

## Dravid to depose



Rahul Dravid.  
\*K. MURALI KUMAR

### SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT MUMBAI

A high profile conflict of interest (COI) issue-related hearing will be conducted here on Thursday by the BCCI Ethics Officer Justice (Retd) D.K. Jain, and attention will be on one of India's most distinguished cricketers, Rahul Dravid.

The coach and mentor of the India-A and U-19 was recently appointed Head of the NCA.

It has been alleged that Dravid is on the payrolls of India Cements, once-owner of the IPL team Chennai Super Kings. COI rules say that an individual holding a BCCI post cannot be part of any other party associated with BCCI's activities.

## Lanka-India T20I series

### SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT MUMBAI

Sri Lanka will play three T20Is against India on January 5 (Guwahati), Jan. 7 (Indore) and Jan. 10 (Pune). Sri Lanka is the replacement for Zimbabwe which was suspended by the ICC.

# All eyes on the sky as rain looms

South Africans and BPXI players keen to get some action ahead of the Test series

### SA IN INDIA

V.V. SUBRAHMANYAM  
VIZIANAGARAM

Rain threat persists as the visiting South African team and the Board President's XI are scheduled to meet in a three-day warm-up game at the Dr. PVG Raju Sports Complex here from Thursday.

Rains lashed the town on Wednesday morning but receded by afternoon much to the relief of the District Association officials. "If it doesn't rain tonight, then there will be a prompt start to the match," said a senior VDCA official.

With the first Test between India and South Africa scheduled for Visakhapatnam from October 2, this match assumes significance as it is expected to provide a platform for the fringe players to raise the bar and grab the attention of the national selectors.

More so for a player like captain Rohit Sharma, who had two forgetful outings in the T20I series against South Africa. The other Test squad member who will be the focus of attention is Mayank Agarwal.

### Big match

In a way, this is a big match for players like Priyank Panchal, Abhimanyu Easwaran, Karun Nair and wicketkeeper-batsman K. Srikanth Bharat who, when he last played at this venue, scored a century against Hyderabad in a Ranji Trophy game.

The 31-year-old Umesh Yadav, who last played in a Test



The skipper's here! Rohit Sharma will look to make the warm-up game count. \*K.R. DEEPAK

in 2018 and replaced the injured Jasprit Bumrah in the Test squad, should grab the chance to get into the groove before the first match.

It is no different for the likes of pacers Shardul Thakur, Avesh Khan and all-rounder Jalaj Saxena.

On the other hand, this will be the final opportunity

for skipper Faf du Plessis, vice-captain Temba Bavuma and the in-form Quinton de Kock to fine-tune their skills for the longer format.

The teams (from): Board President's XI: Rohit Sharma (Capt.), Mayank Agarwal, Priyank Panchal, Abhimanyu Easwaran, Karun Nair, Siddhesh Lad, K.S. Bharat (wk), Jalaj Saxena,

Dharmendrasinh Jadeja, Avesh Khan, Ishan Porel, Shardul Thakur, and Umesh Yadav.

South Africa XI: Faf du Plessis (Capt.), Temba Bavuma (vice-capt.), Kagiso Rabada, Quinton de Kock, Dean Elgar, Vernon Philander, Keshav Maharaj, Dane Piedt, Zubair Hamza, Lungi Ngidi, Aiden Markram, Theunis de Bruyn, Heinrich Klassen, Anrich Nortje, and Senuran Muthusamy.

## Pant dilemma: To be, or not to be?

Should he play his natural game or protect his spot?

VIJAY LOKAPALLY  
NEW DELHI

The relatively new Rishabh Pant is already faced with a dilemma – should he play his natural game or change to protect his place in the squad?

Pant has faced criticism from various quarters for throwing away his wicket time and again.

"I think someone from the team-management should have a word with him," emphasised Virender Sehwag, who played all formats of the game with the same approach.

"He should do nothing," insisted Kapil Dev, who was known to never compromise with his natural flair to strike the ball, even if it was the first one he faced.

"For me, he must wait to feel the sweet touch of the ball on the bat. What is the hurry? He has the ability and the calibre. It is the temperament that he needs to work on. There is a thin line between failure and success. You connect the shot and you are a hero. If you don't, the same shot becomes your nemesis. It's a tough choice to make, but a choice has to be made before it is too late," was how Kapil put it.

### Up to him

Having gone through ups and downs in his career, Sehwag knew how to deal with such situations and criticisms. "I took it philosophically. That's what Rishabh should also do. He should remember that anyone can flop. But it's important that he should have the backing of the coach (Shastri) and



No let up: Rishabh Pant has pressure being mounted on him with every outing. \*K. MURALI KUMAR

captain (Kohli). Also, he should decide if he wants to keep playing his natural game or look to become a performer," said Sehwag.

The former India opener cited two examples for the benefit of Pant. "I flopped in 20 innings before I scored. But then I had the support of the team-management. I could regain form without changing my game because of that support. Similarly, MS (Dhoni) played his natural game and India lost a match which prompted skipper Dravid to speak to him.

"It brought about a change. MS became a performer the way Rahul wanted him to. Of course, he did curtail his natural game and learnt the art of finishing the game. I think Pant should also look to become a performer. He should concentrate on his shot selection. He has

awesome talent and if he improves his shot selection, I am sure he will serve India for the next 15 years," Sehwag said.

### Matter of time

Kapil wanted Pant to "relax" and look to contribute consistently.

"I know he can hit fours and sixes at will but there are times when you have to be judicious. I was dropped once (in a Test in 1984) but then I could not blame anyone. I had given the selectors a chance to drop me. Pant should now look to deny anyone a chance to drop him. He has it in him and it's a matter of time before he regains his form and confidence. Let's back him."

As for Pant, he is doing what he has been asked to – play domestic cricket to re-organise his game.

## KSL a real learning curve: Jemimah

Says her ability to finish games is the biggest takeaway from the league

### SA WOMEN IN INDIA

AMOL KARHADKAR  
SURAT

When she burst out on to the international arena at the start of 2018, Jemimah Rodrigues, then 17, was tipped to carry forward the tradition of Mumbai's batting from the men's to the women's cricket arena.

Thanks to her rich rewards in the Kia Super League (KSL) in England – her maiden appearance in an overseas league – Jemimah seems to have justified the tag of being the next big thing.

Jemimah's exploits – 401 runs at 57.28 with a strike rate of 149.62, including a record unbeaten 112 off 58 balls – in England showed that the teenager has matured as a batter.

But more than her record-speech, she stressed that her ability to finish games as her biggest learning from the KSL sojourn.

### Finish it

"I used to never finish a game. I used to bat well and not take it till the end. My dad (Ivan, also her coach) used to always say that a real champion is the one who



Managing the transition: Jemimah Rodrigues will be keen to transfer her gains from the KSL to India's cause. \*VIJAY SONEJI

takes his team to victory. I could do it in the KSL. That was the biggest learning for me," a bubbly Jemimah told *The Hindu* on Wednesday, after persistent rain forced the Indian women to cancel their training session ahead

of Thursday's second T20I against South Africa.

That she was made to bat at No. 4 for a better part of the KSL – instead of her usual position in the top-three while playing for and in India – helped a great

deal.

"To get quick runs, bat with the tail, take the responsibility and see the team through was a real learning curve. I don't think I would have got that experience playing in India."

### Growing experience

She admitted that the KSL stint was also a "growing experience" in terms of "getting out of the comfort zone." Her maturity came to the fore when she emphasised that during her topsy-turvy ride with the National team so far, the "lows have helped the most".

She admitted that carrying drinks during the Asia Cup last year created "self-doubts about whether I was good enough for international cricket," but also made her "work harder" on her game. She may have turned 19 barely three weeks ago, but her clarity of thought proved that she was no longer the 'baby of the team', a tag she had to abandon during her professional commitment in England.

It was, in a way, symbolic that with the inclusion of the 15-year-old Shafali Verma in the squad, Jemimah is no longer the baby of the team.

## Mixed day for Khade; Shoan shines again

N. SUDARSHAN  
BENGALURU

It was a bitter-sweet experience for Viradhwal Khade on the second day of the 10th Asian Age Group swimming championship here on Wednesday. He clinched the gold in his pet event – 50m freestyle – and came within 0.04 seconds of matching the meet record that he set as a teenager way back in 2009.

But his dream of bettering his personal best of 22.43 to inch closer to the Olympic Qualifying Time (22.01) A-mark was shattered as he could come home only in 22:59.

### Disappointed

"Very disappointed," Khade said later. "I should have done way better. I got too excited and tried to power through. I got a brilliant start I feel, the start I had trained for. Usually I pull off after the 25m, but it just didn't happen because I ruined my technique due to over-excitement."

The 28-year-old still has time till June 29, 2020, to get the A-mark. But the competition in Bengaluru was the one he had targeted and had warmed up well by clocking 22.44 at the senior Nationals in Bhopal earlier this month.



The sizzler: The 14-year-old Shoan Ganguly has made waves at the Asian Age Group meet. \*SUDHAKARA JAIN

However, for 14-year-old Shoan Ganguly, his maiden Age Group championship continued to get better as he added a silver to the gold and two silvers he had won on the opening day.

In the Group II boys' 400 freestyle, he set a new personal best by finishing in 4:07.21. Later in the evening, he came fourth in 200m butterfly, but called it his "favourite" performance. "It will now push me to do better the next time," Shoan said later.

"This is my first Asian meet. I just wanted to give my best time. Pradeep [Kumar] sir trained us for 4 to 5 weeks. The camp was a bit hard but good. He told me that the competition will be

stroke: 50m: 1. Vladislav Mustafin (Uzb) 27.68, 2. Denis Petrashev (Kyr) 28.35, 3. S.P. Likith 28.38; Butterfly: 100m: 1. Wongcharoen Navaphat (Tha) 54.06, 2. Sajjan Prakash, 54.42, 3. Mhah Qali Bbas (Kuw) 55.10; 400m IM: Klzje Ayman (Syr) 4:30.22, 2. S. Siva 4:32.11, 3. Ketin Nuttapong (Tha) 4:37.11.

Women: Freestyle: 50m: 1. Srisa Ard Jenjira (Tha) 26.16 (NMR), OR: 26.29, Yang Xiaolin (Chn), 2015), 2. Khader Baqlah Talita Bishara (Jor) 26.37, 3. Junkrjang Natthanan (Tha) 26.51; 100m: 1. Junkrjang Natthanan (Tha) 17:39.93, 2. Shivani Kataria 17:58.16, 3. Teeka Kataria (Tha) 18:00.86; Breaststroke: 50m: 1. Srisa Ard Jenjira (Tha) 32.12 (NMR), OR: 32.46, Yekaterina Sadovnik (Kaz), 2009), 2. Vu Thi Phuong Anh (Vie) 33.04, 3. Boonamphai Saovane (Tha) 33.24; Butterfly: 100m: 1. Kittiya Patarawadee (Tha) 1:02.53, 2. Sounthornchote Suspasuta (Tha) 1:02.57, 3. Liu Pei Ting (Tpe) 1:02.94; 400m IM: 1. Pawapoto Phiangkhan (Tha) 5:04.97, 2. Wong Ching Lam Athena (Hkg) 5:08.97, 3. Nim-dam Kanitta (Tha) 5:12.79.

Mixed 4x100m medley: 1. Thailand 3:39.17, 2. Uzbekistan 3:41.73, 3. India 3:42.56. Other Indian medallists (number indicates position): Group I: Boys: Butterfly: 100m: 2. Tanish George 55.98; Group II: Boys: Freestyle: 400m: 1. Shoan Ganguly 4:07.21; Butterfly: 200m: 2. Utkarsh Patil 2:09.82.

## Warriors ride on Maninder's shoulders

### PKL

UTTHA GANESAN  
JAIPUR

Maninder Singh led from the front, achieving a personal milestone and single-handedly dragging his team past the finish line as Bengal Warriors edged past Telugu Titans 40-39 to go to the top of the table in the seventh season of the ProKabaddi League here on Wednesday.

It was the second consecutive one-point win for Warriors, Maninder scoring a whopping 17 of his team's points and going past 150 touch points for the season, stepping forward every time his team was in trouble.

He first changed the game by failing a raid but taking three defenders out with him in the 14th minute and then effecting an all-out two raids later. Every time Titans



Pulling away: Warriors captain Maninder Singh proved unstoppable against Titans. \*SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

managed to win a point, Maninder would hit back with two of his own.

With a well-rounded defence led by veteran Jeeva Kumar that kept the pressure on the opposition, his attacks made all the difference.

Siddharth Desai tried

gamely to counter Maninder's challenge, scoring 15 points, but despite his best attempts – including a super raid and an all-out of his own – found his team falling short in defence.

Titans, in fact, scored five more raid points than Warriors, most of them coming

in the last 90 seconds, but it was too late.

### Contrasting scenario

While Warriors have already comfortably qualified for the playoffs, Titans continue to languish in the penultimate spot, with its playoff hopes all but over.

The second match saw Jaipur Pink Panthers start tentatively but race ahead to a comfortable 43-34 win against Puneri Paltan. Panthers, who remained in the seventh spot, still have a chance of qualifying.

The results: Bengal Warriors 40 (Maninder Singh 17, Sukesh Hegde 5) bt Telugu Titans 39 (Siddharth Desai 15, Rajnish 6, Rakesh Gowda 5, Abozar Mohajermighani 5); Jaipur Pink Panthers 43 (Deepak Hooda 12, Deepak Narwal 11, Nilesh Salunke 7) bt Puneri Paltan 34 (Pankaj Mohite 14, Manjeet 8).

### ASIA CUP

ASHWIN ACHAL  
BENGALURU

India fizzled out after a bright start to lose 62-97 to Korea in the FIBA Women's Asia Cup Division-A basketball tournament at the Sree Kanteerava Indoor Stadium here on Wednesday.

India raised expectations of creating a spectacular upset, going up 6-0 and 10-2 in the opening minutes. Jeena Scaria and Anjana Geetha ran the floor and found their range, while the Koreans struggled to find offensive rhythm. At the end of the first quarter, India held a 22-20 lead.

A disastrous second quarter, however, put India out of contention. With tough physical play and double-



Top scorer: Jeena Scaria's efforts were not enough for India to challenge the Koreans. \*K. MURALI KUMAR

team defence, Korea snuffed out all scoring opportunities. The home team could score only six points, and lost all momentum. Korea raced to a 44-28 advantage at half-time, and never looked back.

Overall, India put up a far improved show after the 27-103 hammering received at the hands of Japan on Tuesday, but it was not enough to prevent a second straight defeat.

India will have to defeat

Chinese Taipei in its last group match on Thursday in order to avoid the relegation playoff encounter.

Earlier, Japan, China and Australia all registered their second successive victories of the tournament.

The results: Group A: Japan 78 (Maki Takada 19, Ramu Tokashiki 19, Yuki Miyazawa 15) bt Chinese Taipei 49 (Ling Chuan Huang 12); Korea 97 (An Jin 21, Hyeeyoon Bae 14, Leeseul Kang 13, Seul Ku 12, Minjeong Kim 11, Hyejin Park 11, Jihyun Park 10) bt India 62 (Jeena Scaria 14, Anjana Geetha 9).

Group B: China 104 (Mingling Chen 21, Guo Zixuan 19, Y. Li 11, Li Yuan 10, Jiachen Liu 10, Xu Han 10) bt Philippines 57 (Afril Bernardino 10); Australia 82 (Ezi Magbegor 14, Darcee Garbin 13, Abby Bishop 10) bt New Zealand 44 (Antonia Edmondson 12, Micaela Cocks 10).