

Khyber Cement gives Kashmiri rowers a launchpad to world stage

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

SRINAGAR: Reinforcing its legacy as one of Kashmir's most trusted and socially conscious brands, Khyber Cement extended its support to a spirited contingent of 35 rowers from Jammu & Kashmir, who are set to compete at the Federation Cup (Men, Women & Mixed) scheduled from 21st to 24th April 2025 at Bhalswa Boat Club, New Delhi.

The grand flag-off ceremony took place Sunday morning at Zabbarwan Park, Boulevard Road, in the presence of Tanvir Sadiq, MLA of Zadibal, who applauded the grit and talent of the athletes. Representing Khyber Cement was Wasim Ahmed Khan, Chief of Sales & Customer Relationsmarked



MLA Zadibal Tanvir Sadiq during flag-off ceremony at Srinagar.

his presence, further amplifying the brand's ongoing commitment to empowering youth and building community pride through excellence in sports.

At Khyber Cement, we don't just build with

strength; we believe in building dreams, ambition, and a future our youth can be proud of. Supporting this rowing team is an extension of our philosophy: Kashmir deserves to be seen, heard, and celebrated on the biggest

platforms. We're proud to be the wind beneath their oars as they row towards national and international excellence," said Mr. Umar Trambo, Director Corporate & Strategy - Khyber Cement. The Federation Cup is not

only a prestigious national platform but also a key qualifier for the 17th World Rowing Championship, which will be held in Brandenburg an der Havel, Germany, from July 16 to 20, 2025. As the region's athletes prepare to row towards glory, Khyber Cement's presence behind them serves as a beacon of support and pride.

As one of Jammu & Kashmir's most respected and admired brands, Khyber Cement continues to stand tall not just as an industry leader but as a true force of empowerment. Whether it's building world-class infrastructure or backing world-class talent, Khyber is more than just cement; it's the pride, promise, and pulse of Kashmir.

J&K U-19 Boxing team leaves for National



Coaches along with players posing before departure.

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

JAMMU: A 17-member contingent, including four officials, from J&K on Sunday left for participation in the 7th Youth Under-19 (men and women) National Boxing Championship to be held at Noida from April 21 to 28.

Earlier, the participating team, including nine men and four women boxers were screened by the J&K State Sports Council (JKSC). The team was selected by the J&K Amateur Boxing Association and sponsored by J&K Sports Council.

"It gives me immense pleasure to inform that international boxer, Shivani Kachroo of dis-

trict Srinagar, who won bronze medal in the Asian Junior Boxing Championship at Doha, is also part of the J&K team," said general secretary of the Association, Rajan Sharma.

The Team:

MEN: Vishesh, Kinshuk, Rajneesh, Aditya, Kanav (all Jammu), Parbakarn, Keshav (both Poonch), Hadi Hassan (Kupwara) and Anish (Samba). **WOMEN:** Sachhi (Jammu), Nandita, Joyeeta (both Kathua), Shivani Kachroo (Srinagar).

Officials: Mohammad A, Rahul Kumar and Rahul Kachroo (all Coach); Ananay Chowdhury, Coach cum Manager.

Bolstered by Nayar's presence, Kolkata Knight Riders eye batting revival against Gujarat Titans

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

KOLKATA: Reigning champions Kolkata Knight Riders will hope that their strife-ridden batting unit will tighten its act against in-form table-toppers Gujarat Titans in the IPL match here on Monday.

The Knight Riders suffered an inexplicable meltdown in their previous match, getting bowled out for 95 while chasing 112 against Punjab Kings in Mullanpur, and that collapse was a just reflection of the overall rot that has set among their batters.

But they have a ray of hope. The reigning IPL champions have roped in Abhishek Nayar, who was recently sacked by the BCCI from the post of India's assistant coach, even before his exit from the national setup was made official.

The homecoming of Nayar, a former KKR assistant coach, is sure to give a fillip to the Kolkatans, who currently have six points from seven matches and need to win at least five of their remaining seven games to stay in the playoff race.

He has already begun working with key batters like vice-captain Venkatesh Iyer and Ramandeep Singh -- their two weak links this season.

Iyer, the team's most expensive player this season at Rs 23.75-crore, has

scored only 121 runs at an average of 24.20, while Ramandeep has managed just 29 runs in six innings.

Andre Russell has only 34 runs in five innings, while Rinku Singh has scored 116 runs at an average of 38.66.

Only Rahane (221 runs, 2 fifties) and young Angkrish Raghuvanshi (170 runs) have shown promise, though the 20-year-old too has struggled with consistency.

At the top, Quinton de Kock and Sunil Narine have had a few good starts but have not delivered regularly and KKR will hope that Nayar will find a solution for it.

Two pitches have been prepared for this match, and one has an extra layer of grass that has not been trimmed.

The final decision on the surface will depend on the team's strategy, even as the KKR have conveyed their displeasure at not getting enough "home advantage".

But above all that, the debacle in Mullanpur should work as a catalyst of change. In the IPL 2014, a Gautam Gambhir-led KKR were cruising at 121 for no loss chasing 171 set by Rajasthan Royals, courtesy a blazing start from the skipper and Robin Uthappa.

But one of IPL's most dramatic collapses fol-

lowed as KKR lost six wickets for two runs, including a hat-trick by Pravin Tambe, and they fell short by 10 runs, ending at 160/6.

However, that defeat was a grim prelude to KKR's nine-match winning streak that culminated in them lifting the title in 2014. So, can they engineer something similar here?

The Titans, led by Shubman Gill, have lost only twice this season. Their bowling attack has been a major strength with pacer Prasidh Krishna leading their charge with 14 wickets at an average of 14.35 from seven games.

Krishna's ability to out-think batters and vary his length have been the key, as seen in his recent spell against Lucknow Super Giants when he returned with a four-wicket haul.

Left-arm spinner R Sai Kishore has taken 11 wickets and could relish the variable bounce and slow nature of Eden surface. Mohammed Siraj also features among the top-10 wicket-takers this season.

In the batting department, opener B Sai Sudharsan (365 runs) is just three runs behind Orange Cap holder Nicholas Pooran, while Jos Buttler (315 runs, average 63.00) has been solid at No. 3.

Lower down, Sherfane Rutherford has emerged as GT's designated enforcer.

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

JAMMU: A vibrant celebration of Indian art, culture, and heritage marked the one-day national-level Baisakhi event held at Abhinav Theatre, Jammu. The event was jointly organized by the Master Sansar Chand Baru Memorial Trust and the Tourism Department, Northern Zone, and witnessed an enthusiastic gathering of dignitaries, artists, and cultural aficionados.

Padma Shri awardees Mohan Singh Slathia and Ramalo Ram graced the occasion along with Maj. Gen. G.S. Jamwal and Brig. V.S. Dhemia. Renowned Kathak dancer Gauri Divakar delivered a mesmerizing performance, while an engaging Dogri play



Dignitaries lighting the ceremonial lamp.

Kunju Chanchalo was staged by Jakson. A special on-the-spot painting camp brought together eminent artists from seven states, celebrating the spirit of unity in diversity through creative expression.

The event also saw participation from Seetharaman

AD, General of Incredible India; SHO Rakesh Jamwal of Kacechi Chhawni; and noted cultural personalities including Amit Anand, Vijay Anand, Sonam Sikarwar, Sharmila Sharma, Suman Dogre, Rakhi Kumar, and Akram Khan. Students from DPS Jammu also actively took part

Another Poonch spiker Madni in India camp

■ STATE TIEMS NEWS

JAMMU: Following the footprints of current India player, Saqlain Tariq, another young spiker from the remote district of Poonch, Ayaz Ahmed Madni has been selected for the senior men India camp.

Madni, a product of Shaheed DySP Manjit Singh Memorial Volleyball Club Poonch, has been selected by the ad hoc committee of the Volleyball Federation of India (VFI) for the camp at SAI NSSC, Bengaluru from April 25 to May 26.

As per a communiqué addressed to Madni, the VFI mentioned that National Coaching Camp is being held for the senior men's team preparing for the CAVA Men's Nations League 2025 to be held in Pakistan from May 29 to June four.

The letter further said, "If you are selected during the National coaching camp, you will



Poonch spiker, Ayaz Ahmed Madni poses with Saqlain Tariq.

travel to Islamabad (Pakistan) to represent India in the CAVA Men's Nations League 2025. So, you must report at the camp on April 25."

Meanwhile, Mohd Tariq, chairman Shaheed DySP Manjit Singh Memorial Volleyball Club thanked the ad hoc committee of

VFI and his selection committee members, Rohit Rajpal (chairman) and Alankanda Ashok (member) for extending a chance to a talented boy from district Poonch of J&K.

He (Tariq) also expressed his gratitude to the Volleyball Association of J&K (VAJK) for the support and encouragement to the talented stuff from remote district of Poonch.

The VAJK complimented Madni and Volleyball fraternity of Poonch for producing the India talent. The Association president, Siddharth Daluja and CEO, Kuldeep Mangotra extended their thanks to the VFI for encouraging J&K talent from the rural pockets.

Padikkal shines in Virat's company as RCB make short work of Punjab Kings

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

MULLANPUR: The stylish Devdutt Padikkal blossomed under the able guidance of peerless Virat Kohli as Royal Challengers Bengaluru exacted a sweet revenge on Punjab Kings keeping their all-away-win record intact with an easy seven-wicket victory in an IPL match here on Sunday. Having lost the rain-curtailed home match to Punjab Kings on Friday, RCB turned the tables within less than 48 hours, chasing down a target of 158 without much ado in just 18.5 overs to enter the top four in the points table.

Southpaw Padikkal (61 off 35 balls), who is an effortless elegance when on song, scored his first IPL half-century in 22 innings while chases like these have been a cakewalk for someone of Kohli's caliber as he played second fiddle for the better part of his innings.

He finished with a flourish, remaining unbeaten on 73 off 54 balls. The duo added 103 in 11.3 overs by playing textbook cricketing strokes with minimal risk.

It was Kohli, who started off with a signature pull off Arshdeep Singh where the rolling of wrists kept the ball down and a bowler's back-drive off Xavier Bartlett to signal his intentions.

He got an able partner in Padikkal, who hit fours and sixes in equal measure.

The best of the lot from Padikkal certainly was the lofted one off Marco Jansen



where the bat swing was picture perfect.

Against spinners, he would use the depth of the crease to rock back and running between the wickets was fantastic as on one occasion, Kohli pushed him to sprint for four runs.

Kohli farmed the strike with ease and when needed, got a boundary like once when he rode the bounce to back-cut Jansen towards backward point.

Padikkal was finally gone trying to get for a fifth six off left-arm spinner Harpreet Brar's bowling but by then RCB had all but pocketed the game.

Once he completed his 50 off 42 balls, Kohli slashed Arshdeep deliberately behind point for a boundary. But undoubtedly the best shot was an inside out straight six off Yuzvendra Chahal.

Earlier, RCB spinners Krunal Pandya and Suyash Sharma bowled stifling spells to restrict Punjab Kings to an under-par 157 for six in 20 overs.

(2/25) and leg-spinner Suyash (2/27) were at their crafty best after Royal Challengers opted to field first on a pitch that had a hint of slowness.

In fact, the Punjab side made a good start to their innings with Priyansh Arya (22) and Prabhsimran Singh

(33) adding 42 runs in 4.2 overs. There was no sign of an impending storm when Arya made his runs through those short-arm pulls and hit-through-line shots.

The left-hander was harsh on pacer Yash Dayal whom he carted the bowler for a six and two fours, and sensing the comfort of PBKS openers against quick bowlers RCB skipper Rajat Patidar turned to Pandya in the fifth over.

It proved a captaincy master-stroke as Krunal immediately fetched the desired result getting rid of Arya, who could not time the shot well of a slower delivery.

Tim David took a simple catch at the edge of the circle.

SCOREBOARD	
PUNJAB KINGS	
Priyansh Arya c David b Pandya	22
Prabhsimran Singh c David b Pandya	33
Shreyas Iyer (c) c Pandya b Shepherd	06
Josh Inglis † b Suyash Sharma	29
Nehal Wadhara run out (David/Kohli/†Sharma)	05
Shashank Singh not out	31
Marcus Stoinis b Suyash Sharma	01
Marco Jansen not out	25
Extras	05
Total	157/6
Royal Challengers Bengaluru	
Phil Salt c †Inglis b Arshdeep Singh	01
Virat Kohli not out	73
Devdutt Padikkal c Wadhara b Harpreet Brar	61
Rajat Patidar (c) c Jansen b Chahal	12
Jitesh Sharma † not out	11
Extras	01
Total	159/3

Arjun bags silver, Arya finishes fifth; India in third place on medals tally

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

LIMA (PERU): Paris Olympian Arjun Babuta clinched the silver medal in the men's 10m air rifle event while Arya Borse finished a creditable fifth in the women's event in her first ever final of the ISSF World Cup here.

In a nail-biting final, Babuta (252.3), who had finished fourth at the Paris Games last year, lost by just 0.1 points to reigning Olympic champion Sheng Lihao of China (252.4).

Seasoned Hungary shooter Istvan Peni, with over 40 ISSF medals to his name, bagged the bronze in what was a world-class field with a total of 229.8.

The final featured a star-studded line-up, including reigning world champion and Paris silver medallist Victor Lindgren of Sweden, Jon-Hermann Hegg of Norway and India's former world champion Rudranksh Patil.

India had a chance for a double podium finish, but Rudranksh was unfortunately docked his 11th shot by the jury due to a technical infraction. As a result, Indian finished eighth, bowing out at the first elimination stage.

Patil had won gold at the World Cup in Buenos Aires last week.

India's Hriday Hazarika narrowly missed out on the final, finishing 10th

with a score of 629.3.

In the 10m air rifle women event in the second leg of the ISSF World Cup circuit, Arya finished a good fifth in the 10m air rifle women event after shooting a superb 633.9 on Saturday to qualify for the final.

She finished behind the reigning junior world champion and eventual gold medalist Wang Zifei of China, who set three world records on the day.. Arya, bowed out after the 18th shot of the 24-shot final, her score reading 188.1, just 0.1 behind silver winning reigning world champion Han Jiayu of China, who was fourth at that stage.

Wang also led a Chinese sweep of the medals in the event as another upcoming young talent Fan Xinyi, took bronze. She set a new junior qualification record (635.9) as well as the new junior and senior final world records (254.8) in a stunning display of air rifle shooting throughout the day.

That consolidated China's position at the top of the charts with three gold, three silver and four bronze medals.

India are now placed third in the medals tally with two golds, two silvers and one bronze, putting them a gold behind the USA who are in second position.

Till she shot a 9.9 for her 17th shot, Arya had shot

almost the perfect final, doing ever so well to maintain second position despite a rampaging Wang and strong challenges posed by world class shooters like Han, Jeanette Hegg Duestad (a multi-format ISSF World Champion in rifle) of Norway and Eunji Kwon of Korea.

She led after the first five shot series, was behind by 0.6 to Wang after the second and after momentarily going down to third, found herself back in second after the 16th single shot, 1.2 behind Wang and tied with Jeanette, who finished fourth eventually.

The 17th took the Indian down to fourth and as Han and Jeanette fired high 10s for their 18th, Arya's 10.4 left her just short of Han.

Over at the Shotgun ranges where the Trap competitions also got underway, veteran Zoravar Sandhu in the men's trap and Pragati Dubey in the corresponding women's event, began with flawless first rounds of 25 each.

Zoravar however ended up with a tally of 70 after three rounds to finish the day at 21st place while his team mates Prithviraj Tondaiman and Lakshay Sheoran shot 69s to end 24th and 25th respectively. Among the women, it was national champion Bhavya Tripathi who finished best among the Indians with a tally of 69 (24,22,23) which placed her seventh, while Pragati with 68 was lying ninth..

Neeru was further back in 18th with a total of 60 hits.

India off to flying start at Asian U-15 & U-17 boxing c'ships

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

AMMAN (JORDAN): India started their campaign at the Asian U-15 & U-17 Boxing Championships in style with Hardik Dahiya and Rudraksh Singh securing dominant victories here.

In the U-15 boys' category, Hardik (43kg) outclassed Kyrgyzstan's Kubanyehbek Bolushov with a 5-0 unanimous decision on Saturday.

Rudraksh (46kg) followed it up with another clean sweep, defeating Mongolia's Ibrakhim Maral 5-0.

This the first event organised by Asian Boxing, endorsed by both the Olympic Council of Asia and the newly-formed World Boxing.

India has fielded a 56-member squad in the tournament.