

Rahul Bhatnagar replaces Injeti Srinivasin as Sports Ministry Secretary

NEW DELHI, OCT 12 /- Rahul Bhatnagar, a former Joint Secretary in the Sports Ministry, will take charge as its Secretary replacing incumbent Injeti Srinivasin, who has been moved to the Corporate Affairs Ministry.

In a bureaucratic reshuffle, Bhatnagar, a senior IAS officer from the UP Cadre, was brought back to the Sports Ministry. He will also hold the post of Director General of the Sports Authority of India (SAI). Bhatnagar, who served as joint secretary in the Sports Ministry during the 2010 Commonwealth Games, told PTI that he has received the orders but will list out his priorities only after taking charge in about a week's time. In July this year, Bhatnagar was appointed chairperson of the Greater Noida Industrial Development Authority (GNIDA) and he had promised to resolve the builder-homebuyer impasse. He was appointed UP Chief Secretary in September 2016 by then Chief Minister Akhilesh Yadav. Bhatnagar is not new to the Sports Ministry having served it in the capacity of Joint Secretary. He is also a former Director General of National Anti-Doping Agency (NADA). He was part of the ministry when corruption charges had hit the Delhi 2010 CWG. All the bureaucrats were later cleared with a CBI inquiry pointing fingers to Congress leader Suresh Kalmadi.

India eye improvement in series-decider

HYDERABAD, OCT 12 /- India will be itching to bounce back from the thrashing they received in Guwahati when they take on an edgy but resilient Australia in the series-deciding third and final T20 International here on Friday. India, who dominated Australia in the preceding ODI series, won the opening T20 comfortably before getting a rude shock in the second game. Despite the recent success, India has had over Australia. Virat Kohli has maintained the team from Under Downs is always tough to beat. And with the thumping eight-wicket win over the hosts on Tuesday, Australia go into series decider with some serious momentum. India had a forgettable day at the Baraspara Stadium in all aspects of the department, the all-important toss. The highly-rated batsmen were found wanting against the new ball bowlers in the first series, will sit out the Australian pacer Jason

Brearendorf doing the bulk of the damage. Captain Kohli was out for a rare duck and he, along with the rest of the batting line-up, would be eager to make amends. India's new ball bowlers did alright in Guwahati but wrist spinners Yuzvendra Chahal and Kuldeep Yadav were taken to the cleaners by Moises Henriques and Travis Head, who shared a match-winning partnership of 109. Yadav especially bowled either too short or too full and the set batsmen did not have any difficulty in punishing the loose balls. However, the dew proved to be a factor with the ball not turning much in the Australian innings. Despite the hammering the spinners receive, it is unlikely that Kohli will make a change and bring in Axar Patel. Similar is the case in the pace department, which means veteran Ashish Nehra, who is set to announce his retirement in the next series, will sit out again. Australia did pull one

back in the ODI series before eventually losing it 1-4. But the way they played on Tuesday, the same resolve and purpose was missing from their body language in the earlier games. David Warner has done so in the absence of regular captain Steve Smith, making optimum use of the resources at his disposal. Brendon McCullum has his job easier with a spectacular spell of swing bowling before Henriques rose to the occasion after being promoted to number three in the batting order. Leggie Adam Zampa too played his part well with a twin strike in the middle overs and he would be expected to do the same tomorrow. While Warner has led effectively, he would surely love to be back among the runs after falling in the earlier two games. The pitch at the Rajiv Gandhi International Stadium is usually good for batting and fans will be expecting a run feast after



Virat Kohli with his teammates during a practice session. File Photo

Kuldeep is a product of Kumble: Raina

MUMBAI, OCT 12 /- Praising Kuldeep Yadav for his recent exploits in international cricket, India discard Suresh Raina on Thursday said credit should be given to former head coach Anil Kumble for shaping the young spinner. "Kuldeep (Yadav) is doing very well and the credit goes to Anil Bhai (Anil Kumble). He worked really hard with him," Raina told reporters at an event here. "I was talking to him (Kuldeep) in the IPL and he always use to message Anil Bhai. He is the product of Anil Kumble. He (Kuldeep) has done well with (former Australian chinaman) Brad Hogg. He is the guy who will change everything in bowling department," he said. The 23-year-old chinaman from Kanpur was impressive in his debut Test series against Australia and also became the third Indian bowler to take a hat-trick in ODIs against the Aussies in the last series. Raina along with Olympian Kavita Rao launched the logo of Skechers Performance Go River Marathon which will be held on December 10. Raina has

been out of the Indian team for a long time and the 30-year-old said he is working hard to earn his place back in the team. "I am working hard and there is nothing tough in life. If you enjoy your process and enjoy your cricket and I have always done that," he said. "When I got injured that was a difficult time of my life. So it (the comeback) is something and I am enjoying it and things will come in my time," the former Chennai Super Kings player said. There were reports that Raina failed the Yo'Yo Test. Asked about it, Raina quipped, "You test your cricket and I have always done that." Raina-led Uttar Pradesh lost to Railways in the Ranji Trophy opener after they were bundled out for 72 in the fourth innings chasing 84. On the loss, Raina said, "The boys are still learning. The wicket was little different. We have still five more games to go and after that match we had a chat. In the Duleep trophy you have seen wickets and its not in my hand to win the toss. So we had to bat on the fourth day and it wasn't easy," he signed off. (PTI)

Nehra announces retirement, says always wanted to end on high

HYDERABAD, OCT 12 /- Veteran Indian pacer Ashish Nehra on Thursday decided to call time on his injury-ravaged career after next month's opening T20 against New Zealand at his home ground of Delhi, saying "it is always good to retire when people are asking why rather than why not." "I have spoken to the team management as well as the chairman of selectors committee that the game against New Zealand has come in Delhi. So it can't get bigger than retiring in front of your home fans where I played my first Ranji Trophy game 20 years ago," said Nehra. The 36-year-old seamer made the announcement on the eve of the third and final T20 against Australia here on Friday. Nehra also confirmed that he won't be playing in the lucrative Indian Premier League. Making his India debut back in 1999 under Mohammed Azharuddin, Nehra has so far played 17 Tests, 120 ODIs and 26 T20 Internationals for the country. He has picked 44 Test wickets, besides 127 ODI and 34 T20 scalps. He could have played a lot more for the constant injuries. Nehra made his latest India comeback for the ongoing



T20 series against Australia but did not get a look-in in the first two games. He came into the series with the mindset of playing all matches but soon realised that the younger crop was fully ready to shoulder the responsibility. "When I came into the series, I came prepared to play all games. I spoke to the captain (Virat Kohli) and coach (Ravi Shastri) straightaway. My thinking is that I should be in the XI if I am available. If you see, I have played in all the T20 games in the past two years so I have my plans to them (team management)," said the Delhi veteran. Nehra said it was not a decision he made overnight and reached the conclusion after seeing the young pacers do well. "Bhuvneshwar is ready to shoulder the responsibility with the way he is bowling. Earlier, Bumrah and I were playing but now Bhuvni is doing well. And there is also no big event lined up in the next 5-6 months. I put my point of view and they all respect my decision," said Nehra. The left-arm fast bowler said he could have easily played international cricket for another year and also the next IPL. It is very important for me to know what people think about me in the dressing room. Sonow

remember moments, like the six wickets against England, or the last over in Karachi but I don't think I am like that. "But yes I will always feel good about the fact that the captain always asked me to bowl the last over. We won the World Cup final (in 2011), lost also (in 2003) but tough to pinpoint my fondest memory." On a lighter note, Nehra said that he has made plans only till November 1, when he will say goodbye to the game, though he is open to coaching roles in the future. His body underwent as many as 12 surgeries but Nehra overcame all of them to play for India again. "For me, the true measure of success is how many times you bounce back from failures. When you are always on top and suddenly you fall, you don't know how to come up again." "I would say that (coming back from injuries) have made me strong mentally. I am sure that will help me in my normal life. Last two-three years have been a great journey. For me, it is not how you start, it is how you finish. I always trained to play for India. Before signing off, Nehra refused to compare the captains he played under, from Azharuddin to Virat Kohli. (PTI)

'Current team is one of the best in Indian football history'

BENGALURU, OCT 12 /- Praising India's qualification for the 2019 AFC Asian Cup, coach Stephen Constantine said the current team is one of the best in country's football history. "This is one of the best teams in the history of Indian football, if not the best," he told reporters after India beat Macau 4-1 in a qualifier match at Sree Kanteerava Stadium here on Wednesday night. India had thrashed Macau 4-1 in a Group A encounter which helped India to qualify for the Asian Cup for the fourth time. In 1964, India participated in the tournament for the first time and ended runners up. In 1984 and 2011, they crashed out in the group stage. Replying to a query, Constantine said he is extremely proud of the boys who had taken his demands earnestly, during training and practice sessions, before they qualified for the Asian Cup. "Thank my staff...everybody

has been magnificent. It is a huge thing for Indian football. It is not only an honour for the team, but the whole country. Right from clubs, coaches everyone has played their part to see the success," he said. "The team had some ups and downs, though," he added. Asked whether he would be fielding the bench strength in the remaining group stage matches, Constantine said he cannot say anything for now, but wants India to finish first in the points-table. "If you want us sitting out for the next two games, I am not going to sit out, for sure," India Captain Sunil Chhetri intervened. Replying to a query, Constantine said, "Bhavesh Singh was a good lifer. Chhetri scored the goal in second half with his help. 'Balwant did what he was asked to do. After he was introduced, Sunil got the room to play with the ball and everyone knows, if he gets the room, he can be really dangerous," he said.



Siliguri: Baichung inaugurates Sports Station's maiden store



SILIGURI, OCT 12 /- "Sports Station", the multi-brand sportswear retail, has opened its very first store in Siliguri at City Centre Mall. The store was inaugurated by the popular Indian football sensation Baichung Bhutia recently. Launched in 2015, Sports Station is positioned as a Sports Specialty Brand Hub that brings the leading international sportswear brands under one roof, and boasts of a powerful portfolio including Nike, Adidas, Skechers, Puma, Asics, Reebok and Lotto. Joram Lalit, the retail partner for Sports Station, emphasized "Siliguri is rapidly developing in terms of its internal economy, overall development and growth in all spheres of life. The history of Siliguri, the patterns of the people here are undergoing a period of transition, and hence Sports Station is considering this fast-changing

Adapt quickly or be ready for harsh lesson in India: NZ coach

WELLINGTON, OCT 12 /- New Zealand coach Mike Hesson has sent out a clear warning to his team ahead of its tour of India - either adapt quickly to the conditions or get taught a harsh lesson by the world No.1 side. "Look, their record at home has been phenomenal in the last two or three years," said Hesson before leaving for India for a limited-overs series comprising the two ODIs and three T20Is starting October 22. "You know going over there that you have to perform, otherwise you get taught a pretty harsh lesson. It is important for us to adapt really quickly. India recently beat Australia 4-1 in a five-match ODI series to cement their number one spot in the ICC rankings. Nine squad members departed for India on Thursday, with the remaining six will be picked from the A side touring India at the moment. "The beauty of an A tour means we have already got people in India, adapting to conditions, so while they come in the squad will be familiar as they are going to be," he said. The coach said senior players, including captain Kane Williamson, will have to rise to the challenge. "Obviously there is the dew factor, the conditions are all very different depending on the grounds you go to.

Mali enter knock-out round with 3-1 win over New Zealand



NEW DELHI, OCT 12 /- African champions Mali breezed into the knock-out rounds of the FIFA U-17 World Cup with a dominating 3-1 win over New Zealand in their final group game here today. Mali, the last edition's runners-up, took the lead in the 18th minute through Salam Jiddou who struck a 25-yard stunner. The first goal supplier Nehra made his latest India comeback for the ongoing

beating Turkey 3-0 in their previous match. Paraguay topped the group with an all-win record. They beat Turkey 3-1 in Mumbai in the other Group B match today. New Zealand and Turkey ended their group engagements with one point each and failed to advance to the round of 16. The match, played in hot conditions, was dominated by Mali who had a ball possession of 61 per cent. They fired as many as 36 shots at the goal out of which 10 were on target. New Zealand, meanwhile, had just four shots but none on target. New Zealand got the first attempt at the goal in the minute but captain Max Mata could not give proper direction to his shot. In the same situation, the Mali goalkeeper Youssouf Koita, Mata, who returned today after sitting out in previous match due to a half-sprung, shot straight to the goalkeeper. As the initial challenge for New Zealand went abegging, Mali gradually stamped their authority with Traore in the thick of action on many occasions. In lone such lightning run down the left flank, Traore got the better of a defender and then sent a square pass to Jiddou who struck a powerful right footer from 25 yards to dump it to the New Zealand net. Soon after, Jiddou could have scored his second goal of the match but he shot straight to the keeper after being sent in the clear by Traore inside the New Zealand box. The second half was also dominated by Mali and they just took five minutes from the breather to double the lead. This time Traore cut in from the left and sent a curling right footer from the top of the box, between the keeper and goalkeeper, to hit net. Mali were denied by the goalkeeper in the 65th minute as substitute Cheick Oumar Doucoure was rebuffed by a diving thudding the woodwork. Against the run of play, New Zealand pulled one back in the 72nd minute with second half striker Traore, who had a spraying heading into an open goal after Mali goalkeeper was beaten by a high cross from the left by Elijah Just. Mali struck back and gave New Zealand a chance of a snatching a draw as the African side made it 3-1 in the 82nd minute Lassana Ndiaye. (PTI)