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**ON THE
RIGHT
TRACK**

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INDIAN ELITE DISTANCE RUNNERS ON TRACK AHEAD OF PARIS OLYMPIC GAMES



The month of March turned out to be quite fruitful for elite Indian distance runners training at the high altitude of Colorado Springs in the USA.

While Army's Gulveer Singh broke the 28-minute barrier in 10,000m in California, Kartik Kumar clocked an impressive 28:01.90. Both the runners improved the long standing national 10,000m record of 28:02.89 set in 2008 by Surendra Kumar Singh in Spain.

Gulveer Singh crossed the finish line at 27:41.81 to earn second spot at the Ten track meet in California, while Kartik Kumar finished ninth.

The Indian female distance runners too gave a good account of themselves in the 10,000m race.

Breaking the 33-minute barrier for 10,000 in March surely have added to the confidence of all four Indian female runners ahead of the Paris Olympics starting on July 26.

Seema clocked 32: 07.67, a personal best, to finish third, while Sanjivani Jadhav's time of 32: 21.76 fetched her fourth spot. Ankita was eighth with a time of 32.48.71.

In another race, Parul Chaudhary clocked 32:02.08, a personal best, but finished outside medal contention.

"Going by the current performance of Indian distance runners, it seems athletes are on their way to bridge the global running gap that is deep and wide," chief national athletics coach Radhakrishnan Nair said.

Asian Games medallist, Parul Chaudhary, has qualified for the Paris Olympics in women's 3,000m steeplechase. The Asian and Commonwealth Games men's medallist in the 3,000m steeplechase, Avinash Sable, has also booked tickets for the 2024 Olympic Games.



Impressive performances in the coming days will certainly improve their global ranking points and brighten their prospects for the Olympics, the chief coach added.

Athletes can qualify for Paris either through automatic qualification standard in the stipulated period or via World Athletics Ranking points in the ranking period. June 30 is the last date to achieve qualification standards.

Automatic qualification time for the Paris Olympics in men's 10,000m is 27:00.00, while 13:05.00 is the automatic qualification time in 5,000m. The Olympic Games qualification time in women's 10,000m and 5,000m are 30:40.00 and 14:52.00 respectively.

Gulveer Singh crossed the finish line at **27:41.81** to earn second spot at the Ten track meet in California, while Kartik Kumar finished ninth.

Relay Carnival was good opportunity to polish skills ahead of World Relays in Bahamas

The One-Day inaugural edition of the Relay Carnival held on March 24 at Chandigarh's Sector 7 Sports Complex turned out to be an electrifying event.

The Relay Carnival also gave elite Indian athletes preparing for the 2024 World Athletics Relay scheduled to be held in Nassau, Bahamas on May 4 and 5, a good platform to evaluate their performance. The competition in the Bahamas will be the Paris Olympic qualification event.

The competition in Chandigarh was conducted just a week after the Indian Open 400m Competition held in Thiruvananthapuram. Back-to-back domestic competitions, according to chief athletics coach Radhakrishnan Nair, was a good evaluation of the preparations of the athletes. "Being an Olympic year, the core group of athletes have specific goals," the chief national athletics coach added.

During the competition, minor changes were made in the National Camp A and National Camp B teams. Eventually, National Camp A was victorious in both men's and women's 4x400m relay events.

Kerala's international quarter-miler Noah Nirmal Tom anchored the National Camp A team to victory in the men's 4x400m relay. The winning time was 3:05.71 seconds. The other members of the team were Arokia Rajiv, Muhammed Ajmal, Muhammed Yahiya.

Noah Nirmal Tom was also a member of the



Mixed National Camp A 4x400m relay team that won gold with a time of 3:17.37 seconds. Other members of the gold medal winning team were MR Poovamma, Muhammed Yahiya and R Vithya Ramraj.

The women's 4x400m title went to National Camp A team consisting of R Vithya Ramraj, Poovamma MR, Jyothika Sri Dandi and Rupal Chaudhary. Rupal is making a comeback after a layoff due to injury. The team gave a good account of their prowess and clocked 3:28.64 seconds to win gold.

The competition was also conducted in junior group.

Indian athletes have bright chances to make a good impression in team event at world cross country championships

The Cross country season has long been considered an important one for building a good foundation for distance running.

Perhaps that could have been one of the reasons India's chief long distance coach Scott Simmons was elated at the performance of the Indian athletes at the recent 2024 Belgrade World Cross Country Championships held in Serbia on March 30.

Simmons, who has been overseeing national middle and long distance camps since 2019, was of the opinion that Indian athletes have an excellent chance to make a good impression in team championships.

"There are a good bunch of long distance runners in the country who have proved themselves in track races at the Asian level," the US expert said. "If a big group of runners get the opportunity to compete at the global cross country it will further improve the quality of distance running in India."

At Belgrade, East African nations, including Kenya and Ethiopia, both known for their athletes' distance running prowess, proved yet again that at the global level they have depth and edge over the others.

According to Simmons, the Indian team should be selected keeping in mind the team championships as the country's athletes stand a good chance of finishing in the top 10 in team championships, in the senior men and women's sections.

"The aim in future should be to field a six-member team in junior (U20) section also," Simmons said.



"India has a good chance to finish among the top Asian nations in both men and women's section at the global level."

At the Belgrade World Cross Country Championships Indian athletes didn't compete in team events.

India's Asian Games medallist and national 10,000m record holder, (add name), finished 43rd in the men's 10km race in Serbia. He clocked 30:07 seconds over the challenging 10km course in Belgrade.

Kartik Kumar clocked 30:09 to finish 45th, while Hemraj Gurjar who led the pack for the opening 1km eventually finished 88th. He clocked 33:56.

In women's 10km, Seema finished 35th at 34:35. "It was a good experience to run with the best in the world," Seema said.

Ankita clocked 35:26 to finish at the 51st spot. Anjali Kumari clocked 44:02 to come 80th.

The 2026 World Cross Country Championships will be held at Tallahassee, Florida, USA.

National U20 Camp in Bengaluru

The upcoming Asian U20 Athletics Championships in Dubai from April 24 to 27, says national junior chief coach N Ramesh, will give Indian athletes another chance to polish their skills to prepare for the World U20 Athletics Championships scheduled to be held in Lima, Peru from August 27 to 31.

According to national junior chief coach the selected athletes numbering 60 including 30 in the women's section will attend a three weeks preparatory camp starting April 1 at Bengaluru's Sports Authority of India (SAI) campus.

"Competition in Dubai will give another chance to promising athletes to make the cut for the World U20," N Ramesh added.

After the Asian U20 meet in Dubai, the athletes will compete on the domestic circuit, the national junior chief coach said.

At the delayed 2021 World U20 Athletics Championships held in Nairobi, Kenya, due to Covid-19 pandemic, the Indian team won three medals, including bronze in mixed 4x400m relay. Shaili Singh sailed to silver in women's long jump, while Amit Khatri clinched team's second silver in men's 10km race walk.

At the 2022 edition of World Athletics U20 Championships in Cali, Colombia, the Indian team continued its good run in the mixed 4x400m relay and won bronze with a time of 3:17.76.

Triple jumper Selva P Thirumaran won silver and Rupal Chaudhary fought hard to win silver in women's 400m. "The 2024 World Athletics U20 Championships is nearly four months away. We hope to improve our medal tally," N Ramesh added.

Ahead of the Asian U20 meet, promising Indian athletes got a chance to compete at the inaugural edition of Relay Carnival held in Chandigarh and National U20 Athletics meet held in Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh.

According to N Ramesh performance of the junior athletes at both the competitions was encouraging. "Going by the results in Chandigarh and Lucknow, we can expect good performance at the Asian U20 in Dubai," N Ramesh said.

Focus on young throwers during Asian U20 Athletics Championships

Punjab's promising discus thrower Amanat Kamboj is among nine promising throwers who have been selected by the Athletics Federation of India (AFI) for the National Discus Throw Assessment Camp in progress at Patiala's National Institute of Sports in Punjab. The main aim of the project is to nurture talented junior throwers for future international events, including Asian Games.

Other talented throwers in the camp, includes Bihar's Soni Kumari; Priya from Haryana and Vanshika Shikhawat of Rajasthan. After the final assessment camp, Delhi's Bhavana Yadav and Sonal Goyal were also shortlisted for long term project. The talented bunch of Supriya Attri, Nitika Verma and Aashika Yadav of Uttar Pradesh also made the grade and completed the list of nine throwers.

Initially 23 throwers were shortlisted for the project. After first and second assessment camps the list was pruned down to nine. Belgium's throwing expert Emil Milanov has been deputed as head coach of the project while Dharmvir Singh will assist him.

Amanat Kamboj (Punjab), Soni Kumari (Bihar) and Supriya Attri (Uttar Pradesh) are also considered having potential to win medals at the upcoming Asian U20 Athletics Championships scheduled to be held in Dubai from April 24.

IOCL project to empower young female distance runners



The Indian Oil Corporation Limited and National Sports Development Fund have joined hands to empower female runners in events ranging from 800m to 5,000m in the country through “Indian Oil Shakti Project”.

This ambitious programme aims to provide comprehensive support to 30 talented female athletes below the age group of 23 years.

The project spans 36 months starting this year at Bengaluru's Sports Authority of India (SAI). Apart from training the selected athletes will be provided domestic and international exposure from time to time.

Of the 30 promising athletes shortlisted, 22 reported for the first assessment camp. After the first evaluation camp, 18 athletes were successful in clearing selection criteria. The selected athletes are undergoing training at Bengaluru Sports Authority of India (SAI)

Campus.

On the basis of their performance at the 22nd National U20 Athletics Championships held in Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh, names of few athletes, including Ekta Pradeep Dey, who improved the junior 3,000m steeplechase record, were recommended for the IOCL project.

IOCL will contribute Rs 15.68 crore over the 36 months period to NSDF through its Corporate Social Responsibility program.

The progress will be closely monitored through short term (annual) and long term (three

RELAY CARNIVAL

