

# Classy India beat Malaysia 4-1, inch closer to Asia Cup final



**RAJGIR:** A determined India produced a masterclass performance, coming from a goal down to beat Malaysia 4-1 in their second Super 4s match of the men's Asia Cup hockey tournament here on Thursday.

The Indians were slow to get off the blocks as Shafiq Hassan gave Malaysia the lead in the second minute before the hosts mounted a great fightback.

Manpreet Singh (17th), Sukhjeet Singh (19th), Shilnand Lakra (24th) and Vivek Sagar Prasad (38th) scored for India.

India had drawn 2-2 against Korea in their first Super 4 match on Wednesday.

With the win, India have moved to the top of the Super 4 standings with four points from two games, just ahead of China and Malaysia, both of whom have three points each while defending champions Korea occupy the last spot with just a point.

After a rest day on Friday, India will take on China in their final Super 4 match on Saturday, while Malaysia play Korea.

India just need a draw against China to seal their place in Sunday's final.

Malaysia were two players short on Thursday after playmaker Fitri Saari was suspended for the match for indiscipline following his onfield brawl with Chinese players in their last match. Abu Kamal Azrai also did not play against India.

Contrary to the final result, India were stunned in the second minute as Malaysia took the lead through Hassan.

The Malaysians caught the Indian defence napping as Hassan dodged past Sanjay and Jugraj Singh to slot home the ball with his reverse stick.

The Indian defence looked a bit shaky in the first

# KKFI celebrates selection of 24 Kho Kho athletes into the CISF

**NEW DELHI:** A total of 24 Indian Kho Kho players, including 12 women, have joined the Central Industrial Security Force (CISF), through the sports quota after cracking the recruitment trials.

A few of the selected athletes, including Shengal Gajanand Maruti and Visag S have played for Mumbai Khiladis in Ultimate Kho Kho.

Meenu was the part of Kho-Kho World Cup and Sweetie, Ananya Pradhan competed during the India vs Malaysia bilateral series.

Kho Kho Federation of India (KKFI) President Sudhanshu Mittal said, "It is heartening to see our young Kho Kho players successfully making it to the merit list."

"The growing recognition of Kho Kho is creating career pathways and motivating more youngsters to dream big in this sport. This success not only benefits individual athletes but also reinforces the growing stature of Kho Kho in India's sporting landscape."

# Sumit, Neeraj make winning start at World Boxing C'ships

**LIVERPOOL:** Indian boxer Sumit Kundu produced a commanding performance to advance to the round of 16 at the World Boxing Championships with a unanimous decision win over Jordan's Mohammad Al Hussein in the men's middleweight category here on Friday.

One of the most promising pugilists in the country, Sumit seized control from the opening bell as he immediately claimed the centre of the ring and forced Al Hussein on the defensive.

Both boxers traded clean punches, but Sumit was relentless and his heavier shots and precise backhand repeatedly pierced the Jordanian's guard.

By the end of the second round, the Indian had built a commanding lead, and though he eased off in the final minutes of the bout, the verdict was never in doubt.

The Army man will now face a stiff challenge in the round of 16 against reigning European champion and Paris Olympian Rami Kiwan of Bulgaria, who received a first-round bye.

In the women's 65kg competition, Neeraj Phogat too made a winning start, edging past Finland's Krista Kovalainen 3-2 in a tense split-decision contest.

Earlier, Sanamacha Chanu powered into the women's 70kg pre-quarterfinals with a 4-1 win over Denmark's Ditte Frostholtm late on Thursday.

Using her height to close the distance, Sanamacha landed a series of heavy blows that unsettled her experienced opponent. The Manipuri boxer will next face World Boxing Cup gold medallist Natalya Bogdanova of Kazakhstan.

However, it was disappointment for heavyweight boxer Harsh Choudhary, who exited in the first round of the men's 90kg after suffering a referee-stopped contest (RSC) defeat to Poland's Tutak Adams.

Asian Games medallist Narender Berwal (90+kg) and Commonwealth Games medallist Jasmine Lamboria (57kg) will open their campaign later in the day.

# Shilnand braves long injury lay-off and personal tragedy to rise again

**RAJGIR:** Perseverance and grit define Shilnand Lakra's journey as the Indian striker overcame a career-threatening injury and the loss of his father to return to the national team after two years in the ongoing Asia Cup.

The 26-year-old from Sundergarh district of Odisha, considered the hockey cradle of the country, twisted his ankle in May 2022 during a regular training session ahead of the FIH Pro League and had to undergo multiple surgeries to fix his knee, forcing him out of the game for two years.

Just when he began rehabilitation, tragedy struck again as he lost his father, a mason by profession, after a fatal accident.

"It was a forgettable phase of my life. I had ACL, PCL and meniscus injuries at one time. It was a major injury. I wish no player should go through such a phase in his or her career," Shilnand told PTI on the sidelines of the ongoing men's Asia Cup hockey tournament here.

"I got operated and started walking and jogging after one month of operation. I had to start everything from the scratch. For 2 years I was in the camp but in rehab.

"But the thought that I might not be able to play again never came in my mind. I had determination because I had seen in the past many senior players making a comeback after such injuries," he added.

Having weathered that storm, another was waiting for Shilnand as he lost his father. He fell from a height in 2021 while constructing his own house.

"Papa was a mason but he met

# Ultra-Processed Foods Add Fat Without Extra Calories and Disrupt Hormones

Over the last 50 years, obesity and type 2 diabetes have climbed dramatically, while sperm quality has steadily declined. One factor that may be fueling these troubling shifts is the growing reliance on ultra-processed foods, which have been tied to numerous health problems. What scientists still debate is whether the harm comes from the industrial ingredients, the processing methods, or simply because these foods make people eat more than they need.

A new study provides fresh insight. Researchers found that people put on more weight when eating an ultra-processed diet compared to a diet of minimally processed foods, even though both contained the exact same number of calories. The human trial also revealed that ultra-processed meals exposed participants to higher levels of pollutants already linked to lower sperm quality. The work was published in the journal Cell Metabolism.

"Our results prove that ultra-processed foods harm our reproductive and metabolic health, even if they're



not eaten in excess. This indicates that it is the processed nature of these foods that makes them harmful," says Jessica Preston, lead author of the study, who carried out the research during her PhD at the University of Copenhagen's NNF Center for Basic Metabolic Research (CBMR).

To get the best possible data, the scientists compared the health impact of unprocessed and ultra-processed diets on the same person. They recruited 43 men aged 20 to 35, who spent three weeks on each of the two diets, with three months "washout" in between. Half started on the ultra-processed and half started on the unprocessed diet. Half of the men also received a high-calorie diet with an extra 500 daily calories, while half received the normal amount of calories for their size, age and physical activity levels. They were not told which diet they were on. Both the unprocessed and ultra-processed diets had the same amount of calories, protein, carbs and fats.

Men gained around 1 kg more of fat mass while on the ultra-processed diet compared to the unprocessed diet, regardless of whether they were on the normal or excess calorie diet. Several other markers of cardiovascular health were also affected.

The scientists also discovered a worrying increase in the level of the hormone-disrupting phthalate cxMNP, a substance used in plastics, in men on the ultra-processed diet.

# Cannabis for Anxiety? Why It May Make Things Worse

A major study led by the Institute of Psychiatry, Psychology & Neuroscience (IoPPN) at King's College London, working with the University of Bath, has revealed that a person's reasons for using cannabis can play a major role in whether they later develop paranoia.

As cannabis becomes stronger and more widely used across the globe, cases of dependence and cannabis-induced psychosis have been rising, with particularly sharp increases reported in North America. Drawing on data from Cannabis & Me (the largest survey of its type), two new studies have pinpointed important risk factors linked to the most severe forms of paranoia in people who use cannabis.

The first study, published in BMJ Mental Health, examined how people's initial reasons for using cannabis influenced their long-term patterns of use.

A total of 3389 adults, both current and former cannabis users aged 18 and above, completed a survey. They were asked about their motivations for starting and continuing cannabis use, how much they consumed each week in THC units, and their overall mental health. The results revealed a clear pattern. Participants who first turned to cannabis as a way of coping with physical pain, anxiety, depression, or early psychotic symptoms scored significantly higher for paranoia.

By contrast, those who initially used cannabis out of curiosity, for enjoyment, or in a social setting with friends reported the lowest levels of paranoia and anxiety. Dr. Edoardo Spinazzola, a Research Assistant at King's IoPPN and the study's first author, said, "Our

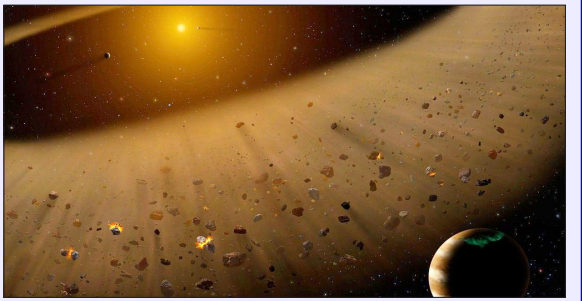
study provides vital evidence on how the reason someone first starts using cannabis can dramatically impact their long-term health.

"This research suggests that using cannabis as a means to self-medicate physical or mental discomfort can have a negative impact on the levels of paranoia, anxiety, and depression. Most of these subgroups had average scores of depression and anxiety, which were above the threshold for referral to counseling." Respondents were also asked to provide data on the frequency and strength of the cannabis they were using so that researchers could track their average weekly consumption of Tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) – the principal psychoactive component of cannabis.

The researchers found that the average respondent consumed 206 units of THC a week. This might equate to roughly 10-17 'joints' per week, if the user was consuming an expected 20 percent THC content that is standard for the most common types of cannabis available in London.

However, respondents who started using cannabis to help with their anxiety, depression, or in cases where they started due to others in their household who were already using cannabis, reported on average 248, 254.7, and 286.9 average weekly THC units, respectively.

Professor Tom Freeman, Director of the Addiction and Mental Health Group at the University of Bath and one of the study's authors, said, "A key finding of our study is that people who first used cannabis to manage anxiety or depression, or because a family member was using it, showed higher levels of cannabis use overall."



# Webb Telescope Spots a 'Blob' Near a Star, but Is It a Planet?

In science, a negative finding can be just as valuable as a positive one. Even the most advanced observatories are sometimes challenged by data artifacts, and this was the case with the James Webb Space Telescope's recent study of Epsilon Eridani.

This nearby star has long been at the center of debate over whether it hosts planets. While JWST's NIRCam detected intriguing signals, they were positioned too close to instrumental noise to be confirmed as a true "planet." The team's results, published on arXiv, may seem inconclusive, but they demonstrate how scientific progress is often made through careful testing and refinement.

These observations were part of a JWST program dedicated to targeted astronomical investigations and focused on the search for two possible planets around Epsilon Eridani, located just 10.5 light years away and only about 400 million years old.

The first candidate, proposed in 2000 using radial velocity measurements, was estimated to be about the size of Jupiter and orbiting 3.5 AU from the star. The second, still unconfirmed, has been suggested as the body responsible for shaping the star's striking ring system and would be situated roughly 45 AU from its host star.

When searching for the first candidate planet, Epsilon Eridani b, NIRCam detected a "blob" of light in exactly the position where a planet was predicted. However, the signal appeared close to a "hexapeckle," an artifact created by the coronagraph that introduced significant noise in that region. Because of this interference, the researchers could not confirm the detection with statistical confidence, even though the feature resembled a planetary signal.

The second potential candidate was much more convincingly ruled out. While the statistics weren't enough to definitively rule out all planets, they were conclusive enough to say there are no Saturn-sized planets any further out the 16 AU from the star.

# The Universe's Engine Is Changing: DESI Hints Dark Energy Isn't What We Thought

These are remarkable times for probing some of the most profound mysteries in physics, made possible by advanced experiments and increasingly precise measurements. One of the most compelling questions centers on dark energy, the term given to the unknown force driving the accelerated expansion of the universe.

A study published in Physical Review Letters presents new evidence suggesting that dark energy's role in cosmic evolution—long assumed to remain constant—may actually vary over time. According to the researchers and their collaborators, the results can be interpreted as a sign that ordinary matter is gradually being transformed into dark



energy. This work is based on observations from Iolkam Du'ag, a mountain in southern Arizona where the Tohono O'odham Nation oversees Kitt Peak National Observatory. At the site, the Dark Energy Spectroscopic Instrument (DESI) scans deep into the history of the universe with 5,000 robotic eyes, each capable of locking onto a different galaxy every 15 minutes. Operating nearly every night, DESI has already charted millions of galaxies and other luminous ob-

jects, many dating back to when the universe was less than half its current age.

In this study, the team examined the idea that black holes act as tiny reservoirs of dark energy. Since black holes form when massive stars burn through their fuel and collapse, this concept—known as the cosmologically coupled black hole (CCBH) hypothesis—implies that stellar material is converted into dark energy.

This framework naturally ties the rate of dark energy production and the depletion of matter to a well-studied quantity: the rate of star formation, measured for decades with instruments such as the Hubble Space Telescope and now the James Webb Space Telescope.

# AI not affecting job market much so far, New York Fed says

Rising adoption of artificial intelligence technology by firms in the Federal Reserve's New York district has not been much of a job-killer so far, the regional Fed bank said in a blog on Thursday.

"Businesses reported a notable increase in AI use over the past year, yet very few firms reported AI-induced layoffs," New York Fed economists wrote in the blog. "Indeed, for those already employed, our results indicate AI is more likely to result in retraining than job loss, similar to our findings from last year," and so far the technology does not point to "significant reductions in employment."

There has been broad concern that AI could create major headwinds for hiring in the coming years, with the technology hitting highly-paid professional and managerial jobs the hardest.

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