

# BWF should plan a timeline for resuming tournaments: Srikanth

Says it's challenging to re-set training schedule and goals

## BADMINTON

V.V. SUBRAHMANYAM  
HYDERABAD

Former World No. 1 K. Srikanth, while welcoming the decision to postpone the Tokyo Olympics, feels that the Badminton World Federation (BWF) should think of a timeline for starting its other tournaments which have been cancelled recently.

"It is a good decision as it is next to impossible to host the Games given the critical scenario across the world," Srikanth told *The Hindu*.

### Need for a re-think

"I personally feel that the BWF should have a serious re-think, once the situation improves and deemed fit for any sporting activity, about starting the tournaments which were cancelled in the wake of the coronavirus threat," he said.

"I appeal to the organisers to wait before declaring the next possible dates of Olympics. There has to be a periodic, critical review of the

situation before going ahead with the timeline," he said.

Reflecting on the preparations, Srikanth admitted it will be a difficult phase in the run-up to the next schedule of the Games.

### To plan suitably

"For the last 12 months you have been tuning your physical and conditioning programme according to the original schedule. Now, you have to re-set the goal and plan these programmes accordingly.

"It is a huge task and a different kind of challenge for any athlete," the champion shuttler, who once set a rare record of winning four Super Series titles in 2017 before scaling the summit of world rankings in April 2018.

"Right now, I am in Guntur with my family members and friends. But, definitely doing those minimum exercises to stay fit and appeal to all the citizens to adhere to the guidelines of the Government and stay indoors till situation improves," he said.



**Fervent plea:** K. Srikanth said there is a need to wait before declaring the next possible dates of Olympics.  
\* FILE PHOTO: SANDEEP SAXENA

# Indian shuttlers for freeze in rankings

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NEW DELHI

The Olympics postponement brought some relief but Indian shuttlers, including B. Sai Praneeth, are still wondering why the Badminton World Federation (BWF) is yet to freeze the rankings and sought clarity about the qualification process of the Tokyo Games.

The BWF had suspended all HSBC BWF World Tour events post the All England Championships due to the COVID-19 pandemic and there were calls for the extension of the Olympic qualification period which falls on April 28.

### This is the time

But now with the International Olympic Committee (IOC) postponing the Olympics to next year, shuttlers believe its time BWF immediately freezes the ranking.

"Our points are getting deducted even though the tournaments were postponed by BWF due to the coronavirus.



**Testing times:** B. Sai Praneeth is worried that points are being deducted which will make qualification difficult.  
\* FILE PHOTO: V.V. SUBRAHMANYAM

Swiss Open got postponed but my points got deducted.

"So like this, if they keep slashing the points for all the qualifiers which were postponed, I don't know what will happen," Praneeth said.

"BWF should at least freeze the rankings, later they can decide about the qualification depending on the dates of Olympics but as of now there is no clarity."

Praneeth, who was set to make his Olympic debut, said he is not sure about his

participation as he will have to fight again for points.

### Process will start again

"If Olympics would have happened in July, I would have been sure about my qualification but since it is now a year to go, so the process will again be on and I will have to fight for ranking points again.

"It is not easy to maintain that ranking. I can't say what will happen after one year," he said.

# Borges has fitness levels to maintain

We're all doing our best to stay indoors, says MCFC's versatile midfielder

## FOOTBALL

NANDAKUMAR MARAR  
MUMBAI

Rowlin Borges is a tireless box-to-box midfielder, well-known for endurance on the pitch and versatility as a defensive midfielder for Mumbai City FC.

The India international is back home in Nuvem (Goa) trying to maintain a level of fitness during self-isolation.

### Following a regimen

Players usually assemble for the ISL pre-season at a fixed date after India commitments are done. Instead, with the restrictions on assembly of people, Borges, 27, is following a regimen devised by MCFC's Head of Rehabilitation & Medical Services Dr. Sandeep Kurale.

"I'm in great physical condition. I'm trying to maintain fitness levels. We're all doing our best to stay indoors without compromising on our fitness routines," he said.

Borges is working on strength, core enhancement for injury prevention and plyometric exercises to improve power. He was rated one of MCFC's two fittest players (besides midfielder Bipin Singh) last season.

The India international, who was part of the first team at the AFC Cup in the UAE, made 15 league appearances for MCFC, taking charge in the midfield after play-maker Paolo Machado was injured.

The purpose of this advi-



**On his toes:** Rowlin Borges says the focus is on injury prevention and bodyweight.  
\* MUMBAI CITY FC

sory, followed by feedback via videos and periodic readings, is to give coaching and support staff fitness parameters of each player ready for screening and preparation.

### New coach

MCFC will announce a new coach following Jorge Costa's exit this season.

"When a new set of people come in, they'll know certain things have been followed in the off-season. It will be easier for them to implement tactics," Borges said.

"The team coach or strength/conditioning coach will ask for certain data from the previous year. They will check aerobic conditioning and compare it with parameters they have in mind. Be-

fore starting the off-season, the players do the MAS (Maximum Aerobic Speed) test, involving runs over 60m for five minutes up and down the ground continuously and distance covered is calculated.

"This is the basic aerobics data we share," he said.

Borges and other players elsewhere relay the readings periodically.

"We send players' videos and email about the specific data they should record and update during the off-season. From the readings, we know exactly if a player is able to reach the required fitness level in the pre-season.

"Two other aspects we focus on is injury prevention and bodyweight. Players are told what to avoid when eat-

# HCA offers stadium for setting up isolation centre

This is the right time to give back to the govt. and the public, says secretary

V.V. SUBRAHMANYAM  
HYDERABAD

In a move which would also indirectly convey a clear message that there would be no IPL this season, Hyderabad Cricket Association secretary R. Vijayanand, in a letter to the Telangana Chief Minister K. Chandrababhan Rao on Wednesday, offered to let the Rajiv Gandhi Stadium for setting up isolation centre for the coronavirus-affected patients.

### Right time

"We feel this is the right time to give back something to the government and the general public in return for all the wonderful support they have been extending to us over the years," Vijayanand informed *The Hindu* on Wednesday.

"We have about 40 rooms which can be converted into full-fledged isolation wards and in view of the plenty of

# 'Once-in-a-life-time chance to serve the country'

Former cricketer Sukhvinder recounts his rescue mission to Italy

## GENERAL

VIJAY LOKAPALLY  
NEW DELHI

When Prime Minister Narendra Modi applauded the efforts of Capt. Swati Rawal and Capt. Raja Chauhan of Air India Boeing 777 that airlifted 263 Indians, mostly students stranded in Rome, it was an appreciation to cherish for the crew of that historic flight on March 22. Among those engaged in the operation was senior purser Sukhvinder Singh, former Delhi and Assam left-arm spinner.

### Important assignment

The 20-member cabin crew reported at the Indira Gandhi International Airport on March 21 to perform, perhaps, the most important assignment of their careers. Flying to Rome with 120 Italian nationals and returning with Indian students, was the "call of the nation" for every crew member.

Having been employed with Air India (formerly In-



Sukhvinder Singh.

dian Airlines), for close to 30 years, Sukhvinder is among the few sportspersons who did not rest on the on-field laurels.

"When I was not playing, I was flying," Sukhvinder told *The Hindu*. His First Class career, spanning from 1986 to 2004, saw him play 47 matches (148 wickets and 2076 runs with four centuries).

"Cricket was the driving force for me to take up challenges in life. This was a mission for us. We were going to bring back the youth, the future of India. It was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to

serve the country," said the 53-year-old.

### Rising to the occasion

"Air India has been doing a fantastic job in these times of crisis. It flew our countrymen from Wuhan and Milan. We take pride in being a part of that family. Each crew member knew it was the need of the hour. We understood the gravity of the situation and grabbed the chance when it came our way," said Sukhvinder, recalling the experience.

"We were provided with all the protection (Hazmat suit) from the COVID-19 virus. I was not scared. Being a cricketer, I have faced many challenges and pressure. I have flown with many Heads of States, but this was unique.

"I was part of a historic exercise that was evacuating our young citizens trapped in a foreign land. When we landed, most of them shed tears of joy and relief," said Sukhvinder, his voice choked with emotion.



**Well-equipped:** The Rajiv Gandhi Stadium has about 40 rooms which can be converted into full-fledged isolation wards, says Vijayanand, secretary of the HCA. \* FILE PHOTO: K.V.S. GIRI

parking slot available at the Stadium which hosts all major cricketing matches - international and IPL - we thought it would ideal for these centres," the HCA Secretary informed.

"This initiative was unanimously backed by the HCA president Mohd. Azharuddin, Apex Council members

and all the secretaries of the affiliated clubs," he said.

"It is an undeniable fact that Telangana has been in the forefront and setting example for others to follow the measures to curb the menace on a war-footing by the way you, as the Chief Minister, have been taking the steps setting example for

others," the HCA official said in the letter.

"We deem it is the moral obligation on our part in this hour of crisis to be of some help the government.

"We will be more than happy if HCA services are sought for any other purpose in battling this dreaded virus," he concluded.

# Indian TT players get more time

Olympics postponement will help them prepare better

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NEW DELHI

The postponement of Tokyo Olympics to next year due to the COVID-19 pandemic has given India's table tennis squad more time to prepare and given the current scenario, the sport's governing body TTFI is looking to fill the head coach's position locally rather than hiring a foreign coach.

The head coach position has been lying vacant since the 2018 Asian Games due to multiple factors.

The Table Tennis Federation of India (TTFI) had tried to rope in Canadian Dejan Papic last year, but things did not work out as the latter decided to undergo a knee surgery when he was expected to join the squad.

"We can only look at an

Indian coach now. There is no activity at the moment, but when things get better, I doubt a foreign coach would like to come here considering the global situation (due to coronavirus)," TTFI secretary-general M.P. Singh said.

Former national champions Soumyadeep Roy and Arup Basak have been working with the men's and women's teams respectively for more than a year.

### No clarity

With the entire world sporting scene coming to a standstill due to the pandemic, there is lack of clarity over the Olympic qualification events.

The Asian qualifier was supposed to take place next month but world body ITTF has suspended all activity

until the end of April.

"We are waiting for the ITTF to give us more details about the future. The Olympic qualifying events need to be rescheduled and may be fresh rankings will have to be considered for qualification," Singh added.

India's highest-ranked player G. Sathiyam, who is in line to qualify alongside veteran Sharath Kamal, said it is still too early to talk about the game.

"Decision can only be made after the world is able to contain the virus. Indian coach is an option but will have to discuss with TTFI and SAI when the time comes and take a call," said Sathiyam.

Among the women, Manika Batra has the best chance of making the Olympics cut.



**Need to wait:** G. Sathiyam said a decision on the coach can be made only after the world is able to curtail the pandemic. \* FILE PHOTO: G. RAMAKRISHNA

# FIFA monitoring virus threat in India

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NEW DELHI

World football governing body FIFA on Wednesday said it was monitoring the developments arising out of the COVID-19 pandemic in India, which is scheduled to host the Women's U-17 World Cup in November.

FIFA said it was also exploring "alternative solutions".

The coronavirus outbreak has so far claimed lives of over 20,000 people across the world while infecting more than 4,25,000.

In India, the pandemic has affected over 600 people besides 10 deaths.

"FIFA is currently monitoring developments regarding the coronavirus outbreak in India to decide the future of the U-17 Women's World Cup which is slated to be held in the country in November," the apex body said in a statement after PTI inquired.

### Alternative solutions

"With public health and safety in mind, FIFA is also working with the Local Organising Committee to identify any potential impact on preparations for the FIFA U-17 Women's World Cup India 2020, as well as finding alternative solutions to upcoming events that were planned in India in the lead up to the tournament," it added.

Sixteen teams will take part in the World Cup, of which only three have sealed their berths.

India has qualified as the host nation, while North Korea (winner) and Japan (runner-up) progressed from the Asian qualifiers.

The World Cup is scheduled to be held from November 2 to 21 with matches to be played in Navi Mumbai, Kolkata, Ahmedabad, Bhubaneswar and Guwahati.

# Hockey teams take postponement in stride

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
BENGALURU

The news of Tokyo Olympics' postponement is yet to sink in but India's hockey captains Manpreet Singh and Rani Rampal are confident that they will take the disappointment in stride while working hard for the next year.

"We had just finished the day's evening session when chief coach Graham Reid informed us about the postponement of the Olympic Games," Manpreet said.

### Yet to sink in

"I think the news is yet to sink in for us. We were mentally gearing up for our first match on 25th July, so the disappointment is surely there but it is important for us to now look at the positives," he added.

The Indian men's and women's teams have shaped up well over the course of the last year, winning big competitions such as the FIH Series Finals and the Olympic Qualifiers in front of the home crowd in November last year.

### Fine start

The men's team made a fine start to the season this year with a fantastic outing in the Pro League while the women's team was stoked after its tour to New Zealand earlier this year.

"Though, somewhere at the back of our minds we anticipated this could happen considering the impact COVID-19 has made across the globe, we had never let it affect our training or the intensity needed in every session," Manpreet said.