

## Aaqib Javed backs squad selection, rules out changes for Champions Trophy



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LAHORE, February 6 – Interim head coach and chief selector Aaqib Javed has ruled out any changes to Pakistan’s squad ahead of the ICC Champions Trophy, firmly defending the selection of all-rounders Faheem Ashraf and Khushdil Shah despite criticism.

Faheem and Khushdil, who were not in contention just three months ago, were picked for the tri-

nation series against South Africa and New Zealand, preceding the Champions Trophy.

Addressing concerns, Aaqib stated that making changes based on two matches would be unfair and reaffirmed their suitability for subcontinental conditions.

He highlighted the need for two all-rounders in the squad, particularly against New Zealand, India, and Bangladesh. Saim Ayub's fitness concerns and wicketkeeper Haseebullah's injury further necessitated adjustments, making Usman Khan a preferred choice.

Aaqib emphasized the importance of Pakistan consistently setting 325+ scores in ODIs, aligning with modern cricket trends. He also noted that Jasprit Bumrah's absence could impact India but stressed that strong teams do not rely on individuals.

Regarding fast bowler Aamer Jamal, Aaqib revealed that his selection was considered but ruled out since he has only played Test cricket and not ODIs.

Meanwhile, the New Zealand squad has arrived in Lahore for the tri-nation series. Both Pakistan and New Zealand will begin training at the newly renovated Gaddafi Stadium on Thursday, where final touches are being completed ahead of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's scheduled inauguration on February 7.