

What was going through Anish Giri's mind a day before playing Praggnanandhaa at Candidates?

NEW DELHI: GM Anish Giri is scheduled to take on GM R Praggnanandhaa in his opening round of the Candidates tournament at Cyprus. And thoughts on opening day eve clearly revolved around the Indian for the Dutchman.

Giri, talking to Chessbase revealed a hilarious message he received that sent his creative word-smith mind into a tizzy.

"Unless earth is going...like earthquake is happening...other than that I'm not checking my phone. But suddenly there was a message and I thought it must be earth shattering. I opened phone, and they said 'would you do chess training on 28th?'" Giri told ChessBase.

Pro Chess Training is an online chess coaching platform which has both Giri and Praggnanandhaa on their list of coaches. What's more, the speaker on March 28 casually tossed in that even Praggnanandhaa might join. The Candidates were to start on March 29, with the two to play Round 1. Giri was staggered.

"They said it'll be very well attended. Maybe Praggnanandhaa will join. I know Praggnanandhaa always watches afterwards. So I thought, what, Praggnanandhaa wants some last minute training or what? I wanted to tell them, 'But it's scheduled for 29th. Let's not do two for price of one?'" he narrated to ChessBase.

Giri thought of answers like 'Go to hell' because he was raging. "I had thousands of options of responses running through my mind. Finally I tweeted and it ended up being funny. I think it escaped their mind that Candidates is on at the moment," he said.

Joking later in the interview that he would FIDE to consider school exam schedules in South Holland before deciding on World Championship dates if he qualified, Giri would also talk about why Candidates hid their seconds.

Knowledge about opponent gave them cues, Giri said. Like, knowing if Praggnanandhaa has shaved his stubble.

"It's just nice I think to not re-



veal because then the unknown is always (more challenging). I always feel also when I find out something about my opponent I feel always a bit... Let's say, I see some kind of picture of Praggnanandhaa and I see who he's with. I see you know he didn't shave or something. It just gives me a comfortable feeling," Giri explained.

"Like okay, now I know Praggnanandhaa is here with this guy and didn't

shave. I still don't know anything but it gives me a little more comfort," he would add.

Giri said it sounded funny now, but small observations could end up important in hindsight. "And these are tiny things but this could be deciding factor. You know afterwards they'd be like 'Well how did you win?' and I'll say, 'Yea you know I saw Praggnanandhaa didn't shave,'" he joked.

Kohli can raise his strike rate anytime

NEW DELHI: Playing his first T20 since the IPL 2025 final, Virat Kohli guided Royal Challengers Bengaluru to a big win in their opening match against Sunrisers Hyderabad. His unbeaten 69 off 38 balls, which included five fours and five sixes, helped RCB chase down 202 in 15.2 overs. According to former India batter Ambati Rayudu, "there's a lot more to come from him".

"[Kohli] was still looking a little rusty... throughout the innings," Rayudu said on ESPNcricinfo's Time Out. "There's a lot more to come from him, as he gets more tuned in."

Kohli looked scratchy at the start but Devdutt Padikkal's blazing 26-ball 61 allowed him to find his hitting range. Kohli took a slight backseat in their 101-run partnership. According to Sanjay Bangar, who has been the head coach of RCB



in the past, Kohli's slower start was by design.

"If the batsmen around him are doing the job, then he doesn't really have to put the accelerator on," Bangar said. "Because he can raise the bar anytime in terms of strike rate... He can hit those boundaries or sixes at will, when he actually needs to be done."

When Padikkal departed, captain Rajat Patidar walked in - and he bashed the spinners in the middle overs during a cameo of 31 off 12 balls. Kohli took over during the final phase of the innings, propelling from 50 off 33 to 69 off 38, scoring 19 runs off his final five balls to lay down a marker for the rest of the season.

Debutant Kayla Reyneke's last-ball six seals thriller for South Africa

HAGLEY OVAL: Kayla Reyneke produced a spectacular debut performance with the bat, hitting a six off the final ball of the first ODI to seal a scintillating victory for South Africa at the Hagley Oval. South Africa needed 79 off 75 balls when No. 8 Reyneke had arrived at the crease, and though New Zealand continued to make breakthroughs, Reyneke struck 42 not out off 32 deliveries, and scored 13 of the 14 runs required off the final over bowled by Suzie Bates.



No six had been struck in the first 99 overs of this match, but Reyneke muscled two in the 100th, thumping Bates over deep midwicket to bring the target within reach, before sizzling another one down the ground with six needed off the final delivery. This chase of 269 had been set up by Annerie Dercksen, who struck 72 off 93 balls, and Sune Luus, who hit 53 off 72.

But as New Zealand continued to strike, South Africa had seemed to be heading for a narrow loss until Reyneke's nerveless maiden innings. She was rapid between the wickets as the visitors whittled down the requirement, and struck three fours to go with her two sixes to keep the target within reach.

With frontline seamer Bree Illing having been expensive, New Zealand captain Amelia Kerr went to Bates to close down the match. But one of the most experienced players in the women's game was on Sunday bested by a 20-year-old upstart to send South Africa 1-0 up in the series.

Earlier, seamer Ayabonga Khaka claimed 6 for 56 in good swing bowling conditions, as Maddy Green's 85 off 83 drove New Zealand forward. The hosts' 268 all out represented a good score given the conditions, but South Africa took the game deep, and Reyneke produced the finishing blows. Nadine de Klerk had also contributed a run-a-ball 39 to the effort.

Having been put into bat, New Zealand had begun

strongly, their first hundred coming up inside 23 overs for the loss of just two wickets. But Khaka and Chloe Tryon found wickets through the middle overs, and prevented the hosts from turning a competitive score into a gargantuan one. Three of Khaka's wickets came in the final over of the innings.

In response, South Africa endured an early wobble. When Illing removed Laura Wolvaardt in the sixth over, South Africa were 30 for 2. But then a 123-run partnership between Dercksen and Luus put the chase on track, and put the pressure back on New Zealand's bowlers. Jess Kerr, Amelia Kerr and Rosemary Mair all took two wickets apiece while Bates and Illing - New Zealand's two most expensive bowlers in the end - claimed one each.

Ben Stokes out of action until May due to broken cheekbone

NEW DELHI: Ben Stokes, England's Test captain, is not expected to be available for the first month of the county season with Durham after undergoing surgery on a broken cheekbone last month.

Stokes was struck in the face by a Durham academy player while helping in the nets in early February. He was subsequently part of the coaching staff for England Lions white-ball series against Pakistan Shaheens in the UAE, but has yet to be passed fit for a playing return.

Durham had originally pencilled him in for their season opener against Kent next week, but Ryan Campbell, the club's head coach, said that Stokes was unlikely to play before their fifth game, against Worcestershire starting on May 8.

"[The incident] could have been horrific," Campbell said at Durham's pre-season media day. "So, so much worse than what you think."

A couple of centimetres a different way it hits him in the eye and it could have been different.

"The ball was hit so hard. We are just lucky he got away with it."

Avengers lift Akhnoor Premier League season-1

EARTH NEWS SERVICE

AKHNOOR: Jammu-based Avengers lifted the title of the Akhnoor Premier League (APL) Season-1, defeating local side Jai Chandi Maa (JCM) by 42 runs in the final played at Palwan Stadium, Akhnoor. Batting first, Avengers posted a total of 112 runs on the board. In reply, JCM could manage only 70 runs, handing Avengers a convincing victory.

Surinder Kumar was adjudged Man of the Match for his wonderful knock of 43 runs. Rishabh (Shaktiman) was declared Man of the Tournament for his all-round performance, scoring 40 runs and taking 11 wickets during the tournament. The winning team was awarded a cash prize of Rs 51,000, while the runners-up received Rs 25,000. The Man of the Tournament was presented with Rs 5,000.

Notably, this was the first-ever floodlit night cricket tournament organised in Akhnoor, featuring participation from 16 teams and drawing a crowd of over a thousand spectators during the final. The event



was organised by Joshiley Club, with Amit Rajput playing a key role as the organiser. MLA Akhnoor, Mohan Lal, who was the Chief Guest on the occasion, in his address said that efforts would be made to streamline and upgrade the sports stadium in Akhnoor. He also announced the development of an akhara for players and assured that bigger tournaments would be organised in the future to

provide a better platform to the youth. He emphasized that promoting sports activities would help steer the younger generation away from drug abuse.

Among others present on the occasion were SDPO Varinder Gupta (Guest of Honour), ZEPO Ashok Kumar, Judo Coach and Incharge Sports Stadium Jugal Kishore as special guests. Prominent citizens including Ganesh Sharma,

Yash Sharma, Shamsher Dass, Dev Raj Bhagat, Suman Singh, Sham Lal, Bindu Singh, Karan Singh, Sonu Malhotra, Sanjay Sharma, Sumit Sharma, Krishan Lal, Darshan Chib, Harish Sharma and Rattan Lal were also present. The event was supported by sponsors including Kameshwar Sports, AME College, Ganpati Enterprises, Darshan Karyana Store and Sanjana Makeovers.

Jharkhand, HP wrestlers win two golds each

RAIPUR: Jharkhand and Himachal Pradesh clinched two gold medals each on the opening day of wrestling competition in Ambikapur while Mizoram bagged a couple of gold medals to wrap up the weightlifting competition on the fifth day of the Khelo India Tribal Games (KITG) 2026 here on Sunday.

Jharkhand opened their gold medal account with Poonam Oraon winning the women's 50kg final against Geetha K of Telangana 6-3 while Anjit Kumar Munda won the men's 67kg greco-roman final beating Gujarat's Mukesh Vasva by technical superiority.

Himachal Pradesh's two gold medals came through Navish Kumar (97kg GR)

and Priyanka Chaudhary (women's 62kg) while Mizoram took their gold medals tally to four with Zosangzuali (women's +86kg) and David Zohm-inmawia (men's +110 kg) finishing on top of the podium. These golds catapulted Mizoram to fifth place in the overall medals standing..

Karnataka continue to top the overall standings with 15 gold, six silver and four bronze medals while Odisha are second with nine gold, four silver and 10 bronze. Hosts Chhattisgarh, which won a silver (Rishika Kashyap) and bronze (Lucky Babu Markam) from weightlifting, slipped to ninth in the medal standings..

Weightlifter Sambo Laping helped Arunachal Pradesh leapfrog Assam to third place when he clinched the men's 100kg gold with a total lift of 299kg.

David Lal Zawmdika of Mizoram finished second with a total of 270kg with the bronze medal going to Chhattisgarh's Lucky Babu with a total of 261kg.

Maharashtra also made their move on the medals tally as weightlifter Sakshi Burkule helped the state win their second gold medal with a dominant showing in women's 86kg category. Her total of 150kg was 29kg more than silver winner Rishika Kashyap of Chhattisgarh..

Sakshi led from the front

and was hardly challenged. It was a good show by Rishika who played within her limits and chose her weights well to finish on the podium. Wrestler Vinod Salkar then added a gold to Maharashtra's tally by topping the Nordic competition in men's 125kg freestyle competition.

Jammu and Kashmir also opened their medal account on Sunday by winning a gold and silver in wrestling competition. Munir Hussain defeated Maharashtra's Vikram Pawar 11-1 by technical superiority in the first round to win the men's 74kg freestyle gold while Shama Hoon lost to Himachal Pradesh's Navish Kumar in the 97kg greco-roman final.

The Breakthrough That Could Solve AI's Massive Energy Crisis

Artificial intelligence is not just changing software. It is also driving a sharp rise in electricity use. In the United States alone, AI systems and data centers consumed about 415 terawatt-hours of electricity in 2024, according to the International Energy Agency. That amounts to more than 10% of the nation's total energy output, and the figure is expected to double by 2030.

That trend is raising a difficult question for the future of AI: Can these systems become more capable without becoming dramatically more expensive to power?

Researchers at the Tufts University School of Engineering believe the answer may be yes. They have built a proof of concept for an AI approach that could use up to 100 times less energy than today's standard systems while also producing more accurate results on certain tasks. In a field that often rewards ever larger models and ever larger computing infrastructure, that kind of improvement could be significant.

The work was developed in the laboratory of Matthias Scheutz, Karol Family Applied Technology Professor. It centers on neuro-symbolic AI, which combines standard neural networks with symbolic reasoning, similar to how people break problems into steps and categories.

Mastercard keeps tabs on fraud with new foundation model

Mastercard has developed a large tabular model (an LTM as opposed to an LLM) that's trained on transaction data rather than text or images to help it address security and authenticity issues in digital payments.

The company has trained a foundation model on billions of card transactions, with the intention of expanding to hundreds of billions in time. The datasets include payment events and associated data such as merchant location, authorisation flows, fraud incidents, chargebacks, and loyalty activity. Mastercard says personal identifiers are removed before the training began, and that the model parses behavioural patterns rather than concern itself with individual identities.

By excluding personal data, the technology reduces privacy risks that may affect other forms of AI in financial services sector. The scale and richness of the data allow the model to infer patterns that are commercially valuable - the company said in a recent blog post - despite the lack of per-user information. Although anonymisation removes signals that could be argued as being useful in the area of risk assessment, Mastercard asserts that using sufficiently large volumes of behavioural data compensates for any loss of rich data.

LTM architecture differs from that of large language models, which are trained on unstructured inputs and work by predicting the next token (typically but inaccurately described as a word) in a sequence. Mastercard's LTM examines relationships between fields in multi-dimensional data tables, making a definition of the technology closer to that of pure machine learning rather than artificial intelligence. The large tabular model learns from raw inputs exactly which relationships are predictable, so it can identify anomalous patterns not captured by predefined rules.

comes from Nvidia and Databricks, with the former providing the computing platform and Databricks handling data engineering and model development.

Cybersecurity at Mastercard is the first area to see active deployment of the tech. Like many institutions, Mastercard operates several fraud detection systems examining transaction data. These require human input at their outset - and ongoing attenuation - to define what constitutes a suspicious behaviour. These might include sudden increases in transaction frequency, or users making purchases in different parts of the world in a small space of time.

Early results indicate improved performance on conventional techniques in specific cases, the company says. It cites the example of high-value, low-frequency purchases which can be flagged as anomalies using traditional models, but the new model appears to be able to distinguish legitimate events more accurately than its counterparts.

The company plans to deploy hybrid systems that combine established procedures with the new model, a degree of caution that reflects the regulatory levels it operates under. It acknowledges that no single model is likely to perform well in all scenarios, so the LTM will take its place among the tools in this sphere.

It's claimed the model can scan activity on loyalty programmes, be used in portfolio management, and for internal analytics, areas where there are large volumes of structured data. In current operations, companies often deploy many models adapted to each task, but this can involve multiples of training costs and validation and monitoring efforts. A single foundation model that can be fine-tuned for different tasks may simplify processes and keep costs down.

There's a risk to the multi-function LTM approach, of course: A failure in a widely-deployed model could have system-wide consequences, which goes some way to explain Mastercard's strategy of applying its technology alongside existing detection systems - at least, for the present.

ICC chief Jay Shah rises to 22nd spot in IE 100 list of most powerful Indians in 2026

NEW DELHI: International Cricket Council (ICC) chairman Jay Shah rose to the 22nd spot in the IE 100 list of the most powerful people in India in 2026, unveiled on Sunday. Shah, who took over as the ICC chairman on December 1, 2024, is the highest-ranked sports administrator in the IE 100 list this year, moving up two places from the 24th position in 2025. Meanwhile, International Olympic Committee (IOC) member Nita Ambani maintained her position at

No. 26 from last year.

Shah is one of four men from the Indian cricket fraternity to be named in the rankings. Senior men's head coach Gautam Gambhir took the 74th position on the list, ahead of former India captain Virat Kohli (75) and pace ace Jasprit Bumrah (82). Shah spearheaded the BCCI as its secretary between October 2019 and November 2024 before moving to the ICC chair, making him one of the most powerful sports administrators in the world.

Indians shine in World Wushu Championship

TIANJIN: Indian athletes secured two bronze medals while four others moved to the finals in different categories at the 10th World Wushu Championship here on Sunday.

In the semifinal matches, India's Anu faced a tough contest against China's Zhang Lining but lost the bout, earning a bronze medal in the girls section while in the boys' semifinal, Goutam Mankas was defeated by his opponent to secure another bronze.

Furthermore, four Indian players registered victories to enter the finals. Upendro Thougam defeated Ahmed Mohamed of Egypt to reach the final, while Pama Heiba Singh beat Alimou Sy of Senegal to secure a place in the title clash. Yuvraj defeated Xiviel Bantali of the Philippines to enter the final, while Victor overcame Said Karim Mohamed of Egypt to progress to the summit clash.