

NEWSLETTER



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We've a good team to strengthen ecosystem, says new AFI president

Bahadur Singh Sagoo

“We have a good team to further strengthen the ecosystem in the country”

New Athletics Federation of India president and 2002 Busan Asian Games shot put champion, **Bahadur Singh Sagoo**



“Good teamwork is needed to be successful at the highly competitive global competitions. Immaculate planning in the last decade enabled Indian athletics to achieve good results at global meets. We will continue to work in tandem with all stakeholders to achieve our goals in the future,” the former Asian Games champion from Punjab said.

Sagoo was the unanimous choice as AFI chief, succeeding Adille Sumariwalla, who completed his three terms in office.

The election of AFI office-bearers was held during its Annual General Meeting in Chandigarh last month.

The AGM was attended by a government observer while World Athletics observer Niels

Lindholm attended virtually. Sebastian Coe, World Athletics president, sent a congratulatory message to the newly elected team. Justice (ret'd) Raj Shekhar Attri was returning officer.

Sagoo said his predecessor Sumariwalla, one of the vice-presidents of World Athletics, was a guiding force in the development of track and field in India. “His vast experience as sports administrator was a big advantage to Indian athletics. We will continue to take his advice from time to time for the holistic development of track and field in the country,” Sagoo said.

According to the newly elected AFI president, the 2025 annual calendar will give more opportunities to everyone as regional competitions have been incorporated. “To compete in regional competitions the athletes

will have to travel less because they are being conducted across the country," Sagoo said. "At the same time, regional competitions will give a chance to athletes on the fringes to prove themselves."

AFI plans to conduct international events on home soil will also give athletics fans something to cheer about. "There will be a good chance to witness high quality competition during the one-day World Athletics Continental Bronze Level event scheduled to be held in August in Odisha," he said.

Sagoo pointed out that the sports ministry has approved appointments of foreign coaches to prepare the core group of athletes for upcoming international competitions.

"It's an exciting year for all of us," the former shot put champion said. "There are two major competitions this season--- World Relays and the World Athletics Championships. We are hopeful of

a good show at the international level."

India's double Olympic Games medallist in men's javelin throw, Neeraj Chopra, won gold at the 2023 Budapest World Athletics Championships. The national men's relay team (4x400m) finished a creditable fifth at the Hungary capital.

Sagoo said AFI will continue to strengthen the ecosystem to achieve good results at the 2026 Asian Games in Japan and in the 2028 Los Angeles Olympic Games. "The AFI in coordination with World Athletics is regularly conducting courses to update the knowledge of Indian coaches," the AFI president added. "We have foreign coaches to polish the skills of elite athletes but at the same time it is important to have a good coaching system at grassroots level for a smooth transition of athletes from the junior to senior level."

The AFI will soon add more members to its executive council, Sagoo added.

Members of Executive Committee 2025-2029

- **President:** Bahadur Singh Sagoo
- **Senior vice president:** Anju Bobby George
- **Vice president (5):** Abu Metha, Jayanta Malla Baruah, AK Sharma.
- **Secretary:** Sandeep Mehta
- **Senior joint secretary:** S Srinibas Patnaik
- **Joint secretary (5):** Sharat Chandra Singh, Jyotirmoyee Sikdar, Finley L Pariat.
- **Treasurer:** BE Stanley Jones.
- **Executive council members (8):** Harjinder Singh Gill, Sharda Devi Jadam, Priyanka Bhanot, Rachita Mistry, A Rajavelu, K Sarangapani.



Economical running technique vital for better results, says India's Italian athletics expert

Claudio Pannozzo, the Italian athletics expert who has come on board to train Indian athletes, was elated that young Indian female middle and long-distance runners at IOCL (Indian Oil Corporation Ltd) camp at the Sports Authority of India (SAI) Campus in Bengaluru were responding to the workload he had given.

The Italian athletics coach joined the IOCL project in early January. Over a dozen young athletes running from 800m to 10,000m are training in Bengaluru. Two or three athletes are also keen to test their skills over the 3000m steeplechase event, Pannozzo said.

Pannozzo who hails from Grosseta in Italy has rich coaching experience. The European Level 4 coach was associated with Italy's senior national from 2018 to 2024.

"I'm happy that the young girls are adapting to the training schedule," the Italian said. "If the athletes are making progress that's the best thing for the coach."

The foreign coach has chalked out the 2025 season programme for the athletes as a majority of them are in the U-20 age group. "We also have two-three runners in the U-23 age group," he said. "All the athletes will compete in upcoming domestic events to enhance racing experience."

The long-term plan however is to achieve good results at the 2026 Asian Games. "There is a good support staff system here at the SAI campus in Bengaluru," the Italian coach said. "It is important to have scientific backing to be successful at the world level."

Pannozzo has made some modifications to the training plan. One of the key changes was to reduce the distance of long runs and incorporate short, faster runs in the weekly



Middle and long distance runners during a training session at SAI Campus in Bengaluru.

training programme. "We did lactate threshold and biomechanical tests. It's good to keep records and discuss progress reports with the athletes," he explained. The practice sessions at the camp in Bengaluru are twice a day. Weekly off and recovery runs are also part of the training programme. "I've slightly changed the training schedule as young athletes are able to adapt to the environment more rapidly than mature athletes," Pannozzo said. "The focus is also to improve the running technique. It is important to have a good running technique to conserve energy in distance running."

Pannozzo also has plans to increase the number of young athletes in the camp. "We will scout promising athletes and include them in the camp in the near future," he added.

World Athletics Championships good platform to evaluate performance ahead of 2026 Asian Games

The 2025 season will help evaluate performances and iron out grey areas ahead of the 2026 Asian Games in China, Radhakrishnan Nair, chief athletics coach, said of the national 4x400m women's relay team's preparation.



Jamaican coach Jerry Holness overseeing training of 400m runners at NCOE in Thiruvananthapuram.

"More than 10 women quarter-milers were shortlisted for combined practice which is on at the National Center of Excellence (NCOE) in Thiruvananthapuram," Nair said. "The athletes are training under the foreign coach from Jamaica, Jerry L Holness."

The 66-year-old Jamaican has vast coaching experience, Nair said. Holness, a former consultant cum coach of the Thailand track and field team, was also technical director of Cayman Islands Athletics Association. Holness was a member of the Jamaican athletics squad at the 2020 Tokyo Olympic Games.

Several promising 400m runners, including 19-year-old Sandramol Sabu whose season's best in 2024 was 54.82 seconds, have been drafted into the NCOE to use the best of facilities ahead

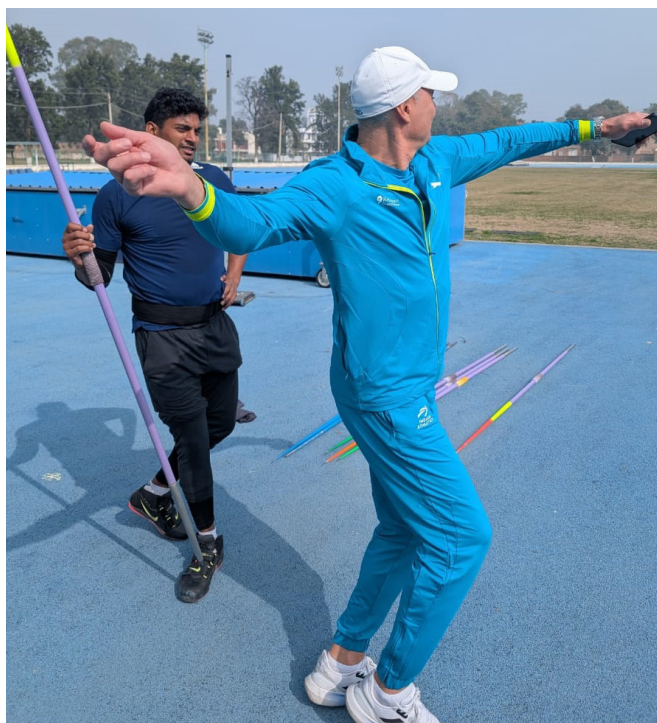
of the May 10-11 World Relays, a qualifying event for the World Athletics Championships to be held in Japan in September.

Experienced Dandi Jyothika Sri and Subha Venkatesan were both key runners of the national relay team (4x400m) in 2023 and 2024. "The dependable runners should be able to stay in contention for the main team in the 2025 season," the chief athletics coach added.

Apart from the top women quarter-milers, leading 400m runners in the men's group are also camping in Thiruvananthapuram to prepare for the World Athletics Championships.

"The male 400m runners are under the guidance of Jamaican coach Jason Dawson," Nair said.

Russia's two-time Olympic medalist Makarov Sergey to oversee India's elite javelin throw programme



Russian javelin throw coach giving tips on technique to athletes at NIS in Patiala.

Country's leading javelin throwers including double Olympic Games medalist Neeraj Chopra and Annu Rani will have an opportunity to get coaching tips from Russian javelin expert Makarov Sergey Aleksandrovich.

The 51 years old Aleksandrovich, winner of multiple global medals, including bronze at 2000 Sydney and 2004 Athens Games, has been appointed keeping mind next Olympic Games cycle, Radhakrishnan Nair, Chief National Coach said

"The Russian javelin throw expert will be based at Patiala's National Institute of Sports in Punjab," Nair said. "Aleksandrovich's vast experience as an athlete and coach will surely give fillip to development of javelin throw in the country."

At the 2024 Paris Olympic Games India's ace javelin thrower Chopra added silver medal to his kitty of gold won at the 2020 Tokyo Olympic Games.

At the 2023 World Athletics Championships, three Indian javelin throwers were in top six. Chopra went on to win the gold medal. The double Olympic Games medalists had won silver at the 2022 Eugene World Athletics Championships.

Apart from overseeing elite Indian javelin throw programme, the Russian throwing coach will also interact with Indian coaches from time to time to update their knowledge.

According to the chief national athletics coach the main focus will be the 2025 World Athletics Championships starting September 13 in Tokyo, Japan. "Asian Championships in May is another important event this year," Nair said.

The Athletics Federation of India (AFI) had recommended Aleksandrovich's name to the sports ministry, which was approved to oversee training of elite Indian javelin thrower.

Aleksandrovich has an impressive profile. His personal best of 92.61m was recorded in 2002, a Russian record in Sheffield. During his competitive career he has recorded throws over 90m four times. He also won a bronze medal at the 2003 Paris World Athletics Championships and 2005 Helsinki World Championships in Finland. Aleksandrovich was also coach of the Russian national team from 2012-2018.

AFI to streamline India's unregulated road racing circuit

The Athletics Federation of India (AFI) plans to streamline the unregulated road racing circuit in India. The AFI move will ensure safety of competitors, which is currently ignored by several race organisers.

Barring a few race organisers, majority of those conducting half-marathon and marathon races across the country don't follow proper guidelines, Radhakrishnan Nair, chief athletics coach, said of the disadvantages runners face during these competitions. There are over 100 marathon races held annually that have no approval of the AFI, Nair added.

"Several race organisers conduct prize money races in India but ignore safety measures of the competitors. Except official vehicles, the route of the race should be traffic free, which is not happening," the chief athletics coach said. "The interest of the athletes is not the primary motive as the aim of the event organiser is to earn money."

According to the chief athletics coach, AFI plans to categorise marathon and half marathon events in India shortly. "AFI has set up a separate department to oversee and implement rules during road racing competitions," Nair said. "A meeting was recently held in Mumbai to apprise all the stakeholders, to abide by AFI guidelines. Local administration will be requested not to grant permission to conduct races that don't have affiliation from the AFI."

The AFI team will coordinate with local administration to apprise them of the safety of the competitors during road racing events, particularly marathons.

Leading race organisers in India, including Procarn International, follow World Athletics guidelines to conduct competition. Procarn has four major races under their banner, including the Delhi Half Marathon and the Mumbai Marathon.

At the 2025 edition of the Mumbai marathon

Men's trophy for Services, Railways claimed women's title

Hukam and Ankit of SSCB (Service Sports Control Board) and Railways Sports Promotion Board (RSPB) claimed men's and women's 10km individual titles at the 59th National Cross Country Championships held at Army's Golf Course in January. While SSCB won the overall team championship in the men's group, RSPB walked away with the women's trophy.

Overall efforts of SSCB runners including Hukam (1st), Ishwar Verma (2nd), Pramod Singh (4th) and Ravi Dass (5th) ensured they stayed ahead of their rivals to take home the trophy. RSPB finished second and Rajasthan third on the table. The women's team title went to Railways. Uttar Pradesh and the Police Sports Control Board were second and third, respectively.

The runners from Uttar Pradesh dominated the U20 men's race, winning both individual and team titles. Maharashtra won the women's U20 group team trophy.

Results: Men 10km: Individual: Hukam (SSCB) 29:43.46, Ishwar Verma (SSCB) 29:43.89, Bhavishya (Railways): 29:43.98.

Team (men 10km): SSCB 12 points, Railways 35 points, Rajasthan 57 points.

Women: 10km: Individual: Ankit (Railways) 34:45.16, Jyoti (Haryana) 34:46.85, Shraddha Kathiriyi (Railways) 34:49.07.

Team (women 10km): Railways 17 points, Uttar Pradesh 40 points, Police Sports Control Board 42 points.

U20: Men 8km: Individual: Jainu Kumar (Uttar Pradesh) 24:13.34, Vikesh Dagur (Uttar Pradesh) 24:16.72, Ravi Yadav (Chandigarh) 24:16.73.

U20: Team: Men 8km: Uttar Pradesh 13 points, Madhya Pradesh 48 points, Maharashtra 56 points.

U20: Women 6km: Individual: Kajal (Haryana) 20:57.59, Sunita Devi (Uttar Pradesh) 20:59.27, Ankitaben Gavit (Gujarat) 21:37.92.

U20: Team: Women 6km: Maharashtra 27 points, Uttar Pradesh 53 points, Karnataka 72 points.

U18: Boys 6km: Rohit Binnar (Maharashtra) 17:59.56, Sanjeev (Jharkhand) 18:01.07, Abinandan Suryavanshi (Maharashtra) 18:03.15.

U18: Girls 4km: Pranali Mandale (Maharashtra) 14:09.29, Janhavi Hirudkar (Maharashtra) 14:12.32, Anshu (Uttar Pradesh) 14:17.80.

U16: Girls 2km: Manjot (Punjab) 6:43.35, Mahee Rathaur (Delhi) 6:51.07, Arya Kalel (Maharashtra) 6:56.13.

U16: Boys: 2km: Chhotku Sen (Uttar Pradesh) 5:48.27, Sachin Rawat (Madhya Pradesh) 5:50.84, Dakshveer Singh (Rajasthan) 5:51.35.



India's ace javelin thrower
NEERAJ CHOPRA tied a knot with HIMANI MOR



Indian Oil Corporation Limited

