

India instil young blood

First T20I against England today

 **Cricket**
PTI, Pune

India need to put behind the humiliation of losing the Test rubber against England and regroup quickly to take on the confident visitors in the first of the two T20 Internationals on Thursday.

Under-fire for the first Test series loss to England in 28 years and with his captaincy under the scanner, skipper Mahendra Singh Dhoni will have to put these issues on the back burner and motivate his teammates for the shortest format of the game.

To the home team's advantage, a younger lot of players -- some of who were not part of the Test series like flamboyant all-rounder Suresh Raina, Rohit Sharma and Ambati Rayudu -- would give India the much-needed edge and enthusiasm.

All three are very good T20 players and would also bring the extra zip and verve in the fielding department which was absent in the Tests.

They have all been busy playing in the Ranji Trophy for their respective units and will be match fit too.

Incidentally Sharma, who has been in good form with the bat in the Ranji Trophy recently, had top-scored with an unbeaten 55 when the two teams last met in a T20 game, won by India by a whopping margin of 90 runs in Sri Lanka earlier this year during the ICC T20 World Cup.

Yuvraj Singh, who flopped in the Test series barring a fighting 74 in the opener at Ahmedabad, is back to the format in which he has excelled in the past.

Dashing opener Virender Sehwag

has opted out of the two-match series, which ends with the last match at Mumbai on December 22, and it has given the chance to Ajinkya Rahane, who warmed the bench right through the Test series, to open the innings with Gautam Gambhir.

Rahane had impressed with a 61 when the two teams met in a T20 game last year in England at Manchester and would be eager to get going after playing Ranji Trophy games for Mumbai.

Dhoni, himself a superb T20 and 50-over batsman, would be the late-order game changer, and with Virat Kohli, who had rediscovered his wonted touch with a patient 103 in the last Test at Nagpur, will give extra impetus in the batting and fielding sections. The new ball bowling has a fresh look to it in the form of Ashok Dinda, Abhimanyu Mithun, Bhuvneshwar Kumar and Parvinder Awana -- with veteran Zaheer Khan opting out.

Dinda and Awana had been part of the Test squad in the latter stages but did not get a game while Mithun has been added as a replacement for his injured Karnataka teammate, R Vinay Kumar.

Spin bowling department will be manned by R Ashwin, who would be extra keen to impress after a disappointing show with the ball in the Test rubber, Ravindra Jadeja, who made his Test debut at Nagpur, and Piyush Chawla, who too was part of the team in the drawn final game.

England have made wholesale changes in their squad with triumphant Test skipper Alastair Cook returning home and replaced at the helm by hard-hitting middle order

batsman Eoin Morgan who was part of the Test team but did not play a single game.

Morgan is also the stand-in captain for the injured Stuart Broad, replaced by James Harris, who has returned home along with many other members of the team, notably Kevin Pietersen.

The absence of Pietersen, who played a big role in England winning the Test rubber, would be welcomed by India. The star batsman is no longer part of the England Twenty20 team.

England have included T20 specialists like Alex Hales, Jos Butler, Jade Dernbach, James Tredwell, Michael Lumb, Luke Wright and Danny Briggs -- some of who have been part of the development squad which played a few matches in Navi Mumbai when the Test matches were on.

Retained from the Test squad along with captain Morgan are Tim Bresnan, wicketkeeper Jonny Bairstow, Samit Patel and Joe Root, who made an impressive Test debut in the final match.

Bresnan and Patel also had the opportunity to play in two and three Tests while Morgan and Bairstow did not.

India have lost three T20 games, all in bilateral series, between the two sides. They had lost bilateral matches played at Lord's in June 2009 and the next two held at Manchester and Kolkata in August and October last year.

The game here would be the first T20 International played at the swanky Sahara Stadium on the city's outskirts which hosted IPL matches last year. It has a capacity of 43,000.

V-Day hockey from Saturday

SPORTS REPORTER

The South East Bank Victory Day Hockey Competition will begin at the Maulana Bhasani Hockey Stadium on Saturday, with six teams taking part.

Bangladesh Army, Bangladesh Navy, BKSP, Bangladesh Air Force, Bangladesh Police and BHF XI comprising national hockey players -- will compete in the meet as powerhouses like Abahani, Mohammedan, Usha KC expressed their inability to take part.

Participating teams will face each other in the round-robin basis tournament and top two teams will play in the final, speakers informed at a press conference at the BHF conference room yesterday.

Sponsors South East Bank will provide Tk 5 lakh.

PAKISTAN IN WI Tour can be split into 2 parts

CRICINFO, Karachi

Pakistan's tour of the West Indies in July 2013 is likely to be split into two parts in order to accommodate the Pakistan Cricket Board's plan of hosting India in August for a series that is yet to be confirmed. Pakistan were due to play two Tests, five ODIs and two Twenty20s in the Caribbean in June and July but now they will only play either Tests or limited-overs matches to create a window for India.

According to the FTP, West Indies are scheduled to host Pakistan from the last week in June to the last week in July but they also have a tri-series against India and Sri Lanka during that time.

V-Day tennis

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yesterday.

Amol Roy, Arif Hossain, Anwar Hossain, Munir Hossain, Ranjam Ram, Alamgir Hossain, Hanif Munna and Delwar Hossain beat their respective rivals to move into the quarterfinals in men's singles.

In women's singles quarterfinals, Sharmin Alam Sarda beat Ayesha Sultana 6-0, 6-1, Afrana Islam beat Mounmita Jannat Mou 6-0, 6-1, Jara Alam beat Tasin Ajmi Rajani 6-1, 6-1 and Ishita Afroz beat Safina Shaha 6-1 and 6-2 to reach the semifinals.



PHOTO: AFP

Pakistan all-rounder Shahid Afridi sweeps one during a training session in Lahore on Wednesday. Pakistan will play two Twenty20s and three one-day internationals against India starting on December 25.

'Afridi still can play'

 **Cricket**
AP, Islamabad

Dropped all-rounder Shahid Afridi might be reconsidered for Pakistan's one-day international series against India, limited-overs captain Misbahul Haq said on Wednesday. Afridi was picked only for the two Twenty20s against India this month but left out of the three one-dayers because he's scored only 182 runs in his last 16 ODIs with only one half century.

But Afridi has scored two half centuries in 50-over practice matches in the last three days, including 90 off 64 balls on Wednesday to catch the eyes of his captain. "If his form remains like this and we needed him, we will definitely consider him," Misbah said in Lahore at Pakistan's training camp for the tour. "The form of senior players, who are experienced enough, is very important."

Afridi has played 349 one-dayers, the third most for a Pakistani, but has struggled for runs in ODIs this year. Former captain Wasim Akram reportedly criticised Afridi's exclusion from the ODIs and said the enigmatic allrounder could have been picked in any team as a bowler. "Indian players are afraid of Afridi and I fail to understand why he was dropped," Daily Jang quoted Akram as saying. "If the selectors were thinking that Afridi was out of form, then they should have also dropped

Dhoni wants Tendulkar to keep playing

ANI, London

India captain Mahendra Singh Dhoni has expressed hope legendary Sachin Tendulkar keeps playing Test cricket for the country despite poor run of form.

The veteran great managed just 112 runs in six innings in his side's 2-1 defeat by England.

Dhoni said great players like Tendulkar, VVS Laxman and Rahul Dravid are hard to replace, and added that India team is going through a tough phase similar to when they lost in 2007 World Cup.

When asked if the 39-year-old was going to play Test cricket again, Dhoni said: "I hope so."

But pressed as to whether Tendulkar has told him he will, he said: "No."

"It has been tough. But many things that come close to what we went through when we lost in the 2007 World Cup," the Daily Star quoted Dhoni, as saying.

Clarke's race against time

AFP, Sydney

Australia captain Michael Clarke is confident he will be fit for the second Test against Sri Lanka and started an intensive physio campaign Wednesday to overcome a hamstring strain.

The world's leading Test batsman suffered the twinge in his team's 137-run win over the tourists in Hobart this week and he is racing the clock to recover in time for the next encounter in Melbourne from December 26.

"I know I'm in great hands with [team physio] Alex [Kountouris] and I know how great a physio he is," said Clarke, who reclaimed the top spot in the ICC Test batsman rankings released Tuesday evening.

Kiwis underdogs in SA

 **Cricket**
AFP, Durban

The New Zealand Black Caps will be underdogs on their cricket tour of South Africa, with the first Twenty20 International against South Africa scheduled for Durban on Friday.

Hit by injuries and the unavailability of leading batsman and former captain Ross Taylor, New Zealand's best chance of matching their powerful hosts would appear to be in three Twenty20 internationals, which precede two Tests and three one-day internationals.

Led by Brendon McCullum, one of the world's leading T20 batsmen, New Zealand will hope to match an experimental South African squad in the shortest form of the game.

Their chances in the Tests would seem to be minimal against South Africa, who claimed the world No 1 ranking by beating England in England earlier this year and then endorsed that status with an away win against Australia.

New Zealand's hopes in the Tests are likely to depend on a handful of key players such as batsmen McCullum, Martin Gupthill, Kane Williamson and fast bowlers Tim Southee and Trent Boult.

Not only will the New Zealanders have

difficulty matching South Africa on the field, but they will also have to convince a sceptical local public that they are worthy opponents.

Jacques Faul, the acting chief executive of Cricket South Africa, took the unusual step of distancing the organisation from negative media comments about the quality of a New Zealand side ranked eighth in Test and T20 cricket and ninth in one-day internationals.

South Africa are first, fifth and second in the respective categories.

"It is fundamental at any level of sport to respect the opposition, regardless of the team they put in the field," said Faul.

He pointed out that New Zealand had recently drawn a Test series in Sri Lanka, McCullum had hit a record T20 international score, and that New Zealand had a crop of talented young cricketers, especially among their fast bowlers.

Faul talked up the appeal of the South African side, claiming that local supporters would be eager to see their country's stars in action on home soil for the first time in almost a year.

The New Zealand T20 squad includes five new caps and there is one uncapped player, left-arm spinner Bruce Martin, in the Test party. The one-day squad has not been announced.

BPL auction today

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The absence of a 'written agreement' between the parties, as put by the current BCB president Nazmul Hassan Papon, was the core reason of all the problems that took place last year.

"One of the biggest problems during the previous edition was that Game On, the franchises and the players didn't have much to do with the BCB. Whether people agreed to the rules or not, whether the players got paid or not, we didn't have any control over anything since there weren't any written agreements between the parties. We didn't have a clear cut agreement and therefore couldn't take any action," said Papon in a press conference on Saturday.

It is only natural to think, after all the problems because of the failure to have a legally binding agreement in the first edition, that this time around great care will be taken to avoid a repetition.

Astonishingly however, the 'verbal agreement' between the stakeholders seems to be the very path the second edition is headed.

The member-secretary of the council, Dr IH Mallick, on Saturday said that the council had included new guidelines in the proposed agreement in support of the players. "There will be a few guidelines regarding players' payment in the agreement. For instance, after the auction and before the tournament begins, 25 percent of the money has to be paid. Before the last match, another 25 percent should be paid and the rest of the money will have to be paid within six months from the end of the last match."

However, with the auction scheduled to begin today based on mere verbal agreements, there remains a doubt regarding the implementation of the so-called 'guidelines'.

Div I cricket

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Shahada 2-23, Kamran 2-33, Shahidul 2-32).

Young Pegasus Club: 165 all out in 37.5 overs (Shahadat 57, Sabur 29; Manik 5-35, Habib 2-25, Rois 2-30)

Result: Uttara Sporting Club won by 10 Runs (39.0 Overs Match)

Kathal Bagan Green **Crescent Club:** 83 all out. (Mozahidul Islam 23, Ilias Hossain 16, Sarfaraj 4-17, Abu Bakkar Siddiq 3-6, Minhaj 2-7)

Eskaton Sabuj Sangha: 84 for 3 in 17 overs. (Mehidy Hasan 37 not out, Jony Talukdar 25; Sabuj Barmon 1-23, Sabbir Newaz 1-10)

Result: Eskaton Sabuj Sangha won by 07 wkts.

Dhanmondi Progoti Sangha: 122 for 7 in 25 overs. (Rukunuzzaman 34, Nayan 31, Tamal 19, Hasibur 3-23, Sipon 2-10)

City Club: 124 for 4 in 19.4 overs (Arafat Sunny 53, Arif Reza 43; Rawshan 2-24, Shabaz 1-24)

Result: City Club won by 6 Wkts. (25.0 Overs Match)

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

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| ACROSS | 39 High card | 2 Pedestal | 24 Tokyo's old name |
| 1 Smell | 40 Squabble | 3 Oil cartel | 25 Director Howard |
| 5 U.K. fliers | 43 Plaster-fiber-board mix | 4 Irritate | 26 Cohort of Whoopi and Sherri |
| 8 Teen's skin woe | 47 Home entertainment piece | 5 Betty Ford Center program | 27 Outdated, as a wd. |
| 12 One of the Three Bears | 49 Vicinity | 6 From the start | 28 Born |
| 13 Conclusion | 50 Oodles | 7 Govt. Rx watchdog | 29 Halloween |
| 14 TV's Dr. McGraw | 51 Billboards | 8 Self-assurance | 31 Calendar abbr. |
| 15 Mideast port | 52 One-named super-model | 9 Hew | 34 Rejoices |
| 16 Wrestling hold | 53 Some ever-greens | 10 Pleasant members | 35 God, in Grenoble |
| 18 Tetanus | 54 Lad | 11 BPOE | 36 Aloof |
| 20 Lassoos | 55 Harp's cousin | 17 Sketched | 37 Lament |
| 21 High tennis shot | | 19 Make marginalia | 39 Pretentious |
| 22 Jewel | DOWN | 22 Choke | 40 Vacationing |
| 23 Jaunty topper | 1 October birth-stone | 23 Lobster eater's aid | 41 Bronchial sound |
| 26 Samson's weapon against the Philistines | Solution time: 21 mins. | | 42 Radiate |
| 30 Altar affirmative | | | 43 Prank |
| 31 London forecast | | | 44 Host |
| 32 Hive dweller | | | 45 Mad king of literature |
| 33 Arid | | | 46 Highway division |
| 36 Playwright Henrik | | | 48 Arrest |
| 38 Noon, in a way | | | |

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CRYPTOQUIP

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L A S T L P A H T H T G B W H - P B E T
O B E D V G P B Q S V T D L P I D Z T ?
K A V F A W L L I T P F B Q F P .

Yesterday's Cryptoquip: ARTIST WHO LOVED PAINTING SURREALISTIC PICTURES OF COLORFUL GARDEN FLOWERS: SALVADOR DAHLIA.

Today's Cryptoquip Clue: L equals T