

Sidhu
in jail

REUTERS, Chandigarh

Former Indian cricketer and politician Navjot Singh Sidhu was jailed on Thursday after he surrendered before a court following his conviction for a 1988 road-rage killing, his lawyer said.

Sidhu was sentenced to three years' jail in December by the Punjab and Haryana High Court after being found guilty of culpable homicide not amounting to murder.

His sentence was suspended to allow the popular TV host and commentator time to appeal to the Supreme Court.

After he surrendered to a lower court on Thursday, Sidhu was taken to jail in Patiala, his home town in the northern state of Punjab, where he will remain in judicial custody for 14 days.

His appeal against his conviction comes up for hearing in the Supreme Court on Friday.

"Sidhu has appealed his conviction before the Supreme Court, but Supreme Court rules require a convict to surrender before his appeal is heard, making it imperative for Sidhu to surrender," his lawyer, Satya Pal Jain, said.

Sidhu surrendered despite being on bail till January 31.

Before the court in Chandigarh, Punjab's capital, sent him to jail, the 43-year-old batsman told a crowd of reporters, onlookers and supporters he would accept whatever it decided.

"I surrender to the majesty of law, unconditionally."

Sidhu was involved in a car accident in Patiala in 1988. He got into a fight with the elderly occupant of the other vehicle, which led to the man's death.

He resigned as a federal lawmaker following his conviction on December 1 last year. Sidhu, a Sikh, joined the Hindu-nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party and was elected to the lower house of parliament in 2004.

He amused millions of Indian cricket fans with his witticisms and controversial comments as a commentator.

Tendulkar peps up U-19 boys

PTI, Mumbai

Sachin Tendulkar on Thursday made an appearance at the Wankhede Stadium to interact with the India under-19 squad members who are set to embark on a tour of New Zealand on Friday.

"He told the players that the wickets in New Zealand would be different from what they have experienced in India. He said they would be more helpful to the bowlers," said under-19 coach Lalchand Rajput who had invited the master batsman to talk to the players.

"He also said that they need to work hard as this is a stepping stone for making it to the Indian team," Rajput added.

Tendulkar, who missed Mumbai's crucial and concluding Ranji Trophy league tie against Maharashtra which is in progress in Nashik because of a Gluteal muscle injury, also took the opportunity to do some jogging.

1st Div

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fate of last season's contentious issues regarding Mariners' Youngs Club and Baridhara (formerly known as Young Pegasus). CDDM have reportedly asked the two clubs to withdraw the court case so that the clubs can be officially allowed in the league this season, inflating the number of teams to 20 from 18.

Last year, Baridhara and Mariners contested their relegation after several controversial matches during the course of the league.

CCDM chairman Khondoker Jamiluddin and other officials were present at yesterday's meeting.

Sehwag

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The poor form of the batsmen would be a cause of worry for the selection panel, headed by former India captain Dilip Vengsarkar (West Zone) and comprising Bhupinder Singh Sr. (North), Ranjith Biswal (East), Sandip Jagdale (Central) and Venkatpathy Raju (South), most of whom according to official sources are expected to arrive here last night.

The meeting is expected to discuss in detail Sehwag's show in the one-day and Test series on the recently concluded tour of South Africa.

Strauss fit

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Symonds, Michael Hussey, Cameron White, Nathan Bracken, Stuart Clark, Michael Johnson, Glenn McGrath.

ENGLAND (from): Michael Vaughan (captain), Andrew Strauss, Ed Joyce, Ian Bell, Kevin Pietersen, Andrew Flintoff, Phil Collingwood, Jamie Dalrymple, Paul Nixon, James Anderson, John Lewis, Monty Panesar, Chris Tremlett, Sajid Mahmood, Liam Plunkett, Chris Read.

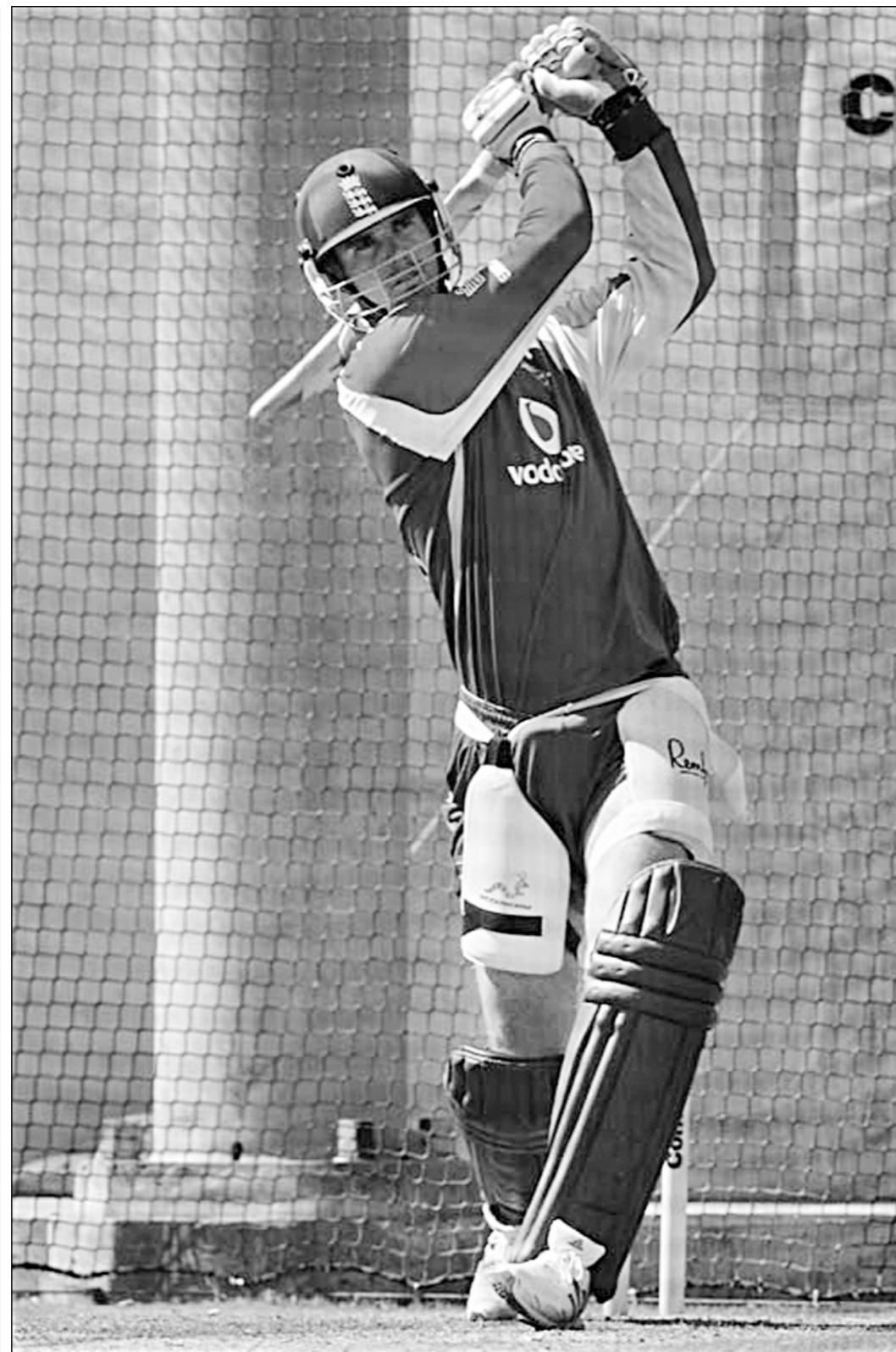


PHOTO: INTERNET

England batsman Kevin Pietersen hits out during a net session in Melbourne on Thursday ahead of their opening one-day international against Australia today.

Full circle for Sourav?

Cricket

AFP, New Delhi

Sourav Ganguly is set to return to India's one-day squad after 15 months out as selectors move to infuse life into a battered team ahead of the World Cup.

Some former players such as Ajay Jadeja even want the left-hander to be reappointed captain for the showpiece event after Rahul Dravid's men lost both the Test and one-day series in South Africa.

"I have said it before and I will say it again, Sourav Ganguly should captain India at the World Cup," Jadeja said, even though Dravid has already been confirmed as skipper.

The five-man selection committee, headed by former captain Dilip Vengsarkar, meets on Friday to pick 30 probables for the World Cup, and the team for the upcoming home one-dayers against the West Indies and Sri Lanka.

Coach Greg Chappell has already warned that heads could roll as he joins the selectors in building a side capable of winning the March-April World Cup in the Caribbean.

"We're going to have to make

some decisions on which direction we go," said Chappell. "There will be a few guys under a bit of pressure."

Ganguly, 34, was India's leading scorer in the three South Africa Tests with 214 runs, but he has not played one-day cricket since September 2005.

He is the fourth-highest scorer in one-day cricket with 10,123 runs -- behind compatriot Sachin Tendulkar (14,537), Pakistan captain Inzamamul Haq (11,591) and Sri Lankan veteran Sanath Jayasuriya (11,442).

His 22 centuries in 279 matches are bettered only by Tendulkar's 40 from 374 games and Jayasuriya's 23 from 375.

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India's most successful Test captain was dumped after a bitter row with Chappell in September 2005 when the Australian legend accused Ganguly of being selfish and unworthy of leading the side.

Chappell concedes that Ganguly is a changed man and praised his performance in South Africa. "He has done what he was

chosen to do, which is to get in there and get runs," the coach said.

India's recent one-day failures -- two wins in last 10 matches -- can be attributed directly to the failure of top-order batsmen.

Tendulkar, the world's most successful one-day batsman, has managed just 248 runs in his last 10 games with two half-centuries.

The normally explosive Sehwag averages 14.80 in his last 10, Dravid 26.00 and wicketkeeper Mahendra Singh Dhoni 29.55.

"The batsmen have really messed it up," said Vengsarkar of the South African tour. "They were once the team's strength but now nothing seems to be going right for them."

One-day cricket's unpredictable nature, however, keeps India's hopes of resurrecting their form alive -- as they did in the previous World Cup in South Africa in 2003.

The Indians, led by Ganguly then, bounced back after a stuttering start to win eight matches in a row and qualify for the final where they lost to Australia.

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Azhar upset at WC snub

BBC ONLINE, undated

All-rounder Azhar Mahmood has expressed frustration and confusion after being left out of Pakistan's World Cup plans.

Mahmood was listed in a provisional World Cup squad published in Pakistani newspapers but not in the official list.

"I'm very frustrated. I've played county cricket and every first-class game (in Pakistan) and they're playing with my career," he told BBC Sport.

"They (the selectors) never give me a straight answer. I think someone really has a problem with me."

Mahmood, 31, played the last of his 139 one-day internationals in February 2005. In all, he has 122 ODI wickets at an average of 38.86.

Playing alongside Shaikh Akhtar he took six wickets for Islamabad in the first-class Quaid-e-Azam Trophy this week.

In one-day county matches for Surrey last year he claimed 12 wickets in 22 runs at an average of 25.25 and hit 227 runs at 37.83.

There were four differences between the squad named in newspapers and the official version but chief of selectors Wasim Bari dismissed the former as "pure speculation".

Speaking to BBC Sport he denied that late changes had been made to the squad, which must be trimmed to 15 by 13 February.

"Azhar Mahmood has not been a regular in domestic cricket," he said.