

Special Olympics Bharat underscores India's sporting journey through the 2026 National Futsal Championship

Faridabad, (UNI)

Special Olympics Bharat-Delhi marks a major milestone in its national competition calendar with the 2026 National Futsal Championship at the campus of Manav Rachna Educational Institutions in Faridabad.

The Championship laid the foundation for structured preparations for the Special Olympics World Summer Games 2027 to be held in Santiago, Chile.

The championship brings together 350 participants representing 20 States, highlighting the expanding reach of futsal as a competitive and inclusive sport for athletes with intellectual disabilities. The event is supported by coaches, officials, volunteers, and technical personnel, whose collective efforts ensure high standards of



competition, athlete safety, and overall event management.

As part of the Healthy Athletes Programme, all participating athletes underwent Special Smiles (oral health) screenings and Fit Feet assessments, reinforcing the organisation's commitment to athlete health and well-being. In addition, Youth Activation initiatives and Athlete Leadership training sessions will be conducted during the championship, reflecting Special Olympics Bharat's belief in the holistic development of athletes and the creation of an inclusive and empowered society.

The Opening Ceremony was held on January 8, 2026 at the Central Lawn, Manav Rachna Educational Institutions Campus, Faridabad.

The ceremony was

presided over by Dr. Mallika Nadda, President, Special Olympics Bharat and Chairperson, SOAP Advisory Council.

The event was honoured by the presence of Chief Guest Vipul Goel, Minister of Revenue & Disaster Management, Urban Local Bodies and Civil Aviation, Government of Haryana, and Guest of Honour Amit Bhalla, Vice President, Manav Rachna Educational Institutions and Advisor, Special Olympics Bharat.

Speaking on the occasion, Dr. Mallika Nadda, President, Special Olympics Bharat, said, "Sport has the ability to reveal strength, discipline, and self-belief in ways few platforms can."

Malaysia Open 2026: Sindhu reaches SF after Yamaguchi suffers injury and discontinues match



Kuala Lumpur, (UNI)

Two-time Olympic medalist PV Sindhu on Friday entered the semi-finals of the Malaysia Open 2026 after third seed Akane Yamaguchi of Japan retired from the quarter final after the first game.

Former world champion Sindhu was declared the winner after her Japanese opponent retired from the match after losing the first game 21-11.

This would be Sindhu's first semi final in an international tournament in 13 months.

Sindhu had reached the quarterfinals with a stunning win over Yamaguchi's compatriot Tomoka Miyazaki on Thursday.

The formidable Yamaguchi didn't look like her old self, as Sindhu raced to a 11-5 lead at the interval in

the first game. In the middle of the exchange, Yamaguchi injured herself while attempting a shot as she sprained her ankle.

Sindhu won the game 21-11 in just 12 minutes. Soon after it ended, Yamaguchi went to the umpire and informed him about her decision to retire from the match and shook hands with Sindhu.

Sindhu last reached the semi-finals at the Syed Modi International in December 2024, where she defeated compatriot Unnati Hoo da in straight games and then easily defeated China's Wu Luo Yu in the final to win the title.

In the semi final Sindhu will either face second seed Chinese player Wang Zi Yi or sixth seed Indonesian player Putri Kusuma Wardani.

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"Best talents from all across the nation are competing in the Senior Nationals. Kho Kho is a modern competitive global sport that offers unmatched thrill and action-packed entertainment," said Sudhanshu Mittal, President, Kho Kho Federation of India (KKFI).

"The matches will be in morning-afternoon sessions and flood lights have been arranged. There are 6 courts including 4 mat courts for the championship. The integration of sports science and technology in Kho Kho has given the game an edge and has elevated its stature," said Upkar Singh Virk, General Secretary KKFI.

The matches will be in league-cum-knockout format with pre-quarter and quarter final matches on January 14, and semi-finals and finals on January 15.

Karnataka swimmers get India's first biomechanical assessment

Bengaluru, (UNI)

Karnataka Swimming Association (KSA) has conducted a pioneering four-day quantitative biomechanical assessment camp for 20 of the state's top swimmers, marking the first time in India that a state swimming association has undertaken such a detailed performance analysis as part of a structured programme. The camp, held at the Centre for Excellence (CSE) campus, aimed to prepare swimmers for the upcoming Asian Games in Aichi-Nagoya, Japan, later this year. The initiative was organised in association with Swimplife Sport Lab, which engaged Niels De Boer, Head Coach of Hellas-Glana, a leading Dutch First Division team, to oversee the assessments.

During the four-day camp, swimmers underwent an extensive evaluation of key performance indicators, including stroke length and rate, wall contact time during turns, take-off and entry angles during starts, underwater trajectory and efficiency, and consistency across repeated trials.

Speaking about the programme, KSA President Gopal Hosur, IPS, said, "This is an important year for swimming with the Asian Games scheduled in September. We want to support our swimmers with the best technology available to enhance their performance. The feedback from this camp was very encouraging, and we will explore more such opportunities in the future."

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Kho Kho Nationals Championship: 76 teams from 26 States and 6 UTs to compete

New Delhi, (UNI)

Thirty-eight men and as many women teams from 26 states, 6 union Territories, 4 Institutions and 3 Associate Member Associations will vie for the title in the 58th Senior National Kho Kho Championship (2025-26) scheduled from January 11 to 15 at Kakinada, Telangana.

In a bid to send best talents to the senior nationals and foster sportsmanship and mutual pride, the central paramilitary forces this year would contest as a combined Central Armed Police Forces (CAPFs) team with players from ITBP and SSB playing under the same banner in both men's and women's category. On the other hand, the state police forces will have a joint team in All India Police Sports Control Board (AIPSCB). It consists of players drawn from state police forces of Maharashtra, Karnataka, Telangana, Andhra Pradesh,



Rajasthan, West Bengal, Uttar Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Punjab.

The union Territories (UTs) participating in the Championship are Jammu & Kashmir, Puducherry, Delhi, Dadra & Nagar Haveli, Chandigarh and Ladakh. The Institutional teams

in the Championship are Airports Authority of India (AAI), Railway Sports Promotion Board (RSPB), All India Police Sports Control Board (AIPSCB) and Central Armed Police Forces (CAPFs). The Associate Member Associations participating in the cham-

pionship are Kolhapur, Vidarbha and Madhya Bharat.

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Courtois keeps Atletico at bay to power Real Madrid into Spanish Super Cup final

Jeddah (Saudi Arabia), (UNI)

Federico Valverde and Rodrygo scored and goalkeeper Thibaut Courtois made a series of fine saves as Real Madrid beat Atletico Madrid 2-1 to qualify for Sunday's Spanish Super Cup final against FC Barcelona.

Atletico dominated the game and had more than twice as many shots as Real, but was only able to beat Courtois once through Alexander Sorloth's second-half header on Thursday. The game was only in its second minute when Jude Bellingham went down under pressure around 10 meters outside the Atletico penalty area, with the referee awarding Real Madrid a free kick.

Valverde hit the ball hard and flat and it was still rising as it hit the back of the Atletico net, leaving goalkeeper Jan Oblak helpless.

Real Madrid began the game by



pressing high and stopping Atletico from moving the ball effectively, but as the half progressed Atletico created enough chances to have scored, only to be frustrated time and again by former Atletico keeper Courtois.

Sorloth had already headed over

away Alex Baena's shot.

The goalkeeper then produced a stunning reflex save to tip over Sorloth's header following a corner and after the Norwegian nodded over Conor Gallagher's cross, Courtois was again at his best to deny Baena, with Gallagher hitting the rebound wide. Atletico started the second half brightly, but it was Real which doubled its lead when Rodrygo latched onto Valverde's through-ball and beat Oblak with a cool finish in the 55th minute. Sorloth finally got the ball in the net with a powerful header three minutes later to get Atletico back into the game.

Courtois pushed another effort from Sorloth wide, before Real Madrid was forced to change both central defenders with Antonio Rudiger and Raul Asencio replaced by Ferland Mendy and Fran Garcia.

Sabalenka, Muchova through to semifinals at Brisbane International

Sydney, (UNI)

World No. 1 Aryna Sabalenka triumphed in straight sets over Madison Keys in a rematch of the 2025 Australian Open final on Friday to reach the semifinals at the Brisbane International.

Sabalenka notched a 6-3, 6-3 victory over Keys, the world No. 7 and reigning Australian Open champion, in one hour and 29 minutes.

It improves Sabalenka's record in Australia since the start of 2023 to 36 wins and two losses in a run that has included two titles at the Australian Open and one at the Brisbane International.

"This place is super special. I always play great here and I'm excited to be back in the semis," she said on court after the match.

Sabalenka will play world No. 20 Karolina Muchova, who beat the fifth-ranked Elena Rybakina earlier in the day, in Saturday's semifinal.



Muchova's 6-2, 2-6, 6-4 victory in two hours four minutes ended Rybakina's 13-match winning streak.

Tied at 4-4 in the third set, Muchova hit a return backhand winner to break Rybakina's serve at a critical point in the match.

In the following game, the 29-year-old Czech hit her third ace to set up a match point, which she converted with a forehand winner.

"It's the first tournament, and so far it couldn't have been better than this," Muchova said of her start to the 2026 season.

Sydney, (UNI)

China opened its AFC U23 Asian Cup campaign on Thursday with a hard-fought goalless draw against Iraq at the Prince Faisal Bin Fahd Stadium.

China's best chance came in the 55th minute when Wang Yudong found himself unmarked inside the box.

However, his close-range volley from a Yang Xi cross was cleared by Iraqi goalkeeper Layth Sajid.

Goalkeeper Li Hao saved a crucial point for China in the closing minutes as he denied Aymen Luay's headers twice from the center of the box.

In another Group D fix-



ture on Thursday, Australia came from behind to beat 10-man Thailand 2-1 with goals from Ethan Alagich and Mathias Macallister.

Aiming to advance into the knockout stage for the first time in the tournament's history, China has sent a strong squad to Sau-

di Arabia, with over 80 percent of the players enjoying consistent playing time in the Chinese Super League.

The team also benefits from the experience of seven players who have already earned senior international caps, including promising young forwards Wang and Behram Abdeweli.

China will take on Australia on Sunday, before facing Thailand next Wednesday.

The tournament features 16 teams divided into four groups, with the top two teams from each group advancing to the quarterfinals.

HIL: Vedanta Kalinga Lancers move to second spot with 2-1 win over Shrachi Bengal Tigers

Chennai, (UNI)

The Vedanta Kalinga Lancers continued their strong start to Men's Hero Hockey India League 2025-26 with a hard-fought 2-1 victory over Shrachi Bengal Tigers at the Mayor Radhakrishnan Hockey Stadium, Chennai, on Thursday. Alexander Hendrickx (52') and Boby Singh Dhami (57') were on target for Vedanta Kalinga Lancers, while Afan Younis (56') scored the lone goal for the Tigers. The win marked the Lancers' second victory on the trot, lifting them to second

place on the points table.

Reflecting on the contest, Head Coach Jay Stacy said, "It was a tough match with momentum swings. The first quarter was ours, the second belonged to the Tigers, which is how high-level hockey often goes. After that it was quite even, but we made a few turnovers by going for too much too soon."

Highlighting areas of focus, he added, "We need to reduce those turnovers, maintain possession, stay brave, follow the game plan and trust our process to keep creating opportunities."

Speaking on the development of young Indian players within the squad, Stacy said, "Playing alongside some of the world's best is a great learning experience. Our young Kalinga Lancers players are learning both on and off the pitch through preparation, studying opponents and understanding the demands of this level. Even when they haven't had extended pitch time yet, they're absorbing a lot, and we'll continue to rotate the squad to remain competitive."



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