

T20WC Boycott: Broadcasters may move court against PCB

KARACHI/NEW DELHI: The ICC has warned the Pakistan Cricket Board that it faces the prospect of legal action from T20 World Cup's official broadcasters JioStar for boycotting its February 15 game against India, a PCB source said on Tuesday.

Pakistan decided to boycott the match in Colombo on February 15 on instructions of their government but haven't yet officially specified the reasons to ICC.

As reported by PTI, there is a possibility that the ICC will withhold the entire annual revenue share of Pakistan, which is around USD 35 million and pay the broadcasters from that purse.

A PCB source informed that although chairman Mohsin Naqvi had taken advice from the board's legal experts before briefing PM Shehbaz Sharif on the issue last week, the board is bracing for some serious consequences.

"If Pakistan doesn't relent and play against India, not only will they face financial penalties, perhaps a lawsuit from broadcasters but also any efforts to go to the ICC Dispute Resolution Committee (DRC) are likely to fail," a PCB source told PTI.

ICC's DRC is an internal committee which doesn't hear appeals against the decisions made by its own board.

"The PCB might face problems regardless of their government directive to not play India as they are playing all their matches at a neutral venue (Sri Lanka) as per their wishes and not in India," another PCB source said.



"Secondly, while the Indian government has not given permission to its team to play in Pakistan, it has not stopped them from playing against Pakistan at neutral venues in Asia Cup or ICC events even after the May conflict," the board source, who tracks Naqvi closely, added.

The PCB is yet to communicate in writing to the ICC but it the boycott decision is being seen as an act of solidarity with Bangladesh after their ouster.

"When the ICC signed its four year deal with the broadcaster for all ICC events, the contract included Pakistan and India

matches based on which the broadcaster made the payments to the ICC," the source explained.

"So the broadcaster will be within its rights to take the PCB and ICC to court over a major breach of the contract."

It is reliably learnt that the PCB approached other members boards for support on the matter but failed to find any backers.

Will Naqvi make U-turn after Bangladesh elections?

There is a school of thought that Naqvi, who is also the interior minister of his country, might just make a U-turn once the general elections are held in Bangla-

desh on February 12 and a democratic government takes charge instead of the present one headed by Mohammed Yunus.

"Naqvi more than a cricket administrator is a politician, who is not one bit bothered about the welfare of the national team.

He is trying to score a brownie point with his and could well flip once elections are held on February 12.

"There would still be two days before the India game and things could just change. Else he knows that Pakistan could be ostracised," another source tracking Pakistan cricket said.

Akshay Sharma takes first-round lead with a phenomenal nine-under 60

NAYA RAIPUR: Indian golfer Akshay Sharma shot a phenomenal nine-under 60 on Tuesday to take the first-round lead at the Rs 1.5 crore SECL Chhattisgarh Open, the DP World PGTI's season-opener. Akshay, who had a near-perfect round and narrowly missed a hole-in-one on two occasions, matched the record for the lowest score at the venue set by Khalin Joshi last year.

Two-time DP World PGTI winner Akshay had a bogey-free effort on day one that saw him make five birdies on the front-nine and four on the back-nine. He sank two 15-footers for birdies.

"It was a dream round being one of those days when every aspect of my game was top-notch – driving, iron-play and putting. I missed only three greens in regulation today and missed out on holes-in-one by one foot on two occasions – second and 17th," Akshay said.

"I enjoyed some good form towards the end of last year with a couple of top-10 finishes. I feel I'm now building further on that form. I also had a good outing in Naya Raipur last year with a top-10 finish. So, I'm quite familiar with this course," he added.

Sixteen-year-old Kartik Singh, fresh from his tied seventh place finish at the PGTI Qualifying School last week and making his DP World PGTI debut, made an eagle, seven birdies and a bogey on day one to be placed tied second.

India to host shooting's Asian Olympic qualifying championship next year

NEW DELHI: India will host next year's Asian Rifle/Pistol Championship in Delhi where eight quota places for the 2028 Los Angeles Olympics will be up for grabs, marking a historic first for the country's shooting calendar which already features an Olympic qualifier in the World Cup.

The eight slots in the Asian competition will be in addition to the 12 quota places that will be on offer in the World Cup (Rifle/Pistol/Shotgun) from April 21 to 30 next year, also to be held in Delhi.

The allotment of the Asian event was confirmed by the Asian Shooting Confederation in a letter to the National Rifle Association of India (NRAI) president Kalikesh Singh Deo.

The NRAI stated that the dates for the Asian qualifier will be finalised in due course.

"We congratulate National Rifle Association of India for winning the hosting rights of Asian Rifle/Pistol Championship 2027 where eight Quota Places will be distributed for the LA 2028 Olympics.

"We are confident that, under your leadership, the championship will be organised to the highest standards and will be a great success," the letter, which is in PTI's possession, stated.

Deo expressed his excitement at the prospect of a significant number of Indian shooters booking Olympic slots through these events.

"...now they will have two events with home advantage spread across the year, to win quota places...I thank the Hon. Secretary General Eng. Alotaibi and his team at ASC, for continuing to repose their faith in India's capability to host world class Shooting competitions," he said.

Speaking to PTI, NRAI secretary general Pawankumar Singh said it is a proud moment for the country.

"This is the first time India will be hosting two Olympic quota competitions and we are very proud of that. We will host the ISSF World Cup Rifle/Pistol/Shotgun (April 21-30) in New Delhi and the Asian Championships in Rifle and Pistol here at the Karni Singh Ranges," said Singh.

"The dates for the Asian Championships will be announced later but we are very happy that the International Shooting Sport Federation (ISSF) has shown faith in our abilities to organise major competitions.

"This shows the growing clout of Indian shooting sport and the confidence the international body has in us," he added.

Singh said he was hopeful India would make full use of the two competitions to secure as many quota places as possible.

In-form India would be extremely difficult to beat in T20 WC: Michael Klinger

VADODARA: India's performance in the recent series against New Zealand showed why the defending champions would be extremely tough to beat in the T20 World Cup beginning on February 7, said former Australian cricketer turned coach Michael Klinger.

India's aggressive top-order core makes them arguably the strongest unit going into the ICC event, according to Klinger, the head coach of WPL franchise Gujarat Giants. "With the form they're in and what I saw recently against New Zealand, India are going to be extremely difficult to beat.

A team will probably have to catch them on a bad night in a final to beat them," Klinger told PTI Videos in an interaction. Klinger said Abhishek Sharma's rise has been a standout feature of India's new template at the top. "Abhishek Sharma is probably my new favourite player. I've been watching him for a while now. Opening with Travis Head in the IPL and now doing it at international level, he's fearless and amazing to watch," said Klinger, who played three T20s for Australia besides appearing in 182 first-class games.

India's fearless approach

was displayed by Abhishek and Kishan, who consistently put New Zealand bowlers under pressure.

"Ishan Kishan has come back in fantastic form and is certainly putting a case forward to start in the XI at the World Cup," he said, adding that India's depth has turned selection into a challenge rather than a concern.

Klinger, however, cautioned that India would face stiff competition from traditional rivals. "Australia and South Africa are strong teams. South Africa, coming off a lot of T20 cricket recently, will be dangerous as well," he said.

Third stage of T20 World Cup ticket sales begins

NEW DELHI: The BCCI announced the commencement of the third stage of ticket sales for the upcoming T20 World Cup following the two successful ticketing windows, with Phase 1 launched on December 11, 2025, and Phase 2 on January 14, 2026.

This latest phase provides fans with a further opportunity to secure seats for matches across the tournament, which will bring together the world's leading teams, the BCCI said in a release.

The T20 World Cup, starting on Saturday, will be staged at some of India's most recognised cricketing venues, creating an environment where fans can witness elite international players and the intensity that defines the T20 format throughout the competition.

As preparations across host cities move into final stages, the BCCI, in close coordination with the

stakeholders, continues to focus on venue readiness, operational planning, and match-day experience. The aim is to ensure that every fixture offers spectators a setting that matches the quality of cricket on display.

The BCCI also looks forward to the presence of fans from across the country throughout the tournament, including on days when India is not in action.

BCCI President Mithun Manhas said, "The ICC Men's T20 World Cup is an event of global significance, and the BCCI is committed to working in close partnership with the ICC to ensure that it is delivered to the highest standards.

"As the third phase of ticket sales opens, we look forward to welcoming fans to our stadiums for matches that reflect the depth and competitiveness of international cricket across all participating teams."

AI is now more creative than the average human

Are generative artificial intelligence systems such as ChatGPT capable of real creativity? A new large-scale study led by Professor Karim Jerbi from the Department of Psychology at the Université de Montréal set out to answer that question. The research team also included Yoshua Bengio, a leading AI pioneer and professor at the Université de Montréal. Together, they conducted the most extensive comparison to date between human creativity and the creative abilities of large language models.

The findings, published in Scientific Reports, point to a major shift. Generative AI systems have now reached a level where they can outperform the average human on certain creativity measures. At the same time, the study makes it clear that the most creative people still exceed the performance of even the strongest AI models.

The researchers evaluated several major large language models, including ChatGPT, Claude, Gemini, and others, and compared their results with data from 100,000 human participants. The outcome marks a clear turning point. Some AI systems, including GPT-4, scored higher than the average human on tasks designed to measure divergent linguistic creativity.

"Our study shows that some AI systems based on large language models can now outperform average human creativity on well-defined tasks," explains Professor Karim Jerbi. "This result may be surprising – even unsettling – but our study also highlights an equally important observation: even the best AI systems still fall short of the levels reached by the most creative humans."

Further analysis by the study's co-first authors, postdoctoral researcher Antoine Bellemare-Pépin (Université de Montréal) and PhD candidate François Lespinasse (Université Concordia), revealed an important pattern. While some AI models now outperform the average person, the highest levels of creativity remain uniquely human.

When the researchers looked more closely, they found that the most creative half of human participants achieved higher average scores than all AI systems tested. The difference was even more pronounced among the top 10 percent of the most creative individuals.

"We developed a rigorous framework that allows us to compare human and AI creativity using the same tools, based on data from more than 100,000 participants, in collaboration with Jay Olson from the University of Toronto," says Professor Karim Jerbi, who is also an associate professor at Mila.

ThoughtSpot: On the new fleet of agents delivering modern analytics

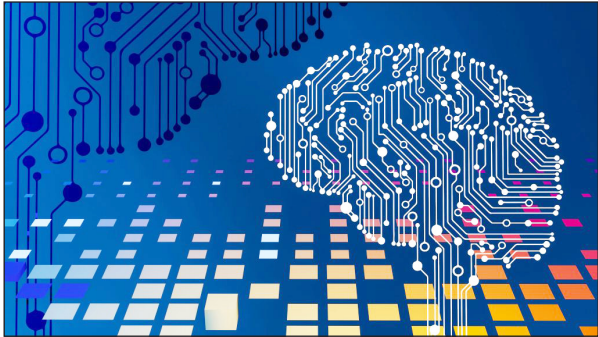
If you are a data and analytics leader, then you know agentic AI is fueling unprecedented speed of change right now. Knowing you need to do something and knowing what to do, however, are two different things. The good news is providers like ThoughtSpot are able to assist, with the company in its own words determined to 'reimagine[re] analytics and BI from the ground up'.

"Certainly, agentic systems really are shifting us into very new territory," explains Jane Smith, field chief data and AI officer at ThoughtSpot. "They're shifting us away from passive reporting to much more active decision making.

"Traditional BI waits for you to find an insight," adds Jane. "Agentic systems are proactively monitoring data from multiple sources 24/7; they're diagnosing why changes happened; they're triggering the next action automatically.

"We're getting much more action-oriented."

Alongside moving from passive to active, there are two other ways in which Jane sees this change taking place in BI. There is a shift towards the 'true democratisation of data' on one hand, but on the other is the 'resurgence of focus' on the semantic layer. "You cannot have an agent taking action in the way I just described when it doesn't strictly understand business context," says Jane. "A strong semantic layer is really the only way to make



sense... of the chaos of AI."

ThoughtSpot has a fleet of agents to take action and move the needle for customers. In December, the company launched four new BI agents, with the idea that they work as a team to deliver modern analytics.

Spotter 3, the latest iteration of an agent first debuted towards the end of 2024, is the star. It is conversant with applications like Slack and Salesforce, and can not only answer questions, but assess the quality of its answer and keep trying until it gets the right result.

"It leverages the [Model Context] protocol, so you can ask your questions to your organisation's structured data – everything in your rows, your columns, your tables – but also incorporate your unstructured data," says Jane. "So, you can get really context-rich answers to questions, all through our agent, or if you wish, through your own LLM."

With this power, however, comes responsibility. As ThoughtSpot's recent eBook exploring data and AI trends for 2026 notes, the C-suite

needs to work out how to design systems so every decision – be it human or AI – can be explained, improved, and trusted.

ThoughtSpot calls this emerging architecture 'decision intelligence' (DI). "What we'll see a lot of, I think, will be decision supply chains," explains Jane. "Instead of a one-off insight, I think what we're going to see is decisions... flow through repeatable stages, data analysis, simulation, action, feedback, and these are all interactions between humans and machines that will be logged in what we can think of as a decision system of record."

What would this look like in practice? Jane offers an example from a clinical trial in the pharma industry. "The system would log and version, really, every step of how a patient is chosen for a clinical trial; how data from a health record is used to identify a candidate; how that decision was simulated against the trial protocol; how the matching occurred; how potentially a doctor ultimately recommended this patient for the trial," she says.

Old hair reveals how toxic America once was

Before the Environmental Protection Agency was created in 1970, lead pollution was deeply embedded in everyday American life. Communities were exposed through industrial activity, lead-based paint, aging water pipes, and most heavily through vehicle exhaust. Lead is a powerful neurotoxin that builds up in the body over time and has been linked to developmental problems in children. As environmental regulations took effect, lead levels in the environment dropped sharply, followed by a steep decline in human exposure.

The evidence of that change is still visible today.

It is recorded in human hair. University of Utah researchers analyzed hair samples and found dramatic reductions in lead levels stretching back to 1916. These samples provide a long-term biological record of environmental exposure.

"We were able to show through our hair samples what the lead concentrations are before and after the establishment of regulations by the EPA," said demographer Ken Smith, a distinguished professor emeritus of family and consumer studies.

स्कैमर पीड़ितों को डराने और धोखाधड़ी करने के लिए नकली ऑनलाइन गिरफ्तारी का इस्तेमाल करते हैं।

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