THE Hans India

Sports Nation

"Having Gukesh D return to Norway Chess as reigning World Champion is something we truly value. India has become one of the strongest chess nations in the world today, and we know many fans will be following Gukesh D closely. We hope chess audiences across India will tune in as he competes in Oslo in 2026,"
-Benedicte Westre Skog, COO of Norway Chess.

T20 WC BOYCOTT ROW

Broadcasters may move court against PCB

Karachi/New Delhi

THE ICC has warned the Pakistan Cricket Board that it faces the prospect of legal action from T20 World Cup's official broadcasters JioStar for boycotting its February 15 game against India, a PCB source said on Tuesday.

Pakistan decided to boycott the match in Colombo on February 15 on instructions of their government but haven't yet officially specified the reasons to ICC. As reported by PTI, there is a possibility that the ICC will withhold the entire annual revenue share of Pakistan, which is around USD 35 million and pay the broadcasters from that purse.

A PCB source informed that although chairman Mohsin Naqvi had taken advice from the board's legal experts before briefing PM Shehbaz Sharif on the issue last week, the board is bracing for some serious consequences.

"If Pakistan doesn't relent and play against India, not only will they face financial penalties, perhaps a lawsuit from broadcasters but also any efforts to go to the ICC Dispute Resolution Committee (DRC) are likely to fail," a PCB source told PTI.

ICC's DRC is an internal committee which doesn't hear appeals against the decisions made by its own board. "The PCB might face problems regardless of their government directive to not play India as they are playing all their matches at a neutral venue (Sri Lanka) as per their wishes and not in India," another PCB source said.

"Secondly, while the Indian government has not given permission to its team to play in Pakistan, it has not stopped them from playing against Pakistan at neutral venues in Asia Cup or ICC events even after the May conflict," the board source, who tracks Naqvi closely, added.

"When the ICC signed its four year deal with the broadcaster for all ICC events, the contract included Pakistan and India matches based on which the broadcaster made the payments to the ICC," the source explained.

"So the broadcaster will be within its rights to take the PCB and ICC to court over a major breach of the contract." It is reliably learnt that the PCB approached other members boards for support on the matter but failed to find any backers.

There is a school of thought that Naqvi, who is also the interior minister of his country, might just make a U-turn once the general elections are held in Bangladesh on February 12 and a democratic government takes charge instead of the present one headed by Mohammed Yunus.

"There would still be two days before the India game and things could just change. Else he knows that Pakistan could be ostracised," another source tracking Pakistan cricket said.

ICC, PCB open 'back-channel talks'

NEW DELHI: Pakistan's decision to boycott their T20 World Cup group match against India has reportedly prompted "back-channel talks" between the International Cricket Council (ICC) and the Pakistan Cricket Board amid concerns over potential financial fallout.

Pakistan's boycott decision could reportedly cost world cricket more than 250 million dollars.

As per The Dawn report, a few other cricket boards have also extended support to the ICC in its attempt to reach an understanding with PCB.

It is currently unclear whether Pakistan will be sanctioned for the move, with the ICC urging the PCB to consider the significant and long-term implications if the boycott were to go ahead.

"While the ICC awaits official communication from the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB), this position of selective participation is difficult to reconcile with the fundamental premise of a global sporting event where all qualified teams are expected to compete on equal terms per the event schedule," the ICC said.

T20 WC: Ticket sales of third stage begin

NEW DELHI: The BCCI announced the commencement of the third stage of ticket sales for the upcoming T20 World Cup following the two successful ticketing windows, with Phase 1 launched on December 11, 2025, and Phase 2 on January 14, 2026.

This latest phase provides fans with a further opportunity to secure seats for matches across the tournament, which will bring together the world's leading teams, the BCCI said in a release.

The T20 World Cup, starting on Saturday, will be staged at some of India's most recognised cricketing venues, creating an environment where fans can witness elite international players and the intensity that defines the T20 format throughout the competition.

As preparations across host cities move into final stages, the BCCI, in close coordination with the stakeholders, continues to focus on venue readiness, operational planning, and match-day experience.

ICC Under-19 World Cup

India favourites against Afghanistan in semis clash

Unbeaten Men in Blue in pursuit of record 6th U-19 WC title

HARARE: Unbeaten so far in the tournament, a confident and all-round India will be overwhelming favourites against Afghanistan in the semifinal of the ICC Under-19 World Cup here on Wednesday. India are the most successful team in the history of the event, having annexed the title five times (2000, 2008, 2012, 2018, 2022), followed by Australia, who have won the trophy four times. Come Wednesday, India will look to take one step forward towards a record sixth title.

India have had a great run in the tournament, having won all their five matches quite comfortably, including a 58-run win over arch-rivals Pakistan in the Super Six stage.

Afghanistan too has had a fairly good tournament, winning four out of their five games, their only loss coming against Sri Lanka by four wickets.

Going by form and overall composition, India will hold an edge over the Afghans in the knock-out game. Wicket-keeper batter Abhigyan Kundu has been the star performer for India with the bat as the left-hander has so far amassed 199 runs from five games with two half centuries to his name.

Match starts at 1 pm IST

Big-hitting opener Vaibhav Suryavanshi (196 runs in 5 matches with 2 fifties) too has been in good form but the team management would want him to convert his half-centuries into three-figure scores.

All-rounder Vihaan Malhotra (172 runs from 5 games) is the other Indian batter to look out for. He struck the lone century (109 not out) against Zimbabwe in group stages. Skipper Ayush Mhatre has been consistent with the ball in hand, picking up six wickets with his off-break from five games but there is room for improvement on the batting front. He managed just 99 runs from five games with 53 being his highest. Opener Aaron Geroge's form, however, is a cause of concern for India as the right-handed batter could manage only 46 runs from three outings.

TEAMS

India U-19: Aaron George, Abhigyan Kundu, Harvansh Pangalia, Vaibhav Sooryavanshi, Vedant Trivedi, Ayush Mhatre (c), Vihaan Malhotra, RS Ambrish, Kanishk Chouhan, Khilan Patel, Deepesh Devendran, Henil Patel, Mohamed Enaan, Udhav Mohan, Kishan Singh.

Afghanistan U-19: Mahboob Khan (c), Azizullah Miakhil, Faisal Shinozada, Khalid Ahmadzai, Osman Sadat, Uzairullah Niazai, Abdul Aziz, Aqil Khan, Khatir Stanikzai, Nazifullah Amiri, Nooristani Omarzai, Roohullah Arab, Salam Khan, Wahidullah Zadran, Zaitullah Shaheen.

India to host next year's Asian Rifle/Pistol C'ship

NEW DELHI: India will host next year's Asian Rifle/Pistol Championship in Delhi where eight quota places for the 2028 Los Angeles Olympics will be up for grabs, marking a historic first for the country's shooting calendar which already features an Olympic qualifier in the World Cup. The eight slots in the Asian competition will be in addition to the 12 quota places that will be on offer in the World Cup (Rifle/Pistol/Shotgun) from April 21 to 30 next year, also to be held in Delhi. The allotment of the Asian event was confirmed by the Asian Shooting Confederation in a letter to the National Rifle Association of India (NRAI) president Kalikesh Singh Deo. The NRAI stated that the dates for the Asian qualifier will be finalised in due course. "We congratulate National Rifle Association of India for winning the hosting rights of Asian Rifle/Pistol Championship 2027 where eight Quota Places will be distributed for the LA 2028 Olympics.

"We are confident that, under your leadership, the championship will be organised to the highest standards and will be a great success," the letter, which is in PTI's possession, stated.

Vasavi College of Engg wins OU inter-college chess title

Hans News Service
Hyderabad

Vasavi College of Engineering emerged champions at the OU Inter-College Chess Championships, organised by Vivekananda Government Degree College, Vidyanagar, here on Tuesday. The two-day tournament was conducted in a Round Robin League format and witnessed keen competition among leading city colleges.

Vasavi College topped the standings with 15.5 points, with Varshith, Sainath, Sharath, Shyam and Sai Vardhan delivering consistent performances.

Dr B.R. Ambedkar College finished runners-up with 14.5 points, led by strong outings from Akshay Kumar, Nelson, Nikhil, Manish Kumar and Kumar Raj Thota. C.B.I.T. secured third place with 14 points, while Bhavans Vivekananda finished fourth with 13.5 points.

Prof Bala Bhaskar, Joint Director of Collegiate Education, attended as chief guest and distributed prizes to the winners. Dr K Prabhu, Principal, Vivekananda Government Degree College, Prof Rajesh Kumar, Dean, Faculty of Education, Prof K Deepla, Director, DPE, and Prof S Jagan Mohan, Organising Secretary, were present. The tournament was inaugurated by philanthropist Nakka Srinivas Yadav.

Punitive demolitions persist in UP despite SC ban on bulldozer action: Allahabad HC

Prayagraj

TAKING a stern note of alleged demolition drives in Uttar Pradesh, the Allahabad High Court has observed that punitive demolition of structures continues to take place in the state despite the Supreme Court's November 2024 ruling that "bulldozer justice" is simply unacceptable under the rule of law.

A two-judge bench of Justices Atul Sreedharan and Siddhartha Nandan also asked the state government whether demolishing a structure immediately after the commission of an offence was a colourable exercise of executive discretion.

The bench observed that it came across various cases in which the notice for demolition was issued to the occupants immediately after the commission of an offence. Thereafter, the dwelling places were demolished after the ostensible fulfilment of statutory requirements, it said.

Therefore, bearing in mind the "overarching" nature of the case, spanning the right of the state to demolish a structure and the rights of its occupants under Articles 14 and 21 of the Constitution of India, the court fixed February 9 as the next date for hearing.

In the order passed on January 21, the court observed, "Preliminary submissions have been made by both sides. The case of the petitioners appears to be that though the petitioners are not co-accused in the FIR, the respondents issued a notice to Petitioner No. 2, who owns the residential house in which they dwell, immediately after the commission of the offence and registration of the FIR." The court said the respondents have sealed a commercial property registered in the name of Petitioner No. 3 as 'Indian Lodge', and a saw mill, the licence of which was renewed in the name of Petitioner No. 2 on February 11, 2025, and its renewal is pending. The petitioners have expressed an apprehension that their properties have been marked for "destruction by mechanical means" (a euphemism for bulldozer action).

"The obvious primary prayer is judicial intervention to prevent the anticipated destruction of the properties," the court said. The bench was hearing a petition filed by Faimuddeen and others, who claimed that their relative, Aafan Khan, was booked under various sections of the BNS, POCSO Act, IT Act and the UP Prohibition of Unlawful Religious Conversion Act. The petitioners claimed that though they were not co-accused in the FIR, they were targeted by a mob allegedly in collusion with the police.

The Uttar Pradesh government, however, termed the petition "premature" and said the petitioners must respond to the notices issued to them.

MP cough syrup deaths

4-yr-old dies months after being in coma

Betul

A four-year-old boy died at AIIMS-Nagpur, months after he fell critically ill and slipped into a coma after allegedly consuming Coldrif cough syrup in Madhya Pradesh's Chhindwara district, an official said on Monday.

According to the official, Harsh, from Tikabarri village of Betul district bordering Chhindwara district, had been in a coma for more than four months and was admitted to the intensive care unit (ICU), but died during treatment on Sunday night. Betul Chief Medical and Health Officer (CMHO) Dr Manoj Hurmade confirmed the child's death and said the post-mortem examination was conducted in Nagpur on Monday, and the body was handed over to the family.

The cause of death would be ascertained after the post-mortem report, Dr Hurmade said. Harsh's uncle, Shyam Yadav, said over the phone that the child's last rites were performed on Monday evening.

Yadav said his nephew was undergoing treatment under Dr S S Thakur in Parasia, Chhindwara, and the child's condition deteriorated after consuming the cough syrup prescribed by him.

Harsh remained admitted at the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) for months, his uncle said. In October 2025, children in Parasia town of Chhindwara district began falling ill after consuming Coldrif cough syrup, with complaints of vomiting, inability to urinate and fever. Investigations revealed that the syrup contained diethylene glycol, a toxic chemical that causes kidney failure.

Around two dozen children from Chhindwara and Betul districts had died in the incident, following which the Drug Controller General of India also conducted a probe.

US-India trade deal

BJP attacking farmers again, govt must answer: Akhilesh

Lucknow

SAMAJWADI Party president Akhilesh Yadav on Tuesday slammed the government over the India-US trade deal, saying opening Indian markets to American agricultural produce amounted to "betrayal" of nearly 70 per cent of the country's population dependent on farming. His remarks came after India and the US agreed to a trade deal under which Washington will bring down the reciprocal tariff on Indian goods to 18 per cent from a total 50 per cent.

Yadav claimed that the BJP and its associates were "agents of foreign interests" even before Independence and continued to be so today.

Targeting the ruling party, the former Uttar Pradesh chief minister said BJP leaders should explain to the public how much "commission" they had earned by compromising the country's economy.

Yadav said such policies would not only harm farmers but also adversely impact the lower middle class and middle class by encouraging profiteering in foodgrains and agricultural products and creating a new class of middlemen, leading to a rise in prices. He alleged that the BJP would also collect donations from corporate entities, making food items even costlier.

These steps would gradually reduce farmers' income, forcing them to sell their land to wealthy individuals and corporates, Yadav said. "Capturing land is the ultimate objective of the BJP and its associates," he alleged.

Referring to the proposed Seed Bill, Yadav described it as "fatal for Indian agriculture" and alleged that it was the product of an anti-farmer mindset of the BJP government. He accused the ruling party of bringing land acquisition laws, humiliating people by forcing them to stand in fertiliser queues every year, and promoting corporate interests linked to seeds, pesticides, storage silos, crop insurance and agricultural trade.

Yadav called for organised resistance against such policies, asserting that farmers already troubled by issues such as stray cattle would no longer tolerate the government's actions. He alleged that the BJP had been, was and would remain anti-farmer, and said it was time to "remove BJP, save fields, farming and farmers."

Relief for our exporters': Abdullah welcomes US' tariff cut

JAMMU: Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Tuesday welcomed the US government's decision to bring down reciprocal tariffs on Indian goods, saying this would bring relief to many exporters in the country who were facing difficulties in view of the increased tariff.

US President Donald Trump on Monday announced that India and the US have agreed on a trade deal under which Washington will reduce the reciprocal tariff on Indian goods to 18 per cent from the current 25 per cent.

The announcement is crucial for India as the US imposed a steep 50 per cent tariff on Indian goods entering American markets from August 27, 2025. "These tariffs were proving to be quite burdensome for us, and we also know very well why these tariffs were imposed. The United States was not happy with the fact that we buy oil from Russia. Trump announced that the Indian government has now stopped purchasing oil from Russia, and because of that, the tariffs will no longer be imposed on us," the chief minister told reporters in the Assembly lawns here.

Sabarimala gold case

Uproar in Kerala Assembly as UDF alleges CMO interference

Thiruvananthapuram

DRAMATIC scenes unfolded in the Kerala Assembly on Tuesday over the Sabarimala gold loss issue after a Congres MLA tried to climb onto the Speaker's Chair that forced an adjournment, the opposition declaring non-cooperation in the House and the government calling it "unfortunate" and "deplorable." Alleging interference by the Chief Minister's office in the SIT probe into the Sabarimala gold loss cases, the Congress-led UDF opposition boycotted Assembly proceedings, declaring that it would no longer cooperate with the House.

Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan termed the opposition conduct as "unfortunate" and "deplorable". Leader of Opposition in the Assembly, V D Satheesan, informed Speaker A N Shamseer about the UDF's boycott decision as the House proceedings commenced. As the opposition protest continued in the House amidst the question hour, Congress MLA Anwar Sadath suddenly attempted to climb onto the Speaker's dais, leading to Shamseer stopping the proceedings for around 30 minutes and leaving for his chamber. Satheesan alleged that there was government interference in the probe and that even the Kerala High Court observed there was delay in filing of charge sheet in the Sabarimala gold cases by the Special Investigation Team (SIT). He said that the High Court also observed that there was a "laxity" in the SIT probe.

The LoP claimed that conditions were being created so that the accused in the two cases can come out on statutory bail and thus, "stonewall" the investigation. He said that if the accused are released from jail, there was every possibility that the evidence in the cases would be destroyed.