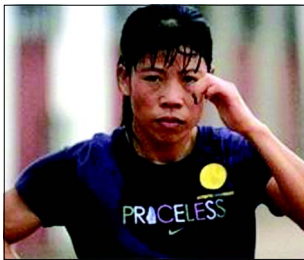


# Mary Kom resigns as boxing's national observer



NEW DELHI, DEC 1 /- Five-time world champion M C Mary Kom has resigned as the national observer for Indian boxing after Sports Minister Rajyavardhan Singh Rathore made it clear that active sports persons will not be considered for the position. "I resigned as national observer 10 days ago after having a word with Mr Rathore. I had been requested to take up the position, it was not something I had asked for." Mary Kom, who claimed her fifth Asian Championships gold medal last month, told PTI on Friday. "I had inquired about the rule on not having active athletes as observers with the then Sports Secretary Injeti Srinivas when it was offered to me," she explained, reacting to

insinuation that her appointment smacked of conflict of interest given that she is still an active national camper. "But at that time, I was told that I should nonetheless accept the position. I did so on insistence of the Ministry and I don't want unnecessary controversies about something that I had not asked for."

The 35-year-old Olympic bronze medalist was among 12 national observers appointed in March by the then Sports Minister Vijay Goel. The list also included the likes of Olympic-gold medalist shooter Abhinav Bindra, double Olympic medalist, Sushil Kumar and former Commonwealth Games gold medalist Akhil Kumar among others. Of

these, Sushil and Mary Kom are still active in their respective sports. Akhil, on the other hand, is no longer a part of the national camp after giving up amateur boxing. He has already rejected the conflict of interest charge, saying that he is neither a beneficiary of government schemes nor a part of the national camp. "I was never interested in this but accepted the position because I had been requested. I have my hands full with a lot of things. I am happy to let it go and have no complaints," said Mary Kom. The decorated boxer is also a member of Rajya Sabha, the upper house of Indian parliament, and is in contention for the Commonwealth and Asian Games next year. (PTI)

# Friendship with KL, Dhawan helps during selection calls: Vijay

NEW DELHI, DEC 1 /- It is tough when one among three in-form players has to sit out but senior India opener Murali Vijay is relieved that his "off the field friendship" with KL Rahul and Shikhar Dhawan has helped him deal with sensitive selection matters with ease. Dhawan and Rahul scored 94 and 79 in the second innings of the first Test on a green top where Vijay India's most technically equipped opener was dropped. With Dhawan taking a break in the second Test, it was Vijay, who made a successful comeback in international cricket with a patient hundred. With one among Dhawan and Rahul set to be dropped from the XI, Vijay was asked about how does their troika deal with the situation. "We three are very good friends off the field and that makes it much easier. Definitely, it unsettles (when one is dropped) the opener, who is playing regularly. Obviously, we three share a good rapport outside the field and this will help us big time during the (South Africa) series coming ahead and future," Vijay said at the pre-match media conference. The Tamil Nadu opener revealed that sharing feelings about selection openly with each other helps them to move on rather than keeping things brewing inside. So when one among the three is dropped, how do they deal with such a situation? Vijay said, "Make it easier, lighter and more fun (for the other). Talking about it openly and having a good chat over it rather than keeping things within yourself and making the other person feel it." The 30-year-old said whenever he and Dhawan have faced such a situation, they thrashed it out and moved on. "It's better off going in the open. Like whatever I feel or Shikhar feels, we put it out in the open, so that it comes off and we move forward," he said. "Basically, we are fun-loving people and we do things together. We have good times outside the field, which is really helping us as a team." However, Vijay sidestepped the question on what can be the possible playing XI for the final Test. "I don't know. Whatever the team management does, we are well-equipped and all looking to contribute. I don't know how they (team management) are going to play around with the team. It's absolutely their choice and we are ready to do it for the team," said Vijay, who has 3536 runs in 52 Tests with 10 hundreds. As the discussions veered towards playing in challenging conditions, Vijay said that communication and sharing of knowledge becomes important. "We have been playing Test cricket abroad for a while now and the same members have stuck together. It's going to be very important for us to communicate and share knowledge with each other," he said. "These are things I am looking forward to in this tour as these are the things that will add value rather than going and having hit in the centre. "We should clear our head before we are going to do. These are aspects we are looking forward to and there are definite plans for team building activities and it will be good fun." "I tried to do something different in practice so that it challenges me. I try to be better each and every day possible. That's the whole concept of doing that." With Tamil Nadu out of Ranji Trophy, Vijay plans to focus on fitness and skill development in the next three weeks before leaving for South Africa. "Definitely occupy myself with fitness and skill level where I want to go on and improve a little bit. Have a good training schedule and stick onto it and prepare for the big series coming ahead." Vijay rated the Feroz Shah Kotla track as "good" and hoped that it would be a good experience to play on a track that had grass covering. "It has grass, so hopefully, that's the focus on fitness and skill development. Hopefully, the wicket plays good and we get a good experience before the SA tour." (PTI)

# Happy opening dilemma as India brace up for another big win

NEW DELHI, DEC 1 /- An infinitely superior India will have to sit out to carry out yet another demolition act on a below-par Sri Lanka when the two teams clash in the third and final Test starting here tomorrow. India's dominance has made the series a lopsided affair and the aspect

Kohli playing, it would mean that one of the openers will have to sit out. If Karun Nair's example is taken, he had to sit out because first-choice middle-order batsman Ajinkya Rahane was making a comeback to the side. If that policy is followed, then Dhawan and Rahul

aiming for a finish inside four days. One aspect of this encounter which could be of some relevance is the fact that this will be India's last Test match at home for quite some time as the young team would embark on the toughest journey of their cricketing careers come 2018.

Add to it, the absence of their injured veteran left-arm spinner Rangaana Herath has left the island nation look like a rudderless ship. Herath, with figures of 1/81 in 29 overs, was the only bowler who the Indians treated with respect during their innings and 239-run win in the second Test in Nagpur. Even worse, Angelo Mathews, who was supposed to take Sri Lanka cricket to the next level, has been woefully out of form. The Perozh Shah Kotla track may not be as flat as the one at Jamtha, where India scored 610/8 declared but it also won't be a green top like the one they got at the Eden Gardens. Ishant Sharma, who had a match-haul of five wickets, would like to retain his place in the side even if Mohammed Shami gets injured. The last time a Test match was held at the Kotla in 2015, it was rated as the best pitch as the match against South Africa went deep into the fifth day. But the current Sri Lanka side does not possess the kind of guts and gumption that Hashim Amla, Temba Bavuma and AB de Villiers displayed, which precisely is the reason that all and sundry are bracing for a quick finish.



Virat Kohli during a practice session in New Delhi on Friday

which will be most interesting to observe tomorrow is the opening combination that the home team would pick. After the batting debacle in the first innings of the first Test, Indian openers Shikhar Dhawan and KL Rahul enjoyed a fruitful second innings with scores of 94 and 79 respectively. Murali Vijay, who was surprisingly kept out of playing XI for the first Test, came into the side in the second game in Dhawan's absence to score 128. Now with Dhawan back in the squad, it is indeed a happy problem for skipper Virat Kohli, who has to choose two quality openers among three. Had Kohli himself opted out of the third Test, then it would have been easier to fit in all three knowing that Rahul can also play at the No.4 position. But with

have a better chance but Vijay's tighter technique also makes him a strong contender. A bold decision could have been to drop an out-of-form Rahane from the playing XI and accommodate all three but that could be detrimental to the Indian vice-captain's confidence as he will be a vital cog in the wheel for India in overseas conditions. India are 1-0 up in the series which could have easily been 2-0 had Kohli and his men got an extra 45 minutes on the final day of the rain-curtailed first Test that ended in a draw. With skipper Kohli himself questioning the need for such series in a roundabout manner, the unequal balance between the sides has been all too evident. No wonder, India would be ideally hoping to put up another dominant show.

Starting with three Tests against South Africa followed by the two marquee away series - five matches against England and four against Australia at the back-end of 2018 will define the character of Kohli as a leader and also the ability of his team. Therefore it will be a good chance for the likes of Kohli, Cheteshwar Pujara and Ravichandran Ashwin to rack up some more enviable numbers which will do a world of good to their confidence. Facing a Sri Lankan side, which has been nothing short of an embarrassment, is not the greatest of challenges but for world's No 1 Test side, it will be an opportunity to get some much required match practice, which they unfortunately won't get in South Africa save a two-day game.

## GAME NOTES

### India enter quarters of WSF World men's team squash C'ship

NEW DELHI, DEC 1 /- Mahesh Mangaonkar did the star turn as eighth seed India edged out seventh seed Germany 2-1 and moved to the quarterfinal of the WSF World men's team squash championship in Marseille, France. Mahesh, 23, had come on to the court when the score read 1-1 and everything depended on him if India was to progress. Facing an unsure opponent in Valentin Rapp, Mahesh controlled the volleys and varied the drives to eventually carve out a comfortable 11-6, 11-7, 11-4 win on Thursday in 31 minutes to bring joy to the Indian camp. (PTI)

### Djokovic brings Stepanek into coaching team

PARIS, DEC 1 /- Former world number one Novak Djokovic said Radek Stepanek was joining his coaching team to complement Andre Agassi. Agassi and former doubles specialist Stepanek will replace the Serb's former coaching duo of Boris Becker and Marian Vajda. He parted company with Becker last year and ended a seven-year association with Vajda in May after seven years working together. "Not long ago, @radek, stepanek and I were on the opposite sides of the net. Now we are teaming up to chase new goals together and share the love for the game."

## SQUADS

**INDIA: Virat Kohli (captain), Murali Vijay, KL Rahul, Shikhar Dhawan, Cheteshwar Pujara, Ajinkya Rahane, Wriddhiman Saha (wk), Rohit Sharma, Ravichandran Ashwin, Ravindra Jadeja, Ishant Sharma, Umesh Yadav, Mohammed Shami, Vijay Shankar, Kuldeep Yadav.**  
**SRI LANKA: Dinesh Chandimal (captain), Dimuth Karunaratne, Sadeera Samarawickrama, Lahiru Thirimanne, Niroshan Dickwella, Angelo Mathews, Dilruwan Perera, Jefferey Vandersay, Roshan Silva, Dushan Shanaka, Suranga Lakmal, Lahiru Gamage, Lakshan Sandakan, Dhananjaya de Silva. (PTI)**  
Match starts 0930 hrs.

# Cheteshwar Pujara should be in top bracket of central contracts: Shastri



James Anderson is 'biggest sledger', says Steve Smith

NEW DELHI, DEC 1 /- India's chief coach Ravi Shastri feels that Test specialist Cheteshwar Pujara should remain in the top bracket when the BCCI and Committee of Administrators (COA) thrash out the revised central contracts based on new remuneration structure. Pujara is currently in the Grade A of Central Contracts alongside Virat Kohli, Mahendra Singh Dhoni, Ravichandran Ashwin, Ajinkya Rahane and Murali Vijay. During a panel discussion on journalist Rajdeep Sardesai's new book 'Democracy's XI', Shastri said: "It is very important that someone like Cheteshwar Pujara is kept in the top bracket of central contract." Shastri, along with Kohli and Dhoni, met CoA chief Vinod Rai to discuss the revised remuneration package and Future Tours & Programme (FTP)

calendar. There have been discussions in BCCI circles that players will be bracketed as per who plays the maximum number of international matches. Pujara, who is in a particular calendar year, Pujara, one of the pillars of the Indian Test set-up, does not play any other format and unfortunately has not been getting any IPL contract. Shastri also spoke about how the mutual respect between Dhoni and Kohli has been a reason for the current team's success. "I have never seen Dhoni lose his cool. If he has, it must have been for 10 seconds. Kohli is still work in progress but he will certainly mature. I hear a lot of stories about their relationship but all those are not true. I have seen how much mutual respect they have for each other." Shastri said in the presence of former captain Kapil Dev.

**James Anderson is 'biggest sledger', says Steve Smith**  
ADELAIDE, DEC 1 /- Australia captain Steve Smith described England's James Anderson as "one of the biggest sledgers in the game" on Friday as the heat rose off the field at the Adelaide Oval on the eve of the second Test. England have made clear that their dissatisfaction over comments aimed at Jonny Bairstow during his second innings in the 10-wicket defeat in the first Test in Brisbane last week that gave the hosts a 1-0 lead in the five-match series. Anderson compared the antics of the Australians to bullying in a column in a British newspaper but an amused Smith told reporters that when it came to doling out insults in the middle, the England players were among the worst offenders. "I read the article, and it's interesting coming from Jimmy calling us bullies and big sledgers," Smith told reporters.

**Q U Z Contest**

CQ003

WHAT IS A PACA ?

A PACA ?? I THOUGHT YOU WANTED A PACKER.

Yesterday's Answer: Karl Benz and Gottlieb Daimler.

Name : M.S. Archana, Address : Phoenix Bay, M.S. Archana, Bay, Vaishnavi, Sharma, Shivaji Colony in Garacharma.

We will publish your name, correct answer in this space. SMS the answers alongwith your name, address, correct answers to the following mobile number: 8334826380

**This little boy Mohd. Aslam from our islands is fighting CANCER**

An appeal to fellow islanders

He needs our help

Mohd. Aslam, a 10 year old island boy is battling **BONE CANCER**, presently undergoing chemotherapy at G.B.Pant Hospital is in critical state and is in need of about 7 lakhs for further treatment at cancer hospital in Hyderabad. His father Mr. S. Rafiq is working as DRM in secretariat, R/o Bambooflat.

It's a request to extend help whatever little possible donation either in person or to account number.

Account Name : S.Rafiq PH.No.9474291711  
A/C No.30350586965  
IFSC: SBIN0007708

**EOI Isles Icon 2018**

Celebrating excellence in Andaman & Nicobar Islands

Award, Certificate and Cash prize of **Rs. 50,000/-**

- NOMINATIONS OPEN -

The most widely circulated newspaper in the Isles, THE ECHO OF INDIA is announcing EOI ISLES ICON 2018 for a person, organisation or group who have excelled in making Andaman and Nicobar Islands proud nationally or internationally in the field of culture, social, sports, journalism, business or in any field deemed right. To be selected by an esteemed jury, the award will be presented in a glittering ceremony at Port Blair in the month of March, 2018 to be attended by the crème de la crème of the islands.

Please fill this form with the name, address, phone number and email of the person, organisation or group you would like to Nominate and see the first EOI ISLES ICON 2018 (It also could be you!). Attach photograph (you can download picture from the internet too) of the nominee along with the cut out of this form.

IMPORTANT: Please do not forget to cut this filled form from this newspaper (If you do not, then the nomination will be deemed rejected) and attach to a detailed list of the achievements, personal profile and photograph in a separate paper or document. No photocopy of newspaper cut out will be entertained.

**LAST DATE OF SUBMISSION- 31ST DECEMBER, 2017**

NOTE: Please post or courier nomination with cut out of this form to EOI ISLES ICON award 2018, THE ECHO OF INDIA, First cross, M.C. Road, Junglhat (near Mitai Book Store), Port Blair- 744103.

<p style="text-align: center;">FORM</p> <p>NAME _____</p> <p>FIELD OF EXCELLENCE _____</p> <p>ADDRESS _____</p> <p>PHONE/CELL NO. _____</p> <p>EMAIL _____</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">PHOTO</p>
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NB. No staff members or their families of THE ECHO OF INDIA group of publications can participate in the nomination process. No telephone calls or emails will be entertained.