

1st ODI: Skipper Steve Smith's 149 overshadows Rohit Sharma's 171* as Australia beat India by 5 wickets

Barinder Sran got India off to a good start as he picked a wicket in his second over dismissing Aaron Finch and followed it with the huge wicket of David Warner.

Australian skipper Steve Smith's 149 overshadowed a brilliant ton by Rohit Sharma, as Australia defeated India by 5 wickets in the first ODI at the WACA ground in Perth.

On a batsman-friendly pitch, India posted a formidable 309-run total on board, courtesy a magnificent 171-run knock by opener Rohit Sharma.

Rohit, along with Virat Kohli (91), stitched a 207-run stand for the second wicket, after Josh Hazlewood dismissed Shikhar Dhawan for 9 in the seventh over of the innings. The partnership was finally broken by James Faulkner, when in the 45th over, Kohli holed one to straight to long-on.

In reply, debutant pacer Barinder Sran got India off to a good start as he picked a wicket in his second over dismissing Aaron Finch and followed it with the huge wicket of David Warner.

But after that, wickets were hard to come by as George Bailey and Smith pummeled the Indian bowlers. The duo added a massive 242-run stand for the third wicket and by the time Bailey was dismissed for 112, Australia were already in the driver's seat.

2002 hit-and-run case: Soul-searching by Mumbai police over 16 lapses in Salman Khan case

Nearly a month after Bollywood megastar [Salman Khan](#) was acquitted in the 2002 accident case, Mumbai police have done some soul-searching on alleged lapses that led to the legal defeat, officials said on Tuesday.

For starters, police top brass issued a circular to all police stations on the procedural lapses and discrepancies in the police case as vividly brought out in the Bombay High Court judgment that quashed the case against the actor.

The circular will serve as a veritable guideline to police personnel on how to probe accidents and accident-related cases in the future, especially those involving high-profile celebrities, actors or businessmen, an official explained while declining to be named.

The Maharashtra government has informed the high court that it would challenge the verdict in the Supreme Court soon and the police are currently preparing a watertight appeal.

The circular issued by Additional Police Commissioner (Crime) K.M.M. Prasanna's office asks all police officers to learn from the alleged mistakes of the investigating team in the Salman Khan case and ensure that these are not repeated.

Salman Khan was found guilty by the sessions court in May 2016 and convicted for, among others charges, culpable homicide not amounting to murder, and sentenced to five years in jail.

On December 10, 2015, in a hard-hitting judgment, the Bombay High Court acquitted him of all charges and quashed the lower court verdict.

The circular lists around 16 lapses in the case investigation that contributed to the adverse

judgment and public reactions.

Prominent among these were collecting bills from Rain Bar, where the actor allegedly consumed liquor, without due certification under the Evidence Act as well as bills from J.W. Marriott Hotel and a parking tag that were not recorded in the 'panchnama' (record/document on identity of accused, articles seized from him/her), raising doubts about the evidence and where Khan went after leaving the Rain Bar.

The actor was present at Bandra police station from the morning of September 28, 2002, but was taken to Sir J.J. Hospital only in the afternoon for collecting blood samples.

Similarly, while the blood samples of the only person who died in the accident were collected at Bhabha Hospital in Bandra, it remained unexplained when Khan was taken to Sir J.J. Hospital in south Mumbai.

Also mentioned was the two-day delay in sending the collected blood samples to the forensic sciences laboratory on September 30. Since these were kept in the police station till then, the court said they may have been tampered with or not stored properly.

Even the chain of custody of the blood samples was not properly established and owing to a missing link, the biological evidence was not credible. The statement of the policeman who carried the blood samples from the hospital to the police station was not recorded nor was he examined.

Another lapse pertained to 6 ml blood drawn from Khan in two containers, though the lab received only 4 ml blood. The receiving clerk at the FSL was not examined while the investigating officer did not verify the medical papers while collecting them; even the blood collection reports showed many discrepancies and defects which were admitted.

The actor was not charged under the Bombay Prohibition Act and in two places the FIR was altered without explanation.

Statements of the witnesses were not recorded under Section 161 of the Code for Criminal Procedure and nobody says Khan was driving the vehicle. While the defence said the vehicle tyre had burst leading to the accident, it (tyre) was not sent for forensic examination.

Lastly, British national and singer-actor Kamaal Khan, who was allegedly Salman's co-passenger when the accident occurred, was not summoned as police witness in the case though his address was available with the police.

Nepal hopes for world support to implement new Constitution

Deputy Prime Minister Kamal Thapa on Tuesday expressed hope that the world community would support Nepal for the smooth implementation of the new Constitution and assured that all "genuine concerns" of the Madhesis would be addressed through dialogue.

Addressing chiefs of diplomatic missions based here and representatives of donor agencies, Thapa, who is also foreign minister, noted that Nepal has become only the second country in South Asia to draft its constitution through a democratically-elected constituent assembly.

Thapa also thanked the international community for its support in concluding the peace process

and promulgation of the new Constitution in September last year.

"I am also confident of receiving your continued support which is crucial for the implementation of this Constitution," he said.

"Nothing is perfect in this world," he said adding "Nepal's new constitution encompasses the main features of a democratic and inclusive polity to judge by any fair standard".

"Commitment has been expressed in the very Preamble to democratic norms and values, civil liberty, fundamental freedoms, human rights, adult franchise, periodic elections, complete press freedom and an independent, impartial and competent judiciary, and the rule of law," he said.

He said that the new constitution has guaranteed the rights of socially backward groups and communities based on principle of inclusion.

Stating that a few political parties, especially Madhes-based parties, have expressed discontent over some of the provisions of the new statute, Thapa stressed that Nepal government has repeatedly made it clear that the Constitution is dynamic in a true sense and genuine concerns can and will be addressed through dialogue.

Nepal has been in political turmoil as the Indian-origin Madhesi people are opposing the seven-province model of federalism which was introduced in the country through the promulgation of the new Constitution.

Madhesis are also protesting against division of their ancestral homeland under the new structure and have led an ongoing blockade of key border trade points with India.

Thapa said as a result of several rounds of dialogue between the government and the agitating leaders an amendment bill has been tabled to address the demands of proportional inclusiveness in state organs and delineation of electoral constituency on the basis of population while maintaining at least one seat in each geographical district.

He noted that a high-level mechanism with representatives of major parties will be formed to settle the dispute over demarcation of provinces.

Lauding the Indian government's statement on the amendment proposal as an encouraging and positive gesture, Thapa hoped that problems would be resolved soon.

He said supply of commodities from the southern border check points that were disrupted following the promulgation of new constitution has been gradually improving in recent days.

"I have been informed that all other check-points, except Raxaul-Birgunj, are now operational," said Thapa.

The continued disruption of supplies, especially medicines and food might lead to a humanitarian crisis, Thapa said adding that the government has conveyed this concern to the Indian authorities.

He hoped the supply situation will return to normal with resumption of all border check-points within a few days.

Highlighting the foreign policy of the new government, Thapa said that the country is fully committed to further strengthening relations with its neighbours and all other friendly

nations.

“We pursue the policy of friendship with all and enmity with none. It was in pursuance with this commitment that I visited India and the People’s Republic of China where I had very fruitful discussions on matters of mutual interest with my counterparts and other high dignitaries,” he said.

“The government is serious about the reconstruction of the infrastructures, both public and private, damaged by the earthquakes,” he said.

“I am pleased to say that with passage of Reconstruction Authority Act by the Legislature-Parliament and the appointment of its CEO, the Authority has started its task,” he said.

Thapa further requested all donor countries to use government channels for their support and firmly recognise the national leadership and ownership in development efforts rather than channelling such precious resources through non-transparent agencies, NGOs and other entities.

Amitabh Bachchan floored by 'Wazir' response!

One of most awaited movies of 2016, ‘Wazir’ hit the theatres on January 7.

Starring the tank of talent Amitabh Bachchan and Farhan Akhtar, the movie is basking in appreciation.

Amitabh took to Twitter to share his joy with fans.

The movie also starred Aditi Rao Hydari in pivotal role.

Pakistan opposes preconditions for Afghan-Taliban peace talks

Pakistan on Monday said that no precondition should be attached for talks between the Afghan government and the Taliban, as a key meeting of a quadrilateral group involving Afghanistan, Pakistan, China and the US began here aimed at reviving the stalled peace process.

“It is important that no preconditions are attached to the reconciliation process, as it will create difficulties in bringing Taliban to the negotiating table,” PM Nawaz Sharif’s Advisor on Foreign Affairs Sartaj Aziz said at the meeting.

The group was set up last year to facilitate the reconciliation process in the war-torn country.

“The primary objective of the reconciliation process is to create conditions to bring Taliban to the negotiating table and offer them incentives that can persuade them to move away from using violence as a tool for pursuing political goals,” Aziz said.

“It is therefore important that no preconditions are attached to the reconciliation process,” Aziz added.

“Proper sequencing is required in the negotiating process,” he said, adding that “threat of use of military action against the group will cause hindrances and cannot proceed the offer of talks to all groups.”

He said that it was important to undertake a realistic assessment of the opportunities as well as anticipated obstacles in the process and then develop clarity on how to proceed further.

“I want to reaffirm that Pakistan values its brotherly and neighbourly relations with Afghanistan, and is firmly committed to continue serious efforts for long term peace and stability in Afghanistan,” he added.

Afghanistan hoped that Pakistan will share a list of insurgents who are ready for peace talks.

The first round of talks was held in July but the process was suspended in the same month after news of Taliban chief Mullah Omar’s death was announced.

Officials from Pakistan, China and US were present when representatives of the Taliban and the Afghan government met in Murree near Islamabad during the first round.

According to officials, the second round may take place towards the end of January if the four nations agreed on the minimum agenda of talks.

It is believed that the process of peace in Afghanistan will be testing for all parties due to strong opposition within Afghanistan towards any peace with the Taliban.

BJP highlights Malda riots' 'truth' with five questions for Mamata

Hours after its three-member delegation was detained and sent back without their planned visit to violence-torn Malda district, Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) on Monday levelled serious allegations against West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee.

Accusing Mamata Banerjee of failing to control violence at Kaliachak despite reports about brewing tension in advance, BJP senior leader Siddharth Nath Singh on Monday indicated that Kaliachak police station was attacked to destroy records about opium farming and fake currency racket in the area.

He also said the three party MPs – SS Ahluwalia, BD Ram and Bhupender Yadav, who were part of the BJP’s delegation to Malda, will meet the President and Union Home Minister Rajnath Singh after returning to Delhi.

Singh said the BJP is posing five questions before Mamata Banerjee:

1. The incident (Malda violence) happened on January 3. Leaflets, pamphlets and other publicity materials were being openly distributed in the area in advance to provoke the communal flare. Then why did state government failed to take precautionary measures and curb the violence on time?
2. Mamata govt is calling Malda violence a reaction to a provocative statement against Prophet Muhammad made one month ago. So why was this reaction after a gap of one month? It was not a reaction but a planned action.

3. Mamata Banerjee is saying the violence was between locals and BSF. If it was so, then why the mob attacked police station? They should have attacked or gathered at BSF posts.

4. NIA has been working on the investigation into Malda fake currency racket. More than 50 persons have been arrested in the past and most of them were from Malda. NIA was in touch with West Bengal govt to burst this racket. There were crucial records at Kaliachak police station which was attacked by the mob.

5. There is widespread opium farming taking place in Malda. Aren't the state government and police aware of it? Why is West Bengal govt sleeping over it?

Opium farming here leads to fake currency rackets and other anti-national activities. This is why the police station which had crucial information regarding these cases was attacked.

Earthquake hits India's Manipur state

An earthquake measuring 6.8 magnitude has hit northeast India, near its border with Myanmar and Bangladesh, the US Geological Survey (USGS) has said.

The quake hit at 04:35 local time (23:05 GMT Sunday) about 29km (18 miles) northwest of Imphal, the capital of Manipur state, according to USGS.

Strong tremors have been felt across the region.



Our reporter in Dhaka says many people were seen fleeing their homes in Bangladesh.

USGS issued a yellow alert for casualties and damage, with a 35% likelihood of between one and 10 deaths from the tremor.

The earthquake was originally reported to have measured 6.8 magnitude.

The region has a history of powerful earthquakes caused by the northward collision of the Indian and Eurasian plates. They are moving towards each other at a rate of 4-5cm per year.

In 2005, a magnitude 7.6 quake in Pakistan-administered Kashmir left more than 75,000 people dead.

In April 2015, Nepal suffered its worst earthquake on record with 9,000 people killed and about 900,000 homes damaged or destroyed.

Saudi Arabia breaks off ties with Iran

Saudi Arabia says it has broken off diplomatic ties with Iran, amid a row over the Saudi execution of a prominent Shia Muslim cleric.

Saudi Foreign Minister Adel al-Jubeir was speaking after demonstrators had stormed the Saudi embassy in Tehran.

Sheikh Nimr al-Nimr and 46 others were executed on Saturday after being convicted of terror-related offences.

Mr Jubeir said that all Iranian diplomats must leave Saudi Arabia within 48 hours.

Saudi Arabia was recalling its diplomats from Tehran, he said.

Mr Jubeir said Saudi Arabia would not let Iran undermine its security, accusing it of having “distributed weapons and planted terrorist cells in the region”.

“Iran’s history is full of negative interference and hostility in Arab issues, and it is always accompanied by destruction,” he told a news conference.

US state department spokesman John Kirby said: “We will continue to urge leaders across the region to take affirmative steps to calm tensions”.

“We believe that diplomatic engagement and direct conversations remain essential,” he said.

Saudi Arabia says it has broken off diplomatic ties with Iran, amid a row over the Saudi execution of a prominent Shia Muslim cleric.

Earlier, Iran’s Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei warned that the Sunni Muslim kingdom would face “divine revenge” for the execution – an act which also angered Shia Muslims elsewhere in the Middle East.

Ayatollah Khamenei called Sheikh Nimr a “martyr” who had acted peacefully.

Protesters stormed the Saudi embassy in Tehran late on Saturday, setting fire to the building before being driven back by police. The Saudi foreign ministry said none of its diplomats had been harmed in the incident.

Iran is Saudi Arabia’s main regional rival – they back opposing sides in the conflicts in Syria and Yemen.

Relations between the countries have been strained over various issues in recent decades, including Iran’s nuclear programme and deaths of Iranians at the Hajj pilgrimage in 1987 and again in 2015.

Who was Sheikh Nimr al-Nimr?



News of Sheikh Nimr's execution prompted an angry response from Shias across the region

- In his 50s when he was executed, he has been a persistent critic of Saudi Arabia's Sunni royal family
- Arrested several times over the past decade, alleging he was beaten by Saudi secret police during one detention
- Met US officials in 2008, [Wikileaks revealed](#), seeking to distance himself from anti-American and pro-Iranian statements
- Said to have a particularly strong following among Saudi Shia youth

Sheikh Nimr al-Nimr: Figurehead Shia cleric

Most of the 47 people executed by Saudi Arabia were Sunnis convicted of involvement in al-Qaeda-linked terror attacks over the last decade.

Sheikh Nimr was involved in anti-government protests that erupted in Saudi Arabia in the wake of the Arab Spring, up to his arrest in 2012.

The execution sparked new demonstrations in Saudi Arabia's Eastern Province, where Shia Muslims complain of marginalisation, as well as in Iraq, Bahrain and several other countries.

The top Shia cleric in Iraq, Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani denounced the execution as an "unjust aggression".

The leader of Lebanon's Shia Hezbollah movement, Hassan Nasrallah, launched his sharpest attack yet on the Saudi ruling family on Sunday, accusing them of seeking to ignite a Shia-Sunni civil

war across the world.

He said the blood of Sheikh Nimr would “plague the Al Saud [family] until the Day of Resurrection”, prompting cries of “Death to the Al Saud!” among an audience watching his address.

[News Source](#)

Battle for Pathankot Indian airbase enters second night

The battle between Indian troops and militants who attacked an air force base at Pathankot near the Pakistani border has entered a second night.

At least four attackers and seven Indian soldiers have died so far.

It is unclear whether all the militants have been killed, with the home secretary saying two gunmen were still at large.

The attack is being seen as a blow to an apparent Indo-Pakistani peace initiative launched just days ago.

Hopes for a thaw in relations were raised after Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi [paid an unexpected visit](#) to his Pakistani counterpart, Nawaz Sharif.

Fresh gunfire and a blast were heard at the base on Sunday, more than a day after the attack started.

Pakistan’s foreign ministry and the US State Department have condemned the attack.



Helicopters have been involved in the operation to secure the base

The attack started before dawn on Saturday, when a group of gunmen – wearing Indian army uniforms – entered the residential quarters on the base.

Hours of heavy gunfire followed, and a helicopter was seen firing at the facility. On Saturday afternoon, police said the base had been secured.

However, fresh gunfire was reported on Sunday morning.

A senior government official, Home Secretary Rajiv Mehrishi, troops were battling at least two gunmen who had been cornered at the site.

At least one explosion – suspected to have been caused by a grenade – was heard on Sunday. Local news reports said a soldier from a commando unit had been killed while defusing explosives.



India's Punjab state is on alert following the attack

The identity of the attackers is not clear. Some Indian security officials suggested the Islamist militant group Jaish-e-Mohammed was to blame.

India says the group is backed by Pakistan, but Islamabad denies this.

In July seven people were killed in a similar attack when gunmen stormed a police station in nearby Gurdaspur district. The three attackers in Gurdaspur were killed after a 12-hour standoff with police.

Pathankot air force base is about 430km (270 miles) north of the Indian capital, Delhi and is on the road linking Indian-administered Kashmir with the rest of the country.

Indian-administered Kashmir has seen a long-running insurgency against rule from Delhi, and Kashmir has been a flashpoint in relations between Pakistan and India for nearly 70 years since independence.
