



Did U Know?

Top South African all-rounder Jacques Kallis is told to have been soft against Australia. In 18 Tests against the Aussies he averages only 38.32, well below his overall 55.06. But in 12 Tests against Bangladesh and Zimbabwe he has an average of 124.50 which is a proof that he does "dish it out to the minnows".



Allan Lamb
(Former England cricketer)
"Ian Botham was my best roommate. I never saw him."



Neo Cricket
India v England
First Test, Day 3
Live from 10:00am

ESPN
English Premiership
Middlesbrough v Arsenal
Live from 6:40pm
Man City v Everton
Live from 8:55pm
Aston Villa v Bolton
Live from 11:30pm

STAR Sports
English Premiership
Liverpool v Hull City
Live from 8:55pm
Tottenham v Man United
Live from 11:25pm
Primera Liga
Barcelona v Real Madrid
Live from 3:00am (Saturday)

AB relieves Proteas

AB de Villiers is another player the South Africans do not have to worry about entering Wednesday's first Test after he fine-tuned with a century against Western Australia's 2nd XI at the WACA.

After Hashim Amla's hundred in the tour opener, he scored 59 not out and the tourists received a further boost with de Villiers and Neil McKenzie finding form at the right time.

De Villiers, who retired on 129, and McKenzie combined for a 124-run third-wicket stand after the tourists, who won the toss, slipped to 29-2. They recovered quickly and finished with a comfortable 320-8 declared at stumps on the first day of the two-day fixture.

McKenzie collected a well-earned 69 while de Villiers flexed with 18 fours and three sixes during his 181-ball innings. Amla continued his strong start to the tour and at the end of the day the only batting concerns were the short stays of Graeme Smith, Ashwell Prince and Mark Boucher.

An elbow problem kept Smith from the first encounter and he hit two boundaries in his 17 deliveries before being bowled by Drew Porter for two.

The South Africans' second wicket fell when Prince (10) was caught at mid-off from the bowling of Justin Coetzee, who finished with 2-56. Boucher (13) departed in the second session, hitting Chris Thompson to deep square-leg, and it was left to Amla and de Villiers to add another 72 before de Villiers retired.

The tourists received some good news in the morning with fast bowler Morne Morkel, who sprained his ankle on Wednesday, passed fit to play. He joined Dale Steyn, Makhaya Ntini and Paul Harris in a full-strength bowling attack.

Newbie Swann blitzes India

Cricket

AFP, Chennai

England debutant Graeme Swann grabbed two wickets in his first over to spark a dramatic Indian collapse in the first cricket Test here on Friday.

India, replying to England's first innings total of 316, crashed to 155-6 by stumps on the second day, sending some 5,000 home fans into stunned silence at the Chidambaram stadium.

Swann, the 29-year-old off-spinner who played 15 one-day internationals before being handed his Test cap here, struck as soon as he was brought on by skipper Kevin Pietersen for the last over before tea.

He trapped Gautam Gambhir (19) leg-before with his third delivery after having an appeal for a catch at short-leg turned down by umpire Daryl Harper the previous ball.

Off the final delivery of the over, Swann earned another leg-before verdict against Rahul Dravid to emulate countryman Richard Johnson's feat of two first-over wickets on debut against Zimbabwe in 2003.

Swann's double strike followed the dismissal of opener Virender Sehwag in the sixth over, the batsman dragging a James Anderson delivery on to his stumps.

Sachin Tendulkar (37) and Venkatesh Laxman (24) put on 61 for the fourth wicket before the duo banished to return

catches in the space of six deliveries, reducing India to 102-5.

Laxman was beaten in the air by left-arm spinner Monty Panesar, while Tendulkar, the world's leading Test batsman, was removed by Andrew Flintoff with the first delivery of a new spell.

Steve Harmison struck shortly before close when Yuvraj Singh, who turned 27 on Friday, was snapped up in the slips for 14.

At stumps, skipper Mahendra Singh Dhoni was on 24 and Harbhajan Singh was on 13 with India still trailing by 161 runs.

Earlier, England's total was boosted by a defiant 53 not out from wicket-keeper Matt Prior in his first Test match since the tour of Sri Lanka a year ago.

Indian spinners Harbhajan and Amit Mishra claimed three wickets each as the tourists, who were 164-1 at one stage on the first day, lost their way in the middle-order before the late revival.

Nightwatchman Anderson gave the top order a batting lesson by holding his ground for almost two hours to score 19 that included a valuable sixth-wicket stand of 42 with Prior.

England recovered after Flintoff was dismissed in the day's third over before a run had been added to the overnight score of 229-5.

Dhoni's gamble to bring on Mishra after one over from seamer Ishant Sharma paid off when the leg-spinner forced Flintoff (18) to deflect a catch to short-leg with his fifth delivery.

Anderson batted till 30 minutes before lunch when he pulled Mishra to mid-wicket where Yuvraj took a low catch.

The Test is the first in cricket-mad India since last month's terror strikes in Mumbai that killed 172, including nine gunmen, and left more than 300 wounded.

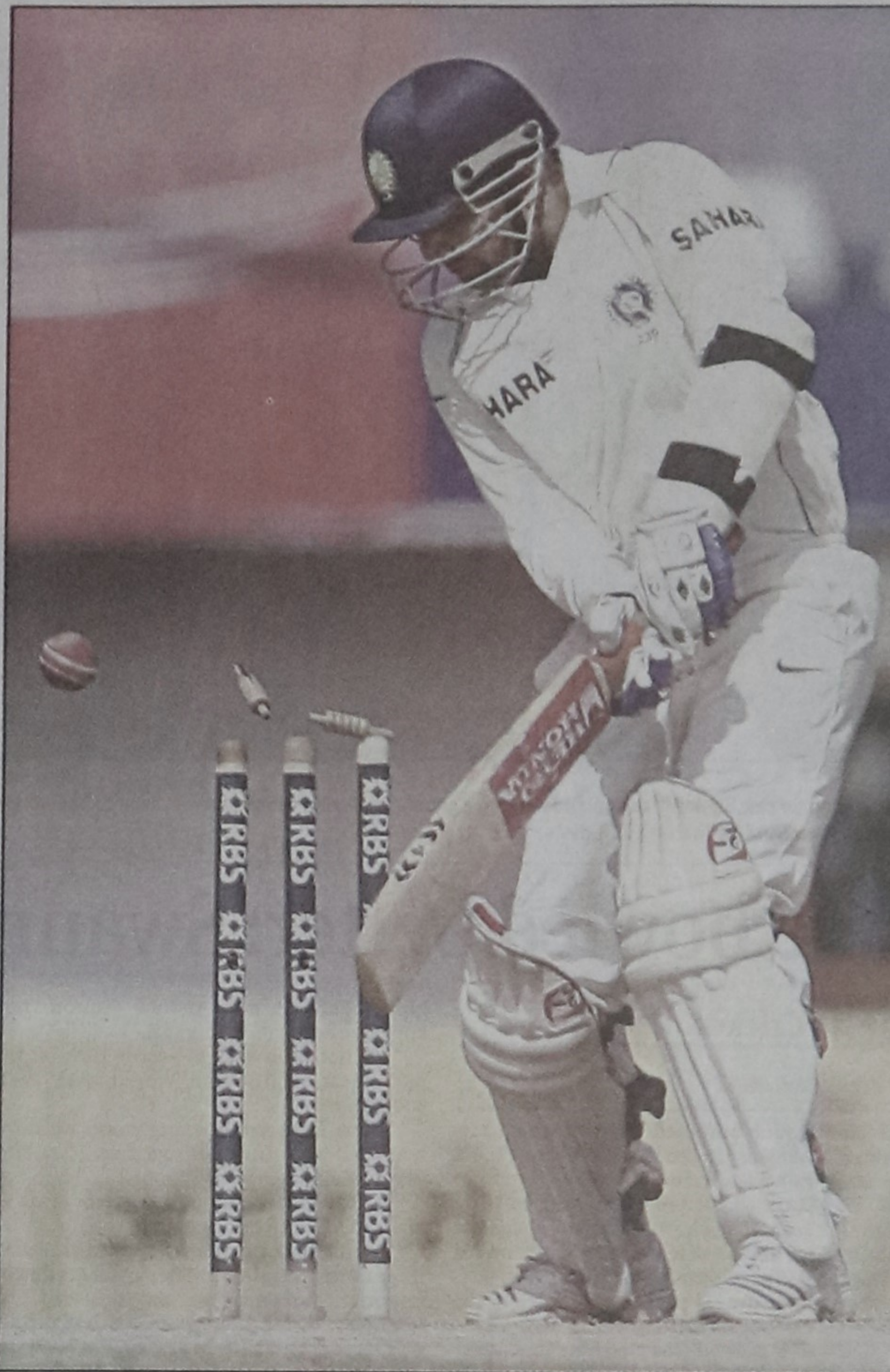
The second and final Test will be played in the northern town of Mohali from December 19.

SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard at stumps on the second day of the first Test between England and India at the MA Chidambaram Stadium in Chennai on Friday:

ENGLAND: First innings (overnight 229-5):			
Strauss c and b Mishra	123		
Cook c Zaheer b Harbhajan	52		
Bell lbw b Zaheer	17		
Pietersen c and b Zaheer	4		
Collingwood c Gambhir b Harbhajan	9		
Flintoff c Gambhir b Mishra	18		
Anderson c Yuvraj b Mishra	19		
Prior not out	53		
Swann c Dravid b Harbhajan	1		
Harmison c Dhoni b Yuvraj	6		
Panesar lbw b Sharma	6		
Extras: (lb-7, nb-1)	8		
Total (all out in 128.4 overs)	316		
Fall of wickets: 1-118, 2-164, 3-180, 4-195, 5-221, 6-229, 7-271, 8-277, 9-304, 10-316.			
Bowler O M R W			
Zaheer	21	9	41
Sharma	19.4	4	32
Harbhajan	38	2	96
Mishra	34	6	99
Yuvraj	15	2	33
Sehwag	1	0	8
INDIA: First innings:			
Gambhir lbw b Swann	19		
Sehwag b Anderson	9		
Dravid lbw b Swann	3		
Tendulkar c and b Flintoff	37		

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Indian batsman Virender Sehwag plays on to the stumps from a James Anderson delivery during the second day of the first Test against England at the Chidambaram stadium in Chennai on Friday.

PHOTO: AFP

NZ-WEST INDIES

No play possible at Dunedin

CRICINFO, Dunedin

Heavy overnight rain topped up with a series of daytime showers meant that there was no play possible on the second day of the opening Test at Dunedin's University Oval yesterday.

Prospects were always poor after a prolonged torrential downpour left the outfield sodden, and after the most cursory of inspections, the umpires called for an early lunch with a view to starting in the middle of the afternoon.

But despite an energetic mopping-up exercise, early clear skies gave way to more rain and the ground staff were always fighting a losing battle with the elements. An almost token inspection confirmed the worst and the day was abandoned shortly after 2.30pm with pools of water still visible on parts of the outfield.

Even though the last three days will start half an hour earlier to try to make up for lost time, New Zealand -- who will resume on 226-4, will need to press for quick runs tomorrow and then look to let loose their seam attack on a pitch which, although well covered, could yet be spiced up by the rain.

If yesterday's cloud cover also continues, West Indies will find themselves batting in conditions far removed from those they expected.

The forecast for the weekend is generally good, though chilly, but more rain is predicted for Monday.

CL Twenty20 next year

Cricket

CRICINFO, undated

The inaugural Champions Twenty20 League has been pushed back by a year and will now be held in India in October 2009, the window originally identified for the tournament's second edition.

The tournament was scheduled to be held from December 3-11 in Mumbai, Chennai and Bangalore but was put off after the terrorist attacks in Mumbai.

The organisers -- the BCCI, Cricket Australia (CA) and Cricket South Africa (CSA), meeting in a teleconference on Friday -- said they took the decision to cancel the event "after considering all aspects, including the international calendar and the domestic schedules of the participating teams".

It is understood that there is a provision to push back the tournament's ten-year cycle by a year in the organisers' arrangement with ESPN-

Star Sports (ESS), the broadcasters, though it would mean teams would have to qualify afresh for the tournament.

The initial plan was to hold the tournament in early 2009 but the home and away series between Australia and South Africa, and the domestic Twenty20 fixtures of those countries, made it an impossible task. The participation of India's players was also dependent on the status of next year's tour of Pakistan. Eventually, the organisers decided to use the proposed second season dates for the inaugural edition.

While it is likely the tournament will now have more teams -- possibly up to 12 from the eight slotted for this year -- next year's Twenty20 domestic finalists from India, Australia and South Africa will definitely take part. "Other participating teams will be finalised by the end of January 2009," a press release stated.

The cancellation comes as a huge blow for the teams that qualified for the 2008 edition, as they would have received at least US\$250,000

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FIFA reveals top five

AFP, Zurich

World football's ruling body FIFA on Friday revealed the remaining contenders for the 2008 World Player and FIFA Women's World Player awards, to be handed out here on January 12, 2009.

The male nominees are Kaka (Brazil), Lionel Messi (Argentina), Cristiano Ronaldo (Portugal), Fernando Torres (Spain), and Xavi (Spain).

Nadine Angerer (Germany), Cristiane (Brazil), Marta (Brazil), Birgit Prinz (Germany) and Kelly Smith (England) will contest the women's award.

This year heralds an increased field of contenders, moving up to five from the three of previous years.

All the nominees were confirmed after a poll in which the coaches and captains of men's and women's national teams from around the world cast their votes on the basis of a list of men's and women's candidates drawn up by FIFA.

In addition, the customary FIFA Presidential Award and the FIFA Fair Play Award will be presented.

AC Milan striker Kaka won the award last year, adding the accolade to his European Footballer of the Year honour.

Ronaldo recently picked up the prestigious Ballon d'Or for the European Footballer of the Year.

No visa woes for Rauf

AFP, Karachi

Pakistan's top-ranked umpire Asad Rauf said Friday he will travel to India next week for the second Test between India and England after missing the first match due to visa problems.

"I have got the Indian visa now and I am flying to New Delhi on Monday and (will) stand in the second India-England Test," Rauf told AFP.

The 52-year-old had been due to officiate the first Test but missed it because he had to reapply for his visa when the event was relocated to Chennai in the wake of the deadly attack on Mumbai.

His place was taken by New Zealand umpire Billy Bowden. There had been concerns Rauf would have trouble going

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NCL gets nat'l touch

Cricket

SPORTS REPORTER

The national cricketers will be back to business tomorrow when the penultimate round of the 10th National Cricket League kicks off at three different venues across the country.

Mohammad Ashraf's men, who returned home on December 2 after a month-long trip to South Africa, have the opportunity to get tuned in a domestic competition before facing another tough challenge at home against the formidable Sri Lankans who will arrive in Dhaka on December 19 to play two Tests and a triangular one-day tournament also involving Zimbabwe.

For the first time, the national stars will be available for their divisional sides in the tenth version of the country's lone first-class meet and because of that, the focus will be on the big names ahead of the next international assignment.

League leaders Rajshahi are likely to make sure they will have the last laugh when they meet bottom-table Sylhet but all eyes will be on Khulna as Bangladesh captain Ashraf and his deputy Mashrafe Bin Mortaza clash besides other key national cricketers at the Khulna Divisional Stadium.

Chief selector Rafiqul Alam will watch the Dhaka-Khulna match as they are all set to announce the 14-member Test squad for the two-match series against Sri Lanka in December-January and coach Jamie Siddons, who return from Australia today, is likely to travel to the southwestern city to watch the match.

It can be good experience for some national

players to play in Khulna after the tour of South Africa as there are grass and bounce on the pitch which definitely would favour the so far lacklustre Khulna to provide some good show when they have a bowler like Mashrafe.

"It's a very good wicket because of grass and bounce. We are looking forward to a good contest in Khulna ahead of the home series against Sri Lanka," informed Rafiqul.

"We hardly have any scope to focus too much on this round's performance ahead of selection but players can take the opportunity with both hands. We are waiting to see how the national players respond in their first appearance in the domestic competition," he added.

Ashraf also admitted that it is an opportunity for them to get back the confidence and he was looking forward to see how good the wicket is in Khulna.

"Nothing could have been better than playing a longer-version match ahead of a tough series. We have to capitalise on the opportunity. I've heard about the grassy and bouncy track and that's why I am looking to play there," said Ashraf, who has been suffering from fever but has decided to travel to Khulna today to play the match.

"You know there is no point to make a bowlers' paradise. We rather need to make sporting wickets. To us, a good wicket always means a grassy pitch but it's wrong. We might have failed to deliver in South Africa but undoubtedly there are perfect wickets to play good cricket," he added.

Whatever the condition is, the Bangladesh skipper will definitely try to get back among runs after a disappointing tour in South Africa where he went into hibernation after playing one good knock in the one-day match.

'India should not tour'

Cricket

AFP, New Delhi

The Indian cricket team should not tour Pakistan following last month's terror attacks in Mumbai, the country's sports minister said here on Friday.

It was not the right time to play cricket with Pakistan when "people from their soil were indulging in mass murder in India", the Press Trust of India news agency quoted Sports Minister Manohar Singh Gill as saying.

"Is it possible for one team to arrive in Mumbai and indulge in mass murder, and have another team go and play cricket in the winter afternoon sun at Lahore, immediately after?"

The minister said he was not in favour of the Indian team playing in Pakistan, but it was up to the government to make a final decision.

The Indian government has blamed elements in Pakistan for the attacks on the country's financial capital which left 172 dead, including nine gunmen, and wounded more than 300.

The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) is awaiting a response from the government on its request for security clearance for the tour.

India are scheduled to play three Tests, five one-day internationals and a Twenty20 match during the five-week tour from January 6 to February 19.

Gill's comments came just a day after Pakistan Cricket Board chief Ijaz Butt flew to India in a last-ditch bid to rescue the series.

Butt is scheduled to meet Indian cricket officials and International Cricket Council (ICC) chief executive Haroon Lorgat on the sidelines of an Asian Cricket Council meeting in Chennai on Friday.

Lorgat, however, said Thursday the world governing body would be powerless to intervene if the Indian government refused to sanction the tour.

"We would try and encourage India to tour, but if the government decides otherwise, we will have to respect that because there is nothing the ICC can do about it," he said.

"We can't force any country to tour Pakistan."

Lorgat hoped the matches could be played at a neutral venue such as the United Arab Emirates.

The tour was first put in doubt in early November when the Indian government denied permission to the national junior hockey team to visit Pakistan.

Kapil hits out at BCCI

Cricket

PTI, New Delhi

Former India captain Kapil Dev yesterday lambasted the BCCI for neglecting former cricketers and pleaded before the Delhi High Court that it should be asked to release pensions to him and other players who joined the rival Indian Cricket League (ICL).

He made the submission while appearing before Registrar of Delhi High Court Pawan Kumar Jain for being cross examined by the BCCI on the allegations levelled by him against the Board for allegedly taking punitive action against him and his ICL colleagues.

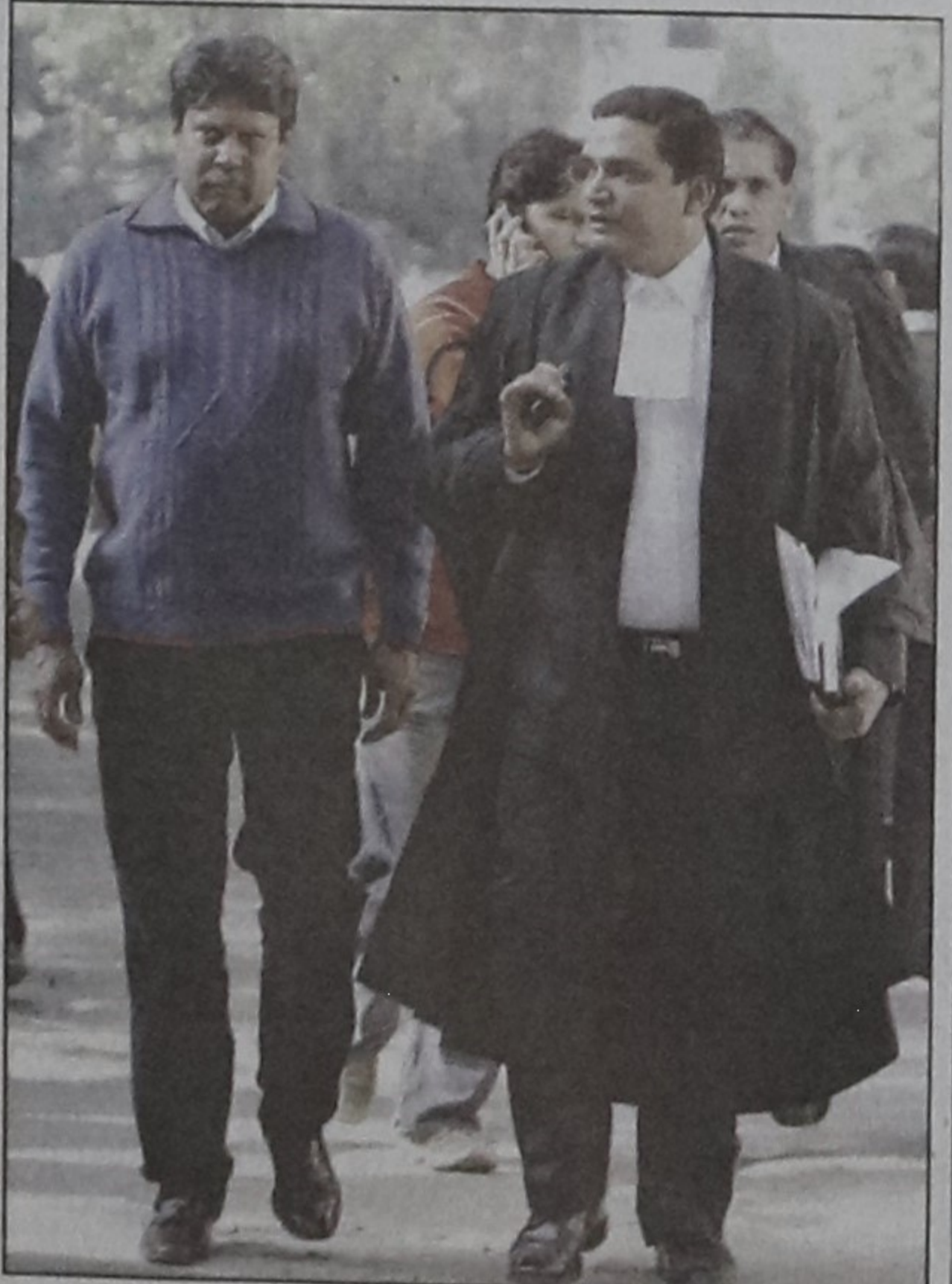
The former all-rounder alleged that the Board was neglecting the former cricketers who served the nation and was taking punitive action by stopping their pension and other post-retirement benefits by the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI).

Kapil accused the cricketing body of adopting delaying tactics in the legal proceedings after the BCCI sought adjournment in the matter saying that it could not find time to prepare for cross-examination in view of terror attack in Mumbai and the then uncertainty over the ongoing series with England.

"BCCI is not concerned about cricketers who served the nation but shows more concern about the on-going series between India and

England," Kapil claimed. "I just seek that pension of my colleagues be released. They are suffering due to Board's action," he alleged, adding "the Board keeps taking dates in the matter and the proceeding is being

delayed due to it." The Board has stopped pension to 15 former players including Kapil Dev, Kiran More, Sandeep Patil, Ajit Wadekar and E Prasanna after they joined its rival Indian Cricket League.



Indian legend and ICL chairman Kapil Dev (L) walks with his lawyer as he exits the Delhi High Court in New Delhi on Friday.

PHOTO: AFP