

Jharkhand's Poonam Oraon wins gold at Khelo India Tribal Games

JHARKHAND: Defying pain and adversity, Jharkhand wrestler Poonam Oraon delivered a remarkable performance to clinch gold at the Khelo India Tribal Games 2026.

Competing in the women's 50kg category, the 19-year-old battled through a recurring shoulder injury to secure her first gold medal at a national-level competition. Facing Telangana's K Geetha in the final, Poonam fought through visible pain—her shoulder heavily strapped—to emerge victorious.

Her journey to gold has been anything but easy. Poonam first dislocated her shoulder at the age of 10, shortly after taking up wrestling in 2017. Though she recovered, the injury continued to trouble her over the years, resurfacing at critical moments—including just before the final bout.

Despite the setback, she refused to back down. "If I haven't given up in so many years, how could I give up now?" she said after her win, calling the gold medal a dream come true after years of struggle.

Hailing from Suiyabar



village in Jharkhand's Chatra district, Poonam had earlier secured bronze medals at the School Games Federation of India nationals in 2018 and 2019, but a gold medal had eluded her until now.

Even ahead of the tournament, she was not fully fit, with her family advising her to skip the event. However, encouragement from her coach and support staff helped her push through. "This injury is nothing compared to the pain of not winning gold for nine years,"

she said.

Currently pursuing a Bachelor's degree in Political Science from Ranchi University, Poonam is balancing academics with her sporting ambitions. Her next goal is to qualify for the Junior Nationals and continue her winning momentum. The Khelo India Tribal Games aims to identify and nurture sporting talent from tribal communities across the country. The inaugural edition, being held in Chhattisgarh from March 25 to April 3, features nine

disciplines, including wrestling, athletics, football, and archery, along with demonstration sports like Mallakhamb and Kabaddi.

Mitchell Perry ruled out of Lancashire stint with back stress injury

Lancashire: Mitchell Perry, the Australia A seamer, has been ruled out of a planned stint playing in the County Championship with Lancashire after scans picked up the recurrence of a lumbar bone stress fracture. Perry, who made a dramatic intervention as an injury sub in the Sheffield Shield final, went for a routine MRI after the game, which detected the injury. He will now undergo a period of rehabilitation overseen by his state, Victoria, instead of travelling to the UK for the first block of Championship games.

Lancashire have also confirmed they will be without Marcus Harris for their opening fixture against Northampton, starting on Friday, due to his involvement in the Shield final, a five-day game which concluded on Monday. Harris is expected to be available for the visit of Derbyshire next week.



LG's Diary



● Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha on Tuesday greeted on the auspicious occasion of Mahavir Jayanti. "Bhagwan Mahavir's profound teachings of Ahimsa, Satya & humility serve as a guiding light for humanity", LG Sinha said.

● Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha today inaugurated the Jammu Kashmir Cultural Festival. During the event, LG spoke on spiritual-cultural roots which anchors human beings to achieve success in life.



● Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha Tuesday said that under leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, India stands resolute today. LG also said that the Prime Minister has laid foundation for a powerful nation which is inspiring the world with its message that true peace is not weakness but unwavering courage & this is a time to build bridges, not battlefields.

CM's Diary



● Chief Minister Omar Abdullah reaffirmed unwavering support for entrepreneurs at every stage of their journey. Chief Minister Omar Abdullah had made these remarks during the Yuva Mahotsav event.



● Chief Minister Omar Abdullah today informed the assembly that liabilities amounting to Rs 18,382 crore have been cleared, including Rs 12,561 crore in pending bills, covering gratuity, commutation, leave salary, and contractor bills, settled up to March 27, 2026. In addition, Rs 5,821 crore in GFP claims has been disbursed.



'Summer is coming' – Finland Cricket's motto as they wrap up their mostly-overnight winter T20 training

NEW DELHI: Not every country can boast of natural floodlights in multi-colours. But when Finland host their annual 'overnight cricket camps' at Helsinki's Eerikila the vistas outside can range from dazzling northern lights to minus 6 degrees snow. "Not everyday you drive home from cricket and see this," a player posted on Instagram.

Finland is to host the ICC Men's World Cup Europe Group C qualifiers in August, and their team, named the Bears ran with the 'Summer is coming' motto, where they trained hard in cricket skills in freezing winters, mostly at nights, waiting for the tournament to arrive.

Announcing their first bilateral of 2026 against Cyprus (called the Rams), the newbie nation announced, "The hard work through the cold months had been immense and is ongoing. The new look of Bears is built on discipline and effort and Cyprus our first real test."

It started with the happiest nation installing two

cricket wicket surfaces, complete with shockpads, laying low maintenance, high quality surfaces in November.

With the sport getting into Olympics, several rank oblivious nations have taken to the sport, and immigrants from the subcontinent (called Finndians) make a good number of the squad. Vanraaj Padhaal even went briefly viral taking a good catch in an European tournament, for his cross hands celebration.

Their wicketkeeper Jordan O'Brien would also catch up with Brad Haddin around Big Bash.

Through a frigid January, the designated cricket field of Finish Bears, including a pavilion, was covered with snow. But the indoor camp inside a massive dome structure saw a skills camp where the Bears batters were urged to cut down on the time taken to complete singles and running between wickets with sprint&turn training. The markings on the indoor training surface remained football ones, but the Finns

were into pretty heavy strength weight training through the winter.

A small theatre room also beamed tapes of cricket matches with theory lessons. A common feature of the indoor nets was a red strawman figure, positioned as an umpire – complete with a jumper around the neck. 'Kriketti' as the sport is called in Helsinki, also trains for coin flips at the toss. The nets inside the dome are narrow lanes teaching batters to play straight at all times. While outside is an entirely snow filled stairways leading out the facility. "Most teams rest in winter. We build," Cricket Finland, would post.

Another interesting but about their local cricket league called 'Cage cricket's at the Playbox arena, is the net run rate runs up to four decimals, for some reason. Also their crease markings in February indicated not the no-ball line, but the spot from where the delivery release begins, before they changed it by March. The crease remains demarcated by cones.

Praggnanandhaa at Candidates: 'A good start is great, but I still have to play my best'

NEW DELHI: While poor form leading into a Candidates chess might simply be guarding his cards close, Indian GM R Praggnanandhaa seems to have shrugged off the lead-up doldrums, and started well at Cyprus.

His draw with Chinese GM Wei Yi, in the second game, saw him hold strong and mostly stay in an advantageous position, to remain undefeated after first two days. His win against GM Anish Giri had ofcourse put his campaign on a good footing, though it's only a start.

Pragg got asked about his recent poor form by a reporter at the FIDE press conference, and said, "I think I still need to learn from it because I played like five tournaments in the last six months, and all five of them went poorly. I think it's something I should learn to recover from a bad tournament. But here, it's just a start. A good start is great, but I still have to play my best. There are 12 more games, so I

have to keep focusing and keep giving my best."

The 'French defence' tends to be a popular opening, and the Indian player said it had helped him stay ahead on the clock, using the opening. The French gave him almost a 1 hour advantage on clock.

"I don't think the French defense itself was a surprise. I mean, I've played the French recently, so I don't think it will come as a big surprise. But yeah, it's not clear what I actually played after that, because I have played a lot of lines, many different lines even though I have only a few games," he told FIDE.

The segue offered enough of a surprise element, he reckoned. "So I thought what I played would come as a little surprise. And I think I got a good position out of the opening and a good time advantage. I can't really complain about the opening today," he said.

Pragg quibbled, on critical moment in the game, Praggnanandhaa said, "I

think castle f6. Black should be okay. Yeah, I was quite happy with my position, like knight e5, I thought queen c7 is good. And then this plan of rook f7, I mean what happened in the game later... but I think I should have just played c4 here instead of rook f7." It offered Wei Yi an off-ramp to get out of trouble.

He reckoned c4 was a better choice. "It stops f5 and I can play rook f7 next and then just start rolling the pawns. I don't see White's plan clearly and Black's moves are just free flowing. I don't know what the computer says here, but I think c4 should be practically good for Black," he said.

However, Pragg was content with how the match had panned out. "Maybe we could have played a bit better but I think it was just fine for both of us. I don't think I'm sure there were many other options which were also equal but I think what we played look logical and look like decent moves."

Cautious Draper playing long game with withdrawal

LONDON: Britain's Jack Draper has withdrawn from next week's Monte Carlo Masters as he continues his cautious comeback following an arm injury. The 24-year-old did not play a tour-level tournament for six months because of a bruised bone in his left serving arm but has competed in three events in five weeks since making his return to competitive action, according to BBC sport. The 2024 US Open semi-finalist won on his return in Dubai, earned a notable victory over Novak Djokovic on his way to the Indian Wells quarter-finals, then lost in his first outing at the Miami Open. Draper said he was "feeling good" physically after being beaten by Reilly Opelka in Miami, but also outlined how he needs to continue to be patient.

'Iran will be at the World Cup,' FIFA boss Infantino confirms amid West Asia conflict



UNITED STATE: In a massive development surrounding Iran's participation at the forthcoming FIFA World Cup 2026 in North America, Gianni Infantino, the apex body's president, confirmed the war-ridden country's involvement amid raging conflict with the tournament's co-hosts, the US and Israel, in West Asia. Speaking during the half-time of Iran's friendly against Costa Rica in Turkey on Tuesday (Mar 31), Infantino, whose attendance was unannounced, revealed. Moreover, he said that there will be no change in Iran's scheduled Group G games, with all its matches set to take place 'where they are supposed to be, according to the draw.'

"Iran will be at the World Cup," Infantino said in a chat with AFP. "That's why we're here. We're delighted because they're a very, very strong team, I'm very happy."

"I've seen the team, I've spoken to the players and the coach, so everything is fine," added Infantino.

The US, Canada and Mexico will host the 48-team tournament starting June 11. Iran is scheduled to play their first Group G game against New Zealand in Los Angeles on June 15 before facing Belgium in Los Angeles on June 21 and Egypt in Seattle on June 27.

Meanwhile, Iran's participation had been thrown into doubt by the war with the US and Israel that broke out on February 28. The

Iranian Football Federation said earlier this month it was "negotiating" with FIFA to relocate the country's World Cup matches from the United States to Mexico. The Mexican President, Claudia Sheinbaum, also said that her country is prepared to host Iran's first-round matches at the tournament if needed.

Infantino initially said that US President Donald Trump had given assurances that the Iranian team would still be welcome. But Trump then stated that Iran's team should not travel to the tournament "for their own life and safety".

Iran hit back at Trump's comments, saying that "no one can exclude Iran's national team from the World Cup".

This common lab item could be faking microplastics pollution

A new University of Michigan study suggests that nitrile and latex gloves, commonly used in labs, could be causing scientists to overestimate levels of microplastics.

Researchers found that these gloves can unintentionally contaminate the equipment used to analyze air, water, and other samples. The contamination comes from particles called stearates, which are not plastics but can closely resemble them during testing. Madeline Clough and Anne McNeil of U-M recommend switching to cleanroom gloves, which release far fewer particles.

Stearates are salt-based, soap-like substances. They are added to disposable gloves during manufacturing to help them separate easily from molds. However, because stearates share chemical similarities with certain microplastics, they can be misidentified during analysis, leading to false positives.

The researchers emphasize that microplastics pollution is still a real and serious issue.

"We may be overestimating microplastics, but there should be none," said McNeil, senior author of the study and U-M professor of chemistry, macromolecular science and engineering, and the Program in the Environment. "There's still a lot out there, and that's the problem."

Clough added, "As microplastic researchers looking for microplastics in the environment, we're searching for the needle in the haystack, but there really shouldn't be a needle to begin with."

Led by Clough, a recent doctoral graduate, the study appears in the journal RSC Analytical Methods. Funding was provided by the U-M College of Literature, Science, and the Arts' Meet the Moment Research Initiative.

Little Andaman Pro to kick off surfing season as Asian Games debut beckons

NEW DELHI: The Surfing Federation of India on Tuesday announced the 2026 season opener, Little Andaman Pro – National Surf & SUP Championship, to be held from April 9 to 12. The tournament will debut in a highly anticipated season just ahead of India's first-ever campaign at the Asian Games in Japan later this year.

The four-day surfing extravaganza will see India's top surfers and stand-up paddlers vying for the top honours at Butler Bay Beach in the Andaman Islands, bringing competitive surfing to one of the country's most pristine and untapped coastal destinations for the very first time.

Presented by Andaman and Nicobar Tourism and organised by the Surfing Federation of India, the event will have surfers competing in the Senior Division across Surfing and Stand-Up Paddle (SUP) disciplines, with registrations

already underway for the event.

India secured its first-ever Asian Games quota at the 2024 Asian Surfing Championships and built on that momentum at the 2025 edition in Mahabalipuram, ultimately securing the maximum allocated four slots—two each in the men's and women's categories.

"This is a landmark moment for Indian surfing. As we stare at India's surfing debut at the Asian Games later this year, starting the national season at a world-class location like Little Andaman speaks loudly about our intent to take the sport deep into our coast-rich country. We are constantly working to give more competition time to our talented athletes across diverse conditions, which is critical for their growth at the international level," said Arun Vasu, president of the Surfing Federation of India.

Jharkhand sprinters Shiv Kumar Soren and

Prithvi Oraon emerged as the fastest men and women athletes, respectively, in the inaugural edition of the Khelo India Tribal Games here on Tuesday.

For hosts Chhattisgarh, Siddharth Nagesh clinched a shot put gold and discus throw silver, while Tilak Barsel bagged the men's 100m silver.

Shiv Kumar and Prithvi led their 100m races respectively from start to finish to capture the golden double for their state. Shiv Kumar clocked 10.58 seconds while Barsel finished the race in 10.87 seconds to clinch the silver medal. Odisha's Atish Kindo (10.91 seconds) took the bronze medal.

In the women's 100m final, 16-year-old Prithvi clocked her personal best of 12.73 seconds to clinch the gold. Nagaland's Ruduolhounuo Belho (12.90 seconds) and Jharkhand's Putil Bakshi (13.03 seconds) took home the silver and bronze medals respectively.

SAP and ANYbotics drive industrial adoption of physical AI

Hheavy industry relies on people to inspect hazardous, dirty facilities. It's expensive, and putting humans in these zones carries obvious safety risks. Swiss robot maker ANYbotics and software company SAP are trying to change that.

ANYbotics' four-legged autonomous robots will be connected straight into SAP's backend enterprise resource planning software. Instead of treating a robot as a standalone asset, this turns it into a mobile data-gathering node within an industrial IoT network.

This initiative shows that

hardware innovation can now effectively connect with established business workflows. Underscoring that broader trend, SAP is sponsoring this year's AI & Big Data Expo North America at the San Jose McEnery Convention Center, CA, an event that is fittingly co-located with the IoT Tech Expo and Intelligent Automation & Physical AI Summit.

When equipment breaks at a chemical plant or offshore rig, it costs a fortune. People do routine inspections to catch these issues early, but humans get tired and plants are massive. Robots, on the other hand, can

walk the floor constantly, carrying thermal, acoustic, and visual sensors. Hook those sensors into SAP, and a hot pump instantly generates a maintenance request without waiting for a human to report it.

Usually, finding a problem and logging a work order are two disconnected steps. A worker might hear a weird noise in a compressor, write it down, and type it into a computer hours later. By the time the replacement part gets approved, the machine might be wrecked.

Connecting ANYbotics to SAP eliminates that delay. The robot's onboard AI

processes what it sees and hears instantly. If it hears an irregular motor frequency, it doesn't just flash a warning on a separate screen, it uses APIs to tell the SAP asset management module directly. The system immediately checks for spare parts, figures out the cost of potential downtime, and schedules an engineer. This automates the flow of information from the floor to management. It also means machinery gets judged on hard, consistent numbers instead of a human inspector's subjective opinion.

Putting robots in heavy industry isn't like installing

software in an office—companies have to deal with unreliable infrastructure. Factories usually have awful internet connectivity due to thick concrete, metal scaffolding, and electromagnetic interference.

To make this work, the setup relies on edge computing. It takes too much bandwidth to constantly stream high-def thermal video and lidar data to the cloud. So, the robots crunch most of that data locally. Onboard processors figure out the difference between a machine running normally and one that's dangerously overheating.