



Jessore DC Nepur Ahmed (2nd from L) hands over the National Cricket League champions' trophy to the members of Khulna zilla team after the final at the Shamsul Huda Stadium in Jessore yesterday.

Yuvraj back in Test fold

AFP, Chennai

India's cricket selectors resurrected the Test career of Yuvraj Singh on Thursday by naming him for the two-match series against England starting next week.

The left-hander was included in a 15-man squad for the series that England said will go ahead pending a security clearance, following last week's attacks on Mumbai by armed militants that killed 188 and injured nearly 300.

The series hinges on the report by England's security advisor Reg Dickson on the facilities in Chennai, which hosts the first Test from December 11, and Mohali, the venue of the second Test from December 19.

Yuvraj smashed 325 runs, including two centuries, at an average of 108.33 in five one-day internationals against England last month as India blanked the tourists 5-0.

The last two games of what was supposed to be a seven-match series were called off as England flew home after the Mumbai attacks.

Yuvraj, who turns 28 on the second day of the Chennai Test, returns to the Test side after being ignored for the tour of Sri Lanka in July-August and the home series against world champions Australia in October-November.

He replaces another left-hander, former captain Sourav Ganguly, who retired from international cricket last month after India's 2-0 series win over Australia.

Yuvraj, a veteran of 222 one-day internationals, has played just 23 Tests since his debut in 2003, scoring 1,050 runs at 32.81 with three centuries.

The squad, announced in an Indian cricket board release, retains most players that took part in India's winning campaign against Ricky Ponting's Australians.

Left-arm slow bowler Pragyan Ojha, who has yet to play a Test after five one-day appearances, is the only new face in the squad as a back-up to frontline spinners Harbhajan Singh and Amit Mishra.

He replaces seamer Rudra Pratap Singh.

SQUAD

Mahendra Singh Dhoni (captain), Virender Sehwag, Gautam Gambhir, Rahul Dravid, Sachin Tendulkar, Venkatesh Laxman, Yuvraj Singh, Harbhajan Singh, Amit Mishra, Zaheer Khan, Ishant Sharma, Munaf Patel, Pragyan Ojha, S Badrinath, MV Jay.

Spurs ride

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slot past Loach and maintain his record of scoring in every round.

Jenkins almost made amends for giving away the penalty soon after the restart when he shot from the edge of the area, only for Dawson to block bravely.

As the second half degenerated into an ugly scrap, Redknapp responded by replacing Campbell with Bent and the England striker got the decisive goal in the 76th minute.

Liam Bridcutt, on loan from Chelsea, won the ball with a challenge on Lennon but it deflected to Bent rather than a Watford player and his low shot crept past Loach at the near post for his first goal in five matches.

29TH NATIONAL CRICKET Khulna triumph on Iftekhar's show

SPORTS REPORTER

Mosaddik Iftekhar helped Khulna become champions of the 29th National Cricket Championship after a 21-run victory over Rangpur in the final at the Shamsul Huda Stadium in Jessore yesterday.

After batting purposefully and posting a competitive 226-6 in their 50 overs, Khulna bowled out the northern district for 205 in 45.3 overs.

But the day definitely belonged to the allrounder who helped Khulna reach the final with three priceless wickets. On the big day, Iftekhar batted well, scoring 28 off 32 balls, helping the likes of Ashraf Rizvi (57) and Delwar Hossain (35) do their job properly.

His work in the afternoon began early when he ran out opener Salahuddin, who was running hot on a 33-ball 41. He took three wickets to destroy the middle-order before Bishwanath Halder came back in his second spell to remove Abdur Rahman and clinch Khulna the title.

Al-Amin top-scored for Rangpur with 42 while Sakib Sarkar, Rangpur's hero in the earlier rounds, struck a rapid 33 off 28 balls with a six and two boundaries. He also took two wickets in the first innings, but in the end it was the other allrounder, Iftekhar, who stole the show.

BRIEF SCORES

KHULNA: 226-6 in 50 overs (Rizvi 57, Delwar 35, Riazul 34, Iftekhar 28; Sakib 2-24, Monty 2-44).
RANGPUR: 205 all out in 45.3 overs (Salahuddin 41, Al-Amin 42, Sakib 33; Iftekhar 3-35, Shamim 2-36, Zafar 2-27).
Result: Khulna won by 21 runs.

PCB to insure Indo-Pak series

Cricket

PTI, Karachi

The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) is working on a contingency plan to avoid financial losses if security concerns derail its scheduled home series including the tour by India in January.

An insurance specialist from England met with PCB officials in Lahore on Thursday and gave a presentation in this regard.

A senior official of the Board said the specialist had come to Pakistan on his own expenses and his presentation was a free of cost exercise.

"We are interested in getting our coming series insured against cancellation, postponement caused due to terrorist threats or security issues," the official said.

"We have lost money in the past due to the security situation leading to postponement of home series and we want to avoid that pitfall again. We don't want to get into financial problems," Saleem Altaf, the chief operating officer of the Board said on Thursday.

He said a previous exercise of getting home series against South Africa, Zimbabwe and Australia insured had not been a gain for the Board.

"Basically our investigations have shown it was a re-insurance exercise and we ended up paying around 5 crores premium without getting anything in return even

Let's do it for India

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"They are men at the end of the day and they make decisions for themselves. They certainly make life decisions for themselves. It is very clear that nobody was told what to do. Nobody was persuaded what to do."

"We respected everybody's opinions. We are fortunate to have such a great bunch of lads who want to jump on a plane this afternoon to go to Abu Dhabi."

"I'm not sure about extra persuasion I just think guys like Steve and Fred (Flintoff) have got a lot more open minded in the last couple of days with what Reg has said

after Australia postponed its visit earlier this year," he said.

Altaf said the purpose of inviting the insurance specialist from the United Kingdom was for the PCB management to get in-depth knowledge of how the insurance industry works. "We are interested in getting our future series insured as we have also signed a new deal for television rights for 140.5 million dollars. But before we do anything we want to be absolutely sure of everything," Altaf said.

According to its international calendar, Pakistan has a packed year hosting major teams like India, Sri Lanka, Australia and even the Champions Trophy. But security and safety concerns by touring teams have led to the cancellation or postponement of several series this year and even before that.

Even India's forthcoming tour from January 4 to play three Tests and a One-Day series is in doubt after the Mumbai terror attacks although the PCB said it was confident something positive will happen.

He said the local insurance Board had taken out didn't cover cancellation or postponement of series due to terrorism.

With security concerns forcing postponement and cancellations of several events and accusations of misuse of funds by the previous Board set up, the PCB says it has been left with only around 1.80 billion rupees in its account.

and what's gone on in the last couple of days.

"That is fantastic for the team because they are two big players and we certainly want them in our team and certainly want them to come."

Hugh Morris, the England Cricket Managing Director, added: "I have spoken to our security team in Chennai a couple of times this morning. They are finding out exactly what the situation is with these terrorists."

"As soon as we get that information it will be fed back to me and fed back to the Board and form part of the security audit we are undertaking."

Gibbs having rehabilitation

AFP, Cape Town

South African batsman Herschelle Gibbs will undergo a month of rehabilitation for alcohol abuse, ahead of his trial for drunken driving next year, local media reported Thursday.

The batsman was thrown out of the national squad in November for breaking a team curfew ahead of a one-day international against Bangladesh and Cricket South Africa said he would undergo rehabilitation for alcohol abuse.

"He is going to take some time out until next year," his agent Donne Commins told the Cape Times.

Gibbs was recently divorced from his wife who accused him of abusing alcohol, and has often been surrounded by controversy, also found guilty of smoking marijuana with teammates while on tour in the West Indies in 2001.

He was also allegedly involved in match fixing in 2001, along with then captain Hansie Cronje.

Gibbs was arrested seven months ago in the Cape Town suburb of Sea Point, on suspicion of driving under the influence of alcohol. His trial has been set down from March 24.

Bird's Nest

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The Bird's Nest, which seats 91,000 people, became the symbol of the Games held in August in China's capital, attracting worldwide attention for its striking design of interlocking steel girders.

It hosted the Olympics opening and closing ceremonies, as well as athletics competition and football final.

It has since proved a hit with tourists, attracting 60,000 visitors on its October 1 opening day, and thousands of people every day since.

But the venue has also attracted controversy due to charges of 50 yuan (7.3 dollars) for a tour inside, which some locals and sections of the state-run press have said are too high.

According to China's National Bureau of Statistics, the average Beijing household has only 60 yuan of disposable income per day.

Twente scalp

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home to Greek side Olympiakos with Edmar volleying the vital goal in the 87th minute.

Standard Liege made it three wins in three with a 3-0 Group C victory over Sampdoria which ensured the Belgians advanced.

Igor De Camargo, Oguchi Onyewu and Milan Jovanovic were all on target for the home side in the first half.

Sevilla, the champions in 2006 and 2007, enjoyed a 3-0 win over Partizan Belgrade with Brazilian striker Luis Fabiano scoring twice and compatriot Renato adding the third.

Despite the win, Sevilla are still not guaranteed of a place in the last 32.

The top three teams in each of the eight groups qualify for the next round where they will be joined by eight third-place finishers from the Champions League opening stage.

Eight more group matches take place on Thursday.

Mido angry

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individuals who are identified and found guilty of discriminatory chanting, we will be calling for them to be banned," said a spokesman.

"The responsibility lies with the police and the clubs to identify individuals responsible. We'll be liaising with them to make sure that happens."

Mido suffered similar abuse during the same fixture last season but no action was taken because police were unable to identify the culprits.

Piara Powar, the director of Kick it Out, a campaign group which seeks to eradicate racism from English football, called for tougher action this time.

"This is the second consecutive season that we've seen Newcastle supporters directing Islamophobic abuse at Mido," Powar said earlier this week. "This time both the FA and the police should act."

"It's time a message went out loud and clear to Newcastle fans that calling a Muslim a terrorist, a shoe bomber, or whatever else they think is funny this week, is against the law and can have serious implications for them personally and the club they support."

Lorgat hails decision

Cricket

CRICINFO, undated

Haroon Lorgat, the International Cricket Council (ICC) chief executive, has welcomed England's decision to go ahead with the tour of India, pending security clearance, saying it was good for world cricket. The security inspection by the England and Wales Cricket Board's (ECB) expert, aimed at assessing the cover provided to players, is underway and Lorgat said the ICC would expect similar security for its match officials.

"It is very important for world cricket that England does tour India. We have to do everything to ensure that the tour proceeds with the security measures in place," Lorgat told Cricinfo. "But at the same time, we can't be foolish and that is why it is important that the necessary security measures are in place. It's very good for cricket that England have risen above the events of the past week because of the security measures that have been promised."

Lorgat said that security would be an important item on the agenda during the ICC's chief executives' meeting in Cape Town on Monday. "We must do everything possible to play the game without taking risks that cannot be managed. All of us would need to put our heads together to come up with a collective and coordinated approach in responding to global terrorism. Of course, I'm no expert in this area and we must all join hands in tackling this problem with experts and governments supporting us."

Moore's fears thrashing

Cricket

AFP, London

Head coach Peter Moores has admitted England will be seriously under-prepared for next week's first Test with India.

After flying home in the wake of the Mumbai attacks, Kevin Pietersen's squad were due Thursday to fly to Abu Dhabi before a scheduled return to India early next week, days before the first Test starts on Thursday, December 11 in Chennai.

"Realistically the time is not long enough," Moores said in an interview with BBC Radio.

"Our preparations are going to be compromised in many ways through circumstances."

"We're in Abu Dhabi, where we're not going to play. The facilities, I think, are going to be okay but we haven't had a chance to check them out, which we normally would, and the timeframe is very short."

England go into the two-Test series having been comprehensively outplayed by India in the

Asked about a letter sent by Vince van der Bijl, the ICC's umpires' and referees' manager, to the Indian board asking for similar security to ICC match officials as the players, Lorgat said, "Everyone is an important participant in the Test match and must be accorded similar security measures as the player. Everyone is important." Jeff Crowe will be the match referee for the series, while Daryl Harper and Asad Rauf are the on-field umpires.

Lorgat's words echoed those of David Morgan, the ICC president, who -- before England announced their decision to fly to Abu Dhabi -- criticized the view of Geoffrey Boycott and others who argued that the series should be postponed. "I have seen British writers criticising the ECB for wanting to return while the disaster is still 'raw' in India, to use Geoffrey Boycott's expression," Morgan said in the Daily Telegraph. "In my view they are failing to understand that it isn't for British people to make a judgment on what people in India want."

"It is quite clear that the people who run cricket in India want the game to resume as soon as possible. Wouldn't we want the same here if the boot was on the other foot?"

Former players such as Boycott and Graham Gooch have pushed for the cancellation of the two-Test series after it was reported that "at least five or six" players may pull out. "I know Mr Boycott is saying that players will be in an inappropriate state of mind, but it's the same, if not worse, for the Indian players," Morgan said. "We have to think of the business of cricket as well as the game of cricket. The terrorists cannot be allowed to win."

one-day series that was curtailed as a result of events in Mumbai, and they have not played Test cricket since the final Test of their last series against South Africa, in August.

"That's a long time," added Moores. "So we've got a lot of work to do to get mentally in the right place and also physically and technically ready to go."

England will have two full practice sessions on Saturday and Sunday in the Gulf with the journey to Chennai scheduled for Monday.

All of England's leading players have agreed to return to India although seamer Ryan Sidebottom misses out as a result of a side strain while Stuart Broad will miss the first Test with a hamstring problem but is hoping to rejoin the squad for the second match, in Mohali from December 19.

Despite the odds being against England, Moores believes the unique nature of the situation they find themselves in could result in a better performance on the pitch.

"Things like this often pull teams tighter together and we hope to give it our best shot in the two Tests," he said.

Mohammedans

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Mamun then palmed away Sharif's slow drive from 20 yards on the stroke of halftime, inspiring the men from Chittagong to lay a series of attacks after resumption.

But it were the hosts who came close to score one minute from the hour. Hazem unleashed a teasing volley from 35 yards but the ball skimmed the upright.

A minute later, Robin gave Dhaka Mohammedan a lifeline when he got inside the area only to be tripped by rival back Shawkat and win a penalty. But Hazem powered his chance from the spot wide of Mamun's left-hand post.

Doe and substitute Chowmrin got two late chances for the visitors but

fired wide under challenge from the opposition defenders.

D h a k a M o h a m m e d a n mounted pressure in the last five minutes but they were not lucky like the matches against Abahani or Farashganj when they got last minute goals.

Yellow cards: Hazem (Dhaka Mohammedan) and Ridon, Shawkat (Ctg Mohammedan).

TEAMS

Dhaka Mohammedan: Aminul, Kamal, Wahid (Jewel Rana), Saikat, Ripon, Nasir, Hazem, Sharif (Emmanuel), Komol, Robin and Bukola (Rony).

Ctg Mohammedan: Mamun, Dhiman, Pradip, Shawkat, Sharif, Ridon (Lincoln), Kaiser (Chowmrin), Camara, Doe, Rafael and Daulat (Touhid).

Referee: Mizanur Rahman

ECB looks out for

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seen news of the airport situation this morning but insisted he was concentrating on the Test series. "It'll buy us some more time in Abu Dhabi and I think it's fantastic that we're going to demonstrate in India that we're showing our support to play Test match cricket."

I'm very confident that we have 15 lads who will be playing Test cricket next week."

Hugh and Sean Morris, the chief executive of the Professional Cricketers' Association, are flying straight to India to meet up with Reg Dickson, the ECB security advisor, who has been assessing the venues in recent days. They are then due to meet the

England squad in Abu Dhabi on Sunday to deliver a final security report, at which point the decision will be made as to whether to proceed to India.

A full England squad has been named despite speculation that a number of players would pull out and Pietersen said time at home helped everyone come to their decision.

"Everyone has become a lot more open minded, spoken to family members, and realise that it's pretty huge to go back at India's time of need. The boys want to go and play Test cricket. I'm very confident that if everything goes according to plan we'll have a full squad to pick from."

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS	34 Chances, for short	54 Utters	16 Water vessel
1 Taxi	35 Journal	55 Kreskin's claim	20 Favorite one
4 Dismiss flies	36 Insolence		
8 Ovine remarks	37 Crusted	DOWN	23 Toll road
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13 Nullify	40 " — the pair	2 Auth.	25 Sherman, for one
14 Fairy tale	41 Van Gogh painting	3 Info measure	26 Sticky stuff
15 Midriff bulge	42 Favorable votes	4 Slender and sleek	27 Fair, for short
17 The Eternal City	43 Eccentric	5 Yuletide plant	28 Egg container?
18 Tied after two scores	44 Angry	6 Lubricate	32 Compels to do
19 Hot tub	45 Brian of rock music	7 Eventful journey	33 Araby VIP
21 Eyelid woe	46 Sound of contentment	8 Shoddy merchandise	35 Golfer's position
22 Alluring one		9 Past	36 Ringlings' show
		10 Branch	
		11 Witness	38 Riddle

Solution time: 25 mins.

39 Blog, basically

42 Gray years

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47 Mess up

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CRYPTOQUIP

C I P X P B Q X V D L P O P L

X N G K O C L P S I P L D Q V U C V U M

V M G P X Z S G N S G R Q Z

V I P I Q B Q N I Q U M P S O Q U C

Yesterday's Cryptquip: THAT WAS A VERY FASCINATING BIT OF TRIVIA YOU DIVULGED. IT'LL BE A TOUGH FACT TO FOLLOW!

Today's Cryptquip Clue: I equals R