



India beat Uruguay 3-2 in FIH Hockey Women's Nations Cup 2025-26

AUCKLAND [NEW ZEALAND], JUNE 18: The Indian women's hockey team continued their impressive run at the FIH Hockey Women's Nations Cup New Zealand 2025-26 with a hard-fought 3-2 victory over Uruguay in their final pool match in Auckland on Thursday.

After conceding an early goal, India showed resilience and composure to fight back, with Deepika scoring a brace while Deepika Soreng also found the net, according to a press release.

The win ensured a top-place finish in Pool A for India, with three consecutive wins over the USA, Japan and Uruguay. The USA joined India in the semi-finals from Pool A after the American side finished in second place.

Chiara Appennino (13') and Manuela Vilar (55') scored goals for Uruguay, while Deepika (24', 56') and Deepika Soreng (43') netted the goals for India. The match was also a special occasion for midfielder Neha, who celebrated her 200th senior international appearance for the Indian Women's Hockey Team.

Uruguay took the lead in the 13th minute when Chiara converted a penalty corner to put her side ahead after a closely contested opening quarter. In-



dia, however, responded strongly and drew level before halftime through their in-form drag-flicker Deepika, who successfully converted a penalty corner in the 24th minute to make it 1-1. The momentum shifted decisively in India's favour after the break as they stepped up the intensity and created sustained pressure. Their efforts paid off in the 43rd minute when Deepika Soreng produced a fine field goal to

hand India a 2-1 lead heading into the final quarter. Uruguay refused to give in and found an equaliser late in the contest through captain Manuela, who struck in the 55th minute to set up a tense finish. However, India's response was immediate. Just a minute later, Deepika converted her second penalty corner of the evening, restoring India's lead at 3-2, which sealed victory. India enjoyed the better share of attacking opportunities

throughout the match, earning seven penalty corners compared to Uruguay's two, and capitalised on key moments to register a comeback win.

With three consecutive wins, India will head into the semi-finals brimming with confidence as they continue their pursuit of the FIH Nations Cup title and a return to the FIH Pro League. They are likely to face Chile or Korea in the semis, scheduled for June 20. (ANI)

Smriti Mandhana, Temba Bavuma only cricketers in TIME's 2026 Most Influential People in Sports list

NEW DELHI, JUNE 18: India's women's cricket team player Smriti Mandhana and South Africa's Test team captain, Temba Bavuma, became the only cricketers to feature in TIME magazine's 'The 100 Most Influential People in Sports 2026' list published earlier this month.

The inclusion in the prestigious list highlights both cricketers' impact on the global cricketing arena.

Charlie Campbell, editor-at-large at TIME, highlighted Smriti Mandhana's record-breaking career, noting that she became the first Indian woman to score a domestic ODI double century and the first woman to register international centuries in all three formats. He also pointed to her tally of 17 international centuries, which is the most in women's cricket.

Campbell further underlined her leadership achievements, including captaining Royal Challengers Bengaluru (RCB) to Women's Premier League (WPL) titles in 2024 and 2026 and playing a key role as vice-captain in India's ICC Women's World Cup triumph in 2025.

"The records keep tumbling in for Smriti Mandhana. The Mumbai-born left-handed opening batter was the first Indian woman to score a double century in a domestic one-day game, the first to score a century in all three international formats, and is a joint holder of the most international women's cricket centuries with 17. Mandhana is also the first woman to score more than 1,000 one-day international runs in a calendar year. But Mandhana is proudest of the team honors she is also



accumulating." Campbell wrote as per the TIME's website.

"She captained the Royal Challengers Bangalore to the 2024 and 2026 Women's Premier League titles and was vice captain for India's triumph at last year's ICC Women's World Cup, scoring the second-most runs in the tournament. In 2024, Mandhana set the record for most international runs across formats by a woman and then beat her own record last year—a feat that contributed to her being crowned BBC Indian Sportswoman of 2025," Campbell wrote further.

Temba Bavuma, on the other hand, has been highlighted by Campbell for carrying significant historical and social expectations as one of the few black South African cricketers. Campbell highlighted Bavuma's major milestones, including becoming the first Black South African to score a Test century in 2016 and the first Black captain of the national team in 2021.

Campbell also noted his leadership success in 2025,

when Bavuma guided South Africa to a historic Test series win in India and an unbeaten World Test Championship triumph over Australia.

"Temba Bavuma has always carried more than the weight of his shirt. As one of just a handful of Black South African cricketers, his successes were lauded as a turning point for the sport. But any setbacks were never merely his own. Fortunately, Bavuma has enjoyed many more successes than setbacks. In 2016, he became the first Black South African to hit a century (scoring 100 or more runs in an inning), and five years later he was his nation's first Black captain," Campbell wrote.

"Last year, Bavuma led South Africa to a historic Test series win in India as well as victory in the World Test Championship (WTC), besting a heavily favored Australia in the final and emerging from the tournament undefeated. It was South Africa's first international title since 1998 and owed much to Bavuma's heroic 66 runs in the final

despite his being hobbled by a hamstring strain. "It was that moment there to be recognized as more than just a Black African cricketer," Bavuma told journalists following the WTC. "And I hope that it continues to inspire our country," Campbell wrote further.

Cricket South Africa (CSA) congratulated Bavuma on being named in TIME's 100 Most Influential People in Sports list, calling it a prestigious honour. They highlighted his inspirational leadership and his role in guiding South Africa to the ICC World Test Championship title in 2025, praising him as a leader who continues to inspire the nation.

"A Prestigious Honour. #TheProteas captain, Temba Bavuma, has been named in TIME's 100 Most Influential People in Sports. Recognised for his inspirational leadership and for guiding South Africa to the ICC World Test Championship title in June 2025. A fitting tribute to a leader who continues to inspire a nation," CSA said in an X post. (ANI)

Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports approves financial grant for hosting of Asian Fencing Championships

NEW DELHI, JUNE 18: The Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports has officially sanctioned financial grants under the Assistance to National Sports Federation Scheme to the Fencing Association of India towards the organisation of the 26th Senior Asian Fencing Championships, scheduled from June 19 to June 24, 2026.

The tournament also marks the historic first time that the world-class Bharat Mandapam complex at Pragati Maidan here will host a competitive sporting event since its inauguration in 2023.

Previously reserved strictly for high-profile diplomatic and political summits like the G20, Bharat Mandapam's transition into a sports arena represents a definitive turning point for Indian indoor sports infrastructure.

The mega-venue has been transformed to accommodate an elite international field of more than 400 athletes from over 30 countries. "Hosting a tournament of this magnitude is a monumental milestone for Indian fencing," stated star fencer and India's first-ever fencing Olympian CA Bhavani Devi, set to compete in the women's sabre event, as quoted by a press release.

India has rapidly scaled its capabilities as a multi-sport global host, success-



fully organising several massive international tournaments across different disciplines over the last few years. This tournament will also serve as a perfect curtain raiser to the Commonwealth Games 2030, set for four years from now. Of late, India has served as the host to major international sports competitions like the World Para Athletics Championships 2025, and more, and is also vying to win a bid to host the 2036 Olympics.

The Fencing Association of India (FAI) has officially locked in a powerhouse 24-member national contingent, evenly split with 12 male and 12 female athletes.

Rising stars as well as Khelo India Athletes (KIAs) Karan Singh (Sabre), Shreya Gupta (Sabre), and more, join Target Asian Games Group (TAGG) athletes Bhavani Devi (Sabre) and Taniksha Khatri (Épée) in the 24-member squad; 17 members are KIAs.

The Senior Asian Fencing Championships opens on Friday with the individual Men's Sabre and Women's Foil preliminary pools and elimination rounds, followed by the Opening Ceremony, starting at 6 PM. The continental team knockout stages take centre stage from June 22.

*Full India Squad:

Epee Women: Taniksha Khatri, Prachi Lohan, Mitva Chaudhari, Yashkeerat Kaur Hayer

Epee men: Sherjin Rajendran Shanthimol, Joseph Bennet, Shaurya Ashwini, Alohious Koovakkal Joshy

Foil women: Joys Ashitha Stalinraj, Naorem Mina Devi, Kanupriya Chawla, Sonia Devi Waikhom

Foil men: Sachin, Sanasam Hemash Singh, Aditya, Tejas Manoj Patil

Sabre women: Bhavani Devi, Shreya Gupta, Jefarlin J.S., Shruti Joshi

Sabre men: Karan Singh, Gisho Nidhi K.P., Lakshay Badser, Vishal Thapar. (ANI)

England name squad for historic women's Test against India at Lord's

LONDON [UK], JUNE 18: England have announced a 15-player squad for their first-ever women's Test match at Lord's from 10 July against India.

Nat Sciver-Brunt will become the first English woman to lead her team in a Test match on the ground, with no less than five players in the running for debuts in the format.

Capped in limited-overs formats, Alice Capsey, Tilly Corteen-Coleman and

Mady Villiers could make their first England appearance in whites, while fellow squad members Grace Potts and Ellie Threlkeld are yet to play for their country, as per ICC.

England managing director of women's cricket Clare Connor believes it is an exciting time for women's cricket in the country, with more history about to be made.

"We have selected a strong Test squad under the leadership of Nat

Sciver-Brunt for what will be another historic few days at Lord's for women's cricket," Connor said as quoted by ICC.

"Test cricket is a rare and wonderfully challenging experience in the women's game, and I know how proud our players are to represent England in this format."

"For the 11 women who will get the chance to be the first to enjoy that feeling at Lord's, it will be a moment to savour," concluded Con-

nor.

While re-injuring her calf on T20 World Cup duty earlier this week, Sciver-Brunt is named to lead the team, set to play in her 13th Test match. Heather Knight, the most-capped Test player of the group, will play her 15th match in the format.

England's last Test match was in an away Women's Ashes in January 2025, where they fell to the Australians at the MCG.

DOHA [QATAR], JUNE 18:

Ahead of his return to competitive action, India's Olympic gold medalist and former world champion javelin thrower Neeraj Chopra said that the upcoming Commonwealth Games this year would be a tough competition, with several athletes having thrown 90 m or more. He also spoke on his historic 90 m throw at the same venue last year, saying that "technically, it was not that good".

After last year's World Athletics Championships in Tokyo, where he failed to defend his title, finishing eighth and getting outshone by a fourth-placed Sachin Yadav, Neeraj will be making his return to action at the Doha leg of the Diamond League on Friday. The venue holds a special place in Neeraj's career, as he threw 90.23 m last year under the guidance of his former coach and Czech javelin legend Jan Zelezny, silencing all the talks around him breaching the 90 m mark.

However, this time around, things have changed for Neeraj, with two more challengers emerging from Asia. Sri Lanka's Ramesh Pathirage, the current world leader, will compete after producing a remarkable 92.62m throw at the Rome Diamond League 2026 earlier this month, will be participating in the competition along with Pakistan's Arshad Nadeem, who holds the Olympic record and gold medal with a throw of 92.97 m.

"All of them have thrown 90m, so the Commonwealth Games will not be less (competitive) than the Olympics or World Championships; it will be a really tough competition," Chopra said during the presser at Doha as quoted by Olympics.com.

On his epic 90 m throw last year, Neeraj has some interesting thoughts, noting that he could have gone two to three metres further.

"Commonwealth Games will be a tough competition": Neeraj Chopra ahead of Doha Diamond League



"Technically, that throw was not that good. It was really fast from the arm, but if I had done better with my lower body, that may be two to three metres more," Chopra explained.

Neeraj also needs to achieve the mark of 82.61 m set by the Athletics Federation of India (AFI) to secure his CWG 2026 qualification. CWG will be held in Glasgow from July 23 to August 2 this year. If qualified, Neeraj will be aiming to reclaim the gold he won back in the Gold Coast 2018 edition. The Indian javelin superstar missed the 2022 Birmingham edition due to injury, where Arshad Nadeem took home the gold with a games record of 90.18m.

Neeraj said that competing in Tokyo last year, where his best throw was a mere 84.03 m, may have done him more harm than good, noting that he had an injury before the world meet.

"I had an injury last year before the Tokyo World Championships. We

worked a lot and also competed in Tokyo, but I don't think that was a good decision because I already knew that I had some problems," he said. "But that was the last competition, so I decided to compete there," he said.

After months of rehab and recovery, though, Neeraj feels "really good and fit" to resume.

He also confirmed that he has returned to working with his long-time mentor Jaiveer Chaudhary, after ending his coaching partnership with Zelezny earlier this year, saying that he is working on his "natural technique" with someone who has known him since the start of his career.

"He knows my story from the last 15-16 years. He knows my training plans and everything, so now we work on my technique," Chopra said.

"We are not working on anything specific. I am working on my natural technique," he signed off.