

Indo-Pak bilateral cricket subject to approval: Ganguly

Kolkata: BCCI president-elect Sourav Ganguly has said that the resumption of bilateral cricketing ties between India and Pakistan is subject to approval from India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his counterpart Imran Khan.

When the question of cricket between the two countries came up during a media briefing, Ganguly said, "You have to ask that question to Modi ji and the Pakistan Prime Minister... Of course we have (to take permission), because international exposure (tours) is all through governments. So we don't have an answer to that question," the former India captain added.

The last time both neighbours featured in a bilateral series was in 2012, when India hosted Pakistan for a limited-overs series comprising two T20Is and three ODIs.

The 47-year-old Ganguly, who will take charge as BCCI's next president on October 23, had led India on the historic tour of Pakistan in 2004, the first bilateral series since the Kargil war in 1999 and India's first visit to Pakistan since 1989.

Sachin's two cents on Ganguly
Meanwhile in Mumbai, Sachin Tendulkar said he is expecting Ganguly to play his role as BCCI President as passionately as he played the game during his extremely successful career. Ganguly is set to take over the BCCI's reins October 23 at the Board's Annual General Meeting.
"The way he played his cricket, the way he has gone out and served the nation, I have no doubt that he will serve (as BCCI President) in same capacity and in the same manner, with same passion and same focus. That is what I know of him," Tendulkar said.

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In the future, Ranchi ‘will think twice before hosting a Test match’

SHAMIK CHAKRABARTY
RANCHI, OCTOBER 17

The Jharkhand State Cricket Association (JSCA) will "think twice before hosting a Test match" next time after having sold just 1500 tickets for the third India-South Africa game to be played at Ranchi's 39000-capacity stadium from Saturday.

The association kept the ticket prices affordable — Rs 250 per day is the lowest. They also opened five counters at the JSCA Stadium, but, till Thursday, there were few takers. At Pune, India achieved a record 11th consecutive Test series wins at home. Only a handful of spectators went through the turnstiles to witness history. Ranchi is hardly going to be any different despite the fact that the JSCA has distributed 5,000 complimentary tickets to security personnel and another 10,000 tickets to schools, clubs and academies.

The new JSCA president, Nafis Khan, told The Indian Express: "Next time, maybe we have to think twice before hosting a Test match. At the same time, we can't say no also. If the state associations start rejecting Test cricket, the purest form of the game would die. It's very sad to see empty stands. We have to make certain changes to the Test format."

As the JSCA has received Rs 1 crore from the BCCI for hosting the Test, they will not incur a loss. But at the next BCCI general body meeting, the JSCA officialdom might raise the Test revival issue, and like the BCCI president-elect Sourav Ganguly, the JSCA president, too, thinks pink-ball Test could be an option.

A couple of days ago, while talking to the reporters, Ganguly had said: "I always believe that's (day/night Test) the way forward in Test cricket. Games are being played before empty stands."

You get to know yourself quite a lot in India, says SA opener Elgar

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
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SOUTH AFRICA opener Dean Elgar says he got "stretched" as a cricketer and learned a lot more about himself during what has been a humbling India tour, part of which included visiting "smaller places and staying in hotels" not that good.

"It's a challenging tour. You get stretched as a person, you get stretched as a cricketer, I think you get to know yourself quite a lot as a person when you come to the smaller places where the hotels are maybe not as good, and you get challenged on the field," Elgar said. "It's always a good learning curve coming to India."

The introduction of the World Test Championship means South Africa still have "quite a lot to play for" in the third Test despite conceding the series, Elgar said.

"Back in the day it was always a bit of a dead rubber game but now with the World



CRICKATE

The Duchess of Cambridge, Catherine, hits an aerial shot as Shahin Shah Afridi stands behind the wicket in Lahore on Thursday. The Duchess and the Duke of Cambridge, Prince William, played a game of cricket during their visit to Pakistan's National Cricket Academy in the city. AP

Dread rubber

On their tour of South Africa in 2018, India had won the third Test after losing the first two. But don't expect any such heroics from the depleted and demoralised Proteas when they take the field on Saturday

SHAMIK CHAKRABARTY
RANCHI, OCTOBER 17

DEAN ELGAR needed a concussion test after being hit on the grille by a Jasprit Bumrah bouncer. On-field umpires Ian Gould and Aleem Dar had stopped play because they wanted to consult with match referee Andy Pycroft if the Wanderers pitch was too dangerous for the third Test between South Africa and India in January last year to continue.

It was only the third time in the history of Test cricket that a match had been stopped because the umpires weren't satisfied with the condition of the pitch. Eventually, after Faf du Plessis and Virat Kohli met the match officials, it was decided that the game would continue. India went on to win by 63 runs on a pitch which at times virtually took the mickey out of the batsmen from both sides. Kohli's team showed courage and character to bounce back after losing the first two Tests of the three-match series.

Cut to the present, and the JSCA International Stadium at Ranchi would be hosting the third Test between the two teams from Saturday. India have already won the first two of the series but an India-like comeback, a la Jo'burg, looks well-nigh impossible from the Proteas here. A depleted squad hampers their chances all right, but that's just a side story. With the JSCA pitch unlikely to offer any unpredictability, the visitors will have very little 'elbow room' to cause an upset. On a level playing field, Kohli's India are head and shoulders above du Plessis's South Africa in terms of quality.

Till early evening on Thursday, the Ranchi pitch had a thin grass cover. A member of the ground staff predicted no further change. He described the 22 yards as "a typical Indian wicket", offering scope to read between the lines.

No, it's not going to be a dust bowl and



Cheteshwar Pujara scored a double hundred (202) when India last played a Test in Ranchi — against Australia in 2017. PTI

the autumn sunshine won't be harsh enough to disintegrate the top soil. But spin could be a "major factor" from the third day onwards. A thin grass cover is expected to help the quicks initially.

Black clay soil is used for pitch preparation at this venue. "It's a very high quality clay soil that rules out the possibility of the pitch turning into a dust bowl," the groundsman informed, adding that this type of soil has a "structural difference" compared to the pitch for the second Test in Pune, for example, because of its "different chemical composition".

When a black clay soil of this type is used, the top soil becomes "very hard" after rolling. The JSCA ground staff have been working on the pitch for the last 15 days.

Black clay soil is not inimical to producing a rank turner. It depends on the preparation and the amount of grass left on the sur-

face. Also, the pitch behaves differently depending on the way the curator puts the finishing touches; whether it's glossy or a matt finish. It is learnt that the JSCA Stadium surface has a significant tilt towards the latter.

The World Test Championship has given context even to dead rubbers. South Africa might have lost the first two Tests, but they still have 40 points to play for in the final game of the series. Every Test series under the World Test Championship has a total of 120 points at stake. But to make matters worse for the visitors, their leading spinner, Keshav Maharaj, has been ruled out of the Ranchi Test due to a shoulder injury he suffered in Pune.

After insult, self-inflicted injury

The left-arm spinner carried the bulk of South Africa's spin bowling in the first two Tests — 127 overs and six wickets. His replacement, 27-year-old George Linde, is yet to play an in-

Women's cricket: Selectors fume after being kept out of support staff hiring

analyst, scheduled to be held in Mumbai on Friday. However, the selectors are unhappy about why they were not involved in the other appointments but asked to be part of the interview process for the video analyst.

"The trainer was appointed without due shortlisting process and now ad hoc coaches, namely the fielding and bowling coaches, have been appointed for the tour of the West Indies without involving the selectors. 'Involving' is an understatement. We have not even been intimated about the appointment of the support staff," a source in the selection committee told *The Indian Express*. Ravi Shastri was appointed as head coach

The selectors have objected to the appointment of the senior women team's trainer, fielding coach and bowling coach.

‘Idiot’ Marsh

All-rounder Mitchell Marsh is set to miss the opening Test against Pakistan, beginning Nov. 21, after fracturing his right hand punching a wall, with Australian coach Justin Langer branding him "an idiot". Marsh took his frustrations out in the changing rooms after he was dismissed for 53 in a Sheffield Shield match.

T20: Minnows chase WC dream, hosts marred by corruption

AGENCE FRANCE PRESSE
DUBAI, OCTOBER 17

CRICKET'S LESSER lights, including Jersey and Nigeria, are chasing a "dream" as qualifying for next year's T20 World Cup gets underway on Friday, but the start of the tournament will be overshadowed by three United Arab Emirates players being charged with corruption.

Scotland are the highest-ranked team in the competition, with 14 nations vying for six places in the opening round of next year's World T20 in Australia, where they would join Bangladesh and Sri Lanka in attempting to reach the 'Super 12s'.

But the hosts' preparations for the tournament in Dubai and Abu Dhabi have been thrown into disarray, after captain Mohammed Naveed was one of the trio of UAE players charged by the International Cricket Council on Wednesday.

Batsman Shaiman Anwar and right-arm pace bowler Qadeer Ahmed have also been charged by the ICC, the players facing a total of 12 counts of breaching the governing body's anti-corruption rules, as well as being axed from their country's squad for the qualifiers.

‘My mistake’

"My family is let down, my friends are let down. Everybody is let down. This was my mistake," the 32-year-old Naveed told *The National* newspaper.

Naveed added that he had made a mistake in failing to report an approach made to him by a "fixer" who had pretended to be an official representing a franchise in the T10 League, also slated for the UAE in November.

Ireland are the only Test team having to go through qualifying and will be expected to book a sixth straight appearance in the tournament. "We are here to compete at the world stage," said Irish skipper Gary Wilson. "We have a great record in the Middle East and the boys are looking forward to a great tournament and ensure we finish right at the top again."

The winners of each group of seven will qualify automatically, with the four remaining spots to be decided in playoffs.

Scotland, 11th in the world T20 rankings, claimed their first-ever win at a global ICC tournament in the 2016 edition by beating Hong Kong, but will be looking to put the pain of agonisingly missing out on the 50-over World Cup earlier this year behind them.

They had two chances to secure a place during last year's qualifying in Zimbabwe, but lost to Ireland before rain cut short their tense run chase against two-time world champions the West Indies.

"It is vitally important not only for us as Scotland but for every team here," said Scotland captain Kyle Coetzer.

Jersey upbeat

The Netherlands, who reached the 'Super 10' round in 2014, Oman, Hong Kong and the UAE will all be among the favourites to qualify. But the likes of Nigeria, Jersey and Singapore insist they are not going to just make up the numbers as they bid to give cricket a boost in their countries. There was already a shock in the Asian regional qualifiers, with Singapore reaching this stage ahead of Nepal, the world's 13th-ranked outfit.

Island team Jersey are playing in their second consecutive qualifier, having fallen short four years ago despite surprise victories over Hong Kong and Nepal. "For Jersey, it would probably be the biggest thing that has happened in our sporting history," admitted captain Charles Perchard. "It's a dream of ours to potentially play in a World Cup next year."

Nigeria have reached the final stage of qualifying for the first time as cricket continues to grow in the African country, with their youth side booking a spot at next year's Under-19 World Cup in South Africa. "It would be a great thing to be at the World Cup. It would be a great history for Nigeria," said their skipper Ademola Onikoyi, after his team took the place of Zimbabwe following their suspension by the ICC, which was lifted on Monday.

India T20s series: Sunny, Al-Amin back in B'desh squad

Dhaka: Left-arm spinner Arafat Sunny and pacer Al-Amin Hossain were recalled as Bangladesh on Thursday announced a 15-member squad for next month's three-game T20I series against India. Opener Tamim Iqbal also made a comeback after a break during which he missed the tri-series at home involving Afghanistan and Zimbabwe.

Both Sunny and Hossain have been out of contention for a long time having played their last T20I in 2016. The 33-year-old Sunny, who has taken 12 wickets in 10 T20Is, was suspended during the 2016 ICC World Twenty20 for an illegal bowling action. He had also spent two months in jail after being arrested in 2017 for his involvement in a family dispute. The 29-year-old Hossain also last featured in the 2016 ICC World Twenty20.

The T20I series will begin with the first match on November 3 at Feroz Shah stadium in New Delhi. The next two games are at Rajkot and Nagpur on November 7 and 10 respectively.