



## PM Modi lauds performance of Punjab's 15-year-old badminton player Tanvi Sharma

**HOSHIARPUR, MAR 18:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi has commended 15-year-old badminton player Tanvi Sharma, who hails from Punjab, for her stellar performances at the national and international levels throughout the badminton championships of 2023.

Sharma has captured the attention of the nation by clinching a gold medal at Senior Asian Championship held in Malaysia.

In a letter to the badminton player, Modi, on behalf of the entire nation, extended his heartfelt congratulations to the young athlete, recognising her outstanding achievement on the international stage.

Expressing his pride in India's sporting talent, PM Modi highlighted the government's commitment to



supporting athletes through initiatives such as Target Olympic Podium Scheme (TOPS).

These efforts aim to provide world-class training facilities and access to global coaching expertise for Indian sports stars, enabling them to compete at the highest levels of competition.

The prime minister emphasised the inspirational role Tanvi plays for the

younger generation, noting that her success will undoubtedly motivate countless aspiring athletes across the country.

By raising awareness about initiatives like TOPS and promoting opportunities in sports, Tanvi's achievements contribute not only to a flourishing sporting culture but also to the Fit India movement, he said.

While sharing her feel-

ings upon receiving the letter from the PM, she expressed her immense pride and happiness, stating that the letter has filled her with a sense of honour and accomplishment.

Tanvi described the letter as a symbol of recognition for her hard work and dedication to badminton, and she vowed to continue striving for excellence in the sport.

Looking ahead to the upcoming international sporting events, including Paris Olympics, PM Modi wished Tanvi continued success and greater achievements in her future endeavours.

He encouraged her to shine brightly on the global stage, inspiring others with her dedication, talent and unwavering spirit.

## Senior Kabaddi team leaves for National

**HIMALAYAN MAIL NEWS  
JAMMU, MAR 18**

Jammu and Kashmir Amateur Kabaddi Association today flagged off the UT team for participation in the 70th Senior National Championship to be held at Ahmednagar in Maharashtra from March 21 to March 24.

The team was given send off by general secretary of the Association, Kuldeep Gupta, who encouraged the players and wished them improved performance. He informed that the team is sponsored by the J&K Sports Council (JKSC) as part of the annual calendar of activities.

Gupta expressed his thanks to the District Udhampur Kabaddi Association for hosting the first



ever coaching camp for the senior team at Indoor complex of the Subash Stadium.

Before the formal send off, the team underwent screening which was conducted under the guidance of Divisional Sports Officer of the JKSC, Baljinder Pal Singh and concerned officials at the district.

Earlier, the team presented the sports kit by

former Director Sports at SMVD University and SMVD Sports Complex Katra, Ashok Kumar in the presence of Vikas Dogra, Manager Subash Stadium; former general secretary of the Association, Surinder Mohan; District Udhampur president, Tanveer Ahmed and Vishal Bamotra.

Meanwhile, president of the Association, Anil Gupta conveyed his warm

wishes to the team and officials for improved performance.

The Team: Sanjeet Kumar (Captain), Aamir Hamidwani, Irfan Ahmed Mir, Farman Ali, Akshey Singh, Abhishek Gupta, Vikas, Rohit, Nishant, Krishnaveer, Rajan Singh Manhas and Amrit Dev Singh. Manik Sharma, Chief Coach; Ram Kumar, Assistant Coach and Ashok Kumar, manager.

## Mumbai City FC announce squad for Reliance Foundation Development League

**NEW DELHI, MAR 18:**

The Reliance Foundation Development League's (RFDL) 2023/24 is upon us, and, Mumbai City FC, who are raring to go, have announced their squad for the tournament. The RFDL's Mumbai region Qualifiers will see all the participating 9 teams play each other once in Phase 1, after which the top three teams progress to Phase 2, from where the top two teams will make it to the National Group Stage.

The 31-strong squad will include five first-team players in Ahan Prakash, Halen Nongtdu, Nathan Rodrigues, Franklin



Nazareth, and Seilenthang Lotjem. The squad also has four reserve players in Ishaan Shishodia, Mustafa Shaikh, Subhajit Beel, and Yash Bisht. The Mumbai City FC side will be led by Head Coach Anthony Fernandes, and Assistant Coach Mohan Dass.

The Islanders begin their

campaign at the RFDL Mumbai region qualifiers on the 19th of March, with their final game of this leg of the tournament on the 6th of April. The Islanders will play a total of eight games in that period.

**SQUAD:**

Goalkeepers - Shaury Sharma, Harsh Kadam,

Ahan Prakash

Defenders - Arsh Bagwan, Ansari Kaif, Nikhil Shinde, Parvez Shah, Tanush Pandey, Sayyam Desai, Raj Bisht, Nathan Rodrigues, Atharva Aher, Halen Nongtdu

Midfielders - Eashan Sartape, Steiner Dsouza, Aadil Sheikh, Kunal Raghav, Reagan Pereira, Kshitij Maral, Subhajit Beel, Franklin Nazareth, Ishaan Shishodia

Forwards - Divyang Sheram, Omkar Talkar, Mangthenlal Haokip, Harsh Patil, Ahan Mani Sharma, Mohd Jaffer Mansoori, Seilenthang Lotjem, Yash Bisht, Mustafa Shaikh

**BENGALURU, MAR 18:** Royal Challengers Bangalore's renowned star Virat Kohli arrived in Bengaluru ahead of the upcoming season of the Indian Premier League and RCB's Unbox event.

India and RCB's stalwart batter Kohli has been with the franchise since the inception of the IPL and has led the team from the front for nine years.

RCB took to Instagram to announce the arrival of Kohli and captioned it, "Too much happening too quickly and we're not slowing down. Is he here?"

On Sunday night, Kohli was spotted at the Mumbai airport as he had to catch a flight to Bangalore to join



his team for the upcoming match of IPL 2024.

He was seen donning his cool white T-shirt, which featured a huge illustration of a cute cartoon character and had the word 'Dad' written on it.

Kohli who missed India's 4-1 Test series triumph over England was recently

blessed with a baby boy, Akaay.

In 237 appearances for RCB in the IPL, Kohli has amassed 7,263 runs at an average of 37.2 and a strike rate of 130.0 and is the leading run-scorer in the history of the competition.

His best score of 113 came against Punjab Kings

in 2016 which propelled RCB to a massive score of 211/3.

Kohli is yet to lift an IPL trophy with RCB in the past 16 seasons and he will be looking to secure the maiden title in the upcoming edition.

RCB strengthened their squad in the IPL 2024 auction by acquiring the services of foreign and Indian talent which includes Alzarri Joseph, Yash Dayal, Tom Curran, Lockie Ferguson, Swapnil Singh and Saurav Chauhan.

RCB will kick off their campaign in the season opener clash against Chennai Super Kings on Friday at the MA Chidambaram Stadium.

## KL Rahul gets NCA fitness clearance, may not keep in first few LSG games

**NEW DELHI, MAR 18:**

Lucknow Super Giants captain KL Rahul is all set to play for his franchise from its opening IPL game after getting all clear from the National Cricket Academy, but he has been advised against wicket-keeping in the first few games.

Rahul had once again suffered a strain in his quadriceps during the first Test against England in Hyderabad and even though he was expected to join the team by the third game, he felt a tightness in his muscles and skipped all the remaining games.

Rahul posted a short video of his batting, basic keeping drills and outfielding practice at the NCA.



"The NCA has given him clearance and he will join his mates in Lucknow on Thursday (March 20) before they travel to Jaipur for the opening game against Rajasthan Royals on March 24. It is understood that he has been told to avoid squatting initially and he can don the gloves in coming days. For first few games, he will only

play as pure batter," a BCCI source tracking the developments of LSG told PTI on conditions of anonymity.

It is understood that even the franchise isn't losing its sleep over Rahul's keeping as it has two quality short-format glovesmen in Quinton de Kock and Nicholas Pooran, who is also vice-captain for this

season.

However for Rahul, keeping will be an important aspect of his game if he has to stake claim for a spot in the Indian squad for the T20 World Cup in the USA and West Indies in June.

"Rahul will not be considered for a top three slot in the Indian T20 team considering his previous performances. He can be that keeper-batter at number five or six, if he has a decent IPL. But if he plays purely as a batter, you have a far better option in Rinku Singh, apart from Rishabh Pant, who might just stake a claim with some power-packed performances," a BCCI source privy to developments said.

## Lakshya Sen, PV Sindhu spearhead India's challenge in Swiss Open

**SWITZERLAND, MAR 18:**

Star Indian shuttler Lakshya Sen is expected to continue his purple patch, while two-time Olympic medallist PV Sindhu will strive to regain top form at the Swiss Open Super 300 tournament, beginning here on Tuesday.

After first-round losses at the Malaysia Super 1000 and India Super 750 earlier in the year, Sen has gained momentum. The 22-year-old enters the USD 210,000 tournament on the back of semifinal



appearances at the French Open and All England Championships.

The seventh-seeded Indian will open his campaign against Malaysian Leong Jun Hao and is

likely to cross paths with 2021 world champion Lee Zii Jia.

Former world No. 1 Kidambi Srikanth will face Asian Games bronze medallist Wang Tzu-wei

of Chinese Taipei in the first round while young Priyanshu Rajawat will take on Hong Kong's fourth seed Lee Cheuk Yiu.

After making headway in the French Open earlier this month, Sindhu, who is on a comeback trail after recovering from a left knee injury, made an early exit from the All England Championship. She was guilty of committing several unforced errors and the former world champion would look to improve on that aspect.

## Sarfaraz Khan, Dhruv Jurel get central contracts; Ranji matches unlikely to be held in North in Dec-Jan

**NEW DELHI, MAR 18:**

India's newest batting star Sarfaraz Khan and wicket-keeper Dhruv Jurel were inducted into Group C of BCCI's central contract with an annual retainership fee of Rs 1 crore, having fulfilled the criteria of playing three Tests in a current season.

Their names were ratified during BCCI Apex Council meeting which was held on Monday.

Sarfaraz, a domestic heavyweight for Mumbai, scored three half-centuries in three Tests against England while Agra man Jurel, with scores of 90 and 39 not out in a tricky chase at Ranchi, won the Player of the Match in only his second game.

The BCCI is likely to re-



visit the Ranji Trophy calendar for the next season and will not schedule any matches in the northern part of India during December and January when fog and bad light often play spoilsport.

While the detailed domestic calendar will be announced later, the BCCI Apex Council did discuss

the tentative schedule of 2024-25, which was one of the primary items in the eight-point agenda of the Apex Council meeting on the day.

For the past few seasons, the Ranji Trophy has started in January and ended in the second week of March and in north-Indian cities like Delhi,

Chandigarh, Kanpur, Meerut, Jammu, and Dharamsala, most matches are being affected by bad light and fog during peak winter months.

"No decision has been taken yet but the Ranji Trophy, like earlier years could start from mid or end of October after the Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy, which serves as an IPL auction platform. Some states are losing crucial points in do-or-die games because of inclement weather from mid-December to mid-February," a senior BCCI source told PTI.

It has been also learnt that BCCI will form a committee, which will decide whether union territory Daman & Diu get associate membership.

## Smriti Mandhana reveals her role in RCB roping in Luke Williams as head coach

**NEW DELHI, MAR 18:**

Women's Premier League-winning Royal Challengers Bangalore captain Smriti Mandhana revealed that she had a role to play in bringing Luke Williams on board as head coach.

Having played under Williams at Southern Brave in The Hundred, Mandhana admitted that his was the first name that came to her mind when the management asked her for her preference.

"I've seen Luke Williams operate for the last few years at Southern Brave and have been following his work at Adelaide Strikers as well. Tahlia McGrath, who I get along with during The Hundred, also gave me some insight into Luke. So, when the management asked me if I had anyone in mind... Ben (Sawyer) was



great... but when I was asked, the first name that came to my mind was that of Luke Williams. He's really big on building a good culture and that's so necessary in the first few years for a team. If we get the basics right then we can build on it. He's done that so

well at Adelaide," Mandhana told reporters.

The 27-year-old explained that much of the planning for the WPL was done during The Hundred and the international window.

"I did approach him during The Hundred. Charlotte Edwards is my coach there but we'd speak from time to time on what we needed to do in the auction and other things. The Hundred is where we started jotting down a few names, tracking a few players. Sophie Molineux was one of them. She was injured so we had to track her. We were playing international cricket then and my focus was entirely there but we would have the odd phone call here and there to discuss our plans and the way forward.