

## Services' decision on Kashmir match taken at 'lower level': minister

The 'unfortunate' decision of the Services team to back out of a Ranji Trophy cricket match in [Srinagar](#) on grounds of security was taken at a 'lower level', Minister of State for Defence M.M. Pallam Raju said here Wednesday.

'That was an unfortunate decision which happened at lower level.... Each organisation, country has to take decision based on threat perception and then they decide whether they want to play or not. That organisation (Services' Sports Board) exercised the same right,' Raju told reporters here.

Seeking to downplay the decision by the team, representing the armed forces, Raju refused to say if anybody would be held accountable for it.

The Ranji match was scheduled to start Tuesday at the Sher-e-Kashmir stadium in Srinagar. The stadium has hosted two one-day internationals - India vs West Indies in 1983 and India vs Australia in 1986. The last Ranji match in Srinagar was held in 2004 between Jammu and Kashmir and Orissa.

'If the Ranji committee gives us an opportunity we are willing to send our team,' Raju said, responding to a question on why 11 servicemen don't feel safe enough to play cricket in Jammu and Kashmir when there are nearly 400,000 troops posted in the state.

The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) has already thrown out the Services team from this year's Ranji Trophy championships.

Reacting sharply to the Services' team refusal, a furious union minister and Jammu and Kashmir Cricket Association (JKCA) chief Farooq Abdullah had Tuesday said he would take up the issue with Prime Minister Manmohan Singh.

'To hell with them for that... Services is saying Kashmir is not normal,' Abdullah said about the match that was supposed to signal the return of first-class cricket to the valley after five years.

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