

As IPL put on hold young Jharkhand batsmen Saurabh, Virat support PPL in steel city

■ **AGENCY**
RANCHI: Indian Premier League needs no introduction but ever heard of Plasma Premier League (PPL) or Telco Red Panthers?

It is not "Where talent meets opportunity" it believes in 'From warrior to saviour' and has support from state's young cricket talents of the likes of Saurabh Tiwary and Virat Singh.

At a time when hospitals in Pan-India are grappling with shortage of plasma and blood amid an exponential surge in COVID-19 cases during the second wave, here comes a tournament that

begins on Sunday - to collect plasma for people battling for their lives.

PPL is the brainchild of state BJP leader and former legislator Kunal Sarangi who says: "So what if the IPL has been put on hold. Let's cheer and play together to save lives. Donate plasma, be a corona warrior."

Apart from the likes of Jharkhand batsmen Saurabh Tiwary and Virat Singh it has support from district administration and industry and no-profit bodies.

So far this PPL has nine teams ranging from Precious Plasma Tigers and Telco Red Panthers to 3S Donators,

Helping Hands, Steel City Warriors and Jugsalai Mask.

There are others - Sunrise Superstar, Jamshedpur Kings and Rotaract 11.

"Each team scores six or four runs on a plasma donation or a blood donation. The plasma and blood collected through the drive goes to Jamshedpur blood bank at a time of crisis when there is scarcity," PPL founder Sarangi said.

PPL has joined hands with voluntary body Namya, district administration and industry body CII's arm the Young Indians besides philanthropic body Marwari Yuva Manch in the noble drive.

The incentive the donors will get is "supply of plasma or blood when needed by them or any family member or friend". The unique initiative has been pledged support by several Bollywood celebrities including Bhumi Pednekar, Sarangi said.

Notably, East Singhbhum occupies the second slot when it comes to COVID-19 deaths in the state, accounting for the highest number of deaths in the state after capital Ranchi.

Every week, a team which can ensure maximum plasma donation will be declared a winner.

Sarthak Agarwal, regional convener of Marwari Yuva

Manch said: "Whoever participates in this initiative in these tough times would not go unrecognised. Even if a diabetic comes or any other person, we will give runs to them."

"Once the plasma donation drive kicks off, we intend to replicate it in the entire state so that patients have not to run around for plasma or blood," he said.

Battling a sharp surge in COVID-19 cases, the state government has extended the lockdown-like restrictions with stricter provisions, including seven days mandatory quarantine for people visiting the state, till May 27.

Kohli best batsman in world, will always remember him: Paine

■ **AGENCY**
MELBOURNE: Virat Kohli seems to have left an indelible mark on Australian Test captain Tim Paine, who says he will "always remember" the Indian skipper for being the world's best batsman, capable of also getting under the opposition's skin with his competitiveness.

Kohli and Paine have had a fiery rivalry which goes back to India's 2018-19 tour of Australia. Their on-field spats were an interesting sub-plot during the historic showdown in which India became the first Asian country to win a Test series Down Under.

"For Virat Kohli, I've said many times, he seems like the type of player you would love to have on your team. He is competitive. He is the best batsman in the world,"



the 36-year-old Paine said on the 'Gilly and Goss' podcast.

"He (Kohli) is challenging to play against and he can get under your skin because he is so good and he is so competitive.

"But yeah, for me from where I came from, sharing a feud with him four years ago, He is certainly someone I will always remember," he added.

Interestingly, last year

Paine had said that Kohli is "just another player" in the Indian team who "doesn't really bother me".

He had also stated that the Australian team "loves to hate" the superstar for his awe-inspiring abilities with the bat.

Paine, after the stunning loss in 2018-19, endured another debacle earlier this year when an injury-ravaged Indian team, which did not have Kohli after the opening Test, upstaged the Aussies in the Tests for a second successive tour.

He had recently caused a flutter by stating that his side was distracted by the Indian team's "niggling" during this year's series. Paine had to clarify that he wasn't making excuses for the loss after drawing criticism for his comments.

Athletics High jumper Tejaswin Shankar clinches gold at outdoor meet in US

■ **AGENCY**
NEW DELHI: Indian high jumper Tejaswin Shankar has claimed a gold medal at the Big 12 Outdoor Track and Field Championships in Manhattan, USA.

Representing Kanassas State University, Tejaswin cleared 2.28 metres on Saturday, making a facility record. It was also the season's finest performance for the Indian but a centimetre short of his personal best and the current national record of 2.29m which he created in 2018. University of Oklahoma's Vernon Turner (2.25m) and Texas Tech University's Jequan Hogan (2.11m) claimed the silver and bronze respectively. This was Tejaswin's second successive gold at the event.

He claimed the top honours in 2019 as well while the event could not be held in 2020 because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Bhaker to write BA exams while shooting in European Championships

■ **AGENCY**
NEW DELHI: Inside her hotel room in Croatian capital Zagreb, India's Olympic medal hope Manu Bhaker is juggling shooting-related activities and studies.

However, a day before the Tokyo-bound Indian shooting contingent hits the range for its first training session in Croatia, Bhaker's pistol will give way to a pen and the shooting gear to her study materials, as she logs in for her BA fourth semester exam.

A student of political science in the Delhi University's prestigious Lady Shri Ram College for Women, the champion shooter's exams start on May 18 while the European Championship in Osijek, in which the Indian team will compete as a guest invitee, begins two days later, from May 20.

The continental tournament and Bhaker's exams

will run almost concurrently but she is relived that the dates of her events are not clashing with the papers.

"I will manage both, as I have done in the past. At least I don't have competition on days I have my papers, so it's manageable," Bhaker told PTI.

While the Bhakers consider studies very important, shooting competitions are a priority for one of India's biggest medal hopes at the Tokyo Olympics.

"This is the year of the Olympics and I am fully focussed on how to give my best and do my country proud," said Bhaker, a gold medalist at the Youth Olympics, ISSF World Cup and Commonwealth Games.

Her father, Ramkishan Bhaker, added, "She is very serious about her studies but if there is a clash

between her competition and exams, then she chooses sports."

According to the DU guidelines, sports persons who have represented India in competitions, recognised and funded by the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports, are given direct admission without sports trial.

Ramkishan, a chief engineer at the merchant navy, has played a major role in giving his daughter the initial impetus needed to launch her career in the sport. Along with the ammunition, shooting gear and coronavirus-related travel essentials, Bhaker travelled to Croatia with her books to prepare for the exams, and will send her answers using the mobile scanner after she has written them all. The 19-year-old Bhaker has been selected for three events in the

upcoming Tokyo Olympics, scheduled to be held from July 23 to August 8.

She will be fielded in both the women's 25m pistol alongside the experienced Rahi Sarnobat, and in her pet 10m air pistol event with Yashaswini Singh Deswal.

Bhaker will also represent India in the mixed team 10m pistol along with Saurabh Chaudhary.

After the continental event, the Indian shooters will compete in the ISSF World Cup, slated to be held in same city, Osijek, from June 22 to July 3.

The 13 Olympic-bound Indian shooters, seven coaches, five physios and a two-member video crew landed in Zagreb in a chartered flight on Tuesday, after which they were received by the Croatian shooting federation and the country's world number three rifle shooter Peter Gorsa.

Former Saurashtra cricketer BCCI match referee Rajendra Jadeja dead; Shastri pays tributes

■ **AGENCY**
RAJKOT: Former Saurashtra pacer and BCCI match referee Rajendrasinh Jadeja has died due to COVID-19, the Saurashtra Cricket Association (SCA) said on Sunday. Jadeja was 66 years old.

"Everyone at SCA are deeply saddened on the untimely demise of Rajendrasinh Jadeja, one of the most remarkable yesterday cricketers of Saurashtra. He left for heavenly abode today early morning fighting a hard battle against COVID-19," the SCA said in a statement.

Rajendrasinh was one of the finest right-arm medium pacers and a remarkable all-rounder. He played 50 first-class matches and 11

List A games, taking 134 and 14 wickets respectively in a 12-year period between 1975-1987.

He scored 1,536 runs in first-class matches and 104 runs in List A cricket.

Indian cricket team's head coach Ravi Shastri, who has played office and zonal cricket with the former medium pacer, expressed his condolences. Shastri and Jadeja played for famous office side in Mumbai cricket Nirlons, for which even Sunil Gavaskar played Times Shield.

"Really sad to lose a colleague from Nirlons Mumbai and West Zone and a friend for many years, Raju Jadeja due to COVID complications. A gentleman to the core. May his soul rest in peace," Shastri

tweeted.

Jadeja served as the BCCI's official referee in 53 first-class matches, 18 List A games and 34 T20s.

He also served as selector, coach and team manager of SCA.

Former BCCI and SCA secretary Niranjan Shah said, "Rajendrasinh Jadeja was the man with quality, style, ethics and great cricketing capabilities. His dedication and contribution to cricket shall be remembered forever."

SCA president Jaydev Shah, too, condoled his demise, saying, "It is an immense loss to the world of cricket. Rajendra sir was one of the finest men I have met. I am fortunate to play many matches having him as our head coach, manager and mentor."

Battled anxiety for 10-12 years of my career: Tendulkar

■ **AGENCY**
NEW DELHI: Cricket legend Sachin Tendulkar on Sunday said he battled anxiety for a major part of his 24-year-old career before realising that his pre-game quirks were an important part of his preparation.

Talking about mental health, which has gained significance in the COVID times with players spending lot of time in bio-bubbles, Tendulkar said acceptability is the key.

"Over period of time I realised that besides preparing physically for a game, you have to prepare yourself mentally also. In my mind the



match started long before I entered the ground. The anxiety levels were very high," Tendulkar said in an interaction organised by Unacademy.

"I felt the anxiety for 10-12 years, had many sleepless nights before a game. Later on I started accepting that it

was part of my preparation. The I made peace with times I was not able to sleep in the night. I would start doing something to keep my mind comfortable."

That "something" included shadow batting, watching TV and playing video games in the wee hours of the day. Even making his morning cup of tea helped him prepare for the game.

"Making tea, ironing my clothes also helped me prepare for the game. I would pack my bag the day before the game, my brother taught me all of it and it became a habit. I followed the same drill even in the last match I

played for India," said the 48-year-old, who retired after playing his 200th Test match in 2013.

Tendulkar said a player is bound to go through ups and downs but it is important to accept when one is feeling low.

"When there is an injury, physios and doctors examine you and diagnose what is wrong with you. Same is the case with mental health. It is normal for anyone to go through ups and downs and when you hit those lows you need people around."

"Acceptability is the key here. Not just for the player, for people around him also.

Once you have accepted you start looking for solutions."

He emphasised that one can learn from anyone, like he did from a hotel staff in Chennai during his playing days.

"That person got me dosa in the room and after keeping it on the table, he offered an advice. He pointed out that my elbow guard was restricting my bat swing, which was actually the case. He helped me address that issue."

Tendulkar also thanked the frontline workers for their tireless work ever since the COVID-19 outbreak last year. The champion batsman recently recovered from the deadly virus.

You could point your finger at me too David Sekar on 2018 sandpaper gate

■ **AGENCY**
MELBOURNE: Former Australia bowling coach David Saker, who was with the team during the 2018 ball-tampering scandal, on Sunday said it was a "monumental mistake" which could have been prevented and for which fingers can also be pointed at him.

The review of Australia's win-at-all-cost team culture after the incident led to varying punishments for then captain Steve Smith, his deputy David Warner and the man who had the sandpaper in his possession at that time, pacer Cameron Bancroft. But Sekar felt it was collective failure.

"Obviously a lot of things went wrong at that time. The finger-pointing is going to go on and on and on. There was a lot of people to blame. It could have been me to blame, it could have been someone else. It could have been stopped and it wasn't, which is unfortunate," Saker told the 'Sydney Morning Herald'.

"Cameron's (Bancroft) a very nice guy. He's just doing it to get something off his chest ... He's not going to be the last," he added.

Sekar lamented that the incident is going to be associated with Australian cricket forever and there is nothing one can do about it.

"You could point your finger at me, you could point your finger at Boof (then coach Darren Lehmann), could you point it at other people, of course you could," he said.

"The disappointing thing is it's never going to go away. Regardless of what's said. We all know that we

made a monumental mistake. The gravity wasn't as plain until it all came out," he added.

The 54-year-old Victorian made the statement after Bancroft made a startling revelation that Australian bowlers at the time might have had some knowledge about the plot.

Saker believes the incident will hound Australian cricket for decades like the Trevor Chappell's under-arm bowling against New Zealand 40 years ago.

While Cricket Australia issued a statement saying that it was open to a re-investigation into the incident, Saker said he was not sure what could possibly come out of it.

"I don't think it'd be unfair. I just don't know what they're going to find out," Saker said.

"It's like the underarm, it's never going to go away."

Coach creating match situations for me in training, Sindhu on gearing up for Olympics

■ **AGENCY**
NEW DELHI: The lack of competitions before the Olympics is a major concern for Indian shuttlers but not so much for PV Sindhu, who trusts her Korean coach Park Tae Sang to create match situations for her in training itself.

Owing to the raging COVID-19 pandemic, the Badminton World Federation has been forced to cancel the remaining three Olympic qualifiers in India, Malaysia and Singapore. These were to be the last set of events before the Tokyo Games in July-August.

Asked if cancellations will affect her preparations, Sindhu said: "Well, we were thinking that Singapore will be the last event before Olympics but now we don't have another option, so I am playing matches against different players and my coach Park is trying to create match situations for me in training."

"Different players have different styles like Tai Tzu (Ying) or Ratchanok (Intanon) have different styles of play but Park is there to guide me, to prepare me for it," Sindhu told PTI.

"Obviously, we will be playing each other after a few months and there will be something new in our games, so I will have to prepare for that."

Sindhu doesn't train with the rest of the Indian

Olympic-bound team. She has been training at the Gachibowli indoor stadium in Telangana and does her fitness training at Suchitra academy.

The 25-year-old endorsed BWF's decision to cancel the events, saying while it is sad that competitions could not take place but life is more important than sports.

"It is sad that the whole world has come to a standstill but before sportspersons, we are human beings and life comes first," Sindhu said.

"If tournaments happen, we don't know if we will be safe, we might think we will be but we can't be sure because we don't know from where this virus will come."

"For the moment, events are being cancelled and I know sportspersons are sad but I think it is good for the people...Organisers take a lot of measures and keep us in a bubble but still we need to be careful."

Sindhu, the reigning world champion, said it will be a tough task for organisers and athletes to adhere to the COVID-19 protocols in a showpiece event like the Olympics and everyone has to brace up for the challenge.

"Every country has their own COVID-19 rules. In Thailand, we were tested every 2-3 days, in All England an entire contingent had to pull out for one case in their flight but we have to deal with

it," the Hyderabad shuttler said.

"Even in Olympics, I have heard that everyday they will be testing us. Before we take off, we have to clear an RTP-PCR test and after getting down we do a test again, it is definitely a tough task."

There was a lot of chaos in some of the international badminton events early this year when a few false positives forced some of the top players, including Saina Nehwal and B Sai Praneeth, to withdraw.

Sindhu hoped that such instances do not happen during the Olympics.

"...It is the Olympics and there will be so many athletes from so many countries but they also have to be very careful. As an athlete we have to prepare and just hope that everything is fine in the next few months," the world No.7 said.

"...unless you take care of yourself, it can spread anytime, anywhere. So it will be tough."

Sindhu, who had reached the finals of Swiss Open in March after returning to action following a long break, said she is improving as a player.

"It has been a good campaign so far this year. I have been improving as a player. My coach has analysed my game, so really looking forward to the Olympics. My dad also helps me a lot," she said.

Reproducing good form of last six months will be enough for great English Summer: Shami

■ **AGENCY**
NEW DELHI: Veteran India pacer Mohammed Shami found his "rhythm" during the now suspended IPL and feels the UK tour will be a successful one for the team if it is able to replicate the stellar performance of the last six months.

India will leave for the UK on June 2 for three and half months during which they will play six Test matches starting with the World Test Championship final against New Zealand in Southampton from June 18, followed by five Tests against England starting August 4.

With the COVID-19 wreaking havoc across the globe, the soon to be 31-year-old Shami said that too much of planning in these times is of no use.

"See, there is no point in planning too much as certain things are not in our control. Who would have thought that the pandemic would virtually destroy two years of our lives - hence I prefer to take it by each series or tournament as the case may be," the pacer told 'Gulf News'.

"We have played some

extraordinary cricket in recent times as an unit and naturally, the confidence level is high on the eve of our departure for England."

"If we can reproduce some of the form which we did over last six months, I am confident it will be a great summer for us," said the man, who has 180 wickets from 50 Tests.

Shami, who missed seven straight Tests due to wrist fracture sustained during first Test in Adelaide, knows that he is not going to be around forever. And that's precisely the reason why he wants to share the tricks of his trade with the younger generation.

"It comes automatically as after being in international cricket for so many years, I would like to share any input that the youngsters may want. I am not going to play forever, so it will be great if I can pass on something to the youngsters," Shami said.

Shami maintained that he doesn't over-think about his own bowling.

"I do not believe in overthinking about what my approach will be. I found my rhythm back in the IPL and the rest, of course, depends on the conditions."



Indian women likely to tour Australia in September

■ **AGENCY**
NEW DELHI: The Indian women's cricket team is set to travel to Australia in September.

India, who have played only one series amid the COVID-19 pandemic, tour England next month to play their first Test in seven years besides three ODIs and as many T20s. Australia pacer Megan Schutt dropped a hint that India will be visiting in September though Cricket Australia is yet to announce the schedule. The tour is expected to comprise ODIs and T20 Internationals. "We have got a tour against India in mid-September," Schutt said on No Balls: The Cricket Podcast, hosted by Kate Cross and Alex Hartley. "So, there's a couple of camps. I believe we are doing one in Darwin, which will be really cool... and then the tour against India. And then pretty much from there things get crazy with Big Bash, WNCL, Ashes, World Cup, and hopefully the Commonwealth Games."

The BCCI, in its last Apex Council meeting, had also approved the tour of Australia ahead of the World Cup in New Zealand next year. A home series against the West Indies was also cleared.

4th edition of Khelo India Games from Nov 21

■ **STATE TIMES NEWS**
JAMMU: Sports Authority of India (SAI) under the aegis of Union Sports Ministry has released the calendar of activities for the 4th edition of the Khelo India Youth Games (KIYG).

This time, the competition shall be held in under-18 age group of both boys and girls across 25 sporting disciplines at Panchkula in Haryana from November 21.

As per the circular, issued by Senior Director (Khelo India) to all the States and Union Territories, six new sports disciplines have been included in the existing 19 sports events of 2020 Guwahati Games.

The six new disciplines are Handball and five indigenous games of Thang-Ta, Kalaripayattu, Mallakhamb, Gatka and Yogasna. Other disciplines are Achery, Judo, Table Tennis, Kabaddi, Athletics, Shooting,

Tennis, Kho-Kho, Badminton, Swimming, Basketball, Volleyball, Boxing, Weightlifting, Football, Cycling, Gymnastics, Wrestling, Hockey and Handball. To be eligible for this event, an athlete should be born on or after January, one 2003.

Important to mention here that the 3rd edition of the KIYG was conducted from January 10 to January 22, 2020 at Guwahati in Assam.

The KIYG 2020 had an appropriate participation of 10,112 from 29 States and seven UTs which comprised more than 6130 Athletes, 1504 support staff, 1074 technical officials, 37 chef-de-missions, 1347 volunteers and 20 competition managers.

