

Yudhvir Sethi encourages youth to pursue sports with passion, commitment

J&K Police XI lifts 19th Christmas Gold Cup trophy

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

JAMMU: In an electrifying finale of the 19th Christmas Gold Cup Football Tournament 2025, J&K Police XI defeated J&K Bank XI to lift the coveted trophy. The tournament was organized by the All J&K Sports & Cultural Welfare Association under the aegis of the J&K Football Association (DFA Jammu) at Mini Stadium, Parade Ground today.

The final between J&K Bank XI and J&K Police XI ended in a 2-2 draw, showcasing intense competition and skill from both sides. Farhan opened the scoring for J&K Bank XI in the 10th minute, while Faisal Rashid equalized for J&K Police through a penalty in the 53rd minute. Hayat Bashir put J&K Police ahead in the 81st minute, but Toufeeq leveled the score for J&K Bank in stoppage time at 93 minutes.

With the match tied, the winner was decided through a tie-breaker, where J&K Police XI triumphed 6-5, clinching the championship in a dramatic finish.

The match also saw disciplinary action, with Rohit of J&K Bank receiving a yellow card in the 32nd minute, followed by a red card, leaving his team a player short during critical moments.

The final was graced by eminent



MLA Jammu East, Yudhvir Sethi presenting trophy to winner team.

dignitaries, including Yudhvir Sethi, MLA East, Priya Sethi, BJP J&K UT Vice President, Nuzhat Gul, Secretary J&K Sports Council, Shiv Kumar Sharma, DIG J&K Police, Hemant Digal, R.K. Chibber, Ex-Chairman J&K Bank, Advocate General M.L. Zargar Patwani, Ashok Gupta, Divisional Head, J&K Bank Zonal, Anil Masoom, Ex Corporator and President of All J&K Sports & Cultural Welfare Association, David Masih, Vice President, Yousaf Don, General Secretary, Peter Sandhu, Deputy Secretary, Amit Gorge Sotra, President Jammu Sports Football Club, Sebastian, Treasurer, Adarsh Jathiar, Ramesh Gupta and

Vijay Anand Gill.

The match was officiated by referees Dheeraj Menia, Satnam Singh, Ricky Kumar, and Aman Sudan, who ensured a fair and competitive contest.

The thrilling final not only highlighted the competitive spirit of Jammu's football teams but also reflected the growing popularity of football in the region. J&K Police XI's victory added a memorable chapter to the Christmas Gold Cup Football Tournament, leaving fans and spectators elated.

Speaking on the occasion, Yudhvir Sethi said "I am delighted to witness such an exciting and competitive

final which was a true testament to the talent, dedication, and sportsmanship of our local football players. I congratulate J&K Police XI for their hard-fought victory in a thrilling tie-breaker and also appreciate J&K Bank XI for their spirited performance."

"Sports play a crucial role in nurturing teamwork, discipline, and a sense of community, especially among our youth. I urge all young players to continue pursuing sports with passion and commitment. The local authorities remain committed to supporting such tournaments, which strengthen the sporting culture in Jammu and Kashmir."

He also appreciated the All J&K Sports & Cultural Welfare Association and the J&K Football Association (DFA Jammu) for organizing such a successful event, providing a platform for budding talent.

Yudhvir Sethi presented trophies to the winning and runner-up teams as well as to individual players who performed exceptionally.

Anand Jain, Additional Director General (ADG) of Armed Police, also congratulated J&K Police team, coaches, and support staff, praising their remarkable discipline, spirit, and determination in the tournament.

Arun led Winter Football Coaching Camp concludes



Arun Malhotra interacting with boys at Winter Football Coaching Camp.

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

JAMMU: Led by India player from Jammu, Arun Malhotra, a five-day long Winter Football Coaching Camp for young boys and girls concluded at Dr B R Ambedkar Stadium, Dehradun in Uttarakhand.

Around 80 young and budding footballers actively participated in this camp under the guidance of former India player, who presently serves with ONGC and based in Dehradun, Arun Malhotra.

"Divided into age-wise groups and trained under the guidance of a penal of current and former national footballers in the presence of qualified coaches with focused attention on improving the individual

skills," informed Arun, who himself took a couple of sessions.

The camp was organized through the collective efforts of Arun Malhotra, ONGcian, former Indian footballer and Technical Member, AIFF, senior footballers, and experienced male and female coaches. The initiative aimed at providing structured training in the fundamentals of football while familiarizing players with modern techniques of the game during the winter break.

"Neeraj Sharma, Head HR Services, ONGC, graced the closing session and interacted with the participants. He highlighted the importance of sports in daily life and spoke about the role

of sports neuroscience, explaining how physical activity helps in the release of positive hormones such as dopamine, serotonin, and endorphins, contributing to overall mental and physical well-being," informed Arun, who is technical member of the AIFF.

Later, Arun emphasized the importance of such initiatives in strengthening grassroots football development and providing young players with structured opportunities to improve their skills.

He also expressed his gratitude to ONGC and other supporting departments for their continuous guidance and help, which played a crucial role in the successful conduct of such activities.

20th Kashmir Premier League Cricket Tournament begins

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

JAMMU: Apni Party Senior Vice President and former Minister Ghulam Hassan Mir on Thursday inaugurated the 20th edition of the Kashmir Premier League (KPL) cricket tournament at Jagati here. The tournament is being organised by Subash and his team from the Orzu Sports Cultural Club and has witnessed enthusiastic participation from 21 teams, reflecting the growing interest of youth in sports activities.

Ghulam Hassan Mir was accompanied by District President Jammu Urban Abhay Bakaya, Incharge Apni Party Shangus (Anantnag), and senior Kashmiri Pandit leader M. K. Yogi. A large number of players, sports enthusiasts, and local residents

were present on the occasion.

Addressing the gathering, Ghulam Hassan Mir described youth as the most valuable asset of society and emphasised the need to guide and reform them into responsible and disciplined citizens. He said that initiatives like the Kashmir Premier League play an important role in shaping the future of young people by encouraging healthy competition and positive engagement.

Appreciating the efforts of Orzu Sports Cultural Club, Mir said that such tournaments keep children physically active and motivate them to take up sports seriously. He noted that the participation of 21 teams was highly encouraging and reflected the success of the organis-

ers in mobilising young talent.

He further stated that sports platforms not only help in nurturing talent but also play a crucial role in keeping youth away from social evils, including drug abuse, which is emerging as a major concern in society.

The inauguration ceremony was also attended by several prominent personalities, including Ashwani Bhat, Mumtesh Ji, Vijay Pandita, Sunil Pandita, Chandiji Bhat, Tej Krishan Dhar, and Naveen Gosian.

The 20th edition of the Kashmir Premier League is expected to witness exciting matches in the coming days while promoting fitness, teamwork, sportsmanship, and positive community values among the youth.

Super over thriller, dominant chase mark New Year action in BIG JKPL

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

JAMMU: The first day of the New Year witnessed high drama and thrilling cricket, including a nail-biting Super Over finish, in the HexaMed BIG Jammu Kashmir Premier League (BIG JKPL) 2025-26, organised by 92.7 BIG FM, at the University of Jammu Ground. Two exciting matches were played on the day, with Royal Goodwill Cricket Club and Kanwal Tigers registering impressive victories.

The league is being conducted with the support of HexaMed Diagnostics as the Title Partner, CT University as the Powered By Partner, Kanwal Spices and Oxford Hospital as the Associate Partners, JK Sports Time as the Live Streaming Partner, and Pepsi as the Beverage Partner.



A player receiving Player of the Match award.

In the first match of the day, Tiles and Bath Cricket Club faced Royal Goodwill Cricket Club. Winning the toss, Royal Goodwill Cricket Club elected to bat first. The match was rain-curtailed and reduced to 10 overs per side. Batting first, Royal Goodwill posted a strong total of 138

for 2, putting the opposition under pressure.

Aadil Reshi starred with the bat, scoring a scintillating unbeaten 56 runs off 26 balls, including four towering sixes.

In reply, Tiles and Bath Cricket Club matched the target, taking the contest into a dramatic Super Over. In the

Super Over, Tiles and Bath managed only 3 runs, which Royal Goodwill Cricket Club chased down with ease, sealing a thrilling victory. Aadil Reshi was adjudged the Man of the Match for his brilliant half-century.

The second match of the day was played between Kanwal Tigers and Gamechangerz. Due to a wet outfield, the match began late and was reduced to a 13-over contest. Batting first, Gamechangerz scored 98 for 7.

Kanwal Tigers' captain Ankush Bhandral delivered an outstanding bowling performance, claiming 4 wickets for just 8 runs.

In reply, Kanwal Tigers chased down the target comfortably within 10 overs, with the openers providing a solid start. For his exceptional all-

round contribution, Ankush Bhandral was adjudged the Man of the Match for the second time in the tournament.

Vikrant Sharma, Cluster Head North, 92.7 BIG FM, RJ Juhie, Morning Show Host, along with Almer Ikhtlaq and Sahil Choudhary from the organising team, were present on the occasion. They appreciated the players for their performances and expressed gratitude to the officials, media and spectators for their continued support in making the BIG JKPL a grand success.

Both matches drew a large gathering of cricket enthusiasts, creating an electric atmosphere at the venue. With thrilling finishes and competitive cricket, the BIG JKPL 2025-26 continues to grow in excitement and popularity.

NSS Unit GDC Akhnoor organises clothes donation drive under seven-day Winter Camp

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

AKHNOOR: A Winter Clothes Donation Drive was successfully organised by the National Service Scheme (NSS) Unit of Government Degree College (GDC) Akhnoor as a part of the ongoing Seven-Day NSS Winter Camp. The drive was conducted under the patronage and guidance of Dr. Romilla Malla Bhat, Principal, GDC Akhnoor, who has always been a source of inspiration and support for student-led social initiatives.

The event was organised by Dr. Sanjay Kapoor, NSS Programme Officer and Assistant Professor of Chemistry, with the participation of about 37 NSS volunteers. The volunteers distributed winter clothes among the



needy sections of society in Akhnoor aiming to provide warmth and comfort during the harsh winter season.

Alongside the donation drive, the volunteers also carried out a cleanliness drive, spreading awareness about hygiene, social responsibility, and community well-being. The activity conveyed a strong social message of compassion, empathy, and collec-

tive responsibility, truly reflecting the spirit of the NSS motto "Not Me, But You." The initiative not only helped the underprivileged but also sensitised students towards the values of selfless service, cleanliness, and social harmony. The Winter Clothes Donation Drive proved to be a meaningful step towards community outreach, spreading warmth, sharing smiles, and

strengthening the bond between the institution and society. The NSS Unit of GDC Akhnoor remains committed to organising such impactful activities in the future, fostering a sense of social responsibility among students and contributing positively to nation-building.

Women cricket gains ground in J&K

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

JAMMU: Stands nowhere in comparison with their male counterparts, still the women cricket has gained a substantial ground in Jammu and Kashmir.

In view of their insufficient number on ground, the women cricket needs to be explored and encouraged at the grassroots, especially at the school level to build up the bench strength.

This was stated by longest serving J&K captain, Roopali Slatia while expressing her views in regard to women cricket in the Union Territory.

"Obviously, you get better stuff with improved participation and more competitions at the grassroots, especially at the school level. Schools are the best ground to catch them



young and then train them hard to achieve the desired results," said Roopali, who remained J&K skipper for 10 long year.

The women cricket has to go a long way in terms of on ground presence with only around 400 active regular trainees in both Kashmir and Jammu Divisions across different age groups.

On the other hand, around

10,000 under-19 boys turned up for selection trials in Kashmir alone in 2021-22 on a J&K Cricket Association (JKCA) call.

"The number makes all the difference. More players means strong bench strength. And, to achieve desired results in women cricket, you need to activate and involve more youngsters. Exclusive women cricket academies could be the game changer," expressing her views, the former India camper said.

While laying stress on encouragement to those working for the women cricket on ground, especially in the rural and hilly pockets of J&K, she said, "I think, individuals working for the women cricket need to be encouraged and motivated further in their endeavours. A

retired Physical Education Teacher in district Doda has devoted himself and has produced talented girls from a small school ground. Another female PIET in district Udhampur has also done a commendable job," mentioned Rupali, who has played for the North Zone at the National level. She was all praise for the JKCA in transforming the J&K cricket. "The cricket has progressed a lot under present set up. Improved facilities have been extended to seniors with focussed attention to youngsters. J&K seniors have outperformed and beaten the champions sides like Mumbai while youngsters of under-16 group are hitting double hundreds," said Roopali. In terms of coaching strength, she said, "The women cricket has been strengthened in terms of coaching by the JKCA. Presently, we have in J&K ten qualified level 1 and three level 2 female coaches."

CLUJ flags off men's wrestling team for NZ Inter-University Tournament

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

JAMMU: The Dean Students Welfare and Director Physical Education & Sports, Cluster University of Jammu (CLUJ), today flagged off the Men's Wrestling Team, which will represent the University in the North Zone Inter-University Wrestling Tournament scheduled to be held at Chandigarh University from January 5 to 09, 2026.

Addressing the team during the flag-off ceremony, the Dean Students Welfare extended his best wishes to the players and emphasized the values of hard work, dedication, discipline, and sportsmanship. He encouraged the wrestlers to give their best performance and uphold the prestige and pride of the University at this prestigious inter-university sporting event. He fur-



ther highlighted the University's continuous efforts to promote sports culture and encourage students to excel at inter-university and national levels.

Dr. Vinod Bakshi, Director of Physical Education & Sports, acknowledged the rigorous training and consistent efforts put in by the team. He appreciated the commitment and determination of the athletes and expressed confidence that the team would exhibit out-

standing performance, discipline, and sportsman spirit during the tournament.

On the occasion, Prof. D. S. Manhas and Dr. Vinod Bakshi posed for a group photograph with the Men's Wrestling Team. The University fraternity extended its heartfelt best wishes to the team for a successful campaign in the upcoming North Zone Inter-University Tournament, reflecting the spirit of teamwork, dedication, and excellence.

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

JAMMU: Puneesh Puri of Class IX-D, Heritage School, once again brought distinction to the institution by securing the Bronze Medal in the 3000m Road Race (Under-17) at the 69th School Games Federation of India (SGFI) Roller Skating Championship, held at ITM Global School, Gwalior, from 25th December to 30th December 2025.

Demonstrating exceptional grit and endurance, Puneesh fearlessly competed against seasoned national champions many two years senior and racing on 110mm wheels-while he skated on 100mm wheels. His podium finish against such formidable competition highlights not only his physical strength but also his growing maturity as a high-performance athlete, firmly establishing him among the country's elite young skaters. This achievement crowns an outstanding 2025 season for Puneesh. Earlier this month, he delivered a spectacular double-gold performance at the 63rd National Roller Skating Championship, organised by the Roller Skating Federation of India and hosted by the Andhra Pradesh Roller Skating Association at Visakhapatnam (5-15 December 2025). He clinched Gold in the Inline Sub-Junior 5 km Point-to-Point Track Race, a newly introduced World Games-format event, where he dominated



the field with a commanding 21 points. He followed this with another Gold in the 3000m Road Race, reaffirming his supremacy at the national level.

Puneesh's skating journey began in Class II, and over the years he has emerged as one of the most decorated young skaters in the country. A former Sub-Junior Quad National Champion, he has consistently delivered medal-winning performances at major national platforms. Despite transitioning to inline skating only in January 2025, he has made a seamless and highly successful shift, excelling against more experienced competitors at senior sub-junior and junior levels.

Among his most notable achievements are Gold, Silver and Bronze medals at the All India 5th Ranking Championship held in Ranchi in June 2023, which marked his rise on the national circuit. He further stamped his authority at the 2nd India Skates Roller Games in Pollachi, Tamil

Nadu (August 2024), where he won an impressive three Gold Medals in the 1500m Road Race, 500m Rink Race and 1000m Rink Race, earning him the title of National Champion in the Under-14 category. He also clinched Gold in the 500m Rink Race at the CBSE North Zone II Roller Skating Championship held at Ambala City in September 2024. Maintaining remarkable consistency, Puneesh continued his winning streak through 2025 with multiple podium finishes at state-level championships and another Gold Medal in the 500m Rink Race at the CBSE North Zone II Championship (September 2025). In recognition of his exceptional talent and discipline, he was also honoured as the First Brand Ambassador of the Quads Category by Simmons Rana Racing, a renowned international skating brand. Heritage School congratulated Puneesh Puri on his outstanding achievements and unwavering commitment to excellence.

11th UT Handball C'ship from Jan 7

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

JAMMU: The Jammu & Kashmir Handball Association, in collaboration with the J&K Sports Council, will organize the 11th Handball Championship of UT J&K (Men and Women) from January 7 to 9, 2026 at the Playing Field, Shastri Nagar, Jammu.

Rajesh Chandan, General Secretary, J&K Handball Association, said, "All affiliated units are requested to participate in the championship to make it a grand success. Teams should report in proper sports uniform with jersey numbers and the names of their respective districts clearly mentioned." He further informed that the championship will be held on a league-cum-knockout basis and added, "All units are advised to confirm their entries by January 3, 2026, to ensure smooth conduct of the event."