and sits easily with the European award he picked up last month.

But as long as a decade ago, well before he finally departed native Brazil to join Paris St Germain, the 25-year-old's path to success at both club and international level seemed already mapped out.

Ronaldinho, who left the French league side in 2003 for the Catalan giants, may owe some of his early success to his older brother Roberto Assis although most will agree his is a special kind of individual talent.

Ronaldinho was only eight years old when Roberto, nine years his senior, became head of the family after his father Joao Da Silva Moreira was killed in a swimming pool electrical accident.

Roberto was an emerging star with Gremio but his hopes of becoming a Gremio great were compromised by a serious knee

injury which led to him playing second-tier football in Switzerland with Sion, then in Japan and Mexico. Now Roberto is very much in the picture - he is his younger brother's manager and adviser.

Ronaldinho followed in his brother's footsteps, emerging as an even hotter talent at Gremio's youth set-up before he left for Europe after a protracted contract dispute.

It was from an early age that Ronaldinho began to nurture the kind of skills that have left dozens of the world's best defenders kicking out at their hair.

"I loved dribbling. I loved to play in the living room, round the furniture or in the garden with my dog," he said. "That was always what I loved doing the most."

Having been voted the outstanding player at the under-17 world championships in Egypt in 1997, won by Brazil, Gremio quickly rejected a six-million-dollar offer for Ronaldinho from PSV Eindhoven.

It was an understandable approach. Only a year before the Dutch giants had sold his compatriot Ronaldo to Barcelona. That year Ronaldo won the first of his two Ballon d'Or awards.

Ronaldinho did not make his full debut for Gremio until 1999, but little convincing of his potential was needed when he scored 15 times in 14 matches.

He was then called up by Vanderlei Luxemburgo to the Brazil squad for that year's Copa America in Paraguay.

Again, he didn't disappoint when given the chance to prove himself. Coming on as a late substitute against Venezuela, he scored a well-remembered goal that left Brazilian television replaying it the next day, comparing it with the equally impressive goal Pele scored against Wales in the 1958 World Cup.

Ever since PSG beat off a host of other keen observers to whisk Ronaldinho to Europe in 2001, his stock has gone sky high.

His mazy runs, deft feints and eye for goal - not to mention the flamboyant dances which form part of his celebrations - have added a new dimension to the European game - even at arch rivals Real Madrid, whose fans applauded his second of two goals in a 3-0 win earlier this season.

Curse of the 17th

REUTERS, Rome

Florentina striker and Serie A top scorer Luca Toni has blamed supernatural forces for his inability to score his 17th goal of the season.

The Italy international started off the season at a phenomenal rate, scoring 16 goals in Florentina's opening 13 Serie A matches.

In the three games since, however, he has failed to score, hitting the post and the bar in a 2-1 defeat to Juventus, missing a penalty in a 1-0 win over Treviso and then hitting the post again in a 1-1 draw with Empoli on Sunday.

In Italy the number 17 is considered unlucky, just as 13 is in England and the United States.

"I admit it: I'm starting to believe in the curse of the 17th goal," Toni was quoted as saying in La Gazzetta dello Sport on Tuesday. "I'm a fairly superstitious person."

But the numerical barrier was only half the problem, he said.

Toni has also lost his lucky charm -- a small red horn that usually hangs from the rear view mirror of his car.

"The horn isn't there any more," he said. "I broke it. Or rather I lost the bit you need to hang it up. It all happened after the game against Juventus."

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