

Ex-ECB chief against going back to India

BBC ONLINE, undated

England should call off their tour of India, says former England and Wales Cricket Board chairman Lord MacLaurin.

The squad are expected to receive a security report on Tuesday before deciding whether to return following the attacks on Mumbai.

But MacLaurin told BBC Radio 5 Live: "I think the ECB will probably say yes and I think it will be very sad.

"I don't think any security people can actually say it's going to be safe. If it was left to me, I wouldn't go."

The England squad returned home following the attacks, which left 188 people dead.

The final two one-day matches were cancelled and a planned three-day warm-up match has since been scrapped.

However, England have been offered a revised schedule, with the first Test on 11 December in Chennai and the second beginning on 19 December in Mohali.

Former captain Nasser Hussain believes England can "make a statement" by returning.

"Eventually, the game has to go on," Hussain told the Daily Mail.

"If the security people say it is as safe as it can be and as long as the Indian people want it, England can make a statement by going back."

Another former England captain Mike Atherton wrote in the Times newspaper: "The smart money is on England returning to India towards the end of the week."

India

FROM PAGE 17 attacked Mumbai had Pakistani links -- a charge Pakistan has denied.

Pakistan themselves have suffered from the postponements this year and if India refuse to tour, it could leave Pakistan without a Test from December 2007 to June 2009, when they are scheduled to visit Sri Lanka.

Miandad pointed out that for the first time an all-cricket body was in power in the PCB and those concerned were concentrating on improving cricket in the country. "Terrorism is a persisting problem and we are even trying to formulate a strategy to give the best security cover to visiting teams. We understand the fear factor and have, therefore, hit upon this plan, which will be sent to the government for ratification soon enough," he said.

A similar sentiment was echoed by Pakistan captain Shoaib Malik. Pakistan captain who believed "cricket diplomacy" would help ease tensions between the two countries. "If we play cricket matches then the people of both the countries will have a chance to divert their attention and the situation will definitely improve," he told reporters.

"Cricket diplomacy has helped in the past as well in the same manner."

"We badly need cricket because we have not played a single Test this year and are anxiously waiting for the India series."

He was also hopeful that England would return to India for the Tests which would not only "be a very good decision" but would also ensure that cricket continued, even during these troubled times.

India's tour, scheduled from January 4 to February 19, includes three Tests, five one-day internationals and a Twenty20 international.

Arambagh

FROM PAGE 17 earlier games but started as striker yesterday, converted the spotkick coolly but had to wait till the 43rd minute for his second goal. It was a solo effort from the mid-pitch and he dribbled past two defenders before beating Nahid at the Abahani goal.

Nicodemus completed the second treble of the league on the stroke of halftime when he leaped in the air and beat two rival defenders to head home a right-side centre by Tutul. The first hattrick was also scored against Khulna Abahani when Alfaz Ahmed struck three goals in a 5-0 win.

Tutul set the team's fourth goal with another cross in the 53rd minute when he picked up Moudud to nod home while Nayan sealed the victory in the 64th minute with a powerful shot from 25 yards.

Run ragged by the Dhaka opponents, the tourists created two late openings but Manjurul hit the sidebar with an angular shot two minutes from time after Ashiqul's effort from the top of the box was saved by Arambagh keeper Piru.

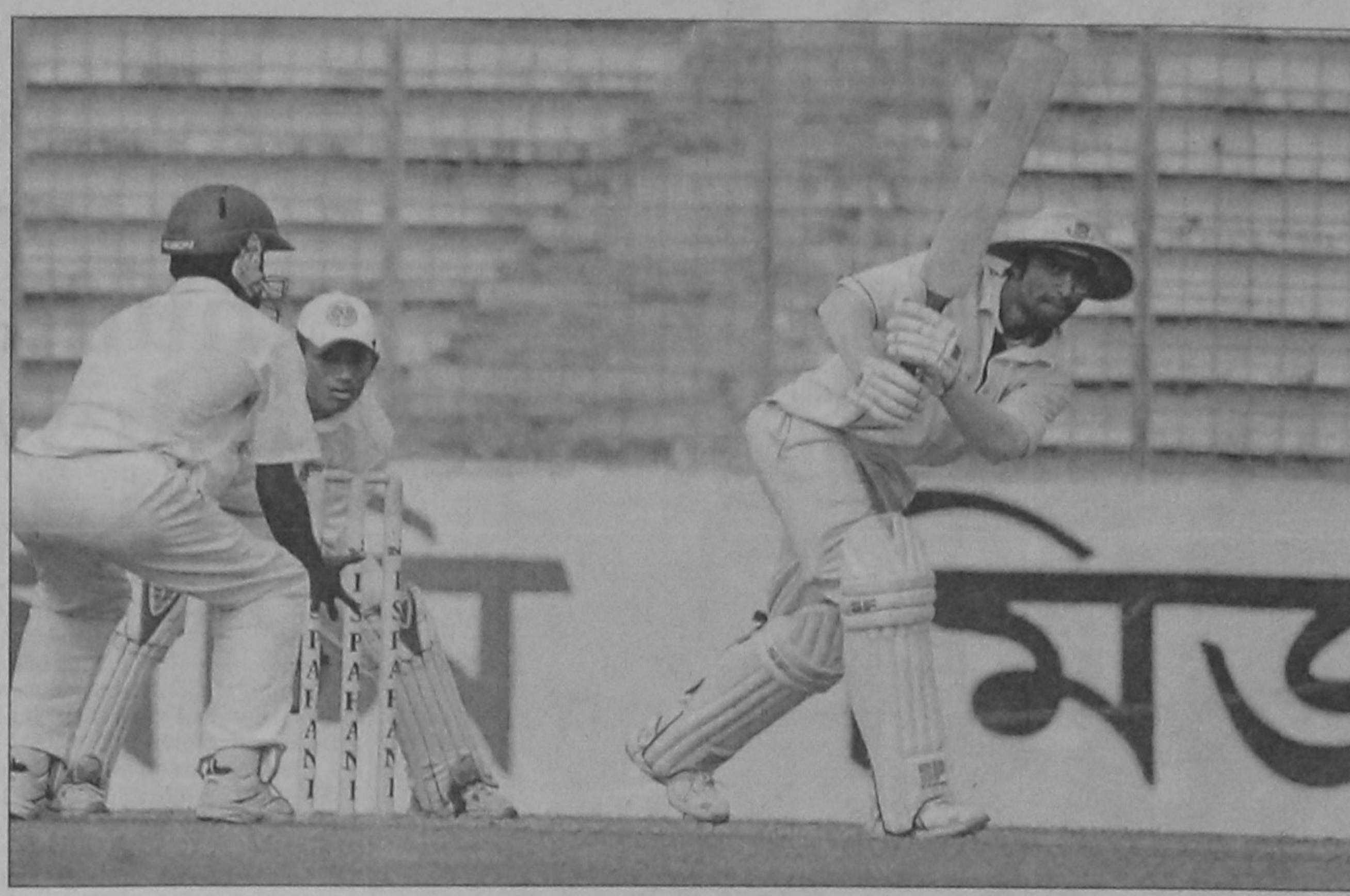


PHOTO: TIGERCRICKET.COM

Rajshahi all-rounder Suharwardi Shuvo works the ball towards mid-wicket on the second day of their National Cricket League match against Dhaka at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium yesterday.

Malik hopes cricket can ease Indo-Pak tension

AFP, Lahore

Pakistan captain Shoaib Malik on Tuesday called for India's tour of his country to go ahead, saying "cricket diplomacy" would ease tensions between the rival neighbours.

The captain made his remarks amid reports that India will cancel its upcoming Pakistani tour after accusations that the terrorists that killed 188 people in Mumbai came from Pakistan.

"If we play cricket matches then the people of both the countries will have a chance to divert their attention and the situation will definitely improve. Cricket diplomacy has helped in the past as well in the same manner," Malik told reporters.

India is due to play a side game, three Tests, five one-day internationals and a Twenty20 match on in the January-February tour of Pakistan next year.

Before the attacks, India's Board of Control for Cricket was awaiting security clearance from its government to go on the tour.

As tensions grow between the two countries after the Mumbai attacks, reports have emerged in the Indian media that the matches will be cancelled.

Malik said cricket was the sub-continent's biggest passion and listed past examples of

how the sport has brought India and Pakistan closer.

Pakistan's military ruler General Ziaul Haq used cricket as a tool of diplomacy by visiting India in the middle of the Pakistan cricket team's 1987 tour there. Pakistan also toured India in 1999 despite death threats from Indian Sikh extremists.

Malik said he hoped England's team would return to India to play Test matches, which were abandoned after the Mumbai attacks.

"If England agrees to tour India for Tests, it would be a very good decision because cricket must go on," Malik said.

The England and Wales Cricket Board has said it will wait for a security report before sending its team back for the two-match series.

Malik said his team must play some matches soon.

"We badly need cricket because we have not played a single Test this year and are anxiously waiting for the India series," said Malik.

Australia's refusal to tour Pakistan earlier this year due to fears over possible Islamic militant attacks left Pakistan without a Test during the whole of last year. If India refuses to tour, Pakistan's next Test will be in Sri Lanka in July 2009.

England offered new tour

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that an England team and their supporters would be targeted.

"If one individual decides they cannot go then others will probably follow."

Spinner Graeme Swann, battling to secure a place in the side, admitted he had a "tricky" decision to make, despite not being 100 per cent happy to return.

Ratnakar Shetty, chief operating officer for the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI), told the BBC: "In principle [the England team] do feel that the tour has to go on but I think clear picture will emerge by [Monday] evening or tomorrow morning as to how we will proceed in this matter."

"I think a team which visits and then took a break and went back -- when it comes back I think it sends a great deal of positive signal to the world."

Last week's terror attacks in Mumbai saw at least 172 people killed.

With the last two one-dayers between India and England already cancelled, the two-Test series depends on the security report's outcome.

It is understood that travel will be limited as much as possible, with England flying directly to Chennai to start the tour.

ECB managing director Hugh Morris could not confirm reports of Andrew Flintoff and Steve Harmison refusing to travel.

"I've not had confirmation from either Andy or Steve," Morris told BBC 5 Live's Sportswave programme on Sunday.

"What we are doing is pulling information together over the next 24 to 48 hours and we will be putting that to the players and their representatives."

Morris said the team would only go back to India if their safety could be guaranteed, but it

remained unclear as to which players a returning England team would.

He said England could send a weakened squad if regular first-teamers declined to go, conceding: "Clearly we would have to potentially face that issue."

Swann told BBC Radio 5 Live's Sportswave programme: "I wouldn't be 100 per cent happy going back. If [the report] says 'look guys we're safe, we can go out there, we can do some good playing cricket', then I'd go."

"But until that report comes back, I'm not keen at the minute."

Meanwhile, Lalit Modi, vice-president of the Indian cricket board (BCCI), expects England to return -- if safety assurances are met.

"Player safety and fans safety is paramount for us," Modi said.

"But on the other hand we must make sure events like this don't give the opportunity to terrorists around the world to get away with this. We need to carry on."

"I'm sure families will want to influence players and rightfully so, but they need to make their own decision."

"I really do believe it will happen though. The ECB, the security teams and governments are all checking it out and I'm sure it will be all right."

He also said the BCCI would not press the ECB for compensation should the series be shelved.

International Cricket Council chief executive Haroon Lorgat urged the series to go ahead if it was safe to do so.

"If safety and security allow then I would urge the England Test tour of India to go ahead," he said, "and if it does so, then representatives of the ICC will be there to show solidarity with the competing teams."

C'Ron wins Ballon d'Or

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Despite the good showing for the division, Ronaldo is just the second England-based player to win the award since Best in 1968. Michael Owen, in 2001, is the other.

"It is one of the most beautiful days of my life. To gain this trophy is something I dreamed of as a child," Ronaldo told www.francefootball.fr. "Great emotion fills me but I cannot really describe it."

"I want to thank those who voted for me, those who know me and those who love with me. I was not worried, because I was aware of what I did in the course of the season. But to the people who mentioned my name, I say thank you. Thank you also to my teammates."

Ronaldo was certainly not at a loss for words. "This (trophy) is one that I want to win again because it is so good," he said. "Therefore, I will wake and I will say to myself 'I want to be even better.'"

Ronaldo admitted he was proud to be take the honour ahead of a host of world stars.

"I am only 23 years old and it is splendid, incredible," he said. "There were other great names this year. I see that Lionel Messi finished second and Fernando Torres third, but also (fifth-placed) Xavi ... all these people could have taken the trophy, and I won it."

RESULTS

- 1. Cristiano Ronaldo (Portugal, Manchester Utd), 446 points
- 2. Lionel Messi (Argentina, Barcelona), 281 pts
- 3. Fernando Torres (Spain, Liverpool), 179 pts
- 4. Iker Casillas (Spain, Real Madrid), 133 pts
- 5. Xavi Hernandez (Spain, Barcelona), 97 pts
- 6. Andrei Arshavin (Russia, Zenit St Petersburg), 64 pts
- 7. David Villa (Spain, Valencia), 55 pts
- 8. Kaka (Brazil, Milan), 31 pts
- 9. Zlatan Ibrahimovic (Sweden, Internazionale), 30 pts
- 10. Steven Gerrard (England, Liverpool), 28 pts

PAST WINNERS

AFP, Paris

Last ten Ballon d'Or, Footballer of the Year winners after Cristiano Ronaldo was named on Tuesday:

- 2008: Cristiano Ronaldo (POR/Manchester United)
- 2007: Kaka (BRA/AC Milan)
- 2006: Fabio Cannavaro (ITA/Inter Milan then Real Madrid)
- 2005: Ronaldinho (BRA/FC Barcelona)
- 2004: Andrei Shevchenko (UKR/AC Milan)
- 2003: Pavel Nedved (CZE/Juventus)
- 2002: Ronaldo (BRA/Inter Milan then Real Madrid)
- 2001: Michael Owen (ENG/Liverpool)
- 2000: Luis Figo (POR/Real Madrid)
- 1999: Rivaldo (BRA/FC Barcelona)

Verbal war begins The Australia-South Africa series

Cricket

CRICINFO, undated

Australia and South Africa are incapable of competing without pre-series bluster but Tim Nielsen, the Australia coach, has said Graeme Smith's men face an enormous task to back up their words with on-field success.

South Africa's coach Mickey Arthur said earlier this week his side would try to exploit Andrew Symonds' temperament and the uncertainty over Matthew Hayden's future when the first Test starts in Perth on December 17.

Arthur labelled South Africa's fast-bowling line-up as the most exciting group he had been around and Smith has spoken of the team's confidence in the lead-up to the tour. However, Smith had also sparked a pre-series war of words in 2005-06 only for his side to lose 2-0 and Nielsen said the Australians would not hesitate to remind South Africa of their poor record in Australia, where they have won one Test in the post-isolation era.

"They better be ready. They're talking themselves up a lot at the moment," Nielsen said after Australia wrapped up a 2-0 series win over New Zealand in Adelaide. "There's no doubt they've got some good bowling but they've never won over here before, so they'd better play better than they've ever played before. We've got some high-quality players in our top order that are ready for the challenge of South Africa."

Although Hayden and Symonds are still short on runs, several of their teammates found form against New Zealand including the wicketkeeper Brad Haddin, who posted his first Test century in Adelaide. Nielsen said it was important for the squad to build confidence following the tough tour of India, where they lost 2-0 and some key members of the team struggled.

"We had a couple of guys who got some real personal success as well over the last two Test matches, which is a real fillip for them," Nielsen said. "Haddis obviously getting his big score and Mitchell [Johnson] getting his first five-for and then Brett [Lee] getting nine wickets here, Andrew Symonds coming back into the team. All those things add up to us being in a much better place than when we left Nagpur a month or so ago."

Form and confidence will be crucial in the three Tests against South Africa, who have not lost a Test series since visiting Sri Lanka in 2006 and are now the second-ranked side behind Australia. Smith, Hashim Amla, Neil McKenzie, Ashwell Prince and AB de Villiers are all in the top ten run scorers in Tests for 2008 and helped South Africa do what Australia could not achieve this year -- they drew a series in India.

The attack based around Dale Steyn, Makhaya Ntini and Morne Morkel will also be a threat. However, Australia's captain Ricky Ponting said his men were not concerned about handling the fast bowlers on what is likely to be a bouncy WACA surface.

"It's on paper a very good attack," Ponting said. "It's an attack, though, that hasn't played in Australia, that's the other thing. We all know that it's pretty easy to get carried away with conditions in Perth if you haven't played there before."

The WACA can even trick the home team and last summer Australia played four fast bowlers there, including Shaun Tait, only to lose to India when the pitch failed to offer as much pace as expected. Although Ponting said they would consider a four-man fast-bowling line-up again this year, Nielsen prefers the balance of including a spinner.

"It allows us to get through some overs without being totally defensive at times as well," Nielsen said. "It balances us up nicely and gives us those options if they do get partnerships going that we have something a bit different rather than keep sloggling away with the same style of bowling."

A four-man pace attack worked against New Zealand at the Gabba before the offspinner Nathan Hauritz was surprisingly called into the team for Adelaide when Jason Krejza hurt his ankle. Australia are likely to be given a much more rigorous examination by South Africa than they were by New Zealand, who are now ranked eighth, but Nielsen is confident his men can deliver.

"The great thing about these sort of series is that our senior players have shown time and time again when the game's on the line they're willing to stand up and do the job," Nielsen said. "That'll be the challenge for South Africa. Talk is pretty cheap at this time of the summer."

Khulna lose their way

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batted diligently too, scoring 85 off 176 balls.

Shuvo also added 71 runs for the fifth wicket with Sabbir Rahman, who contributed 37. Rajshahi suffered a mini collapse when the two Sunnys -- Arafat and Elias -- bowled well in tandem to bowl out the visitors for 283 runs.

Dhaka reduced their deficit by 12 runs, but lost opener Anwar Hossain for just two.

SYLHET-BARISAL Golam Rahman batted seven minutes short of six hours to score his first hundred of the winter. The left-hander struck eighteen boundaries and a six in his 280-ball essay of 116 runs.

The dismissal of Rahman, the younger brother of rebel cricketer Golam Mabud, sparked the Sylhet management to declare their first

innings on 366 for nine, having batted 32.4 overs in the day.

Barisal batted solidly, scoring 129-2 with half-centuries from Nasiruddin Faruque and skipper Imran, who was the aggressive of the two, scoring his fifty off 129 balls with ten boundaries.

BRIEF SCORES SYLHET: First innings 366-9 dec. in 126.4 overs (Rahman 116, Saikat 111, Taposh 38; Tariqul 4-78, Nasir 3-51). BARISAL: First innings 129-2 in 54.1 overs (Faruque 54, Imran 50; Taposh 1-16). DHAKA: First innings 142 and second innings 12-1 in 8.3 overs (Elias 6\*, Javed 1\*, Saiful 1-1).

RAJSHAH: First innings 283 all out in 107.5 overs (Jahurul 83, Shuvo 85, Sabbir 37; Arafat 2-45, Azim 2-61). KHULNA: First innings 301-9

dec. in 100.2 overs (Sahagir 33, Raihan 63, Nahid 67, Salim 38, Ziaur 45; Tareq Aziz 5-69, Rubel 2-97) and second innings 40-7 in 29.2 overs (Kamrul 3-14, Younus 2-5).

CHITTAGONG: First innings 121 all out in 31.4 overs (Rezaul 30, Arman 17; Ziaur 5-36, Rabiul 3-18).

CGames, WC

FROM PAGE 17

Indian cricket authorities are awaiting security clearance from the government for a Test tour of Pakistan in January, but media reports say the series is unlikely to take place.

India and Pakistan jointly hosted the World Cup in 1987 and 1996 with Sri Lanka, who organised three matches in 1996, and Bangladesh added as hosts for the 2011 tournament.



PHOTO: STAR

Scene from yesterday's Prime Bank 11th Open International Rating Chess tournament at the federation hall room.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

Crossword puzzle grid with clues. ACROSS: 38 Make like Torville and Dean (Lat.). 59 Being (Lat.). 11 Take Her— Mine! 15 Sicilian spouter 16 1990s 20 Back talk 23 LPs' successors 2 Mel 24 Tibetan beast 25 Twice the radius 27 Buck's mate 29 Rowing boot 30 Phlything when 32 Wages 34 Lowly one 37 Before 39 Chess piece 42 Venomous viper 44 Detached 45 Pt. of speech 46 Roof overhang 48 Responsibility 49 Uses a ray gun 50 Other-wise 53 Debt notice

Cryptiquip puzzle grid with numbers 1-50 and letters X, Y, Z.

CRYPTOQUIP XK V OIZGEQ IK VZWSTVEXPP LVTWZGXVEW DQTQ NVSSEXPR XS IZS LXRBS SBVS NQ DILNVS OILNVS? Yesterday's Cryptiquip: WHEN YOU'RE ALTERING JUST THE FIRST WORD OF A SENTENCE, YOU COULD BE CHANGING THE SUBJECT. Today's Cryptiquip Clue: S equals T