

Modipays tributes to Dhyyan Chand

NEW DELHI, AUG 29 /-/- Prime Minister Narendra Modi today paid tributes to legendary hockey player Major Dhyyan Chand, and congratulated all sports persons and enthusiasts on the occasion of National Sports Day. In a series of tweets, Modi said, "On #NationalSportsDay, I congratulate all sports persons and sports enthusiasts who pursue sports with great vigour and passion. I pay tributes to the exemplary Major Dhyyan Chand, whose legendary sporting skills did wonders for Indian hockey," he tweeted. Modi said India is blessed with immense sporting talent, and to harness this potential, a portal was launched by the Sports Ministry. "The #NationalSports TalentSearchPortal gives essential direction and support to youngsters to pursue their sporting aspirations and shine," he said. (PTI)



Minister of State for Youth Affairs and Sports (I/C), Water Resources, River Development and Ganga Rejuvenation, Vijay Goel and the Minister of State for Home Affairs, Kiren Rijiju paying tributes to Hockey Legend Major Dhyyan Chand, on his 112th Birth Anniversary on the occasion to commemorate the 'National Sports Day', in New Delhi on Tuesday.

Khel Ratna Jhaharia wants state governments to do more

NEW DELHI, AUG 29 /-/- Devendra Jhaharia today became the first para athlete to receive India's highest sporting honour - Rajiv Gandhi Khel Ratna - and said the state governments "need to do more" for the disabled athletes. Jhaharia received the award from President Ram Nath Kovind at the Rashtrapati Bhawan along with Sardar Singh, who became only the second and only para athlete to receive the prestigious Khel Ratna on the National Sports Day. Jhaharia is the only Indian to win two Paralympic gold medals - 2004 Athens Games and 2016 Rio Games - while star mid-fielder Sardar has been the architect of India's hockey team's many victories in the last few years. "It's a historic day for Indian para athletes. There are five core such athletes and they need more support," Jhaharia told PTI in an interaction.

KHEL RATNA AWARDEES

Devendra Jhaharia (Para-Athlete) and Sardar Singh (Hockey).

ARJUNA AWARDEES

V J Surekha (Archery), Khushbir Kaur (Athletics), Arkin Rajiv (Athletics), Prasanthi Singh (Basketball), Devendra Singh (Boxing), Cheshwar Pujara (Cricket), Harmanpreet Kaur (Cricket), Oinam Bembem Devi (Football), SSP Chowwara (Golf), S V Sanil (Hockey), Jasvir Singh (Kabaddi), P N Prakash (Shooting), Anthony Amraj (Table Tennis), Saketh Myneni (Tennis), Saiyowat Kodian (Wrestling), Mariyappan Thangavelu (Para-Athlete) and Varun Bhati (Para-Athlete).

Sanjita Chanu and basketball player P Anitha had approached the Delhi High Court over their non-selection and the government promised to have a re-look into their cases. The government will file a response in 14 days time. For the first time none of the Dronacharya awardees this year - six in all - are active. Dr R Gandhi received the award posthumously and others got a lifetime achievement. (PTI)



President Ram Nath Kovind presenting the Arjuna Award, 2017 to Harmanpreet Kaur for Cricket, in a glittering ceremony at Rashtrapati Bhawan, in New Delhi —PTI

FFAchiefs says India a football boom waiting to happen

NEW DELHI, AUG 29 /-/- India is "a football boom waiting to happen," says FFA chief Gianni Infantino days before the country hosts its biggest football tournament - the U-17 World Cup. Infantino felt there is plenty of scope to develop the sport in India. "All though football has been making considerable strides in the country for years now, there is a unanimous sense that the room for growth is still of gigantic proportions. India is a football boom waiting to happen. It is simply a matter of investing in development and, more importantly, doing so in a wide and effective manner," Infantino wrote in 'FFA 1940 magazine'. The 47-year-old, who succeeded the controversial Sepp Blatter, added, "This is what the FIFA Forward Programme aims to achieve with tailor made projects. For every territory in the world, there is a sensible plan to 'ignite football growth.' The World Cup will be held in India from October 6 to 28 across six continents every day, as we count down to the kick-off of the FIFA U-17 World Cup in October, India is a country ready to have this youth tournament as a valuable spotlight shining right over its development plan," Infantino said. "With the 'Mission 11 Million', which is taking football to every corner across the whole country, India has been laying the foundation for a true revolution. A revolution of development and popularisation," he added. India will make their debut in the U-17 World Cup and the FFA chief called the tournament a stepping stone for young footballers. "The FIFA U-17 World Cup is, by its very definition, a stepping stone for young footballers to experience what the global stage feels like," Infantino said.

Sanath Jayasuriya-headed Sri Lankan cricket selectors to resign after India series

NEW DELHI, AUG 29 /-/- In the wake of their humiliating defeats to Sri Lanka in both the Test and ODI series, Sri Lankan selectors have decided to step down after the end of the series. According to reports, the Sanath Jayasuriya headed panel will effectively resign after the solitary Twenty20 international on September 6. The other members of the panel are Ramesh Kaluwitharana, Ranjit Madurasinghe, Eric Upanantha and Asanka Gurusinha. The committee took office on May 1, 2016. India had won the three-match Test series 3-0, then sealed the

five-match ODI series with a six-wicket win in the third match on Sunday. India now have an unassailable 3-0 lead. Confirming the new development, Sri Lanka Cricket (SLC) vice-president Mohan de Silva said that, "Sri Lanka Cricket chief selector Sanath Jayasuriya, as well as committee members Ranjith Madurasinghe, Ramesh Kaluwitharana, Asanka Gurusinha and Eric Upanantha, have decided to resign." A combined letter bearing the names of the above committee members was conveyed this decision to sports minister Dayasiri

Jayasekara. According to the letter, their tenure will end on September 7, he was reported as saying by new papers. Lanka, once considered a formidable force in world cricket, is now facing an existential crisis. Since the retirement of legends like Kumar Sangakkara, Mahela Jayawardene, Muttiah Muralitharan and host of other match winners in quick succession, the Lions have failed in transition. Couple it with mismanagement, Lanka cricket is witnessing one of its worst periods. The teams selected by this panel have tasted defeats to Zimbabwe, in ODI series, in a first at home. Lanka also suffered first-round exit in the ICC Champions Trophy in England. Then came the India series, which has left the Lankan team like never before.

'Glad changed the medal colour to silver' It's not going to be easy anymore, says Sindhu

HYDERABAD, AUG 29 /-/- Shrugging off the disappointment of losing the epic final, former bronze medalist PV Sindhu today said she is happy she could at least change the colour of the medal by bagging a silver at the World Championship. Sindhu went down fighting 19-21, 22-20, 22-22 to Japan's Nozomi Okuhara in a nail-biting marathon summit clash on Sunday that lasted for an hour and 50 minutes at the Emirates Arena in Glasgow.

"After the final match, I felt upset but I thought 'never mind'. I thought it is over now. From next day it was normal," said Sindhu, who twice won bronze in the 2013 and 2014 editions, told reporters here after returning home. "It is one of the best after Rio (Olympics). World Championship is something different. It was bronze earlier. I am happy that I changed the colour to silver," she added. Talking about the World Championship final, the Olympic silver medalist said: "It was tiring mentally and physically. You think you have to get a point (Chen Yufei) (Nozomi Okuhara of Japan) was also tired. It was not my day." Asked if a new trend of longer duration matches emerged in badminton, she replied in the affirmative. "Definitely, it is not going to be easy any more. We have to fight for each point. Anything can happen (in the match)," she said. Replying to a query, Sindhu said it is great to hear that people looked up to her and many prominent personalities wished her in the match. Chief National Coach P Gopichand expressed happiness at Sindhu and Saina Nehwal winning medals and their players K Srikanth and B Sai Praneeth putting up good performances in the World Championships. Gopichand also hoped Sindhu's return in a good run after winning two big medals at a young age. "At 22, she has won big medals, hopefully this will continue," he said. Gopichand said it was great to receive wishes from the top level in the government, including Prime Minister, for good performances in badminton. "I am glad to see how we have become more competitive and demanding characterised by long rallies, feels P V Sindhu, who had to settle for a silver after losing a marathon final at the World Championship. In a battle of attrition marked by energy-sapping long rallies, including a 73-shot rally, Sindhu and Japan's Nozomi Okuhara fought for an hour and 50 minutes before the Indian lost the match by a whisker. "It's not going to be easy anymore. Because, if you see, women's singles, men's singles, dou-



PV Sindhu is the only Indian badminton player to win both Olympics silver medal and World Badminton Championship silver medal.

bles, whatever, nowadays, the rallies are too long," Sindhu told reporters after returning home on Tuesday. "Nobody is getting an easy point anywhere. It is just that you have to fight for each point," added the 22-year-old from Hyderabad, who won bronze twice in the 2013 and 2014 editions. Talking about the nail-biting final, Sindhu said: "Mentally and physically, it is just tiring. But at that point of time, you just think that you have to get that point. Because, if it is world championship final, I was just playing. She was equally tired. That 73-shot rally, I think it happened for the first time. It was a good match because, it was anybody's game," she said. Olympic silver medalist Sindhu said she was upset after the match "It was a good match, overall. Okuhara also played well. At that time, after 20 all, it was anybody's game. I fought hard but it was not just my day," she said. "After the final match, I felt upset but I thought 'never mind'. I thought it is over now, from next day it was normal." Sindhu, however, took the disappointment in her stride to focus on the future and said she is glad she could at least change the colour of the medal this time. "Feeling very happy. It's one of the best tournaments after Rio (Olympics) and also World Championships is something different. Before it was bronze medal, both the times, this time I changed the colour to silver. I am very happy about

Players need to get used to scheduling: Gopichand

HYDERABAD, AUG 29 /-/- The scheduling of matches in the recent World Badminton Championship was an issue but the players need to get used to it, said Chief National Coach P Gopichand. "In a way, yes (it was an issue). But sometimes you are at the wrong end. Her (P V Sindhu) semifinals in the night session was a tough day and it was almost 1-1.30 by the time she slept and then next day the final was in the morning. Sometimes, these small things affect a long match, where you need extra energy," Gopichand said today. However, it is important to get used to it, he said. "Not an excuse, it happens, it is just important that we get used to it. Yes, I would think, there were three, four matches which could have been scheduled better," Gopichand said further. He was asked if the scheduling of the matches was a concern. Gopichand said players sometimes lose out when it comes the television requirements and what fans want. "But, our challenge is that Indian television timings dictate matches and that's why they want some of the matches to be in the morning and sometimes the local crowds may be wanting to see the big matches to be in the evening. It's a compromise which needs to be done and we have to accept it," Gopichand said. Gopichand, who is appreciated for producing world class shuttlers, was elated to see Sindhu played in the World Championship final before finishing second best in the epic clash. "It was a tough match. Both the players played well. Very proud of the way Sindhu responded and also the fight which was on the cards. For me, one of the best matches I have seen. It's been a great preparation for us. All of us put a great effort," he said. "At 22, she (Sindhu) has big medals and four consecutive years of medals. Hopefully, this continues. By the end of her career, she will win lot of more gold in her cabinet," he said. He also praised Saina Nehwal for having



Gopichand said sports in India is at a stage where it has never been in the past. We have the highest officials in the country talking about sport in a big way. We never had somebody at the Prime Minister's level address this issue of sports successfully over so many months," he said. A lot has been achieved in badminton and a lot more needs to be achieved, he said. "Hopefully, things will improve. I would say that a lot has been spoken. A lot has been done. But a lot more needs to be done. Because, the whole world is competing and we need to ensure that we put our best foot forward," he said. (PTI)

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MS Dhoni's improved performances give fans opportunity to hit out at MSK Prasad yet again

NEW DELHI, AUG 29 /-/- After being roasted on Twitter for his comment on MS Dhoni's future in Team India ahead of the start of ODI series against Sri Lanka, MSK Prasad's team started trending again, all thanks to the former Indian captain's fans. Right before the start of the limited overs series, Dhoni's performance faced criticism from fans for his comment on the veteran wicket-keeper batsman's form and consistency in the team. "You never know. We don't say it is an automatic thing (selection) but we will see. We are all stakeholders. We will wait the Indian team to do well. If he is delivering, why not?



If he is not, we will have to look at alternatives," Prasad had said. With Dhoni being of the best performers in the 2nd and 3rd ODI for Virat Kohli and Co against Sri Lanka, Prasad's team became a target on Twitter once again as Dhoni fans took to social media in reminding him of what the 35-year-old brings to the table. The second ODI saw Dhoni and Bhuvneshwar Kumar put on an unbroken 100-run stand for the 8th wicket to give the visitors a 2-0 series lead. In the 3rd match, Dhoni paired up with Rohit Sharma to forge yet another unbeaten century partnership and help his side secure a 6-wicket win.