

## Dilip issues warning to seniors

AFP, New Delhi

India's chief selector Dilip Vengsarkar put the senior players on notice Saturday, saying they could not take their places in the team for granted.

India's Twenty20 celebrations have been abruptly cut short by Australia, who have raced to a 2-0 lead in the seven-match series after the first game was abandoned due to rain.

The reversal has put the spotlight on the seniors who were not part of the team that won the recent ICC World Twenty20 Championship in South Africa.

While senior-most member of the squad, Sachin Tendulkar has scores of 0, 16 and 43, former skipper Rahul Dravid has managed 31 and 0. Sourav Ganguly is yet to put on his batting pads as he is recuperating from a hamstring injury.

Vengsarkar hinted that selectors might have to make tough choices if they continued to fail, amid clamour from fans to bring back youngsters from the triumphant Twenty20 squad.

"Definitely, the threshold has reduced, no question about it," he was quoted as saying in the Mid-Day newspaper.

"There are many players like S. Badrinath and Suresh Raina who are performing with the India A side. These guys are waiting for their chance and you cannot ignore them."

"It's a professional set-up and nobody can take their place for granted," said the former Test opener.

India's cricketing great Sunil Gavaskar also took a swipe at the home team's below-par performance in these series so far.

"The heady experience of watching some stunning saves and incredible catches at the ICC World Twenty20 seems like a distant dream," he wrote in his syndicated column for the Times of India.

"The Indians have talked the talk but have not walked the walk as yet and on present evidence they hardly seem like doing so."

The next two matches of the series will be played in Chandigarh on Monday and in Baroda on Thursday.

## Dav could head NCA

AFP, New Delhi

Former Bangladesh coach Dav Whatmore could be hired as the director of India's National Cricket Academy, according to an official statement.

The 53-year-old Australian is holding discussions with NCA chairman Ravi Shastri, cricket board secretary Niranjan Shah said in a press release.

"Ravi Shastri, after taking over as chairman of the National Cricket Academy, is in discussion with Dav Whatmore for appointment as director, operations, at the NCA," Shah said.

Whatmore had earlier been widely tipped to succeed Greg Chappell, who quit as India coach after the World Cup debacle in April.

India are still without a coach and have been managing with stop-gap arrangements since Chappell's exit.

Chappell, however, has returned to India to take over as adviser to a local cricket academy in the western Indian state of Rajasthan.

Whatmore guided Sri Lanka to World Cup triumph in 1996 and helped minnows Bangladesh reach the second round in the Caribbean this year after a shock win over India.

## Brothers, Indira

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the reason for a discussion was unclear.

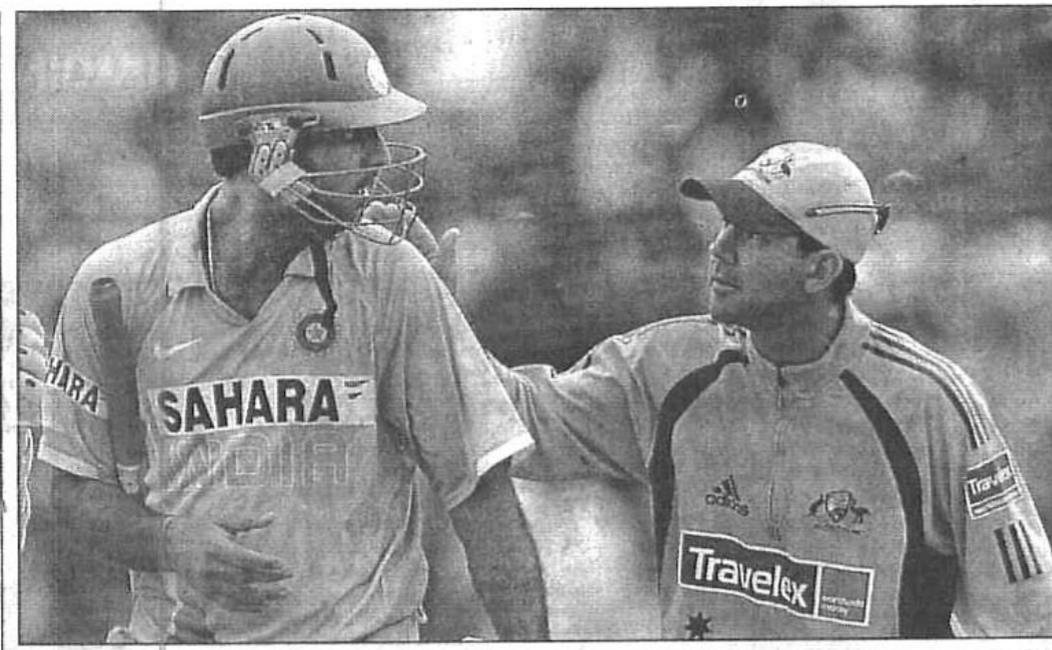
"The clubs also expressed their desire in a letter to meet him but they said it was 'for cricket's greater interest'. To be honest, we don't know what that meant," said the experienced cricket organiser.

BCB took this decision for the greater interest of the game, there is no doubt. It will serve as a lesson for elements that creep up to create trouble.

In order to follow through on this decision, BCB must also recognise the reaction from the two clubs as they have already threatened with legal consequences. If that happens, Premier and First Division competitions would be held up: a thought that was echoed by players and officials alike.

"I don't know what would happen if they want to go for a legal battle. I am also unsure if this decision will have an impact on the upcoming season. But we are hoping for the best," observed Lipu, a former national captain.

Lipu also admitted that City Club, who were with Brothers and Indira all the way through, are fortunate to be saved. If it hadn't been for the fixture, it could have been them who got demoted but now, it will be interesting to see what they do.



Yuvraj Singh (L) is congratulated by Australian captain Ricky Ponting after the Indian batsman scored a century during their third one-day international match at the Rajiv Gandhi International Stadium in Hyderabad on Friday.

## NCL fixtures released

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) released the official fixture of the National Cricket League which starts across the country from October 19.

The matches, to be played on home-and-away basis, comprise a four-day match followed by a limited-overs game and will end by December.

The tournament committee has named seven venues including three in Dhaka -- Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium (SBSN), Fatullah Cricket Stadium (FCS) and the BKSP cricket ground -- for the six-team competition.

Chittagong will play their home matches at the Bishreshtha Shaheed Ruhul Amin Stadium (BSSRAS). Rajshahi play at the Rajshahi Divisional Stadium (RDVS) and Khulna will host the matches at the Bishreshtha Matir Rahman Stadium (BSMRS).

Sylhet and Barisal don't have their own venues. Shaheed Chandu Stadium (SCS) in Bogra and FCS will be used as their home venues respectively.

### FIXTURE

October 19-22, 23

Dhaka v Khulna (SBSN)

Barisal v Chittagong (SCS)

Rajshahi v Sylhet (RDVS)

October 26-29, 30

Sylhet v Dhaka (SCS)

Rajshahi v Barisal (RDVS)

Khulna v Chittagong (BSSRAS)

November 2-5, 6

Dhaka v Barisal (SBSN)

Chittagong v Rajshahi (BSSRAS)

Sylhet v Khulna (FCS)

November 8-12, 13

Dhaka v Chittagong (SBSN)

Khulna v Rajshahi (BSMRS)

Barisal v Sylhet (FCS)

November 16-19, 20

Rajshahi v Dhaka (RDVS)

Chittagong v Sylhet (BSSRAS)

Barisal v Khulna (SCS)

November 23-26, 27

Sylhet v Rajshahi (FCS)

Chittagong v Barisal (BKSP)

Khulna v Dhaka (BSMRS)

November 30-December 3, 4

Dhaka v Sylhet (SBSN)

Barisal v Rajshahi (SCS)

Chittagong v Khulna (BSSRAS)

December 7-10, 11

Barisal v Dhaka (FCS)

Rajshahi v Chittagong (RDVS)

Khulna v Sylhet (BSMRS)

December 14-17, 18

Chittagong v Dhaka (BSSRAS)

Rajshahi v Khulna (RDVS)

Sylhet v Barisal (SCS)

December 27-30, 31

Dhaka v Rajshahi (SBSN)

Sylhet v Chittagong (FCS)

Khulna v Barisal (BSMRS)

Note: The first segment of the dates are four-day matches and the second is the one-day match.

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## Akhtar wants to play IPL

### Cricket

APP, Lahore

Under fire Pakistani paceman Shoaib Akhtar is set to play for a recognised Indian league next year, saying he has sought permission from Pakistan's cricket authorities.

"I have been approached by the Indian Premier League (IPL) and I have applied for permission from the Pakistan Cricket Board to sign the contract," Akhtar told AFP on Saturday.

"I always liked the Indian crowd and have always loved to play in India. Hopefully I will be in the Pakistan team for next month's tour there and will also play in the league," he added.

Akhtar faces disciplinary action for hitting teammate Mohammad Asif with a bat a few days before the Twenty20 world championships in South Africa last month.

The maverick bowler, who was sent home following the incident, has appeared before a three-man committee, which is likely to announce its decision later Saturday.

The IPL -- a Twenty20 competition scheduled to be launched next April -- was set up by Indian authorities to rival the breakaway Indian Cricket League (ICL), which is being bankrolled by India's largest media group.

The IPL -- sanctioned by the International Cricket Council -- will offer three million dollars in prize money and feature eight franchises participating in a 56-game season.

The top four teams will then

face off in the semi-finals, with the winners contesting the champion-ship match.

Akhtar was offered a contract to play for the ICL, which he declined after Pakistan officials, warned that any player signing with the rebel league would be ineligible to represent the national team.

The Pakistan Cricket Board has backed the IPL and announced that star batsmen Mohammad Yousuf and Inzamamul Haq -- who both signed for the ICL last month -- will play for the IPL.

Yousuf last week cancelled his contract with the ICL, making himself available to play for Pakistan. He was included in the team for the first Test against South Africa in Karachi, but had to pull out at the last minute due to lack of match fitness.

The multi-million dollar rebel ICL, which plans to hold Twenty20 tournaments between city teams for the next three years, has been unable to fix a date for the first event, which was originally supposed to take place in October.

PTI adds: PCB would not punish Akhtar again for the offence but question him about subsequently holding a press conference and playing a charity match in England without its permission.

Shoaib would also be interrogated about making serious allegations against teammate Shahid Afridi in a disciplinary committee hearing which is expected to give a decision in the case on Saturday.

A senior PCB official said the fast bowler has already been punished for his row with Asif as the team manager sent him back from South Africa before the Twenty20 World

Cup in South Africa last month.

"The factual situation is that we have not included the primary charge in the fresh show cause notice sent to Shoaib as he has already been penalised for this offence by being sent back from South Africa," said Shafqat Naghmi, the PCB's Chief Executive.

"It is an old charge and during the hearing we have to decide if he deserves more penalty for this particular offence," he added.

Naghmi said the show cause notice sent to Shoaib contained fresh charges of him addressing a press conference and going to play a charity match in England without the Board's permission and making serious allegations against teammate Shahid Afridi.

## DFA okayed

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constitution would be made official.

The BFF however remained silent about further development in its Friday's meeting before Roy served the spanner in the mysterious oastle.

"I'm not sure whether the BFF officials have misinterpreted the FIFA observations on the DFA constitution or it may have not perceived the content. It's certainly a failure on their part and they should immediately quit," said Roy acidly.