



Asian Games gold medallist Ritu Negi dropped from Rs 1 cr kabaddi award list

SHIMLA, OCT 08: In a sudden turn of events, Asian Games gold medallist and Arjuna awardee Ritu Negi has been dropped from the list of Himachal Pradesh kabaddi players eligible for the state government's enhanced cash award, leaving the sportsperson and her family shocked.

Negi's name figured in the list of four Himachal players—along with team skipper Pushpa Rana, Jyoti Thakur and Bhavna Thakur—just about a week ago. Her name was also included in a congratulatory post shared by Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu on Facebook.

However, her name was missing from a government press release issued two days ago announcing an increase in the cash award for the kabaddi players from Rs 33 lakh each to Rs 1 crore.

Sports Minister Yadvinder Goma said he was unaware of the reason for the omission. "I will see the file and check with the Chief Minister," he said when asked about Negi's exclusion.

Negi, who hails from Sirmaur and is married in Haryana, said she was shocked and disappointed by the sudden decision.

"I was Himachal's daughter until a week ago. The CM shared a congratulatory message on Facebook, while Leader of Opposition Jai Ram Thakur and Anurag Thakur called to congratulate me. I fail to understand what happened two days ago," she said.

She termed the omission insulting, pointing out that she had won several medals for both the country and the state. Negi is the only Indian woman kabaddi player to have represented the country at three consecutive Asian Games, winning two gold medals and a silver.

Her father, Bhawan Singh Negi, questioned whether her marital status could be a reason for excluding her. "Does marriage change the fact that she is Himachal's daughter?" he asked.

He pointed out that Negi had received the state's cash award for her 2023 Asian Games gold even though she was married at the time.

Negi acknowledged that she would receive an award from the Haryana government under its sports policy but said athletes had received awards from more than one state. She said she was employed with Railways and did not represent Haryana in domestic competitions, while having represented Himachal Pradesh several times.

"Why is Himachal disowning me at the fag end of my career?" she asked. Negi suspects foul play and plans to meet the Chief Minister soon.



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Harmanjot Singh, Lili Das to headline Indian Elite Field at Delhi Half Marathon

NEW DELHI [INDIA], OCTOBER 8 : The Delhi Half Marathon on Thursday announced the Indian Elite field for the 21st edition of the World Athletics Gold Label Road Race, scheduled to be held in New Delhi on Sunday, October 18.

The field comprises 22 men and 20 women, led by Harmanjot Singh and Kiran Matre in the men's category, as per a press release.

Harmanjot, the reigning World 10K Bengaluru 2026 Indian Elite champion and silver medallist at the 2026 Asian Cross Country Championships, will make his Vedanta Delhi Half Marathon debut on 18 October. With a personal best of 1:01:46 at the Alwar Tiger International Half Marathon, the fastest in the Indian Elite field, he enters the race as a strong contender.

"Winning in Bengaluru and taking silver at the Asian Cross Country this year has given me a lot of confidence going into Delhi. The Vedanta Delhi Half Marathon is one of the toughest races in the country, with a field that pushes you to your limit, and I am looking forward to testing myself against the best elite runners over the half marathon distance. I will give it everything on race day," said Harmanjot Singh.

Kiran Matre, who finished second among the Indian Elite men at last year's Vedanta Delhi Half Marathon and set his half marathon personal best of 1:04:57 in that race, will look to build on that performance on home roads. He is also a former winner of the Indian Elite race at the TCS World 10K Bengaluru (2024), where he clocked a personal best of 29:32.

The pair will face strong competition from Kartik Karkera, winner of the Indian Elite men's race at the Tata Mumbai Marathon 2026 and second runner-up at last year's Vedanta Delhi Half Marathon.

Also returning to the half marathon circuit after a long hiatus is track star Prince Kumar of Uttar Pradesh, who won the 5,000m and 10,000m titles at the 2025 Open National Athletics Championships and the 5,000m gold at the 2025 South Asian Athletics Championships.

Asian Games 2023 steeplechase bronze medalist Priti Lamba, who already knows what it takes to reach the Indian Elite podium in Delhi, will add further depth to the field.

The 21st edition also marks the launch of PRIDE (Procram Rewards for Indian Distance Elites), a merit-based rewards framework designed to recognise, incentivise and empower Indian elite athletes competing at its flagship events.

PRIDE offers India's top distance runners transparent, performance-driven, premium benefits, celebrating excellence and encouraging the growth of elite distance running in the country.

The framework applies to all verified Indian elite distance athletes registering for all Procram International events.

Prize money and Indian Elite event record incentive

The top three finishers in the Indian Elite Men's and Women's categories will receive a prize money of Rs 3,50,000, Rs 2,50,000 and Rs 1,50,000, respectively. An additional Rs 1,00,000 incentive is also up for grabs for setting a new Indian Elite record at VDHM. The current Indian Elite records stand at 60:30, set by Avinash Sable in the Men's category in 2020, and 70:31, set by L. Suriya in the Women's category in 2017. (ANI)



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Samson-Sooryavanshi dilemma resurfaces as India eye 2-0 lead against West Indies

RANCHI, OCT 08: Sanju Samson's lean run is the lone sore point in an otherwise firing batting line-up and it will prompt the team management to ponder over pairing teen sensation Vaibhav Sooryavanshi with opener Abhishek Sharma in the second T20I against the West Indies here on Friday.

A win here will power India to a 2-0 lead in the five-match series, but the hosts will certainly want a more productive outing from Samson.

The Kerala batter's last four innings read: 9, 7, 2, 11. Consequently, the partnerships involving Samson in the previous four matches stand at: 7, 12, 2 (both for 2nd wicket with Sooryavanshi coming in as opener), and 29.

But the middle-order led by skipper Shreyas Iyer, who has finally found his footing as T20I captain, has covered up those failures in spectacular fashion. Iyer also hammered his maiden T20I century in the 68th match of his career.

So, there will be a temptation to give Sooryavanshi another run. The left-hander has shown that T20 cricket comes naturally to him in the limited opportunities he has received so far.

His wide and unique range of shots, coupled with the ability to produce match-winning knocks have made him a compelling package.

But India have so far backed the established opening combination of Abhishek and Samson.

The management's support of Samson was evident when he was accommodated at No.3 in the Asian Games in Japan, while giving the opening slot to Sooryavanshi.

However, Samson is yet to respond to that show of faith in him with matching performances.

In that context, the current five-match series against the Caribbeans could become significant for Samson as he cannot hang on to his World Cup performances for an eternity.

But Sooryavanshi, for all his talent, has also discovered that international cricket is a different beast.

He scored 14, 13 and 15 in India's 0-3 defeat in the T20I series against England. In the Asian Games, the Bihar batter made 18 and 35.

They are not bad scores in isolation for a beginner but they also demonstrated the fact that he cannot be rushed into top level cricket simply because of the hype around him.

India's management will therefore be thinking hard about all the corners before handing another chance to the 15-year-old.

So, that makes Friday's match less about an immediate selection call and more about the Samson-Sooryavanshi question that could grow louder as the series progresses.

For Samson, the extension of the current poor run could make his position increasingly difficult to defend.

India will also look at a change in their pace-bowling combination.

Mayank Yadav leaked 16 runs in the opening over of the first T20I at Lucknow and was expensive through the middle and at the death. He, however, claimed the important wicket of West Indies top-scorer Sherfane Rutherford in the penultimate over.

India could be tempted to bring in all-rounder Nitish Kumar Reddy and trust him with the new ball, although that experiment did not work particularly well during the preceding ODI series.

The spin department, on the other hand, looked settled after Kuldeep Yadav joined veteran Axar Patel in the eleven. The pair picked up two wickets apiece and kept the West Indies batters under pressure.

Rookie all-rounder Naman Dhir was another positive to emerge, finishing with impressive figures of 3/31 with his off-spin.

For the West Indies, the batting has to produce far bigger total than the 171 all out they managed in the opening game.

Their line-up is packed with established T20 names, with Shimron Hetmyer, Rovman Powell, Roston Chase and Romario Shepherd providing plenty of firepower around captain Shai Hope.

The West Indies will have to bat out Jasprit Bumrah-less India and a total in excess of 220 could give them a solid platform to defend.

Batting is clearly the West Indies' biggest strength, and they will need to make the most of it to compensate for a bowling attack that lacks bite apart from the wily left-arm spinner Akeal Hossain.

Teams

India: Shreyas Iyer (c), Tilak Varma, Abhishek Sharma, Arshdeep Singh, Shivam Dube, Ishan Kishan, Naman Dhir, Kuldeep Yadav, Nitish Kumar Reddy, Axar Patel, Prince Yadav, Ravi Bishnoi, Sanju Samson (wk), Vaibhav Sooryavanshi, Mayank Yadav.

West Indies: Shai Hope (c and wk), Jewel Andrew, Roston Chase, Matthew Forde, Shimron Hetmyer, Akeal Hosen, Shamar Joseph, Gudakesh Motie, Keemo Paul, Kamil Pooran, Rovman Powell, Sherfane Rutherford, Quentin Sampson, Romario Shepherd, Shamar Springer.



PV Sindhu storms into Arctic Open QFs with straight-games win

VANTAA [FINLAND], OCTOBER 8 : Two-time Olympic medallist PV Sindhu stormed into the women's singles quarter-finals of the Arctic Open 2026 after a comfortable straight-games victory over Japan's Riko Gunji in Vantaa, Finland, on Thursday.

The sixth-seeded Sindhu, competing at the BWF Super 500 event, defeated Gunji 21-15, 21-15 in 49 minutes to book her place in the last eight. She will next face top seed and former world champion Ratchanok Intanon of Thailand in the quarter-finals, as per Olympics.com.

The opening game was closely contested, with Sindhu and the Japanese shuttler locked at 15-all before the Indian produced a decisive late surge, winning six consecutive points to take the game.

The second game followed a similar pattern, with the scores level at 13-all before Sindhu raised her intensity at the crucial stage. She won eight of the next 10 points to close out the match in straight games.

Earlier, World Championships medallists Kidambi Srikanth and HS Prannoy suffered first-round exits from the men's singles event at the Arctic Open 2026 in Vantaa, Finland. Srikanth, ranked 31st in the world, won the opening game against Canada's world No. 34, Brian Yang, but eventually lost 15-21, 21-15, and 21-13. World No. 38 Prannoy, meanwhile, was beaten by fourth-seeded Denmark's Anders Antonsen. Prannoy struggled against the Dane and exited the tournament after losing 21-10, 21-9. (ANI)

Nongmeikapam. Goalkeeper Monalisha Devi Moirangthem made her first start and earned her third cap overall. The 69th-ranked Blue Tigresses faced a considerable challenge against 27th-ranked Russia in what was India's first-ever women's international match in Kolkata. Yet, for much of the opening half, the hosts defended with discipline and created opportunities that could have changed the course of the contest.



Indian Women's team goes down to Russia in Kolkata friendly

KOLKATA, OCT 08 : A new-look Indian women's team held their own for much of the first half before conceding a 0-4 defeat to Russia in the first of two international friendlies at the rain-soaked Kishore Bharati Krirangan on Thursday.

Iana Sheina's moment of brilliance gave the visitors the lead in the 40th minute, and substitute Kira Petukhova struck twice in the 60th and 65th minutes.

Iana Svistunova completed the scoring in the 81st minute as Russia's sustained pressure wore down the Blue Tigresses after the break, as per the AIFF website.

Head coach Crispin Chettri used the occasion to test his emerging players, handing international debuts to Babysana Devi Thingbaijam, Malati Munda, Cindy Colney, Shubhangi Singh, Dhurga Perumal and Sibani Devi