



PHOTO: AFP

Rajasthan Royals wicketkeeper Naman Ojha (front) runs out Mumbai Indians' Abhishek Nayar during their IPL match in Durban on Thursday.

## Azad Sporting lift Div I title

OUR CORRESPONDENT,  
Gaibandha

Azad Sporting Club became champions of the Faraha Knit First Division Football League when they beat Mohammedan Sporting Club 3-0 at the Gaibandha Stadium yesterday.

Prodip, Chanchal, Rafayel scored the goals for the winning team. Rubel of Mohammedan was declared the best goal scorer of the league. Deputy Commissioner of Gaibandha, Bikash Kishore Das, gave away the trophies to the champion and runners-up teams as the chief guest.

## 'PCB remains as joint host'

AFP, Dubai

The International Cricket Council (ICC) on Thursday hit back at Pakistan over a legal challenge launched by the Asian giants after they were stripped of matches in the 2011 World Cup.

The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) said Saturday it would challenge the ICC decision to move matches out of the country over security fears. The PCB branded the decision legally flawed.

But the ICC Board said on Thursday that they had not decided to remove the PCB as a joint host of the event, but only that the matches assigned to the PCB should be played outside Pakistan.

ICC chief executive Haroon Lorgat said: "We are naturally disappointed that the PCB has chosen to pursue its grievance with the ICC through legal channels but, having received correspondence from its lawyers, we have now responded."

## India finish

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qualified for the 2010 World Cup as hosts.

On Thursday World number five South Korea lived up to their favourites tag to blast their way into the final after a 5-1 win over China in the first semifinal.

The Koreans, gold medalists at the Doha Asian Games in 2006, will play Pakistan in the field hockey final on Saturday.

## Shakib grabs

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An emotion-choked Bashir told about his early life struggle on way to become a successful sportsman which touched the audience.

It was a notable year for women's cricketers in the country as they got the reward when Salma Khatun clinched the leading Female Sportsman award while two runners-up awards went to Fahima Akhter Moyna (weightlifting) and Asif Hossain Khan (shooting).

Minhazuddin Ahmed Sagar (chess) received the Emerging Sportsman award.

The winners of Lifetime Achievement and Sportsman of the Year each received Tk 1 lakh and the other winners got Tk 50,000 each.

Prothom Alo Editor Matuir Rahman and Grameenphone CEO Oddvar Hesjedal also spoke on the occasion.

## Warne praises team spirit

AFP, Durban



Rajasthan Royals' skipper Shane Warne praised his team spirit after the defending Indian Premier League champions edged closer to the semifinals on Thursday with a two-run win over Mumbai Indians.

Munaf Patel bowled a tight last over under pressure when Mumbai needed just four runs to achieve their 146-run target, but the Indian seamer conceded just one.

It was Mumbai who folded as three wickets fell in that last over, including two run-outs.

"All credit to the guys who showed great character. It just showed the spirit in our group," said Warne, who was named man of the match.

"I was worried when the master (Sachin Tendulkar) hit 40 off 30 balls) was hitting it all around the ground. It was such a big game for both sides."

Mumbai skipper Tendulkar hit a solid 40 and

Abhishek Nayar an 18-ball 35 to raise his team's hopes of victory following Warne's triple-strike, but Rajasthan hit back in the closing over.

Former Australian leg-spinner Warne finished with 3-24.

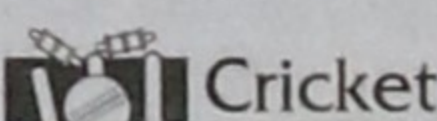
Mumbai's hopes rested on Tendulkar and Sanath Jayasuriya (16), specialist openers batting in the middle order, after three wickets had fallen for 23 runs but skipper Warne removed both the batsmen at the right time.

Delhi lead the eight-team tournament with 16 points from 10 matches, followed by Chennai (13/11), Rajasthan (13/12), Deccan (12/11), Bangalore (12/12), Mumbai (11/12), Punjab (10/11) and Kolkata (3/11).

Australian opener Rob Quiney and Indian middle-order batsman Ravinder Jadeja earlier boosted Rajasthan with a 61-run stand for the third wicket off just six overs.

Quiney top-scored with a 40-ball 51 for his maiden half-century of the tournament, while Jadeja scored 42 off 32 balls.

## Tait fuming at CA snub



CRICINFO, undated

If Australia's selectors are chasing Shaun Tait for a recall in September he might be a bit hard to find. A disappointed Tait, who lost his Cricket Australia contract on Thursday, will continue to train after a series of injuries, but suggested he might go on a long holiday instead of waiting by the phone.

"It's pretty easy for CA to say 'get yourself ready for a tournament' when they haven't given you a contract," he told AAP. "I could quite easily duck off to the Greek Islands for a couple of months if I wanted to. But I'll keep myself fit, keep bowling and if something does come up that'd be good."

Tait's wonky body restricted him to a handful of matches for his country last season, but he believed he was ready to bowl in the Indian Premier League two weeks ago before his lucrative stint in the Indian Premier League was vetoed by Australia's medical staff. The decision cost Tait up to US\$375,000 - it's too late to join Rajasthan Royals for their final two group games - and the faith he showed in Cricket Australia was very costly.

"When you think you're ready to go and play,

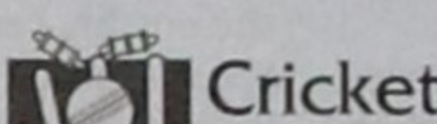
I thought they had me in mind for future tournaments, so that was fair enough at the time," he said. "But to not let you go, then not pick you in a squad, then not give you a contract is a little bit of a kick in the teeth."

Andrew Hilditch, the chairman of selectors, said Tait remained in Australia's thoughts and could be considered as soon as the one-day series that follows the Ashes in September. Tait wasn't impressed by the carrot.

He will go to England for a holiday before coming back to South Australia to focus on the limited-overs formats. "It's no secret I'm trying to concentrate on the shorter form of the game and from what's happened yesterday, being dropped off a contract it probably frees me up a bit more to do that," Tait said. "I'm still going to be hopefully contracted to the SACA here, but I can explore other options with the shorter form of the game. Four-day cricket is a fair way out of my mind at the moment."

The longer formats have taken their toll on Tait and he supported the view of Chris Gayle, who said this week it "wouldn't be so sad if Test cricket dies and Twenty20 comes in". "It's a pretty big call coming from a Test captain, pretty amusing really, but I think he's probably spot-on," Tait said. "Two years ago we didn't have those options but now the Twenty20 stuff has really kicked off."

## Essex pair acclaim Gooch



AFP, Chester-Le-Street

Essex duo Ravi Bopara and Alastair Cook both paid tribute to watching mentor Graham Gooch after they each scored centuries on the first day of the second Test against the West Indies.

Left-handed opener Cook (126 not out) and No 3 Bopara (108) shared a stand of 213 which was the backbone of England's total of 302 for two at the Riverside here on Thursday.

Bopara's innings meant he'd become only the fifth Englishman, and first since former Essex and England captain Gooch against India in 1990, to score hundreds in three successive Test innings.

"I felt good from the minute I went in. I'm seeing it quite nicely," said Bopara, whose Test-best 143 at Lord's last week sent England on their way to a 10-wicket win which put them 1-0 up in this two-match series.

"Graham Gooch talks about when you are in good nick, make the most of it."

Told he'd equalled one of Gooch's landmarks, Bopara said: "I wouldn't put my name in the same sentence as him, he's done a lot for me, a lot for cricket."

Bopara added he'd received a few words of advice from the maestro, a world-class opening batsman in his time, before play got underway.

"He popped into the nets this morning and said 'keep playing straight, no better place to hit the ball then down the ground, there's no fielders there'."

Bopara's current purple patch is all the more impressive as early in his now six-match Test career he made three straight noughts away to Sri Lanka in December 2007.

"Sri Lanka was probably the toughest point of my career," Bopara said.

"I found ways to keep getting out but not once did I think I was never going to play Test cricket again, it drove me on to come back."

And again a pep talk from Gooch gave Bopara a boost.

## Jaques to fight for Test berth

CRICINFO, undated

Phil Jaques will continue to fight to regain his national spot despite suffering a setback in his recovery from a severe back problem when he was dropped from Australia's contract list on Thursday. Jaques has opened in 11 Tests for the team and scored 108 in his last match 11 months ago, but he was cut from the XI in India and returned home for surgery.

His comeback began towards the end of the season and did not go well, with him requiring a second operation on his back and Phillip Hughes capturing the vacancy created by Matthew Hayden's retirement. "It is obviously very disappointing," he said in the Sydney Morning Herald.

"I suppose I have lost my contract because I've had injuries this past year. All I want to do is get back on the park. When I am fit and healthy I will put scores on the board, I know that."

## Ajmal could be dropped?

CRICINFO, undated

The Pakistan Cricket Board is seriously considering withdrawing the offspinner Saeed Ajmal from the ICC World Twenty20 squad as they await the results of the tests done on his bowling action.

Ajmal's doosra was reported by the umpires during the second one-day international against Australia in Dubai last month but was allowed to continue bowling till an assessment of his action, done by the ICC's appointed biomechanist Bruce Elliott, is completed.

"Elliott is supposed to send a report based on the tests to the ICC in 14-days time maximum but he can do it earlier," Saleem Altaf, the PCB's chief operating officer, told Dawn. "So we are waiting to see what happens. But we are also pondering the possibility of pulling him out of the [Twenty20] World Championship and including a reserve player."

Ajmal and Shahid Afridi are the only two recognised spinners in the World Twenty20 squad.

Meanwhile, the PCB has asked Pakistan coach Intikhab Alam to submit the medical report on Shoaib Akhtar's skin infection, which forced the fast bowler to skip the high-altitude conditioning camp at a mountain resort in Bhurban. He was advised at least 7-10 days of rest.

"We want to have a look at the medical report because players are supposed to attend the conditioning camp which is primarily meant to check their fitness and endurance levels ahead of the World Twenty20 Championship," Altaf said.

Shoaib was included in the squad despite a long history of breakdowns and fitness problems.

## First place

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Boris was left unimpressed and expressed dissatisfaction at the missed opportunity to prepare ahead of today's crunch game.

"The field was not fit to play on and we couldn't do much except some running around and basic drills. So although I don't expect this to be a problem for tomorrow's game but it is definitely not an ideal situation. We will make some changes to our formation and strategy as Abahani is a different opposition than Sri Lanka (Army) and are stronger. They can't be taken lightly and we will be going all out and full strength to win," said Boris.

Abahani and Ashgabat go into today's match with a goal difference of plus one and four respectively.

Two want ICL

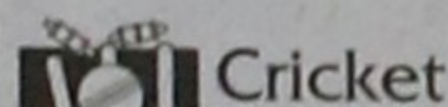
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all ties with the unofficial Twenty20 league.

This decision was taken by the SLC's interim committee on Thursday. Secretary Nishantha Ranatunga said the verdict to allow the ICL contracted players to get back was taken with the intention of making full use of their experience in different capacities.

"We have followed the line taken by the Indian board but we have decided to reduce the cooling period to three months so that we can have these players back as quickly as possible," said Ranatunga.

## A Pakistani summer?



CRICINFO, undated

The summer of 2010 in the UK may turn out to be a Pakistani summer, as the PCB is involved in negotiations with various boards that could result in them playing six Tests in England next year and nearly ten limited-overs internationals.

The Pakistan board is already in discussions with Cricket Australia and the ECB to 'host' a series against Australia in England next year, which now consists of two Tests and two twenty20 internationals. Pakistan are now also in the running to replace West Indies next year as England's opponents for a four-Test series.

"Ijaz Butt (PCB chairman) has met Giles Clarke (ECB chairman) and negotiations are underway for a series of four Tests, five ODIs and two twenty20s," Salim Altaf, PCB chief operating officer, told Cricinfo. "As West Indies has toured this year for two Tests, filling in for Sri Lanka, their slot for next year may now be empty so we are in a position to fill it."

Pakistan tours England, on average, every

four to five years and last visited in 2006, a series it lost 3-0. As a touring team, Pakistan have always been popular, attracting big crowds, especially from the large British Asian communities in various cities throughout England.

England, in fact, is in the running along with the UAE, to become a home away from home for Pakistan. Since the turn of the century, teams from outside the subcontinent have been hesitant to tour Pakistan. The situation has become progressively worse over the last few years and the March terrorist attack on the Sri Lankan cricket team in Lahore has all but ruled out international cricket in Pakistan in the near future.

Clarke is keen on getting Pakistan to play its neutral Tests in England and the idea has the backing of Ehsan Mani, former ICC president, and a long-time advisor to the PCB. "In the choice for neutral venues, I think England is an almost perfect option," Mani told Cricinfo.

"Pakistan has a huge following there, there is a cricket infrastructure in place, the grounds and facilities are brilliant and the whole cricket culture is vibrant there. England would be a very good as a neutral venue."

## Charge delayed, charge denied

CRICINFO, undated



You ask any modern Indian cricketer or even foreign players in the Mumbai Indians team, they all point to one constant piece of advice given by Sachin Tendulkar: Under pressure you have more time than you think you have. Delay the charge. Today, Tendulkar tried to make a laboratory experiment of it. It was a high-risk approach that was simply enthralling to watch. When is he going to go for it? Surely, he has left it for too late? Tendulkar had squeezed himself and Sanath Jayasuriya in the middle-order as Mumbai had been choking whenever the duo failed at the top.

The plan didn't start off well with Mumbai wobbling at 23 for 3 when Tendulkar entered in the sixth over. If the top three had added more runs, then it would have been understandable but they seemed caught in no man's land. Tendulkar and Jayasuriya however, stuck to the plan. No shot in rage, nothing flashy, just keep batting and delay the assault. It threatened to cause an implosion. Shane Warne tried his best to shake them off their focus, throwing little temptations their way. The mini-battle between Warne, Tendulkar and Jayasuriya was riveting. It wasn't action packed but the gameplans of each of the masters were fascinating to watch. On the one hand you had the sages - Tendulkar and Jayasuriya - and on the other, Warne, the wizard.

Warne lighted the leg breaks to Tendulkar who at best looked for singles. Ditto for Jayasuriya. Warne brought the men from the deep and increased the trajectory but there was no change in the batsmen's mindset. Warne knew one wicket could turn the game in his way. But he wouldn't have been too displeased with the run rate either. Johan Botha too bowled two tight overs. The pressure was mounting and the two batsmen would have to really need to turn it on consistently for a

period of time. The risk might have been too much. And this approach couldn't be a blueprint for a successful chase for other batsmen. It needed the calibre of Tendulkar and Jayasuriya to pull it off. Would they?

At the end of ten overs, Mumbai required 92 from 60 balls. At the strategic timeout the two batsmen remained on the pitch. Jayasuriya stretched himself on the ground while Tendulkar stood. Both were involved in a chat with Shaun Pollock and Praveen Amre. Upon resumption, Jayasuriya tried to slog-sweep Warne but fell. Tendulkar had to do it now. The mind couldn't but go back to their previous encounters. Tendulkar charging Warne has to be the sight of the 90s for many Indians and one image has frozen into the mind's eye - Sharjah. The Tendulkar charge. And Warne waving his hand in front of his face almost in disbelief. Would it happen again?

Two balls after Jayasuriya fell, Tendulkar jumped out at the flighted legbreak to lift it over inside-out over extra cover. Warne ripped another one even higher but with more work on the ball. Tendulkar came out but ended up miscuing the lofted hit but it fell safely. Tendulkar cranked up the heat. He dispatched Yusuf Pathan over long-on and hit three consecutive fours to the straight boundary off Ravindra Jadeja and the equation came down to 48 from 30. The man seemed to have pulled off his incredibly risky plan.

But Warne wasn't done yet. He squeezed one past Tendulkar's attempted sweep to claim his man. Game over? Abhishek Nayar didn't think so and played a fine whirlwind innings till he had a Tendulkar moment of his own. With just six runs needed from nine balls, he dug out a yorker to the leg side and ran, unaware that the ball was with the wicketkeeper. Just like Tendulkar in the 1996 World Cup against Sri Lanka with Romesh Kaluwitharana, the keeper, stumping him. India collapsed then, Mumbai choked now. The Tendulkar shadow refuses to leave Mumbai.

## Butt goes for diplomacy



AFP, Lahore

Pakistan's cricket chief left Friday on a South Asian tour to try to win support in his battle against the ICC's decision to strip the country of its World Cup matches, an official said.

The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) has legally challenged last month's decision by the International Cricket Council to move the country's 14 World Cup 2011 matches due to the "uncertain security situation."

The PCB said the decision to remove Pakistan as a co-host contravened ICC articles and the 2006 agreement that awarded the competition jointly to Bangladesh, India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka.

PCB chairman Ijaz Butt flew first to Sri Lanka Friday following former ICC president Ehsan Mani's suggestion to keep "back-channel communications" with the ICC and its member countries open throughout the dispute.

Butt will meet Sri Lanka Cricket interim committee head Somachandra De Silva in Colombo and then travel to Delhi to meet ICC vice president Sharad Pawar on Monday regarding the World Cup decision, PCB chief operating officer Salim Altaf told AFP.

The PCB has complained to the ICC that the World Cup move was legally flawed and on Tuesday sent a letter to ICC Dispute Resolution Committee.

It also warned the matter could be taken to the Court of Arbitration of Sports (CAS) -- a global body based in Switzerland to solve sports related disputes -- if the need arises.

Altaf said Butt was also due to visit Bangladesh before going to South Africa to attend the semi-finals and final of the Indian Premier League.

The chairman will also meet the head of the Bangladesh Cricket Board and will visit South Africa where he is due to meet the officials of various other boards," said Altaf.

Following the ICC decision, co-hosts India will now have 29 matches including a semi-final and the final, while Sri Lanka will host 12 matches with one semi-final, and Bangladesh will hold eight matches and the opening ceremony.

## Match-fixing in 'joke' IPL: Miandad

PTI, Karachi

He may consider the Indian Premier League a joke but former Pakistan captain Javed Miandad feels there is a serious possibility of matches being fixed in the cash-rich Twenty20 event.

Miandad said the league, currently underway in South Africa, has been witness to some surprising results where teams have lost from winning positions.

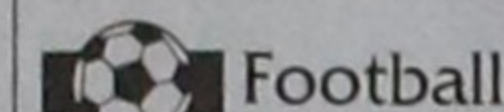
"There is a definite smell of match-fixing coming from the IPL where strange things are happening," he told the Express newspaper on Friday.

"I don't consider the IPL as cricket, it is a joke. It is strange that players who are not regular bowlers have taken hat-tricks in the league. Teams are losing matches from winning positions," he said.

Miandad feels the International Cricket Council (ICC) needs to step in and check possible corruption in the event.

"If at all such Twenty20 cricket leagues must be held they should be held under the direct supervision of the ICC or else there will always be fear of corruption taking place in matches," he said.

## Perez to spend 200m



AFP, Madrid

Former Real Madrid president Florentino Perez will spend at least 200 million euros on players if he is re-elected to the post, reports claimed here Friday.

Perez led Real from 2000 to 2006, when it earned the nickname "Los Galacticos", winning the Primera Liga twice and European Champions League with such stars as Zinedine Zidane, Ronaldo, Luis Figo and Beckham.

If he is re-elected following elections on June 14, Perez, a hugely successful businessman,

would look to spend at least 200 million on new talent.

Some media outlets, including El Mundo and ABC newspapers, speculated that Perez would invest 250 million euros in the team.

On Tuesday El Pais newspaper said that 2008 World Footballer of the Year Cristiano Ronaldo and Manchester United had both signed agreements with Real regarding the Portuguese winger's transfer to the Spanish side at the end of this season.

It said Perez has already discussed an 80 million euro (109 million dollars) fee with Ronaldo's agent Jorge Mendes.

Perez, 62, Thursday declined to discuss possible signings until the campaign for the June 14 elections officially begins.