

# Ganguly, Dravid discuss way ahead for NCA

BCCI's office-bearers are understood to have been impressed with the latter's presentation

SHREEDUTTA CHIDANANDA  
BENGALURU

Sourav Ganguly and his new team of BCCI office-bearers visited the National Cricket Academy (NCA) here on Wednesday, meeting Rahul Dravid to discuss the way forward for the facility.

Dravid, the NCA's Head of Cricket, delivered a detailed presentation, with a revival of the NCA's status as a centre of excellence said to be on top of the agenda. The NCA, originally envisioned as a nursery of talent, has in recent years seemingly turned into a rehabilitation centre for injured players.

The BCCI's office-bearers – president Ganguly, secretary Jay Shah, treasurer Arun Singh Dhumal, vice-president Mahim Verma and joint-secretary Jayesh George – were understood to have been impressed with Dravid's presentation and his blueprint for the NCA's future.

**Grass-roots cricket**

“All the office-bearers wanted to meet Dravid, and it was a very good meeting,” said sources. “He spoke at length on how to take NCA and Indian cricket forward. It was a very detailed presentation. The NCA has turned into a



On a mission: BCCI president Sourav Ganguly and secretary Jay Shah arrive at the National Cricket Academy. • G.P. SAMPATH KUMAR

rehab centre but Dravid wants to turn it into a centre of excellence which it used to be. He focused largely on developing grass-roots cricket. “He feels that once talent at grass-roots level is strong, the national team will also

be strong.”

**NCA's new facility**

Also on the agenda of the meeting, which lasted three hours, was a vision for the NCA's new facility, set to come up near the international airport. The BCCI had been trying for over a decade to move the NCA out of the premises of the M. Chinnaswamy Stadium. In 2017, it finally completed the purchase of 40 acres of land, in the Devanahalli Aerospace Park area.

The BCCI office-bearers heard a proposal about the construction of a new NCA complex here. “The land for the new NCA was acquired during the CoA regime and because the BCCI was in limbo, we couldn't proceed with building the new facility,” said sources.

“Now that the committee is in place, building a world-class state-of-the-art NCA is one of the BCCI's primary objectives. The presentation made was very good. We will now place the matter before the Apex Council and try and get this project started as soon as possible.”

Ganguly was scheduled to visit the site in Devanahalli in the evening before flying home.

## BCCI orders SG pink balls

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NEW DELHI

The BCCI has asked manufacturer SG to deliver 72 pink balls by next week for India's first-ever day/night Test to be held at the Eden Gardens from November 22.

The BCCI president Sourav Ganguly has already confirmed that SG pink balls will be used for the landmark game, leaving the manufacturer with very little room for error.

It is a big challenge for SG as its pink ball is yet to be tested in a competitive game. The Duleep Trophy was played with Kookaburra pink balls for three seasons and not SG before the BCCI switched back to red ball this year.

SG had faced strong criticism from some Indian players in the previous home season with India skipper Virat Kohli saying that the red ball got scuffed up way too early in comparison to the Dukes used in England and Kookaburra in Australia.

Kohli acknowledged the improvements made on the ball this season but wants it last to at least 60 overs.

## Messi sinks Valladolid

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
PARIS

Lionel Messi made it clear he is fit and back to his scintillating best by tearing apart Real Valladolid on Tuesday in a thumping 5-1 victory for Barcelona.

Messi scored another spell-binding free-kick at Camp Nou after his sumptuous pass had already teed up Arturo Vidal for Barca's second.

He then drove home his second late on before sliding through Luis Suarez to make it five.

Atletico Madrid could have done with a drop of Messi's attacking inspiration as it was held to a disappointing draw by Alaves.

Alvaro Morata came off the bench to score his third goal in as many games but Lucas Perez hit a stunning late equaliser at Menzies-rotza.

**The results: Serie A:** Brescia 1 (Skriniar 76-og) lost to Inter Milan 2 (Martinez 23, Lukaku 63); Parma 0 lost to Verona 1 (Lazovic 10).

**La Liga:** Alaves 1 (Perez 83) drew with Atletico Madrid 1 (Morata 70); Barcelona 5 (Lenglet 2, Vidal 29, Messi 34, 75, Suarez 77) bt Real Valladolid 1 (Olivas 15).

# Shakib's absence will motivate us, says Mahmudullah

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NEW DELHI

Controversies chased the players like shadows culminating in the suspension of Shakib Al Hasan, but Bangladesh's T20 skipper Mahmudullah said on Wednesday that the top player's absence from the India tour will act more as motivation than handicap.

A 15-member squad arrived here, a day after one of its greatest players was handed a two-year ban by the ICC, for a tour that will have three T20Is and two Tests.

“We have to play with our heart for the country,” Mahmudullah was quoted as saying by *ESPN Cricinfo*.

**Honour**

“I think this (Shakib's absence) will work as motivation for us. I think there's no greater honour than playing for the country. The responsibility to lead the side lies with me, so I will try to give it my all,” said the T20 skipper and a veteran of many battles.

Mahmudullah, however, admitted that it will be a difficult assignment against In-



Tough road ahead: Bangladesh players arrive in New Delhi for their India tour which begins with the T20 series. • PTI

dia. “The statistics don't lie. It is a tough ask, but it is not impossible.

“We have to perform as a team, and ensure we take advantage of every opportunity.”

**Young squad**

In what is a rather young side, Mahmudullah will only have another senior player Mushfiqur Rahim to lean on for help in the absence of Shakib and opener Tamim Iqbal.

“Definitely, I will miss him (Shakib), since we have played together for so long,” Mushfiqur said.

The former skipper said that Shakib's absence could also be seen as someone getting injured and being out of action.

“It is tough to play without him as he is the No. 1 player. If someone was injured for a year, which could have been anyone, then it would have been an opening for the younger players. It is a challenge to beat India in their home turf but a challenge also means an opportunity,” Rahim said.

# Williams strikes in ATK's victory

Chennaiyin FC's woes continue as it fails to get going

ISL

**K. KEERTHIVASAN**  
CHENNAI

John Gregory's woes continued to spill over. The Chennaiyin FC head coach's forwardline hasn't been up to the mark, to put it mildly.

The I-O loss to ATK in the Indian Super League at the Nehru Stadium here on Wednesday amply underscored the host's lack of intensity and ideas upfront. It continues to remain on one point from three matches. On the other hand, ATK has seven from three and has moved to the top of the table.

David Williams scored what turned out to be the winner in the second half. The Australian pushed one home after Javier Hernandez's shot found the foot of Chennaiyin defender Lucian Goian only to deflect and go straight to Williams, who was spot on with his strike.

**Wasted opportunities**

The second half saw Chennaiyin creating more opportunities, but it was unable to make them count.

After conceding a goal, Gregory, in a bid to add more



Clean strike: David Williams, right, scores ATK's winner against Chennaiyin FC. • R. RAGU

bite to the attack, replaced midfielder Dragos Firtulescu with forward Andre Schembri. There weren't any tangible benefits arising out of the move.

Credit to ATK's defence that was led adroitly by Anas Edathodika. The back four nipped a lot of promising moves of Chennaiyin in the bud. Surprisingly, the much-feared strikers like Roy Krishna and Williams weren't as effective as one expected them to be as the

host's defence largely kept the two in check.

**One good chance**

The only good chance that Chennaiyin had in the first half was when Nerijus Valskis' header off a cross by Rafael Crivellaro went over the post. In fact, the first five-odd minutes were very positive for Chennaiyin as it raided ATK's defence with impunity.

Chennaiyin's new signing Lallianzuala Chhangte was

# Unpardonable conduct

Fixing makes a mockery of viewers and teams

S. DINAKAR  
CHENNAI

The ICC banning Shakib Al Hasan for two years – one of them suspended – from all cricket for not reporting advances by an alleged bookie should send shockwaves in the cricketing world.

Here was a marquee player, Bangladesh's best cricketer and among the world's top allrounders, being punished for his interactions with someone suspected to be a bookie.

Shakib's conduct – he has let his team, country and cricketing community down – is unpardonable because he, having played the game for so long, must surely have been aware of ICC's instructions, to all players, to report approaches by suspicious elements.

**Disturbing**

The transcripts of Shakib's Whatsapp conversations with the person in question, released by the ICC, are disturbing. Particularly when Shakib writes to the individual that he wanted to meet him in person.

Then, there are deleted messages. We might never know the extent of Shakib's

LANKA IN AUS

REUTERS  
BRISBANE

Steve Smith and David Warner's first batting partnership on home soil since their ball-tampering suspensions helped Australia to a series-sealing nine-wicket victory over Sri Lanka in the second T20 International at the Gabba on Wednesday.

Smith (53 n.o., 36b, 6x4) joined Warner (60 n.o., 41b, 9x4) at the crease after the third ball of the innings and the pair's unbeaten 117-run stand mowed down Sri Lanka's total of 117 in 13 overs.

The win gave Aaron Finch's team a 2-0 lead in the three-match series, having thrashed the visitors by 134 runs in Sunday's opener.

Dominant performances back-to-back from Australia's bowlers ensured the series win, with the pacemen snaring four wickets to match the spinners as the Lankan batsmen struggled with the pace and bounce of the Gabba pitch.

“Yeah, we played well tonight, I thought the bowlers did a terrific job early on,” said Smith. “It's good to be back now, obviously (there is) a T20 World Cup next year that I'd love to be a part of”



Back with a bang: Steve Smith marked his return to T20Is with an unbeaten half-century. • AFP

SCOREBOARD

**Sri Lanka:** Danushka Gunathilaka b Stanlake 21, Kusal Mendis run out 1, Avishka Fernando c Cummins b Agar 17, Kusal Perera b Agar 27, Niroshan Dickwella c Turner b Cummins 5, Dasun Shanaka c Carey b Stanlake 1, Wanindu Hasaranga st Carey b Zampa 10, Isuru Udana c Richardson b Cummins 10, Lakshan Sandakan run out 10, Lasith Malinga st Carey b Zampa 9, Nuwan Pradeep (not out) 2; Extras (lb-1, w-3): 4; Total (in 19 overs): 117.

**Fall of wickets:** 1-5, 2-29, 3-53, 4-65, 5-75, 6-75, 7-93, 8-95, 9-108.

**Australia bowling:** Richardson 3-0-17-0, Stanlake 4-0-23-2, Cummins 4-0-29-2, Agar 4-0-27-2, Zampa 4-0-20-2.

**Australia:** David Warner (not out) 60; Aaron Finch c Perera b Malinga 0; Steve Smith (not out) 53; Extras (lb-2, w-3): 5; Total (for one wkt. in 13 overs): 118.

**Fall of wicket:** 1-1.

**Sri Lanka bowling:** Malinga 3-0-23-1, Pradeep 3-0-26-0, Hasaranga 1-0-18-0, Udana 2-0-16-0, Sandakan 4-0-33-0.

**Toss:** Sri Lanka.

**Man-of-the-match:** Warner.

Australia won by 9 wickets with 42 balls remaining to lead the three-match series 2-0.

## Scotland and Namibia seal berths

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
DUBAI

Scotland thrashed United Arab Emirates by 90 runs here on Wednesday to book a place in next year's T20 World Cup.

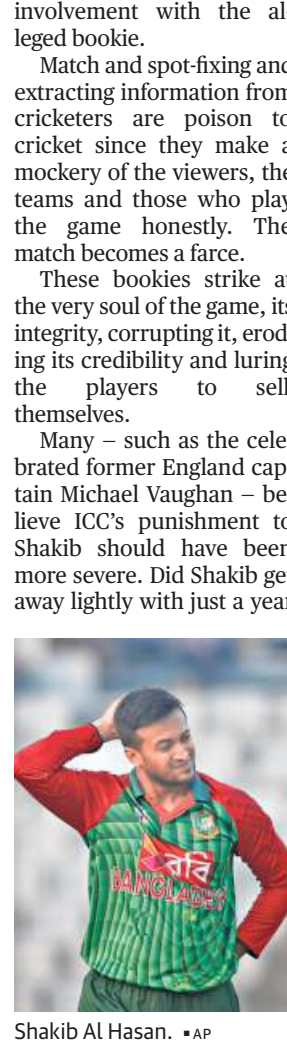
On Tuesday, Namibia beat Oman by 54 runs to join the Netherlands, Papua New Guinea and Ireland in next year's tournament in Australia from Oct. 18 to Nov. 15.

## Indian women triumph

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
COLOMBO

India claimed the ACC Women's Emerging Team's Asia Cup, defeating Sri Lanka by 14 runs under the D/L method in the final.

**The scores:** India Women Emerging Players 175 for nine in 50 overs (Tanusree Sarkar 47, Simran Bahadur 34, Kavisha Dilhari three for 27) bt Sri Lanka Women Emerging Players 135 in 34.3 overs (Harshitha Madavi 39, Tanuja Kanwar four for 15, Devika Vaidya four for 29). *Target revised to 150 from 35 overs.*



Shakib Al Hasan. • AP

## Ravinder gets silver medal

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
BUDAPEST

Indian grappler Ravinder settled for a silver medal after going down to Kyrgyzstan's Ulukbek Zholdosbekov 5-3 in the 61kg final at the Under-23 World wrestling championship on Wednesday.

Earlier, the 22-year-old Indian had pinned senior European champion Arsen Harutyunyan of Armenia to storm into the final with a 4-3 win.

Ravinder had notched up a 12-1 win over Hungary's Marcell Budai Kovacs in his opening bout and then demolished Russia's Dinislam Takhtarov 11-0 in the quarterfinals.

Among other Indians, Jyoti stormed into the semifinals with a 12-1 win over Moldova's Maria Leorda in the women's 50kg bout.

In 55kg, Rani Rana was blanked 6-0 by USA's Dominique Olivia Parrish in the qualifiers while Suman put went down 6-4 against China's Yingying Wang.

Pooja Yadav's campaign in 59kg was cut short by Canada's Tiana Grace Kennett 6-2.

# Svitolina makes semis

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
SHENZHEN

Defending champion Elina Svitolina stormed into the semifinals of the season-ending WTA Finals after a commanding win over Simona Halep on Wednesday. Canada's Bianca Andreescu retired hurt, trailing 6-3 against Karolina Pliskova.

Winless Andreescu can't qualify for the last four, while Halep will play Pliskova to decide the group's second spot.

Svitolina will finish top of Purple Group after taking advantage of an error-strewn Halep to win 7-5, 6-3 in one hour and 39 minutes.

Svitolina had the better of long baseline rallies against an uncharacteristically errant Halep, who finished with 38 unforced errors.

**The results: Purple Group:** Elina Svitolina bt Simona Halep 7-5, 6-3; Karolina Pliskova bt Bianca Andreescu 6-3, ret'd.

# Thiem battles past Raonic

PARIS MASTERS

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
PARIS

Dominic Thiem booked his spot in the Paris Masters third round on Wednesday by edging out Milos Raonic in a marathon encounter, while Greek star Stefanos Tsitsipas also progressed.

Fifth seed Thiem had to dig deep to get past Raonic 7-6(5), 5-7, 6-4 as the Canadian powered down 30 aces in a thunderous serving display.

But Thiem saved nine of 10 break points before clinching the crucial breakthrough in game nine of the deciding set.

**The results: Second round:** Alex de Minaur bt Roberto Bautista Agut 7-6(2), 7-6(1); Grigor Dimitrov bt David Goffin 7-5, 6-3; Gael Monfils bt Benoît Paire 6-4, 7-6(4); Stefanos Tsitsipas bt Taylor Fritz 7-6(3), 6-3; Cristian Garin bt John Isner 7-6(5), 7-6(4); Dominic Thiem bt Milos Raonic 7-6(5), 5-7, 6-4; Denis Shapovalov bt Fabio Fognini 3-6, 6-3, 6-3; Jeremy Chardy bt Daniil Medvedev 4-6, 6-2, 6-4; Alexander Zverev bt Fernando Verdasco 6-1, 6-3.

**First round:** Corentin Moutet bt Dusan Lajovic 6-4, 1-6, 6-3; Alex de Minaur bt Laslo Djere 6-1, 6-4; Taylor Fritz bt Frances Tiafoe 7-6(6), 3-6, 6-4; Grigor Dimitrov bt Ugo Humbert 4-6, 6-1, 6-2; Denis Shapovalov bt Gilles Simon 2-2 ret'd.