

CWG performance may be considered for Khel Ratna



NEW DELHI, May 15

Weightlifter Mirabai Chanu and Sanjitha Chanu's long wait for a government sports award may soon come to an end, and star javelin thrower Neeraj Chopra could get first-time lucky to be conferred with the Rajiv Gandhi Khel Ratna.

Arjuna awards, the sports ministry is planning to keep their impressive CWG performances in mind while deciding on the sporting honour, it's been learnt. The ministry, while taking into account India's one of the best-ever CWG shows in terms of medal count, may request the soon-to-be constituted awards' selection committee to include the CWG medallists' fine show in Gold Coast while award-

ing them points for their performance in the last four-year cycle. The ministry, it's been learnt, could nominate two sportspersons for the Khel Ratna and three athletes for the Arjuna award as it reserves the rights to do so. As per norms, a candidate's performance of last four years up to December 31, 2017 will be taken into account to arrive at the total points accumulated by a sportsperson. However, the ministry could make an exception, like it did during the time of 2016 Rio Olympics and Paralympic Games, to consider their CWG performances. In that scenario, strong contenders Mirabai, Neeraj, Sanjitha, star table tennis player Manika Batra, badminton star Kidambi Srikanth could benefit immensely. **TNN**

IOA signs Li-Ning as apparel partner till Tokyo Olympics

NEW DELHI, May 15

The IOA has announced sports apparel brand Li-Ning as Indian team's official sports apparel partner till Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games. As part of the partnership, Li-Ning will provide Indian athletes and officials with sports competition and training apparel, leisure wear and footwear for the Asian Games 2018, 2018 Summer Olympic Youth Games and Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games. On the new partnership, IOA president Narinder Batra said: We are pleased to announce Li-Ning as the official sports apparel partner of the Indian contingent until 2020 Olympic Games. This partnership represents the rising stature of Indian sports and at this crucial juncture to find a like-minded partner like Li-Ning gives us and our athletes a great boost. IOA secretary general Rajeev Mehta said, We are

extremely proud to partner with Li-Ning again and offer Indian athletes the best of sports apparel. Our partnership began with Rio 2016 Olympic Games and this time we are delighted to have them on board for long-term till 2020. Commenting on this association Mahender Kapoor, MD Sunlight Sports Pvt Ltd said, We, Li-Ning-Sunlight Sports, are excited and happy to join Indian Olympic Association as its official Sports Apparel partner for a period of nearly 3 years covering Asian Games 2018, 2018 Summer Olympic Youth Games and 2020 Olympic Games. "Like we provided the comfort wear apparels and footwear to Indian athletes in 2016 Rio Olympics, we are fully committed at providing best quality and on-field comfort clothes to Indian athletes during these mega events." **PTI**

Our spinners will challenge Indian batsmen: Afghanistan captain Stanikzai

NEW DELHI, May 15

Afghanistan captain Asghar Stanikzai believes the 'world-class' spinners in his team will pose a serious challenge to the much-vaunted Indian batting line-up in the historic one-off Test in Bengaluru from June 14. Afghanistan will make their much awaited Test debut at the Chinnaswamy Stadium and Stanikzai said the aim is to give a good fight to India, who will be without their regular skipper Virat Kohli. "With or without Kohli, India are a top team and even stronger at home. Kohli is a very big player and we would have enjoyed playing against him," Stanikzai told PTI. Afghanistan are currently training in Greater Noida but will be travelling to Dehradun later this week ahead of the three-match



T20 series against Bangladesh early next month. While coach Phil Simmons has stressed on making his team mentally and physically ready for the five-day challenge, Stanikzai feels adjusting to the Test mode from four-day cricket will not be much of an issue. The team's key players -- spinners Rashid Khan and Mujeeb Zadran, and all-

rounder Mohammad Nabi are currently playing in the IPL. Rashid especially has evolved into a top-quality leg-spinner and a few others including Mujeeb, Zahir Khan and Qais Ahmed too are improving rapidly. He sees the upcoming Afghan T20 league in Sharjah further fast-tracking the growth of the game in the country. **PTI**

IPL 2018 qualification scenarios: Race for playoffs heats up

MUMBAI, May 15

We are finally on to the last week of the league stage of the 11th season of IPL and it must be said that it has been one of the most open seasons ever in the short history of the tournament. 48 matches done and dusted, seven teams are still in fray for the silverware. Sunrisers Hyderabad and Chennai Super Kings have already booked their play-off berths with two matches each still in hand. Delhi Daredevils are the only side that stand eliminated with eight league games still to be played. By virtue of Royal Challengers Bangalore's win over Kings XI Punjab in Indore, SRH are assured of a top-two finish and will head to Mumbai for the first qualifier.

With six wins and as many losses in 12 games, KKR still have their fate in their own hands. If they win their last two games, they are assured of a last four finish. They can progress even with one win if both KXIP and RR don't win all their remaining games. If KKR win only one out of their last two matches, there is a possibility of multiple teams finishing at 14 points and team(s) with the highest NRR can go through. Rajasthan Royals (Points 12; NRR -0.347) After struggling with just six points from nine games, RR have stormed back into contention with three Jos Buttler-led back-to-back

wins. If they get the better of KKR at the Eden on Tuesday, they not only reach 14 points with a game in hand but also prevent KKR from overtaking them on the points tally. Like KKR, a huge deficit on NRR rules out the hypothetical possibility of them qualifying on 12 points. Kings XI Punjab (Points 12; NRR -0.518) They suffered a reversal of fortune in the second-half of the season. After winning five out of their first six games, they could win only one out of the next six. They have two away games scheduled next - in Mumbai and Pune. If they win both they are through for sure. If they

win only one, they will be tied on 14 points with multiple teams. Mumbai Indians (Points 10; NRR +0.405) The winning momentum they started to gather was arrested by the loss to RR at the Wankhede and they now need other results to go their way to qualify. They will be eliminated if they lose to KXIP on Wednesday. If they win both their remaining matches, it will make sure the fourth qualifying team can go through with 14 points. Royal Challengers Bangalore (Points 10; NRR +0.218) Back-to-back wins for the first time in two seasons has given RCB's quest for a maiden IPL title a fresh lease of life, albeit them needing other results to go their way. If KXIP and one of KKR or RR win all their remaining games, RCB stands eliminated come what may. The best RCB can reach is 14 points where they can tie with other sides and race ahead by virtue of a positive NRR. **Cricbuzz**

Team	M	W	L	NRR	Pts
1 SRH(Q)	12	9	3	+0.400	18
2 CSK(Q)	12	8	4	+0.383	16
3 KKR	12	6	6	-0.189	12
4 RR	12	6	6	-0.347	12
5 KXIP	12	6	6	-0.518	12
6 MI	12	5	7	+0.405	10
7 RCB	12	5	7	+0.218	10
8 DD	12	3	9	-0.478	6

India sports tourism takes off

MUMBAI, May 15

Sports tourism, already a big business in developed markets, is starting to make inroads with Indian sports fans who are looking beyond cricket when they travel overseas to attend a sporting event. According to Manmeet Ahluwalia, head of marketing at Expedia India, the launch of the Indian Premier League a decade ago was the catalyst, as fans began to travel internally in the country to watch games. That trend gained international momentum a few years later when the 2011 ICC Cricket World Cup was hosted across three countries: India, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh. But Indian sports fans are not only interested in cricket, according to Karan Anand, head of relationships for travel specialists Cox and Kings. "There has also been a shift in the interest for other sporting events like the Soccer World Cup or the Olympics." **Economic Times**

AFC Cup: Bengaluru FC hope to ride luck against Abahani

DHAKA, May 15

Bengaluru FC will hope for the rub of the green to go their way at more than one venue when they take on Abahani Limited Dhaka in their final Group E game at the Bangabandhu National Stadium on Wednesday. Albert Roca's men need a win while hoping Aizawl FC claim a point or more against New Radiant SC in Group E's other fixture, if they are to stand a chance of qualifying for knock-out stages of the Cup for a fourth successive year. Meanwhile, the Maldivian side simply need to match Bengaluru FC's result, as a better goal difference in the head-to-head comparison between the two sides will pull New Radiant through. Speaking to the press on the eve of the clash, Roca said, "It's true that we are in a position where a win may not be enough to qualify, but it has been made clear to the players that we have to remain focused on the task ahead. We cannot



take Abahani (Limited Dhaka) lightly, as they are a team with some good players and we have seen that in our travels here before." Bengaluru's only previous visit to Dhaka ended in defeat to the Bangladeshi side in the group stages of last year's AFC Cup campaign with late goals from Saad Uddin and Rubel Miya handing Roca's men a 0-2 loss. The Saiful Bari Titu-coached Abahani side are out of contention for the knockout stages and have won just one of their five games so far this campaign, a 3-0 away victory in Aizawl - their only win across all competitions in the last four months - but Roca believes there is no room for complacency. **IANS**

SC asks Delhi HC regarding Sreesanth's IPL spot-fixing case

NEW DELHI, May 15

The Supreme Court on Monday asked the Delhi High Court to decide by July end the appeal challenging a trial court order discharging several cricketers, including S Sreesanth, in the sensational IPL spot-fixing case. Sreesanth, who has been awarded life ban by the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI), has filed an appeal in the apex court challenging the Kerala High Court decision upholding the ban on him. A bench headed by Chief Justice Dipak Misra said it understood the "anxiety" of the cricketer to play cricket but would like to wait for the high court's decision on the appeal of Delhi Police challenging the trial court order discharging the cricketers and others in the IPL spot-fixing case. Sreesanth has sought an interim direction that he should be allowed to play the English County cricket. **PTI**

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