

## World's top Shuttlers for Yonex Sunrise India Open



Photo :- (L-R) T.S.Puri (Vice President (Administration, BAI), Vikram Dhar (Country Manager, Sunrise India), P. Sindhu, Dr. Akhilesh Dasgupta (President, BAI), P Kashyap, K Srikant & Balachander Sekhar, Chief Marketing Officer, PNB Metlife

New Delhi, March 29: The world's top players among men and women will be seen in action during the Yonex Sunrise-BWF Metlife India Open Super Series badminton tournament, to be played at the Siri Fort Sports Complex, here from April 1-6, with the field for the fourth edition of this tournament is as good as any Badminton World Federation (BWF) world event.

This was announced by Dr. Akhilesh Das Gupta, President Badminton Association of India at the launch press conference on Saturday, in the presence of BAI office bearers, Balchander Sekhar, Chief Marketing Officer, PNB Metlife, Vikram Dhar, India Head Yonex Sunrise and leading Indian players P V Sindhu, P Kashyap and K Srikanth.

Leading the participants list is men's world number one and multiple-time champion Lee Chong Wei. The Chinese are also sending all their top stars for this enhanced US\$ 250,000 prize money tournament. The prize-money last year was US\$ 200,000.

The Indian challenge would be led by world number 8 Saina Nehwal and World Championship bronze medallist P V Sindhu in the women's section and Thailand Grand Prix gold champion K Srikanth and the experienced P Kashyap among the men.

Badminton Association of India (BAI) President, Dr Akhilesh Das Gupta, expressed satisfaction over the response this year's event has got from the world's best players. "We have conducted the India Open for the last three years and this year it is going to be very special. That is because the top players, whom we had missed in the previous years, especially the Chinese, will be seen in action. This year, China is sending a full contingent and that augurs well for the tournament," said Dr. Das Gupta. The occasion was also used to unveil the glittering Yonex-Sunrise trophies to be awarded to the champions.

Dr. Gupta also sounded optimistic about the prospects of the Indian players in the event. "Our Indian players have been playing tournaments around the world and have been very successful. Players like P.V. Sindhu, P. Kashyap and K. Shrikant, who are present here, have excelled in major events and I am confident that they will do well in this tournament," he further stated.

Vikram Dhar, Yonex Sunrise India head, said, "It's indeed a proud moment for us at Yonex-Sunrise to be the title sponsor of the Yonex India Open 2014. The sport has gained a lot of momentum and popularity," he said.

"This tournament is all the more special as a lot of international players showcase their talent and the avid followers of the sport can watch their stars," he added.

Balachander Sekhar, Chief Marketing Officer at PNB MetLife said, "MetLife's BWF sponsorship takes our brand visibility to a whole new level, both globally and here in India. Few other sports are as multi-faceted as badminton, a well-balanced combination of performance excellence and passion; qualities which reflect MetLife's brand and its values," he mentioned.

The qualifying rounds of the tournament will be played on April 1, with the main draw beginning from April 2. A total of around 400 players from 12 countries will be seen in action during the tournament.



**Photo: Vikram Dhar (Country Manager, Sunrise India), P. Sindhu, Dr. Akhilesh Dasgupta (President, BAI), P Kashyap, K Srikant unveiling the tournament trophy**

World rank No. 9, Sindhu runs into second seed Shixian Wang of China in the opening round and although being a bit edgy was confident of putting up a good show. "This will be my fourth meeting with the Chinese player. I have beaten her in the three previous outings and am confident that I can give my best and win again."

Sindhu had defeated Shixian in the Swiss Open quarter-finals this year and the pre-quarter-finals of the ABC (Asian Badminton Championship) and World Championship last year.

Kashyap and Shrikant have also drawn strong opponents in the first round, but they too are confident of getting past the first hurdle.

"I am feeling good at the moment as I had recently reached the semi-finals of the Swiss Open and can do well this time as well," he said.

Shrikant mentioned that Delhi has been lucky for him as he won the National Championship here and was eager to perform well in this event.

The organisers have also decided to provide free entry for spectators to encourage badminton fans to come and enjoy quality badminton action.