

SIMPLY PUT QUESTION & ANSWER

# Shooting in India, target in Birmingham

Chandigarh to host Commonwealth shooting & archery events in 2022; medals to be counted in Birmingham tally

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SIX MONTHS before they will officially be declared open in Birmingham, the 2022 Commonwealth Games will get underway in Chandigarh. This, after the Commonwealth Games Federation (CGF) approved India's proposal to host shooting and archery after they were omitted from the event programme.

India will spend crores to host the two sports — that lack competitiveness in the Commonwealth — in which they are expected to win more than a dozen medals. These will be added to the final tally after the Games conclude in Birmingham.

The solution was arrived at after months of posturing and negotiations and according to CGF chief executive David Grevenberg, 2022 Games will be a 'pilot programme' to check the feasibility of hosting future Commonwealth Games in different cities, and countries even. "Not every sport is not widely and regularly practiced in all countries. So we need to find sustainable ways to hosting games," Grevenberg told *The Indian Express* after the meeting of CGF's executive board, which gave its nod. "So this innovation will be a great pilot programme to future hosting process."

Here is a low down on how India went from being on the brink of boycotting the 2022 Games to now hosting a couple of events related to the same edition.

## Why are shooting and archery held in Chandigarh and not Birmingham?

Simply put, because the organisers of the 2022 Games were not interested in hosting these two sports. Shooting and archery are two of the several optional sports in the CWG programme. It is a standard practice for the hosts to choose events in which they are strong. For example, India excluded popular sports like basketball and triathlon from the 2010 Games, adding tennis, archery and wrestling instead.

## So if India dropped some sports as well, why did they object to shooting and archery being omitted from 2022 edition?

That's because India wins a chunk of its medals in these events. In fact, archery was a last-minute addition to India's demand. The sport has featured in the CWG just twice — in Brisbane 1982 and Delhi 2010. But shooting's exclusion would have severely impacted India's medal count as it accounts for nearly one-fourth



The proposal for the separate championships was submitted by Commonwealth Games India, and a decision made at the Commonwealth Games Federation's executive board meeting in London. File

of the country's medals at the event.

## Did the organizers give any reasons for dropping these sports?

It is believed that the decision to drop shooting was taken primarily because the organisers were keen to include those sports for which Birmingham and the wider West Midlands region had the facilities. The closest Olympic-standard shooting range to Birmingham is in Surrey, roughly 150 miles away. The organisers were not keen to spend money on constructing a new range just for the Games. Britain's tough gun laws, which makes it very tough for athletes to enter the country with weapons, were a deterrent as well.

## So who will foot the bill now?

India have said they will take care of all the expenses for hosting these two events. According to the Indian Olympic Association, the budget for shooting is estimated at Rs 10 crore while Rs 3.5 crore will be set aside for archery. The National Rifle Association of India (NRAI) president Raninder Singh has said they will pay for the shooting event. The cost includes return airfare, accommodation, meals, local transportation and training costs for the athletes and support staff.

## Why did India propose to host the two sports?

Recently, sports minister Kiren Rijji said: "If you are getting medals, whatever the way it has to be, I think it is justified..." From the fed-

eration and Indian Olympic Association's point of view, the official line has been that 'athletes should not suffer.' Indian athletes are entitled to a cash prize, government jobs and even promotions for a medal at CWG. Also, the sports that are included in the CWG get an additional budget from the government for preparation.

## Will medals won in Chandigarh counted in the overall tally?

Yes. That was the Indian Olympic Association's primary condition. The CGF has said they will issue a "medal table that includes results from the Chandigarh 2022 Commonwealth Archery and Shooting Championships, as a further and final legitimate ranking of competing nations and territories."

## How many countries and athletes are likely to take part?

Roughly 38 countries will take part in these two events. According to Raninder, 418 athletes, officials and CGF dignitaries are likely to be a part of the Chandigarh event. It will include 281 shooters. In archery, 175 athletes and officials are expected.

## Does this mean India are the co-hosts of the 2022 Commonwealth Games?

It may feel like it but the CGF has said that is not the case. They have been very careful in their words, calling the event in India merely a 'Commonwealth Championship' for shooting and archery. "We need to be careful that it's not a co-hosts arrangement. It's organised separately. We have our arrangements, agreements and contracts with Birmingham. We will have a separate licensing agreement with Chandigarh," Grevenberg said, adding that there will be co-branding of the Chandigarh and Birmingham events as well.

## Will this become a norm in the future, where CWG will be held in multiple cities or countries?

Grevenberg did not rule out the possibility. "What we have done is similar to what FIFA has done in the past with Japan and Korea (co-hosting the 2002 World Cup) or with 2026 World Cup, which Mexico, USA and Canada will co-host. For future, this allows us to explore and consider options — it has let the creative juices flowing," he said. It is worth mentioning that India has also expressed willingness to host either the 2026 or 2030 CWG.



Player-of-the-Match Shafali Verma's 17-ball 39 gave India a rousing start. ICC

# Shafali hits four sixes as India win yet again

This girl can play, tweets former England captain Nasser Hussain as Rohtak girl creates World Cup buzz

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
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DAYS BEFORE the start of the women's T20 World Cup last week, India's 16-year-old opener Shafali Verma broke the internet. In a tri-series game against Australia, she came up with a spectacular straight hit against Aussie pacer Megan Schutt that flew over the sight screen. The commentators couldn't believe their eyes, the power of the lofted stroke had stunned them. "Watch out cameraman... it's unbelievable... that's beautifully timed, wonderfully shaped against Megan Schutt, one of the best bowlers in the world in T20 cricket, and she has done it pretty easily." — would be the audio of the viral clip.

With that one stroke, Shafali would have the weight of expectations on her young shoulders. India want her to give them a blazing start, the ICC too want a teen star who would lighten up the Cup. Be it Indian captain Harmanpreet Kaur, the promotional videos of the broadcasters or the ICC social media campaigns, there was always a mention of the Rohtak-born natural stroke-player.

However, her father Sanjeev knew she will be fine. A small-time goldsmith and a passionate cricket coach to his three children, he had repeatedly told Shafali never to let pressure get the better of her. "I have always told her to think positively. Agar negative sochegi to khatam ho jayegi. (If she thinks negatively, you are over)," the father had told *The Indian Express* days before the World Cup. Sanjeev would go on to say that he too had followed this principle of positivity which was the reason he could raise a world-class cricketer despite meagre resources.

After her 'Player of the match' performance against Bangladesh — where her 17-ball 39 went a long way in India recording an 18-run win — the Shafali buzz around this World Cup has increased. Her stunning knock had four sixes and two fours. This came after she scored a 15-ball 29 against Australia in the World Cup's opening game. The talk in Perth, among commentators and fans, was once again about the incredible hitting of the girl who didn't seem fazed by the occasion or opposition. In the two games where she had scored 29 and 39, Shafali has now hit five sixes and nine fours.

Today after yet another shot cleared the long-off fence, former England captain and astute student of the game Nasser Hussain would tweet: "This girl can seriously play". Former Australian captain Lisa Shalkekar too would praise the Indian girl. "Get to a TV quick and watch this 16-year-old, Shafali Verma".

By the time Shafali got out, India, batting first, were 53/2 in five overs. Going for a shot too many, she was caught at mid-off. But Shafali had given India the headstart and team would hold on to that lead and win the

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game without much fuss. Since her early days, Shafali has been taught by her father to go for big hits early in the innings. "She used to mostly play school matches and these would be eight-over games. These are the kind of games where you don't have enough time to build your innings, take singles and doubles. So during training sessions, I would ask her to go for her strokes very early," he had said.

Before she joined Rohtak's ultra-modern Shri Ram Narain Cricket Club, Sanjeev, Shafali and her elder brother Sahil would practice on the streets of Rohtak. When they couldn't afford to buy a hard ball, they would play with tennis, rubber or plastic balls. The three would be involved in a very competitive game of hitting sixes. "All of us would get three balls to play and the one who hit the most straight sixes would win," the father recalled. Brother Sahil says sometimes he would win and sometimes it would be his sister. "Our father would give money to the winner," he had.

On Monday in Perth against Bangladesh, Shafali was playing as if she was at a park in Rohtak knocking with her father and brother. Facing only her second ball, she hit Bangladesh new ball bowler Jahanara Alam for a six over extra cover. In the next over, she showed the same disdain for off-spinner Salma Khatun. She was hit over mid-wicket for a six.

Like in the tri-series where she went for the Aussie pacer, here too she made an early impact on the opposition. That is again her father's instruction. "If you hit the best bowler, you too will be seen as the best," he had said. The team management too is on the same page. After the game, India pacer Shikha Pandey said Shafali has been asked to play her natural game. "We have not asked Shafali Verma to change anything. She has been given free licence to play her fearless brand of cricket," she said.

**BRIEF SCORES:** India 142/6 (Verma 39, Rodrigues 34, Panna 2-25, Salma 2-25) beat Bangladesh 124/8 (Nigar 35, Murshida 30, Yadav 3-18, Pandey 2-14) by 18 runs.

## ROUND-UP

### Bengal advance

*At Cuttack:* Bengal lost their last three wickets inside the first half-an-hour. But the victory target for Odisha was an improbable 456. The hosts moved to 39 when bad stopped play. **Brief scores:** Bengal 332 and 373 (Shahbaz Ahmed 64) drew with Odisha 250 and 39/0.

### Karnataka to face Bengal

*At Jammu:* Karnataka bundled out J&K inside 45 overs in their second innings on the final day to win the match by 167 runs and enter the semifinals, where they will face Bengal. **Brief scores:** Karnataka 206 and 316 (KV Siddharth 98; Abid Mushtaq 6/83) beat J&K 192 and 163 (K Gowtham 7/54) by 167 runs.

### Saurashtra enter last four

*At Ongole:* Andhra hung on in their second innings to deny Saurashtra an outright win, but the visitors reached the semifinals on first innings lead. **Brief scores:** Saurashtra 419 and 426 drew with Andhra 136 and 149/4.

### Semifinal line-up:

- Bengal vs Karnataka (Kolkata)
- Saurashtra vs Gujarat (Rajkot)

# BCCI mulls changes in Ranji knockouts qualification format from next season

SHAMIK CHAKRABARTY  
CUTTACK, FEBRUARY 24

THE BCCI is likely to change the knockouts qualification format in the Ranji Trophy, bringing in pre-quarterfinals from the next season. *The Indian Express* understands that the revamp is being mullied because in the existing format, many top teams have been missing out on knockout berths, while qualification from the Elite Group C and the Plate Group appears to be relatively easier. And when the quarterfinalists from the lower rungs are facing the teams from the top tier, the mismatch is evident.

The gulf in class was obvious during the Bengal versus Odisha quarterfinal here at the DRIEMS College ground, Bengal, despite being reduced to 46/5 on the first day, cruised to the semifinal. The hosts had been poor, but tactically and skill-wise, after the pitch lost its zip. Odisha committed some elementary errors.

In another quarterfinal, Jammu & Kashmir frittered away an excellent opportunity to secure the first innings lead against Karnataka despite being just 15 runs shy of the target at one stage, with three wickets in hand, J&K folded up inside 45 overs in their second innings to lose the match by 167 runs.

Odisha and J&K had come to the quarterfinals from the Elite Group C. The latter had six outright victories in the group stage, while Odisha had five, including four seven-pointers. Goa had qualified from the Plate Group, registering seven wins in nine matches. In the quarterfinal, they lost to Gujarat by 464 runs.

Domestic giants like Mumbai, Delhi, Tamil Nadu and Punjab, and back-to-back Ranji Trophy winners Vidarbha, on the other hand, couldn't qualify, as the current format allowed only top five teams from the Elite Group A and Group B combined to go through.

It is learnt that at the moment, a plan is afoot to have three teams each from the Elite Group A and Group B to the quarterfinals and then organising two pre-quarterfinals involving the top teams from the Elite Group C and the Plate Group. Bengal head coach Arun Lal, however, has a different suggestion.

"Top four teams each from the Elite Group A and Group B and one team each from the Elite Group C and the Plate Group should form the pool (after the group stage). Then, have pre-quarterfinals, where the Group C toppers will face the fourth team from Group A and the Plate Group leaders will be up against the fourth team from Group B. After that we should have the quarterfinals. In that way, you will have only

two additional matches and only one extra week in the domestic cricket calendar. I will take my case to the BCCI Captains and Coaches Conclave and if they don't agree with my suggestions, I will also urge them to explain the reasons for denial," Lal said.

Senior Bengal batsman Manoj Tiwary concurred. "A change would be better, for, at the moment, some quarterfinals aren't offering the desired level of competition. The BCCI should look into this and make sure that the teams that deserve to be in the quarterfinals should go through. I think three teams from Group C and the Plate Group (two plus one) are too many." Tamil Nadu coach Diwakar Vasu extended his support to Lal's suggestion. "I totally agree with Arun bhai. That would be a great format," Vasu said.

Tamil Nadu finished ninth in the Elite cross pool and missed out on knockouts qualification. "At the moment, it's quite unfair. Another problem is that we don't know which team has got how many points, because it's not in one group. So every team is going for outright wins. If you look at the number of outright victories (this season), in the history of the Ranji Trophy, this number of outright victories has never happened," he observed.

## [SPORTS BAR]



## Pandya to play in DY Patil T20 tournament

India all-rounder Hardik Pandya is set to play in the DY Patil T20 tournament, which began in Navi Mumbai on Monday. Hardik suffered a lower back injury five months ago and underwent surgery in London. The 26-year-old, who hasn't played international cricket since then, had been recovering at the National Cricket Academy in Bengaluru. "The Reliance 1 (team) would be represented by players like Hardik Pandya, Bhuvneshwar Kumar, Shikhar Dhawan," said Vijay Patil, President, DY Patil Sports Academy and also the President of Mumbai Cricket Association. Dhawan and Bhuvneshwar are also on their road to recovery after sustaining injuries.

## Mushfiqur's 203 puts Bangladesh in charge

Mushfiqur Rahim hit his third Test double century as Bangladesh declared their first innings with a lead of 295 on Monday in their one-off match against Zimbabwe. Bangladesh ended their innings on 560 for six in the final session before spinner Nayeem Hasan claimed two wickets in two balls in the first over in Dhaka. The visitors reached nine for two at stumps on the third day, still needing 286 runs to make Bangladesh bat again on a wearing pitch at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium. Mushfiqur, who became the highest run-scorer for Bangladesh in Tests, hit an unbeaten 203, while skipper Mominul Haque made 132, after the hosts resumed on 240 for three. Mushfiqur and Mominul added 222 for the fourth wicket. **Brief scores:** Zimbabwe 265 & 9/2 vs Bangladesh 560/6.

## Yash clinches French Junior Open in squash

Budding squash player Yash Fadte from Goa has won the prestigious French Junior Open, and made history by becoming one of the very few Indians to win the prestigious championship. The French Junior Open was held at Lille from February 20 to 23 and is counted as one of the oldest junior squash events. Fadte, 18, was the top seed in the tournament and defeated Czech Republic's no.2 seed Marek Panachek, 3-1 (10-12, 11-5, 11-4, 11-5) in the final. Yash now has his eyes set on the Junior World Championship.



Several of the weekend's Serie A matches in Italy were postponed due to the coronavirus scare, which has hit the northern part of the country. Reuters

## Virus may force football behind closed doors

The Italian government is moving towards having football matches played behind closed doors in affected areas as authorities try to contain a spreading virus that has made northern Italy the focal point of the outbreak in Europe. Serie A president Paolo Dal Pinto sent a letter to the government on Monday asking that games no longer be postponed in the affected areas but played without fans in attendance — noting there is little time for make-up dates considering all elite football competitions must be completed by May 24 because of the upcoming European Championship. Sports Minister Vincenzo Spadafora also proposed the closed-door plan to Italian Premier Giuseppe Conte — although no final decision had been made. "Playing all sports behind closed doors for the next week could be possible, because then fans can more easily stay at home," said Maurizio Casasco, the president of the Italian federation for sports physicians. "But the clubs have to be in agreement. There's more than just soccer in Italy. It's an issue that regards all sports."

## Bazie scores as Real Kashmir beat Arrows

Real Kashmir bounced back from two consecutive defeats as they beat Indian Arrows by a solitary goal to remain in the top half of the I-League points table on Monday. Ivorian midfielder Bazie Armand scored the all-important goal in the 70th minute at the picturesque TRC Ground in Srinagar. Real Kashmir, who lost to Punjab FC and Churchill Brothers — both away games — in their previous two matches, now have 18 points from 12 games to occupy the fifth spot in the 11-team league table. Indian Arrows remained at the bottom of the pile with eight points from 13 games.



## Reed stays strong for WGC title in Mexico

Patrick Reed came through in the clutch, firing three late birdies in a four-under par 67 for a one-shot victory over Bryson DeChambeau in the WGC Mexico Championship. Former Masters champion Reed stayed patient through a frustrating front nine at Chapultepec Golf Club on Sunday, and as a string of leaders fell away powered to the victory with an 18-under par total of 266. Birdies at the 15th, 16th and 17th pushed him to 19-under for the tournament, giving him a two-stroke lead. The cushion proved enough after he pushed his tee shot at 18 well right, Reed limiting the damage to a bogey for the narrow win. DeChambeau appeared to take control with four birdies in a five-hole stretch. But a three-putt bogey at the par-three 17th proved too much to overcome as he settled for a six-under par 65 and a 17-under total of 267.

## Marcelo drives with suspended licence

Brazil defender Marcelo has been in court for driving with a suspended licence for the second time in seven years and speeding, a Madrid court revealed on Monday. The high courts of justice in the Spanish capital said that the Real Madrid left-back had admitted to the offences after reportedly being clocked driving at 134 kmph (83.2 mph) in a 120 km/h zone in December. He was subsequently found to be without a valid licence. Marcelo was told to appear at a second hearing in March when sentencing could be handed down. In March 2013, the 31-year-old was fined €6,000 (\$6,492) for driving after his licence had been revoked.