

CCFC officially crowned champion

Club comes in for praise for its brand of football and planning

I-LEAGUE

K. KEERTHIVASAN
CHENNAI
Chennai City FC (CCFC) was officially crowned the I-League champion in front of all the other clubs and bigwigs of All India Football Federation (AIFF) at a function here on Wednesday.
Sunando Dhar, CEO of I-League, praised Rohit Ramesh, owner of Chennai City, for the brand of football his team had dished out in the tournament.

'Noteworthy football'
"Chennai City was by far been the best team this year. Its brand of football of keeping the ball to the ground and the passing game were noteworthy."

"That's what we in the Indian National team have been trying to put in place," he said.

Dhar also spoke highly about the teams' promotion of local players from their respective regions as the way forward.

"[Many] local players have come from Minerva Punjab while Real Kashmir has been a revelation.



Merry bunch: The Chennai City FC squad proudly poses with its medals and the trophy. • R. RAGU

"Chennai City has been doing it for the last few years. It helps grow the fan base, and is the best way to move forward," he said.

Rohit thanked AIFF, his

players, club's head coach [Akbar Nawas] and the supporting staff for its maiden triumph.

"It has been a tough four years altogether. Many didn't

believe in our vision, but we stuck to our guts.

"It's been a good season and we hope to continue the dream," he said.

Kushal Das, AIFF secre-

tary, said Chennai City won primarily due to its "tremendous planning and [excellent] strategising in only its third year."

Special awards:

FIFA president's pat for CCFC

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

FIFA president Gianni Infantino on Wednesday congratulated Chennai City FC for winning its maiden I-League title.

"I was delighted to hear that Chennai City FC have been crowned 2018-19 I-League Champions. It

gives me great pleasure to congratulate them for their first ever championship title," Infantino said in a letter addressed to the All India Football Federation. "This is, no doubt, the result of effort and hard work, and everybody involved can be proud of this great achievement."

"I encourage them to continue working with determination and motivation," Infantino said.

Chennai City FC won its maiden I-League title earlier this month, after a thrilling final-day finish, that saw the team end the league with 43 points, just a point above Ques East Bengal.



Foreign flavour: CCFC's European stars Pedro Manzi, Nestor Gordillo, Mauro Boerchio and Sandro Rodriguez with coach Akbar Nawas, left, and owner Rohit Ramesh. • R. RAGU

Fair play award: Shillong Lajong.
Top goal scorer: Pedro Manzi (CCFC) and Willis Plaza (Churchill Brothers) (21 goals each).
Best goalkeeper: Bilal Khan (Real Kashmir).

Best defender: Roberto Eslava (CCFC).
Best midfielder: Nestor Gordillo (CCFC).
Best forward: Manzi.
Best home-match organiser:

East Bengal.
Emerging player: Gaurav Bora (CCFC).
Best coach: Akbar Nawas (CCFC).
Hero of the League: Manzi.

'Indian Football League' idea mooted

Proposal to have a 20-team event with both ISL and I-League clubs

AASHIN PRASAD
CHENNAI

I-League clubs, on Wednesday, proposed a unified 'Indian Football League' as the way forward for the sport in India.

Newly crowned champion Chennai City FC, Mohun Bagan, East Bengal, Minerva Punjab, Aizawl FC, Gokulam Kerala, Real Kashmir FC, Churchill Brothers and NEROCA FC have put forth a proposal to the AIFF for a 20-team league which will have both Indian Super League and I-League clubs.

"There will be 20 teams in the first division and a strong 16-team second division.

"Every team will benefit

and we have given a financial model so that it's a sustainable project. Not like ISL (project) because they are suffering huge losses. We don't want to lose ISL clubs, because they are supporting Indian football by investing money," Debasish Dutta, one of the directors at Mohun Bagan, told mediapersons here.

Not omitting anybody: Rohit Ramesh
Chennai City FC owner Rohit Ramesh said: "We aren't omitting anybody, we want to play against everyone. But, it should be in a manner where the money we put in has to be got back in some time."

KEY POINTS PROPOSED

- A 20-team professional league running for a duration of nine months
- Marketing of the league must be done centrally
- Promotion and relegation to be implemented with no exemptions
- Parachute payment to be made to relegated sides
- A maximum of four foreigners in each team
- Mandatory signing of players from home states
- Strong youth development projects for all squads

FINANCIAL SUGGESTIONS

- Generate a total net sponsorship revenue of ₹325

crores, even by a conservative estimate
The revenue to be divided thus:
20 teams x 12 crores = 240 crores
Pool amount to AIFF = 50 crores
16 second division teams x 2 crores = 32 crores
Parachute payment for two relegated teams x 2 crores = 4 crores
Mandatory 10 per cent of the team's budget to be spent on youth development in line with the AFC Club licensing criteria
Each team to pay ₹2 crore participation fee to AIFF/FSDL and no other participation fee

Praful Patel to meet representatives of I-League clubs: Kushal Das

'You can't merge twenty clubs just like that. There are huge financial implications'

S. PRASANNA VENKATESAN
CHENNAI

The All India Football Federation (AIFF) general secretary Kushal Das said here on Wednesday that federation president Praful Patel will meet and discuss with the representatives/owners of the I-League clubs following their boycott from this year's Super Cup.

"The president is campaigning in Gondia, Maharashtra, right now. So, he's

been busy. Hopefully, [it will be sorted] before the Super Cup final round.

"Right now, we have written again to the clubs to give the final update; to let us know by March 21 latest, if they are actually participating or not, and that we'll take a call then."

The clubs want to discuss the future of the league with the AIFF president.

Kushal said: "We have always said that as per the con-

We have always said that ultimately there has to be a league structure with promotion/relegation

tractual obligations with the marketing partner (FSDL), the ISL has to be the top league.

"But we've held it back for some years, so that we find a middle path.

"If the bid opens, then

some of the clubs can bid. Then, slowly next year again it can be opened up. You can't merge twenty clubs just like that. There are huge financial implications."

He added it will be "very difficult" to waive the entrance fee and let I-League clubs into the top tier.

"There are clubs paying their franchisee fee. And then if you're trying to get somebody without paying the franchisee fee right now,

then it can lead to problems with the existing clubs. So, when the contractual obligation with the existing clubs gets over after ten years, then it may be considered.

'Sustainable model'
"We have always said that ultimately there has to be a league structure with promotion/relegation.

"The introduction (of such a structure) has to be timed properly, because we

also have to find a sustainable model. In Europe, when a team gets relegated, there is a parachute payment as they call it.

"Those kind of things are not there in the Indian system right now. Let's take Kerala Blasters, for example.

"If there's relegation and if there's no parachute payment to support them especially after they've invested so much, then it'll be a problem for them."

AFI names a 51-member contingent for the Asian championships

Tejaswin Shankar missing from the list which is subject to confirmatory trials and officials' satisfaction

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Athletics Federation of India on Wednesday named a 51-member strong team for the Asian Championships but the squad was overshadowed by the one name missing from the list - that of high jumper Tejaswin Shankar.

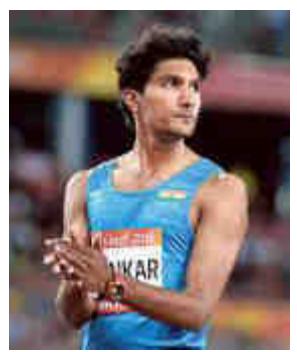
Shankar, a 2nd year student at the Kansas State University on full scholarship, had requested an exemption from participation in the recent Federation Cup since it clashed with his exams. However, the AFI exempted only javelin thrower Neeraj Chopra, currently training in South Africa, and excluded Shankar from the list. The 20-year-old currently holds the National record at 2.29m and had recently won the Big

12 collegiate athletic meet in Texas with a leap of 2.28m.

Interestingly, the bronze medal in the previous edition was at 2.24m. Shankar, who initially only expressed his disappointment at missing out and wished luck to those selected, soon made his displeasure clear after coming to know of the AFI president's statements.

However, while the AFI appeared to be sticking strictly to its rule of not considering anyone not appearing at the Fed Cup in the case of Shankar, it was more than willing to ease the rules for several others who failed to meet the qualifying norms in any of the five competitions that were considered for selection - the four Grand Prix and the Fed Cup.

Among those who have



Tejaswin Shankar... excluded. • PTI

been included despite not qualifying are Jinson Johnson and Manjit Singh in 800m, discus thrower Navjeet Kaur Dhillon, heptathletes Swapna Barman and Purnima Hembram and javelin thrower Sharmila Kumari.

The 4x400m relay teams for both men and women

have also been included even though Arokia Rajiv was the lone quarterfinalist to qualify individually.

Manjit, however, has not been included in the 1500m after pulling out in the final at the Fed Cup.

He had qualified earlier at Grand Prix 2.

The Asian meet is to be held from April 21-24 in Doha.

The squad:
Men: 4x400m relay: Arokia Rajiv, Md. Anas, Kunhu Mohammed, K.S. Jeevan, Jithu Baby, A. Alex; **800m:** Jinson Johnson, Manjit Singh; **1500m:** Jinson Johnson, Ajay Kumar Saroj; **3000m steeplechase:** Avinash Sable, Shankar Lal Swami. **400m hurdles:** Dharun Ayyasamy, M.P. Jabir; **Shot put:** Tajinder Pal Singh Toor; **Javelin:** Neeraj Chopra, Shivpal Singh. **Women: 200m:** Dutee Chand;

4x400m relay: Hima Das, M.R. Poovamma, Saritaben Gayakwad, Jisna Mathew, V.K. Vismaya, Sonia Baishya; **1500m:** Lili Das, P.U. Chitra; **400m hurdles:** Saritaben Gayakwad; **Javelin:** Annu Rani; **Heptathlon:** Swapna Barman, Purnima Hembram.

Subject to confirmatory trials (April 13): Men: 5000/10000m: Murli Kumar Gavit, Abhishek Pal; **Triple jump:** Praveen Chithravel; **4x100m:** Gurinder Singh, Harjit Singh, Siva Kumar, V.K. Elakkiyadasan, Gurulal Singh, Safikul Mondal.

Women: 800m: Gomathi Marimuthu, Twinkle Chaudhary; **5000m:** Parul Chaudhary; **3000m steeplechase:** Parul Chaudhary, Sudha Singh; **400m hurdles:** M. Arpitha; **Discus:** Kamalpreet Kaur, Navjeet Kaur Dhillon; **Javelin:** Sharmila Kumari; **4x100m:** Dutee Chand, Archana Suseendran, K. Ranga, Hina, B. Revathi, SDhanalakshmi.

Subject to NADA clearance: 10000m: Sanjivani Jadhav.

Prajnesh qualifies

SPORTS BUREAU
MIAMI

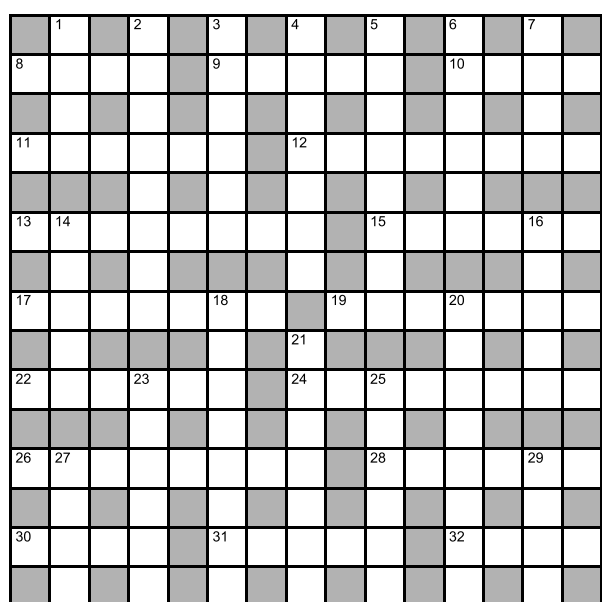
India's top-ranked player Prajnesh Gunneswaran qualified for his second consecutive ATP Masters 1000 main draw with a 6-4, 6-4 win over Brit Jay Clarke here on Tuesday.

The India No. 1 broke the 20-year-old Brit in the first game. He saved two break points on his way to sealing the first set 6-4.

In the second set, Clarke was broken in the first game. At 4-2, the Brit saved two breakpoints to win the game but Prajnesh made it 5-3 before clinching the match at 6-4.

The World No. 84 had reached the third round in his maiden Masters main draw appearance last week in Indian Wells.

THE HINDU CROSSWORD 12579



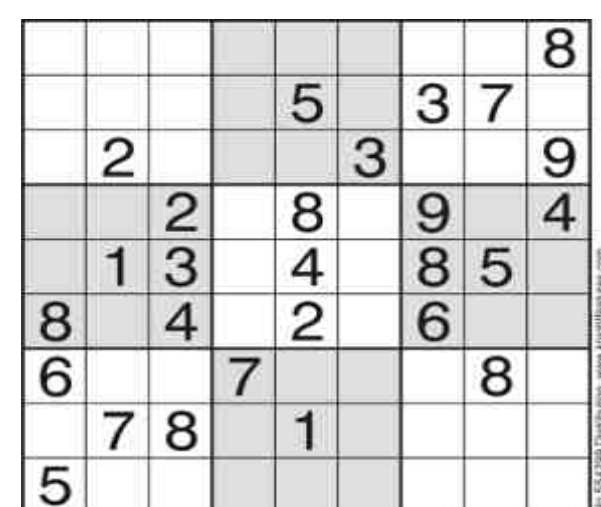
ACROSS

- 8 Comedian's spirit found at the bottom of Pandora's box (4)
- 9 In geography, landforms conceal subdivisions of kingdoms (5)
- 10 Elliptical like POTUS' office (4)
- 11 Some kind of pig's money? (6)
- 12 Breeze followed by rain was an unexpected bonus (8)

(set by Incognito)

- 13 Dress suitable for islands (8)
- 15 Word said during shooting? (6)
- 17 War where America intercedes between Costa Rica and Germany (7)
- 19 One comes in and one goes out of a town in European country (7)
- 22 Guide soldiers to river (6)
- 24 Dog with tail docked, preceded live royal soldier and another dog (8)
- 26 Practice about the funerary vehicle (8)
- 28 Type of beans or trays (6)
- 30 Petty criminal seen at South Pole, initially, with four Romans following (4)
- 31 Officer commanding takes each man finally to a large body of water (5)
- 32 Trot back, resulting in a contravention (4)
- 1 Writer discloses identity of literary pseudonyms (3-5)
- 3 Mountainous region in state territory (6)
- 4 Cleaning of optical organ? Bunkum! (7)
- 5 Man leaves manacle behind farm building to get marine creature (8)
- 6 Sweet for nob with two notes (6)
- 7 Welshman returns armour (4)
- 14 Lake surrounds round unknown eagle's nest (5)
- 16 Puts up a Buddhist reliquary (5)
- 18 Place where one may see things developing (8)
- 20 VKS Padukone, master of French race (4,4)
- 21 Stuck to present day, present location decision at first (7)
- 23 Dozen of these can be gross! (6)
- 25 Island wear (6)
- 27 See Eastern secret agent (4)
- 29 Make money in the midst of learning (4)

SUDOKU



Solution to puzzle 12578

C	B	O	I	L	E	R	S	U	I	T	S		
O	P	L	E	N	T	N	A	T	A	N	T		
L	P	R	O	N	E	G	R	A	D				
D	R	O	L	L	A	T	H	A	N	O	R		
F	R	E	A	R	M	A	I	O	M				
R	E	A	R	R	O	T	I	S	S	E	R	I	E
A	M	B	R	O	M	L	M	A					
M	I	C	R	O	M	E	T	E	R	K	I	L	N
E	H	I	N	Y	D	A	N	D					
F	I	R	E	B	O	X	F	O	R	G	E		
M	H	R	O	F	O	R							
B	E	H	A	D	V	I	O	L	A	T	E		
R	A	E	E	R	I	D							
H	A	N	D	G	R	E	N	A	D	E			

Solution to yesterday's Sudoku

1	2	3	7	5	4	9	6	8
5	6	7	2	8	9	3	4	1
4	9	8	1	6	3	5	2	7
3	5	6	8	1	2	7	9	4
2	7	1	9	4	6	8	3	5
8	4	9	5	3	7	2	1	6
7	8	2	4	9	1	6	5	3
9	3	4	6	7	5	1	8	2
6	1	5	3	2	8	4	7	9

FAITH

Celebrating Navroz

Navroz is a 3,000-year-old Zoroastrian tradition, a ritual celebration that signals the start of Spring and the Persian new year. In more modern times, in A.D. 1079, a king of Iran named Jalaluddin Malekshah started observing it on March 21. In the 18th century, a rich tradesman from Surat, Nusser-vanji Kohyaji, who often travelled to Iran, came to know about Navroz and began celebrating the day back home; that brought the festival to India. In the 19th century, another Parsi, Merwanji Panday, started celebrating the day in Bombay after his wife who was from Iran told him about it. Over a period of time, the festival was introduced in India on a wide scale by members of the Parsi community who eventually connected it to Jamshed, the illustrious king of Iran. Thus, the day came to be known as Jamshedi Navroz.

The scriptures state that in the realm of King Jamshed, there was no excessive heat or cold, there were no premature deaths, and everyone lived happily. The people were so contented it reflected on their faces; if a father and son walked together, the age difference would not be visible. King Jamshed, like other ancient kings of Iran, was known for his truthfulness and righteousness. For Parsis, celebrating Navroz in its true sense means living truthfully and walking on the righteous path.

Dressed in their best attire, Parsis offer prayers at Atash Behram, cook an elaborate spread of dishes, offer charity, and call over friends and relatives to celebrate the day. Parsi high priest Dasturji Feroze Kotwal says the most important aspect of the day is to instil good thoughts, do good deeds and speak good words. As long as Parsis imbibe the good qualities of their ancient kings, they have observed Navroz in the best possible way, he says.