

Kohli returns to Vijay Hazare tournament after 15 years

Bengaluru, (UNI) Star Indian cricketers Virat Kohli and Rishabh Pant have been named in Delhi's probable squad for the Vijay Hazare National One-Day Tournament, set to begin on December 24.

Kohli recently informed the Delhi Cricket Association of his availability, marking a return to the Vijay Hazare Trophy for Delhi after 15 years. He last featured in the tournament in 2010 against Services and has already played Ranji Trophy matches for Delhi this season.

Both Kohli and Rohit Sharma, who have retired from India's Test and T20 squads, will now focus solely on representing the national team in the one-day format. The BCCI has in-



structed all fit players not engaged in other tournaments to participate in domestic competitions, paving the way for Kohli's inclusion.

Delhi will host all seven of its matches in Bengaluru, with two games at Chinnaswamy Stadium and five at Alur. The team will kick off its campaign against Andhra Pradesh.

Kohli comes into the tournament on the back of a stellar performance in the recent three-match ODI series against South Africa, scoring 302 runs, including two centuries and an unbeaten half-century, and earning the Player of the Series award.

With 651 runs from 13 ODIs in 2025, Kohli currently ranks second in the ICC ODI rankings and is eyeing the 2027 ICC T20 World Cup.

Indian team not worried as Gill, Suryakumar struggle



New Chandigarh, (UNI) India is not concerned about the lean patch of Shubman Gill and skipper Suryakumar Yadav in the ongoing T20I series against South Africa, assistant coach Ryan ten Doeschate said on Friday, backing the out-of-form duo to regain their touch ahead of the ICC Men's T20 World Cup in February.

According to the International Cricket Council (ICC) website, the key pair has combined for just 21 runs through the opening two matches of the ongoing T20I series against South Africa, and you need to go back further than 12 months to find the last time either player scored a half-century at the T20I level.

Gill fell for a golden duck in India's 51-run defeat in New Chandigarh on Thursday, while Suryakumar scored just five off four balls. Neither has scored a T20I half-century in over a year.

Despite the numbers, ten Doeschate insisted there was "no worry at all" in the Indian camp.

"I saw some good signs of a

change of mentality (from Gill) on the backend of that Australian tour (in November)," ten Doeschate noted. "The two dismissals in this series (against South Africa), I thought in the first game we asked the guys to go out there and attack the Powerplay, and it wasn't a great wicket at Cuttack, so I will let him off that one."

"And I thought he got a good ball today, which can happen when you are short on form," he added.

"But we also know the class. If you look at his IPL record, where he has stacked up 700 runs, 600 runs, 800 runs, and 600 runs. We believe in his class, and we believe he will come good."

The former South Africa all-rounder expressed equal confidence in India's captain, who is also yet to fire in the series.

"It's exactly the same with Surya," ten Doeschate said. "You mentioned the leadership roles, and we are quite far down the road now with our planning and how we have set the team up."

New Zealand crush West Indies by nine wickets, gain WTC points

Wellington, (UNI)

New Zealand strengthened their chances of securing a second ICC World Test Championship (WTC) Final berth with a commanding nine-wicket win over the West Indies in the second Test at the Basin Reserve on Friday.

According to the International Cricket Council (ICC) website, the Black Caps' bowlers did the damage on the third day at Basin Reserve, with Jacob Duffy's five-wicket haul helping the hosts dismiss the West Indies for just 128 in their second innings.

Chasing just 56 for victory and a 1-0 lead in the three-match series, New Zealand lost captain Tom Latham early

for nine. But Devon Conway (28 not out) and Kane Williamson (16 not out) ensured a smooth finish as the Black Caps cruised home.

The victory saw New Zealand bank 12 valuable World Test Championship points and allowed the 2021 winners to jump in front of Pakistan and India and join Sri Lanka in third place on the standings.

New Zealand now holds a win-loss percentage of 66.67, trailing only table-toppers Australia (100 percent) and second-placed South Africa (75 percent).

The third and final Test of the series begins in Mount Maunganui on December 18.



Bollywood star Shah Rukh Khan excited about meeting Lionel Messi in Kolkata

Kolkata, (UNI): Bollywood star and Kolkata Knight Riders owner Shah Rukh Khan is agog to meet the world's one of the greatest footballing icons Lionel Messi, who is all set to arrive in the city after 14 years when he led his country Argentina for the first time in a FIFA friendly against another South American country Venezuela. Lionel Messi himself has confirmed that he is coming to India between December 13-15, 2025 as he is expected to land at Kolkata airport from Miami via Dubai in the night of 12/13 on his own private jet with some of his Inter Miami teammates. Shah Rukh Khan regularly visits Kolkata and especially when his team KKR play IPL in every season. But this time his itinerary is special, exclusively for the Argentinian great, who led his country to the World Cup 2022 title.

"This time round I am not planning my Knight in Kolkata and hoping the day ride is completely 'Messi'," said the Bollywood star cutting short of his busy schedule to make it in Kolkata and meet Lionel Messi. "See you guys on the 13th at the Salt Lake Stadium," Khan said on his X handle.

Besides Kolkata, "messiah of football" is scheduled to Hyderabad, Mumbai, and Delhi during his India tour starting from December 13. His return to Kolkata after 14 years is memorable as this city first saw him wear captain's armband to lead his country Argentina with 1-0 victory against Venezuela and retained his captaincy after leading his South American football powerhouse to many laurels, including the 2022 World Cup against. The atmosphere in the city is quite electric owing to making all arrangements in order, including tight security from airport to the stadium and hotel on EM Bypass. West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, former Bengal Brand Ambassador Shah Rukh Khan, his successor and former India captain Sourav Ganguly are expected to greet Messi before the Argentinian leaves for Hyderabad in the noon.

India lose 1-2 to Spain at FIH Hockey Junior Women's World Cup 2025

Santiago (Chile), (UNI)

The Indian Junior Women's Hockey Team went down 1-2 against Spain in its 9th/10th place playoff match in the FIH Hockey Junior Women's World Cup 2025 at the Centro Deportivo de Hockey Césped, Estadio Nacional, here.

Kanika Siwach (41') was the goalscorer for India while Natalia Vilanova (16') and Esther Canales (36') netted a goal each for Spain.

It was a cagey yet entertaining first quarter with intense action and chances on both sides of the field. Midway through the quarter, Spain were through on goal with only the goalkeeper to beat

but India's Nidhi heroically stepped out and made two back-to-back saves to keep the scores level.

In the 14th minute, Spain were awarded the first penalty corner of the match, which was again denied by Nidhi. In the early moments of the second



quarter, Spain launched a quick counter-attack as Sara Carmona Ramos drib-

bled skillfully around the circle and played a pass inside, successfully de-

flected by Natalia Vilanova (16') into the net to claim the lead.

India had a couple of bright chances in the following minutes, however, Spain hardly made any mistakes and didn't give any penalty corner to ensure they maintain their advantage. In the 36th minute, India had a brief moment of celebration as Sonam did well to intercept a pass and score with a powerful strike however, Spain took a video referral which was successful as the referee spotted a back stick and had to cancel the goal. Unfortunately for India, in the same minute, Spain won and converted a penalty corner thanks to

a flick from Esther Canales (36') as they increased their advantage to two goals. In the 41st minute, India won two successive penalty corners as Kanika Siwach (41') beat the Spanish goalkeeper with her strike and delivered a goal for India to reduce the deficit and conclude an eventful third quarter.

Developing Golf in the North East next on Indian Golf Union's agenda, says president Brijinder Singh

New Delhi, (UNI)

Indian Golf Union's (IGU) big agenda is to promote and develop golf in the North East states of India. This was announced by IGU president Brijinder Singh after the National Sports Federation's 65th Annual General Meeting at the India Habitat Centre here on Thursday.

The AGM saw active participation from 15 affiliated State Golf Associations- Assam, Chandigarh, Delhi, Gujarat, Jharkhand, Maharashtra, Meghalaya, Manipur, Orissa, Punjab, Tripura, Rajasthan, Mizoram, Telangana and Uttar Pradesh.

The agenda for the meeting was to adopt the Annual Report of the Governing Council, confirm minutes of the previous AGM, to adopt the audited statement of accounts for the financial year 2024-25, to appoint auditors and fix their remuneration and to discuss any other subject with the permission of the chair.

"Our AGM went very well - we had our delegates from the North East, who were earlier absent and not part of mainstream golf for long time. We were very excited to have them on board. It is an uncharted territory as far as golf is concerned. We have committed to them we will be taking golf there and develop golf and make sure that children, grassroots and excellence are



all achieved over there," Brijinder Singh said.

The 'Seven Sisters', as the States of Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Manipur, Nagaland and Tripura are called, have a plethora of British era courses based at scenic locations of the region.

"It is one of the most beautiful parts of India but one of the most neglected part also as far as golf is concerned. We will be taking our coaches and equipment over there to make sure that at least one champion comes from the North East in the near future.

New Zealand jump ahead of Pakistan, India on WTC27 standings

Wellington, (UNI)

New Zealand have boosted their prospects of a second appearance in the ICC World Test Championship Final with a comprehensive nine-wicket victory over the West Indies in the second Test of their series here on Friday.

The Black Caps' bowlers did the damage on the third day at Basin Reserve, with Jacob Duffy's five-wicket haul helping the hosts dismiss the West Indies for just 128 in their second innings.

That left New Zealand requiring 56 for victory and a 1-0 series lead and Devon Conway (28 not out) and Kane Williamson (16 not out) guided them home after the early loss of skipper Tom Latham for nine.

According to International Cricket Council (ICC), the victory saw New Zealand bank 12 valuable World Test Champi-



onship points and allowed the 2021 winners to jump in front of Pakistan and India and join Sri Lanka in third place on the standings. New Zealand now own a win-loss percentage of 66.67 percent, with first-placed

Australia (100 percent) and second-placed South Africa (75 percent) the only teams in front of them. The third Test between New Zealand and West Indies will commence in Mount Maunganui on December 18.

Maha beat UP 4-1 to lift Dr Talimeren Ao Jr Girls National Football title

Nagaland, (UNI)

Maharashtra clinched the Dr Talimeren Ao Junior Girls' National Football Championship Tier 2 title after a 4-1 victory over Uttar Pradesh in the final at the Chumoukedi-ma Football Stadium in Chumoukedi-ma, here. Both finalists, Maharashtra and Uttar Pradesh, have earned promotion to Tier 1 for next season.

On the other hand, Arunachal Pradesh and Goa, the two bottom-ranked sides from this season's Tier 1, have been relegated to next season's Tier 2. Manipur were crowned the Tier 1 champions in Anantapur, Andhra Pradesh, earlier this month. On Thursday evening in Nagaland, Maharashtra started on a bright note, taking the lead in the 15th



minute. From a free-kick just centimetres outside the box, Aysha Sartape went for precision instead of power.

The Maharashtra captain executed it perfectly as her

strike nestled into the top corner. Uttar Pradesh goalkeeper Anshi Kashyap had no chance of saving it. But Uttar Pradesh, who had won all three games en route to the

final, took only 10 minutes to equalise.

Shbana's firmly struck left-footed pass pierced through the Maharashtra backline and found Divya unmarked inside the box. Divya had all the time in the world to turn, pick her spot and slot it into the bottom corner to make it 1-1 in the 25th minute. However, the second half completely belonged to Maharashtra. Coached by Kirti Patil, they retook the lead in the 56th minute when Aarna Sindhav deftly converted Sharvari Mane's cross from the left to make it 2-1.

Sharvari got on the score-sheet herself in the 83rd minute when she received the ball around 35 yards from the goal, dribbled past a couple of defenders, and then shot into the top corner.

India's first-ever UCI 2.2 Bajaj Pune Grand Tour 2026 from Jan 19 to 23

Pune, (UNI)

India's sporting landscape is poised for a historic moment as the country prepares to host its first-ever UCI 2.2 Bajaj Pune Grand Tour 2026 - a Continental Team's Men's Elite Road Cycling Race. Scheduled from January 19 to 23, 2026 in the vibrant Pune District, this groundbreaking event is set to kick-start the international cycling calendar with a four-stage, multi-day challenge that promises to be a truly global spectacle.

The Bajaj Pune Grand Tour 2026 is expected to witness participation of 28 competitive teams from across the globe, including 4 national teams representing some of the world's best cycling nations. India will field 2 national teams' namely, 'India A' and 'India B'.

This historic sporting initiative was conceptualised and led by Pune District Administration, with the steadfast support of the Government of Maharashtra. The four-stage road race will traverse a 437-kilometer route, winding through Pune's urban landscapes, heritage rich locations, and its scenic rural expansion. The event aims not only to showcase world-class cycling action, but also to promote the region's tourism, environ-



ment, and infrastructure development.

Reflecting on the response received from global cycling community, Jitendra Dudi (IAS), Collector Pune District and Officer In-charge of Pune Grand Tour, stated: "We are extremely happy and honoured to see the magnitude of world's response for the inaugural year of Pune Grand Tour. Major cycling countries like United Kingdom, France, Belgium, Germany, Netherland, Australia, China, Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand etc have shown keen interest with many having confirmed participation."

"Union Cycliste International is very keen to help promote the sport in India. This is Pune's moment to establish itself as an international cycling destination and we are confident to deliver a world class event," he added.

The Bajaj Pune Grand Tour 2026 will feature four exhilarating four stage routes, designed to push the limits of world's seasoned cyclists. Covering 437-km, the routes passes through diverse terrains, from the bustling cityscape to the serene Sahyadri foothills, to push riders through toughest climbs, fastest flats, iconic landmarks to test stamina, strategy, and skill in equal measure.

