

# India breach 100-mark to consolidate top spot

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LED BY strong performances by wushu players and swimmers, India breached the 100-medal mark by winning a whopping 56 medals on the fourth day of competitions to consolidate its top position in the South Asian Games here on Thursday.

India secured its best medal haul on a single day so far in the Games to lead the medal tally with 62 gold, 41 silver and 21 bronze for a total of 124 medals to leave hosts Nepal far behind in the second spot. Nepal has 36 gold, 27 silver and 38 bronze for a total of 101 medals, followed by Sri Lanka at third position with 107 medals (17 gold, 35 silver, 55 bronze). India added 30 gold, 18 silver and 8 bronze on Thursday.

The bulk of India's medals came from swimming, wushu, weightlifting and athletics. India's gold rush was triggered by wushu with as many as seven yellow metals coming from it. Suraj Singh fetched the first wushu gold of the day in men's gunshu all-round event before Y Sanathoi Devi (women's sansou 52kg), Punam (women's 75kg), Deepika (women's 70kg), Sushila (women's 65kg), Roshibina Devi (women's 60kg) and Sunil Singh (men's 52kg) also clinched top spots in their respective events. O Bidyapati Chanu bagged a bronze in women's sansou 56kg category.

Swimming accounted for the most medals for India with 11, of which four were gold, six silver and one bronze. Likhit Selvaraj Prema clocked 2 minute 14.67 seconds to win the men's 200m breaststroke (short course) gold while compatriot Danush Suresh won the silver in 2:19.27. India's second gold from swimming came from Apeksha Delyla Fernandes who won the men's 200m breaststroke (short course) with a time of 2:38.05. Divya Satija clinched a gold in women's 100m butterfly (short course), clocking 1:02.78, before the women's 400m freestyle relay team finished on top of the podium with a time of 3:55.17.

Indians bagged four gold medals on the first day of weightlifting competitions. Jhilli Dalabehera, who had fetched a silver in the Asian Weightlifting Championship earlier this year, lifted a total of 151 kg (66kg in snatch and 85kg in clean & jerk) to win the yellow metal in women's under 45 kg category. In the women's under 49kg event, Sneha Soren bagged the top honours. The 18-year-old lifted 68kg in the snatch and followed it up by an 89kg effort in the clean and jerk category for a total of 157kg.

In the women's 55kg event, Commonwealth Championship gold medalist Sorokhaibam Bindyarani Devi emerged victorious. The Manipuri lifted a total of 181kg to grab the top spot on the podium. India's fourth weightlifting gold of the day came from Siddhant Gogoi in the men's 61 kg category for his effort of 264 kg.

Taekwondo players' impressive show also continued as they gave India six medals -- 3 gold, 2 silver and 1 bronze. India's participation in the taekwondo discipline in the SAG was allowed at the eleventh hour after intervention from the International Olympic Committee. Purva Dattary Dixit (women's 49kg), Ruchika Bhawe (women's 67kg) and Margaret Maria (women's 73kg) bagged the gold for India while Niraj Choudhary (men's 58kg) and Akshay Hooda (men's 87kg) clinched a silver each.

**SAG: HOW THEY STAND**

Nation	G	S	B	Total
India	63	41	21	125
Nepal	36	27	38	101
Sri Lanka	17	35	55	107
Pakistan	16	23	26	65
Bangladesh	4	11	45	60

# An ‘accidental admission’?

In official document, FIFA may have inadvertently supported claims of corruption against 2022 World Cup

TARIQ PANJA  
DECEMBER 5

CONFIRMATION OF one of the worst scandals in soccer history appears to be sitting in plain sight, published last week on the website of FIFA, the sport's global governing body.

The admission exists in a couple of lines referencing three notorious former soccer officials, dropped casually into a long decision justifying the lifetime ban of one of them. FIFA cautions that people should not read too much into it.

But it's there, for the first time, posted publicly in an official FIFA document.

Question: Which officials were to receive money for their votes in connection with the Qatar selection?

Answer: Ricardo Teixeira, Nicolás Leoz and Julio Grondona.

As secrets go, it was not a well-kept one. Many journalists have published the accusation that bribery helped deliver the 2022 World Cup to Qatar. Investigations have probed it. The United States Department of Justice built indictments based on it.

But the one organization that would never bring itself to admit that bribes had been paid was FIFA itself. That was why it was jarring this week to see the mention of payments to three former top soccer officials -- Brazil's Teixeira, Paraguay's Leoz and Argentina's Grondona -- as supporting evidence in a FIFA disciplinary report posted online.

The exchange, a snippet of testimony by a South American media executive in an American courtroom, is part of a 28-page document justifying the lifetime suspension of Teixeira, the former head of Brazil's soccer federation. But by releasing that report through a new database that FIFA has hailed as its latest step toward "greater transparency," world soccer's governing body appears to have -- inadvertently -- gone further than ever before to confirm there was a scheme to bribe voters in the 2022 World Cup vote.

FIFA denied having done anything of the sort. "The reference to the FIFA World Cup 2022 was made by a third party," it said in a statement, noting that Teixeira was barred for corrupt acts related to three unrelated tournaments. "Consequently," FIFA added, "this is not an implicit confirmation that Mr. Teixeira received bribes for his vote in connection to the appointment of the FIFA World Cup 2022 host."

The accusation of a rigged vote is not without substantial circumstantial evidence: More than half of the 22 men who cast ballots in the vote for Qatar in late 2010 were later accused of, or charged with, corruption, including Teixeira, Leoz and Grondona. The entire bidding process remains under investigation by Swiss authorities.

Qatar, the tiny but hugely wealthy Gulf state that beat the United States and others to win the hosting vote, continues to strongly deny any misconduct by any member of its victorious bidding team. "We maintain that we conducted our bid ethically and with integrity, strictly adhering to all rules and reg-



Qatar were controversially elected as the hosts of the 2022 World Cup. Reuters

## EXPLAINED How FIFA's ‘transparency’ drive may have become admission of guilt

LAST WEEK, FIFA published a disciplinary report against its officials on its website. Among other things, the report mention payments to three former top football officials -- Brazil's Ricardo Teixeira, Paraguay's Nicolás Leoz and Argentina's Julio Grondona -- as evidence to support the sanctions imposed on them. And to justify it, a snippet of the testimony by a South American media executive in an American court has been included. It has been alleged that Teixeira and others agreed to vote for Qatar in exchange for \$1 million. FIFA say they have published the document as a part of their transparency drive. However, many see this as a sign that world football's governing body has, inadvertently, confirmed there was a scheme to bribe voters during the 2022 World Cup vote.

ulations for the 2018/2022 FIFA World Cup bidding process," Qatar's World Cup organizing committee said in a statement. It has spent years trying to overcome suspicions over how it achieved its stunning victory. FIFA has spent almost as long trying to avoid discussing them.

In outlining its case against Teixeira -- one of the more than 40 individuals and companies named in a sweeping 2015 United States indictment that described corruption at soccer's highest levels -- FIFA detailed his participation in a number of corruption schemes. Included in that, though not directly a part of FIFA's reasoning for issuing its life ban, was witness testimony from a 2018 trial in New York against three former South American soccer executives. In that case, an Argentine media executive, Alejandro Burzaco, provided evidence against the officials as part of his plea agreement.

**Questioned by American prosecutors**

While not identifying Burzaco by name, the FIFA document describes his questioning by American prosecutors. In it, he said Teixeira, along with two other South American officials who have since died, Argentina's Grondona and Paraguay's Leoz -- agreed to vote for Qatar in exchange for \$1 million.

When the legal team for Teixeira, who

cited ill health for not attending a hearing with FIFA ethics officials, questioned the validity of the testimony because the Brazilian had yet to be successfully prosecuted in court, FIFA pushed back, painstakingly defending the quality of its evidence and the witness as "credible."

FIFA, in its statement, said Teixeira was barred for bribery connected to a number of South American and Brazilian soccer tournaments, and not for any actions related to the vote for the 2022 World Cup. It said it had extensively commented on an investigation by Michael Garcia, a former United States attorney, that had looked into the corruption surrounding the vote. That investigation, however, was hampered by a lack of subpoena power and no power to compel witnesses outside the soccer world to cooperate.

As part of its continuing effort to promote greater transparency, FIFA in October announced the creation of its new legal portal, in which documentation underlying decisions like the one barring Teixeira would be made public for the first time. In doing so, it pulled back the veil on a judicial process that for decades -- and to the consternation of those inside FIFA and out -- had been cloaked in secrecy.

By detailing the allegations against Teixeira, however, FIFA, even if it did so accidentally, has once again raised new questions about how Qatar secured soccer's biggest prize.

NYT

recurve event. Veteran L Bombayla Devi is the other archer to make the cut.

The men's and women's teams have also been included after qualifying for the Tokyo Games. "Boxer Neeraj Phogat has also been excluded from the TOPS scheme due to her provisional suspension by NADA," the Sports Authority of India said in a statement.

Phogat tested positive for performance enhancing drug Ligandrol, which helps muscle building. "The committee has also taken the decision to exclude shooters Ravi Kumar and Om Prakash Mitharwal from the Target Olympic Podium Scheme due to their dipping performance graph," the release stated.

In addition to the above players, who were included in the core group, the com-

# IOC head Bach says Russian doping sanctions are ‘mandatory’

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
LAUSANNE, DECEMBER 5

ANY SANCTIONS imposed on Russia in the latest fallout of a years-long doping scandal must be observed by the IOC, the Olympic body president Thomas Bach said on Thursday.

World Anti-Doping Agency leaders have been advised to ban Russia from hosting major sports events for four years, and remove the Russian flag and anthem from those championships, when they meet on Monday in the Olympic capital city of Lausanne.

A WADA expert panel concluded Russian authorities manipulated a Moscow laboratory database - removing details of positive tests and planting fake evidence - before handing it over to investigators in January. When the WADA panel delivered its report and recommendations last week, the IOC called the "flagrant manipulation . an insult to the sporting movement."

Asked on Thursday if the IOC must accept the WADA executive committee's sanction decisions, Bach confirmed: "They are mandatory. IOC has in the Olympic Charter accepted the World Anti-Doping Code and if there is a decision being issued . it is mandatory."

However, Bach refused to speculate on what WADA might decide or which sports events could be affected. Russia's hosting in St. Petersburg of soccer games at the 2020 European Championship and the 2021 Champions League final have been declared out of reach by WADA because European soccer body UEFA is a continental organization. World soccer body FIFA has signed up to the code but not UEFA.

**Loophole in sanctions**

A major annual meeting of Olympic stakeholders, known as SportAccord, could also be beyond the reach of WADA's executive board. One loophole of the WADA recommended sanctions is exemptions allowing Russia to host when "it is legally or practically impossible" to strip hosting rights.

On Saturday - after the WADA recommendations were published, and nine days before the pending sanctions decision - Lausanne-based SportAccord said the May 2021 edition of its week-long convention would be in Ekaterinburg, Russia.

The four-man SportAccord executive committee includes a close ally of Russian President Vladimir Putin, businessman Arkady Rotenberg, and former IOC member Francesco Ricci Bitti, who is an Olympic delegate to the WADA ruling panel which decides Russia's fate on Monday.

Bach said any potential conflict of interest for Ricci Bitti would need to be addressed by WADA rules. In the latest defense of Russian interests on Thursday, Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev said the government ordered its sports officials "to fight for our interests" in the WADA process.

mittee has also included Indian men's javelin throwers Shiupal Singh and Rohit Yadav in the developmental group. The criteria for selection of the athletes were feedback from the National Sports Federations, National Observers, High Performance Managers, Project Officers and Coaches.

Besides the inclusion of athletes, financial proposals of more than Rs 40 lakh were approved for athletes from shooting, table tennis, wrestling and para-athletics. The Badminton Association of India also presented its long-term plan for the 2020, 2024 and 2028 Olympics.

The points discussed, in the presence of national badminton coach Pullela Gopichand, included, "creating a larger pool of coaches for the emerging players with a greater focus on Indian coaches."

# Dope-tainted Neeraj dropped from Olympics funding programme



Boxer Neeraj has been provisionally suspended by the anti-doping agency.

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 5

DOPE-TAINTED woman boxer Neeraj Phogat was on Thursday dropped from the Sports Ministry's Target Olympic Podium Scheme (TOPS) while archer Deepika Kumari was included after playing a crucial role in India securing a Tokyo 2020 Games quota place.

Shooter Chinki Yadav, who secured an Olympic quota in the 25m pistol event earlier this year, was added to the TOPS list along with veteran Tejaswini Sawant, Aishwary Pratap Singh Tomar and Mairaj Ahmed Khan.

Three archers have been included in the scheme, including former world number

NEW ENTRANTS IN TOPS

**Shooting:** Aishwarya Tomar, Mairaj Khan, Tejaswini Sawant, Chinki Yadav

**Archery:** Deepika Kumari, Ankita Bhakat, Bombayla Devi.

**Hockey:** Men's and women's teams.

**Para-Archery:** Vivek Chikara, Harvinder Singh, Rakesh Kumar and Shyam Sundar

**Para-Athletics:** Nishad Kumar, Ajeet Singh, Y Kathuniya, T Mariyappan

**Para-Badminton:** Nagar Krishna.

one Deepika Kumari and Ankita Bhakat, both of whom combined to secure an individual Olympic quota for India in women's

## [SPORTS BAR]

### First woman match referee for men's ODI

Former India cricketer GS Lakshmi is set to become the first woman match referee to oversee a men's ODI when she officiates the opening match of the third series of the World Cup League 2 in the United Arab Emirates on Sunday. Lakshmi will supervise the game between the UAE and USA at the Sharjah Cricket Stadium. The competition aims to provide development opportunities for officials. This is the second significant achievement for Lakshmi this year, following her appointment as the first woman on the ICC International Panel of Match Referees in May. The 51-year old has overseen three women's ODI matches, 16 men's T20 Internationals and seven women's T20 Internationals.

### Mumbai City, Kerala Blasters in a stalemate

Mumbai City FC and Kerala Blasters continued their winless streaks as they managed a 1-1 draw in an Indian Super League encounter at the Mumbai Football Arena on Thursday. After a goalless first period, Raphael Messi Boulis (75th minute) put Kerala in the lead but Mumbai hit back with an Amine Chermiti strike (77th) to share the spoils. Mumbai and Kerala are without a win in six matches each and find themselves at sixth and eighth spots on the table, with just one point separating them.

### Cardiff appeals to CAS after FIFA's Sala order

Cardiff has formally filed an appeal to sport's highest court seeking to overturn a FIFA order it must pay Nantes a 6 million euros (\$6.7 million) first payment for Emiliano Sala. An appeal hearing is likely to be held around April, and a verdict "is not expected before June," the Court of Arbitration for Sport said on Thursday. FIFA ruled in favour of Nantes and warned Cardiff it faces a transfer ban of three trading windows if it refuses to pay when the case is settled. Cardiff agreed in January to pay a club record fee for Argentine forward Sala, who died in a plane crash before playing for his new team. Sala was killed when the single-engine aircraft carrying him from Nantes to Cardiff crashed near the Channel Island of Guernsey on January 21. Hours earlier, FIFA received an online document from the Welsh football federation to complete transferring the player's registration from France.

### Priyanshu on top at Natl Bench Press event

Priyanshu Vats secured the first position in the junior equipped category of the 66kg weight class at the National Bench Press Championship in New Delhi. Vats lifted 145kg with a body weight of 65.1 kg. The competition was conducted by Powerlifting India and featured more than 800 participants from all over the country.



### Infantino may become IOC member in January

FIFA president Gianni Infantino has been proposed for International Olympic Committee membership, but World Athletics head Sebastian Coe will have to wait due to a conflict of interest, IOC President Thomas Bach said on Thursday. FIFA and World Athletics, have been without membership ever since the departure from the IOC of their respective former presidents Sepp Blatter and Lamine Diack in 2015. Bach said Infantino had been proposed for election at their next session in January. Coe, however, had not been proposed due to a conflict of interest. Apart for his role at World Athletics, Coe is also Group Chairman of consultancy firm CSM which also works with the IOC. Bach said Coe had informed them that he could not immediately resolve this situation but was working on it.