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OFF TO PARIS

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JUBILANT RELAY TEAM MEMBERS FOCUSED TO SHOWCASE THEIR POTENTIAL AT PARIS GAMES

Jubilant members of the national 4x400m relay teams are all focused to showcase their potential at the Paris Olympic Games scheduled to be held in France from July 26.



The Indian men and women's 4x400m relay teams earned tickets to the Paris Olympic Games on May 5 at Nassau's Thomas A Robinson Stadium in Bahamas. It was the season's first major global relay competition that offered berths for the Paris Olympic Games.

The Indian quarter milers grabbed opportunity with both hands during the second leg of the Paris Olympic Games qualification round of the World Relays in Bahamas. The Indian teams missed qualification on Saturday (May 4), but came back strongly on final day (May 5) to finish second in their respective heats and qualified for the Olympic Games.

As per World Athletics relay qualification rule, the first two teams in each heat on Sunday (May 5) joined teams that had already qualified for Paris Olympic Games on Saturday (May 4).

The men's team consisting of Muhammad Anas, Muhammad Ajmal, Arokia Rajiv and Amoj Jacob posted a time of 3:03.23 seconds, a season best, to finish second in their heat. "We can do better in Paris," said Jacob, who ran the anchor leg of the men's team.

The opening day of the World Relays on Saturday (May 4) wasn't productive for the Indian quarter milers. After a good start by Muhammad Anas, the

second leg runner Rajesh Ramesh wasn't able to continue as he fell down around the first bend due to muscle cramping.

The Indian team didn't compete in the mixed 4x400m event on Sunday (May 5).

The women's team was equally impressive on May 5. The team of Rupal Chaudhary, Jyothika Sri Dandi, MR Poovamma and Subha V pushed hard to clock a time of 3:29.35 seconds to finish second in their heat and qualified for the Paris Olympic Games.

The Indian women's 4x400m relay team gave a good account of themselves on May 4, clocking a time of 3:29.74 seconds but finished fifth in their heat. Only the top two teams got tickets to the Olympics.

However, on May 5, the athletes dig deep into their reserves to ensure a smooth passage to the Paris Olympic Games.

The mixed 4x400m relay squad consisting of Rajesh



Ramesh, Rupal Chaudhary, Avinash Kumar and Jyothika Sri Dandi on Saturday posted a time of 3:20.36 to finish sixth in their respective heat.

The members of the national mixed relay team will get another chance to make the cut for the Paris Olympic Games at the Asian leg of the relay competition on May 20 in Bangkok, Thailand.

Main goal is to stay healthy for smooth passage to Olympic Games says Jyothika Sri Dandi

Jyothika Sri Dandi overcame hamstring niggle to push the paddle at full throttle during second round of Paris Olympic Games qualification at world relays in Nassau, Bahamas on Sunday.

Jyothika's performance at the third leg of the relay race hugely contributed to the Indian 4x400m women's team to finish second in their heat and achieve an Olympic Games qualification berth.

The Indian team clocked 3:29.35 seconds. Rupal Chaudhary, MR Poovamma and Subha V were other members of the national team that have qualified for the Paris Olympic Games.

"It was very challenging to stay healthy and

perform up to optimum level in the global competition in Bahamas," Jyothika revealed. "I'm thankful to the coaching staff for keeping me fit for the big day."

Jyothika's next goal is to sustain her performance and do exceedingly well in the next month's Inter State Athletics Championships scheduled to be held in Panchkula. "I have to stay healthy and avoid injury in the coming weeks," she added.

Her main goal is to stay within top three in the women's individual 400m race to stay in contention for the relay team. "The goal is to be in the first four to cement a place in the national relay team," she said.

Race walkers to compete in Europe

Core group of race walkers to compete in Europe to prepare for Paris Olympic Games.

The elite India race walkers made most of the chances at the one-day World Athletics Race Walking Team Championships, a qualifying event for the Paris Olympic Games, on April 21 in Antalya, Turkey.

Core group of race walkers will also go to Europe for an international exposure tour later this month to further polish their skills.

The competition in Antalya was a first major international exposure tour ahead of the Paris Olympic Games.

The pair of Akshdeep Singh and Priyanka Goswami finished 17th in the mixed marathon relay event to earn a berth for the Paris Olympic Games. Top 22 nations in the mixed marathon relay, being introduced for the first time at the Olympics, were given tickets to the Paris Games.

The Indian squad also did creditably well in the team standings in both men and women's section. The men's team collected 83 points to earn sixth spot while the women's points tally was 129 and finished eighth in team standings.

The individual performance of the elite Indians preparing for the Paris Olympic Games was on track.

Servin Sebastian clocked 1:21:39 to finish 20th in the men's 20km race walk, while Vikash Singh's time of 1:21:59 earned him 23rd spot.

Suraj Panwar, who has qualified for the Paris Olympic Games at National Race Walking Championship in Chandigarh, posted a time of 1:24:09 to finish 40th.

Arshpreet Singh, however, finished down the



ladder at 66th place. He clocked 1:33:39.

Ram Baboo, who has also made the cut for the Paris Olympic Games didn't complete the race due to an injury.

The eventual winner in the men's race was Perseus Karlstrom of Sweden whose winning time was 1:18:49.

The winner in the women's 20km race was Kimberly Garcia of Peru who clocked 1:27:12.

Pooja Kumawat (42) was the best among the Indian athletes in the women's 20km race walk. Her time of 1:40:27 fetched her 42nd position.

Manju Rani (43) 1:40:31, Mokavi Muthurathinam (44) 1:40:33, Ramandeep Kaur (49) clocked 1:42:12 while Payal (50th) clocked 1:42:32.

To further improve their mental and physical abilities, the core group of race walkers will go for an exposure tour to Europe in May. The training-cum-competition plan will give another opportunity to rub shoulders with the best in the business.

Indian team made a big impression at 2024 Asian U20 Athletics Championships in Dubai

Indian contingent rich haul of 29 medals, seven of them gold at the April 24 to 27 Asian U20 Athletics Championships in Dubai, not only augur well for the future of athletics in the country, but has given a big boost to youngsters ahead of the World U20 Athletics Championships.

“The impressive performance ranked the Indian team second behind China in medal standings at the Asian U20 Athletics Championships. It was a good platform to evaluate performance ahead of the August 27 to 31 Lima World U20 Athletics Championships scheduled to be held in Peru,” N Ramesh, chief junior athletics coach said. “We have enough time to further polish the skills of the athletes to achieve good results in Peru.”

This is for the first time since 1996 Indian contingent took the second spot in medal standings behind China at the Asian U20 Athletics Championships. At 2023 Yecheon, South Korea, 19 medals, six gold, 7 silver and 6 bronze and finished in third position.

Apart from individual track and field medals, the 400m runners exhibited their prowess in the relays. The women's 4x400m relay team of Anushka Dattatray, Kanista Teena Maria, SAI Sangeetha Dodla and Sandramol Sabu won gold with a time of 3:41.50.

The men's 4x400m relay team of Abiram Pramod, Navpreet Singh, Nikhil Suhas Dhake, Aman Choudhary posted a time of 3:09.36 to win silver. The mixed 4x400m relay team won silver.

Deepanshu Sharma (javelin throw gold), Rohan Yadav (javelin throw silver), Ritik (discus throw silver), Priyanshu (1500m silver) excelled on Day-One at the Asian U20.



The medal tally continued to swell on Day-Two. The medal winners were---Aarti (10,000m race walk bronze), Anurag Singh Kaler (shot put gold), Siddharth Choudary (shot put bronze), Amanat Kamboj (discus throw silver), Ekta Dey (3000m SC gold), Ranvir Singh (3000m SC gold).

The Day-Three was more productive as Shreeya Rajesh (400m hurdles bronze), Laxita Vinod Sandilea (800m silver), Mixed 4x400m relay (silver), Harshit Kumar (hammer throw gold), Prateek (Hammer throw bronze), Pavana Nagaraj (long jump gold), Aman Choudhary (400m bronze), Vinod Singh (5,000m silver) and Dev Meena (Pole vault bronze) won medals in their respective events.

The Day-Four at the Asian U20 was icing on the cake. Unnathi Aiyappa (100m hurdles bronze), Laxita Vinod Sandilea (1500m silver), Gaurav Bhaskar Bhosale (3000m silver), Vikas Kumar Bind (3000m bronze), Ekta Dey (5,000m silver), Sunita Devi (5,000m bronze), Md Atta Sajid (long jump bronze), men 4x100m relay (bronze), women's 4x400m relay (gold), and men's 4x400m relay (silver) further increased the medal tally.

Support from REC Limited mainly contributed to silver in Asian U20, says discus thrower Amanat Kamboj

Fazilka's sixteen and half-year-old discus thrower, Amanat Kamboj, owes it all to national discus throw assessment camp in Patiala's National Institute of Sports in Punjab, for winning silver at the April 24 to 27 Asian U20 Athletics Championships held in Dubai. Her best performance in Dubai was 50.47m, which was also better than the World U20 qualification mark.

"I consider myself lucky to be part of the national camp in Patiala," the teenager from Punjab said. "Good facilities in the camp hugely benefited me and I was able to win a medal at the Asian U20 meet in Dubai."

The camp sponsored by REC Limited started in January this year in Patiala. Talented Punjab thrower was among nine promising throwers selected by the Athletics Federation of India (AFI) from all over the country.

After a podium finish in the Asian U20 meet in Dubai, the youngster has become quite popular in her area. "I was so excited when everyone welcomed me in my hometown (Fazilka)," the elated thrower said. "My next step is to do well at the World U20 Athletics Championship in August in Peru."

The Punjab thrower has achieved the qualification mark of 49m and is looking forward

Inspired by her parents who were national level athletes, she started her track and field journey in 2021. With a few months of practice, she went on to win the U14 girls shot put title at the national level in 2022. It does speak volumes of her talent.

However, she switched to discus throw in 2023 as she wasn't comfortable with the iron ball.



During the Asian U20 competition in Dubai, she was the only athlete from Punjab. "I'm feeling proud to have won silver. My performance will certainly encourage young girls to take up sports as Punjab," she added. The Punjab thrower was also thankful to coaches associated with the discus throw national development camp in Patiala.

"The camp in Patiala gave me an opportunity to further polish my skills and learn the latest technique from head coach Emil," she explained. "The facilities in Fazilka were ordinary that too for a beginner and not for an aspiring thrower."

To cope up with her academics, the 11th class student of a school in Fazilka prefers to have textbooks in her luggage when she is traveling for competition. "I make it a point to study for at least one hour each day," she revealed.

At the national camp she devotes more time to studies. "The practice sessions are in the morning and evening. I get enough time to balance my academics and practice to achieve excellence," the Asian U20 silver medalist explained.

Diamond league

Star javelin thrower Neeraj Chopra records 88.36m throw in season opening event in Doha



It was a promising start to the 2024 season for Olympic and world champion in men's javelin throw, Neeraj Chopra, at the May 10 Diamond League in Doha. In the competitive field, the 26 years old star Indian javelin thrower was steady in his performance, but missed the title by a wafer-thin margin. In the season opening competition in Doha, Olympic champion recorded a throw of 88.36m in his last attempt to win second position behind Jakub Vadlejch of Czech Republic whose best throw on the day was 88.38m.

Asian Games medalist, Kishore Kumar Jena, however, finished down the ladder as he couldn't settle down into a good rhythm in the opening two attempts. His best throw in the competition was 76.31m. "The season opening competition is to evaluate performance," Radhakrishnan Nair, chief athletics coach said. "The main goal is to peak at the Paris Olympic Games starting July 26 in

Injury to Commonwealth and Asian Games medalist, Murali Sreeshankar, dashed his hopes of competing at the Paris Olympic Games. The promising long jumper from Kerala injured his knee last month during a training session. He had to undergo surgery and will miss the Paris Olympic Games scheduled to start July 26 in France.

Sreeshankar was supposed to start his season from May in Doha. But he had to watch Doha Diamond League from home.

"A good rehab programme will certainly enable him to bounce back strongly," the chief athletics coach added.

France."

Both Neeraj Chopra and Kishore Kumar Jena have qualified for the Paris Olympic Games.

GEARING UP FOR WORLD U20



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