

# Ganga lauds Kick-Boxing champions of J&K



Former Minister Chander Parkash Ganga posing with players and officials during felicitation programme.

## ■ STATE TIMES NEWS

SAMBA: Former Minister Chander Parkash Ganga on Sunday congratulated and appreciated the J&K UT team for bringing laurels to the J&K by winning medals in Sub-Junior and Junior National

Kick Boxing Championship held at Pune.

Players namely Rahul Bogal, Rajvir Singh, Mehak Janwal, Nitesh Singh, Danish Sharma, Janvi Jamwal, Satyajit Singh, Arun Mehra, Rhythm and Manish Jamwal

participated the championship. Former Minister presented gifts as a token of appreciation among all the players.

On the occasion Ganga appreciated the active participation of the youth in sports

and termed it as pivotal in ending the drug menace spreading ghastly in the society.

BJP District Vice-president Pawan Bakshi, Mandal President Atresh Dutta and Dheeraj Singh Jamwal were also present.

# Pushp Vatika celebrates Guru Gobind Singh Jayanti



Students and teachers reciting Shabad Kirtan.

## ■ STATE TIMES NEWS

JAMMU: Pushp Vatika, Jeevan Nagar celebrated Guru Gobind Singh Jayanti on Sunday in the school premises. Teachers of Pushp Vatika recited the path of Japuji Sahib, Choupai Sahib and

Anand Sahib.

Little toddlers of Pushp Vatika also recited the Holy hymns.

Principal, Rameshwar Mengi and Director, Rishiek Mengi extended greetings to society by saying "May this fes-

tival bring peace, health and prosperity in the Nation".

Ardaas was done for the peace and prosperity of whole nation and Prashad and Langer was served to all by Rameshwar Mengi and Rishiek.

# Kohli hits nets, could return for decisive third Test against SA

## ■ AGENCY

CAPE TOWN: India Test captain Virat Kohli hit the nets on Sunday and if his cover drives and off drives were any indication, he could return for the decisive third match against South Africa after missing the second game due to a back spasm.

The Indian team began training for the third and final Test hoping to recover from the defeat in Johannesburg and claim its maiden series win in the Rainbow Nation.

"We are here at the picturesque Cape Town. #TeamIndia begin preparations for the 3rd Test," the BCCI tweeted along with a picture of the Indian camp after the visiting players hit the

ground running at the magnificent Newlands Stadium.

The third Test is scheduled to be played here from January 11-15.

If Kohli is declared match fit, Hanuma Vihari will make way for the Indian talisman.

"It's GO time here in Cape Town. #TeamIndia all set and prepping for the series decider," the BCCI wrote in another tweet alongside a host of pictures including Kohli batting at the nets.

Seeking to win their first-ever series on South African soil, India began the rubber on a rousing note, winning the opener at Centurion by 113 runs before succumbing to a seven-wicket defeat in the second Test at Johannesburg.

# All eyes on Yuki, Ramkumar at Australian Open qualifiers

## ■ AGENCY

MELBOURNE: India will keenly watch Yuki Bhambri's progress after his return to competitive tennis at the Australian Open Qualifiers while compatriot Ramkumar Ramanathan will enter the competition after a confidence-boosting maiden title triumph on the ATP Tour.

Bhambri, 29, lost invaluable three years due to a troubling knee but in a few tournaments that he has played going into the fresh season, the talented Delhi player seems ready for the grind yet again.

The close fight he had had against Aljaz Bedene in

March was a testimony that he is ready for top flight tennis but his return came to halt again due to the same knee issue.

He began again in November, competing on the Challenger and ITF circuit and won a doubles titles with Saketh Myneni in Gurugram.

In the tune-up event for the first Grand Slam, Yuki tied up with old partner Michael Venus but lost first round in Melbourne at the ATP event.

He has got a decent draw as he has been pitted against Portugal's Joao Domingues, ranked 248 and clearing first round should not be an issue

for Yuki. A good show at Melbourne Park will set the tone for him in the 2022 season.

In 22 attempts so far, Ramkumar has not yet succeeded in cracking the singles main draw of a Grand Slam and it's time that he breaks the losing trend. He will be up against Italian Gian Moroni, ranked 197.

Ramkumar has enjoyed fantastic results going into Australian Open. He has just won his maiden ATP doubles title in Adelaide with compatriot Rohan Bopanna and also won his maiden singles Challenger title in Manama, Bahrain in November.

# England shuttlers pull out of India Open badminton after 2 positive cases in contingent

## ■ AGENCY

NEW DELHI: The entire England badminton contingent has withdrawn from the upcoming India Open after the country's doubles specialist Sean Vandy and coach Nathan Robertson tested positive for the COVID-19.

England's decision to pull out was made public by the Badminton Association of India (BAI) on Sunday.

The organisers, however, said that COVID tests of all players conducted this morning at the team hotel came out negative.

"Entire @ Badminton Engld team had withdrawn two days back and they are not here in India. #YonexSunriseIndiaOpen2022 is on track and all players who were tested at the hotel this morning as per protocol have come negative," the BAI tweeted.

Vandy's men's doubles partner, Ben Lane, too confirmed the development with a Twitter post.

"No India Open this year for myself and @SeanVandy after he returned a positive covid test along with our coach @Nath\_Robertson," Lane tweeted.

## ■ AGENCY

ADELAIDE: Teaming up for the first-time on the ATP Tour, India's Rohan Bopanna and Ramkumar Ramanathan won the Adelaide International doubles trophy with a hard-fought 7-6 (6) 6-1 win over top seeds Ivan Dodig and Marcelo Melo here on Sunday.

Bopanna's excellent service returns at crucial times and Ramkumar's all-round game tilted the match in their favour.

In the one hour and 21 minutes contest, the Indians saved all the four break points they faced and broke their rivals twice.

It was Bopanna's 20th ATP doubles title and first for Ramkumar, who was playing only in his second summit clash at this level, having ended a runner-up at the Hall of Fame Tennis Championships in 2018.

"When Ramkumar is serving by your side, you can finish the point early, so that was an advantage," said Bopanna.

Asked how different it was playing with Ramkumar than another compatriot and left-handed Divij Sharan, Bopanna said, "With Divij, we had to create a point, ensure that first volley opportunity is taken while with Ram, the point can be finished early.

"I am surprised not many Indians entered this event. If anyone had landed here, would have entered the field since not many players were there."

Bopanna and Ramkumar will split USD 18700 as prize money and earned 250 ranking points each.



The win would be a huge confidence booster for Ramkumar ahead of the Australian Open Qualifiers, where he will aim to make the singles main draw of a Grand Slam once again.

After saving an early breakpoint, Bopanna and Ramkumar upped their game. In the seventh game, when Melo served at 30-0, Bopanna's unreturnable service on the right of the Dodig and later a crushing forehand winner made it 30-all but the Brazilian eventually held.

Bopanna then saved another breakpoint and converted the deciding deuce point to make it 4-4. Serving to stay afloat in the set at 5-6, the Indian pair was up 40-30 when Dodig created a winner on Bopanna's serve that whizzed past Ramkumar on his right but the big-serving Coorgi hit an ace to drag it to a tie-breaker.

At 6-6, Bopanna found a service return winner on Melo's serve to earn their second set point and converted with his booming serve. It was one-way traffic in the second set with the Indians dominating all through.

# JU Fencing team qualifies for Khelo-India University Games

## ■ STATE TIMES NEWS

JAMMU: University of Jammu won three bronze medals in team event in the recently concluded All India Inter-University Fencing Championship 2021-22 which was held at Guru Nanak Dev University Amritsar from January 7 to 10, 2022.

JU Girls team comprising Jaspreet Kour, Riya Manhas, Mokshika Rana and Simran Rajput won bronze medal in Sabre Team event while boys team comprising Parvinder Sharma, Sawan Mangotra, Gourav Thakur and Harsh Singh also won bronze medal in Epee Team event.

JU boys team comprising Udhayveer Singh Chandel, Lakshay Sharma, Suryansh Sharma and Siddhant Raina also won bronze medal in Sabre Team event.



JU Fencing team posing for a photograph with Director Sport JU, Dr Daud Iqbal Baba and other officials.

While Foil boys team comprising Parshant Chib, Gourav Thakur, Parvinder Sharma and Sawan Mangotra qualified for Khelo

India University Games, Udhayveer Singh Chandel also qualified for Khelo India University Games in Sabre Individual Boys category.

Director Physical Education and Sports, JU, Dr. Daud Iqbal Baba was present as observer from

AIU for the Championship. He was accompanied by Padam Dev Singh, In-charge Fencing event of Jammu University. JU Fencing team was accompanied by Ajay Kumar and Mokshi Sharma as Coach while Anthony Mattoo as Team Manager.

# Jammu Karate-Do Championship held



Medal winners posing with dignitaries.

## ■ STATE TIMES NEWS

JAMMU: Jammu Division Karate-Do Championship held under the banner of Jammu Division Karate-do Association at Trikuta Yatri Niwas complex, here on Sunday involving 130 young participants from different clubs and academies.

Naresh Chander, president of Traditional Karate-Do Association of J&K was the chief guest, who distributed medals among the winners and appreciated other participants

# Thalaivas face Steelers, Dabang Delhi K.C. hope to maintain unbeaten run

## ■ AGENCY

BENGALURU: Tamil Thalaivas will take on in-form Haryana Steelers in the Pro Kabaddi League here on Monday. The team from Tamil Nadu have had an impressive start to the season with captain Surjeet Singh and Sagar marshalling the defence. They will however be facing a Haryana squad who are on a three-match unbeaten run.

The second match of the day will feature Jaipur Pink Panthers and Dabang Delhi K.C.

Young all-rounder Meetu has been impressive for Haryana Steelers in the last few matches. Everyone expected Vikash Kandola to be their main raider for the season but Meetu's emergence as a reliable alternative has made coach Rakesh Kumar's team top contenders. Haryana's raiding unit has been ably backed by the defensive duo of Surrender Nada and Jaideep. The former's experience in the left corner has often made the raiders venture deep for points, allowing others to pounce. Tamil Thalaivas' defence has not fared badly either. Surjeet Singh and Sagar gave even the likes of Delhi's Naveen Kumar a scare with their combination moves. Only two raiders have managed to score Super 10s in all their matches of Season 8 -- Naveen Kumar of Delhi and Arjun Deshwal of Jaipur Pink Panthers. The two young stars of Kabaddi will be on the mat when the teams lock horns on Monday.

# Lakshya Sen eyeing maiden title in Indian Open debut

## ■ AGENCY

NEW DELHI: World Championships bronze medalist Lakshya Sen says he will look to build on his rich vein of form and return with a maiden title when he begins the new season with a debut appearance at the India Open Super 500 here on Tuesday.

The 20-year-old from Almora had a good outing in the last season as he reached the final of Dutch Open, made it to the semifinals at Hylo, and then entered the knockout stage of the World Tour Finals on debut.

However, the icing on the cake was his bronze at the World Championships, which helped him to emulate his

mentor Prakash Padukone and compatriot B Sai Praneeth.

"This is the first time I will be playing the India Open as the last two editions were cancelled due to the pandemic. So I am looking forward to making the most of this opportunity and win the title," Sen told PTI after arriving in the national capital.

"I had a 10-day break after the world championships and started training from January 1st. I had some niggles but now I am back to full fitness."

Walking down memory lane, Sen talking about the time when he would come as a fan to watch greats such as Lin

Dan and Taufik Hidayat compete in the tournament.

"I remember coming to India Open as a 10-year-old in 2011-12. I was inspired a lot by Lin Dan and Taufik Hidayat. I have always loved Taufik's game, it influence me a lot."

Sen will open his campaign against Egypt's Adham Hatem Elgamal and a win will pit him against Sweden's Felix Burestedt in the next round.

"I have a good draw. In the first round, I am playing a player from Egypt and in next round, it will be Felix. I had trained with him in Dubai."

"I will take one match at a time and the way I am play-

ing, I am confident of winning the tournament."

The year will be a hectic one with big-ticket events such as the Commonwealth Games and Asian Games lined up, apart from the regular BWF World Tour events.

Sen said his entire focus will be to stay injury free and peak at the right time.

"It is an important year as there are lots of important tournaments lined up. I have to come up with a proper training plan ahead of these important events, also pick and choose events," the world number 17 said.

"I have to perform well so that I can qualify for important events. So the focus will be on staying injury free and

peaking at the right moment."

Organised by the Badminton Association of India (BAI), the India Open is all set to kick off on Tuesday at the Indira Gandhi Stadium's KD Jadhav Indoor Hall. Most players have started arriving in the capital for the tournament.

"All the participating players will be taking the necessary safety precautions right from their arrival in New Delhi as per protocol, and will be tested everyday at the hotel and from there they will be having shuttle buses to come to the stadium, play matches and go back to the hotel again," the BAI said in a release.

# England clings on for a draw in dramatic 4th Ashes Test

## ■ AGENCY

SYDNEY: England's tailenders resisted Australia's bowlers in fading light Sunday to clinch a draw on a dramatic final day of the fourth Test in fading light at the Sydney Cricket Ground.

Jack Leach, Stuart Broad and then Jimmy Anderson battled out the final 10 overs under immense pressure, after Pat Cummins and Scott Boland took three quick wickets in the final session before Steve Smith removed Leach with two overs remaining to set up a nervous finale to a gripping test match.

At stumps, England finished 270-9 with Broad unbeaten on eight and Anderson not out on zero to give England its best result of the five-match series which Australia leads 3-0.

With the final hour approaching, Cummins removed Jos Buttler and Mark Wood in the space of three balls to turn the test on its head after it was looking increasingly likely that England would earn a draw after its most determined batting effort of the

series. Scott Boland then continued his incredible start to test cricket by having first-innings centurion Jonny Bairstow caught at bat pad by Marnus Labuschagne for 41. It was Boland's 14th wicket in just his second test after making his test debut at Melbourne's 3rd test where he was named man of the match.

But Broad and Leach saw out the remaining 10 overs despite Australia have all its fielders around the bat in catching positions as the fading light meant Australia had to bowl spinners Nathan Lyon and Steve Smith in the final three overs.

Earlier in the session, Stokes, no stranger in proving to be an immovable object for Australia after his heroics in the 2019 Ashes series in England, did not appear to let the pain of his left side injury curtail his attacking shots as he crushed ten boundaries and a six as part of his 60 runs, to go with his 66 in the first innings.

But Lyon eventually made the vital breakthrough as

he caught Stokes in two minds as to whether play at the ball or leave it. In the end he did neither and guided a simple chance to Steve Smith at slip. It was the ninth time that Lyon has taken Stokes' wicket, including twice in this match.

As the final hour loomed, Cummins (2-80) made a big breakthrough trapping Jos Buttler lbw for 11. On-field umpire Paul Reiffel initially rejected the appeal before Cummins referred to the TV umpire, who reversed the decision.

Two balls later Cummins dismissed Wood with a vicious in-swinging delivery that hit the tail-ender on the foot for a much easier lbw decision for Reiffel to confirm.

Boland then had Bairstow caught at bat pad to expose England's tail, but Leach and Broad and then Anderson found a way to survive despite up to nine fielders in close catching positions.

Before tea, Joe Root and Stokes combined for a 60-run partnership from 26 overs before Scott Boland

had the English skipper edging through to wicket-keeper Alex Carey for 24 to give Australia renewed optimism it may be able to bowl England out.

Needing to bat out the day to draw the Test after being set an improbable 388 to win, the tourists lost a very defensive-minded Hameed (9) and Malan (4) in the morning session, but Zak Crawley decided that attack was the best form of defense as he unleashed eight boundaries on his way to a 69-ball half-century.

Hameed was dropped by Carey off Pat Cummins, but only survived a few overs more as he again edged through to Carey, who made the catch, to give Scott Boland yet another wicket in his bright start in test cricket.

Lyon (2-28) was introduced into the attack and in his third over found a way through Malan's defenses to have England at 74-2 after the first hour of play.

Crawley's enterprising innings was halted at 77 after 13 boundaries when Cameron Green (1-38) captured the 23-year-old opener leg before wicket.