

Top shuttlers to compete in Tata Open badminton tournament

India's top shuttlers will be seen in action along with some international stars in the 1st Tata Open All India Badminton Tournament, organised by the Prakash Padukone Badminton Academy (PPBA) at the Bombay Gymkhana here from July 27.

The tournament has received a five-star rating and will feature the country's top badminton players including Saina Nehwal and Anup Sridhar, who have qualified for the Beijing Olympics.

It is the first time that a ranked tourney in India is allowing foreign participation for the prize money of Rs.500,000. Aspiring international players like Rajeev Ouseph, Britain's top player, will also compete in the event.

The others likely to take part in the tournament to be played across five events include Anup Sridhar, Chetan Anand, Arvind Bhat, Anand Pawar, Ajay Jayaram and P. Kashyap in men's singles.

Sanave Thomas, Rupesh Kumar, Diju V, Akshay Dewalkar will compete in men's doubles.

Saina, Trupti Murgunde, Aditi Mutatkar, Gayatri Vartak and B.R. Meenakshi are some of the top names to play in women's singles while country's top doubles pair of Jwala Gutta and Shruti Kurien will also be there.

The final list of participants and the draws shall be announced Saturday.

The five-day tourney, for which the Tata Group has entered into a sponsorship agreement with the PPBA, is part of the group's efforts to nurture badminton as a sport which needs corporate encouragement and has potential to create world champions.

As part of the support, Tata Group will help run the PPBA's three centres in Bangalore, Pune and Mumbai, the last one to open soon, for the next three years. These will be called Tata Padukone Badminton Centres and shall focus on identifying and developing badminton talent all over India, said Tata Service Ltd senior vice-president - corporate affairs, Romit Chaterji.

PPBA director Prakash Padukone said that the Tata Group's encouragement for the academy would enable them take forward a lot of new initiatives.

"The forthcoming tournament will witness the best of the badminton talent in India to battle it out for the coveted Tata Open trophy," he said.

Chaterji praised Padukone's 14-year-long efforts in running the academy and sincerely promoting young talent.

The PPBA was founded by Padukone, Vimal Kumar and Vivek Kumar, all stalwarts of Indian badminton, in 1994 in Bangalore, while the Pune Centre was established in 1999.

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