

## Nandita Sharma brings glory to SD Tara Puri Public High School

EARTH NEWS SERVICE

**JAMMU:** Demonstrating grit, leadership and exceptional sporting skill at a young age, Nandita Sharma, a Class IX student of SD Tara Puri Public High School, Gandhi Nagar, has brought laurels to her institution by winning a gold medal at the Jammu and Kashmir State Level Handball Championship.

The championship was organised by the Jammu and Kashmir Handball Association, where Nandita emerged as a standout performer. Leading her side as team captain, she played a decisive role in steering her team to the top position. Her performance was marked by discipline, tactical awareness and strong sportsmanship, earning praise from coaches and officials alike. The achievement has been hailed as a proud moment for the school, reflecting its emphasis on holistic development alongside academics. The school management, principal and staff congratulated Nandita and her parents for the outstanding feat and expressed confidence that her success will inspire other students to actively pursue sports. They wished Nandita continued success and greater achievements in her future sporting career.



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## Bangladesh stands firm on not playing in India, reiterates demand to ICC 'citing safety concern'



**NEW DELHI:** The deadlock over Bangladesh's demand to move its 2026 T20 World Cup matches continues after a call with the apex body ICC on Tuesday (Jan 13) failed to produce a solution. The two sides held a video call after ICC sent a letter to BCB after risk assessment and mentioned 'no practical threat' to the side. The Bangladesh Cricket Board, in a statement issued on Tuesday (Jan 13), however, stood firm on its stance of moving matches, 'citing security concerns.' The World Cup, which is being co-hosted by India and Sri Lanka, starts in less than a month on February 7 with final to be played on March 8.

"During the discussions (with ICC), the BCB reaffirmed its position regarding the decision not to travel to India, citing security concerns," the BCB said in a statement. "The board also reiterated its request for the ICC to consider relocating Bangladesh's matches outside India. "While the ICC highlighted that the tournament itinerary has already been announced and requested the BCB to reconsider its stance, the board's position remains unchanged. Both parties agreed that discussions will continue to explore possible solutions. The BCB remains committed to safeguarding the well-being of its players, officials and staff while engaging constructively with the ICC to address the matter."

Earlier on Monday (Jan 12), Bangladesh sport advisor Asif Nazrul called ICC's internal risk assessment 'bizarre, unrealistic and unreasonable.' Bangladesh are scheduled to play their first three group matches in Kolkata on February 7 (vs West Indies), February 9 (vs Italy) and February 14 (vs England) before the final match in Mumbai on February 17 (vs Nepal). The whole issue started after IPL franchise Kolkata Knight Riders released Bangladesh bowler Mustafizur Rahman from the squad with the reason not being shared publicly.

## Snail Gavaskar Slams England's Batting, Says Only Joe Root Showed Respect for His Wicket

**NEW DELHI:** Former India captain Sunil Gavaskar has launched a scathing attack on England's batting approach following their crushing Ashes series defeat, saying most players appeared to bat with a "couldn't-care-less" attitude rather than the much-talked-about fearless brand of cricket. Writing in his column after England lost the Ashes 4-1 to Australia, Gavaskar said Joe Root was the lone exception in an otherwise disappointing batting line-up. According to the Indian great, Root

was the only batter who consistently showed the discipline, technique and temperament required to succeed in tough conditions. Gavaskar said the rest of the England batters did not seem overly concerned about losing their wickets, largely because they felt secure in their places. He argued that modern-day contracts and the availability of lucrative T20 leagues have removed the fear of being dropped — a factor that once pushed players to fight harder for runs. The 74-year-old also

reflected on England's transformation under head coach Brendon McCullum, acknowledging that the team initially benefited from McCullum's fresh and aggressive mindset. However, Gavaskar felt that once the novelty wore off, England's technical flaws — particularly against movement — were brutally exposed by the Australian bowlers. He was especially critical of the way England's attacking philosophy was applied, suggesting that what is being marketed as "fearless cricket" often borders on

reckless batting. Gavaskar warned that intent without application rarely brings consistent success, especially in Test cricket. Summing up England's Ashes campaign, Gavaskar said defeats are part of sport but questioned whether the players could honestly say they gave their best in terms of concentration and mental effort. He stressed that playing for the country should demand accountability, discipline and respect for the game — qualities he felt were missing for most of the series.

## Not Andy Murray, Wilander wants this tennis stalwart to coach Carlos Alcaraz

**NEW DELHI:** World No.1 Carlos Alcaraz's hunt for a new coaching voice has quietly brought some of the biggest names in tennis into the conversation after he recently parted ways with his long-time mentor, Juan Carlos Ferrero. While his immediate setup is in place, the bigger question now is who will guide him through the most defining phase of his career. The split with Ferrero came as a shock to many, as their partnership lasted seven years and shaped Alcaraz into a multiple Grand Slam champion and the top-ranked player in the world.

Together, they built a game that mixed power, speed, and fearlessness. From the outside, it looked like a perfect match. But behind the scenes, things were not as smooth as they appeared. Reports suggested that Alcaraz's camp had concerns for some time. There were talks of change as early as December 2024, but Alcaraz himself decided to continue with Ferrero through 2025.

By the end of the season, the decision was finally made to move in a new direction. It marked the end of one of the most successful player-coach relationships in recent tennis history.



For now, Samuel Lopez has taken charge as Alcaraz's main coach. He joined the team full-time before the 2025 season and is trusted within the setup. Still, many believe this is only a temporary structure. Alcaraz is expected to add another experienced voice, someone who has been at the very top of the sport and understands what it takes to stay there.

Former world No.1 Mats Wilander believes that voice should come from a Grand Slam champion. Speaking to Eurosport, he said it is important for a player like Alcaraz to have advice from someone who has lived through the pressure of winning majors. He already had that with Ferrero,

and Wilander feels the next step should follow the same path.

However, Wilander does not think Andy Murray is the right choice. In his view, Murray and Alcaraz play in similar ways. Both rely on movement, defense, and building points with patience. While that shared style has value, it may not bring something fresh to Alcaraz's game.

Instead, Wilander pointed towards Roger Federer. He feels Federer's approach to tennis is completely different and could help Alcaraz grow in areas where he is still developing. Federer was known for his calm control, smooth shot-making, and ability to finish points early.

## Wayne Rooney Says Manchester United Have Lost Their Identity, Open to Coaching Role Under Carrick

**MANCHESTER:** Manchester United legend Wayne Rooney has said the club has lost its identity and admitted he would be open to returning in a coaching role if former teammate Michael Carrick is appointed manager.

Speaking during a media interaction, Rooney said Manchester United no longer feels like the club he once played for, claiming the "family culture" that defined the side during his playing days has faded. He stressed that the club needs people who truly understand United's values and history to help restore stability.

Rooney made it clear that he is not actively chasing a role at Old Trafford, but said he would not hesitate to help if Carrick takes charge and asks for his support. According to Rooney, assembling the right backroom staff is just as important as appointing the manager, especially at a club going through a difficult phase.

The former England captain backed Carrick's credentials, highlighting his deep understanding of the club and his managerial experience after leaving United. Rooney also named other former players who know the club well, saying United would benefit from having people who "care about the badge" involved in decision-making.

United are currently enduring another turbulent period on and off the pitch, with inconsistent results adding to pressure on the management. Rooney believes reconnecting with the club's roots is essential if United are to move forward and regain their former stature.

## Salig Bin Farooq Strikes Gold at Khelo India Beach Games

Jammu and Kashmir athlete Salig Bin Farooq clinched a gold medal in Pencak Silat at the Khelo India Beach Games, delivering an impressive performance to cap a strong showing for the UT contingent. Competing in the 65-70 kg category, Salig dominated his bouts on the way to the top of the podium. He began his campaign with a convincing quarter-final win over Sudarshan K of Tamil Nadu, followed by a solid semifinal victory against Sheikh Arbaaj of Chhattisgarh. In the final, Salig outclassed Ashish Kumar Singh of Delhi to secure the gold. The Khelo India Beach Games, held in Daman and Diu, featured athletes from across the country competing in multiple disciplines. Salig's triumph added to Jammu and Kashmir's medal tally and highlighted the region's growing presence in martial arts at the national level.

## Brazil may hold the missing keys to extreme human longevity

**A** viewpoint published on January 6 in Genomic Psychiatry by Dr. Mayana Zatz and colleagues at the Human Genome and Stem Cell Research Center at the University of São Paulo argues that Brazil may be one of the most valuable yet overlooked places to study extreme human longevity. The article draws on the team's ongoing nationwide research involving exceptionally long-lived individuals while also summarizing recent scientific advances in the biology of supercentenarians.

Why do a small number of people live beyond 110 years when most never come close to 100? Researchers have long been fascinated by this question, but clear explanations have remained out of reach. According to Dr. Zatz and her co-authors, one reason may be where scientists have focused their efforts. Many large genomic databases lack meaningful representation of admixed populations,

which can hide important biological clues. "This gap is especially limiting in longevity research, where admixed supercentenarians may harbor unique protective variants invisible in more genetically homogeneous populations," explains Mateus Vidigal de Castro, first author of the Viewpoint and a researcher at the Human Genome and Stem Cell Research Center. Brazil's population history gives it a genetic profile unlike that of any other nation. Portuguese colonization beginning in 1500, the forced migration of roughly 4 million enslaved Africans, and later immigration from Europe and Japan produced what the authors describe as the richest genetic diversity in the world.

This diversity is already revealing itself in genetic studies. An early genomic analysis of more than 1000 Brazilians over age 60 uncovered about 2 million previously unknown genetic variants.

## Plasma 'Fireballs' at CERN May Explain the Universe's Missing Light

**A** global team of scientists led by the University of Oxford has accomplished a world first by producing plasma "fireballs" in a laboratory setting. Using CERN's Super Proton Synchrotron accelerator in Geneva, the researchers set out to examine how plasma jets from blazars behave as they travel through space.

Their findings, published in PNAS, offer fresh insight into one of astronomy's long-standing puzzles involving missing gamma rays and the universe's elusive magnetic fields.

Blazars are highly active galaxies fueled by supermassive black holes at their centers. These black holes eject narrow beams of particles and radiation that move at nearly the speed of light and, in some cases, point directly toward Earth.

The jets release enormous amounts of gamma radiation, reaching energies of several teraelectronvolts (1 TeV = 10<sup>12</sup> eV), which are observed using ground-based telescopes. As these high-energy gamma rays pass through intergalactic space, they collide with faint starlight in the background. This interaction creates cascades of electron-positron pairs.

Scientists expect these particles to interact with the cosmic microwave background and produce lower-energy gamma rays in the GeV range (GeV = 10<sup>9</sup> eV). Yet gamma-ray space observatories such as the Fermi satellite have failed to detect this expected signal. Until now, the cause of this discrepancy has remained unclear.

One possible explanation is that weak magnetic fields spread between galaxies deflect the electron-positron pairs, sending the resulting gamma rays in directions

that miss Earth entirely. Another idea comes from plasma physics. According to this hypothesis, the particle beams become unstable as they move through the extremely thin matter found in intergalactic space. Small disturbances within the beam could generate electric currents and magnetic fields that amplify the instability and drain energy from the jet.

To determine which explanation is more likely, the researchers carried out an experiment at CERN's HiRadMat (High-Radiation to Materials) facility. The project was a collaboration between the University of Oxford and the Science and Technology Facilities Council's (STFC) Central Laser Facility (CLF).

Using the Super Proton Synchrotron, the team created beams of electron-positron pairs and passed them through a meter-long region of plasma. This setup served as a scaled laboratory version of a particle cascade produced by a blazar jet moving through intergalactic plasma.

By carefully measuring the shape of the beam and the magnetic fields associated with it, the scientists were able to directly test whether plasma instabilities could disrupt the beam as it traveled.

The outcome surprised the researchers. Instead of spreading out or breaking apart, the particle beam stayed narrow and almost perfectly parallel. It also showed very little sign of generating its own magnetic fields. When these results are extended to the vast distances involved in astrophysics, they indicate that beam-plasma instabilities are far too weak to account for the missing GeV gamma rays.

## Allister Frost: Tackling workforce anxiety for AI integration success

**N**avigating workforce anxiety remains a primary challenge for leaders as AI integration defines modern enterprise success.

For enterprise leaders, deploying AI is less a technical hurdle than a complex exercise in change management. The reality for many organisations is that, while algorithms offer efficiency, the human element dictates the speed of adoption.

Data from the TUC indicates that 51 percent of UK adults are concerned about the impact of AI and new technologies on their job. This anxiety creates a tangible risk to ROI; resistance halts the innovation leaders seek to foster.

Allister Frost, a former Microsoft leader and expert on business transformation, argues this friction stems from a misunderstanding of the technology's capability.

A common error in corporate strategy treats generative AI and Large Language Models (LLMs) as autonomous agents rather than data processors. This anthropomorphism drives the fear that machines will make human cognition obsolete.

"The greatest misconception is that AI is as intelligent as its name suggests and can perform human-like tasks," Frost notes. He clarifies the reality: "AI is primarily pattern-matching at scale, offering opportunities to help people work smarter, innovate faster, and explore new pathways to growth."

Communicating this distinction is essential. When employees view these tools



as pattern-matchers rather than sentient replacements, the narrative changes from competition to utility. Frost emphasises that "AI doesn't have the ability to replicate human intelligence, it exists to augment it." Some finance and operations leaders view AI integration primarily as a mechanism to reduce salary overheads. Yet strip-

ping away experienced staff for automation often degrades institutional memory.

Frost warns against this tactic: "Too often, businesses see AI as a shortcut to headcount reduction, putting experienced workers at risk for short-term savings. This approach overlooks the enormous economic and societal cost of losing skilled staff."

Data confirms the workforce is on edge regarding this scenario. Acas reports that 26 percent of British workers cite job losses as their biggest concern regarding AI at work. History suggests, however, that technological integration expands rather than contracts the labour market.

"The reality is that AI is not poised to eliminate jobs indiscriminately, but rather to evolve the nature of work," states Frost. Successful integration requires changing how AI use cases are identified. Rather than looking for roles to remove, enterprise leaders should identify high-volume, low-value tasks that bottleneck productivity.

"AI tools have the potential to automate mundane tasks and free up human labour to focus on creative and strategic aspects," explains Frost.

This allows leaders to move staff toward high-touch areas where algorithms struggle. "As AI handles repetitive tasks, it frees up time to allow staff to upskill and transition into more complex roles that require a higher level of critical thinking and emotional intelligence."

These competencies — empathy, ethical decision-making, and complex strategy — remain outside the grasp of current computational models.

Resistance to AI is often a symptom of "change fatigue," a common response to the pace of digital updates. With 14 percent of UK workers explicitly worried about AI's impact on their current job, transparent governance is required.