

NEWSLETTER



NEERAJ CHOPRA CHASES A BRUSSELS HIGH

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To pursue bigger goals, **World U20 bronze medallist** in race-walking moves to Nilgiris hills



Medal winners of women's 10km race walk at 2024 World Athletics U20 Championships held in Lima.

India's World U20 bronze medallist in race-walking, Aarti will be based out of Coonor in the Nilgiris hills to pursue bigger goals. She clocked 44:39.39, a national record, in the women's 10,000m race walk at the August 27 to 30 World Athletics U20 Championships in Lima (Peru).

After an exhilarating experience in Peru, the teenager from Haryana will shift to Tamil Nadu and train under the tutelage of former international race walker and army coach Basant Bahadur Rana.

Aarti's performance in Lima was nearly three minutes better than her national U20 record clocked earlier this year in Chandigarh. "She (Aarti) has the potential to do better at the senior level too," the army coach said.

Aarti's imminent goal is to improve her race walk technique. Achieving excellence in senior international competitions in 2026 is her future goal.

The 2025 season will act as a transition phase from junior to senior level, the coach added.

At senior level the distance for race walk will be 20km. Graduating to that distance from 10km will be a daunting task. But the World U20 bronze medallist, who celebrated her 18th birthday on September 6, is prepared to tackle the distance.

"The goal is to be successful at the 2026 Asian Games. To achieve that I've to start now," the World U20 bronze medallist said with an air of confidence.

For Aarti, the global competition in Lima was an enriching experience. "I've learned so much in Lima that I will cherish throughout my sporting career," said India's lone medal winner in Lima.

To get acclimatized to the local weather conditions, the Indian contingent reached Lima five days prior to competition.

In the build up to the World U20, Aarti won the Asian U20 bronze in 10,000m in April. She was hopeful of a better time in Lima as her preparation had gone well, the army coach said. "The main goal in Lima was to hang on with a leading bunch of athletes as long as possible," the coach added. "The strategy was successful and she (Aarti) could win bronze."

China's Zhuoma Baima won gold with a world lead time of 43:26.60. Compatriot Meiling Chen won silver.

The Indian race walker continued to stay with the lead group till the 8km mark. At the 9km she was in contention for silver medal, but wasn't able to push hard in the closing stages and settled for bronze with a national U20 record.

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Aarti said her legs were too tired to shift gear in the final stages. "But I was happy that I improved my national U20 record in Lima," she added.

Off the track, the Indian race walker enjoyed the local delicacies. "In the build up to the race I didn't taste local food because I was a bit scared of spoiling my routine. However, after the event I enjoyed a local non-veg meal, including chicken," she revealed.

Pooja improves national U20 high jump record

Haryana's international high jumper, Pooja was one of the three Indian athletes who improved the national U20 record during the August 27 to 31 World Athletics U20 Championships in Lima. Sharuk Khan (3,000m steeplechase) and Aarti (10,000m race walk) were the others. During the qualification round in Lima, Pooja cleared 1.83m, which was better than her own national record of 1.80m. However, in the final she wasn't able to further improve her performance and settled for a lower position in the medal round. The Indian 4x400m mixed relay quartet also missed the podium, finishing fifth with a time of 3:22.92 secs in the final. The men's 4x400m relay team clocked 3:08.10 in the preliminary round, but finished outside the medal bracket in the final.



Uttar Pradesh's promising steeplechase runner on a record breaking spree, aims to follow in **Avinash Sable's** footsteps

Sharuk Khan twice broke the national U20 3,000m steeplechase record at the 2024 World Athletics U20 Championships held from August 27 to 30 in Lima, Peru. He finished sixth in his heat with a time of 8:45.12, a national U20 record, to advance to the medal round. Encouraged by the good performance in the preliminary round, the teenager from Uttar Pradesh further lowered his own national U20 record to 8:42.06 seconds. He finished 10th in the final.

Narrating his experience of the World U20, the promising distance runner said the final was a tough race. "I made efforts to keep pace with the leading group in the final. But the pace was too fast. After the opening 1000m, I lost contact. Thereafter, I decided to run my own race and do better than the preliminary round," the young steeplechase runner explained. "It was a satisfying race as I further lowered the national U20 record."

Sharuk hails from Pratapgarh in Uttar Pradesh. He joined Lucknow's Sports College in 2018. Initially his focus was middle distance, but he shifted to the 3,000m steeplechase in 2023.

He immediately found success and established himself as a leading runner at junior level. He has been on a record-breaking spree after switching to steeplechase. He clocked 9 minutes 5 seconds, a national U20 record, in his second attempt over the distance in a gruelling event that has 28 barriers, including seven water jumps. He further improved his personal best and national record to 8:51 at the 2023 Asian U20 meet in Korea. He won silver.

He missed the 2024 Asian U20 meet due to personal reasons, but looked strong during the World U20 in Lima. "My performance in the heats



Sharuk Khan

gave a big boost to my confidence," he said.

What's the next goal for the young steeplechase runner? Sharuk Khan acknowledges that steeplechase is a very demanding race and he wants to stay healthy and at the same time move up to the senior level.

"The knees and ankles often hurt after the race. I was on the injured list earlier in April, but managed to qualify for the World U20." The teenager made his appearance at senior level in 2023 but finished sixth. "I could have done better but someone stepped on my ankle with the spikes and it was hurting during the race," he said.

"Going by his performance in the junior level he has the potential to make a big impact at the senior level too," N Ramesh, chief junior athletics coach, added.

My next target is to qualify for 2025 World Championships, says Kerala's Asian Games medallist Ancy Sojan

Kerala's Asian Games medallist in long jump, Ancy Sojan has plans to make a good impression at the 2025 World Athletics Championships. The 23 years old won gold with a distance of 6.71m at the just concluded 63rd National Open Athletics Championships held in Bengaluru. Her performance of 6.71m in Bengaluru, was personal and season best. She also walked away with the best female athlete award of the domestic meet.

She, however, narrowly missed the meet record of 6.74m set by Anju Bobby George in 2002.

"My performance of 6.71m in Bengaluru was a big boost to my confidence," Ancy added. "My main goal next year will be to further improve my personal best."

Ancy's personal best in 2023 was 6.63m. She won silver at the Hangzhou Asian Games held in China in 2023.

Ancy and World U20 silver medallist, Shaili Singh were the main attraction at the jumping arena this year. However, both the athletes missed out the 2024 Paris Olympic Games qualification mark.

Based out of Bengaluru, Ancy was hopeful of a more productive 2025 season. "Good health and staying away from injuries will be an important factor for steady performance in 2025," she added.



Ancy Sojan

National Open Athletics Championships in Bengaluru was good platform for young athletes to showcase their potential

The just concluded 63rd National Open Athletics Championships in Bengaluru was the last domestic track and field meet of the calendar but several athletes grabbed the opportunity to showcase their potential, chief athletics coach Radhakrishnan Nair said.

Army's Asian Games bronze medallist in 10,000m, Gulveer Singh and Asian Games 400m hurdles bronze medallist, Vithya Ramraj of Tamil Nadu were two prominent athletes who didn't miss the chance to establish themselves atop the field and erased the long-standing meet records in their respective events.

On her way to gold in women's 400m hurdles, Vithya Ramraj bettered PT Usha's meet record of 56.80 seconds set way back in 1985. The Tamil Nadu runner representing Railway Sports in the National Open Athletics Championships clocked 56.23 seconds.

The army's distance runner and national record holder in both 5,000m and 10,000, Gulveer Singh, continued his dominance at the domestic level. He won the gold medal in the 5,000m with a meet record of 13:54.70 seconds. The previous record of 13:54.72 seconds was in the name of Bahadur Prasad set in 1994.

Tamil Nadu's Nithin also sprinted to glory in the men's 200m race. He won 200m gold with a time of 20.66 seconds, a meet record. Previous time of 20.74 seconds was set by Animesh Kujur in 2023.

Away from track and field, the grueling 35km race walking event was center of attraction. Winner of gold medals in both men and women's 35 km race walk entered their names in the record books on the penultimate day of the 63rd



Vithya Ramraj



Gulveer Singh

National Open Athletics Championships.

On their way to winning gold medals, Amit of Haryana and Payal of Railway Sports, improved the meet record. Amit clocked 2:38:00.00 to better the previous time of 2:39:05 set by Ram Babu in 2022.

While Payal clocked 3:02:24 to improve her own meet mark of 3:04.48 set in 2022.

As expected, the Services team claimed the men's trophy with 137 points. The women's title went to Railways (201 points). Railways team was also declared overall champions with 318 points.

Indian contingent for SAAF junior championships in Chennai

India's promising 3,000m steeplechase runner, Sharuk Khan, will be among 55-member national team, including 27 in women's group selected by Athletics Federation of India (AFI) that will compete at the September 11 to 13 South Asian Athletics Federation (SAAF) Junior Championships scheduled to be held in Chennai, Tamil Nadu. Nepal, Bhutan, Sri Lanka and Maldives have also confirmed their entries for three-day competition.

Indian team: Men: Varun Oori Manohar, Mrutyam Jayaram Dondapati (100m), Partik Maharana, Mrutyam Jayaram Dondapati (200m), Jay Kumar, Rihan Ch (400m), Vinod Kumar, Bopanna Klappa (800m), Rahul Sarnaliya, Priyanshu (1500m), Sharuk Khan, Mohit Choudhary (3,000m steeplechase), Hariharan Kathiravan, Nayan Pradip Sarde (110m hurdles), Sagar Roy, Jewel Thomas (high jump), Mohd Atta Sazid, RC Jithin Arjunan (long jump), Bhupendra Bisht, Raviprakash (triple jump), Anurag Singh Kaler, Siddharth Choudhary (shot put), Ritik, Atul (discus throw), Dipanshu Sharma, Rohan Yadav (javelin throw) and 4x100m relay (M Jayaram Dondapati, Mahendra Santa, Karthikeyan S, Varun Oori Manohar, Vallipi Himateja).

Women: Abinaya Rajarajan, V Sudheeksha (100m), Unnathi Aiyappa Bolland, Neeru Pathak (200m), Neeru Pathak, Sandra Mol Sabu (400m), Laxita Vinod Sandilea, Tanvi Malik (800m), Laxita Vinod Sandilea, Vinita Gurjar (1,500m), Prachi Ankush, Shilpa Dihora (3,000m), Unnathi Aiyappa Bolland, Sabita Toppo (100m hurdles), Pooja, Mohur Mukerjee (high jump), Prathiksha Yamuna, Lakshanya SN (long jump), Rishika Awasthi, Prathiksha Yamuna (triple jump), Tamanna, Pooja Kumari (shot put), Amanat Kamboj, Anisha (discus throw), Deepika, Poonam (javelin throw), 4x100m relay (Abhinaya Rajarajan, V Sudheeksha, Nancy, Neole Anna Cornelio, Rujula Amol Bhonsle).

