

# NEWSLETTER



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NEERAJ CHOPRA

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# NEERAJ CHOPRA

## exemplifies art of adaptation, expands boundaries in Brussels Diamond League



Neeraj Chopra

All elite sportspersons quickly adapt to local weather conditions. Adaptation comes through training in different environments over a period of time. The high degree of mental and physical conditioning also enables elite athletes to perform to their potential in the face of stiff challenges.

India's celebrated 26-year-old javelin thrower, Neeraj Chopra, has on several occasions illustrated that he has the ability to push beyond boundaries when it matters the most.

At the year-end Brussels Diamond League Finals on September 14, despite a fractured

left hand, he stepped on to the field to showcase his class.

He narrowly missed the title in Brussels. Chopra's best attempt was 87.86m while the eventual winner, Anderson Peters of Grenada, took home the trophy with a throw of 87.87m.

The 2024 Olympic year turned out to be a long competitive season for Chopra. He began his quest to defend his Olympic Games title with the Doha Diamond League in May.

Despite niggles he continued to stay in the race for a podium finish at the Paris Olympic Games, held between July 26 to August 11. He finished with a silver medal to go with his Tokyo Games gold, becoming the first Indian track and field athlete to win back-to-back Olympic medals. "All are at par in the Olympics. It all depends on who is able to give his best on the given day," Chopra said after winning silver in Paris.

Post Olympics, Chopra's focus was to excel at the year-end prestigious one-day Diamond League in Belgium. He narrowly missed the trophy and settled for second place.

Chopra's long association with German bio-mechanic expert Klaus Bartonietz, who was instrumental in keeping him in top mental and physical condition to win back-to-back Olympic Games medals, ended post the Paris Olympic Games. The coach has decided to take a break from coaching. Chopra also won back-to-back medals at the World Athletics Championships under Bartonietz.

To prepare for the 2025 season, the Indian javelin thrower will be training with a new coach. That is after addressing fitness issues.

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# Army distance runner Gulveer Singh's next target is **2025 World Championships**

**A** rmy's 26-year-old 2022 Asian Games men's 10,000m bronze medallist thrice etched his name in record books this year and wants to continue his good run next year, a season that includes the World Championships in Japan.

"Steady performances over the past four months has given a big boost to his confidence," Radhakrishnan Nair, India's chief athletics coach, said. "He needs to work more to stay on course to qualify for the 2025 World Athletics Championships."

The World Athletics Championships, to be held in Tokyo from September 13, 2025, has a tough entry standard. The qualification time for men's 5,000m is 13:01.00 while it is 27:00.00 is for the 10,000m. The Indian army runner will focus on 5,000m. The qualification window for 10,000m opened on February 25, 2024. It will close on August 24, 2025. For other track events entry standard can be achieved from August 1, 2024 to August 24 2025.

While Gulveer Singh is the leading distance track runner in the country, Kartik Kumar also from the army's stable is the second best. Kartik Kumar whose personal best in 10,000m is 28:01.90 seconds had also won silver at the 2022 Hangzhou Asian Games in China. His personal best in the 5,000m track race is 13:37.64 seconds.

Gulveer Singh's first record breaking performance of this year was in 10,000m, on the USA track circuit in June. He clocked 27:41.81 seconds to become the first male Indian athlete to break the 28-minute barrier for the 25-lap race.

He went on to improve the national 5,000m record to 13:18.92 seconds at the 2024 Portland Track Festival in June. His third record-breaking



performance was clocking 13:11.82 seconds over 5,000m in the World Athletics Continental Tour in the Japanese city of Niigata in the last week of September.

"Consistent performance in 10,000m and 5,000m was a good learning experience. All the good work should be beneficial to prepare for the 2025 season," the Hangzhou Asian Games bronze medallist said.

The qualification system for World Athletics Championships is a combination of entry standard and world ranking. Each event has specific quota places -- August 24, 2025 is the deadline to qualify for the global meet.

The men's 5,000m has a quota of 42 athletes while 27 athletes can compete in the 10,000m at the Worlds.

## Gulveer Singh to lead

Army's 26 years old Asian Games bronze medalist in men's 10,000m track race, Gulveer Singh will be among eight-member senior team that will represent India at the Asian Cross Country scheduled to be held on October 20 in Hong Kong. Gulveer Singh had an excellent run on the track this season. Earlier, in the last week of September he improved his national 5,000m track record to 13:11.82 seconds during the World Athletics Continental Tour in Japan. The Athletics Federation of India (AFI) selection committee has also selected the national team in senior and junior group for the South Asian Cross-Country Championship to be held on November 24 in Islamabad, Pakistan. "The participation of the athletes at the South Asian Cross-Country Championship in Pakistan will be subject to fitness," Adille Sumariwalla, president AFI said. National team that will compete at the Asian Cross Country will also get the opportunity to compete at the South Asian Cross Country in Pakistan in November. "But if any athlete is unfit will be dropped from the national squad," the AFI president added.

### Team

**Men:** Gulveer Singh, Karthik Kumar, Abhishek Pal, Arun Rathod.

Women: Ankita, Seema, Sanjivani Jadhav, Sonika.

**Junior:** Men: Amardeep Pal, Kripashankar Yadav, Vinod Singh, Gaurav Bhaskar Bhosale.

**Women:** Ekta Dey, Sunita Devi, Shilpa Dhiora, Prachi Ankush Devkar.

## Jay Kumar's steady performance graph at World U20 augurs well for future

Delhi's international teenage runner Jay Kumar was the most consistent quarter-miler in the junior group this year.

Highlight of his performance graph was season and personal best of 46.86 seconds clocked during South Asian



Athletics Federation competition held earlier in September in Chennai. Delhi's 18 years old gave his best at 2024 World U20 Athletics Championships held in August

in Lima, Peru. He competed in three individual 400m races in Peru. And four relay races, including mixed 4x400m and men's 4x400m heats. He finished in the top six in the individual 400m at World U20.

Kumar was a member of the national U20 4x400m relay team that clocked a national record of 3:08.10 on August 30 at World U20 Athletics Championships. "He (Kumar) was outstanding this season," N Ramesh, chief junior coach said. "He will be one to watch in the 2025 season."

At the SAAF competition held in Chennai, Kumar won gold with a time of 46.86 seconds, a personal and season best. "It was a good opportunity for me to compete in the SAAF competition on home soil and further improve my personal best in the 400m," the promising junior athlete explained.

## Several meet records were erased at fourth edition of Indian Open U23 Athletics meet

More than half a dozen meet records were erased during the three-day fourth edition of Indian Open U23 Athletics Meet in Patna, Bihar. The competition was conducted at Patna's Patliputra Sports Complex in the last week of September. While Odisha's sprinter Animesh Kujur walked away with best male athlete of the meet, the honour in the women's group went to Gujarat's Devyaniba Zala, who won gold in 400m (53.53 seconds). Apart from winning gold in the men's 100m dash, Kujur displayed brilliant curve running to add 200m gold to his kitty.

During the 100m semis, Kujur clocked 10.38 seconds, which was better than the previous meet record of 10.39 seconds. The Odisha's sprinter also broke the 200m meet record. His gold winning time was 20.65 seconds, which was better than his own meet record of 20.87 seconds set in 2023. Haryana's javelin thrower Jyoti was also cynosure of all eyes as she entered her name in the record books by improving her own javelin throw record by a big margin. Jyoti got the big throw on her fifth attempt (58.49m), which was better than her own previous record of 52.77m set in 2023. Uttarakhand's Ankita, who participated in the 5,000m heats at Paris Olympic Games, tested her endurance over the 3,000m steeplechase in Patna. She won gold. Overall Indian Open U23 Athletics Meet turned out to be a good platform for athletes to test their skills ahead of the 2025 season.



Animesh Kujur

## Regional competitions to give fillip to 2025 domestic calendar

The Athletics Federation of India (AFI) has incorporated regional competitions in the 2025 calendar year to give fillip to track and field in the country. The regional events will also give more opportunity to athletes in their own backyard. The AFI has identified affiliated state units to conduct the additional competition from next year.

Four states namely --- Delhi, Uttar Pradesh, Haryana, Punjab---will conduct regional competitions in the North. While Gujarat, Maharashtra, ASI Pune, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan have been identified for central and western zones. Assam, Jharkhand, Bihar and Odisha will also conduct regional events. The Southern states of Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Anju Bobby Sports Foundation, Kerala, Andhra Pradesh and Telangana have been identified to organise regional competition which has been grouped in B category. The main goal of the new regional competitions is to provide opportunities to young athletes whose performance has been modest in the previous year. Since the competition will be conducted at regional level across the country, athletes will have to travel less to compete.

The AFI has also relaxed entry standards for the regional meets. This is to allow athletes having potential to showcase their talent to gain valuable experience and climb the ladder. The regional events will also act as build up competitions for main domestic events. During the regional meets ranking points will be awarded to the athletes. Top athletes at the regional level will get a chance to graduate to the main domestic circuit even if their performance is below the entry criteria set by AFI.

Each regional competition will have different disciplines depending on the popularity of a particular event in that area. AFI will monitor the regional events, including branding and live streaming. The AFI will also provide technical support to the state units but the local organising committee will have to provide accommodation to the technical staff.

## SAAF meet turned out to be an excellent platform for junior athletes on the home soil

The three-day South Asian Athletics Federation held from September 11 to 13 in Chennai turned out to be an excellent platform for junior athletes to end the 2024 season on high note, N Ramesh, chief junior athletics coach said. "Podium finish with a meet record during SAAF competition will certainly encourage young athletes to carry on the good work forward," chief junior athletics coach added.

India won the overall championship but Sri Lanka sprinters battled for supremacy in the relays. India topped the medal chart with 48 medals, including 21 gold, 22 silver and five bronze medals. Sri Lanka finished second with 35 medals, nine of them gold. Sri Lanka also won nine silver and 17 bronze medals. Bangladesh was distant third with three bronze medals.

Several meet records were also improved during the three-day regional competition in Chennai. The Indian 4x100m women's relay team comfortably won gold with a meet record of 45.08 seconds. The previous meet record was 46.23 seconds.

The men's 4x100m title went to Sri Lanka with a meet record of 40.28 seconds. The previous record was 41.27 seconds set in 2007. India's Anisha won gold in women's discus throw with a distance of 49.91m to better the previous meet record of 48.60m set by A Bajwa in 2018.

Meet record was also erased in the men's discus throw by Ritik. His gold winning throw was 55.64m which was better than the earlier meet record 54.44m set by Sachin in 2013 in Ranchi, Jharkhand.

India's Unnathi Aiyappa also improved the women's 100m hurdles time. On her way to winning gold medal she clocked 13.93 seconds, which was better than the previous meet mark



Pooja won high jump gold at SAAF

of S Kumari recorded in 2018 in Colombo. Pooja comfortably won gold at 1.80m, which was better than the previous meet record of 1.75m. She made efforts to improve her national U20 high jump record of 1.83m set recently in Peru at the 2024 World Athletics U20 meet, but missed to cross the bar at 1.84m.

On his way to gold in men's shot put, Siddharth Choudhary hurled the iron ball to a distance of 19.19m, a meet record. Previous record was 18.53m. Compatriot Anurag Singh Kaler won silver with a distance of 18.91m.

"Regional competitions have its advantages as competitors will have to travel less and at the same time get good competition close to home," the chief junior athletics coach added.

All seven SAAF countries competed in the three-day competition in Chennai.

# Indian contingent won overall trophy at SAAF meet in Chennai



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