

## ASIAN JR SQUASH

## India's Agarwal, Aadya emerge champions

CHENNAI: India's Shiven Agarwal and Aadya Budhia emerged the boys'



U-15 and girls' U-13 champions respectively in the 31st Asian Junior Individual Squash Championships which concluded in Islamabad on Saturday.

Second-seeded Agarwal got the better of Malaysian top seed Muhammad Raziq Putra Mohd Fakhru Razi 11-7, 8-11, 11-5, 13-11 in the final, while second seed Aadya put it past fourth-seeded compatriot Goushika M 11-5, 11-5, 11-4.

Agarwal avenged his loss to Muhammad Raziq in the U-13 semifinal in 2022, while Aadya's medal was India's first gold in the girls' U-13 category of the competition.

India won two gold medals in the championship after a gap of 12 years.

## WOMEN'S COACHING CAMP

## HI announces 33-member group

BENGALURU: Hockey India (HI), on Saturday, announced the 33-member Indian women's hockey team that will return to train in the national women's coaching camp from July 1 to August 31, in SAI Bengaluru.

The Indian women's team went on a short break after concluding their FIH Hockey Pro League 2023/24 season in London and Antwerp.

The team, led by captain Salima Tete and vice-captain Navneet Kaur fought in close matches against Argentina, Belgium, Germany, and Great Britain in the FIH Pro League, under the guidance of chief coach Harendra Singh, and showed glimpses of brilliance occasionally.

The shortlisted squad

includes goalkeepers Savita, Bichu Devi Kharibam, Abaso Dhekale, Ajmina Kujur.



Bansari Solanki, and Madhuri Kindo. The defenders picked for the core group are Nikki Pradhan, Udita, Ishika Chaudhary, Monika, Ropni Kumari, Mahima Choudhary, Jyoti Chhatr, and Preeti.

The midfielders selected are Salima Tete, Marina Lalramnghaki, Vaishnavi Vitthal Phalke, Neha, Jyoti, Edula Jyoti, Baljeet Kaur, Manisha Chauhan, Aksha-

Meanwhile, the forwards featured in the group are Sunelita Toppo, Mumtaz Khan, Lalremsiami, Sangita Kumari, Deepika, Sharnila Devi, Navneet Kaur, Deepika Soreng, Preeti Dubey, Vandana Katariya and Rutuja Dadaso Pisal. Chief coach Harendra Singh commented on the progress of the team saying, "We recently travelled to Antwerp and Lon-

don for the Europe leg of the Pro League, and while the results were not in our favour, we learned a lot as a team. On several occasions, we were leading, and we proactively searched and threatened to score while looking for an equalizer. These are good signs to have in the initial stages of a rebuild, and I am sure the Indian women's hockey team will be a force to be reckoned with in the future."

## Dilmeris new head coach of Punjab FC

MOHALI: Punjab FC have appointed Panagiotis Dilmeris as the Head Coach for the upcoming Indian Super League (ISL) 2024-25 season. Konstantinos Katsaras will join him as Assistant Coach and Papaioannou Ioannis as the Strength and Conditioning coach. Before joining PFC, Dilmeris served as the head coach of A. E. Ermionida FC in the previous season. His extensive 15-year coaching career includes stints at Iraklis Larissas FC, Rochester NY FC, and Panserraikos FC, among other notable teams.

Before his coaching endeavours, Dilmeris

enjoyed a distinguished 17-year playing career as a goalkeeper, representing clubs such as Iraklis FC and Agrotikos Asteras, along with several others. His rich experience throughout both his playing and coaching career will play a key role in leading PFC in the upcoming season.

"I am really excited to start a new journey in India with Punjab FC. It is a great challenge and I look forward to helping the team in achieving its objectives. I am completely aligned with the Club's vision and can't wait to start the new season in the new country," said Dilmeris.

## Shreyanka Patil delighted over Shafali's record

BENGALURU: Shreyanka Patil couldn't contain her joy as Shafali Verma etched her name in history with a stunning double century against South Africa on Day 1 of the One-Off Test at MA Chidambaram Stadium.

Amidst discussions about Shafali's recent form in the just-concluded ODI series against South Africa, Shreyanka offered unwavering support, emphasising, "One bad day or tournament doesn't define a player. Shafali has been exceptional for the team, and her contributions are undeniable," she told news agency.

"As players, we all strive to contribute to our

team. We give our all in every match. There are ups and downs in sports, but Shafali has consistently shone across all formats, playing a crucial role for the team," Shreyanka continued.

Despite recent scrutiny, Shafali's phenomenal innings showcased her explosive batting prowess and resilience.

In a breathtaking display of batting mastery, Shafali's remarkable double century propelled India Women to a record-breaking total on the opening day of the one-off Test against South Africa Women at the MA Chidambaram Stadium.

Shafali's command-

ing 205 runs guided India to an astonishing 525/4 by stumps, surpassing the previous highest single-day total in Women's Test cricket of 431 runs. Her innings, characterized by aggressive strokes and strategic precision, set the stage for a day of absolute dominance.

Notably, Shafali broke the record for the fastest double century in Women's Test cricket, previously held by Australia's Annabel Sutherland, achieving the milestone off just 194 balls. Her aggressive knock included eight sixes and 23 boundaries, highlighting her exceptional skill and determination at the crease.

## Kapil Dev takes over as prez of PGTI

NEW DELHI: World Cup-winning former India cricket captain Kapil Dev has taken over as the president of the Professional Golf Tour of India (PGTI).

This development marks a new chapter for the PGTI, the governing body for men's professional golf in India.

Kapil Dev, who has also excelled as an amateur golfer, has been the vice-president and member of the Governing Body of PGTI since last three years and since then, he has played a pivotal role in further shaping and

developing Indian professional golf along with the core team of PGTI.

"It is an honour to become the President of PGTI, an organisation with which I have now been associated for quite a few years. It is a player's body, and I am great friends with all of them and with whom I often play. And now it is the sport where I spend most of my time. I have been a Vice President and I am on the Board, so it is an honour to be chosen by the players to be the President. I promise to do my best, as I always have.

## FIFA WORLD CUP 2026

## Asia's hopefuls for discover their opponents

KUALA LUMPUR: Asian teams' path to the FIFA World Cup 2026 was finalized following the conclusion of the draw for the round of top 18 qualifiers.

China was placed in Group C along with Indonesia, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Australia, and Japan.

Group B will see South Korea, Iraq, Jordan, Oman, Palestine, and Kuwait vying for their spots, while Group A consists of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Kyrgyzstan, United Arab

Emirates, Uzbekistan, Qatar, and Iran.

The top two finishers from each of the three groups will secure their places at the FIFA World Cup 2026, while the third and fourth-placed teams from each group - six in total - will progress to the AFC Asian Qualifiers - Road to 26 Playoff.

This playoff will be contested in two groups of three teams in a single round-robin format, with both group winners qualifying for the global showpiece.

The two second-placed finishers from the Playoff will face off in a home-and-away tie to earn the right to reach the Intercontinental Playoff and vie for the final available berth. The AFC Asian Qualifiers - Road to 26 will kick off on September 5, with the final round of matches scheduled for June 10, 2025.

The 2026 World Cup will be co-hosted by the U.S., Canada, and Mexico. It will also be the first time that 48 teams will participate in the World Cup.

## Inflation at its peak, says Akhilesh

LUCKNOW: Samajwadi Party (SP) president Akhilesh Yadav said that inflation has reached its peak due to the wrong economic policies of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) government. In a statement issued, Akhilesh said that the BJP government has completely failed to control inflation. "This government is not concerned about the problems of the public. As soon as the elections are over, the prices of milk, oil have increased. The prices of vegetables and pulses are skyrocketing. It is difficult for the common people to make a living in this era of inflation," he said.

He said that the truth is that the government has no control over the market. "Pulses have reached Rs 200 per kilogram. Potatoes are available at Rs 40 per kilogram. The increased prices of other vegetables

have spoiled the budget of the people. It is difficult for the poor and the middle class to arrange for two meals a day," he said.

The SP chief said that the public has given a shock to the BJP in the Lok Sabha elections but it has somehow managed to come to power. "The arrogance of the BJP government is still not decreasing. The policies of the BJP are only for the capitalists. It is always looking for ways to fleece the poor and the middle class," he alleged.

He claimed that at the behest of the BJP government, banks are giving more loans to rich borrowers and waiving off their loans too, while poor farmers are being harassed even for the smallest loans. "Poor farmers are being humiliated and forced to commit suicide," he alleged.

## India's core sector output rises 6.3 pc

NEW DELHI: Driven primarily by coal, power, steel and natural gas production, India's core sector output comprising key eight infrastructure components rose 6.3% year-on-year in May 2024. The core sector output had recorded 6.7% growth in April this year.

"The combined Index of Eight Core Industries (ICI) increased by 6.3 per cent (provisional) in May, 2024 as compared to the Index in May, 2023. The production of electricity, coal, steel, natural gas and refinery products recorded positive growth in May 2024," said Ministry of Commerce and Industry in a release.

The Index of Eight Core Industries measures the combined

and individual performance of production of eight core industries viz. cement, coal, crude oil, electricity, fertilizers, natural gas, refinery products and steel. The eight core industries comprise 40.27% of the weight of items included in the Index of Industrial Production (IIP).

As per official data, coal production increased by 10.2% in May, 2024 over May, 2023 while electricity generation increased by 12.8% during this period. Cement and crude oil production declined by 0.8% and 1.1% respectively in May, 2024 over May, 2023. Fertilizer production also declined by 1.7% year-on-year in May this year. Natural Gas production increased by 7.5%

in May, 2024 over May, 2023. Petroleum Refinery production grew marginally at 0.5% on-year in May 2024. Steel production increased by 7.6% during the month under review.

"While the core sector growth sustained above 6% for the fourth consecutive month, it eased slightly to 6.3% in May 2024 from 6.7% in the previous month led by all the constituents except electricity and coal. A combination of factors including the heat-wave over parts of the country and the phased Parliamentary Elections could have curtailed activity and execution in some sectors," said ICRA chief economist Aditi Nayar while commenting on core sector data.

## People associated with Patanjali, says Balkrishna ji

HARIDWAR: Hypothyroidism is becoming a prevalent condition worldwide, leading to severe side effects such as heart disease, infertility and impaired brain development in children.

In the modern medicine system, the primary treatment of this widespread yet alarming ailment is hormonal replacement therapy, requiring patients to remain on medicines for life.

To free people from this condition, Patanjali developed an herbal medicine 'Thyrogrit', based on the extensive and ancient science of Ayurveda. Research has demonstrated its efficacy on hypothyroidism-induced rats. Ay-

urvedic medicine 'Thyrogrit' not only restores the thyroid gland affected by hypothyroidism but also reverses the kidney damage caused by the disease.

Patanjali is proud to announce that this research has been published in the globally renowned peer-reviewed journal, Clinical Phytoscience, providing contemporary scientists and researchers with insights into innovative Ayurvedic medicinal research.

On this occasion, Acharya Balkrishna ji said that this breakthrough by Patanjali is set to bring new hope to individuals worldwide suffering from thyroid disorders.

## Meta AI arrives: Leading AI assistant now at your fingertip

NASHIK: Built with Meta Llama 3, Meta AI is one of the world's leading AI assistants, already on your phone, in your pocket for free across more than a dozen countries. And it's starting to roll out in India in English. You can use Meta AI on WhatsApp, Facebook, Messenger, and Instagram to get things done, learn, create and connect with the things that matter to you. We first announced Meta AI at last year's Connect, and since April, we've been bringing the latest version of Meta AI built with Llama 3 to people around the world. Thanks to Meta Llama 3, Meta AI is smarter, faster and more fun than ever before.

Make Meta AI Work for You- Planning a night out with friends? Ask Meta AI in your WhatsApp group chat to recommend restaur-

rants with great views and vegan options for you and your friends to consider. Organizing a weekend getaway? Ask Meta AI to give you ideas of places to stop on a road trip. Cramming for a test? Ask Meta AI on the web to create you a multiple choice test. Moving into your first apartment? Ask Meta AI to "imagine" the aesthetic you want so that you can create a mood board of AI-generated images for inspiration on your furniture shopping.

Meta AI in Feed- You can also access Meta AI when you're scrolling through your Facebook Feed. Come across a post you're interested in? You can ask Meta AI for more info right from the post. So if you see a photo of the northern lights in Iceland, you can ask Meta AI

what time of year is best to check out the aurora borealis.

Spark Your Creativity With Meta AI's Imagine Feature- Using the word imagine while interacting with Meta AI directly or in a group chat, you can create and share images. Imagine is our text-to-image generation capability that will let you spark your creativity - you can create a customized fun invite for your kid's birthday party or riff with your friends to create fun images.

And it doesn't stop there. Found an image you love? Ask Meta AI to animate it or iterate on the image with friends by asking Meta AI to change the prompt. With our most powerful large language model under the hood, Meta AI is better than ever.

## Iconiq White emerges as world's fastest-growing brand

MUMBAI: Allied Blenders' Iconiq White, an Indian spirits brand, has emerged as the world's fastest-growing spirits brand, according to The Millionaires Club Report 2024 by Drinks International tracking the performance of spirit brands selling over one million 9-liter cases yearly.

Iconiq White Whisky which is part of "prestige and above segment" was launched in September

2022 grew at 1500% Y-o-Y in 2023, making it the fastest-growing spirit brand globally.

This phenomenal rise has surpassed the growth figures of major international and domestic labels.

The Millionaires' Club Report also highlights many other rapidly growing brands which includes Aznauri, a brandy manufactured by the

Global Beverage Trade Company which saw a growth of 83.3%. Courier Napoleon, a brand under Tilaknagar Industries, experienced a notable 60% increase. Additionally, Magic Moments vodka by Radico Khaitan grew by 29.2%, while Royal Challenge whisky from United Spirits and Olmecca Tequila by Pernod Ricard recorded growth rates of 21.1% and 18.2%, respectively.

## RNLIC declares Rs. 346 cr bonus

MUMBAI: Reliance Nippon Life Insurance Company Limited has declared a total bonus of ₹346 Cr. for its participating policyholders in FY24.

The company declared Profit Before Tax of Rs. 198 Cr. which represents 84% growth over FY23.

According to the announcement, all eligible participating policies as at March 31, 2024, have benefitted from this bonus declaration.

The company has been declaring bonuses consistently for the past 23 years which incentivizes customers to regularly pay their premiums and remain invested throughout the policy term. The robust performance of the Participating Fund can be attributed to a well-strategized as-

set allocation in equities, which yielded significantly higher performance compared to the broader market. Additionally, robust performance is also visible in our flagship ULIP Equity Fund 3 which has delivered returns of 26.4%, outperforming the NIFTY 50 benchmark\*.

Commenting on the bonus announcement, Ashish Vohra, ED & CEO of Reliance Nippon Life Insurance, said, "We have focused on creating value for our customers through consistent performance, robust investment management, and laser-sharp focus on operating efficiencies. Over the last few years, the company has been focusing on customer delight, distributor satisfaction and employee engagement through digital transformation.