

India Open: Spotlight on Satwik-Chirag as jumbo Indian contingent aims to end two-year title drought

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

NEW DELHI: The contingent is the biggest ever but focus would be on a handful of tried-and-tested names, especially the men's doubles team of Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty, when Indian shuttlers go up against a world-class field in the India Open Super 750 tournament beginning here Tuesday.

Despite the name, Indian success at the tournament hasn't been particularly regular with none from the host nation winning any title in the past two editions.

The 46-strong group that will take the court this week would be desperate to make some amends after an ordinary Olympic campaign six months ago.

The expectations would be especially high from Satwik and Chirag, who claimed the doubles title in 2022, the same year in which the currently erratic Lakshya Sen notched the men's singles top honour.

More than 200 players from powerhouse badminton nations such as India, China, Japan, Denmark, South Korea and Indonesia will be in action this week.

Chirag and Satwik, who are former world number ones, have made a good start to the season by reaching the semi-finals of the Malaysia Super 1000 last week.

Despite the Paris Games

disappointment, they have emerged as India's most reliable performers over the last two years by regularly making the deep end of the draws.

They would be expected to do the same in the USD 950,000 event to be held at the KD Jadhav Indoor Stadium here.

Satwik and Chirag, semifinalists at the 2024 China Masters, will face Malaysia's Wei Chong Man and Kai Wun Tee in their opening round.

"The last time we came here was after playing the final of the Malaysia Open and reached the final here also. This time also we have started (the year) with a semi-final in Malaysia and want to improve on last year's results," Chirag said.

"It is our home tournament and we really want to go one better than last year. Playing in different conditions, the first few rounds are tricky to get used to. Some stadium are fast and some slow but we have been in circuit for 7-8 years, so we are accustomed."

While the Indians have shown impressive form, they will be seeking improvement in quick rallies and service variations in a bid to better their runners-up position in the tournament last year.

However, the Indian pair will face stiff competition from top names such as

China's Olympic silver-medallists Liang Weikeng and Wang Chang.

Also there in the field are Paris bronze-medallists Aaron Chia and Soh Wooi Yik of Malaysia, Denmark's Kim Astrup and Anders Rasmussen, and the Indonesian combination of Fajar Alfian and Muhammad Rian Ardianto.

Sindhu back in action

Despite an underwhelming 2024, one can never discount PV Sindhu, who would be back in action after missing the season-opener in Kuala Lumpur due to her wedding.

The 29-year-old Hyderabad returned to winning ways, lifting the Syed Modi International title, although it was against a predominantly Indian field.

Sindhu will begin her campaign against Chinese Taipei's Shuo Yun Sung and is drawn to face Japan's rising star Tomoka Miyazaki in a potentially tough second round.

Miyazaki is a 2022 world junior champion and Sindhu's conqueror at last year's Swiss Open. Sindhu last won this event in 2017.

The very exciting but equally inconsistent Lakshya Sen would be aiming to replicate his 2022 success at the event.

He can draw confidence from his Syed Modi title win and a third-place finish at the Kings Cup a few days

ago. He opens against Chun Yi Lin of Chinese Taipei.

HS Prannoy, returning after a five-month break following a pre-quarterfinal exit at the Paris Olympics, stumbled in the second round in Malaysia last week.

However, the 32-year-old veteran showed signs of his vintage form during the short campaign. He will look to build on that when he faces Chinese Taipei's Li Yang Su in the first round.

A victory could set up a showdown with second seed Jonatan Christie of Indonesia.

Kidambi Srikanth and Kiran George earned last-minute entry following the withdrawal of top seed Shi Yuqi of China and eighth seed Antony Ginting of Indonesia.

Srikanth will face a tough opening test against Chinese left-hander Hong Yang Weng, while Kiran George will open his campaign against Yushi Tanaka of Japan.

With marquee players like Olympic champions Viktor Axelsen (men) and An Se Young (women) leading the competition, it would be no stroll in the park for the Indians in fray.

But being on home turf could prove to be the morale-booster that helps them go over the line in difficult situations.

Young names eye glory

Some promising youngsters will also be eager to make a mark.

Among them is Priyanshu Rajawat, who faces a tough challenge in his opening round against sixth-seeded Japanese Kodai Naraoka.

Malvika Bansod will take on third seed Chinese Yue Han, Aakarshi Kashyap will face eighth-seeded Thai Pornpawee Chochuwong and there will be an all-Indian battle between Anupama Upadhyaya and Rakshithee Sree in another opening round.

In women's doubles, India's hopes will rest on fifth-seeded team of Treasa Jolly and Gayatri Gopichand, who will face Japan's Arisa Igarashi and Ayako Sakuramoto in the first round. Meanwhile, Guwahati Masters-winning pair of Tanisha Crasto and Ashwini Ponnappa, will take on compatriots Kavya Gupta and Radhika Sharma. The Indians are seeded seventh here.

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

NEW DELHI: Union minister Hardeep Singh Puri played the AAP on Monday over the Delhi High Court's observations on its government's failure to place certain CAG reports before the Assembly and asserted that the party will get a blow from the voters in the upcoming polls in the capital for "suppressing" the national auditor's findings.

Hearing a petition filed by some Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) MLAs, the high court said on Monday that the reports of the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) of India on the city administration should have promptly been placed before the Assembly for discussions, but the government of the National Capital Territory "dragged its feet", raising "doubts on its bonafides".

"It is crystal clear. You (the AAP government) have delayed (placing the

reports before the Assembly)," Puri told PTI when asked for his comments on the court's observations in the matter.

He said the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) government should have sent the reports to the Assembly speaker and lieutenant governor as soon as it received those, and initiated discussions in the House on the CAG's findings.

The BJP leader said when the CAG takes up "any issue" for auditing, it provides an opportunity to every stakeholder to submit their comments.

"You (the AAP government) comment (on the CAG's observations) and say that it is not right. But they put the report(s) under the carpet," he said.

There was no immediate reaction from the AAP on the BJP leader's charge.

Puri also slammed Arvind Kejriwal over the issue and said the AAP

supremo, who had praised the national auditor in 2017 saying the Congress would have sold the country had there not been the CAG, is now "suppressing" its reports.

The Union minister pointed out that the high court has fixed January 16 as the next date of hearing in the matter.

"First, a slap will come from the court. The second slap will come from the poll results," he said, suggesting that the AAP will suffer a setback in the upcoming Delhi Assembly election for allegedly keeping the CAG reports under the carpet so far. The 70-member Delhi Assembly will go to polls on February 5 and the votes will be counted on February 8.

In the 2015 and 2020 Delhi Assembly polls, the AAP won 67 and 62 seats respectively. The BJP won three seats in 2015 and eight in 2020, while the Congress drew a blank.

PGTI adds four new events to its calendar; combined prize purse for 11 events goes up to Rs 15 crore

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

NEW DELHI: The Professional Golf Tour of India on Monday added four new events to its calendar, taking the total number of tournaments it will host in the first half of the year to 11 with a combined prize purse of Rs 15.66 crore.

The season will tee off on February 11 with the Tata Steel PGTI Players Championship in Kolkata and will be followed by non-stop golfing action across as many venues. The season will end in April with the Kapil Dev-Grant Thornton Invitational.

The four new events unveiled by PGTI are Chattisgarh Open Golf Championship (Rs 1 crore, Raipur), PGTI Invitational

(Rs 1.5 crore, Greater Noida), Indorama Open Golf Championship (Rs 2 crore, Ahmedabad) and Calance Open (Rs 1 crore, Delhi-NCR).

The PGTI has so far staged events in 16 states, two UTs and the National Capital Territory of Delhi. With the golfing body making its foray in Chhattisgarh, it has now expanded its geographical footprint in the country to 17 states.

The Kapil Dev-Grant Thornton Invitational, with a prize money of Rs 2 crore, will return for its third edition with the event scheduled in Bengaluru from April 22.

Besides, the three international events scheduled to last staged are the DP World Tour co-sanctioned Hero

India Open (USD 2.25m) and the Challenge Tour co-sanctioned Kolkata Challenge and Delhi Challenge (both offering USD300,000 each).

PGTI also announced the resumption of its second-tier tour after a five-year gap. Three NexGen events, with a prize purse of Rs 20 lakh each, are scheduled in the first half of the year at Phillaur, Kapurthala and Gurugram.

The total prize purse on offer in the first half of the 2025 season has seen an increase of Rs 4.5 crore as compared to the first half of 2024 with the number of events increasing from nine to 11 in comparison to last season.

"We at the PGTI are

extremely excited to announce a busy first half of the season with more events and a higher prize purse on offer for the professionals as compared to previous years," said legendary cricketer and PGTI president Kapil Dev.

"This is in line with PGTI's core objective of creating maximum playing opportunities for our Indian professionals.

"We are also looking forward to exploring new territory by taking the tour to Chhattisgarh for the first time thus expanding PGTI's base across the country. The other key development is the launch of the PGTI NexGen events which will help us create an efficient supply line of talent for the future."

Govt unveils CSR policy to foster partnerships with organisations

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

NEW DELHI: The Ministry of Women and Child Development (WCD) has unveiled a new CSR policy to promote partnerships with organisations, individuals, and corporates, a senior official said.

The policy named Pankhudi is designed to support activities under three flagship missions: Mission Saksham Anganwadi and Poshan 2.0, Mission Shakti, and Mission Vatsalya.

The ministry plans to launch a dedicated portal for Pankhudi modelled after the

Education Ministry's Vidyanjali portal.

This portal will facilitate the registration of potential contributors and streamline the identification and approval process for Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) projects. It aims to ensure transparency and efficiency in fostering collaborations, the official said.

Under the Pankhudi initiative, CSR contributions can be utilised for specific activities detailed on the ministry's website.

Approval for projects will depend on

their scope, with district magistrates overseeing district-level projects, state-level projects being approved by principal secretaries or secretaries of the state in WCD departments.

Multi-state projects will be handled by WCD or national organisations such as Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce & Industry (FICCI), Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) and Associated Chambers of Commerce & Industry of India (ASSOCHAM), officials said.

Shimla receives traces of snow, wet spell predicted in Himachal from Thursday

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

SHIMLA: The local meteorological office on Monday predicted rain and snow in the middle and high hills of Himachal Pradesh from January 16-19, as a fresh western disturbance is likely to affect northwest India from January 14 night.

Snow and rain were seen at isolated places since Sunday evening, with Gondla in Lahaul-Spiti district receiving 1 cm of snow, Kalpa 0.4 cm, while state capital Shimla witnessed traces of snow.

Bharmaur received 5 mm of rain followed by Nahan at 4.1 mm, Poanta Sahib 3.2 mm, Rajgarh and Banjar 3 mm each, and Dhaulakuan and Dalhousie 2 mm each.

The tribal areas and higher reaches shivered under piercing cold wave conditions with Kukumseri recording a night temperature of minus 12.3 degree Celsius, the lowest in the state, followed by Tabo at minus 10.9 degree, Keylong minus 8.7 degree, Samdho minus 7 degree, and Kalpa

minus 3.6 degree Celsius.

The minimum temperature hovered around the freezing point at most of the tourist destinations. Narkanda recorded a night temperature of minus 2.5 degree Celsius, Manali minus 1.1 degree, Kufri minus 0.8 degree, Dalhousie 0.6 degree, and Shimla 2.4 degrees Celsius.

Cold wave continued unabated in parts of Una, Hamirpur and Kangra districts on Monday.

Ground frost was observed in Shimla,

Jubbarhatti and Bilaspur while dense fog engulfed Sundernagar, and Mandi saw moderate fog, the Met office said.

However, the maximum temperatures rose to above normal at some places with Dhaulakuan in Sirmaur district reporting a high of 22.4 degrees Celsius.

The winter season rain deficit from January 1 to 13 stood at 81 per cent as the state received 4.8 mm of rain against 25.5 mm normal rainfall seen during this period of the year.

Armed Forces Veterans Day celebrated at Shimla's Army Training Command

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

SHIMLA: The ninth Armed Forces Veterans Day was celebrated at Army Training Command (ARTRAC) in Shimla on Monday. According to an official statement, the day is dedicated to the esteemed veterans of the country and re-affirms the camaraderie between retired and serving soldiers. Lt Gen Devendra Sharma, GOC-in-C ARTRAC, felicitated several veterans of the state for their immense contribution towards the upliftment of society. The event was a poignant reminder of the sacrifices made by brave soldiers and the importance of honouring their service and legacy, it said. The Armed Forces Veterans Day celebrations at Shimla served to strengthen the bond between serving personnel and veterans, while reinforcing the Indian Army's commitment to the welfare and well-being of its veter-

ans. The ARTRAC will organise a "Know Your Army" event on January 15 at The Ridge, Shimla, to mark the 77th Army Day, the statement said.

The event will feature a range of activities, including display of weapons and equipment, medical camp, selfie point and a performance by the Military Band.

In addition, various stalls will be set up to provide information on the Indian Army's role, responsibilities and army's contributions to national security and development.

January 15 is observed as Army Day to commemorate the occasion of General (Later Field Marshal) KM Cariappa taking over command of the Indian Army from General Francis Roy Bucher, the last British Commander-in-Chief, in 1949.

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MLA Shopian expresses solidarity with fire victims of Saidpora Payen, assures support

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

SHOPIAN: In a heartfelt gesture of solidarity, the Member of Legislative Assembly (MLA) Shopian, Advocate Shabir Ahmad Kullay on Friday visited the fire-affected families in Saidpora Payen, Shopian.

The tragic incident caused severe damage to the house of Bashir Ahmad Lone and the cow sheds belonging to Bashir Ahmad Lone and Mohammad Yousuf Mir, leaving the families in distress.

During his visit, the



MLA assured the affected families of full support and assured of necessary assistance to be provided to help them recover from

this unfortunate event. The visit underscores his commitment to standing by the people of Shopian in their times of need.

Custom Hiring Centre established at Imam Sahib Shopian: DC inaugurates Unit Says, initiative aimed at enhancing farm & cooperative efficiency

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

SHOPIAN: In a first of its kind initiative by the Cooperative Department, a Custom Hiring Centre (CHC) was on Monday established at Imam Sahib tehsil of Shopian district.

Deputy Commissioner (DC) Shopian, Mohammad Shahid Saleem Dar inaugurated the Custom Hiring Centre under Cooperative Sector, established by the Primary Agriculture Cooperative Society

(PACS).

While praising the initiative and the efforts of the Department, the DC highlighted the need for such initiatives where modern farm machinery shall be made available to farmers on rental basis at nominal rates.

This initiative is a significant step towards promoting agriculture and horticulture development and empowering farmers in the region, Shahid Saleem

said. This initiative, he said, will make farm machinery accessible to locals, enabling them towards efforts in enhancing their productivity and efficiency.

Deputy Registrar Cooperative Societies, Shopian explained that Custom Hiring Centre (CHC) shall address the challenges faced by small and marginal farmers of the area who may not have the resources to purchase

expensive farm machinery. Today's initiative is in line with the cooperative spirit of achieving sustainable and equitable development.

The event was also attended by ADDC, Dr.Nasir Ahmad Lone; ADC, Dr.Zakir Hussain Faaz; Deputy Registrar Cooperative Societies, Muzaffar Ahmad, Assistant Registrar and other officials of the department.

ADDC Bandipora chairs SOP committee meeting for verification of structural damages

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

BANDIPORA: Additional District Development Commissioner (ADDC) Bandipora, Mohammad Ashraf Bhatt on Monday chaired a meeting of the Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) Committee to discuss the verification process for structural damage cases in the district.

During the meeting, out of 09 cases, 06 relief cases from various areas of Bandipora were evaluated and forwarded to the Relief Section for payment disbursement according to government guidelines,



whereas 02 cases were rejected and one case was forward-

ed for reverification. During the meeting, the

ADDC proposed conducting a joint inspection to ensure a comprehensive evaluation of the matters at hand. Additionally, all cases were thoroughly reviewed and presented before the committee for informed discussion and decision-making.

Speaking on the occasion, the ADDC urged the tehsildars of Sub-Division Gurez to submit their jurisdictional damage case files through the Sub-Divisional Magistrate (SDM) Gurez, promoting more efficient and coordinated processing of cases.

On the occasion, Additional Deputy Commissioner

Bandipora, Zaffar Husson Shawl stressed the need to streamline and accelerate the process of addressing damage cases, ensuring that relief is promptly delivered to affected individuals. He urged the committee to adopt simplified procedures for file submissions to avoid unnecessary delays and alleviate hardships for the public.

The meeting was attended by District Treasury Officer Bandipora, District Sheep Husbandry Officer Bandipora, Tehsildar Bandipora, and representatives from other concerned departments.

MOTOR ACCIDENTS CLAIMS TRIBUNAL: JAMMU	
Present: Chain Lal Bavoria Date of Instt: 02-12-2019	
File No.542/Claim	Suram Singh Versus Rajesh Sharma and anr (Claim Petition u/s 166 Motor Vehicle Act)
Notice To: Rohit Choudhary @Makhan S/o Sh.Subash Chander Coudhary R/o Abdullian Suchetgarh Tehsil R.S.Pura District Jammu. (Driver)	
Whereas, the above titled Claim petition, under Section 166 Motor vehicle Act, is sub- judice before this Tribunal, Wherein the next date of hearing is fixed on 31-01-2025.	
Whereas, this Tribunal is satisfied that service of respondent named above, is not possible by ordinary mode. Therefore, the above named respondent are hereby informed and called upon to appear before this Tribunal, in person or through duty authorized counsel to answer all material questions pertaining to the claim petition, on the next date of hearing. If the date is fixed for hearing is declared as public holiday, the matter shall be takenup on the following day.	
Take note that in case the above named respondent fail to appear before this Tribunal on the next date of hearing, the matter will be heard and determined in their absence.	
Give under my hand and seal of this Tribunal today 11th day of January 2025.	
Sd/- (Chain Lal Bavoria) Presiding officer, Motor Accidents Claims Tribunal, Jammu.	