



Sooryavanshi could be generational talent if managed well: Raza

HARARE, JULY 21: Vaibhav Sooryavanshi's much-hyped India debut may not have gone to script in England, but Zimbabwe skipper Sikandar Raza sees the 15-year-old as a potential "generational talent" if handled well.

The batting prodigy scored 14, 13 and 15 in three T20Is as India suffered a 0-4 series defeat. In two of those innings, he was undone by Jofra Archer's short-ball.

"Vaibhav is a supremely talented cricketer. If a 15-year-old kid is playing international cricket, criticising him after just two or three matches isn't justified," Raza said on JioStar.

"I think Vaibhav has a lot of very good senior cricketers around him. If he is managed and handled well, I think Vaibhav could be a generational talent."

The left-hander will now return to familiar surroundings in Harare, where he had lit up the Under-19 World Cup in January with a match-winning 80-ball 175 against England in the final. With no Sanju Samson in the squad, Sooryavanshi is set to get an extended run at the top of the order in the the series beginning on Thursday.

"To see what he has done over the last year, what he has done for India Under-19, and the fact that he made his international de-



but at the same age, these are no small feats by any means. SouthAsians & Diaspora "You don't get to hear such stories nowadays. Vaibhav is special. It will be important how he is managed and handled," he added.

Raza further dismissed any talk of India being overwhelming favourites, insisting the upcoming series will be a closely-fought contest. SouthAsians & Diaspora

Zimbabwe are sensing an opportunity against an Indian side looking to bounce back from a difficult white-ball tour of Ireland and England.

"Both countries will have an equal chance in this se-

ries. But one thing I am very sure about is that because Zimbabwe has been playing very consistent and very entertaining cricket, I can say this for sure that this series will be very entertaining," Raza told Star Sports.

Zimbabwe's memorable 23-run upset of Australia at the ICC T20 World Cup in Colombo in February sent shockwaves through the tournament, with the defeat ultimately contributing to Australia's stunning group-stage elimination.

They have also secured victories against Sri Lanka and Bangladesh this year.

"As far as winning or losing is concerned, both countries have an equal

chance to win the series," said Raza, the veteran all-rounder who has played 136 T20Is.

He further said India play a very aggressive brand of cricket, and they take the game away from you.

"As far as their batting line-up is concerned, if it clicks on the day, they'll bat you out of the game. But with high-risk cricket, sometimes it doesn't come off, and when that happens and the total isn't as big, the other team does have a chance."

He added that the Indian cricket was going through a transition phase, which will make the series interesting. SouthAsians & Diaspora

"Yes, India is going through a transition and to some extent you'll see Zimbabwe is also going have a little bit of transition happening as well. I don't see it as a one-sided series," he said.

He also spoke on India-Zimbabwe cricketing ties that keep getting stronger.

"India has been a great friend to Zimbabwe cricket. From the players' point of view, it's about the growth of the players and the exposure they get from playing against the world champions, as India are."

The second and third T20I will be played at the same venue on July 25 and 26.

Sharat accompanies Indian Relay team as Manager

**HIMALAYAN MAIL NEWS
JAMMU, JULY 21**

Former top J&K athlete and officer with J&K Police, Sharat Chander Singh accompanied the Indian Relay team as Manager in the 2nd Asian Relay Championship, which held at Shaoxing in China last month.

Presently serving as DySP Police Control Room (PCR) Jammu, Sharat's deputation for the prestigious event was cleared post-facto by the Home Department, J&K.

"The Indian Relay team finished overall third with three medals, including gold and silver. Our women team won gold beating China, which finished second after champion, Vietnam," informed



Sharat Chander and Martin Owens pose with gold winning Indian women Relay team.

Sharat. The Indian team participated in six Relay races

and gold winning 4x100 team beat China bettering the Asian time in the event.

The was accompanied by Martin Owens as team coach.

Did Cristiano Ronaldo 'like' post accusing FIFA of 'favouring' Argentina?

NEW DELHI, JULY 21: Cristiano Ronaldo has sparked fresh online debate after his verified Instagram account appeared to 'like' a post accusing FIFA of corruption and alleging the body of helping Argentina reach the 2026 FIFA World Cup final.

Although the original post is no longer available, fans were quick to notice the apparent like from Ronaldo's verified account. Screenshots of the interaction have since gone viral across social media, reviving long-standing discussions surrounding the football icon's perceived rivalry with Lionel Messi.

Ahead of the FIFA World Cup final between Spain and Argentina, Spanish television programme Espejo Público shared an In-



stagram reel featuring journalist Pilar Rodríguez Losantos, who questioned Argentina's run to the final and alleged that FIFA had shown favouritism towards the team.

"Argentina are a team who should have been eliminated approximately five matches ago, but with the

help of FIFA, which is one of the most corrupt institutions on planet Earth," she said.

"I'm not afraid of Argentina at all; I'm more afraid of Gianni Infantino. I think we're not going to play against Argentina, but against the whole of FIFA, who want to hand the

World Cup to Lionel Messi," she added.

Screenshots purportedly showing Ronaldo's verified account liking the post quickly spread across social media, fuelling speculation among football fans.

Claims that FIFA has favoured Argentina gained traction online after the team's 3-2 victory over Egypt in the round of 16. Egypt alleged bias in favour of Argentina and favouritism towards, Lionel Messi and condemned it. Since then, there have been debates regarding refereeing decisions, Video Assistant Referee (VAR) interventions and tournament bias.

Ronaldo has not publicly commented on the screenshots or explained why he liked it.

Cricket can strengthen people-to-people ties between India and Azerbaijan, says Ambassador Abhay Kumar



BAKU [AZERBAIJAN], JULY 21: The Baku Malayalee Association (BMA) successfully organised the inaugural edition of its cricket tournament, the BMA Champions League, in Baku, witnessing enthusiastic participation from members of the Indian diaspora in Azerbaijan.

Inspired by the world-famous Indian Premier League (IPL) format, the tournament brought together players, organisers, and cricket enthusiasts for a celebration of sport, camaraderie and community spirit.

Preparations for the tournament had been underway for more than a month. As part of the unique IPL-style format, a player auction was organised in June, during which the four franchise teams competed to secure the best talent for their respective squads. The innovative format generated tremendous excitement and anticipation among participants well before the tour-

namment commenced.

The tournament featured intense competition among the four teams, producing several closely contested and thrilling matches that kept spectators engaged throughout the event. Large numbers of supporters turned out to cheer for their respective teams, creating a vibrant and festive atmosphere that reflected the growing popularity of cricket among the Indian community in Azerbaijan. IndiaNews Updates

Ambassador of India to Azerbaijan, Abhay Kumar, attended the tournament as the Chief Guest. He presented trophies and awards to the winning team, runners-up and outstanding players in recognition of their excellent performances and sporting spirit.

In his remarks, Ambassador Abhay Kumar congratulated all the participating teams and players for their enthusiasm, dedication and exemplary sportsmanship. He observed that

participation in sporting events is, in itself, a significant achievement irrespective of the final result, as sports promote discipline, teamwork and mutual respect.

He commended the Baku Malayalee Association for successfully organising the tournament and ensuring wide participation from the Indian community. The Ambassador also encouraged the organisers to work towards greater participation of Azerbaijani youth in future editions, noting that cricket has immense potential to strengthen friendship, cultural exchange and people-to-people ties between India and Azerbaijan. IndiaNews Updates

The India Clinic Lions emerged as champions of the inaugural BMA Champions League, while the Brooks Titans finished as runners-up after a highly competitive tournament.

Although cricket has traditionally been concentrated in a limited number

of countries, particularly in South Asia, the sport has witnessed remarkable global expansion in recent years. Increasing participation from countries across Europe, North America and Africa reflects cricket's growing international appeal. India has played an important role in promoting the game globally, including by providing hosting facilities and support to countries such as Afghanistan for their national cricket teams.

Cricket's inclusion in the Los Angeles 2028 Olympic Games, along with its presence in major multi-sport events such as the Asian Games and the Commonwealth Games, marks an important milestone in the sport's international development and is expected to further accelerate its global popularity. With its vibrant sporting culture and enthusiastic youth population, Azerbaijan possesses significant potential for the growth and development of cricket.

Maharashtra govt signs MoU with KDCA for International Cricket Stadium in Kolhapur

MUMBAI (MAHARASHTRA) [INDIA], JULY 21: The Maharashtra government signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the Kolhapur District Cricket Association (KDCA) to build the KDCA International Cricket Stadium and Sports Complex in Kolhapur.

Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis on Tuesday presided over the signing and exchange of a lease agreement between the state government's Directorate of Sports and Youth Services and the Kolhapur District Cricket Association (KDCA) for the development of an international-standard cricket stadium and sports complex in Kolhapur.

Maharashtra Deputy CM Sunetra Ajit Pawar and Kolhapur District Cricket Association President SambhajiRaje Chhatrapati were also present.

The project aims to create world-class sporting infrastructure and boost the region's sporting ecosystem.

"CM Devendra Fadnavis presided over the signing and exchange of a lease agreement between the Government of Maharashtra (Directorate of Sports and Youth Services) and the Kolhapur District Cricket



Association (KDCA) for the development of an international-standard cricket stadium," CMO Maharashtra wrote in an X post.

?? CM Devendra Fadnavis presided over the signing and exchange of a lease agreement between the Government of Maharashtra (Directorate of Sports and Youth Services) and the Kolhapur District Cricket Association (KDCA) for the development of an international-standard cricket... pic.twitter.com/qSMNiH-HCG5

— CMO Maharashtra (@CMOMaharashtra) July 21, 2026

The project will feature a state-of-the-art residential cricket academy equipped with advanced coaching fa-

cilities, a sports science centre, indoor and outdoor practice areas, physiotherapy and rehabilitation units, fitness centres, and player accommodation.

Envisioned as a multi-sports hub, the integrated campus will also house facilities for wrestling, boxing, judo, fencing, archery, swimming and table tennis, along with a cricket museum and a modern clubhouse. Fadnavis highlighted Kolhapur's emergence as a major sporting hub following the signing of the lease agreement for the proposed KDCA International Cricket Stadium and Sports Complex.

"Kolhapur is set to become a major sporting destination with the signing of

the lease agreement for the proposed KDCA International Cricket Stadium and Sports Complex. This transformative initiative will create world-class infrastructure for training, competition and athlete development, while also promoting multiple sporting disciplines under one integrated campus," Fadnavis wrote in an X post.

A Landmark Step for World-class Sports Infrastructure in Maharashtra! ?????

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