

IOA releases list of 117 athletes, 140 support staff for Olympics; shot-putter Khatua missing

NEW DELHI: India will be represented by 117 athletes at this month's Paris Olympics after the sports ministry cleared the final contingent that also features 140 support staff and officials, of which 72 have been approved at "cost to the government" to meet the "requirements" of the travelling sports persons. The only qualified athlete missing from the list is shot-putter Abha Khatua. The Games will run from July 26 to August 11. Khatua, who made the cut through world rankings quota, has been dropped without any explanation after her name was found missing from the World Athletics' list of Olympic participants a few days ago. There is no word yet on whether her name has been knocked off owing to injury, a doping violation or any other technical issue. The rest of the contingent that has been cleared is on expected lines with London Olym-

pics bronze medal-winning former shooter Gagan Narang as chef-de-mission. Narang is also a vice president in the Indian Olympic Association (IOA). "The permissible limit for stay of support personnel in the Games Village against accreditation as per norms of the Paris Organising Committee for the 2024 Olympic Games is 67 including 11 IOA Contingent Officials, which includes five Medical Team Members," stated a letter from the ministry to IOA President P T Usha, explaining the ratio of support staff allowed as per the size of the contingent. "For catering to the requirements of the athletes, additional coaches and other support staff numbering 72 have been approved at cost to the Government and arrangements for their stay have been made in Hotels/in locations outside the Games Village," it added. Despite Khatua's absence, ath-



letics will make for the biggest group in the contingent with 29 names (11 women and 18 men), followed by shooting (21) and hockey (19). Table tennis will be represented by eight players, while badminton (7) will feature seven competitors, including two-time Olympic medalist P

V Sindhu. Wrestling (6), archery (6), and boxing (6) will have six representatives each, followed by golf (4), tennis (3), swimming (2), sailing (2), and one each for equestrian, judo, rowing and weightlifting. The shooting contingent, which is the second biggest,

consists of 11 women and 10 men, while table tennis will have four players each in both categories. Tokyo Olympic silver medalist Mirabai Chanu is the lone weightlifter in the contingent and will compete in women's 49kg category. In Tokyo Olympics, India were

represented by a 119-member contingent, and the country logged its best-ever performance of seven medals, including the historic javelin throw gold by Neeraj Chopra. Chopra will be there in Paris to defend his medal. Besides, there will be 21 contingent officials of which 11 will be accommodated at the Games Village, including Narang, two Deputy Chief de Mission, Press Attache, two Headquarter Officials and five medical team members. The remaining 10 officials (eight medical team members, social media attache and a team official) will be accommodated in hotels outside the Games Village, the cost of which will be borne by the government. Shooting (18) will have the highest number of support staff, which includes one High Performance Director and six coaches, who will stay at the Games Village while the remaining 11 (four coaches, four

physios, two psychologists, one strength and conditioning expert) will stay in hotels. Athletics will have 17 support staff members, followed by wrestling (12), boxing (11), hockey (10), table tennis (9), badminton (9), golf (7), equestrian (5), archery (4), sailing (4), weightlifting (4) tennis (3), swimming (2) and judo (1). The ministry letter further stated that Air Commodore Prashant Arya, Air Attache in Embassy of India at Paris will be Olympic Attache, who will have accreditation, and will be visiting the Games Village and competition venues to take care of any issues requiring assistance and intervention of the Embassy. The golf competition will be conducted at the Le Golf National in Guyancourt, Saint-Quentin-en-Yvelines, which is around 42km from Paris. To ensure hassle-free travel and practice arrangements, the Indian golf contingent will

stay at a hotel near the venue instead of the Games Village. "...accordingly arrangements for accommodation for members of the Golf Team, including players, coaches, physio and caddy at the request of the Golf players and Indian Golf Union have been made in a Hotel near the competition venue," the ministry said in its letter. In a bid to avoid doping embarrassment in Paris, the government has asked the IOA and concerned federations to take appropriate measures. "The IOA, SAI, National Anti-Doping Agency (NADA) and concerned National Sports Federations may take appropriate measures for conducting the dope tests. IOA may also ensure fitness of the team/individual sportsperson prior to their departure," it said. Besides, the Paris Organising Committee will provide three cars for the Indian contingent without drivers.

J&K Fencing Athletes make India proud at Commonwealth Championship in NZ

EARTH NEWS SERVICE

SRINAGAR: J&K fencers representing India have made the Nation proud by securing 1 silver and 3 bronze medals at the Commonwealth Fencing Championship in New Zealand. Harshit Kohli won a silver medal in the Sabre team event; Shreya Gupta earned a bronze medal in the Sabre individual event; Chhavi Sharma took home a bronze medal in the Sabre team event while Sufyan Waheed Sohil won a bronze medal in the Epee team event. It is noteworthy that Harshit Kohli and Chhavi Sharma are the trainees at the JKSC's Khelo India State Centre of Excellence for Fencing, while Shreya Gupta and Sufyan Waheed are being trained at the National Centre of Excellence in Gujarat and Patiala, respectively. Secretary, Youth Services and Sports, Sarmad Hafeez, congratulated all the medalists and praised their exceptional performance at the prestigious Commonwealth Fencing Championship. "It is heartening



to see our youth competing on international stages and proving to be the best. The diligent efforts of the LG administration are evident as athletes from these centers consistently win medals at both national and international levels," he added. Secretary, J&K Sports Council, Nuzhat Gull, also complemented the athletes, calling it a proud moment for the entire J&K. She emphasized

that the primary aim of these high-performance centers is to train athletes for international competitions, and the Center of Excellence for Fencing is continuously yielding results. "In the last decade, J&K fencing athletes have won a total of 11 medals at international competitions (3 golds, 1 silver, and 7 bronze medals), and I am hopeful this number will continue to grow," she added.

I am going all-out to win gold in Paris: PV Sindhu

NEW DELHI: Badminton ace PV Sindhu says she is "going all-out" in her quest to become the first Indian to win an unprecedented third individual Olympic medal in Paris, drawing on her experience from a successful past. Sindhu stands on the brink of history as she pursues the gold medal in the upcoming Games, having won a silver and bronze in 2016 Rio and 2020 Tokyo edition respectively. In an exclusive conversation on JioCinema's 'The Dreamers,' Sindhu spoke about her unwavering focus on making history at Paris, though it is going to be an extremely difficult task for the Indian star. "That third medal at Paris definitely motivates me, and I am going all-out to get that gold medal. For me, the Olympics is where I give my 200%," Sindhu said. "The journeys in 2016 and 2020 were wonderful, filled with immense effort and unforgettable moments. "As I prepare for Paris 2024, it's a fresh start, and I have to give my 100% no matter what." Ranked among the world's top players, Sindhu draws from her past experiences to fuel her quest for gold. "There are a lot of experienc-



es from my previous outings at the Olympics that I will take into Paris 2024, but I don't want to get overconfident thinking about the medals. "I hope I can fulfil the hope of the nation and get the third medal because getting three consecutive medals is not a joke. My mindset is focused on winning the gold and this gives me a lot of motivation and confidence." She spoke at length about her preparation for the mega event, which will run from July 26 to August 11. "My preparations are focused on putting in the hard work while being smart and focused on that particular day."

The former world champion understands the fierce competition that awaits and respects the calibre of her opponents. "The Olympics is extremely competitive, and all the athletes are at their peak. The top 10-15 players in the world are of the same standard, be it the likes of AN Se Young, Akane Yamaguchi, Carolina Marin, or TAI Tzu Ying. "There are no easy points at the Olympics, and we need to play hard for every point we score against an opponent. Anything can happen at the Olympics; one small mistake can change everything." Sindhu also shared her per-

spective on working with Indian badminton legend Prakash Padukone, terming it her good fortune to be associated with the 1980 All England champion. "This time, we have a whole new team with Prakash (Padukone) sir as my mentor and Agus (Dwi Santoso) as the new coach. Our practice is focused on getting everything perfect and to the point. "It is my fortune that Prakash sir is my mentor and a part of my journey, and I hope his support can help me win that medal." Currently ranked 13th in the world, Sindhu's illustrious career boasts of numerous accolades. She has won five BWF World Championship medals, including a gold, and an Olympic silver and bronze, making her the only Indian to achieve this feat. Her Commonwealth Games achievements include gold in 2022, silver in 2018, and bronze in 2014 in the women's singles event, along with gold in 2018 and silver in 2022 in mixed teams. Additionally, she claimed silver in women's singles at the 2018 Asian Games and bronze in women's teams at the 2014 Asian Games.

Bazball Returns: England score fastest team fifty in just 4.2 overs

NOTTINGHAM: England continued with its aggressive approach to record the fastest-ever fifty in just 4.2 overs against the West Indies on the first day of the second Test here on Thursday. Opener Ben Duckett (33 off 14 balls) and Ollie Pope (16 not out off 9 balls) hit 10 boundaries between them as England eclipsed their own record of reaching the team total of 50 in 4.3 overs against South Africa at The Oval, way back in 1994. In the list of fastest team fifties, England hold the first three positions with their third fastest coming against Sri Lanka in 5 overs during a Test match at the Old Trafford in Manchester back in 2002. Sri Lanka is fourth in the list, having accomplished the feat in 5.2 overs against Pakistan in Karachi in 2004. India stands fifth in this list with two opening stands of 50 in just 5.3 overs — first against England in Chennai in 2008 and other against the West Indies in Port of Spain in 2023.

Quintal becomes 1st Indian rider to compete at World Superbike C'ship

CHENNAI: Rider Kavin Quintal is all set to make a historic debut at the WorldSBK SSP300 competitions and become the first Indian rider to participate in a World Superbike Championship. Thanks to the opportunity provided by the Irish team, Team#109 Retro Traffic Kawasaki and its management company Gaman Racing Global Service, Quintal's entry was accepted for the SSP event in the fourth round which begins at Most, Czech

Republic on Friday. SBK, founded in 1988, is an event for heavily modified production sports motorcycles and consists of a series of rounds held on permanent racing facilities. The 19-year Chennai star, Quintal, will be filling in for the Irish team's main rider, Spaniard Daniel Mokeda, who suffered an injury after leading the Supersport 300 class, in an unfortunate crash that paved the way for the Irish team to rope in the Indian.

Quintal, a world-class rider, is currently competing in the European Stock Championship within the FIM JuniorGP and in the Asia Road Racing Championship. In the three rounds of JuniorGP, Quintal had a top-10 finish. As a rider, who took his baby steps at 13, he was the youngest to earn points in the Indian National events. He went on to win the Talent Cup twice, in 2021 and 2023, in India. Later, after the Asia Talent

Cup events, he soon blossomed into a mature rider, moving to Europe. "It is a great opportunity that I will try to learn and enjoy at the same time. I will be able to show my maximum level together with a great team that surrounds this structure. I would like to thank the team for this opportunity," Quintal said. The practice sessions will be on Friday followed by a race each on Saturday and Sunday at Most, Czech Republic.

Geoffrey undergoes successful surgery to remove throat tumour

LONDON: England cricketing great Sir Geoffrey Boycott has undergone a successful surgery to remove a tumour from his throat, his daughter Emma said. The former England batter had undergone extensive chemotherapy for the same in 2002. But in May, the 83-year-old learnt his cancer had returned. "Just to let everyone know my Father, Geoffrey, has successfully come out of surgery this evening after a 3 hour operation to remove his throat cancer. "Yet to see him but surgeon says it went well. He asked that I post an update," Boycott's daughter Emma tweeted from the cricketer's account on Wednesday. In his illustrious career spanning 1964 to 1982, Boycott scored 100 first-class hundreds while amassing over 8,000



runs in 108 Tests at an average of nearly 48. Former Australia player and head coach Darren Lehmann reacted to the news along with ex-England players Alan Butcher and Michael Vaughan,

who posted a red heart on X. "Thanks for the update, please pass on our thoughts to the whole family and glad the surgery went well," Lehmann wrote, while Butcher wrote, 'Great news'. While announcing his diagnosis last month Boycott had said, "In the last few weeks, I have had an MRI Scan, CT Scan, a PET Scan, and two biopsies, and it has now been confirmed I have throat cancer and will require an operation." "From past experience, I realize that to overcome cancer a second time I will need excellent medical treatment and quite a bit of luck, and even if the operation is successful, every cancer patient knows they have to live with the possibility of it returning. So I will just get on with it and hope for the best," he added.

Ravaged but resolute HS Prannoy focussed on increasing speed ahead of Paris Olympics

NEW DELHI: His body has been ravaged by a spate of illnesses, the most recent being a bout of chikungunya, but seasoned Indian badminton player H S Prannoy is unwilling to let it come in the way of a dream Olympic debut that is happening a tad late in his career. He is focussed on building his stamina for the grind that awaits him in Paris later this month and helping him is his coach and former player RMV Gurusaidutt. The 32-year-old Kerala shuttler, a 2022 Thomas Cup title winner and a world and Asian Games bronze-medallist, has battled past a chronic stomach disorder, a nagging back injury, and more recently a week-long bout of the mos-



quito-borne viral disease. "The preparations that we started after the Australia Open, those are on point, we

are on the right track," Gurusaidutt told PTI. "The best thing about Prannoy in this entire journey is

that though he was struggling, he was showing up for training and giving his best. Of course now, since he had another rough patch, it is not easy to get into the winning momentum," he explained. But Gurusaidutt is confident nonetheless and does not feel that the latest illness will trigger "too many changes" in Prannoy's training routine. "He has been that kind of a player who steps up on big occasions. He's done that multiple times over the last three or four years. So, as a coach, me and Gopi sir (national coach Pullela Gopichand) have that confidence in him." Following the high of his world championship bronze

in 2023, Prannoy was laid low by another stomach disorder, a condition which was similar to the chronic acid reflux problem that he had suffered in the past. Such was complexity of his illness that it was difficult for him to have a meal without wanting to throw up later. The result was six first-round exits and a semifinal and a quarterfinal appearance this year. But he has persevered. Gurusaidutt said the coaching team has introduced some specific drills to address the minor issues, mainly related to speed and enduring long rallies. "We wanted to introduce a few programs. Gopi sir thought he needed to play

longer matches...Based on the last 3-4 tournaments, I particularly felt people were trying to push him at the pace in terms of making him move quickly "...there is not too much time for him to get space between the shots. So that was something that we thought we could make it easier for him in training. Otherwise, it was about getting him confidence, and getting his fitness levels up. Those were the major aspects," he said. Elaborating on the need to step up his pace, Gurusaidutt said, "...we wanted work on it to prepare him for somebody playing some sharp shots, and cross-courts. So, it was meant to make him feel comfortable for those things.

Bawa, Anahat to spearhead India's challenge in World Junior squash team events

NEW DELHI: Shaurya Bawa and Anahat Singh will spearhead India's challenge in the boys' and girls' team events respectively at the World Junior Squash Championships in Houston. Bawa, who won a bronze medal in singles, will be teaming up with Yuvraj Wadhvani, Ayaan Vaziralli and Arihant KS in the boys' event starting on Thursday. National champion Anahat, quarter-finalist in singles, will combine with Unnati Tripathi, Nirupama Dubey and Shameena Riaz in the women's team event. The boys will meet Kuwait and the girls will take on Chinese Taipei in the opening rounds.

