

STAR SPORTS4

Suzuki SAFF Cup
Sri Lanka v India
Live from 7:00pm

SATURDAY

Bangladesh v Maldives
Live from 4:00pm

Bhutan v Afghanistan

Live from 7:00pm
English Premiership
Chelsea v Watford
Live from 9:00pm

STAR SPORTS1

SATURDAY

Australia v West Indies

Second Test, Day 1
Live from 5:30am
English Premiership
Man City v Sunderland
Live from 9:00pm

STAR SPORTS2

SATURDAY

English Premiership
Stoke City v Man United
Live from 6:45pm
Liverpool v Man City
Live from 9:00pm
Newcastle v Everton

Live from 11:30pm

Southampton v Arsenal
Live from 1:45am (Sunday)

TEN CRICKET

SATURDAY

South Africa v England

The future is here

ATIQUÉ ANAM from Trivandrum



The Greenfield Stadium in Trivandrum is a place for the future. Perched on a hill in the suburb called Karyavattom, some 17 kilometres from the city-centre, Greenfield is the epicentre of a sporting hub, which belies its location and the meagre importance of Kerala in India's sporting map.

Even though the hub is a work-in-progress, with many indoor and outdoor facilities for various sports along with practice grounds still being developed, the stadium itself is up and running. Officially opened in January 2015, the 55,000-seater is now at the centre of attention of South Asian football.

Designed to fit both football and cricket in its main venue and other indoor sports in the adjacent establishments, this build-design-operate-transport project over an area of 37 acres is already competing with its more established northern brother, the Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium in Cochin, and

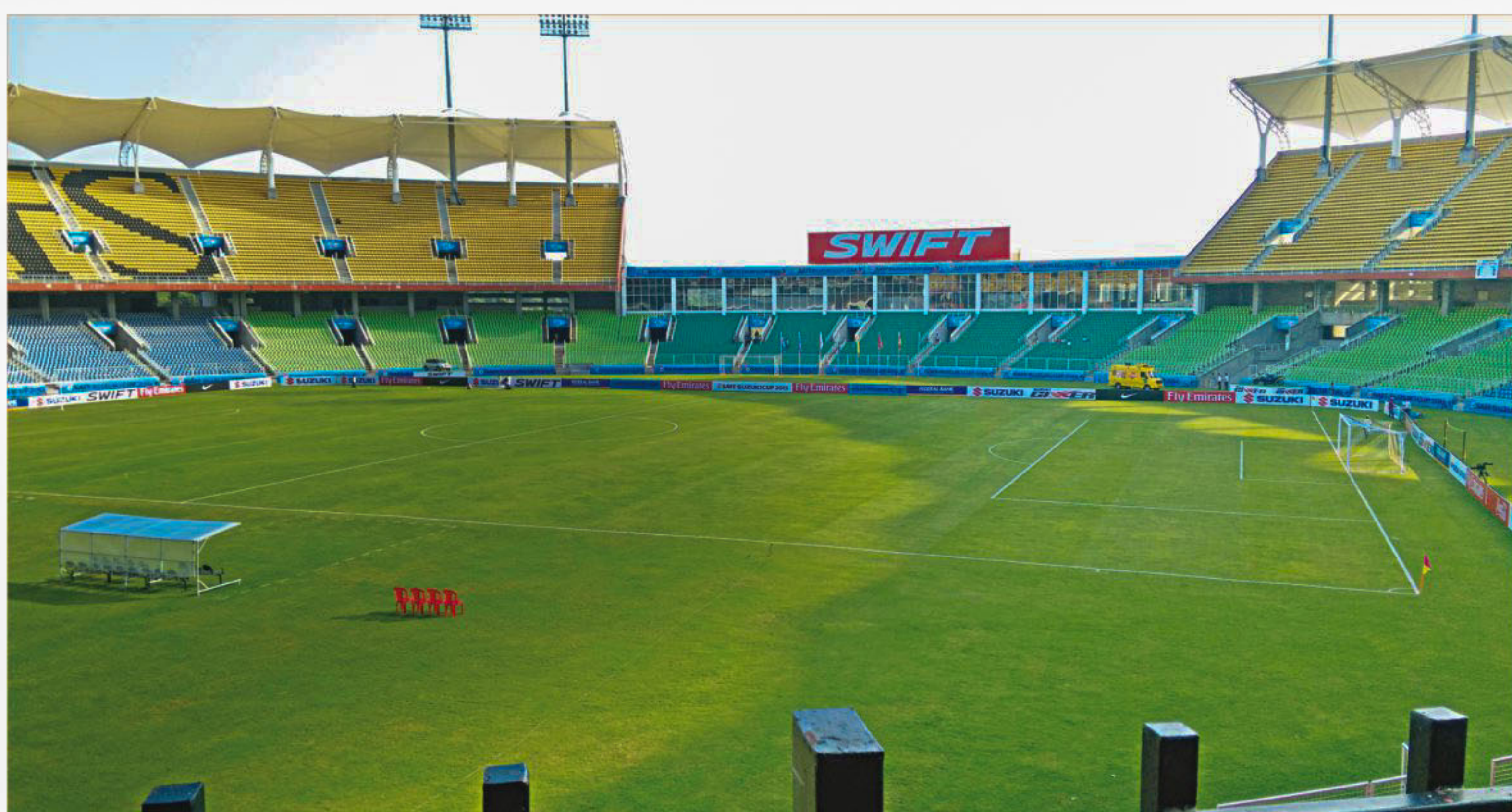
will soon host high-profile international cricket and football matches.

The only problem that this stadium currently faces is its inability to attract a big crowd, owing largely to its awkward location. The long and winding road from the city leading up to this venue could sometimes be a testing experience, especially if you are preoccupied with meeting tight deadlines.

But the private company, which is financing the whole project, has already considered a remedy as they look to finance a new road to cut down on the distance from the main city.

In any case, if you are not too concerned about the distance and want to enjoy a leisurely day of sporting extravaganza, then this is just the place you would want to be.

Just take a taxi from the town and immerse yourself in a ride through the tree-lined streets leading up to the Greenfield. Even if the game fails to live up to your expectation, the journey itself and the discovery of this gem in the middle of the nowhere will surely live with you for long.



A spectacular view of the Greenfield Stadium in Trivandrum.

PHOTO: ATIQUÉ ANAM

REFLECTING ON 2015

Blade-runner to blade-gunner: Pistorius' comeuppance

Nearly two years after fatally shooting his girlfriend Reeva Steenkamp at his home in Pretoria, Oscar Pistorius was found guilty of murder by the South African Court of Appeal.

After Judge Thokozile Masipa delivered the verdict that Pistorius was guilty of culpable homicide on 12 September 2014, the blade-runner seemed to have been let off easy. He was given a maximum prison sentence of five years, along with a concurrent three-year suspended sentence for other convictions. Pistorius would be out of jail sooner rather than later, leading Steenkamp's mother, June Steenkamp, to say that he was "sure to kill someone [again]

sooner or later".

The year 2015 began sweetly for Pistorius. On June 8, the South African Commissioner of Correctional Services said that a prison management committee had recommended that Pistorius be released under supervision after having served one-sixth of his sentence, with his release on parole eventually coming on October 19.

On September 22, the Supreme Court of Appeal confirmed they would hear the defence on 3rd November. The good news from that trial for Pistorius was that the court took just a month to overturn the original verdict.

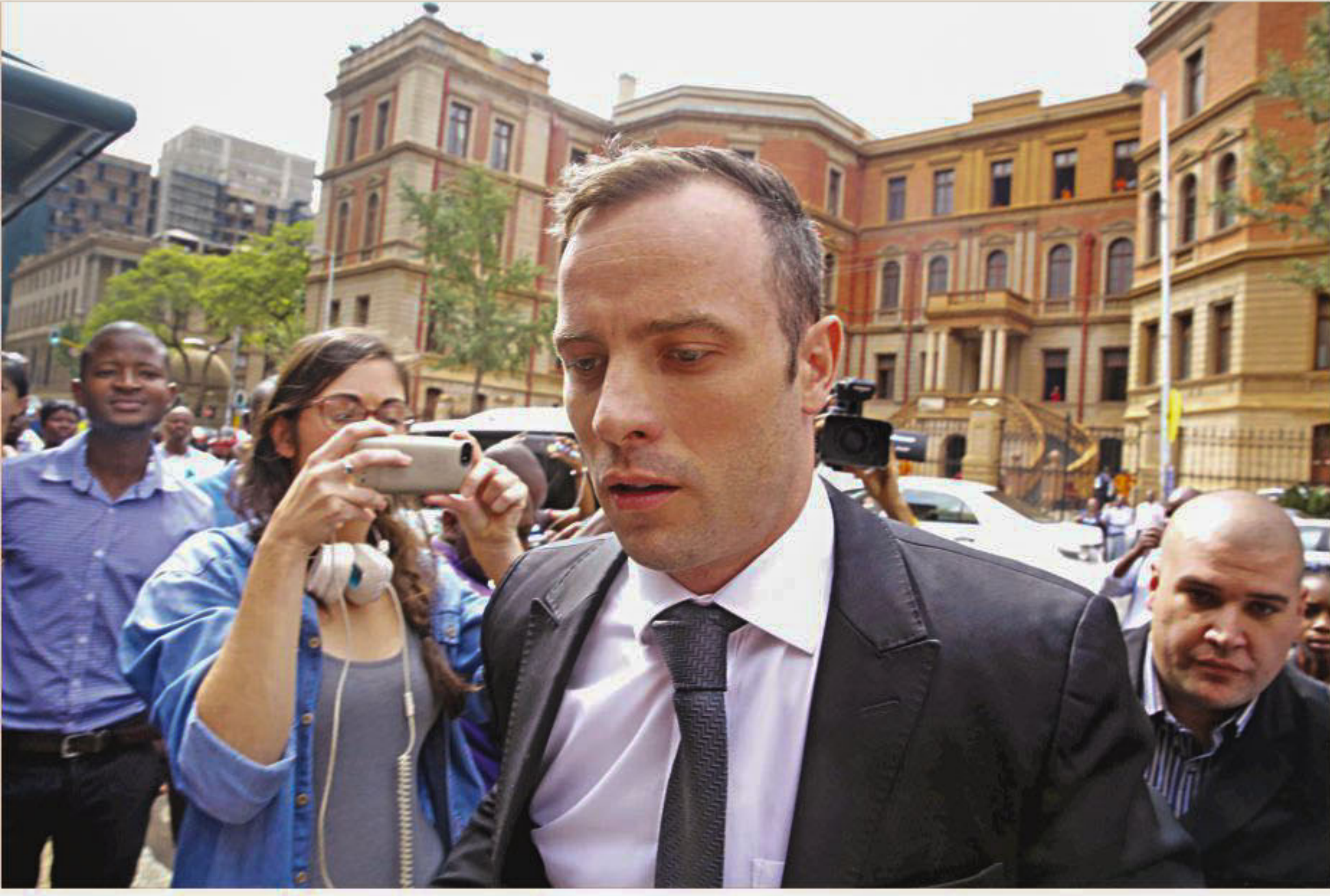
The bad news was that the conviction was upgraded to murder, with the judges presiding over the case believing that the lower courts did not correctly apply the rule of dolus

eventualis -- when a person foresees his actions causing death but proceeds regardless. The court also found that Pistorius was not justified in claiming that he thought his own life was in danger.

On December 8 2015, it was announced that Pistorius would continue to be free on bail since he was not considered a flight risk, although he would remain under house arrest and be under vigilant supervision.

This story is far from over though, as Pistorius plans to appeal his murder conviction in South Africa's Constitutional Court. Should the higher court not agree to hear the appeal, Pistorius will be back in court on 18 April next year for the start of the sentencing phase of his murder conviction.

--Compiled by Star Sport Desk



Ranieri calls his team Forrest Gump

AFP, London

Leicester manager Claudio Ranieri has labelled the surprise leaders as the Premier League's Forrest Gump.

Ranieri's side are in first place at Christmas just 12 months after being bottom of the table and the former Chelsea boss wants Leicester to maintain their pace at the top, likening their stamina to Tom Hanks' film character Forrest Gump, who ran across America.

"I am very confident because Leicester, last season, saved themselves in the last two months and that means the stamina is fantastic. Why can't we continue to run, run, run? We are like Forrest Gump" the colourful Italian said.

Lack of ego Hazard-ous

AGENCIES, London



Guus Hiddink has challenged Eden Hazard to rediscover his "ego" to become a key player at Chelsea again. Stamford Bridge's new interim manager Hiddink has prioritised restoring the confidence shattered by nine Premier League defeats this term, and Jose Mourinho's sacking.

The 69-year-old wants Chelsea to locate the strutting self-assurance that underscored last season's league title charge, to guide the Blues away from relegation conflict. Hazard could yet beat hip trouble in time to face Watford at Stamford Bridge on Boxing Day, with Hiddink intent on helping the 24-year-old hit back to his best after a miserable opening to the new campaign. "He had a terrific season last year and it's also normal you can have a setback after that," said Hiddink. "But I think he can be a key player again."

Hiddink vowed to restore the ex-Lille star to former glories.

"He is a key player as captain of the

national team in Belgium - but also here when he gets back into shape.

"He was unlucky to be injured recently, which was another setback.

"We need to get the ego back for him to perform." Hiddink will oversee Chelsea for the first match of his second spell at Stamford Bridge on Boxing Day, while Didier Drogba appears to inch ever closer to joining the Blues' backroom staff. Former Chelsea hit man Drogba sat alongside Hiddink and owner Roman Abramovich for the 3-1 win over Sunderland last weekend. The 37-year-old remains contracted for another season at Montreal Impact in Major League Soccer, but could yet assume a short-term role with Chelsea. Drogba's MLS club have released a statement admitting talks with Chelsea over the Ivorian joining Hiddink's back-room staff on a temporary basis. Montreal Impact want Drogba back for the start of the new season in March, however, leaving talks to continue between the two clubs.

"We are currently in contact with Didier Drogba and Chelsea FC," Montreal Impact confirmed via twitter. "We are doing everything we can to have him back with the

Ronaldinho gave Messi No.10 shirt

OMNISPORT



Lionel Messi has revealed Ronaldinho told him to take his No.10 shirt months before the Brazilian left Barcelona in 2008.

Ronaldinho joined Barcelona in 2003 and inherited the iconic number from Argentine midfielder Juan Roman Riquelme - who was sent on loan to Villarreal for two seasons.

The Brazilian star left after six years with the club, scoring almost 100 goals in just over 200 appearances.

And Messi revealed in an interview with Barca TV that Ronaldinho already promised him the No.10 shirt months before he announced he was leaving.

"Before leaving the club [Ronaldinho] was coming off a few months where he was thinking about things," Messi said.

"He had it in his mind that he was leaving and he told me to have his number.

"I took it without looking at what he had done with the shirt. If I did, I would not have taken it."

Messi has won 21 trophies with the No.10 on the back of his Barca jersey, and a total of 26 with the Spanish giants.

The Argentina international praised his former team-mate Ronaldinho and spoke about his early stages in the Barca dressing room.

"Everyone welcomed me into the dressing room, and [Ronaldinho] welcomed me in a spectacular way," he said.

"To go into that dressing room was not easy but he made it all so much easier. I was very comfortable by not only Ronnie's welcoming but everyone.

"Those who came up from the [Barca] B sat on the other side [to the main group]. The locker room did a 'U' and we sat in-front, and there came a moment that [Ronaldinho] told me to go to his side and that I no longer needed to be where I was anymore.

"There was a spot free and there was Deco and [Thiago] Motta right there, and he sat me right beside them. I must admit at the start it was hard.

"But he said no, that I was good where I was until I basically obliged to sit there."

Ronaldinho was just as complimentary of his former teammate.

"He's a simple person, very chilled, and he sat by my side in the dressing room," he said. "We had the chance to start a good and honest friendship. He's a great man."

Pep to City confirmed?

AGENCIES, Munich

Reports in Germany say it is a done deal that Pep Guardiola will take over at Manchester City for next season.

Kicker say the former Barcelona Coach will replace Manuel Pellegrini on the bench after leaving Bayern Munich when the current campaign comes to a close.

It has already been confirmed that Guardiola is stepping down at the Allianz Arena, to be replaced by ex-Real Madrid trainer Carlo Ancelotti. Kicker cite sources in England that say Guardiola will be the next Coach of Manchester City and add that the first contact between Guardiola and City came in the 2014-15 season.

Pellegrini has a contract until 2017, but City will clear the way for Guardiola, Kicker insists, and the Catalan will be reunited with former Barca colleagues Txiki Begiristain and Ferran Soriano, who hold executive positions at the Etihad Stadium.

Mourinho to be paid even as a rival

AGENCIES, London

Chelsea could have to pay Jose Mourinho while he manages Premier League rivals Manchester United as they have a contract to make up in any wage cut Mourinho accepts at a new club until the end of the season.

Mourinho is the favourite to replace United manager Louis van Gaal, but may have to accept a pay cut to take over at Old Trafford.

Chelsea gave Mourinho a new contract worth around £10 million a year in August, but the Portuguese can expect to earn about £6 million a season to succeed Van Gaal. Under the terms of his Stamford Bridge departure, it is believed Mourinho will continue to be paid by Chelsea until he finds another job.

It is also understood, however, that Chelsea will have to make up the shortfall in any wage cut Mourinho accepts at a new club until the end of this season.

That could mean that Chelsea have to pay Mourinho around £1.5 million to manage United if he replaces Van Gaal early in the new year.

But the prospect of Chelsea paying him while in charge of United will anger Stamford Bridge fans, who did not want Mourinho to be sacked and showed their support for him during last week's victory over Sunderland.

Van Gaal storms out

AFP, Manchester



Embattled Manchester United manager Louis van Gaal showed signs of cracking under pressure as he stormed out of a media briefing on Wednesday after becoming annoyed by questions about his future.

Van Gaal has reportedly been given two games to save his job after United's miserable six-match winless run cost his side their place in the Champions League and saw them drop out of the Premier League's top four.

Rumours have been rife this week that the former Barcelona and Bayern Munich boss is about to be sacked and replaced by Jose Mourinho, who was dismissed by Chelsea last Thursday.

Quizzed about the speculation by reporters at his weekly press conference ahead of Saturday's trip to Stoke, Van Gaal quickly became irritated and it was less than five minutes before he decided he had had enough.

Refusing to take any more questions, the Dutchman walked out, saying as he passed a table of mince pies and wine that had been laid on for the media: "I wish you a merry Christmas and also maybe a happy new year when I see you. Enjoy the wine and a mince pie. Goodbye."

Van Gaal, who has overseen just three victories in United's last 13 games in all competitions, only answered three questions from the broadcast media and then refused to take any questions from the written press.

It was clear the 64-year-old was in an angry mood from the moment he took his seat in the media room at the club's Carrington training ground.

"Has anybody in this room not a feeling to apologise to me? That's what I'm wondering," he snapped after being asked about (Arsenal manager) Arsene Wenger's claim Van Gaal's treatment had been "disrespectful".

home to Norwich, said he has received calls of support from former United manager Alex Ferguson, as well as former chief executive David Gill and current executive vice-chairman Ed Woodward.

Despite that backing he is widely expected to be dismissed by owners the Glazer family if United lose at Stoke on Boxing Day or at home to Chelsea on Monday, yet Van Gaal feels that he has been treated unfairly by the media.

"I think I was already sacked, I read I have been sacked. My colleague (Jose Mourinho) was here already," he said.

"What do you think happens with my wife or my kids? Or with my grandchildren? Or with the fans of Manchester United? Or my friends? What do you think?"

"They have called me a lot of times and also Arsene Wenger is saying something about that."

"So you think that I want to talk with the media now? I am here only because of the Premier League rules. I have to talk with you."

"But I can only see when I say something that you use my words in your context. And I want to say only that I have tried to lift the confidence of my players."

Van Gaal gave a speech to his squad at the players' Christmas lunch on Monday, urging them to show unity as they attempt to improve their form while enduring criticism from former United players, the club's fans and the media.

"I have done everything this week. I held meetings with the players with my members of staff, I hold a Christmas lunch, I did a speech and I feel the warmth and support of everybody in Carrington, at this training complex," he added.

"But I didn't feel that in the media and of course I can imagine that you can write about that subject."

"I have received calls from Alex Ferguson and David Gill and Ed Woodward because you are creating something that is not good, what is not being the facts."

