

J&K Masters Cricket Championship

WOC Auto Daredevils, Sunbro Warriors, Honey Buzzy, Nischal Jewellers scripts win

■ STATE TIMES NEWS
JAMMU: WOC Auto Daredevils, Sunbro Warriors, Honey Buzzy Bee Royals and Nischal Jewellers Stars scripted empathic wins against their opponents in the ongoing J&K Masters Cricket Championship being organized by J&K Veterans Cricket Association under the aegis of Veterans Cricket India and supported by J&K Police.

Rajesh Gill, former Ranji Player & Avinash Uttam are the coordinators of the Championship.

In the first match, WOU Auto Daredevils defeated JKAC Tigers by 12 runs. Batting first WOU Auto Daredevils scored 129 runs for the loss of eight wickets in the allotted 20 overs, aseeb Ur Rehman with 35 runs, Rajesh Gill 15 runs and Kavi



A player receiving Man of the Match award.

Sharma 14 runs were the main scorers. For bowling side, Vikram Dogra took two wickets, while Rajesh, Raman, Munir and Mukesh claimed one wicket each.

In reply, JKAC Tigers managed to score only 117 runs for the loss of nine wickets. Rajesh made 27 runs while Vikram and Munish contributed 17 runs each for the

team. For bowling side, Arshad Sheikh and Shamser Singh took two wickets each while Rajesh Gill, Haseeb Ur Rehman and Ashok Kumar grabbed one wicket each. Haseeb Ur Rehman was declared Man of the Match.

In another match, Sunbro Warriors defeated KAP Smashers by two runs. Batting first, Sunbro Warriors

scored 130 runs for the loss of six wickets. In reply, KAP Smashers managed to score 128 runs thus lost the match by two runs. The best performances of the match includes Rajinder 31 runs, Imran Khan 30 runs and Sohan 28 runs whereas in bowling Ravi Kumar, Anit Wali and Raju Dutt took two wickets each. Ravi Kumar was declared Player of the Match.

Nischal Jewellers Stars defeated BMRC Superkings by nine wickets in third match. Batting first, BMRC Superkings made 85 runs for the loss of eight wickets in the stipulated 16 overs game. While in reply Nischal Jewellers Stars chased the target in 10.5 overs by losing one wicket. The best performances of the match were Manjeet Singh 38 runs, Deepak Sharma 29 runs and

Dhrinder 25 runs while in bowling Ashish and Prithpal Singh claimed two wickets each and Tinku Singh took one wicket. Manjeet Singh was declared Player of the Match.

In last match of the day, Honey Buzzy Bee Royals defeated Janta Sports Rangers by 62 runs. Batting first, Honey Buzzy Bee Royals scored 145 runs for the loss of six wickets in 20 overs. In reply, Janta Sports Rangers managed to score only 83 runs thus lost the match by 62 runs. The best performances of the match were Vicky Riana 50 runs, Mintoo Bhat 33 runs and Dada 25 runs. In bowling, Rajesh Khatri took four wickets, Pankaj Sasan and Sunny Mattoo took two wickets each. Rajesh was declared Player of the Match.

India bag 17 medals, including 3 gold on Day 2 of Hangzhou Asian Para Games

■ STATE TIMES NEWS
HANGZHOU: Prachi Yadav became the first Indian to win a para canoe gold in the Asian Para Games as she led the country's medal rush for the second consecutive day here on Tuesday.

India won 17 medals on Tuesday, including three gold, taking the total tally to 34 in the first two days of competition. India had won 17 medals, including six gold, on Monday.

India ended Day 2 placed fifth in the standings, one spot down from Monday, with nine gold, 12 silver and 13 bronze, behind China (165: 66 gold, 53 silver; 46 bronze), Iran (47), Japan (45) and Uzbekistan (38).

Prachi, who had won a silver in canoe VL2 category on Monday, bagged her second medal of the Games as she picked up a gold in KL2 event.

Deepthi Jeevanji (women's T20 400m) and Neeraj Yadav (men's F54/55/56 discus throw) were the other gold medal winners on Tuesday.

Sharath Shankarappa Mankanahalli won the men's T13 5000m event and

his gold was initially counted and included in India's medal tally.

But the number of India's gold medals was reduced to nine as there were only two competitors in the event.

Under the Asian Paralympics Committee rulebook, it is up to the technical delegate to award medals in cases where there are less than three competitors.

The 28-year-old Prachi, who is paralysed below the waist, clocked 54.962 to cover the 500m distance and win gold in the KL2 event, meant for athletes who propel themselves with their arms and partial trunk and leg function. She hails from Gwalior.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi appreciated the medal-winning efforts of the Indian athletes in a series of tweets.

"Congratulations to @ItzPrachi on winning the prestigious Gold Medal win in the Para Canoe Women's KL2 event. This was such an exceptional performance, which has made India proud. Best wishes for the endeavours ahead," Modi wrote on X, acknowledging the stupendous effort

of Prachi.

Deepthi then won a gold in women's T20 category 400m race -- meant for athletes with intellectual impairment -- with the Games and Asian record timing of 56.69 seconds.

Indians swept all the three medals in men's F54/55/56 discus throw event with Neeraj Yadav winning the gold with the Games and Asian record distance of 38.56m. Yogesh Kathuniya (42.13m) and Muthuraja (35.06m) were second and third respectively.

Ravi Rongali (men's F40 shot put), Parmod (men's T46 1500m), Ajay Kumar (men's T64 400m) and Simran Sharma (women's T12 100m) clinched a silver each from the track. Rakesh Bhaira picked a bronze in men's T46 1500m event.

The PM also mentioned lauded their achievements on his X page.

In para shooting, Rudransh Khandelwal and Manish Narwal bagged a silver and bronze respectively in the P1 men's 10m air pistol SH1 event while Rubina Francis bagged a bronze in the P2 women's 10m air pistol SH1 category.

The bronze medal winners on the day were Manish Kaurav (men's KL3 canoe) -- who is the husband of Prachi --, Ashok (men's 65kg powerlifting), Gajendra Singh (men's VL2 canoe) and Ekta Bhayan (women's F32/51 club throw).

India picked up a whopping 17 medals, including six gold, on the first day of competition with star shooter Avani Lekhara leading the way.

Besides Avani (women's R2 10m air rifle standing SH1), the other gold winners on Monday were Pranav Soorma (men's F51 club throw), Shailesh Kumar (men's T63 high jump), Nishad Kumar (men's T47 high jump), Ankur Dhama (men's T11 5000m) and Praveen Kumar (men's T64 high jump).

India is being represented by 313 athletes at the Hangzhou Asian Games, the most in any edition, with a target of winning 100 medals.

The country is participating in 17 out of the 22 sports, fielding athletes for the first time in rowing, canoeing, lawn bowl, taekwondo and blind football.

Pulwama Judo meet held

■ STATE TIMES NEWS
PULWAMA: Judo Association of Jammu and Kashmir organised maiden District Pulwama Championship in Kashmir thus extending the youngsters a platform to excel in this Olympic discipline.

Around 100 boys and girls drawn from educational institutions and clubs took part in this day-long competition, a handout issued by the Association here today informed.

Manager Indoor Sports Hall Tral in Pulwama was the chief guest while Gowher Khan (vice president) and Abdul Hameed Khan (joint secretary) were guests of honour.



Dignitaries posing with winner players.

Bishan Bedi's last rites attended by bevy of Indian cricketers



■ STATE TIMES NEWS
NEW DELHI: Cricketing fraternity, including Kapil Dev and Virender Sehwag, attended the last rites of legendary Indian spinner Bishan Bedi here on Tuesday.

Bedi died here on Monday after a prolonged illness. He was 77.

The big names of Indian cricket including World Cup-winning captain Kapil Dev, Madan Lal, Sehwag and Kirti Azad were there to pay their last respects.

Also present were Ashish Nehra, Ajay Jadeja, who is currently part of the Afghanistan support staff, and Murali Kartik, who learnt the tricks of the trade from the "Sardar of Spin".

"A whole lot of first-class cricketers were also pres-

ent. He was a great cricketer as well as a great human being," said a former cricketer who was present at the Lodhi Crematorium.

Born in Amritsar in 1946, Bedi played 67 Tests for India and took 266 wickets with 14 five-wicket hauls and one 10-wicket haul.

He was part of India's golden quartet of spinners that also had Erapalli Prasanna, Bhagwat Chadrasekhar and Srinivas Venkataraghavan. They formed the core of India's bowling unit for more than a decade between 1966 and 1978.

Bedi was briefly the manager of the Indian cricket team in 1990 during tours of New Zealand and England.

He was also a national selector and mentor to many talented spinners like Maninder Singh, Sunil Joshi and Murali Kartik, who all swore by his technical insight.

Bedi was also one of the most admired Indian captains and he led the team for nearly four years in Test cricket between 1975 and 1979 after Mansur Ali Khan Pataudi's retirement.

Satwik-Chirag enter second round of French Open

■ AGENCY
RENNES: Newly-crowned world number one pairing of Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty stormed into the men's doubles second round of the French Open Super 750 badminton tournament with a straight game win here on Tuesday. The Asian Games gold medallists, who had skipped the Denmark Open super 750 last week, beat world no 34 Lucas Corvee and Ronan Labar 21-13 21-13 in a lop-sided contest here.

Satwik and Chirag will next meet three-time world champions Mohammad Ahsan and Hendra Setiawan of Indonesia.

The 2014 Asian Games gold medallists defeated Chinese Taipei's Lu Ching Yao and Yang Po Han.

It took just 35 minutes for the Indian pair to get past Lucas and Ronan, who lagged behind right from the start as Satwik and Chirag dominated the proceedings, leading 11-6 at the interval and kept moving ahead to close the opening game.

Gukesh, Praggnanandhaa to spearhead Indian challenge in Grand Swiss

■ AGENCY

ISLE OF MAN (UK): Young Grandmasters D Gukesh and R Praggnanandhaa will lead the Indian challenge in the year's strongest open aptly titled, the FIDE Grand Swiss that gets underway here on Wednesday and is offering two slots for the Candidates.

Starting as the fifth seed, Gukesh has more pressure than Praggnanandhaa to finish in the top two as that will ensure his place in the next Candidates' tournament that will decide the challenger to the World Champion Ding Liren in the next match.

Praggnanandhaa, by virtue of his excellent silver medal performance in the last World Cup has already qualified for the Candidates.

As many as 14 Indian players, highest from any country, are in the fray out of 114 players in the open section that carries a total prize pool

of USD 460000 USD (over Rs. 3.6 Crores).

There will be eleven rounds in all with one rest day after round six.

American Fabiano Caruana starts as the top seed in the elite Swiss, that will see as many as 106 Grandmasters in action out of which a whopping 89 are rated above the 2600 Elo points.

Fabiano's compatriot Hikaru Nakamura is seeded second ahead of Iranian turned French Firouzja Alireza while Anish Giri of Holland is ranked fourth.

With two spaces up for grabs from here in the Candidates, Arjun Erigaise is one Indian who will hope not to choke towards the end.

The Warangal-based GM just threw up a drawn endgame against Nodirbek Abdusattorov of Uzbekistan in the final round of Qatar Masters that concluded just a few days back at Doha. A draw would have fetched him

a chance to fight for first in a play-off match.

Earlier in the World cup Arjun was well poised against Praggnanandhaa but ended on the receiving end in the Quarterfinals. Arjun starts as the 16th seed, just behind the Indian duo of P Harikrishna and Vidit Gujrathi.

One Indian player who has been consistently moving up the charts is Nihal Sarin who is also closing in on 2700 rating barring being 2694 currently.

S L Narayanan, Aravindh Chithambaram, Raunak Sadhwani, Aryan Chopra, Leon Luke Mendonca, Murali Karthikeyan, Abhijeet Gupta and B Adhiban complete the impressive Indian line up.

The Women event is being played simultaneously with a prize pool of 140000 USD (over Rs. one Crore) and here Grandmaster D Harika is the highest-rated Indian and

seeded seventh in a competitive field boasting of 15 Grandmasters.

R Vaishali, the sister of Praggnanandhaa, will fancy her chances here after a rock solid performance in Qatar where she completed her third and final Grandmaster norm.

Still in need of rating points to reach the 2500 level, Vaishali will hope to inch closer to the figure while at the same time her attacking skills can help her beat any fancied player.

Vantika Agarwal, Divya Deshmukh and B Savitha Shree are three players who have been consistent in the past one year while Tania Sachdev can be brutal on her good days.

Alexandra Goryachkina will be playing under the FIDE flag to start as the top seed while her Russian compatriot till recently, Alexandra Kosteniuk changed federation to Switzerland and will play under the Swiss flag.

Resurgent Australia face tenacious Netherlands in World Cup

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

NEW DELHI: Bolstered by the revival of their batting firepower, a rejuvenated Australia will look for another dominating show against a tenacious Netherlands in a World Cup match here on Wednesday.

There is also a lot of optimism around Travis Head's return from hand injury after he hit the nets on Monday and Australia will hope to get his services against the Netherlands.

After a disappointing start to their campaign, the five-time champions turned it around with two solid performances against Sri Lanka and Pakistan but they know very well that they can ill-afford to take the Dutch lightly in what is turning out to be a World Cup of upsets.

The Netherlands have been one of the success stories of this showpiece event as they stunned an in-form South Africa at Dharamsala after returning to the World Cup following a 12-year hiatus.

However, beating Australia will take some doing.

The reasons behind Australia's turnaround include their top-order batting might, the return to form of spinner Adam Zampa and the consistent performances of pacers Josh Hazlewood and Mitchell Starc.

The return to form of David Warner and Mitchell Marsh is good news for Australia

as they can blow away any opponent with their sheer ruthless batting. A case in point is the 259-run opening partnership that the two shared against Pakistan.

Marsh has scored 351 runs at a strike rate of 108.3 in seven innings as an opener, grabbing the opportunity with both hands in place of an injured Head, while the ever-dependable Warner has looked in ominous touch.

But Australia will need to add firepower in their middle order, especially with Steve Smith and Marnus Labuschagne struggling at the moment.

Glenn Maxwell and Marcus Stoins haven't exactly set things on fire with the bat but wicketkeeper batter Josh Inglis has been among the runs, scoring a crucial fifty against Sri Lanka.

If Head regains his place as an opener, Marsh will slip down to no. 3 spot and Labuschagne might miss out. Head also provides the team with a handy off-spin option and might provide that balance to the XI.

In bowling, Hazlewood has been successful in keeping things tight, Zampa strangled the middle order and returned with two four-wicket hauls in the last two matches which went a long way in getting the team back to winning ways.

Starc though continued his dream run of taking wickets in all World Cup matches

and would fancy his chances after taking a hat-trick in their rain-hit abandoned warm-up game against the Dutch. But skipper Pat Cummins need to do more to lead from the front and produce those breakthroughs.

Spin will come into play at the Feroz Shah Kotla track, where Afghanistan tweekers dismantled England the other day.

The Dutch, on the other hand, have never beaten Australia in ODIs. They lost the two times they met way back in 2003 and 2007.

But the Orange Brigade as shown what they are capable of in the run-up to the World Cup and also during their sensational win over South Africa and a narrow loss to Sri Lanka in the last match.

Armed with a gang of steady all-rounders, the Netherlands have shown they are capable of winning but to have a consistent run they will need better execution, especially from the top-order and the bowling department.

While the likes of opener Max O'Dowd and Vikramjit Singh haven't been able to give them a good start, the Netherlands have found someone or the other to take them to 200-plus scores in the tournament.

But they have bowled too many boundary balls and also floundered in the fielding department to undo their good work.

Unique International Public School celebrates Dussehra Students beautifully perform Ram Leela

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

JAMMU: Unique International Public School celebrate Dussehra, one of India's most significant festivals, today. This festive extravaganza promises to bring the spirit of unity, the victory of good over evil, and cultural vibrancy to our school campus.

"Dussehra, also known as Vijayadashami, is a vibrant and significant Indian festival that marks the triumph of good over evil. It's a time when the entire nation comes alive with festivities, symbolizing the victory of Lord Rama over the demon king Ravana," Chairman of the School, Jasbir Singh.

For students, he said, Dussehra offers a unique opportunity to learn about our rich culture and heritage



Burning of effigies of Ravana, Kumbhakaran, and Meghnad and Ram Leela skit mark Dussehra celebration at UIPS.

while having loads of fun.

"Dussehra isn't just about watching the effigies of Ravana burn; it's a time for children to understand the importance of virtues like truth, courage, and righteousness," he said adding that the today's events in the school not only add an element of excitement to the festival but also impart valuable lessons that will stay

with the children throughout their lives.

Earlier, students, staff, and management come together to commemorate this occasion with a variety of activities and festivities.

Students beautifully performed Ram Leela, a vibrant enactment of the Ramayana, showcasing the life and adventures of Lord Rama.

The symbolic burning of an effigy of Ravana to represent the victory of good over evil was also performed.

Students also presented a range of cultural dances, songs, and skits that showcase the rich heritage of India.

Food Stalls were installed wherein a diverse selection of delectable Indian cuisine, offering a feast for the taste

buds.

Students and staff are encouraged to dress in traditional Indian clothing to add to the festive atmosphere.

The campus was adorned with colourful Rangoli designs and festive decorations.

A special prayer ceremony to invoke blessings for the school and its community was also held.

Remove Babar Azam from captaincy, cry Pakistan stalwarts

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

KARACHI: Pakistan's World Cup campaign might be standing on the brink after their shock defeat against Afghanistan and former players tore into captain Babar Azam and other players for their poor performance in the tournament.

Be it Wasim Akram, Misbah ul Haq, Ramiz Raja, Rashid Latif, Muhammad Hafeez, Aaqib Javed, Shoaib Malik, Moin Khan or Shoaib Akhtar, Babar was blamed for the run of Pakistan's defeats against India, Australia and Afghanistan.

Babar didn't help his cause either by deciding to give away a bat to Afghanistan opener Rahmanullah Gurbaz in Chennai after the eight-wicket defeat.

But the gesture has not gone

down well in the cricket circles here, adding to the cries to replace Babar as captain.

Aaqib said on TV that Shaheen Shah Afridi should be made Pakistan captain in the white ball formats in place of Babar.

"Shaheen is the best bet for the future of Pakistan cricket. Babar has failed to prove himself as an able captain in white ball formats," the former pacer said.

Aaqib who is the Director and head coach of PSL team Lahore Qalandars for which Shaheen, Haris Rauf, Fakhar Zaman and Abdullah Shafique play also criticised all other players except Rauf for not coming to the party against Afghanistan.

Pakistan now have to win all their remaining four games against England, South

Africa, New Zealand and Bangladesh to stand any chance of qualifying for the semifinals.

"The fielding and body language of the players was very poor and unconvincing (against Afghanistan). They just didn't appear capable of defending 283 which is not a small total. The bowling was ordinary and the fielding levels were pathetic," Akram said.

Akram also noted that surprisingly no fitness tests had been held for Pakistan players for the last one year.

"In modern day cricket how do you expect to do well if you are not 100 percent fit? How can you take catches or stop boundaries?"

"The way some of our players fielded it appeared as if they were enjoying a diet of rich dishes and food," he said.