

Ganguly wears the India blazer, again

Takes over as BCCI president, says domestic cricket will be his priority

BCCI MEETING

AMOL KARHADKAR
MUMBAI

As much as it is about winning and losing, sport is also about nostalgia. As he entered a jam-packed conference room at the Cricket Centre – for the second time, with a young team of newly elected apex council members accompanying him – Sourav Ganguly turned the clock back almost two decades.

Sporting the India blazer – he revealed it was the same that was presented to him when he was elevated to India captaincy in 2000 – Ganguly occupied his chair. And as he took centrestage, the four chairs that had been arranged for the other office-bearers were quickly pulled out.

One couldn't help but sense that the second India captain to become a BCCI president would continue to steal the limelight, just like he did during his stint as India skipper.

Vision statement

For the next 25 minutes, Ganguly spelt out his vision for what could well be just a 10-month tenure as BCCI president.

He related taking over a muddled BCCI administration to him taking over as captain in the aftermath of the match-fixing scandal.

He also reiterated that domestic cricket would be his priority, explained BCCI's stand while dealing with ICC on the revenue-sharing model and even explained his interpretation of the new rulebook that has been thrust on the BCCI as a result of the apex court-directed administrative reforms.

Amidst all this, the bespectacled Ganguly also reminisced about his return to



The boss: Sourav Ganguly has likened his taking over as BCCI president in muddled times to his captaincy on the back of the match-fixing saga. • VIVEK BENDRE

the Wankhede Stadium, a place where he made his mark early on in what turned out to be a memorable career on the field.

Where it all started

"I came here as a young boy, I remember scoring my first hundred, it was against Pakistan in an under-19 match at the Wankhede stadium, it was a different Wankhede stadium then.

"We stayed at the Sea Green Hotel next door," Ganguly said. "The hundred against Pakistan actually triggered my career.

"I got picked for the Ranji Trophy, got my Test hundred here (173 versus Sri Lanka in 1997), got my Test wins here and then coming back to the IPL last year with Delhi Capitals and winning here again as BCCI president."

BCCI Apex Council

President: Sourav Ganguly
Vice-president: Mahim Verma
Secretary: Jay Shah
Joint secretary: Jayesh George
Treasurer: Arun Singh Dhumal
Councillor: Prabhtej Singh Bhatia
Cricketers' representatives: Aunshuman Gaekwad (men) and Shanta Rangaswamy (women)

* BCCI has written to the Comptroller & Auditor General to nominate a CAG representative to the council.

If Ganguly can walk the talk and get Indian cricket back on its feet during his tenure, the cricket fraternity will continue to be nostalgic about October 23, the day he wore the India blazer for his second innings.

‘Will support Kohli in every possible way’

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI

Sourav Ganguly answered a range of questions during the media interaction after taking over as BCCI president.

On the way ahead

It is a really young group (office-bearers), so we will have to do a lot of hard work to understand every method. We don't know what happened in the last three years because we were not a part of it. There were no AGMs, there were no committee meetings... so we had no idea how it happened last year.

On Kohli's suggestion to have five permanent Test centres

I will speak to him tomorrow [Thursday]. He is the captain of India. He is the most important man in Indian cricket as captain of the team. We will have a word with him and we will support him in every possible way. As for the

Test venues, we have a lot of States, a lot of venues... we will have to sit with him and see what he wants, and take it forward from there.

On restructuring domestic cricket

That will be the first thing we will do. And we will get it done before the actual Ranji Trophy season starts.

The structures are there, the tournaments are there, and there are a lot more teams now. In the last three years, the matches have doubled actually.

We will have to make sure that the best tournament in the country is competitive and it remains important to everyone because that is where you get the Kohlis, the Dhonis, the Rahanes, and the Rohits of India. That structure has to be at its best, both structure-wise and financially, and that will happen.

Dada on Dhoni

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI

BCCI president Sourav Ganguly fielded a few questions on M.S. Dhoni, saying he will address the issue of the former skipper's future in international cricket.

Did you speak to Dhoni?

I haven't spoken to him yet. I have just taken over today. Hopefully, we will meet soon and have a word with one of the greats of Indian cricket.

Do you see Dhoni making a comeback like you did?

It depends on him. Even when I was left out and when the entire world said I will never make it, I believed in myself and came back and played for four years.

Champions don't finish quickly. I don't know what is in his [Dhoni's] mind, what he thinks about his career... he is one of the greats of the game. Over a period of time, his achievements, when you sit down and take note, you say wow! So, when I am around, everybody will be respected.



The new team: Sourav Ganguly with Prabhtej Singh Bhatia, Mahim Varma, Jayesh George, Anshuman Gaekwad, Jay Shah, Arun Singh Dhumal and Shanta Rangaswamy. • VIVEK BENDRE

‘We will work with ICC and take money matters forward’

G. VISWANATH
MUMBAI

BCCI president Sourav Ganguly was quite guarded when fielding a question about who would be named India's director in the ICC Board. The BCCI can name its director and alternate director.

"No, it has not been decided. But the ICC matter is important for everyone to know, don't just go on hearsay. India is to get \$372 million from the ICC 2016-23 cycle. It is a lot heavy at the backend. Till now we have got whatever it is and we have to make sure we get our due. We will work with the

ICC and take this forward."

Giving his insight on the sensitive subject, the outgoing CoA chief Rai said: "It is being reported that there was a 2014 model. Any of you who has followed the BCCI knows how much we got as per the 2014 model. We took charge in 2017. Not a single dollar was lost to us. When we took charge, we were told that we were allowed \$293 million. When Vikram Limaye went and negotiated with the ICC, \$293 million got increased to \$405 million. That is where it stands today, and if in the future if we get more, that will

be welcome."

The BCCI is not exactly happy with the ICC's new World Cup plans (T20 and 50 overs) for the 2023-2028 cycle.

This is because the ICC global tender for media rights for the post 2023 cycle may be floated in 2021, well before the BCCI gets the opportunity to invite a tender for its media rights.

The BCCI's media rights for 2018-23 was won by Star Sports for ₹6138 crore and the IPL rights was also won by Star Sports for ₹16,347 crore for the five-year period (2018-2022).

Former office-bearers kept away from BCCI meeting

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI

Minutes after the newly elected office-bearers of the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) took charge, a few high-profile individuals were asked to vacate the meeting of the BCCI affiliates' representatives here on Wednesday.

After the short General Body meeting, in which the Sourav Ganguly-led dispensation was handed over the reins, the BCCI members

congregated for a meeting. The three erstwhile office-bearers – acting president C.K. Khanna, acting secretary Amitabh Choudhary and treasurer Anirudh Chaudhry – were also invited along with the representatives of three non-compliant State Associations.

Once they were invited, others like former BCCI and ICC president N. Srinivasan, former BCCI secretary Niranjan Shah, former vice-presidents Rajeev Shukla (al-

so a former IPL chairman) and Ravi Savant, former legal committee member Abhay Apte, also entered the enclosure.

Once it was known that none of them were among the designated representatives of their respective State Associations, Khanna requested them to leave the conference room.

"Yes, I announced that uninvited guests should vacate the room," Khanna confirmed to *The Hindu*.

The CoA innings ends

G. VISWANATH
MUMBAI

"Getting off the Mark" and "End of the Innings" were the two catchphrases Justice Lodha used while writing the Reforms in Cricket Report four years ago. The report was presented to the Supreme Court in July 2015 and exactly a year later – July 18, 2016 – the Supreme Court validated it.

The Lodha Panel set timelines to implement the Supreme Court order, but the BCCI and its members defied them.

In January 2017, the Supreme Court, at the behest of Justice Lodha, created the Committee of Administrators (CoA) to implement the reforms process.

The CoA (Vinod Rai, Dia-



Vinod Rai. •PTI

na Edulji and Lt. Gen (Retd) Ravi Thodge) ended its 33-month tenure on Wednesday.

After completing the for-

malities, Rai said: "We are totally satisfied because we are leaving the BCCI behind with five former players in administration in the Apex Council and IPL Governing Council. The BCCI administration could not have been better than this because we have a president who is one of our most successful captains."

The CoA felt it was able to bring almost all members in to the framework of the BCCI Constitution.

The CoA has also enabled the BCCI to function through its professional managers and a large group from the NorthEast, Bihar, Puducherry and Uttarakhand take part in the Ranji Trophy.

It has also made the Players Association a reality.

Kohli may be rested for T20Is

SELECTION

AMOL KARHADKAR
MUMBAI

Virat Kohli is set to be rested for the next month's Twenty20 series versus Bangladesh, while Shivam Dube – the Mumbai all-rounder – is likely to earn his maiden call-up for the Men in Blue on Thursday.

In what could well be the last meeting of the selection panel headed by former India wicketkeeper M.S.K. Prasad, the selectors will finalise the squad for the three T20Is and two Test matches, to be played from November 3 to 26. Kohli is set to attend the meeting at the BCCI headquarters, besides interacting with BCCI president Sourav Ganguly on a host of issues related to Indian



Virat Kohli. •PTI

cricket.

The decision to rest Kohli will be done keeping in mind his workload management and an attempt at trying out the bench-strength in the shortest format in the build-up to the next year's T20 World Cup in Australia. As a result, Rohit Sharma will lead India for the three T20Is, with the captain set to return for the two Tests as

part of the World Test Championship.

Kohli could be replaced with either Sanju Samson or Shubman Gill, both of whom are in prolific form. If the selectors decide to try out both of them, it could well be at the cost of another established batsman.

With Hardik Pandya recuperating from a back surgery, Dube, who has been consistent for India-A and in the Vijay Hazare Trophy, is all set to be tried out as an allrounder.

Chahal back?

It is possible that Yuzvendra Chahal, India's third-highest wicket-taker in T20Is, could be recalled for the series. With the Test squad wearing a settled look, it will not tinkered with too much.

Saina Nehwal advances

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
PARIS

Saina Nehwal brought cheer to the Indian camp by disposing of Ngan Yi Cheung of Hong Kong 23-21, 21-17 to advance to the second round of the French Open on Wednesday.

However, it was bad day for the men with K. Srikanth, P. Kashyap and Sameer Verma being ousted in the opening round.

Srikanth fought hard against second seed Chou Tien Chen of Chinese Taipei before losing 15-21, 21-7, 21-14, Kashyap was no match for Hong Kong's Ng Ka Long Angus as he went down 21-11, 21-9 and Sameer lost 20-22, 21-18, 21-18 against Japan's Kenta Nishimoto.

It was a mixed outing for India in men's doubles as

Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty progressed to the second round but Manu Attri and B. Sumeeth Reddy lost.

Satwiksairaj and Chirag defeated the Dutch pair of Robin Tabeling 21-16, 21-14 but Manu and Sumeeth lost 21-19, 20-22, 21-15 against England's Ben Lane and Sean Vandy.

The Indian challenge came to an end in mixed doubles with the exit of Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Ashwini Ponnappa and Pranaav Jerry Chopra and N. Sikki Reddy.

While Satwiksairaj and Ashwini lost 21-17, 21-18 against Seo Seung Jae and Chae Yujung of Korea, Pranaav and Sikki were ousted by England's Chris and Gabrielle Adcock 21-13, 21-18.

Going for glory with guts and gumption

RAKESH RAO
NEW DELHI

Rarely does a lady chess player gets to play 11 Grandmasters in as many rounds of a competition. And to do well against such quality opposition is considered highly improbable.

Remarkably, Grandmaster D. Harika made the most of this rare opportunity with her strongest-ever performance in the just-concluded FIDE Chess.com Grand Swiss at Douglas, Isle of Man.

The invitational field attracted some of the strongest players, including the World champion Magnus Carlsen and second ranked Fabiano Caruana. The depth of the field can be gauged from the fact that, out of 154 players in the fray, 131 were GMs, two Woman GMs and 16 International Masters.

Harika, highest rated among 18 ladies, started in the 122nd place and finished 83rd after scoring 5.5 points from 11 rounds. Her display was worth the women's top



prize of \$10,000.

Rated 2495, Harika performed at a never-before high level of 2651 and gained 23 points that should take her back into the World's top-10 list.

Stubborn defence

Known for her stubborn defence and ability to draw far more games than win decisively against quality opposition, Harika showed the stuff she is made of this past fortnight.

Facing far stronger rivals, rated between 2629 and

2691, Harika won twice, lost twice and drew seven times. Her victims included Mircea-Emilian Parligras (Romania, 2629) and Alex Bachmann (Paraguay, 2629). She lost to compatriot K. Sasikiran (2675) and Alexander Moiseenko (Ukraine, 2635). Her strongest performance in the drawn games came against Nils Grandelius (Sweden, 2691).

"It's been an incredible couple of weeks playing the FIDE Grand Swiss tournament. Feels good to be back in the World's top-10 and looking forward to working even harder and carrying this form in future," was how Harika expressed her thoughts on twitter.

Harika has the grit and the gumption to perform at the highest level. After all, three World championship bronze medals stand testimony to her capabilities.

A close look at Harika's latest display surely reinforces the belief that her best clearly lies ahead.

‘Bowling connects me to my inner self’

Ashwin says he is fit and the ball is coming out from the hand ‘like a dream’

EXCLUSIVE

S. DINAKAR
CHENNAI

He leaves one landmark behind and stares at another. Spin ace R. Ashwin, though, is not concerned about the numbers as he revealed in a chat with *The Hindu*.

You have been focusing a lot more on your off-spin these days. You seem to have put fitness concerns behind I have always focused on off-spin, got 80 to 90% of wickets with it. I have dismissed a lot of right-handers.

I am fit and the ball is coming out from the hand like a dream. I am not thinking too much technically. I ran into some very good batting form too at county cricket but have lately not received too many opportunities for India.

You went past 350 Test wickets recently. Are you conscious of the approaching landmarks?

Not at all. I am just enjoying my bowling. I am like a 10-year-old when I have the ball

in my hands. Nothing gives me greater joy. Bowling is like therapy to me. It connects me to my inner self. I am not the same person I was. I am not as intense as before. I just want to bring the joy back.

On pitches that were not turners, you were the highest wicket-taker, with 15, among both sides in the recent India-South Africa Test series I don't complain about pitches, nor do I depend on them. A lot of times we play on green-tops in county cricket. You adapt.

The manner you use your crease in the South Africa series, both over and round the wicket, impressed many I have been criticised for it too. Some say I try too many things. For me, if it gives me an extra opportunity to get a wicket, I will go for it.

This Indian team has taken the pitch out of the equation with the options in its attack. We have a very good bunch of pacemen. Then we have the spinners. We have a complete attack and we put runs

on the board. It is never about one individual.

Virat Kohli has said Test wins abroad should be worth double the points in World Test championship

It is more challenging to win in somebody else's home, gives you more satisfaction. Virat has a point.

Your time under Virat and coach Ravi Shastri and the atmosphere in the team

Virat has led from the front. He has captained India to so many series wins. He deserves credit. Whenever I have had a conversation with Shastri, he comes up with something useful. With the team winning so much, the atmosphere within has to be good.

Are you still hopeful about your white-ball career for India. Two T20 World events are coming up...

I consider myself one of the best, if not the best spinner, in T20 cricket. I don't think age is a factor. Imran Tahir is 40. I have the variety and experience. My hopes are alive.



New perspective: R. Ashwin insists that he is not as intense as before and is just enjoying his bowling. • FILE PHOTO: K.R. DEEPAK