



Punjab's weightlifter Lovepreet, a tailor's son, wins Commonwealth Games silver

JALANDHAR, JULY 31: Punjab's Lovepreet Singh, hailing from Bal Sachandar village in Amritsar district, won the silver medal in the men's +110 kg weightlifting event at the 2026 Commonwealth Games.

Lovepreet lifted a total of 388 kg (176 kg in the snatch and 212 kg in the clean and jerk). The silver medal comes four years after he claimed bronze at the 2022 Commonwealth Games.

Born into a humble family that survived on 'mehnat mazdoori'—as Lovepreet's father, Kirpal Singh, says—Lovepreet's journey to the international stage was far from easy. His grandfather, Gurmej Singh, and paternal uncle earned a living by selling vegetables. Before leaving for training, Lovepreet would accompany them to the wholesale vegetable market at 5 am to help unload the vegetables. Only after finishing the work he would head to practice.

Lovepreet took up weightlifting while studying in Class VIII. Inspired by weightlifters from his village, he dreamt of making a name for himself in the sport. The turning point came when

another youngster from Bal Sachandar won a silver medal at the state level.

"The entire village celebrated that achievement. Seeing the joy it brought, we wanted our son to take up sports and build a better future. Lovepreet was equally motivated," recalled his father, Kirpal, a tailor.

The hard work soon paid off.

While in Class IX, Lovepreet won his first state-level medal, giving him the confidence to pursue the sport seriously.

Lovepreet trained at a college ground located far from his home. Every day, his father would take him on a bicycle to the bus stop. From there, Lovepreet would take an auto-rickshaw to the ground.

"That was our daily routine. That's how the struggle began," said Kirpal. Anti-paper Leak Bill

On his son's achievement, an emotional Kirpal said, "After the bronze medal earlier and now the silver, I cannot express what I am feeling. It is all because of the Almighty that we have lived to see these happy days. Otherwise, we didn't have much."



Dey clinches 48kg judo gold for India

GLASGOW, JULY 31: India's Asmita Dey produced a spirited comeback to clinch the women's 48kg judo gold medal, defeating Canada's Heidi Quach in a dramatic golden score contest at the Commonwealth Games here on Friday.

The 23-year-old from Tripura found herself on the back foot early in the final after conceding a yuko and then receiving a penalty, allowing Quach to take control of the bout.

However, Asmita responded brilliantly, attacking with greater intent and levelling the scores at 1-1 shortly after the midway stage of the four-minute contest.

Neither judoka could find

the decisive score during regulation time despite a series of intense exchanges, forcing the match into the Golden Score period, where the first scoring action determines the winner.

Maintaining her composure under pressure, Asmita launched a decisive attack in sudden-death overtime and earned another yuko to seal a memorable victory and hand India the gold medal.

The triumph capped an impressive campaign for the young judoka, who showed remarkable resilience to recover from an early deficit and outfight her Canadian opponent in a gripping final.



Rana calls for revival of willow cultivation to sustain Kashmir's cricket bat industry

SRINAGAR, JULY 31: Minister for Jal Shakti, Forest, Ecology & Environment and Tribal Affairs, Javed Ahmed Rana, today directed the concerned departments to launch a coordinated drive to revive willow cultivation across Kashmir and expand plantations to ensure a sustainable supply of quality timber for the cricket bat industry.

The directions were issued during a high-level review meeting convened to deliberate upon the challenges confronting the willow sector and to formulate a long-term roadmap for its revival and growth.

The meeting was attended by Principal Chief Conservator of Forests, J&K, Sarvesh Rai; Chief Conservator of Forests, Kashmir, Irfan Rasool Wani besides senior officers of the Forest Department and other concerned departments.

Addressing the meeting, the Minister observed that Kashmir occupies a unique position as the country's only source of the specialised willow wood used for manufacturing cricket bats, making the region the national hub of the cricket bat industry. He said that hundreds of manufacturing units, predominantly located in south Kashmir's Anantnag district, provide

direct and indirect employment to thousands of people engaged in willow cultivation, timber trade and bat manufacturing.

Rana expressed concern over the declining availability of quality willow timber, describing it as one of the biggest challenges confronting the cricket bat industry. He attributed the shortage to the indiscriminate felling of mature willow trees without adequate replantation, resulting in uncertainty in raw material supply and increased production costs for local manufacturers. "The declining availability of willow timber is a matter of serious concern. Expansion of plantations, introduction of improved willow clones and systematic replantation must become a priority so that the industry continues to flourish without facing any shortages of raw material," Rana asserted.

The Minister also noted that the area under willow

plantations has witnessed a steady decline, particularly on private lands, owing to changing land-use patterns. He stressed that unless timely corrective measures are taken, the long-term sustainability of the industry could be adversely affected.

He called upon the Forest Department to identify suitable low-lying and marshy areas across the Valley for expanding willow plantations, in coordination with the Deputy Commissioners.

It was decided that the State Forest Research Institute (SFRI) will introduce improved willow species and clones and ensure the availability of quality planting material to enhance productivity and sustainability.

"Our objective is to build a self-sustaining willow cultivation ecosystem through scientific management, quality planting material, identification of new plantation areas and greater farmer participation. This



will secure livelihoods while preserving Kashmir's unique position as the country's cricket bat manufacturing hub," asserted the Minister. The Agriculture Department was directed to identify the departmental farms and research blocks for raising quality willow planting material to support large-scale plantation drives. The meeting also deliberated upon scientific management and expansion of government willow plantations, timely disposal of mature and over-mature trees to augment raw material availability, streamlining of the permission system for felling and transportation of willow timber, branding and Geographical Indication (GI) tagging for Kashmir willow bats. Emphasis was also laid on stronger coordination among the Forest, Agriculture, Industries & Commerce, MSME and allied departments to prepare a long-term roadmap for the sector.

Rana directed the concerned departments to work in close coordination and submit a time-bound action plan for implementation of the decisions taken. He stressed that revival of willow resources is vital not only for the cricket bat industry but also for the livelihoods of thousands of families dependent on it.

Ishaan, Triyansh, Prajanya win VCA Summer Cup Chess titles

HIMALAYAN MAIL NEWS JAMMU, JULY 31

Promising Ishaan Choudhary, Tirynash Verma and Prajanaya Mahajan emerged winners in different categories of the VCA Summer Cup-2 Chess Tournament, here today.

Ishaan won in open category while Surinder Gupta remained runners-up and Avni Sharma finished third. Similarly, in the under-15 age group, Triyansh Verma bagged gold, silver went to young Peral Thothla and Aryaveer Sharma was third.

The under-10 title bagged by Prajanya Mahajan while Raesha Thothla was second and Divyansh Khanna finished third.

The event was organized by Vivek Chess Academy (VCA) by involving the young trainees. In total, 22 participants were there to

compete in different age groups competition which was spread over two weeks and the winners were declared on the basis of points earned. Earlier, top four players in each category played the semifinals. The Results: Open: Surinder beat Avni; Ishaan beat Ad-

hyan. Under-15: Pearl beat Bhargavi; Triyansh beat Aryaveer. Under-10: Raesha beat Triyam; Prajanya beat Manushree.

Meanwhile, the VCA felicitated a senior trainee, Amrita Gupta, who has become Senior National Arbiter and got FIDE National Arbiter

title this Month.

Amrita secured grade-A finished third among the 35 participants from across different states of India.

Earlier, the winners of different categories were presented cash prizes worth Rs 3500 and medals by the VCA Director, Vivek Bharti.



J&K Sports Council begins Junior Boys Football trials for National Championship

HIMALAYAN MAIL NEWS JAMMU, JULY 31

The Jammu and Kashmir Sports Council on Friday commenced open selection trials for the Junior Boys Football Team for the 2026-27 Dr. B.C. Roy Trophy National Football Championship, organised under the aegis of the All India Football Federation, with 375 players from across the Union Territory registering for the process.

Simultaneous divisional trials began in Srinagar and Jammu, with selected players set to advance to the UT-level selection camp in Srinagar next week.

As many as 248 from Kashmir division and 127 from Jammu division have registered themselves. The first day of divisional trials was held simultaneously at the Synthetic Turf Football Stadium, TRC, Srinagar for Kashmir division players and at the Mini Stadium Synthetic Turf, Parade

Ground, Jammu for Jammu division players. Divisional trials continue on the second day, 1 August 2026, at the same venues.

Players selected at the divisional stage will proceed to UT level selection trials at the Synthetic Turf Football Stadium, TRC, Srinagar on 3 and 4 August 2026. The trials are open to boys born

between 1 January 2011 and 31 December 2012 who are residents of Jammu and Kashmir.

The players reported in full playing kit and carried original birth certificates issued by the Municipal Corporation or competent authority, Aadhaar cards updated with recent photographs, and passport-

sized photographs for verification process.

The selected players at UT level will undergo a coaching camp in Srinagar, with the final squad announced before the team's screening and departure. In accordance with AIFF guidelines, selected players may be required to undergo Bone Age Verification Tests.



CWG: Haryana players show mettle, 2 silver and one bronze assured

HISAR, JULY 31: From collecting discus throws for teachers practising during school free periods to standing on the Commonwealth Games podium with a bronze medal, discus thrower Seema Kaliraman's journey has been an inspiring one. A mother and PhD scholar at Chaudhary Bansi Lal University, Bhiwani, Seema has realised a childhood dream through years of perseverance.

Hailing from Dinod village in Bhiwani district, known for producing boxers, Seema won the bronze medal in Glasgow with a best throw of 58.65 metres.

Speaking to the media after her victory, Seema said she had nurtured the dream of winning an international medal since childhood, when she used to retrieve discus throws for her teachers during their practice sessions at school. She continued training even during the Covid-19 pandemic, believing that an opportunity would eventually come.

Now 27, a mother and a PhD scholar, Seema finally seized that opportunity by

winning a Commonwealth Games medal.

She stayed away from competition for two seasons due to pregnancy but resumed training within a year of giving birth to her son, Rudra, in 2022. She gradually regained her fitness and strength under the guidance of her husband, Ravinder, a former discus thrower whose own sporting career was cut short by injury and who now serves as her personal coach.

Haryana Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini congratulated Seema, saying her hard work, dedication and

sporting spirit had brought laurels to both Haryana and the country.

Celebrations erupted at her residence in Dinod village after news of her medal-winning performance reached home. Family members and villagers distributed sweets and exchanged greetings, while the Chief Minister also congratulated her on winning the bronze medal. GeographicReference

Meanwhile, Haryana athletes continued their impressive performance at the Commonwealth Games, with two more players as-

suring India of silver medals by reaching the boxing finals.

Preeti Panwar of Bhiwani advanced to the women's 54kg final after registering a convincing 5-0 victory over Zambia's Catherine Mwape in the semifinal. A native of Badsara village in Bhiwani district, Preeti is serving as a Naib Subedar in the Army. Her father, Somveer, is an Assistant Sub-Inspector (ASI) with the Haryana Police. Preeti had earlier won a bronze medal at the 2022 Asian Games and a gold medal at the 2025 World Cup. She will now compete for the gold medal on Saturday.

Soon after Preeti's victory, 19-year-old Ankush Panghal of Bheria village in Hisar district stormed into the men's 80kg final with a unanimous 5-0 win over Canada's Joshua Ofori. GeographicReference

Known for his speed and accurate punching, Ankush has also assured India of at least a silver medal. He dominated the semifinal from start to finish to seal his place in the title clash.

