

Double delight for India

Lakshya, Satwik-Chirag enter Hong Kong final

HONG KONG

INDIA enjoyed a memorable day at the Hong Kong Open 2025 as Lakshya Sen stormed into the men's singles final while Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty ended their semifinal jinx to book a place in the men's doubles summit clash here on Saturday.

With both entries confirmed, India is assured of a strong presence in Sunday's final. For Sen, the semifinal win marked a return to the big stage after a two-year wait. The 24-year-old overcame Chinese Taipei's third seed Chou Tien Chen in straight games, 23-21, 22-20, in 56 minutes of high-intensity badminton. Showing nerves of steel in the closing stages of both games, Sen secured his first Super 500 final since 2023. He now faces World No. 4 Li Shi Feng of China in what promises to be a thrilling encounter. Significantly, Sen holds a 7-6 head-to-head advantage over the Chinese star, adding an extra edge to the contest.

Earlier in the day, Satwik and

Chirag finally broke through after a year of setbacks, reaching their first final since their Asian Games gold medal triumph in October 2023. The World No. 9 Indian pair dismissed Chinese Taipei's unseeded duo Bing-Wei Lin and Chen Cheng Kuan with authority, 21-17, 21-15, snapping a frustrating run of six consecutive semifinal defeats in 2025. Their next challenge is formidable: China's World No. 3 pair Liang Wei Keng and Wang Chang, who eased past compatriots Fang-Chih Lee and Fang-Jen Lee 21-19, 21-8. For the Indians, however, this final appearance comes as a huge morale boost after enduring a tough year riddled with injuries and personal struggles.

Satwik, 24, has battled a re-

World Boxing C'ships

Minakshi, Jaismine, Nupur storm into finals

LIVERPOOL

MINAKSHI (women's 48kg), Jaismine Lamboria (women's 57kg), and Nupur (women's 80kg) were at their dominant best in their respective semifinals to raise hope of multiple gold medals for India at the World Boxing Championships 2025 in Liverpool.

Minakshi defeated Altantsetseg Lutsaikhan of Mongolia 5:0, Jaismine hammered Omailyn Carolina Alcala Cegovia of Venezuela 5:0, and Nupur proved too good for Turkey's Seyma Duztas.

India has fielded a 20-member contingent at the inaugural World Championships being held under the aegis of the World Boxing, a recently

formed international governing body for boxing, and is hoping for a good showing in both men's and women's events. Pooja Rani (women's 80kg) is the fourth Indian boxer to reach the semifinals and will face Emily Asquith of England later in the day.

In the women's 48kg semi-

finals, Minakshi did not allow two-time Asian bronze medallist Lutsaikhan to find her rhythm in any of the three rounds and completely dominated the bout to earn an unanimous decision.

It was a similar story in the other two semifinals as both Jaismine and Nupur

Women's Hockey Asia Cup

India qualify for final, to face China in Sunday final

HANGZHOU (CHINA): Indian women's hockey team qualified for the Asia Cup final despite playing out a 1-1 draw against Japan after hosts China beat Korea 1-0 in the last match of the Super 4 stage here on Saturday.

India will face China in the summit clash on Sunday, and the winning team will qualify for next year's World Cup in Belgium and the Netherlands.

After the 1-1 draw against defending champions Japan, India had to wait for the result of the match between Korea and China, who have already qualified for the final.

Korea needed to win by a margin of at least two goals to qualify for the final, but China's victory ensured that India, the third-place finisher in the 2022 edition, made it to the summit clash.

China topped the Super 4s table with nine points after three wins, while India ended at second with four points from one win, one draw and one loss. Korea secured just one point -- one draw and two losses -- to end at the bottom. Japan finished third with two points.

Against Japan, India took an early lead with Beauty Dung Dung putting them ahead in the seventh minute with a field goal.

ISSF World Cup

Esha wins women's air pistol gold

NINGBO (CHINA)

OLYMPIAN and reigning mixed team pistol world champion Esha Singh ended India's medal drought at the ISSF World Cup Rifle/Pistol, clinching gold in the women's 10m air pistol here on Saturday.

At the Ningbo Olympic Sports Centre, the 20-year-old edged out home favourite Yao Qianxun by 0.1 point in a tense final. Reigning Olympic champion Oh Yejin of South Korea took the bronze. This was Esha's maiden World Cup gold in the event and it helped India move to fifth spot in the medal standings, joining four other nations with a gold medal. Hosts China lead the standings with two gold, four silver and one bronze. India have fielded their fourth to sixth ranked shooters in each event at the tournament. "I am very happy as this is the first event that I started with and to win a

world cup gold in it...I am just happy that some of my goals are being reached," Singh said. On her mindset in the final, she said: "Yes I am aware of things like India has not won a medal yet and that there are great shooters in the field, but I have played many finals against these guys and its them all the time so I now know that the pistol is in my hand and the battle is with me so I try to enjoy the match as much as possible."

Esha and teammate Rhythm Sangwan had qualified for the final with identical

scores of 578, securing the last two available spots.

Yao topped qualification with 584, while India's Palak Gulia, competing for ranking points, shot 586. Surbhi Rao finished 25th with 568.

In the eight-shooter final, Rhythm began strongly, leading after the first series with Esha in second.

By the halfway mark, Esha moved into the lead while Rhythm slipped to fifth, where she eventually finished.

As eliminations progressed, both Indians maintained composure.

Rhythm briefly climbed to fourth with a 10.8 on her 15th shot but bowed out after the 18th. Esha, meanwhile, maintained her rhythm, producing two 10.7s at crucial stages to stave off Yao's late surge.

She sealed the gold with a final score of 242.6, just 0.1 clear of the Chinese shooter.

TVK chief Vijay's first poll campaign address lost in audio glitch

TIRUCHIRAPPALLI (TAMIL NADU)

TAMILAGA Vетtri Kazhagam chief Vijay's address from atop his campaign vehicle here on Saturday was marred by audio issues and out of his 20-minute speech, barely one to two minutes was audible

and clear. Cadres, fans and the people who had gathered in thousands chanted 'Vijay, Vijay' as his speech became almost incomprehensible barring some remarks, words and points.

"Will you vote for the DMK?" he asked after raising a number of questions seek-

ing to push the Chief Minister M K Stalin-led government to a tight corner. One of his key accusation was that the DMK government did not fulfill its assurances made ahead of the 2021 Assembly election. He also hit out at the DMK regime over the illegal kidney sale racket.

When Vijay began his speech by 3 PM, he outlined the significance of choosing Tiruchirappalli for his maiden rally. He said that it was here that Dravidian icon, DMK founder CN Annadurai decided in 1956 to enter the electoral race. It was here that AIADMK founder M G

Ramachandran held his first state conference in 1974 after launching his party in 1972.

Tiruchirappalli was renowned also for communal harmony and rationalist leader 'Periyar' EV Ramasamy lived here. During the days of yore, before going to battlefield, kings used to pray

to their family deities. Similarly, Vijay said he has visited Tiruchirappalli. Any political initiative, when started in Tiruchirappalli, would eventually become a turning point, he said.

Meanwhile, the party acknowledged that the technical glitch led to audio issues.

TVK said that the issue has been addressed and that the chief's speech could be hereafter heard clearly. Clad in white shirt, Vijay delivered his address from a raised platform-like structure on the top of the campaign bus and cadres continuously flung party flags at him.

Tripura: UCO bank cashier held in Rs 16 cr fraud case

AGARTALA

A cashier of a public sector bank in Tripura has been arrested for her alleged involvement in siphoning off Rs 16 crore from Agartala Municipal Corporation's (AMC) account using forged cheques, an official said on Saturday.

The accused, identified as Ramayani Shrimayi, a resident of Nagaon in Assam and posted as a cashier at the Agartala branch of UCO Bank, will be produced before a court on Saturday, said sub-divisional police officer (SDPO), Sadar, DP Roy.

After confirming "unauthorised withdrawals" of Rs 16 crore, the bank lodged a complaint with West Agartala police station on September 5.

West Tripura SP Namit Pathak has constituted a Special Investigating Team (SIT) headed by additional SP Drubha Nath to probe the fraud.

"As part of the probe, we arrested Shrimayi for her alleged involvement in the scam on Friday night. She

will be produced before a local court later in the day", Roy said.

He said that altogether six cloned cheques were used to withdraw Rs 16 crore from August 5 to September 2.

Police have so far recovered Rs 7 crore of the defrauded money by tracing online transactions. (PTI)

Pigeons cause no harm, firecrackers can: Maneka

MUMBAI: Former Union minister and BJP leader Maneka Gandhi on Saturday expressed confidence that kabutarckhanas (pigeon feeding spots) in the city will be reopened, saying that pigeons have not caused any harm, while firecrackers have contributed more to pollution.

Speaking to reporters here after attending an event, Gandhi said Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis has constituted a committee to take a decision regarding kabutarckhanas and the report will be favourable.

The Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation had banned feeding pigeons and closed some old kabutarckhanas in the city last month, considering them to be a public health hazard.

"India's foundation is about compassion; it is about living and letting others live. There is no example of anyone ever dying because of pigeons. Pigeons have caused no harm to anyone," Gandhi said.

She noted that there are 57 kabutarckhanas in Mumbai, some of which have been closed.

"The chief minister has formed a committee to make a decision over it. It will take one month. Once the report is out, the kabutarckhanas will be reopened. I am confident of it," she said.

"If pigeons are killed for spreading disease, firecrackers cause multifold pollution. Firecrackers did not exist during the time of Lord Ram and Sita. People would light diyas and share food. The time for firecrackers is now over. People can no longer breathe," the BJP leader said.

Maneka criticised India's approach towards tourism, saying unchecked deforestation and neglect of natural assets had diminished its appeal. (PTI)

'Historic day for Mizoram as it enters country's railway map'

AIZAWL

MIZORAM Chief Minister Lalduhoma on Saturday said it was a historic day as the state entered the country's railway map, which will have a far-reaching impact as it bridges the dreams and reality between the state and Bharat.

He was addressing a gathering as Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated Mizoram's first railway line and flagged off the state's maiden Rajdhani Express, connecting Aizawl with Delhi.

"Today is a historic day for our state. It marks a new chapter in our journey towards progress...The railway projects are not just infrastructure; they are investments in our children's future, in the dignity of our citizens and in the economic resilience of our state. The impact of these projects will be far-reaching, bridging dreams and reality between Mizoram and Bharat," Lalduhoma said.

The chief minister said the 51.38 km-long railway line

was a technical marvel and stood as a testament to engineering excellence.

"This railway line is more than a feat of engineering, it is a symbol of inclusion, national integration and of the shared aspirations of our people. It brings Mizoram closure to the rest of India and India closure to the heart of Mizoram. The 51.38 km stretch includes some of the most difficult terrains in the country," Lalduhoma as-

serted.

He said the Prime Minister's presence in the state is a powerful symbol of his unwavering commitment to the development of the North East and inclusive, connected India.

"We are grateful for the inauguration of several other key projects that touched the hearts of our communities...We are proud to have worked closely with the Central government to bring this development to life ...We place on record our sincere appreciation not only for the projects but also for the way you and your colleagues have consistently lent a listening ear to our concerns," he said.

The CM said, "Your willingness to understand our hearts has not gone unnoticed. It has strengthened our trust in cooperative federalism. Mizoram values this partnership built on empathy, responsiveness and mutual respect, and we look forward to nurturing it further in the years ahead," he emphasised.

