

# Sports Ministry revokes WFI suspension after 15 months, restores its NSF status

**PTI, NEW DELHI:** The Sports Ministry has revoked the suspension imposed on the Wrestling Federation of India (WFI) reinstating its recognition as a National Sport Federation (NSF), ending the months of uncertainty surrounding the sport and paving the way for resumption of activities, including selection trials for the upcoming Asian Championship in Amman.

The ministry had suspended the WFI on December 24, 2023 for lapses in governance and procedural integrity by the new body, which was elected on December 21. It had asked IOA to form an ad-hoc panel to run the affairs of the Federation.

The Sanjay Singh-led body had announced the conduct of Under-15 and Under-20 National Championships in Nandini Nagar, Gonda – the stronghold of former WFI chief Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh – and the choice of venue irked the government since the former BJP MP was facing charges of sexual .

## FROM SUSPENSION TO REVIVAL

- Dec 21, 2023 – New WFI body elected
- Dec 24, 2023 – Sports Ministry suspends WFI due to governance lapses
- Jan 13, 2024 – UWW lifts WFI suspension
- Mar 11, 2025 – Sports Ministry revokes WFI suspension

The ministry, in its order issued on Monday, said that the WFI has taken compliant measures, so in larger interest of the sport and athletes, the ministry has decided to lift the suspension.

There were complaints that the WFI was still operating from the residence of Brij Bhushan, prompting the ministry to form a verification committee, which performed a spot inspection and found that the Federation

had shifted its office to East Vinod Nagar in New Delhi.

The ministry was satisfied with the corrective measures taken and considering that not having a competent body in place will affect Indian wrestlers' medal chances at 2026 Asian Games and 2028 Olympic Games, it ended the suspension.

"I thank the government for taking this step. It will allow us to function smoothly. It was needed for the sake of the sport. The athletes were suffering for lack of competitions," Sanjay Singh told PTI.

## REASONS FOR SUSPENSION

- Governance & procedural integrity issues
- Operations linked to Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh's residence
- Controversial selection of Nandini Nagar, Gonda as event venue

## IMPACT OF SUSPENSION

- Indian wrestlers missed ranking series tournaments in Zagreb & Albania
- Uncertainty over Asian Championship & World Championship participation
- National camps disrupted

The ministry, though, has asked the WFI to follow certain directions, such as the Federation has to ensure that there is a balance of power among the elected office bearers, and it keeps itself disassociated from the suspended/terminated officials.

It may be noted that Prem Chand Lochab, the new general secretary, was elected from the rival camp and the ministry's directive could be

understood in that context.

"The EC of the WFI must give an undertaking in this regard within 4 weeks. Any violation of the undertaking will invite appropriate legal action, including the action under the Sports Code," the ministry said in its order.

It also said that the WFI must ensure that the selection for all international events should be done in a free, fair and transparent

manner as per the extant provisions of the Sports Code and the other latest instructions issued in this regard along with regulations issued from time-to-time by the UWW (United World Wrestling).

The WFI president said there is nothing that can't be followed.

"We have already shifted to a new office and soon we will call for an EC meeting and also issue a circular for the selection trials. We have no issues in following these instructions," he said.

The Asian Championship is scheduled to be held in Amman, Jordan from March 25.

The Indian wrestlers missed out on competing in Ranking Series tournaments in Zagreb and Albania due to the ministry's suspension and the court cases filed by prominent wrestlers.

## Challenging two-year cycle to start for coach Gambhir

**PTI, NEW DELHI:** People who know Gautam Gambhir, describe him as someone 'boringly consistent', someone who has not even changed his eating pattern in the last 20 years.

An experiment is out of question.

He loves wearing his denims for casual gatherings and it has not changed for years.

But when it comes to cricket, his brain is always ticking and seeking solutions to various strategic problems.

It has been eight months since Gambhir took charge of the national team after Rahul Dravid ended his stint with the T20 World Cup triumph in July.

The man from Delhi's Old Rajinder Nagar has witnessed some heartbreaking and baffling defeats as well as success. He has seen both ends of the spectrum with high of Champions Trophy and low of six Test losses.

The CT win has come like a breath of fresh air and 'Guru Gambhir' will get a chance to analyse the big picture as Indian cricket is expected to undergo a sea-change in the next two crucial years.

It won't be wrong to say that Gambhir has completed his probation period and will get into a phase where he would have three distinct challenges, starting with the Test tour of England.

That will be, as usual, right after the T20 spectacle known as IPL with no time for preparation.

His second big challenge will be the 2026 T20 World Cup in India and Sri Lanka where Suryakumar Yadav's men will be defending their title.

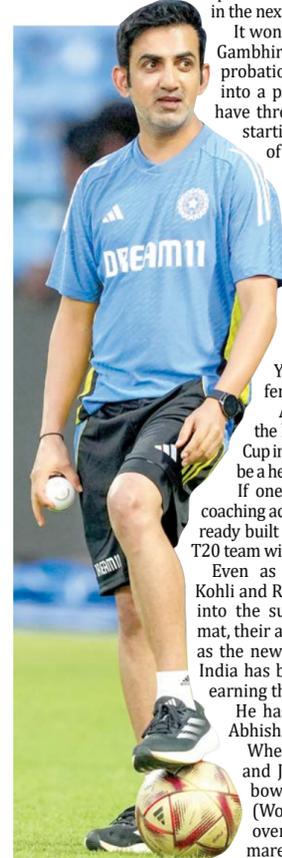
And last but certainly not the least is 2027 ODI World Cup in South Africa, which will be a helluva challenge.

If one segregates Gambhir's coaching across formats, he has already built a fabulous core for the T20 team with Surya at the helm.

Even as Rohit Sharma, Virat Kohli and Ravindra Jadeja walked into the sunset in shortest format, their absence was hardly felt as the new brand of cricket that India has been playing in T20 is earning them fans globally.

He has unearthed a gem in Abhishek Sharma.

When Varun Chakravarthy and Jasprit Bumrah would bowl during a global meet (World T20) those eight overs would be a nightmare for batters.



## Pak cricket is in ICU because of incorrect decisions: Afridi

**PTI, KARACHI:** Former captain Shahid Afridi has questioned the return of all-rounder Shadab Khan to the national T20 squad, saying Pakistan cricket is in ICU because of incorrect decisions.

Out of favour since the last T20 World Cup, Shadab was recalled and also appointed vice captain to Salman Ali Agha in Pakistan's T20 squad for the away series against New Zealand.

"On what basis has he been recalled. What are his performances in domestic cricket or otherwise that he had been picked again," Shahid said during a media interaction.

The flamboyant all-rounder said unless decisions are taken on merit nothing will change in Pakistan cricket.

"All the time we talk about preparations and when an event comes and we flop then we talk about surgery.

Fact is Pakistan cricket is in ICU because of incorrect decisions."

He noted that whenever a new Chairman takes charge he comes and changes everything.

"There is no continuity, consistency in the Board's decisions and policies. We keep changing captains, coaches or some players but in the end what is the accountability for Board officials," the former skipper questioned.

He said it was sad to see coaches blaming players to save their jobs and the management blaming players and coaches to save their seats.

"How can our cricket progress when there is a sword hanging constantly over the captain and coaches' heads.

He also felt that while the PCB Chairman Mohsin Naqvi was a positive person, the truth was he didn't know much about cricket.

## Australia to play England in historic day-night Test

**AFP, MELBOURNE:** Australia will play England under lights at the Melbourne Cricket Ground to celebrate the 150th anniversary of Test cricket in 2027, it was announced Tuesday.

The match, from March 11-15, will commemorate the first ever Test, played between the two arch-rivals in Melbourne in 1877.

It will be the first time the MCG has hosted a men's day-night Test after a successful women's Ashes pink ball clash at the venue earlier last month.

"The 150th Anniversary Test at the MCG will be one of the great cricket events," said Cricket Australia newly-installed chief Todd Greenberg.

## Budding cricketers should focus on playing for the country: Pant

**PTI, NEW DELHI:** India wicket-keeper Rishabh Pant feels the lure of the IPL is understandable but budding cricketers should always focus on playing for the country as "everything else" follows thereafter.

"Since childhood, I had only one dream—to play for India. I never even thought about playing in the IPL. I think today, people are more focused on the IPL. Of course, it's a great platform, but I believe that if your goal is to play for your country, everything else—including the IPL—will eventually fall into place," Pant told JioHotstar.

"If you have that bigger mindset, success will follow. I

always believed that I would play for India one day, and God has been kind. At 18, I got the opportunity to make my debut, and I am grateful for that," said the 27-year-old.

Pant is known for flamboyant style of play and some of his trademark shots include a one-handed six with the bat often slipping out of his hands. He explained why that happens frequently.

"I think it mostly happens because I hold my bottom hand very lightly. I mainly try to use my bottom hand for support because, at times, it starts dominating. So, I focus on gripping my top hand tightly," said Pant.


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