

Gayatri-Treesa pair misses out; Sindhu, Sen to lead India at Sudirman Cup Finals

NEW DELHI: The women's doubles pair of Gayatri Gopichand and Treesa Jolly will miss out due to injury, but P V Sindhu and Lakshya Sen will spearhead a strong Indian singles challenge at the Sudirman Cup Finals to be held in Xiamen, China from April 27 to May 4.

It has been learnt that both Treesa and Gayatri, currently ranked 10th in the world, are recuperating from shoulder issues attributed to a packed schedule last year.

The duo have already featured in five tournaments this season, adding to the 22 events they contested in 2024.

The pair had enjoyed a successful run last year, clinching the Syed Modi International

title and reaching the semifinals of the BWF World Tour Finals in December.

In their absence, the young combination of Priya Konjengbam and Shruti Mishra will shoulder the responsibility in the women's doubles event after being named in the 14-member Indian squad by the Badminton Association of India (BAI).

India, who qualified for the prestigious mixed team championships based on their overall world ranking, have been clubbed in a challenging Group D alongside former champions Indonesia, two-time runners-up Denmark, and a strong English outfit.

The tournament will see the return of the formidable men's doubles duo of Satwiksairaj

Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty after an injury break.

Chirag had suffered a back injury during the second round of All England Championships in March.

The young pairing of Hariharan Amsakuranan and Ruban Kumar Rethinasabapathi has been named as backup for Satwik and Chirag in men's doubles.

"The selectors have picked the best possible combination in all the five categories despite some injury worries," Badminton Association of India (BAI) General Secretary Sanjay Mishra said in a release.

"We are no longer dependent on one or two disciplines to win the tie and that makes us a formidable force in any team

event. We are confident that the team will not only make its mark in the group stages but can go on to create history by winning a medal," he added.

Besides Sen, the men's singles line-up also features H S Prannoy, while Sindhu will be joined by former national champion and world No. 45 Anupama Upadhyaya in women's singles.

Sindhu, who was recovering from a hamstring injury sustained in February, had valuable match practice at the Badminton Asia Championships last week.

In mixed doubles, Dhruv Kapila and Tanisha Crasto, who reached the quarterfinals at the Asia Championships, will lead the challenge.



Jenkins quits as Commonwealth Sport President

NEW DELHI: Chris Jenkins has resigned as Commonwealth Sport President, the organisation announced on Tuesday, acknowledging his longstanding service and significant contribution to the Commonwealth Sport movement.

The Constitution allows for an interim President to be appointed in the wake of mid-term resignation of the incumbent and Donald Rukare has been given the role till the next General Assembly in November this year, according to Commonwealth Sport CEO Katie Sadleir.

"I am particularly proud of the opportunities I have been given to advance Sport for Development – and especially Para inclusion through our GAPS programme – and want to thank all my Commonwealth Games Association colleagues and friends for their support," Jenkins was quoted as saying in a release which did not mention why he stepped down from the role.

Commenting on his appointment Rukare said, "I am ready to step into this role and thank the Board for their confidence in me. We have come through a particularly challenging period in our Games history, and we are now building momentum towards an outstanding Commonwealth Games in Glasgow in 2026."

Namibia to host Junior Africa hockey qualifiers

LAUSANNE: The best junior men's and women's hockey teams from Africa will compete in Windhoek, Namibia in the Junior Africa Cup 2025 from April 18 to 25, with the final three men's and women's spots up for grabs in the upcoming FIH Junior Hockey World Cups 2025, to be played in India (men's) and Chile (women's), with an expanded competition format that will feature 24 teams in each competition for the very first time.

In the men's competition, it will be Egypt, Kenya, Namibia, Nigeria, South Africa, Zambia and Zimbabwe scrapping for the three spots available from Africa in the FIH Hockey Men's Junior World Cup India 2025.

The teams have been split into two pools, with Pool A comprising Kenya, Namibia, Nigeria and South Africa, while it'll be Egypt, Zambia and Zimbabwe competing in Pool B. Following the pool stages where each team plays the others in their pool once, the top two teams in both pools will qualify for the semi-finals. The winning teams in the semi-finals will qualify not just for the final, but also gain entry

into the FIH Hockey Men's Junior World Cup India 2025. The losing semi-finalists will then play in the bronze medal match with the winner becoming the final entrant to the World Cup.

In the women's competition, it will be Kenya, Namibia, South Africa, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe competing for the final three spots available in the FIH Hockey Women's Junior World Cup Chile 2025.

The six teams have been split into two pools of three teams each, with Pool A comprising Namibia, South Africa and Uganda, while it'll be Kenya, Zambia and Zimbabwe competing in Pool B. Following the pool stages where each team plays the others in their pool once, the top two teams in both pools will qualify for the semi-finals.

Similar to the men's competition, the winning semi-finalists will qualify for the finals as well as the FIH Hockey Women's Junior World Cup Chile 2025 and the losing semi-finalists will play in the bronze medal match with the winner becoming the final entrant to the World Cup.

Naqvi fails to attend initial meetings of ICC post Champions Trophy

KARACHI: The PCB chairman Mohsin Naqvi failed to attend the quarterly annual meeting of the ICC after the hosting of Champions Trophy. Naqvi was unable to travel to Harare for the recent meetings due to pending personal business in Pakistan.

Naqvi is also the Federal Interior Minister, a key position in the central government.

"Mohsin Naqvi couldn't go because of work at home and Sumair Ahmed the board's CEO attended the ICC meetings," the official said.

Since the meetings ended there has been silence on part of the PCB on whether it had further pushed its protest over the failure of the ICC to have a PCB representative on stage for the final presentation ceremony of the Champions Trophy in Dubai.

The PCB had sent several reminders to the ICC after the CT final on March 19 asking for an explanation as to why none of its representatives was on stage despite Pakistan being the hosts of the tournament.

BFI turf war intensifies: State units call for elections to be held at the earliest, Interim Committee takes key decisions

NEW DELHI: The turf war in India's boxing administration intensified on Tuesday with members of various state units calling for immediate elections while the newly-formed Interim Committee announced its own set of key decisions, including the conduct of national championships and appointment of coaches.

The tenure of the BFI office-bearers ended on February 2. However, the elections have been delayed by legal disputes.

In its latest order, the Himachal Pradesh High Court directed the Sports Ministry observer and the Returning Officer to issue a fresh election schedule before April 28, when the case is set to be heard again.

"Ajay Singh (the former BFI President and current head of the interim committee) has tried all tactics



to delay the election and undermine the constitution of the Boxing Federation of India," Assam Boxing President and former secretary general of the BFI Hemanta Kalita told reporters on Tuesday.

"We are grateful and happy that the law of the land has prevailed and the honourable High Court has passed the order to conduct the election in a free and fair manner," he added.

The elections, which were scheduled for March 28, had been "paused" by Returning Officer RK Gauba following

directives from the Delhi and Himachal Pradesh High Courts to reinstate names omitted from the Electoral College, including that of former union sports minister Anurag Thakur.

"Ajay Singh is working in a dictatorial manner. We did not have any national championship last year, our performance at the Paris Olympics was zero," Madhya Pradesh Boxing President and former BFI Treasurer Digvijay Singh said. "We are worried and want the elections to happen as soon as possible. So that our athletes

don't lose out and their future is secure," he added.

Himachal Pradesh Boxing Association President and former BFI Vice President Rajesh Bhandari alleged that Singh refused to take the inputs of the executive committee while deciding on the coaching staff, which led to the poor performance in the Paris Games.

"It's because of Ajay Singh's wrong policies, Indian boxing is going down," Bhandari said. Interim Committee fast-tracks key decisions. The Interim Committee, formed by World Boxing to oversee the affairs of the BFI and ensure administrative continuity and management of domestic and international competitions, in its first meeting on Monday took decisions to rejuvenate the domestic circuit as well as restart the elite boxing system.

History Made: Metal Made in Space Lands on Earth for the First Time

The first metal 3D-printed part ever manufactured in orbit has returned to Earth.

Produced using ESA's Metal 3D Printer aboard the International Space Station, the sample is now back on Earth for the first time and is currently located at ESA's technical center, ESTEC, in the Netherlands.

The metal 3D printer, a European-built technology demonstrator developed by Airbus Defence and Space in collaboration with ESA, was delivered to the ISS aboard the Cygnus NG-20 resupply mission.

The printer was installed in the Columbus module by ESA astronaut Andreas Mogensen during his Huginn mission in January 2024.



When Tap Water Fails: New Data Exposes America's Unequal Drinking Water Crisis

About two million people in the United States still live without running water or indoor plumbing. Another 30 million rely on drinking water systems that fail to meet federal safety standards.

One proposed solution is water privatization – transferring the ownership or manage-

ment of public water systems to private companies. Supporters argue it could improve access to clean, safe water.

Critics, however, warn that private companies may prioritize profits over public health.

To better understand how ownership affects water quality and access, researchers conducted a nationwide study.

Teachers worry about Students using AI, but love it for themselves

As artificial intelligence makes its way into schools, a paradox is emerging. Many educators, concerned about cheating and shortcuts, are trying to limit student use of AI.

At the same time, teachers are increasingly using AI tools themselves, both to save time on rote tasks and to outsource some of their most meaningful work, like grading essays and tutoring struggling students. That tension has prompted some difficult ethical questions. For example, is it fair to use AI to grade student essays, if you've prohibited students from using AI to write them?

School leaders are grappling with these dilemmas as they confront a barrage of marketing claims around how AI could "transform," "personalise" and "accelerate" learning. AI "is already being used

by the majority of teachers and students," said Jennifer Carolan, a former history teacher and founder of Reach Capital, a venture capital firm that invests in AI learning tools.

But as the technology works its way into schools, some educators say they are concerned that tech companies are pouring resources into AI applications, like tutoring bots, that disrupt the human relationships at the core of teaching and learning – instead of creating tools to ease the bureaucratic burdens that shift adults' attention away from children. Among middle school students, word has gotten out about a solution for tricky math assignments. If you take a photograph of a problem and feed it into one of several free AI apps, the software will show you the correct answer and break the solution down step by step.



China's Zhipu AI takes initial steps to an IPO

Chinese artificial intelligence startup Zhipu AI has initiated preliminary steps toward an initial public offering, aiming to become the first of China's emerging AI companies to go public.

Founded in 2019 as a Tsinghua University spinoff, Zhipu AI has emerged among China's front-runners in the artificial intelligence race, alongside AI-focused startups Moonshot AI, Minimax, 01.AI, Baichuan, and StepFun, while also competing with tech giants such as ByteDance and Alibaba in the sector.

The company attracted attention earlier this year after securing three rounds of state-backed funding within weeks. Its latest financing included a 300 million yuan (\$41.5 million) investment from the Chengdu municipal government.

Zhipu AI, developer of the GLM series of language models, claims its flagship GLM4 model surpasses OpenAI's GPT-4 on several performance benchmarks.

The company announced Tuesday it would open-source its GLM series models, namely the 32B and 9B versions. Its GLM-Zi-32B-0414 model matches the performance of rival product DeepSeek-R1 at one-thirtieth of the operational cost, according to a company statement.

Zhipu AI is controlled by Tang Jie and Liu Debing, with Tang directly holding a 7.4% equity stake in the company, according to the regulatory filing.

China International Capital Corporation will act as the IPO sponsor, according to a filing posted on the China Securities Regulatory Commission website. As sponsor, CICC will conduct preliminary due diligence on Zhipu's operations and financials.

Scientists witness living plant cells build their own cell walls

In a groundbreaking study, researchers at Rutgers University-New Brunswick have captured continuous, 24-hour images of cellulose synthesis, the process by which plant cell walls are built, using living plant cells. This marks the first time the dynamic process of cell-wall construction has been observed in real time, offering critical insights that could lead to the development of more resilient crops, enhanced food production, and lower-cost biofuels.

Published in the journal Science Advances, the study reveals cellular activity never before documented and opens new possibilities for practical applications in areas such as advanced textiles, biodegradable plastics, improved biofuels, and medical innovations.

According to the researchers, the findings also deepen fundamental understanding of how plant

cell walls are formed. The discovery is the result of more than six years of interdisciplinary collaboration among three Rutgers University laboratories, drawing on expertise from the School of Arts and Sciences, the School of Engineering, and the School of Environmental and Biological Sciences.

"This work is the first direct visualization of how cellulose synthesizes and self-assembles into a dense fibril network on a plant cell surface, since Robert Hook's first microscopic observation of cell walls in 1667," said Sang-Hyuk Lee, an associate professor in the Department of Physics and Astronomy and an author of the study.

"This study also provides entirely new insights into how simple, basic physical mechanisms such as diffusion and self-organization may lead to the formation of complex cellulose networks in cells."

AI agents poised to take over travel industry



Dreaming of going on vacation but not sure where to go? Increasingly the answer -- and how to get there, what to eat and where to stay -- will come from advanced AI, rather than your old-school travel agent.

Startup Mindtrip's generative AI can craft a tailor-made itinerary in seconds from a simple text prompt, with suggestions for hotels, restaurants, sightseeing and activities. After picking out their favorite options, travelers can have every step of the trip reserved in the app -- or on partner websites that open directly to the relevant page.

"Instead of going to Google and you do one search, and then you get another... you can actually just get into everything," Mindtrip chief executive

Andy Moss said. Similar tourism-focused startups include Vacay, while others like Navan are taking on the business travel market. Generative AI heavyweights like Google with its Gemini chatbot, OpenAI with Operator or Anthropic with Claude are also heavily marketing holiday planning.

Existing mainstays of the online travel market are adapting.

Expedia launched an assistant, Romie, last year that can help with some reservation steps -- mostly used for group trips. Its rival Booking.com introduced Smart Filter, which allows users to request specific recommendations -- such as an Amsterdam hotel room with canal views. "It's early days, but we do believe agentic (AI) will allow us to deliver unique value," Book-

ing.com's chief technology officer Rob Francis told AFP.

French giant Club Med has a WhatsApp chatbot on offer that lets customers ask practical questions, chairman Henri Giscard d'Estaing told AFP. "When it was a human answering, it took an average of one and a half hours" to hear back, he noted.

The transformation of travel booking is "capitalizing on the fact that people want more personalized experiences," said Jukka Laitamaki, a New York University professor specializing in the travel sector. He notes that AI already does much more than simply streamlining the booking process.

"Whatever real-time changes may happen... you don't have to call anybody, you can just put it into the system" to have your itinerary instantly updated, Laitamaki added. However, "widespread adoption will be slow," said Eva Stewart of consultancy GSIQ.

"The travel and tourism industry is mostly made up of small and medium-sized businesses -- independent hotels, tour operators, and regional agencies -- that lack the infrastructure for large-scale AI integration," she said.

Startups may be leading the way for now, but Stewart predicted that major legacy players online could make a comeback powered by their "vast resources and technical capabilities."

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