



PV Sindhu enters Maiden Super 750 Final at Japan Open

TOKYO [JAPAN], JULY 18: Indian badminton star PV Sindhu advanced to the women's singles final of the Japan Open 2026 after her semi-final opponent Chen Yufei of the People's Republic of China retired hurt midway through the second game on Saturday.

The Olympic medallist, ranked 12th in the world, was leading the match 21-19, 15-10 at the Tokyo Metropolitan Gymnasium when Chen, the world No. 4 and former Olympic champion, withdrew due to a hamstring injury, according to Olympics.com.

Sindhu will now take on Japan's world No. 3 Akane Yamaguchi in the title clash on Sunday. Yamaguchi booked her place in the final after defeating Indonesia's sixth-ranked Putri Kusuma Wardani in the other semi-final. The final will mark Sindhu's first appearance in a BWF World Tour title clash since she won the Syed



Modi International Super 300 tournament in December 2024. It will also be her maiden final appearance at a BWF Super 750 event.

Coming into the semi-final with an 8-6 head-to-head record against Chen, Sindhu made a strong start and raced to a 16-11 lead in

the opening game. However, Chen, who had defeated Sindhu in their previous four meetings, fought back to level the score at 18-18. Sindhu held her nerve in the closing stages to take the first game 21-19.

The Indian continued her momentum in the second

game and maintained the lead before Chen was forced to stop the contest after 44 minutes due to injury, according to Olympics.com.

Sindhu's previous win over Chen had come in the semi-finals of the 2019 BWF World Championships, where the Indian went on to claim the title. Maps

With this victory, Sindhu became the first Indian shuttler to reach the Japan Open final. She is also the only Indian player remaining in the tournament this year.

India's campaign in the event saw early exits for Lakshya Sen and Ayush Shetty, who were knocked out in the opening round, while the men's doubles pair of Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty had to retire hurt during their first match. The mixed doubles pair of Dhruv Kapila and Tanisha Crasto also bowed out in the pre-quarterfinals. (ANI)

BJP felicitates Chess Champions, reaffirms commitment to promote Sports in J&K

HIMALAYAN MAIL NEWS
JAMMU, JULY 18

Reinforcing the Bharatiya Janata Party's commitment to encouraging sports and nurturing young talent, J&K BJP President and Rajya Sabha MP Sat Sharma along with party General Secretary (Organization) Ashok Koul led the prize distribution ceremony of the Chess Championship organized by the BJP Sports Cell at the party headquarters, Trikuta Nagar, Jammu.

The championship was organized by the BJP Sports Cell under the leadership of its Convenor Kuldeep Gupta with the active support of the All J&K Chess Association (AJCA). The event witnessed enthusiastic participation from chess players across different age groups and served as a platform to identify and encourage emerging talent.

J&K BJP Vice-President Rekha Mahajan, All Cells Incharge Ved Sharma, MLAs Ch. Vikram Randhawa, and Kuldeep Dubey, along with other senior party leaders, were present on the occasion.

In the Open Category, Pazhany secured the first position, Mitansh Magotra finished second, while Rajyavardhan claimed the third position. In the Under-7 Category, Nirvaan Chopra emerged as the win-



ner, followed by Aadit Chopra in second place and Triyansh Sharma in third. Kiaana Gupta was honoured as the Best Woman Player, while Ivaan Gandotra received the Youngest Player award.

Congratulating the winners and participants, Sat Sharma said that sports play a crucial role in shaping disciplined, confident and healthy youth. He said Prime Minister Narendra Modi has consistently emphasized the importance of sports as a tool for nation-building through the vision of "Khelega India, Badhega India." He added that the BJP will continue organizing such sporting events across Jammu & Kashmir to motivate young talent, provide them with opportunities to excel and

strengthen the sporting culture in every district of the Union Territory.

Ashok Koul said that chess is not merely a game but a discipline that sharpens the mind, develops strategic thinking and enhances decision-making abilities. He appreciated the BJP Sports Cell for successfully organizing the championship and said the party remains committed to promoting sporting activities alongside social and organizational initiatives. He urged parents to encourage children to actively participate in sports for their overall personality development.

Ved Sharma said that sports connect society beyond barriers and help channel the energy of youth in a positive direction. He

emphasized that BJP's various cells will continue reaching every section of society through constructive activities. Ch. Vikram Randhawa appreciated the enthusiastic participation of young players and said such competitions inspire confidence and healthy competition among the youth. He assured continued support for initiatives that promote sports at the grassroots level.

Kuldeep Dubey congratulated all participants and said every player who took part in the championship is a winner for displaying dedication, discipline and sportsmanship. He expressed confidence that many of these young players would bring laurels to Jammu & Kashmir in the future.

FIFA World Cup 2026

Argentina eye back-to-back glory, Spain chase second WC title in blockbuster final

NEW YORK [US], JULY 18: Argentina, the reigning FIFA World Cup champions, and Spain, winners of UEFA Euro 2024, will clash in New York/New Jersey for football's ultimate prize. <

The World Cup final between Spain and Argentina will be played at the New York New Jersey Stadium on Sunday (local time).

Spain, the reigning European champions, are aiming for their first FIFA World Cup crown since 2010, while Lionel Messi's Argentina seek back-to-back titles.

Defending champions Argentina secured a thrilling 2-1 comeback win over England in the semifinal, overturning a first-half deficit with Enzo Fernandez scoring the equaliser before Lautaro Martinez netted the stoppage-time winner to send the defending champions into the title clash against Spain.

The win over England sent Argentina into the World Cup 2026 final, while England's hopes of reaching their first World Cup final since 1966 came to a heart-breaking end.

Spain, on the other hand, secured a place in the FIFA World Cup final for the first time since their 2010 triumph after defeating France 2-0 with a composed performance.

Lamine Yamal played a key role in the win, winning a penalty after dispossessing Lucas Digne, which Mikel Oyarzabal converted in the 22nd minute to give Spain



the lead. Pedro Porro doubled Spain's advantage after the break following a fine move with Dani Olmo, while France struggled to create clear chances.

Yamal had a goal ruled out for offside, and despite late efforts from Kylian Mbappe and Aurelien Tchouameni, Spain's defence held firm to secure their sixth clean sheet in seven tournament matches. The victory booked Spain's second-ever World Cup final appearance. GeographicReference

Spain coach Luis de la Fuente anticipates the FIFA World Cup 2026 final against Argentina in New Jersey on Sunday (local time) is going to be "a cracking match".

Ahead of the final, Luis de la Fuente said the clash against Argentina is going to be a "cracking match," saying both teams share a simi-

lar footballing philosophy and are committed to playing an entertaining game where talent, quality and attacking football take centre stage.

"There are two top-class sides, two superb teams with many similarities - in their approach to the game and in the talent of their players - so I think it's going to be a cracking match. I believe that, in terms of our approach, both Argentina and Spain - Spain and Argentina alike - are setting out to play a match where brilliance, talent and good football will prevail over any other factor," he said as quoted by Reuters.

On the other hand, Argentina coach Lionel Scaloni said that the team needs to "bring out best version" to win the FIFA World Cup 2026 final against Spain. GeographicReference

Ahead of the final, Lionel Scaloni said Argentina has prepared as they do for every match by studying their opponents and focusing on delivering their best performance.

He added that despite being a well-known team, Argentina have earned their place in the final on merit and will do everything possible to win the title.

"We prepare just like in every match, with a lot of desire for things to go well for us, with a willingness to analyse the opponent. We need to bring out our best version to try to win. I think we're doing well, beyond things we can always improve. We're a team that's already well-known by our rivals, and that's why it has double merit to have reached where we have. We'll try to win the final," he said during the pre-match press conference.

Commonwealth Games 2026: Mirabai Chanu to lead India as flag bearer, Lovlina Borgohain named baton bearer

NEW DELHI, JULY 18: Olympic medallists Mirabai Chanu and Lovlina Borgohain will lead the Indian contingent at the opening ceremony of the Commonwealth Games 2026 in Glasgow, with the Indian Olympic Association (IOA) naming the weightlifting star as the country's flag bearer and the boxer as baton bearer.

The duo will perform the ceremonial honours during the opening ceremony at the OVO Hydro on July 23, marking the beginning of India's campaign at the Games, according to

Olympics.com.

Announcing the decision on Saturday, IOA president PT Usha expressed confidence in the experienced Olympians and said, "It is a matter of pride that Mirabai and Lovlina will be doing the honours at the OVO Hydro. I wish both the girls and the entire contingent good luck."

Mirabai, India's Tokyo Olympics silver medallist, will carry the Tricolour during the athletes' parade, while Lovlina, who won bronze at the Tokyo Games, will carry the ceremonial

King's Baton.

For the Glasgow edition, each of the 74 Commonwealth nations and territories has been presented with a specially designed baton reflecting its unique culture and identity. The batons will be brought together during the opening ceremony before the Games are officially declared open.

The ceremony will also mark a change from the 2022 Commonwealth Games in Birmingham, where every participating nation had two flag bearers—one male and one female.

WMDA holds day long Water Sports Festival

HIMALAYAN MAIL NEWS
JAMMU, JULY 18

The Wullar-Manasbal Development Authority (WMDA) organized a day long Manasbal Water Sports Festival today at the scenic Manasbal Lake.

The event was organised in collaboration with a local tourism sports group-Swim N Survival Society Kashmir (SSSK). The festival witnessed enthusiastic participation from around 200 school going children, athletes and water sports enthusiasts, making it one of the largest water sports events held at the lake in recent times.

The event featured a variety of exciting competitions, including Open Water Swimming, Kayaking, Paddle Boat Race, Shikara Race for Local Boatmen and other events.



The festival was aimed to promote water recreational activities, encourage healthy outdoor recreation and showcase the tourism and sporting potential of Manasbal Lake.

Winners of the events were later on felicitated by Chief Executive Officer, Dr.

Ahsanul Haq Chishti.

Speaking on the occasion, the CEO congratulated all participants and winners and reaffirmed WMDA's commitment to promoting water recreational activities and adventure tourism in the region. He said WMDA would be holding such

events in the times to come as well. Thanking the Swim N Survive Society for their support, the CEO assured Authority's continued support for future initiatives aimed at developing Manasbal Lake as a premier destination for water recreational activities.

'Preparations are going quite well,' says Ashi Chouksey as rifle shooter targets another golden chapter in Hangzhou

NEW DELHI [INDIA], JULY 18:

Three years after announcing herself on the continental stage with a memorable three-medal haul at the Asian Games in Hangzhou, India's rifle shooter Ashi Chouksey returns to the same Chinese city carrying India's medal hopes once again, this time at the ISSF World Cup (Rifle/Pistol/Shotgun), with an eye on building momentum for the Aichi-Nagoya Asian Games later this year.

The Indian rifle and pistol team departed for Hangzhou on Friday night for the ISSF World Cup 2026, where Chouksey will compete in the women's 50m Rifle 3 Positions event. Having won two silver medals and an individual bronze at the 2023 Asian Games in the same city, the 24-year-old will be one of India's biggest medal prospects as she looks to replicate or better that performance.

Speaking during the Media Day organised by the National Rifle Association of India (NRAI) before the team's departure, Chouksey said preparations for the busy international season had been progressing well.

"Preparations are going quite well,



and in the previous Asian Games held in 2023, I was the first one to win three medals in it. So I think everyone has a lot of expectations that many medals will come this time too. For the Asian Games, I am consistently practising and trying to improve every aspect of my shooting, my mental health, my physicality, everything. So it's going quite well," she said.

After using Hangzhou as the launchpad for one of the finest performances by an Indian shooter at the 2023 Asian Games, Chouksey now sees the ISSF World Cup as another important opportunity before the Indian contingent heads to Aichi-Nagoya for the 20th Asian Games later this year. Maps

Apart from refining her technique on

the range, Chouksey revealed that yoga has become a key part of her training routine, helping her improve concentration and breathing control -- an essential aspect of precision shooting.

"For the vision, I think I have been doing yoga for the last few months. I think it is really helping me with shooting. I started it around eight months ago, and I am doing it continuously. So I think breathing keeps me very focused in shooting. I think it is very important because for every shot, breathing is very important. So I am doing yoga and physical training, like our gym training," she said.

The shooter also acknowledged the role of India's support staff in ensuring athletes remain physically prepared throughout a packed competition calendar.

"I think my physical trainers are working hard on me so that I can be in good shape for the Asian Games and every upcoming competition. Thanks to the federation for providing us with the best trainers, best nutritionists, and everyone who is working hard on every athlete who is going and us," she said.