

If given an opportunity, it will be an honour to captain India: Jasprit Bumrah

■ AGENCY

PAARL: India pace spearhead Jasprit Bumrah on Monday said he is not averse to leading the national team if an opportunity comes knocking at his door in the near future.

With Virat Kohli's captaincy tenure in all formats coming to an end following his resignation from Test leadership, there are questions about who could be his long-term successor considering that Rohit Sharma will be 35 next year.

"If given an opportunity, it will be an honour and I don't see any player (who) would say no and I am no different," Bumrah, who is KL Rahul's deputy for the ODI series against South Africa, replied to a query from PTI in a press conference ahead of the three-match rubber starting Wednesday.

"Be it any leadership group, I always look to contribute however I can, to the best of my abilities," he added.



Bumrah said taking responsibility and helping teammates comes naturally to him. "I look at this situation in the same manner...taking responsibility and talking to players and helping them out has always been my approach and it will always be my approach going further keeping any situation in mind."

The India pace spearhead believes that there would be no tangible change in his role although he is the vice-captain now.

"Having post or not doesn't matter. I always focus on how

I can contribute," he said. "For me, the role doesn't change at all. I have to do my job first, isn't it? Trying to contribute as much as I can and then helping KL if he needs any assistance on the field and sharing a bowler's mindset on what kind of fields you can keep that I always look to do," Bumrah said.

In fact, he has done all this and more even when he wasn't appointed the vice-captain.

"Even when I am not vice-captain, I try to talk to some of the younger guys, have a lot of discussions on what kind of

fields that need to be set and the same role I will try to do that again as well.

"No specific role or added pressure I am going to take. Yes, helping KL in any way possible and trying to keep a calm head."

The Indian team management, following Virat Kohli's complete exit from captaincy roles across formats, bears a new look but Bumrah doesn't see "anything weird" and believes that one needs to respect the new set-up that's in place and start moving ahead.

"I can't speak for everyone but I can say that for me, it doesn't really make much of a difference. I am here to help all in whatever way I can. All the players are responding to the changes that have happened and everybody is respectful and understand how the processes are going." "Change is the only constant and we are happy everybody is contributing and we are get-

ting (acquiring) a lot of knowledge and trying to contribute to that. I don't think anybody is facing a problem or is in a weird space with the change that is happening," Bumrah spoke for himself.

Acceptance is key and that's what Bumrah expects from everyone.

"Everybody understands change and have played enough cricket to understand that this is the way the game goes and this is how you move forward. So everyone in the team is quite positive and eager to contribute."

I always love asking questions and welcome new perspective

There is no fun if there is no responsibility, said Bumrah.

"If there is no responsibility or pressure, where is the fun? I look forward to fulfilling my responsibilities," he said when asked how much he will have to mould himself for the new role.

Saidgarh XI defeats Rehal XI in cricket



Participating teams posing for a photograph with dignitaries.

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

JAMMU: Saidgarh XI defeated Rehal XI and win the cricket match played under the Late Pandit Premnath Dogra Sports Competition organized by Bharatiya Janata Party in Panchayat Saidgarh, here on Monday.

Batting first, Saidgarh XI scored 119 runs and in reply Rehal XI failed to chased the target and lost the match. Sadhu Choudhary of Saidgarh XI was declared as Man of the Match.

Earlier the match was

declared open by the Chief Guest, Rajni Sethi, Spokesperson of BJP Jammu and Kashmir in the presence of Sham Lal Gupta, Co-Convener of Jammu Kashmir Co-operative Society, S.I Harish Chandra (Police Station Bishnah), Sunil Sharma- Convener Sports Cell, Jammu Kashmir and Councillor Sahil Gupta from Municipal Committee Bishnah.

Rajni said that from October 24, under Late Pandit Shri Premnath Dogra Sports Competition, different

sports games are being organized in every region and the message is being given that youth should stay away from drugs and bad society.

Those present were Retd. BDO Chaman Lal, Peer Baba Sewa Samiti Head Mohan Lal, BJP Members Purshotam Sharma, Subedar Gurcharan Singh and NGO Members Ravi Kumar, Rakesh Kumar, Ratan Lal, Tushar Digra, Rohit Kumar, Abhay Sharma, Robin Sharma, Ajay Bhagat, Seema Devi, Manmohan Singh and Sunny Kumar.

Freedom Society conducts belt grading test

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

JAMMU: Freedom Society, an association of Sports and martial Arts J&K, under the Patron of Karun Khajuria, 3rd DAN Black Belt, International Gold Medalist National Instructor on Monday conducted test of sportspersons in martial Arts on for upgradation of Belt colour.

The test was taken by Pratham Chibber, 1st DAN black belt under the guidance of Karun Khajuria.

Advay Singh won yellow belt while Hardik Jain got green belt and Akshu Sharma received Blue Strip. Surinder Rajput, Savya Sharma and Sandeep Kumar got Black Strips.



Belt grading test winners posing with coach.

Rohit close to getting match-ready, likely to be available against West Indies

■ AGENCY

NEW DELHI: India's white ball captain Rohit Sharma is recovering well from his left hamstringing injury and has a bright chance of making a comeback for the six-match home white-ball series against the West Indies next month.

Rohit, who was also the designated Test vice-captain for the tour of South Africa, sustained a left-hamstring strain during a net session just prior to the team's departure for the tour and had to pull out.

He was subsequently also forced to skip the ODIs in

South Africa, starting this Wednesday, as he couldn't attain full fitness before the selection committee announced the team.

"Rohit's rehabilitation at the National Cricket Academy is going pretty well. He is expected to be okay for the West Indies series. It's still close to three weeks from now before the first ODI is played in Ahmedabad from February 6," a BCCI source privy to developments told PTI on conditions of anonymity.

The series against the West Indies comprises three ODIs and as many T20

Internationals. The one-dayers will be played February 6 to 12, followed by T20Is from February 15 to 20.

For Rohit, the hamstring has been a recurrent problem which also forced him to miss the first two Test matches as well as the white-ball leg of the tour of Australia in 2020-21.

He did make a comeback for the final two Tests after serving a two-week hard quarantine in Sydney for the last two Test matches.

Currently, as per BCCI's policy, each and every player has to mandatorily appear

for fitness tests at the NCA before being awarded 'fit to play' certificates. The selection committee is informed about their availability only after this exercise.

With Virat Kohli now having relinquished captaincy even from the Test format, there is greater need for Rohit to remain injury-free in the current set-up.

It has been an open secret in recent years that apart from being one of the best performers across formats, Rohit has been a few notches above his peers in terms of acceptance of one and all in this team.

Govt invites applications from 'Outstanding Sportspersons'

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

JAMMU: Youth Services and Sports Department, Government of J&K today issued notification inviting applications from the 'outstanding sportspersons' for appointment to the government service thus clearing the backlog of seven years.

Applications have been invited from each individuals, as per 2022 rules, for the quota of calendar years 2014 to 2021.

The applications endorsing herewith the required documents should reach office of the Secretary J&K Sports Council (JKSC) on or before February seven.

The five-page notification included a two-page application form.

Osaka, Nadal advance in Australia after Djokovic flies home

■ AGENCY

MELBOURNE: The first test of Naomi Osaka's new approach to tennis might have been when she completely whiffed an overhead to give her opponent a break point on Day 1 of the no-Novak Djokovic Australian Open.

Osaka didn't throw her racket. She didn't roll her eyes. She smiled.

"There are situations where I previously would get upset. But at this point in my life, like, I'm here because I want to be here and because I find that it's fun for me," Osaka said. "Might as well enjoy it while I still can."

In Osaka's mind, the drama involving nine-time champion Djokovic's deportation on the eve of the Australian Open was something for the players in the men's draw to worry about. Her title defence began smoothly enough: She won the first five games on the way to a 6-3, 6-3 victory over Camila Osorio.

With so much attention on the 11-day saga of Djokovic's attempt to participate in the year's first Grand Slam tournament, the returns of Osaka and Rafael Nadal have been overshadowed.

Osaka wasn't bothered by that. Nadal didn't seem to be put off by it, either, renewing his bid for a record 21st Grand Slam singles title with a 6-1 6-4 6-2 win over Marcos Giron.

Sindhu looks to end title drought at Syed Modi International

■ AGENCY

LUCKNOW: Two-time Olympic medalist P V Sindhu will look to recover from her unexpected semifinal loss at the India Open and end her title drought at the Syed Modi International, which begins here on Tuesday.

The 26-year-old from Hyderabad was well on course to win her first title since the 2019 World Championship triumph last week before left-hander Supanida Katethong of Thailand shattered her hopes with a three-game win at the India Open.

Sindhu, who had finished runner-up at Swiss Open and World Tour Finals last year, will hope to turn things around this week when she begins her campaign against compatriot Tanya Hemant.

The Indian will be itching to settle scores against Supanida, whom she is likely to face again at the semifinals at the Babu Banarasi Das Indoor Stadium here.

Second seeded Canadian Michelle Li, a Commonwealth Games silver medalist, will be one of the strong contenders for the title in women's singles, which also has Polish eighth seed Jordan Hart, second seed Iris Wang of USA and Russia's fifth seed Evgeniya Kosetskaya.

Men's doubles pair of Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty has decided to give the Super 300 tournament a miss after claiming their maiden India Open Super 500 crown.

Lakshya Sen, who secured his maiden Super 500 title at New

Delhi on Sunday, also is likely to follow suit after playing continuously since October last year.

Among others, World Championships silver medalist and top seed Kidambi Srikanth also is unlikely to compete this week as he is undergoing seven-day mandatory quarantine after withdrawing from the main draw last week following a positive COVID-19 result.

Third seed B Sai Praneeth, who had pulled out of India Open after testing positive, is also awaiting a RT-PCR test result, while Ashwini Ponnappa and Manu Attri are yet to recover from the virus and will miss the tournament.

Ashwini is part of the top seeded women's doubles pairing, while Manu and B Suneeth Reddy are seeded

third in the men's doubles event.

On a comeback trail, former top-10 player H S Prannoy gave a good account of himself before being stopped by 20-year-old Sen in the quarterfinals last week.

Fifth seed Prannoy will hope to go deep in the draw this week when he opens his campaign against Ukraine's Danylo Bosniuk.

London Olympics bronze medalist Saina Nehwal, seeded fourth, too will test her fitness when she takes on Czech Republic's Tereza v b kov in the opening round. She had lost in the second round last week.

There are a host of other Indians in men's singles, such as seventh seed Sourabh Verma, fourth seed Sameer Verma -- who he is still recover-

ing from a calf muscle injury -- Subhankar Dey and youngsters like Kiran George, Mithun Manjunath and Priyanshu Rajawat.

In women's singles too, Akarshi Kashyap, who had reached the quarterfinals last week, will look to continue her good run when she faces fellow Indian Mugdha Agreya in opening round.

Malvika Bansod and Ashmita Chaliha will be tied in a battle of supremacy in the opening round, while Saniya Imad Farooqui, Ira Sharma and Sri Krishna Priya Kudaravalli will be the other prominent Indians in action. Fourth seeded Ashwini Bhat K and Shikha Gautam will look to put up a good show in women's doubles.

There are likely to be more withdrawals and a clearer picture will emerge only after the manager's meeting later in the day.

No hard feelings, we're good friends: Jansen on heated moments with Bumrah

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

PAARL: South Africa pacer Marco Jansen on Monday said he has no "hard feelings" with his IPL side Mumbai Indians team-mate Jasprit Bumrah even though the duo engaged in some heated exchanges during the Proteas' 2-1 Test series triumph.

Jansen and Bumrah shared some heated exchanges during the second Test at Wanderers which South Africa won by seven wickets and again during the third match at Newlands where the hosts sealed a remarkable Test series win.

"I've played with Bumrah in the IPL and we're good friends. You're not going to back down when you're playing for your country and sometimes on-the-field things get heated," the 21-year-old said in a media interaction on Cricket South Africa Twitter handle.

"He obviously did the same and there are no hard feelings because it was in the heat of the moment, because it was two players giving their all for their countries."

New PC rule by FIH: Defenders can keep wearing protective face gear within 23 metre area

■ AGENCY

LAUSANNE: In its bid to make the sport more safer for its athletes, the International Hockey Federation (FIH) has allowed players defending penalty corners to keep their protective equipment on even after the ball goes outside the striking circle, but must remove them at the first opportunity inside the 23m area.

Earlier, the players defending penalty corners were bound to remove their protective equipment immediately inside the circle once the flick is executed.

But the FIH has tweaked its Rule 4.2, which relates to removal of penalty corner protective equipment.

"Rule 4.2 has been changed to allow for defending players using Penalty Corner protective equipment to continue to play the ball outside the circle after an interception during the taking of a penalty corner. Players can now continue to run with the ball while keeping their protective equipment on but they must remove that same equipment immediately after, at the first opportunity to do so and always inside the 23m area," FIH Sport Director and double-Olympian Jon Wyatt said in a statement.

Elaborating further on the subject, Wyatt said: "No player using PC protective equipment

can play the ball outside the 23m area at any time. This has been introduced to protect athlete safety so that the focus can be on the ball and the play, and not on removing protective equipment during a pressurised defensive situation.

"It was trialled in the FIH Odisha Hockey Men's Junior World Cup in Bhubaneswar in December 2021, and received unanimous support from coaches, athletes and officials."

Keeping in mind the players safety, the FIH has also made another significant rule change, which relates to aerial balls.

Previously, intercepting a falling aerial ball was considered to be illegitimate but now the FIH has granted relaxation to players in this regard.

"Rule 9.10 was changed to allow for the playing of what is commonly referred to as Aerial Balls. The previous text did not cover for the possibility for players to safely intercept a falling ball, which is now seen as both legitimate and positive to the development of the game."

"This followed extensive discussions before, during and after the Tokyo Olympic Games, during which a more consistent interpretation and understanding of this element of our game was agreed. Aerial Balls will continue to be closely monitored by all stakehold-

■ AGENCY

MUMBAI: All India Football Federation President Praful Patel on Monday said that matches of the women's AFC Asian Cup, beginning here on Thursday, will not be cancelled due to positive COVID-19 cases if 13 players are available in each of the two competing teams.

Patel, also the chairman of the Local Organising Committee, said in a virtual press conference that contingency plans have been put in place to deal with any situation in case participating team members are infected by the virus.

"I hope not (of players testing positive of COVID-19), but in case such a situation arises, we have contingency plans, AFC has contingency plans," he said.

"The affected player or players will be isolated but the teams will be fielded as long as 13 players (in each team) are available," said Patel in the presence of Maharashtra Cabinet Minister Aaditya Thackeray.

All the 12 participating teams have named 23-member squads for the tournament.



Due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, strict health and safety protocols have been put in place for the women's continental showpiece.

All the 12 participating teams will be staying inside a strict bio-bubble and everyone involved in the tournament, including all players and officials will undergo regular COVID-19 tests.

All the staff working in the team hotels will also be in the bio-bubble and will not physically interact with anyone outside the bubble. Same goes for the bus drivers who will ferry the teams for training and matches. They have also been provided accommodation inside the bubble.

"AFC and FIFA want strict implementation of COVID-19 protocols and FIFA officials are also visiting here," Patel, also a

member of the FIFA Council, said.

"We want a smooth, safe and successful tournament. Anything negative in this tournament should not have any impact in the FIFA Women's Under-17 World Cup we are hosting in October this year. We don't want any postponement of that tournament."

He also ruled out any possibility of allowing spectators in the three venues in Mumbai, Navi Mumbai and Pune even if the COVID-19 situation in Maharashtra improves in the coming days.

"AFC has made it clear that the tournament will be held in the bio-bubble and the stadiums will not be opened for spectators irrespective of whether the COVID-19 situation gets better or not."

As per the current protocol, upon landing in India all the teams will immediately proceed to their respective hotels which is a bio-secure bubble. All the members of the squads will be confined to their rooms till their test result on arrival comes.

The tournament kicks off with a Group A match between China and Chinese Taipei at Mumbai Football Arena on Thursday. Hosts

India take on Iran later on the same day at DY Patil Stadium in Navi Mumbai.

Five teams from the tournament will directly qualify for the 2023 women's FIFA World Cup in Australia and New Zealand while another two will make it to the Intercontinental Play-offs. Australia, which finished runners-up in the last edition of the AFC Asian Cup, have already qualified for the 2023 FIFA World Cup as co-hosts.

Patel also said that India is a strong contender to host the 2027 Men's AFC Asian Cup. The country has already bid for the tournament.

"We're a serious contender for 2027 AFC Asian Cup, no question of not trying our best. It is tough competition with the likes of Qatar and Saudi Arabia but we are hopeful."

"Hosting these major tournaments changed the landscape of Indian football and prestige in the world. These things were not there in the past 10 years, that is the difference," he said.

"We will bid for major tournaments of AFC and FIFA in future also. All these will nurture a footballing culture."