U'khand CM felicitates Laskshya Sen, Kuhoo Garg

DEHRADUN, JUL 26 /--/ Uttarakhand Chief Minister Trivendra Singh Rawat has honoured Asia junior badminton champion Lakshya Sen by presenting him with a cheque of Rs 5.53 lakh at a felicitation ceremony held at the chief minister's residence here. At the event held yesterday, Rawat also presented Kuhoo Garg, who won the Lagos International Badminton Classics, with a cheque of Rs 2 lakh. "The children of Uttarakhand grow up in the lap of nature and are therefore strong. They also have the spirit to excel in whichever field they choose. The success of Lakshya Sen and Kuhoo Garg is a victory of our youth who are showing promise in every sports," the chief minister said. Sen said his efforts would be directed towards bringing glory to his country and state in the future. Since Garg is in Russia nowdays, the cash award was received by her parents. On Sunday, Lakshya became only the third Indian shuttler to win the Asia Junior Championships after late Gautam Thakkar (1965) and Olympic silver medallist P V Sindhu (2012). He defeated the reigning world junior champion, Kunlavut Vitidsarn of Thailand, in straight games at the finals in Jakarta, Indonesia. On the same day, Kuhoo Garg and Ria Mukherjee had won the women's doubles title in the Lagos International badminton tournament in Nigeria. (PTI)

Current contract could be last at Manchester City: David Silva

EAST RUTHERFORD (USA), JULY 26 /--/ Manchester City midfielder David Silva says his current contract, which runs until 2020, could be his last at the Premier League champions and has ruled out a future move to any rival club in England. The Spain international has been an integral part of City`s success, scoring 61 goals and providing 115 assists in 346 appearances to help the club win three league titles, an FA Cup and three League Cups since his arrival 2010.

"When I finish my contract with Manchester City I will be 34 years old, at that time I will probably want to do something different," Silva told Sky Sports. "I don`t know yet but I won`t play for another club in England. "People always love me in England, it`s been eight years - very successful years, and the football we`ve played has been very attractive. English people love that type of football - those type of games. And that`s why I`m so happy here." City have bolstered their squad further following their record-breaking exploits last season as they aim to become the first team to retain the league title since Manchester United in 2009. "It`s going to be very difficult, especially this year with the big teams Man United, Arsenal, Chelsea spending lots of money to get very good players," Silva said. "To win consecutive leagues is going to be very difficult but we`re going to try. I`m sure this year we`re going to do it." Following an underwhelming World Cup campaign, Silva could return to action for City in their Community Shield clash against Chelsea on Aug. 5 or their league opener at Arsenal a week later.

Arsenal's Mesut Ozil and Lucas Perez before the match ——REUTERS

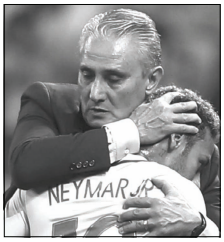
A beautiful game, another beautiful story: Real Kashmir FC to train at Dortmund

SRINAGAR, JUL 26 /--/ Aiming to expand the Real Kashmir FC community, the current path-breakers of Indian football are about to tread a glorious new path, as they visit Germany for a training stint at the renowned BVB Borussia Dortmund. RKFC owners Sandeep Chattoo and Shamim Meraj say they are just "carrying on from where we left" last season. "We were the first team from Kashmir to play in Scotland. We are now the first youth team from Kashmir to visit Germany for a training camp," the club said in a statement. Having dribbled past opponents and the many off-the-pitch obstructions to become Jammu and Kashmir's first football team in the I-League, Real Kashmir FC are in no mood to stop here. "It's just the beginning," Chattoo put it appropriately. "We want Real kashmir to be what Barcelona is to Spain and what United is to Manchester and what BVB is to (the) city of Dortmund. We want every kid of the state who loves to play football either aspire to play for RKFC or become a supporter by default. There is a belief among the club's stakeholders that its success, in what was an extraordinary season, would bring a positive change to the state. The club did not forget to thank the Bundesliga giants, one of the most successful clubs in the league with eight titles. "We also want to thank Borussia Dortmund for giving a small club like RKFC an opportunity to visit them and train at their football school. The boys will also visit the Signal Iduna Park as well as the German Football Museum," the club said. Borussia Dortmund are part of a large membership-based sports club with more than 145,000 members, making it the second largest sports club by membership in Germany, something the Indian club would aspire to achieve in the near future. The Srinagar-based outfit became the first club from the Kashmir valley to qualify for the top tier after winning the second division league by beating Delhi's Hindustan FC 3-2 in May. "We want to change the whole scenario, we want to bring a football revolution in Kashmir. We have opened the way. We want to make this Paradise on Earth a Paradise for Football," a delighted Chattoo had said after the triumph. (PTI)

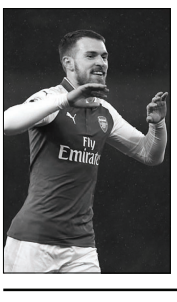
Tite to stay as Brazil coach until 2022 World Cup

RIO DE JANEIRO, JULY 26 /--/ Tite was handed a new contract to remain as coach of the Brazil national team until 2022 on Wednesday despite their traumatic World Cup quarter-final exit in Russia, the Brazilian football federation (CBF) said. "The CBF has renewed the contract with coach Tite until the end of the 2022 World Cup in Qatar," wrote the CBF on its website. Tite is the first coach of the Brazil national team to be re-appointed after a World Cup elimination since Claudio Coutinho in 1978. Brazil, with superstar Neymar in their ranks, were regarded as one of the favourites for the 2018 World Cup but they were knocked out in the last-eight, losing 2-1 to Belgium.

"The federation has given us the conditions to build an environment of unity and professionalism, it's a great challenge and we are happy to face it, already focused on our next matches and competitions," Tite said in a statement. Tite's first challenge will be to win the Copa America in 2019 when Brazil hosts the tournament. Brazil will begin their post-World Cup rehabilitation with a series of friendlies, the first of which is against the United States in New Jersey on September 7. "The CBF is investing in a long-term project to guarantee the staff six-and-a-half-years in charge of La Selecao, and we believe that this careful planning will bring to Brazilian football the results we expect," said Rogerio Caboclo, the executive director of the CBF. Adenor Leonardo Bacchi, who is universally known by his nickname Tite, took over the Brazil job in June 2016 and immediately faced a daunting task. The team under Dunga, who'd been fired, were an embarrassment. And Dunga himself had been hired in 2014 to resurrect a team reeling from the ultimate humiliation of that 7-1 loss to Germany in the semi-finals of the World Cup on Brazilian soil. By the time Tite took over, Brazil had already played a third of their qualifying games for the 2018 tournament and Tite wondered whether he'd have time to turn the slow-motion disaster around. Immediately after getting the job, "I said to myself... 'What if I don't manage to qualify?'" he told TV channel, Tite, 57, says his wife Rose looked at him in concern. "I can't figure out what you're thinking," she said. But the devout Catholic, who has a shrine to the Virgin Mary in his office, did more than just sort out his thoughts. In seven months he pulled the team from the brink and turned them into winners, comfortably topping the South American qualifying group. Tite's emotional and eloquent way of talking and his father-figure status in the dressing room were key in healing the mental scars of talented, young players who'd known so many setbacks.



Arsenal's Ramsey says contract news in 'next few weeks'



SINGAPORE, JULY 26 /--/ Arsenal's Aaron Ramsey says he is excited about playing under new boss Unai Emery and expects movement on a fresh contract "in the next few weeks". Ramsey is considered key to Emery's rebuilding project at the London club after the 22-year Arsene Wenger era but, with his contract expiring next year, the Wales international raised hopes he could agree a new deal. Ramsey said he was encouraged by the ideas and philosophy of Emery, the former Paris Saint-Germain coach, as his agent pursues talks with the Arsenal hierarchy. "We've yet to come to an agreement. I still have a year left and I'm really happy playing here," the 27-year-old midfielder said during Arsenal's pre-season trip to Singapore."There's a great opportunity this season under the new manager to go on and hopefully compete for things, so I'm looking forward to that and if something's to happen we'll see in the next few weeks or so." Ramsey said his discussions with Emery had been "purely football" as Arsenal attempt to return to trophy-winning ways and Champions League football after finishing sixth in the Premier League last season. The 27-year-old said there was a buzz about the team as the players take on the Spanish coach's tactics, most notably a high-tempo, pressing game. "I'm looking forward to playing the way that he wants to play. It's very exciting," Ramsey said. "I think all the players are really looking forward to this season and hopefully we can hit the ground running right from the off. "It's always difficult when a new manager comes in, for him to get his ideas across to the team and for it to just click straight away, but hopefully that will be the case. But yeah, I am encouraged by the way he wants to play and his ideas."

Steyn to quit white ball game after 2019 World Cup

MUMBAI, JUL 26 /--/ Veteran South Africa paceman Dale Steyn, who has been hit by a spate of injuries over the last two years, is not keen to continue playing limited over cricket after next year's World Cup. However, he is equally eager to carry on his stint in Test cricket as long as he could. "I will be trying to get to that World Cup (in England). But after the World Cup I don't see myself playing white ball cricket for South Africa. By the time the next World Cup comes, I will be 40," said the 35-year-old Steyn at a promotional event for 'GoPro' here today. He expressed hope that his vast experience would earn him a place in the World Cup squad. "If you look at the batting lineup, our top six have played 1,000 games, but lower half - from eight to eleven who are currently playing - not even 150 games. You need to draw on experience. "I hope that will be my trump card when the selection comes to the World Cup. I may not necessarily play all the time. But I think my experience will help with me just being there," he said. "When it comes to Test cricket, I would like to play as long as possible. I have finally come out of a cloud of injuries. I broke my shoulder and in my first game on return (against India) I landed in a foothole. It was rotten luck. "It's quite difficult to come back from a broken shoulder, especially with your bowling arm. I feel that's (injury) gone and I am fit. I played two Test matches without an injury (against Sri Lanka recently), bowled at good pace and never went off the field because of niggles. It's a big plus," he added. Steyn struggled for wickets and got one each in the two innings of the opening Test and none in the second. "Wickets is something that's not guaranteed. I am happy I came out 100 per cent (fitness wise). That's the biggest cloud I have gotten over, especially after the last two years," he explained. About South Africa being hammered 2-0 by hosts Lanka, Steyn complimented the islanders for playing to their strength, relying on spin in helpful conditions. "The wickets were tough to play on. Sri Lanka played good cricket. They played their cards right. Preparation was difficult (for SA). They came out trumps. Hats off to them; they played better cricket," he said. He also backed the English county authorities for doing away with the toss and emphasised that cricket has changed so much there's no point in sticking to age-old traditions. "There's been a bit of talk (of doing away with the toss in international cricket). I think there will be some for it and there will be some against it. It might not happen.

"(Cricket pioneer) W G Grace will be rolling in his grave if he heard something called the free-hit; a batsman can be out but he's not out and score four runs off the ball because it's a no-ball. Traditional cricket has gone out the window. T20 cricket has changed the game. "If someone says it's (doing away with the toss) going against the traditional thing, he's blind. The game has changed so much; you have to keep up with the times. England is doing something really well. In County Cricket the toss is gone. You can look at the pitch as the visiting team and can decide what to do. "I think that's a good way they are doing it, it might be the way to go forward - do away with the toss completely; When a visiting team gets to choose (to bat or field). You get to prepare the pitch, but we get to choose we want to do on it. He also had a dig at the flat pitches prepared for the limited over games and the rule of one ball being used from one end for 25 overs and not the same ball from both ends for the entire 50 overs of an innings. "The generally flat wickets in ODIs have taken bowlers completely out of the equation. Two balls - is ridiculous. You take the skill out of the game. I grew up watching Wasim Akram and Waqar Younis (former Pakistan pacers) reversing the ball. But now try naming one player reverse-swinging the ball! "Players are going to the extent of taking sand paper on the field. It might sound funny, but it's a desperate plea for cricket to change. Players are getting into more trouble trying to make the ball do something. (PTI)

Indian shuttlers continue good run at Russia Open

VLADIVOSTOCK (RUSSIA), JUL 26 /--/ Former national champions Sourabh Verma and Rituparna Das continued their impressive run as they progressed to the quarterfinals of the USD 75,000 Russia Open BWF Tour Super 100 tournament here today. Also making it to the final eight were Mithun Manjunath, Subhankar Dey and Vrushali Gummadi in singles, while the men's doubles pair of Arun George and Sanyam Shukla and the two mixed doubles combination of Rohan Kapoor and Kuhoo Garg and Saurabh Sharma and Anoushka Parikh also entered the quarterfinals. Coming back after recovering from an injury, Sourabh, who made the cut for the Asian Games after proving his worth at the selection tournaments, trounced Russia's Sergey Sirant 21-11 21-9 in a lop-sided contest. The eighth seeded Indian will face Israel's Misha Zilberman, seeded third. Rituparna, who won the India International Series and Polish International in 2016, had to dig deep into her reserves to eke out a 13-21 21-17 21-19 win over second seed Ying Ying Lee of Malaysia. (PTI)

India women's team leaves for COTIF tournament

NEW DELHI, JUL 26 /--/ The Indian women's senior national team will be travelling to Spain to play in the COTIF tournament from August 1 to 6.

This is the first time ever that the women's senior team is travelling to Europe to participate in a tournament. The exposure tour has been arranged by All India Football Federation in coordination with Sports Authority of India keeping in mind the crucial Olympic Qualifiers which are slated to be held in November. Furthermore, the senior team will also be defending their title in the SAFF women's championship scheduled to be held later this year, a tournament in which the girls are unbeaten in their last 19 matches.

The squad will be leaving Indian shores early morning tomorrow. The team was given an official send-off at the Football House where the AIFF general secretary Kushal Das wished them luck. "This is a very important trip especially with the Olympic Qualifiers being around the corner. Women in Indian sports are achieving laurels at the highest level and the Indian women's hockey team is currently unbeaten in the Hockey World Cup. The AIFF has extensive plans for women's football in India and all of you are part of the plan. Good luck for the tournament." National team director Abhishek Yadav was also present on the occasion. Head coach Maymol Rocky stated that the team is "looking forward to the challenge". "It's going to be a wonderful opportunity for us to assess ourselves against the European opponents as well as Morocco national team. We're eagerly waiting for it to begin and will put up a brave fight," she said. "The girls are thrilled to be a part of the historic first-ever exposure trip to Europe. We're thankful to All India Football Federation and the SAI for arranging the exposure trip which will eventually help us gaining invaluable experiences for the future endeavours," she added. Goalkeeper Aditi Chauhan felt it's "great" to have the exposure tour to Europe. "This exposure tour wouldn't have been possible had not AIFF and SAI arranged it for us. The tour to Europe is a historic one and it will help us overcome the mental barrier of playing against girls in Europe and Africa," she maintained.

India's fixtures stay as follows:

August 1: India vs Fundaci n Albacete.
August 3: India vs Levante U.D.
August 5: India vs Morocco.
August 6: India vs Madrid C.F.

The 20-member squad:

GOALKEEPERS: E. Panthoi Chanu, Aditi Chauhan, O. Roshni Devi.
DEFENDERS: L. Ashalata Devi, Manisha Panna, Th. Umapati Devi, Jabamani Tudu, Dalima Chhibber, Ng. Sweety Devi.
MIDFIELDERS: Sangita Basfore, Sanju, I. Prameshori Devi, M. Mandakini Devi, Indumathi Kathiresan.
FORWARDS: Y. Kamala Devi, Anju Tamang, N. Ratanbala Devi, Ng. Bala Devi, Dangmei Grace, R. Sandhiya Ranganathan.
HEAD COACH: Maymol Rocky. (PTI)

Alwyn George and Nikhil Poojari join FC Pune City

PUNE, JUL 26 /--/ Indian Super League (ISL) club FC Pune City today signed Alwyn George and Nikhil Poojari, bolstering their squad for the 2018-19 season. Alwyn plied his trade for Bengaluru FC in the last season and will now don the orange colors of FC Pune City, a club from his home state of Maharashtra. For Nikhil too, it will be a homecoming of sorts, as the Mumbai boy will return to Maharashtra, after spending two seasons in Kolkata playing for East Bengal. Speaking on signing the two, FC Pune City CEO Gaurav Modwel said, "Alwyn is one of the more technical players we have in India and we feel he will suit our style of play. His flair for creating chances will bring more creativity in our play. "Nikhil, on the other hand, is one of the most exciting young players in the country. We have been tracking him for a couple of years now. At a young age, he has already gained a good amount of professional experience and we hope that he settles well in our squad." Alwyn started his career with the Tata Football Academy in 2008 and signed his first professional contract with Pailan Arrows four years later. It was during the midfielder's stint at Dempo that he caught the eyes of everyone. He was named best young Indian player of the season for two years in a row. After that, Alwyn played in Indian Super League with FC Goa, Delhi Dynamos FC and later Bengaluru FC. Excited to join the Stallions, George said, "It's a great opportunity for me to play for a team which is ambitious and professionally managed at the same time. Also it is an added advantage for me since I will play for a team from my home state." Nikhil started his football career in Mumbai. Soon he joined the youth team of Mumbai FC before being signed by East Bengal in 2015. His pace and fitness levels with East Bengal impressed national scouts that rightly got him national call for U23 and later senior side too. Coming back to his home state, Poojari said, "I'm excited to join FC Pune City and play in the Indian Super League. To my mind, this is a good club from my state Maharashtra to play for and has a very professional management. "It was a no-brainer for me to sign with them at the first chance I got. I am looking forward to make the most of the opportunities I get here at the club. (PTI)