

### Ashwin finishes years as No.1 Test bowler and all-rounder



**DUBAI, DEC 31 /-** The Indian spin duo of Ravichandran Ashwin and Ravindra Jadeja held on to the top two positions in the ICC Test bowlers rankings, while the national team ended the year as the numero uno side in the latest list issued here.

Ashwin also continued to lead the all-rounders' table with no change among the top five in the list. Hence, Jadeja remained at third spot. This is just the second time the top two spots in the bowlers' chart is occupied by Indian players, with the pair emulating left-arm spinner Bishan Singh Bedi and leg-spinner Bhagwat Chandrasekhar, who were ranked one and two in 1974. In the Test batsmen's ranking, India skipper Virat Kohli topped the list as he topped the year at second position with Australia's Steve Smith heading the chart. Pakistan opener Azhar Ali has moved up 10 places to reach a career-high sixth rank, riding on his scores of 205 not out and 43 in the second Test against Australia in Melbourne. Meanwhile, Team India has ended the year as the No.1 ranked Test side with 120 ranking points, 15 points clear of second placed Australia (105 points). (PTI)

### Jharkhand to face gutsy Gujarat in Ranji Trophy semi-final

**NAGPUR, DEC 31 /-** In what promises to be an enthralling contest full of interesting sub-plots, Gujarat boasting of Ranji Trophy's highest run-getter Priyank Panchal will be pitted against Jharkhand that has top wicket-taker Shahbaz Nadeem in their ranks in the semi-final, starting tomorrow.

While both teams are not exactly 'tradition' heavyweights but they have performed consistently on neutral venues riding on some talented bats but unheralded name in domestic cricket. Gujarat has done some powerhouse batting performers like Panchal who has scored more than 1100 runs this season. Not to forget opener Samit Gohil, who has scored more than a world record in first class cricket for an opener who carried his bat through. And about the 'towering presence' of pocket sized dynamo in their skipper Parthiv Patel, who needs less than 1000 runs to complete 10,000 runs in first class cricket. With his new found confidence having led to half centuries against England on his Test comeback, Parthiv would be eager to teach Jharkhand

### Yuvraj, Raina to play at DY Patil T20 tourney in January

**NEW DELHI, DEC 31 /-** Two of India's most famous cricketers in the limited over format, Yuvraj Singh and Suresh Raina, have been out of Indian ODI team for quite a while. But the good news for their fans and indeed the Indian cricket fans is that they are among some leading cricketers scheduled to play in the 31st DY Patil T20 tournament to be held at the D Y Patil Sports Academy in Nerul from January 4 to 15, 2017. The tournament, carrying a prize fund of Rs 16 lakh, would feature 16 teams in total with 31 matches being staged in all, including seven knockout games, a media release said. A few days back, Yuvraj had released a statement about his plans of making a comeback in the Indian national team. "I am training hard and have the confidence of getting the runs. I feel I still have a lot to offer, and I will do my best to regain my place in the side. I will do all that I can to get the call from the selectors, and take it from there. I still feel I have a few more years of cricket left in

# PCB gets green light for legal action against BCCI

**KARACHI, DEC 31 /-** The Board of Governors of the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) on Friday gave approval for adopting legal recourse against the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) for not honouring the MOU.

The members had given approval for using legal channels to seek compensation for the financial losses suffered by the PCB due to India not honouring the MOU.

We will start legal

## Indo-Pak bilateral cricket

Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the two boards in 2014 to play bilateral series.

PCB chairman Shaharyar Khan and Najam Sethi, who heads the executive committee, told the media here after the meeting of the BOG that the members had given approval for using legal channels to seek compensation for the financial losses suffered by the PCB due to India not honouring the MOU.

We will start legal

## Bindrabacks IOA suspension, lauds ministry decision

**NEW DELHI, DEC 31 /-** Olympic champion Abhinav Bindra today backed the Sports Ministry's decision to suspend the International Olympic Association (IOA) as a 'good step' following the sports body's move to honour two scam-tainted administrators. The IOA named its former president Suresh Kalmadi and Abhay Singh Chautala as life presidents on Tuesday, a decision that has been heavily criticised as both are facing allegations of corruption in the Vijaya Vittala Cricket Ground ministry yesterday suspended the IOA.

"The @olympics movement and specially the movement in India can no longer hide behind autonomy. It's the age of good governance and ethics," Bindra wrote on his twitter handle. The 2008 Beijing Olympics gold medalist - India's lone gold medal winner in individual sport at the Games - added, "Change in Indian sport will only happen if mandated. A law is necessary in India. A good step by @IndiaSports & @govindia." "Cracking the whip, the Sports Ministry yesterday suspended the Olympic body till the time it reverses the decision to make the tainted Suresh Kalmadi and Chautala its life presidents.

## Williamson, Broom sweep series for New Zealand

**NELSON, DEC 31 /-** Fill-in batsman Neil Broom and skipper Kane Williamson produced a match-winning 179-run stand for New Zealand to crush Bangladesh in their final one-day match in Nelson on Saturday.

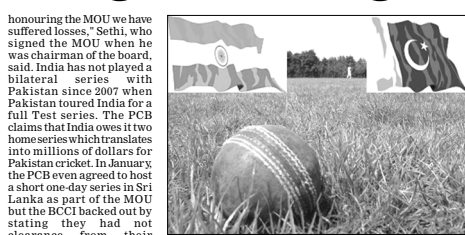
Williamson was left unbeaten on 95 while Broom fell just before the close for 97 as the hosts overhauled Bangladesh's 226 for the loss of only two wickets to sweep the series 3-0. For the 33-year-old Broom, battling to prove himself as a team player, it was his second consecutive match-winning performance after his unbeaten 106 in New Zealand won the second match by 67 runs. Broom, who scored 22 in the first match, which New Zealand won by 77 runs, was recalled for the Bangladesh series after nearly seven years in the wilderness. He scored the number four batting slot while Ross Taylor recovers from eye surgery. He has since been the home side's stand-out performer, notably with his prolific scoring, but also his magic touch on the field with some athletic catches. Williamson was full of praise for his batting partner and his contribution to the side's success in these last two games in particular - "huge contributions" which certainly were what the side was after to get across the line, Williamson said. After the Australian nightmarer, Williamson said New Zealand needed to improve and the third Bangladesh match "was far more the complete performance we were after."

Bangladesh skipper Mashrafe Mortaza said his side have to pick themselves up before they meet New Zealand on Tuesday in the first of three T20 fixtures. As a team we have to

## Darren Lehmann backs Ashton Agar's all-rounder claims for Test recall

**VICTORIA, DEC 31 /-** Coach Darren Lehmann views Ashton Agar as a "genuine all-rounder" putting him in line to be part of Australia's spin tandem in Tuesday's final Test against Pakistan in Sydney.

Agar, 23, is on track to play his first Test since his unheralded debut in the 2013 Ashes series in England, where he scored 98 in his first Test at Trent Bridge batting at No.11. But the West Australian left-hand-er is now being assessed as a "genuine" all-rounder, impressing selectors Greg Chappell and Mark Waugh and has a first-class batting average of 26. Agar was added to a 13-man Australia squad Friday along with fellow spinner Nathan Lyon, who is one of them likely to partner Nathan Lyon on a spin-friendly SCG pitch for the "dead" third Test. Lehmann said after Friday's innings and 18-run second Test series-clinching win over Pakistan in Melbourne that if Australia went into the final Test with two spinners the team would be in a better position. "I've also need an all-rounder. Selectors have also included Zimbabwe-born all-rounder Hilton Cartwright in the Sydney squad, but Lehmann highlighted Agar's all-round qualities. "He's made 500 runs and batted well for us in that (Ashes) Test match at 11," Lehmann told reporters. "He's certainly got the talent to be a batting all-rounder or a spinning all-rounder, either way." "We wanted a left-arm spinner to go away from all their right-handers as well to give us options. He also got 10 wickets in a Sheffield Shield game in Sydney. He's improved, we get feedback from (WA coach) Justin Langer and the guys



Pakistan they should have thought about it before signing the MOU. We will now take up this matter with the ICC because the Indian board claims it has been stopped by its government from playing us. We have the

## Neil replaces injured Martin Gupitll T20 squad

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## Tiger turns 41 with comeback plans for 2017

**MIAM, DEC 31 /-** Tiger Woods celebrated his 41st birthday, the 14-time major winner having already made a comeback from a 466-day surgery layoff with hopes of recapturing success. Woods was inconsistent over 27 holes at the Hero World Challenge, an 18-man Bahamas event in early December to benefit and honor the foundation, and fan interest remains high even though he has only shown glimpses of the form that made him a must-see attraction for years. While saying he still has designs on the record 18 majors won by Jack Nicklaus, Woods would be backing the odds to catch his boyhood idol. Old Tom Morris won three British Opens at 41 or older in the 1860s and remains the longest three major winner beyond his 41st birthday. Nicklaus became the oldest Masters winner by taking his last green jacket in 1986, while Julius Boros is the oldest major winner, taking the 1968 PGA Championship at age 48. Boros, Harry Vardon and Woods' pal Mark O'Meara won two majors after turning 41. British Opens have produced three champions in the past six years who were 41 or older with Woods being the oldest at 40 when he took the Claret Jug in 2016. Woods has said he will play at Riviera in February at another event hosted by his foundation, although he did not rule out another appearance earlier in 2017 or give any hint about other touring plans for the Masters in April. Woods won the 2010 title at the 2008 US Open and last won any title at the 2013 WGC event in Akron, Ohio as he has to win three more career PGA titles to tie the record 82 won by Sam Snead.

## Shahid Afridi also included

**MELBOURNE, DEC 31 /-** Accolades continue to pour for in for India's dynamic test captain Virat Kohli, who has been named as captain of Cricket Australia's One-day team of the year ahead of Steve Smith.

Kohli is joined in the side by his Royal Challengers Bangalore teammate AB de Villiers and compatriot Jasprit Bumrah. Earlier, the International Cricket Council had named India's young Test captain as the skipper of the team of the year 2016. Australian batsman David Warner, who led Sunrisers Hyderabad to their first IPL title in 2016, was selected to partner England's Jason Roy as an opener. England's explosive wicketkeeper-batsman Jos Buttler was handed over the

## Pakistan first Test team member Imtiaz dies

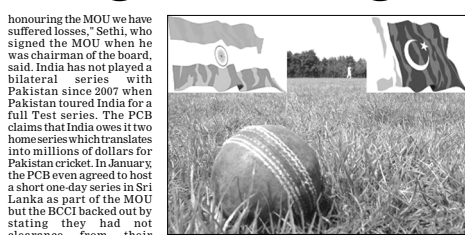
**LAHORE, DEC 31 /-** A member of Pakistan's first-ever Test team, died in a Lahore hospital today after a brief illness, his family said. The 88-year-old Ahmed featured in Pakistan's first Test played in Delhi against India in October 1952 and went on to play 41 matches as a wicketkeeper-batsman. Ahmed's family confirmed his death.

"He (Imtiaz) was suffering from chest infection and died early Saturday," a member of the family told local media. Ahmed was known as an aggressive batsman who had a variety of strokes, most notably the hook and the pull shot. He scored 2,079 Test runs for Pakistan with a career best of 209 against New Zealand in Lahore in 1955. He put on 152 for the first wicket with the legendary batsman Mohammad in the bookend Test against West Indies in 1958, scoring 91. Mohammad, who died in August this year, was Pakistan's first Test captain. He scored 337 in 970 minutes - still the longest innings in Test cricket's history. Ahmed's death means that middle-order batsman Waqar Hasan is now the oldest surviving member of Pakistan's first Test team. (AFP)

## Neil Broom and Kane Williamson's 179-run stand defied Bangladesh

improve lots," he said. "We had a good partnership in opening and we lost the game. There were some good individual performances but as a team we couldn't go through." After Bangladesh won the toss and elected to bat in Nelson, Imrul Kayes and Tamin Iqbal produced a century opening stand in 21 overs to set the tourists up for a big finish. But when Imrul went in the second over, Martin Gupitll retired hurt on six and Broom edged Mashrafe Mortaza straight to Imrul at first slip before getting off the mark. But Imrul dropped a regulation offering allowing Broom and Williamson to embark on

and despite the pitch holding no dangers, most of the remaining Bangladesh batsmen were unable to settle in. Broom was again in the play to catch the team for the top six Bangladesh wickets fell for 68 runs and only Nurali Hasan with 44 from 39 balls offered late resistance. Bangladesh briefly felt they could defend 236 when Tom Latham (four) went in the second over. Martin Gupitll retired hurt on six and Broom edged Mashrafe Mortaza straight to Imrul at first slip before getting off the mark. But Imrul dropped a regulation offering allowing Broom and Williamson to embark on



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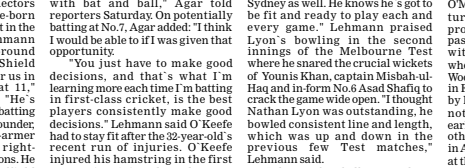
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