

sportspopup

Prague Masters: Praggnanandhaa to take on Shankland after lone rest day

PRAGUE (Czech Republic): With a career-high world ranking of No.8 as per the latest published list, Grandmaster R Praggnanandhaa will take on American Sam Shankland in the sixth round of the Prague Masters after a rest day on Tuesday. Tied at the top spot with compatriot and friend Aravindh Chithambaram, Praggnanandhaa tried to break the defences of his fellow countryman for a long time but only ended up with a draw. The two are now on 3.5 points each out of a possible five. Aravindh was surprised after his second win in the tournament. The Indian, who has arrived big time in to the elite circles, now will have to tackle the experienced Quang Leim Le of Vietnam in the next round. The two Indians are followed by a pack of four players having 2.5 points each. The most dangerous of the lot is Wei Yi who started with two losses in the first three rounds and then won two in a row to send warning signals to his competitors. Anish Giri and Quang Leim hold the dubious distinction of drawing all the five games thus far while Vincent Keymer has lost two, drawn one and won two out of his five games.

Babar, Rizwan dropped from Pakistan's T20 squad

LAHORE: Captain Muhammad Rizwan and Babar Azam were on Tuesday dropped from the Pakistan squad for the five-match T20 series in New Zealand. Salman Ali Agha replaced Rizwan as captain of the T20 outfit with all-rounder Shadab Khan being recalled and named his vice-captain. Rizwan has been retained as captain of the ODI squad after the team's disappointing show in the Champions Trophy. The selectors have avoided an overhaul in the one-day squad and retained majority of the players who flopped in the ongoing ICC event. Babar is also retained in the ODI squad but batters Saud Shakil and Kamran Gulam have been axed. Pakistan squads: ODI: Muhammad Rizwan (captain), Salman Ali Agha (VC), Abdullah Shafique, Abrar Ahmed, Akif Javed, Babar Azam Faleeh Ashraf, Imam ul Haq, Khushdil Shah, Muhammad Ali, Muhammad Wasim junior, Muhammad Irfan Khan, Naseem Shah Sufyan Muqeem, Tayyab Tahir. T20: Salman Ali Agha (captain), Shadab Khan (VC), Abdul Samad, Abrar Ahmed, Haris Rauf, Hasan Nawaz, Jahandad Khan, Khushdil Shah, Muhammad Abbas Afridi, Muhammad Ali, Muhammad Haris, Muhammad Irfan Khan, Omair Bin Yousuf, Shaheen Shah Afridi, Sufyan Muqeem, Usman Khan.

Boxing Federation of India to hold election on March 28

NEW DELHI: The Boxing Federation of India (BFI) Tuesday said it will hold its election on March 28 to elect new office bearers for the next four years. The development comes a day after the Delhi High Court stayed a decision of the Indian Olympic Association (IOA) to constitute an ad-hoc panel to run the affairs of the BFI. "The 10th Annual General Meeting of the Boxing Federation of India will be held under the chairmanship of Mr. Ajay Singh, President, Boxing Federation of India on the 28th Match, 2025 from 10.30am at Delhi NCR," the sport's apex governing body in the country said in a statement signed by its secretary general Hemanta Kumar Kalita. On the agenda will be the election of office bearers and other members of executive council of BFI for the tenure 2025-29. The BFI has also asked its affiliated state units to send the names of the representatives who will be attending the AGM by March 10. On Monday, Justice Sachin Datta issued notice to the IOA seeking its response to a petition filed by the federation challenging the decision of constituting the ad-hoc committee. The court granted two weeks' time to the IOA to file its reply to the petition and posted the hearing on March 27. On February 24, the IOA formed a five-member ad-hoc committee to oversee affairs, citing the federation's failure to conduct elections on time.

South Africa have bit more class and power compared to NZ: Ponting ahead of semis

LAHORE: South Africa have a "bit more class and power" in their lineup, which makes them favourites in the Champions Trophy semifinal against New Zealand, feels Ricky Ponting, though the Australian great added that if someone like Kane Williamson comes to the party he could get the job done for the Black Caps. New Zealand are coming into the knockouts on the back of a big defeat against India in Dubai, while South Africa are on a roll following their massive seven-wicket win against England in the group stage. While momentum could play a big role in the contest, Ponting said with a deep batting line-up, just like India, South Africa enjoy an edge. "If I look at both the sides, I think there's that little bit more class in the South African line-up. They bat deep. I think they might have a little bit too much power for New Zealand," Ponting opined on ICC Review on Tuesday. "I'm actually going with South Africa (to win the contest) as much as I've praised New Zealand," he added.

It's not size, but mental strength that matters: Gavaskar backs Rohit Sharma

DUBAI: Backing India captain Rohit Sharma, who was subjected to fat-shaming, cricket legend Sunil Gavaskar on Tuesday said that slim guys are for modelling and in cricket, mental strength is what matters, not physical size. Addressing the unnecessary criticisms directed at India skipper in the middle of Champions Trophy by a politician, Gavaskar reminded how Mumbai's big-hitting Sarfaraz Khan also faced body shaming, but it didn't affect his performance at all. "I have always said, if you want only slim guys, then you should go to a modelling competition and pick all the models. It's not about that," Gavaskar told India Today. "It's about how well you can play cricket. We talked about Sarfaraz Khan, he was vilified for a long time because he was on the heavier side. But if he scores 150 for India in a Test match and follows it up with another two or three fifty-plus scores, then what's the issue?" "I don't think size has anything to do with it. It's your mental strength whether you can last the distance that's the most important thing. Bat well, bat for long, and score runs."

Ronaldo-less Al-Nassr draws at Esteghlal in Asian Champions League Elite

TEHRAN: Cristiano Ronaldo was absent as Al-Nassr of Saudi Arabia and Esteghlal of Iran drew 0-0 in the first leg of the AFC Champions League Elite second round on Monday. It was a frustrating evening in Tehran for Al-Nassr without the 40-year-old Ronaldo, who has collected five UEFA Champions League titles with Manchester United and Real Madrid. Jhon Duran, signed from Aston Villa in January, came close to scoring and former Liverpool star Sadio Mane had chances but Esteghlal goalkeeper Seyed Hossein Hosseini was in fine form. "I am satisfied with the performance of the players," Al-Nassr coach Stefano Pioli said. "It is important to remember that there is another game." The return match takes place in Riyadh on March 11.

Gaurs deliver in front of home crowd

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FATORDA: FC Goa defeated Mohammedan SC 2-0 in the Indian Super League match played at the Nehru Stadium, here, on Tuesday.

The Gaurs have now moved to 48 points in 23 games, winning 14 games and drawing on six instances. They have already qualified for the semi-finals alongside Mohun Bagan Super Giant and will not have to engage in the single-legged eliminator.

FC Goa controlled the proceedings from the start, holding 56 per cent of the possession, completing 84 per cent of their passes, taking five shots on target, and making 20 crosses too.

The Gaurs were exploring creating gateways inside the Mohammedan SC defence through their ability to initiate quick passing sequences down the middle with Boris Singh chipping in a cross for the onrushing Rowlin Borges inside the six-yard box in the sixth minute. Borges headed the effort on target but Padam Chhetri made a formidable save to stop the ball from barging into the net.

Dejan Drazic sparked the maiden breakthrough in the contest with an incredible display of footwork on the left side of the 18-yard box. Beating his marker



Mohammedan SC's Alexis Gomez vies for the ball with FC Goa players at the Nehru Stadium, Fatorda, on Wednesday

Alexis Gomez, Drazic burst into the final third before pulling off an incredible lateral ball for Ayush Dev Chhetri in the middle of the box through the outside of his right foot. Ayush showed impeccable smarts to pass in Iker Guarrotxena's path on the right, before he headed the ball into the top right corner in the 40th minute.

Drazic continued to be the provider at the start of the second half too, hurling in a powerful cross for Nim Dorjee Tamang from a corner in the 48th minute. The

latter timed his run perfectly and also met the ball well but his aerial effort lacked finesse, thundering above the post.

An own goal by Chhetri comfortably sealed the game in FC Goa's favour, but the base of that was laid by Guarrotxena's robust header from the far post in the 86th minute. Getting to the end of a corner, the attacker displayed fine agility to head the ball towards the post, but the ball took a deflection off the Mohammedan SC goalkeeper before landing into the right side

of the net.

FC Goa will play their next game against Mohun Bagan Super Giant on March 8, whereas Mohammedan SC are set to feature against Punjab FC on March 10.

RESULT
FC Goa 2 (Iker Guarrotxena 40', Padam Chhetri OG 86')
Mohammedan SC 0
ISL FIXTURE
Odisha FC vs Jamshedpur FC at the JRD Tata Sports Complex, Jamshedpur, at 7.30 pm

OL of Carmel HS emerge champions in U-6 football, U-8 futsal

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FATORDA: Our Lady of Carmel High School, Curtorim, emerge champions in the U-6 Diamond 3-a-side League of the Next Gen League 2.0 at The King's School Futsal Court and Multi Sports Court, recently.

Our Lady of Succour High School, Verna, were the runners-up. The King's School, Sao Jose de Areal, were the Most Improved team.

Following are the individual awards: Coach of the...season: Omanakuttan...G (Bloomz International School, Verna) Rising star: Jotham Da Costa (The King's School, Sao Jose de Areal). Player-of-the-season: Zylon Castanha

In the U-8 Futsal 5-a-side League, Our Lady of Carmel High School, Curtorim, were the champions. The U-8 Futsal category saw impressive teamwork and technical skill development. Runners-up were Perpetual Succour Convent High School, Navelim.

Following are the individual awards: Most improved team: The King's School, Sao Jose de Areal, Coach of the season: Kingsley D'Costa (Our Lady of Carmel HS, Curtorim). Goalkeeper of the season: Daiwik Vernekar (The



King's School, Sao Jose de Areal)

Rising Star: Fabiano Martins (Our Lady of Carmel HS, Curtorim)

Player-of-the Season: Myron Attaide (Perpetual Succour Convent HS, Navelim).

In the U-10 Sapphire Futsal 5-a-side League, Perpetual Succour Convent High School, Navelim, emerged champions, while St Jude High School, Betalbatim, were the runners-up.

Most Improved Team: Our Lady of Succour High School, Verna: Coach of the Season: Zico Costa (Our Lady of Succour High School, Verna), Goalkeeper of the Season: Rylan D'Silva (Perpetual Succour Convent High School, Navelim) Rising Star: Vyaana Dunga (The King's School, Sao Jose de Areal) Player of the Season: Gladroy Fernandes (St Jude High School, Betalbatim). With 46 matches played across all three categories,

the Next Gen League 2.0 continues to serve as a platform for grassroots football and futsal development, thanks to the vision and dedication of Sports Director, Christian Roldan, MKVA founder-president, Melvin Pereira, and CEO-Vice President, Ligia Pereira.

Their unwavering commitment to nurturing young talent has helped create structured pathways for the next generation of footballers.

Desserts n More Avengers storm into final

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PANJIM: Desserts n More Avengers defeated DNS VMJ's Rookies to storm into the final of Rajdeep Builders Sarsangan Super Series Cricket tournament at Arlem cricket ground, on Tuesday.

Put in to bat first, Desserts n More Avengers got off to a flying start, thanks to Sachin Bhandare 37 (29 balls, 5x4s) and Sanat Prabhudesai 38 (25 balls, 6x4s, 1x6s) putting on 83 runs in 51 balls for the opening wicket. Though Aditya Dalal (17) and Sarin Pai Kane (6) were dismissed in quick succession, the Avengers reached 121 in the 13th over.

The team owner Dr Sagar Salgaocar tried his best making 24 (20 balls, 2x4s) but the Rookies bowlers were sent on a leather hunt with the Titans amassing 49 runs in the final 3 overs which saw them plundering 49 runs tilting the scales with southpaw Vaibhav Kadkade 27 (18 balls, 4x4s)

and skipper Siddhesh Prabhu Alvenkar blasting a quickfire 35 (11 balls, 3x4s, 3x6s), helping the Titans post an imposing 206-4 in 20 overs. Sanat Kamat was the lone successful bowler picking a wicket.

In reply, the DNS/VMJ's Rookies, despite losing their skipper Sukrut Pai for 5, put up a good fight through Shi-

SARSANGAN SUPER SERIES CRICKET

vam Varik 37 (16 balls, 9x4s). However the loss of Eeshan Kamat (13) and Vibhav Pai (5) put brakes on the Rookies as they slid to 73-3 in 9 overs.

However, southpaw Pratham Kossambe 32 (23 balls, 4x4s) and Bhushan Kamat Bambolkar 18 (8 balls, 1x4s, 2x6s) got the Rookies back into the match with a 38-run stand in 19 balls and with Rajaram Sinai Kundai- kar blasting a quick-fire 36 (18 balls,

2x4s, 2x6s), the Rookies reached 159-5, needing 48 in 20 balls, just about the same number of runs made by the Titans in their final 3 overs.

However, the Avengers bowlers Vibhav Kadkade and Sarin Kane bowled a tight dismissing Mihir Gaitonde (8) and Sahil Neurenkar (2) and not giving much room to Rupesh Kossambe (14 no) and Aghan Bhandare (5 no) as the Rookies finished at 185-7 in 20 overs. Vaibhav Kadkade and Nimay Kamat were pick of the bowlers with an economy of 4 and 5 runs per over respectively picking a wicket each along with Sarin Kane, Aditya Dalal and Sagar Salgaocar. Desserts n More Avengers, as a result of the victory by 21 runs sealed their spot in the final to be played on Sunday. Individual Prizes were awarded to Vaibhav Kadkade, Drogaria Colvalcar man-of-the match; Sanat Prabhudesai received Priority Constructions Best Batter and Nimay Kamat was awarded Wakao Best Bowler.

I really wanted to have six bowling options: Rohit

PTI, DUBAI: Indian captain Rohit Sharma Tuesday said he has always stressed on having six bowling options at his disposal without compromising the batting depth, which was on full view in the team's comfortable win over Australia in the Champions Trophy here.



“That is something I really wanted, to have six bowling options and then batting till No. 8 as well. This is something we discussed while making the squad. Credit goes to everyone who were involved in making the team – Rohit Sharma

Set a target of 265, India rode on Virat Kohli's 84 and useful contributions from the likes of Shreyas Iyer and KL Rahul to register a four-wicket win with 11 balls to spare, after the bowlers restricted the Aussies to a sub-par total in the first semifinal.

"That is something I really wanted, to have six bowling options and then batting till No. 8 as well. This is something we discussed while making the squad. Credit goes to everyone who were involved in making the team," Rohit said at the presentation ceremony.

Mohammed Shami (3/38) grabbed three wickets while Varun Chakravarty and Ravindra Jadeja took two wickets apiece.

"Halfway through the game, we felt it was a reasonable score, and we have to bat really really well. I thought we were very clinical with the bat. We were very calm and composed. The wicket looked better, and that has been the nature of the surfaces.

"The one which played today was slightly better. We just want to play good cricket and not read too much into what the pitch is doing."

Needless to say, Rohit lavished rich praise on his longtime teammate Kohli for anchoring yet another successful chase.

"He has done it for us for so many years. We were very calm. We wanted that big stand which Shreyas and Virat had. Then the shots by Hardik in the end

were very important." In the title clash, India will take on the winner of the second semifinal between South Africa and New Zealand.

The Indian triumph ensures that the final of the eight-team competition will now be held here instead of Lahore, the original host of the marquee clash.

Rohit said, "When you want to play the final, you want all your guys in form. That is something that gives us a lot of confidence. We will not think too much about it. When the time comes, we will think about it. I also want the guys to relax."

Australian skipper Steve Smith believed they fell short of what would have been a challenging total by a good 20 runs.

"The bowlers did a really good job. The spinners squeezed them and took the game deeper. It was a tricky wicket to start on and we did a good job.

"It wasn't the easiest batting condition. We could have put a few more runs on the board. If we had 280-plus, it could have been different. We were one wicket down too many at each stage of the game," Smith said.

Sesa FA collect full points

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RAIA: The Sesa Football Academy thrashed Clube de Salgaocar 7-1 in the Goa Football Association U-13 Division I League match played at Sinquetin ground, on Tuesday.

GFA U-13 DIV I LEAGUE

Sesa FA netted a hat-trick through Pratik Patel, while Erwin Fizardo, Parshuram Vishvas Kandolkar, Soshan Gaunkar and

Terence Fernandes netted a goal each. For Clube de Salgaocar only Casroy Fernandes netted a goal.

In another match, Youth Club Manora easily outwitted Sporting Clube de Goa 8-1 at The King's School ground, Sao Jose de Areal. Sarvambh Dalvi and Joshua Da Costa scored braces, while Naiden Jesus Braganza, Jerrel Moura, Elmer Fernandes and Joseph Da Costa scored a goal each for YC Manora.

The only goal for Sporting Clube de Goa was scored by Rohit Kondvilkar.

GOA DIARY

GFA to hold selection trials for U-20 boys on March 6 & 7

PANJIM: The Goa Football Association will be conducting selection trials for Goa team to take part in the Swami Vivekananda National Football Championship for the U-20 boys to be held in Narainpur in the 3rd week of April. Players born on or after January 1, 2006, who have played in the Goa Professional League, Goa University and those who are to play in the First Division League should attend the trials – on March 6 (Thursday) at Navelim Church ground for South Goa and on March 7 (Friday) at GFA Stadium Duler, Mapusa, for North Goa. Players should come with full playing kit at 3.45 pm at the venue and report to Francisco Nunes.

Goa Fencing Association to hold selection trials on March 6

PANJIM: The Goa Fencing Association will conduct selection trials to select fencers in the U-14 boys and girl categories at Athletic Stadium, Cujira-Bambolim, on March 6, from 3.30 pm. Those interested should contact coaches Deepak Singh Rajput, Arunkumar Saine, Kushal Das. The selected fencers will participate at the 26th Sub-Junior (U-14) National Fencing Championship 2024-25, from March 27 to 30, at Cuttack, Odisha.

TODAY'S SPORTS

GFA Futsal League: Enfermos SC vs Cana Benaulim SA, at Manohar Parrikar Indoor Stadium, Navelim, 7 pm. Verna Cultural & SA vs CDJ Ribandar, at Manohar Parrikar Indoor Stadium, at Navelim ground, 8 pm

GFA Division II League –All Goa Play-Offs: Vasco City SCC vs PVC Parra, at Don Bosco Oratory ground, Fatorda, 4 pm. South Goa United vs Vagator Parish YSC, at Navelim ground, 4 pm

Vaidya Family Memorial Cup (semi-final): Curtorim Gymkhana vs Sporting Club Davorlim, at the Government Primary School ground, Cuncolim, 4.45 pm