Harmanpreet steps down, Smriti skipper

OUR BUREAU

Smriti Mandhana has been appointed captain of the Indian women's cricket team after Harmanpreet Kaur, who led India to their first ODI World Cup title last year, stepped down from all three international formats.

This follows a review meeting conducted by the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) in Guwahati on Monday, with Harmanpreet, Mandhana and head coach Amol Muzumdar in attendance to discuss the roadmap of the women's team going forward.

The meeting, presided over by BCCI secretary Devajit Saikia, came on the back of calls for the removal of captain Harmanpreet. It is understood that the agenda of the meeting was about Harmanpreet and Muzumdar's future.

Hours later, Harmanpreet announced her resignation as captain from all formats.



Smriti Mandhana

Calls for her removal started after the Women's T20 World Cup earlier this year in England, where India failed to qualify for the knockouts. Even the victories in the Asia Cup and the Asian Games failed to save her.



Harmanpreet Kaur with the 2025 Women's ODI World Cup. (X)

HONOUR ROLL

T20Is (from 2016)
Matches **155**
Won **92** Lost **57** Tied/NR **6**

ODIs (from 2013)
Matches **51**
Won **30** Lost **19** Tied/NR **2**

Tests (from 2023)
Matches **5**
Won **4** Lost **1**

TROPHY HAUL

- T20 Asia Cup **2012** (stand-in captain)
- T20 Asia Cup **2016**
- Women's T20 Asia Cup **2022**
- Asian Games Gold Medal **2023**
- Sri Lanka Women's ODI tri-series **2025**
- ICC Women's ODI World Cup **2025**
- Women's T20 Asia Cup **2026**
- Asian Games Gold Medal **2026**

Harmanpreet, 37, led India in five Tests, 51 ODIs and 155 T20Is. She is learnt to have expressed a desire to lead at the Los Angeles Olympics in 2028, but the selectors, led by Amita Sharma, were not keen.

There is talk that she was given the option of retaining the ODI captaincy but she chose to give up on all the formats.

"This is not an easy decision," Harmanpreet wrote in a social media post. "It carries years of memories, emotions, sacrifices, and moments that will stay with me for the rest of my life.

"I have given everything I had to this team and to Indian women's cricket — my blood, my sweat, my time, and many times, a part of my own game and personal ambitions. There were moments when I had to put my individual performance, my own growth, and what I wanted for myself aside, because I believed the team had to come first.

"As a captain, I have had to make difficult decisions. Decisions that were not always understood, not always easy, and sometimes came at a personal cost. But every decision I made was with one intention — to make this TEAM better and to give other players the opportunity to grow, believe in themselves and become the best versions of themselves.

"I leave the captaincy today with a heart full of emotions, but also with PEACE," Harmanpreet said. "Because I genuinely believe My team is in a good place. A team with talent, character, belief and a future that I am incredibly excited to watch and be a part of.

"I feel I have done my duty. I gave this team everything I had. I carried the responsibility with pride, and I will always be grateful for the privilege of leading Indian women's cricket."

Mandhana has been vocal about her readiness for the top job, and has given evidence of her credentials by leading Royal Challengers Bengaluru to twin WPL titles (in 2024 and 2026).

Shafali's salute to her captain

OUR BUREAU

Shafali Verma wrote a personal note on Instagram to express her gratitude to outgoing captain Harmanpreet Kaur.

"Since the day I made my debut, you've always been there for me, on and off the field. From guiding me through the early days to standing by me through everything, I've always known I could count on you," the India Women opener wrote.

"Harman di, your contribution to Indian women's cricket is something that will always be remembered. You've led us through some incredible moments and helped shape the team we are today. Thank you for everything, captain."

Former India men's all-rounder Yuvraj Singh also showered accolades. "You gave Indian cricket everything as captain, Harman. The responsibility, the pressure, the highs and the lows, you carried it all with pride. Well done for everything you've done for the team and for the nation," Yuvraj wrote on Instagram.

BCCI president Mithun Manhas, in a statement, said: "Harmanpreet Kaur's contribution as captain will always hold a special place in the history of Indian cricket. The World Cup victory in 2025 will undoubtedly be the defining achievement of her captaincy. It was the culmination of years of progress, hard work and belief."

With inputs from PTI