

With Chawla's return to India, police may question ex-players in fixing case

MAHENDER SINGH MANRAL
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 12

Almost two decades after one of the biggest match-fixing scandals in cricket came to light, Delhi Police on Wednesday got custody of bookie Sanjeev Chawla, the key accused in the 2000 case involving late South African captain Hansie Cronje, after completing legal formalities for his extradition.

Chawla, 50, had filed an application in the UK High Court seeking leave to appeal against the extradition order by the Westminster Magistrates' Court. UK home secretary Sajid Javid had also signed off on the District Judge's order in favour of the extradition.

In the last two months, a Delhi Police Crime Branch team has attended several court hearings in the extradition case and Scotland Yard officers handed over Chawla's custody to them after completing the documentation.

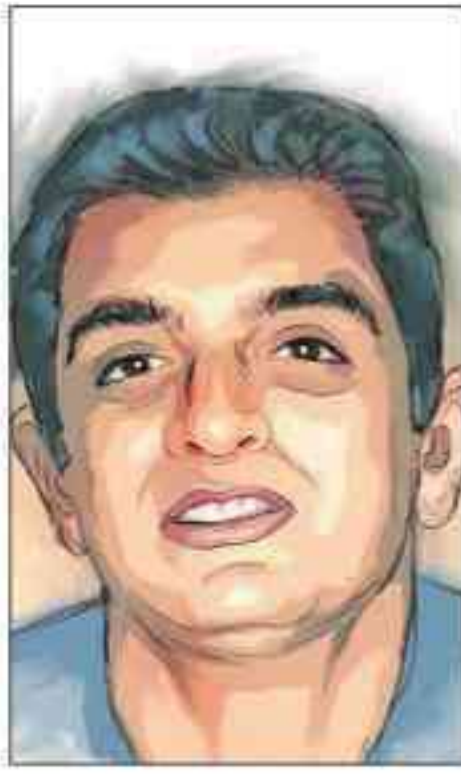
DCP (crime branch) Ram Gopal Naik, who was sent to London for this purpose, told *The Indian Express* that they will reach India on Thursday morning. "We will do in-depth and thorough investigation and are likely to question all the former Indian cricketers whose names surfaced during that time regarding their alleged roles in the match-fixing case," he said.

Chawla, who was on bail, was first taken back into custody by the Metropolitan Police before handing him over to Delhi Police.

Inspector Keshav Mathur, who had filed the chargesheet in July 2013, was shortlisted by senior Delhi Police officers along with Naik and they were sent to attend all the court hearings. "Mathur had also initiated Chawla's extradition proposal and is aware of all case-related documents," a senior police officer said.

70-page chargesheet

Mathur had filed the chargesheet in the scandal naming Cronje, who was killed in a plane crash in June 2002. Chawla and Cronje were named in a 70-page chargesheet by the Crime Branch for 'fixing matches played between India and South Africa from February 16, 2000 to March 20, 2000 in India', an officer said.



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The scandal broke in April 2000, when Delhi Police intercepted a conversation between blacklisted bookie Chawla and Cronje, in which it was learnt that the South African captain had accepted money to lose matches. Chawla has also been accused of offering money to two England players in August 1999.

As soon as Delhi Police filed the FIR in the first week of March 2000, Chawla moved to the UK. He had gone there for the first time on a business visa

in 1996, but his Indian passport was revoked in 2000, and he obtained a British passport in 2005.

Arrested in London

On June 14, 2016, Chawla was arrested in London following India's request for his extradition, and UK officials then asked Delhi Police for details of security arrangements and facilities in the jail he will be kept in. This was done after Chawla raised several questions about security

and facilities in Indian jails.

In response, police informed UK's Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) — through the Ministry of External Affairs — that Chawla would be housed in Tihar Jail, which they described as a central facility following international standards, and he will be provided a special cell with special security personnel, senior police officer said, adding that in January this year, a lower court issued a fresh order, allowing Chawla's extradition,

and it was later sent to the UK home secretary, who formally signs off on the order under the India-UK Extradition Treaty.

Sources said several meetings were also called by senior officers where they discussed the case history and also prepared questions for Chawla. "In one such meeting, they also called complainant ACP Ishwar Singh, who had intercepted the phone calls.

Singh had filed a complaint with charges of match-fixing against Cronje, London-based businessman Chawla and four of the latter's associates. It had details of how Chawla and Cronje allegedly fixed team scores, and mentioned the roles of four other South African players, including Herschelle Gibbs," police sources added.

SIMPLY PUT QUESTION & ANSWER

A new league in town: Does it have any takers?

The World Golf Group has unveiled its plan for a new global tour which has some players curious but the PGA and European Tours miffed. Here's the lowdown.



Tiger Woods said he has been approached by organisers of the league.

What is the format and how much is at stake?

The 18-event tour would run from January to September with 48-player fields in a four-man, 12-team format battling for \$10 million purses at 54-hole events with no cut and shotgun starts over the first two days. There would be an individual \$2 million top prize at each event, as well as team prize money.

Have many players been committed so far?

No players have publicly committed to the proposed tour but despite these seemingly daunting hurdles, the PGL sounds upbeat about its chances of getting off the ground.

The statement said the tour would be "an individual and team league" with 12 teams of four players vying for a world championship.

Ten of the 18 events would be in the United States.

Does the golf calendar have room for a league?

The PGA Tour has a policy in which players must seek a "release" from the commissioner each time they want to play an event on anything other than their home tour. This effectively restricts American players to a handful of international appearances a year. Top players already have at least six must-play events each season — the Masters, PGA Championship, U.S. Open, British Open, Players

Championship and either the Ryder or Presidents Cup. It is difficult to see how they could add 18 PGL tournaments and still find time to play even a limited schedule on the PGA Tour or European Tour

What does Woods have to say about the concept?

When asked how such a concept could be a possibility, Woods referenced the high-profile World Golf Championships, which were introduced in 1999 as a way to get the world's best golfers together outside of the four majors and Players Championship. Woods also suggested that even if the PGL does not get off the ground, the concept of getting the best golfers in the world competing against each other on a more regular basis will not go away anytime soon.

What is the PGA Tour's stand on the league?

In late January, PGA Tour commissioner Jay Monahan warned players that aligning with the PGL could lead to disciplinary measures and loss of eligibility with the Tour.

"If the Team Golf Concept or another iteration of this structure becomes a reality in 2022 or at any time before or after," Monahan said in an email, "our members will have to decide whether they want to continue to be a member of the PGA Tour or play on a new series."

F1 hits virus wall in Shanghai

The Chinese Grand Prix, slated for April, has been postponed due to the coronavirus outbreak in the country

REUTERS
BAKU, FEBRUARY 12

FORMULA ONE'S Chinese Grand Prix has been postponed due to the recent outbreak of coronavirus in the country, organisers said on Wednesday. The race, in what is an important market for Formula One, was originally set to be held in Shanghai on April 19, but the governing body FIA and Formula One said in a statement that they had jointly decided to postpone it.

"As a result of continued health concerns and with the World Health Organisation declaring the coronavirus as a global health emergency, the FIA and Formula 1 have taken these measures," the two bodies said.

"The FIA and Formula 1 continue to work closely with the teams, race promoter, CAMF and the local authorities to monitor the situation as it develops.

"All parties will take the appropriate amount of time to study the viability of potential alternative dates for the Grand Prix later in the year should the situation improve."

The flu-like virus has killed more than 1,100 people and infected more than 44,000 in China after it first emerged in the central city of Wuhan late last year.

A host of international sporting events have been cancelled due to coronavirus, including the all-electric Formula E motor racing series that abandoned plans for a race in the Chinese city of Sanya next month.

Speaking to reporters last week, Formula One's motorsport managing director Ross Brawn had said the sport would look to reschedule the Chinese race rather than cancel it altogether. The sport's Chief Executive Chase Carey said fitting the race back into an already packed calendar with few spare weekends would pose a challenge.

"At this point it's tough to make too many specific plans when there are so many unknowns around it," Carey told Reuters in an interview at a conference in the Azeri capital and Formula One host Baku.

Spread outside China

Carey also said the sport was keeping an eye on the spread of the virus outside China to other countries in the region such as Vietnam, which is set to host its first race on April 5. "The reality of today, in most other countries, the number of people affected is a handful," he said. "But we don't know what it will be in a week or two."



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The Chinese Grand Prix, which debuted in 2004, is an important event for Formula One, with the sport keen to tap into the opportunity presented by the country's vast population and growing middle class.

Hosting fees also make up a significant portion of Formula One's revenues, with some races paying as much as \$40 million a year. A cancellation as a result could mean a financial hit for the sport's U.S. owners Liberty Media.

The last race to be cancelled was the 2011 Bahrain Grand Prix, due to social unrest in the island Kingdom. But the country still paid the hosting fee despite the cancellation of the race. If it cannot be rescheduled, the cancellation of the Chinese race will pare the calendar back to 21 races from the record 22 Formula One was set for this year.

It would also leave a four-week gap between new addition Vietnam and the returning Dutch Grand Prix at Zandvoort on May 3. Asked about the possibility of reviving races that have fallen off the calendar as one-off events to take China's place, Carey said Formula One was evaluating all contingencies.

The time available is short, however, and organisers of any such one-off race would also likely expect their hosting costs to be underwritten.

Ferrari's 'narrow' approach

AGENCE FRANCE PRESSE
REGGIO EMILIA, FEBRUARY 12

FERRARI UNVEILED its new SF1000 car for the 2020 Formula One season, which they hope will deliver a first world drivers title since 2007, during a glitzy ceremony.

The single-seater's name acknowledges the fact that the Italian team will start its 1,000th world championship race during the coming campaign, which begins with the Australian Grand Prix in Melbourne on March 15. Narrower than last season's SF90, with a deeper red colouring the body, Ferrari is pinning its hopes on the SF1000 car earning them drivers and constructors titles that have eluded them for 12 and 11 years respectively.

"I like it very much," said German driver Sebastian Vettel on Tuesday. "It's much narrower at the back than last year and it is also redder, it's even better. I'm impatient to drive it, that will be even more fascinating than looking at it."

The Scuderia broke with tradition and presented its new racing car outside of its stronghold of Maranello, unveiling it instead



Ferrari unveils its SF1000 car on Wednesday. The single-seater has been packaged to have a very narrow body shape. Reuters

amid a sea of red on stage at the Teatro Romolo-Valli in the nearby city of Reggio Emilia. "This is a very important place for our country," chairman of the Ferrari group John Elkann explained. "It was in this city that the tricolour flag, which became that of Italy, was created. And Ferrari is proud of Italy and of representing Italy."

"This is a very special year," continued Ferrari Team Manager Mattia Binotto. "It's 70 years of Formula One, we have been there from the start and we are going to reach the figure of 1,000 Grands Prix, which is something incredible."

Barring a forced change in the calendar because of the deadly coronavirus in Asia, the milestone should be reached in

June during the Canadian Grand Prix in Montreal.

"Maybe it looks a lot like the SF90, but I can assure you it is very different," continued Binotto. "We still have to make progress, especially on reliability," he added, recalling that Ferrari, like the other teams, had to face "the double challenge" of preparing the next season in parallel with the following one, when new rules will come into force.

Binotto stressed that this season veteran Vettel and 22-year-old Charles Leclerc, who impressed on his debut last season, would be starting on an equal footing. "We have seen that they can both fight for the best results. They are both on the same level. It is up to them to race," he added.

Euro 2020 sponsors less than green

AGENCE FRANCE PRESSE
MOSCOW, FEBRUARY 12

WITH SPONSORSHIP from carmaker Volkswagen and Azerbaijan's state-run oil company SOCAR, Euro 2020 proves UEFA's willingness to do business with companies whose environmental records are often less than exemplary.

While UEFA claims the tournament will be the greenest ever, Volkswagen has been a sponsor of its international competitions since 2017, despite the scandal that broke in 2015 when it admitted to cheating on emissions tests on its diesel cars.

UEFA has already come under fire for holding the tournament in 12 different countries across Europe, creating a massive carbon footprint from fans' travel.

In addition, Russia's state energy giant Gazprom has been the main sponsor of another major UEFA tournament, the Champions League, since 2012.

Critics say the ex-Soviet oil and gas giants are not only extracting hydrocarbons in an unsustainable way and polluting the environment, but are also funding political regimes with questionable records on democracy and human rights.

Azeri sponsor SOCAR is the state-run oil company of the Caspian country ruled with scant regard for human rights by the Aliyev family since independence from the USSR.

Russian gas monopoly Gazprom is one of Moscow's main foreign-policy tools used by President Vladimir Putin to further the country's political and economic interests, Kremlin critics say.

UEFA said that it is "conscious of the dilemma" presented by its closeness to SOCAR and Gazprom in terms of their environmental impact.

"We believe that it is still worthwhile to try to apply sustainable event management criteria, where possible, when organising a major event," UEFA said in written comments. The logos of Gazprom and SOCAR will be hard to miss at the tournament, especially as they have strong links to two of the stadiums hosting matches.

The stadium in Russia's northwestern city of Saint Petersburg is called the Gazprom Arena, although it will change its name during the tournament.

44-year-old Uzbek gymnast heads for 'last' Olympics

AGENCE FRANCE PRESSE
TASHKENT, FEBRUARY 12

AGED 44 and readying for her eighth Olympics in Tokyo, Uzbek gymnast Oksana Chusovitina makes light of her record-breaking survival in a sport dominated by teen prodigies.

"I love gymnastics. I tell myself: why not train and perform while you still can?" Chusovitina said during a recent interview in Tashkent. "If I'd stopped, I think I would have strongly regretted it."

But while the desire to compete still burns in Chusovitina, she said she has given her word to her family, whom she calls her



For Oksana Chusovitina, it will be her fifth Olympics representing Uzbekistan.

"strongest motivation", that the Tokyo Games this year will be her "last Olympics".

Chusovitina started her career competing for the USSR but after it collapsed she got her first taste of the Olympics at Barcelona in 1992

in a team representing the ex-Soviet states. There, she scooped team gold but she had to wait another 16 years, and four Games — for an individual Olympic medal.

That came when she won silver on the vault in Beijing in 2008. At that point, Chusovitina was representing Germany, after moving there in 2002 to get her son Alisher treatment for leukaemia that proved successful. But Tokyo will be her fifth Olympics representing her Central Asian homeland of Uzbekistan — a nation of 33 million where she is so revered that she has featured on postage stamps. Her appearance at the Rio Games in 2016 made her the only gymnast ever to compete in seven

consecutive Olympics.

Chusovitina told AFP during a break from practising vaults that it was Alisher, now 20, who persuaded her to call time on her career in top-level sport.

"He worries about me a lot, that I might get a bad injury or fall ill." Her own favourite Olympic memory remains returning home from Beijing where her vault performance saw her share the podium with gymnasts from China and North Korea who were both a decade younger than her.

"When I got back the doctor gave me the news that my son was finally healthy," she recalled.

"I think for a mother that is news that you cannot compare

any medal to."

Chusovitina's longevity as a top-level athlete may be no big deal to the star, but it is a continued source of inspiration for the young gymnasts who train with her daily at the Republican Gymnastic Centre in Tashkent.

"She is already an athlete of such a high level," said Lyudmila Li, Chusovitina's trainer.

"She knows her body and what it can do. Our only job is to help her maintain those levels."

Chusovitina's husband Bakhodir Kurbanov is himself a former Olympic competitor, representing Uzbekistan in Greco-Roman wrestling at the 1996 and 2000 Games.