

# India gear up for Tajikistan test ahead of U-23 Asian Cup qualifiers

**PTI, NEW DELHI:** India men's football team will take on hosts Tajikistan in a friendly match on Wednesday, kicking off a crucial two-match tour that serves as preparation for the AFC U-23 Asian Cup 2026 Qualifiers later this year.

The match will be played at the Hisor Central Stadium near Dushanbe, at 8.30 pm, with the second fixture against Kyrgyz Republic scheduled for Saturday.

Drawn in Group E alongside Bahrain, Qatar and Brunei Darussalam, India will be aiming to qualify for the continental event for the first time when the qualifiers are held in September. The ongoing tour is seen as a vital tune-up in terms of acclimatisation, team cohesion, and tactical fine-tuning.

The Naushad Moosa-coached 23-member squad had been in camp in Kolkata since June 1 before flying out to Dushanbe.

After arriving in the Tajik capital on Monday evening, the team held a mobility session Tuesday morning and followed it up with a 90-minute evening training



The U-23 India squad along with Head Coach Naushad Moosa, Assistant Coach Remus Gomes and other officials before departing for Tajikistan

session at the venue, which is located around 25 kilometres from the city.

Tajikistan U23s were last in action in November 2024 when they lost two friendlies against United Arab Emirates, both by a 0-3 margin. At the AFC U23 Asian Cup 2024, Tajikistan were knocked out in the group stage after defeats to Iraq and Saudi Arabia and a win over Thailand.

Moosa, however, is not reading too much into past results and is focused on the task at hand.

"We know Tajikistan are a strong team. They qualified for the U23 Asian Cup last year and also did well at the senior Asian Cup," Moosa stated in AIFF website.

"The players will, of

course, be different tomorrow. The coach has changed. We just have to go out there and do our job right," added Moosa.

Despite Dushanbe being located 700 metres above sea level, the weather is hot at this time of the year, soaring to almost 40 degrees during the day.

What the Blue Colts mainly have to adjust to is the artificial turf surface of the Hisor Central Stadium, located 25 kilometres from the city of Dushanbe. Moosa hoped for a good turnout at the 20,000-capacity venue.

"The weather is pretty warm. It's normal for us. It's always good to have supporters in the stands. We would love to have them cheer for us," said Moosa.

"Most of our players are coming here for the first time, so it would be great motivation for them. I think the last time the Indian senior team played in Tajikistan, there were a lot of Indian fans in the stadium, so let's hope for the same."

This tour marks Moosa's second assignment with the India U-23 side, having previously overseen their two friendlies against Malaysia in Kuala Lumpur last year. The 53-year-old has been building momentum and instilling belief in the squad during this ongoing preparation phase.

"The boys are very eager for Wednesday. I've been talking to them about how important these games will be for us," added Moosa.

## Inter Kashi win first appeal at arbitration court against AIFF, but not yet I-League champs

**PTI, NEW DELHI:** Inter Kashi on Tuesday won their first appeal at the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS) against the All India Football Federation (AIFF) after the Varanasi-based side were deducted three points for a contested I-League match earlier in the year.

The CAS ruling, though, will not hand Inter Kashi the I-League title yet.

The AIFF's appeals committee had on April 18 ruled against Inter Kashi in a case relating to their match against Namdhari FC -- who were alleged to have fielded an 'ineligible play-

er' -- on January 13, setting aside a decision given by the national federation's disciplinary committee.

After the appeals committee ruling, Inter Kashi finished the I-League at second spot with 39 points, while Churchill Brothers of Goa were declared champions on 40 points.

Inter Kashi filed an appeal at the Switzerland-based CAS on April 24 against the decision of the AIFF appeals committee and the world's apex sports tribunal ruled in favour of the club on Tuesday.

There is another Inter

Kashi appeal pending at the CAS and that may decide who will be the 2024-25 I-League champions, though the AIFF had already handed the trophy to Churchill Brothers on the basis of its appeals committee decision.

"The appeal filed on 24 April 2025 by Inter Kashi FC against the decision issued on 18 April 2025 by the Appeal Committee of the All-India Football Federation is upheld. The decision issued on 18 April 2025 by the Appeal Committee of the All-India

Football Federation is set aside," the CAS said in its ruling on Tuesday. "The terms of the decision issued on 24 February 2025 by the All-India Football Federation Disciplinary Committee in the matter IL 2024-25/102 are hereby confirmed," said the CAS award delivered by three arbitrators.

Frans de Weger of the Netherlands presided over the bench, with Michele A R Bernasconi of Switzerland and Jeffrey G. Benz of United Kingdom being the other members.

## Agxem SC in final



Savio Gomes of Agxem SC was awarded the man-of-the-match by Joaquim Fernandes, member of Sporting Club of Virabhat

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**RAIA:** Agxem SC secured their place in the final of Silver Jubilee Cup inter-ward football tournament after a thrilling 5-3 victory over SFX Sports Club, Camarxet, via tie-breaker, in the semi-final played at the St Alex Church ground, Curtorim, on Tuesday.

In the tournament organised by Sporting Club of Virabhat, SFX-

Sports Club had an early opportunity to take the lead, but Rohit Shetty's header went narrowly wide.

Agxem SC responded with a powerful attempt from Alroy Gomes, only to be denied by a brilliant save from SFX Sports Club goalkeeper Christo Hilario.

Despite the chances, the first half ended goalless. The second half continued in the same fashion, with both sides pressing hard but failing to find the breakthrough. The deadlock led the game into a tie-breaker.

Agxem SC held their nerves to win the shoot-out 5-3. The successful scorers for Agxem SC were Joel, Savio, Agnelo, Michael and Standly. SFX Sports Club found the net through James, Versly and Casvino.

## USC Seraulim in quarters

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**RAIA:** USC Seraulim moved past Don Bosco Oratory, Fatorda, 8-7 in the sudden death tie-breaker to enter the quarter-finals of 14th Super Soccer football tournament organised by UC Benaulim at St John de the Baptista ground, Benaulim, on Tuesday.

After a very sedate



Ashley Fernandes of USC Seraulim was awarded the man-of-the-match

start, USC Seraulim created the first goal scoring opportunity but winger Shashank Shanke shot was saved by rival goalkeeper Glen Fernandes.

Don Bosco Oratory dominated the match after the resumption and almost got the goal but defender Velito Miranda failed to get a touch from a high cross by Kalu.

In the ensuing tie-breaker, USC Seraulim converted through Ashley Fernandes, Flosico Fernandes, Oliver D'Souza, Prexton Braganza, Keith Rodrigues, Mohin Sayed, Dickson Rogtao and Nayab Khan.

For Don Bosco Oratory, Clive Miranda, Velito Miranda, Hanslum Furtado, Alfred Noronha, Vedley Barreto, Richie Vaz and Kevin Araujo were on target.

## Dimple-Tanishka, Shaurya-Vansh & Aarya-Anaya put up a good show

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**PANJIM:** Goa's Dimple Revankar, pairing with Tanishka Ganji of Telangana, emerged victorious in a thrilling Girls Doubles U-15 match of the Yonex-Sunrise All India Sub Junior (U-15 & 17) Ranking Badminton Tournament 2025 played at the Multipurpose Stadium, Peddem-Mapusa, on Tuesday.

In the qualification rounds, the pair defeated Tamil Nadu's Sadana Madhusudhanan and Smridhisha Prabhu 15-9, 18-20, 15-12 in a thrilling round match. In the Boys Doubles U-17, local lads Shaurya Naik and Vansh Khedkar, pulled off a commendable win against Mainak Chakraborty (West Bengal) and Arjiv Hazarika (Assam) in a hard-fought encounter, finishing 12-15, 15-5, 15-12.

Another notable win for Goa came in Girls Doubles U-15, where Anaya Kamat and Aaryaa Metry stunned the third-seeded Telangana pair Hansika Avula and Rishitha Tadidari 15-9, 6-15, 15-10.

Despite determined performances, several Goan players bowed out after battling hard against higher-ranked opponents.

In the Boys Doubles U-17, the Goan pair of Devansh Sakpal and Eshaan Lagu lost to Swarit Satpute and Abheek Sharma (Maharashtra) 15-6, 15-6, while Shane D'Souza and Karthikeyan N were edged out in a nail-biter by Bhargav Jeevitesh and Hrehaan Pradhan (Odisha) 15-8, 20-18.

In the Mixed Doubles U-17, Goa's Ritika Chelluri and partner Vinayaka Mani (Andhra Pradesh) lost to Ab-



Dimple Revankar and Tanishka Ganji of Telangana in action at the Yonex-Sunrise All India Sub Junior (U-15 & 17) Ranking Badminton Tournament 2025 played at the Multipurpose Stadium, Peddem-Mapusa, on Tuesday

### ALL INDIA SUB JUNIOR RANKING BADMINTON

heek Sharma and Safa Shaikh (Maharashtra) 15-13, 15-10. In the Girls Singles U-15 category, Goan shuttlers Aditi Dhargalkar and Anaya Manohar Kamat were unable to match the firepower of Gujarat opponents, going down in straight games.

Among top national players, third seed Eswar Sai Katam (Karnataka) advanced in the U-15 Boys Singles with a strong 15-8, 15-11 win over Syed Zayan Ali (Chhattisgarh), while 11th seed Lakshay Choudhary (Del-

hi) breezed past Rehaan Dudekula (Andhra Pradesh) 15-9, 15-2.

In the U-15 Girls Singles, second seed Mehvish Kaur (Punjab) dominated Anushree G S (Tamil Nadu) 15-11, 15-3 and fifth seed Nimeesha Ojha (Odisha) prevailed over Sahithi Sree Nagireddy (Andhra Pradesh) 15-13, 15-9. In the U-17 Girls Singles, top seed Shantipriya Hazarika (Assam) and eighth seed Nitya Jadon (Madhya Pradesh) secured wins to stay on course for the title.

## YSC Colvale to face Assonora Utd in final

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**MAPUSA:** YSC Colvale registered a hard-fought 1-0 win over hot contenders St Savio Sports Club, Calangute, in a tightly contested semi-final clash of the 24th Vagator Soccer played at the Vagator ground, on Tuesday.

The match began with both sides locked in a tense midfield battle, showing determination but few clear-cut chances. St Savio Sports Club had an early opportunity in the 13th minute when Fasel D'Souza dribbled past a couple of defenders, only to be intercepted inside the box by the rival defender.

Minutes later, Dominic Fernandes came close to scoring for St Savio Sports Club but saw his strike travel just past the far goal post.

YSC Colvale responded with some attacking moves. In the 19th minute, Shaviz Pathan missed a golden opportunity with an open header and later in the 28th minute, his solo run was stopped by the alert St Savio Sports Club goalkeeper.

On crossing ends, the teams came with more urgency and attacks. St Savio Sports Club almost took the lead in the



The man-of-the-match was awarded to Shaviz Pathan of YSC Colvale

46th minute from Dominic Fernandes free-kick, while St Savio Sports Club's Carl D'Souza's header went over the crossbar. St Savio Sports Club's Sanjay made an outstanding goalline clearance in the 53rd minute from a shot by Nehal Parsekar.

YSC Colvale kept pressing and finally broke the deadlock in the 56th minute when striker Shaviz Pathan found the back of the net to give his side a crucial lead, 1-0.

The man-of-the-match was awarded to Shaviz Pathan of YSC Colvale by former Churchill Brothers SC player Fausto Lobo

## Sao Jose de Areal SC move ahead

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**RAIA:** Sao Jose de Areal Sports Club delivered a commanding performance to down Goa Velha Sports Club 3-0 in a thrilling encounter to move ahead in the Anil Kamat memorial football tournament organised by Enfermos Sports Club at the Our Lady of Hope Church ground, Chinchinim, on Tuesday.

The match opened with fast-paced action and it was Sao Jose de Areal SC who took the early lead in the 12th minute through a composed finish by Vanatel Travasso.

Goa Velha SC responded with urgency and nearly equalised in the 21st minute but Satish Kankonkar's header went just wide. Sao Jose de



Sao Jose de Areal SC captain Bersel Viegas receives the ball from a dignitary

Areal SC continued their attacking momentum and in the 24th minute, Ashnoy Gomes slotted in the second goal with a clinical strike, giving his

side a two-goal cushion at halftime.

Goa Velha SC came out stronger in the second half, creating multiple chances through Satish Kankonkar, Prasil Kankonkar and Akash. However, their inability to finish proved costly. Sao Jose de Areal SC also had several opportunities to increase their lead, with Leo Gominde, Tyson Carvalho and Ashnoy Gomes all coming close.

The third goal came in the 52nd minute when Stalen Oliveira found the net to seal a 3-0 victory for Sao Jose de Areal SC.

## St Anthony's SC win

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**MAPUSA:** St Anthony's Sports Club, Marna-Siolim, drubbed Candolim Sports Club by 6-1 margin in the 1st Vedanta inter-village football tournament organised by Sinquerim Sports Club at the Sinquerim ground, on Tuesday.

St Anthony's SC surged ahead in the very first minute when Nathan D'Souza curling corner was converted by Branden Pereira

into the goal, 1-0.

Ten minutes later, Sandanand netted the second goal with a 25-yard strike and Rajesh Pomburphekar made it 3-0. Candolim SC managed to reduce the margin through Anson's goal, 3-1.

On crossing ends, Nathan netted his hat-trick to complete 6-1 rout.

The man-of-the-match award was presented to Gurudas Tari by Nathan D'Souza of St Anthony SC.

### TODAY'S SPORTS

**Silver Jubilee Cup (semi-final):** Bharti SC vs SC Virabhat, at St Alex Church ground, Curtorim, 5 pm

**Anil Kamat Trophy inter-village football:** CAC Sports and Social Club vs Fr Agnel YSC, Paroda, at Our Lady of Hope Church ground, Chinchinim, 4.30 pm

**19th Super Soccer:** Concolim Union vs Parish Youth Nuvm, at St John the Baptist ground, Dando-Benaulim, 4.30 pm

**1st Vedanta Trophy:** Xetrapal Sports Club vs Saligao United, at Mayem ground, 4.30 pm

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