









# ONLINE GAMBLING

## An Alarming Trend in Kashmir

Zahid Ahmad Lone

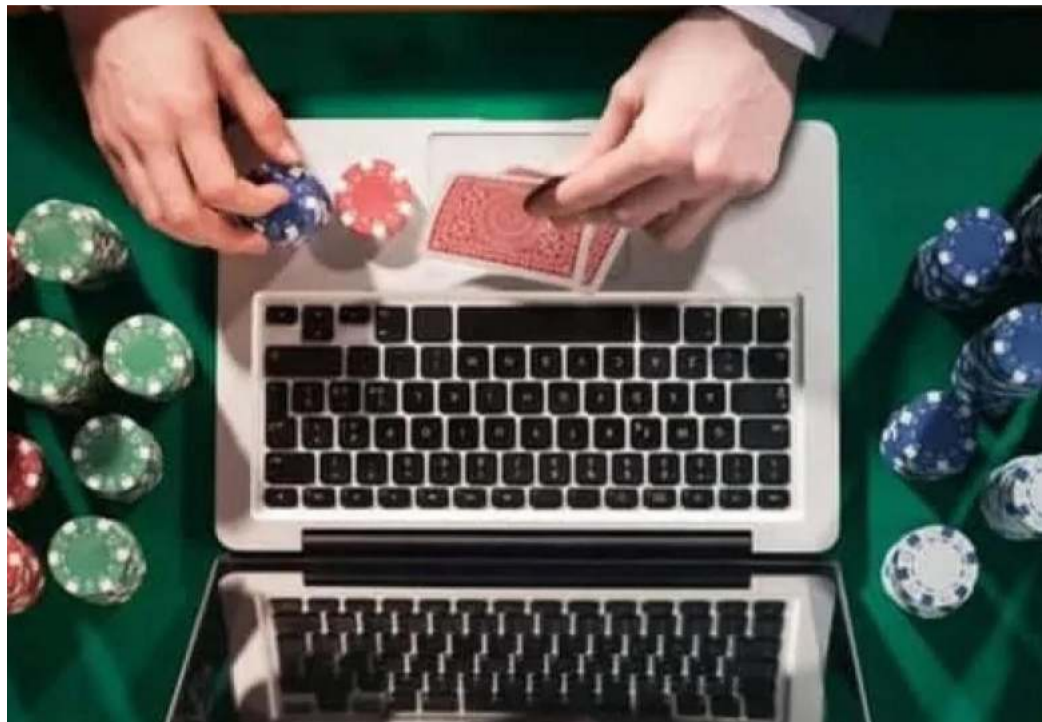
The rise of online gambling is a global phenomenon, intricately woven into the fabric of digital economies. The global online gambling industry, valued at over \$80 billion, continues to grow annually. Mobile apps and cryptocurrencies have revolutionized this sector, making gambling accessible to anyone with a smartphone. In regulated markets, governments attempt to balance revenue generation with measures to curb addiction, yet rising levels of debt and mental health crises persist. In developing nations, lax regulations and widespread internet access allow illegal gambling platforms to thrive, exploiting vulnerable populations. This broader international reality provides context for understanding the unique and devastating impact of online gambling in Kashmir.

Kashmir's economy has long been precarious, relying heavily on agriculture, handicrafts, and tourism. Political instability and frequent shutdowns have further stifled growth, leaving many, particularly the youth, disillusioned. In this environment, online gambling has emerged as an attractive yet perilous escape.

Social media platforms and messaging apps are rife with advertisements for online gambling platforms. These platforms often masquerade as "investment opportunities," promising quick and significant

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returns. Teenagers and young adults, desperate to escape the financial constraints of their



reality are the primary victims. The initial wins often engineered by the platforms themselves entrap users, leading them down a path of addiction and financial ruin.

The economic consequences of online gambling in Kashmir are manifold. Firstly, there is a significant drain of wealth. Unlike traditional industries that circulate money within the local economy, online gambling funnels wealth out of Kashmir. Most platforms are hosted offshore, and the money spent on gambling rarely benefits the local economy, enriching foreign operators instead.

Secondly, household debt has become a growing crisis. Families often borrow money intended for essential needs like education or healthcare, only to see it squandered on gambling platforms. Thirdly, the loss of productivity among addicted individuals worsens unemployment, further weakening the economy. Finally, the social costs family conflicts, mental health issues, and even criminal activities are deeply destructive.

**Gambling is explicitly prohibited in Islam, considered haram due to its exploitative nature. Yet, the surge in online gambling indicates a disconnect between cultural values and individual behaviors**

One of the most alarming aspects of online gambling in Kashmir is the lack of regulatory oversight. The central laws governing gambling in India, such as the Public Gambling Act of 1867, are outdated and inadequate for addressing the complexities of online platforms. Jammu and Kashmir lacks a coherent policy

framework to tackle this issue. Anonymity on digital platforms and the use of cryptocurrencies make it difficult to track and regulate gambling activities, allowing this menace to proliferate unchecked.

Kashmir's predominantly Muslim population adds another layer of complexity to the issue. Gambling is explicitly prohibited in Islam, considered haram due to its exploitative nature. Yet, the surge in online gambling indicates a disconnect between cultural values and individual behaviors. This contradiction can be attributed to the pervasive influence of technology and the desperation born out of economic hardships. Cultural stigma associated with gambling further exacerbates the problem, as addiction often goes unreported and untreated. Families are reluctant to seek help, fearing social ostracism, which allows the issue to fester and affect entire communities.

Addressing the issue of online gambling in Kashmir requires a multi-faceted approach. First, the government must update and enforce gambling laws to include online platforms, targeting offshore operators through

international collaborations or cybercrime initiatives. Banning advertisements for online gambling on social media platforms is another crucial step. Second, financial literacy campaigns are essential to educate the youth about the risks of gambling and promote better financial habits. Schools, colleges, and community centers can play a significant role in these campaigns. Third, support systems for addiction need to be established. Helplines, support groups, and involvement from religious and community leaders can help de-stigmatize addiction and encourage affected individuals to seek help. Fourth, providing alternative economic opportunities is critical. Skill development programs, entrepreneurship initiatives, and investments in local industries can offer constructive outlets for youth aspirations. Finally, internet service providers should be mandated to block access to known gambling platforms, and cyber security measures must be enhanced to detect and dismantle illegal platforms operating in the region.

The rise of online gambling in Kashmir is a stark reminder of the unintended consequences of digital globalization. While technology holds immense potential to drive economic growth and social progress, its misuse can lead to devastating outcomes. For a region like Kashmir, already reeling from political and economic challenges, online gambling is an economic cancer threatening to erode the social fabric.

However, this is not an insurmountable problem. With concerted efforts from the government, community, and civil society, Kashmir can confront this issue head-on. The key lies in addressing the root causes of economic despair and lack of opportunities while implementing robust regulatory and support mechanisms. Only then can the region hope to reclaim its economic and social stability, steering its youth away from the perilous lure of online gambling.

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## Hopes and Aspirations for a New Year

Are they the same for everyone?

Deborshi Gautam

Bidding farewell to an old year and welcoming a new one is a moment filled with joy and celebration for everyone. As we let go of the past and dream of a bright future, we embrace the novelty with great enthusiasm. The desire for renewal stirs the hearts of everyone, filling them with excitement. However, in a developing country like India, the question remains: is it possible for everyone to partake in the plans and celebrations that come with welcoming the new year?

Amidst the radiant dawn of a new year, does everyone truly find the essence of freshness and hope? While people yearn to immerse themselves in the novelty of the season, there are many in our society who spend every single day searching for the very essence of renewal. In the bustling metropolises of our nation, where grand and luxurious arrangements are made to welcome the new year, a starkly contrasting reality also exists.

While some indulge in extravagant celebrations, others—homeless individuals—spend their days and nights on the streets, driven by the pangs of hunger.

For such individuals, there is no difference between December 31st and January 1st. As the night of December 31st ends, the day of January 1st begins as just another ordinary day. These individuals neither dwell on gains and losses nor harbor lofty aspirations. Their only concern is surviving, with two meals a day and a piece of cloth to shield themselves from shame being their sole source of happiness. Matters of the old year or the new year rarely touch their lives.



While we stay awake at night in anticipation of the first dawn of a new year, many spend sleepless nights hoping for a morsel of food or a piece of clothing to survive the next day. In our celebrations, we should aim for inclusivity, ensuring that the joy of welcoming a new year becomes possible for all. It is our moral responsibility to make an effort, however small, to bring smiles to the faces of those deprived of such celebrations.

Instead of spending money on fireworks for our enjoyment, if we allocate that money to help the needy, it could light up their lives and bring smiles to their faces. Perhaps, the homeless on the streets could dream of starting a new life in the new year. Although such dreams may seem unattainable for them, we—those who organize extravagant celebrations—can think of their needs and contribute a bit towards their happiness.

Welcoming a new year with joy is not wrong, but alongside our celebrations, we should spare a thought for those less fortunate. By sharing our joy, we can help bring smiles to many faces. A new year signifies new hopes, new plans, and stepping forward towards new successes. May this new year bring rays of hope not just for us but also for our society and country—that is a wish shared by all.

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# Will AI Save the Planet?

Jo Lindsay Walton

Optimistic advocates for AI say this environmentally costly technology will become more sustainable with time. We can use AI more efficiently, and explore less energy-intensive designs inspired by the human brain. We can build data centres more sustainably, using wood or low-carbon concrete and steel. The heat from the data centres can warm homes in the local area.

Of course, if we start using AI systems too widely (including where we don't really need them), the growth might outweigh any of these potential gains in efficiency. But recently, I've been hearing another argument: that AI itself is tackling climate change. AI can help to model wildfires, optimise energy consumption to stabilise the grid, accelerate the development of low-carbon materials, and much more.

My research team recently published a report that digs into these claims – and found some cause for concern.

As it turns out, it's difficult to compare the environmental impacts of asking AI to carry out a task versus asking people. Take writing and making art. One study says that it is much more environmentally friendly for AI to do these creative tasks than humans.

But one of its methods for investigating this is to allocate a slice of the carbon footprint from all human activities (eating cows, catching planes and so on) to the creative activity. By this logic, there would be the same

carbon emissions from an hour's work by an artist, a dairy farmer, a billionaire CEO, or an ecologist restoring a wetland.

A related paper acknowledges the simplification and instead allocates carbon just for the electricity a human consumes. The authors say this is a practical approach to carbon accounting. Establishing a fair comparison between human and AI work is hard because the tasks may look alike, but their underlying processes are fundamentally different.

What about the current total carbon impact of AI? Another paper, partly funded by Microsoft, mentioned that AI is today responsible for just 0.01% of global carbon emissions.

When we looked closer we found this figure was based on the emissions of one year's AI server sales by Nvidia – the biggest manufacturer of such hardware – as estimated in one analysis. This prediction hasn't been verified, and if it is accurate, it wouldn't include AI being run on servers installed in previous years.

When contacted for comment, some of the authors said that this estimate wasn't the article's main focus. Assessing the climate impacts of AI is complicated because we don't know how future AI models will be built, operated and used, they added.

Another study reviewing AI's sustainability benefits cited several other articles that, in our view, appeared to feature mistakes – like referring to studies to back up their claims which did not contain relevant information. AI systems sometimes make mistakes – known as "hallucinations" – like when Micro-



**WHENEVER AI IS CELEBRATED FOR AMAZING ACHIEVEMENTS, LET'S REMEMBER THAT IT HAD SOME HUMAN HELP.** What time, effort, energy and other resources were invested in the project? Could similar results have been achieved using more traditional data collection and analysis, potentially at a lower environmental cost?

soft Copilot accused a journalist of committing the crimes he had reported on.

So we asked the authors if they had used an AI to write the article. They dismissed this idea and stood by the integrity of their review. They agreed that not all of the AI sustainability solutions their review referred to can be supported by existing studies. But they said that they had also included predictions about what

AI might one day be capable of, based on their own expert judgement, which they said was standard practice.

The authors also pointed out that their work has been widely shared without complaint. But the fact that articles can be read widely without eliciting alarm is exactly the issue. Would every reader assume that the article was predicting what AI might one day do, rather than explain-

ing what AI can already do?

Overall, how reliable is current research on AI and sustainability? We're not sure. We haven't yet had the chance to conduct a more comprehensive investigation. But assessing AI's future potential requires a clear understanding of its achievements to date. Such an investigation is urgently needed.

Questions to ask about AI

Meanwhile, we should avoid lumping all kinds of AI together.

There are in fact diverse forms of AI: big, small, discriminative, generative, machine learning, symbolic and more. I can be excited about an AI that excels at counting carrots, and helps farmers to plant them more effectively, without offering a blanket endorsement of all AI systems.

There are different types of climate action too. Climate mitigation is about getting carbon emissions down to net zero to stop global warming. Climate adaptation is about learning to live and thrive in a warmer world. We need both.

AI for climate adaptation is very welcome indeed (say, helping us to increase carrot yields, despite more volatile weather). But it doesn't simply offset the carbon cost of AI. It would be like comparing apples with oranges (or carrots). It's a tricky calculation to make, one with political and ethical dimensions.

Whenever AI is celebrated for amazing achievements, let's remember that it had some human help. What time, effort, energy and other resources were invested in the project? Could similar results have been achieved using more traditional data collection and analysis, potentially at a lower environmental cost?

The authors of our report have mixed views on AI. None of us are against it, or against using it to solve environmental problems. But to properly govern AI's net impact on the climate, its benefits must not be overstated.

By arrangements with The Conversation

CONTD. FROM FRONT PAGE

**Inspection Of**

(Northern Circle) is expected to inspect the 16.501 km Katra-Reasi section under the Udhampur-Srinagar-Baramulla New BG Rail Link Project before January 15.

The chief PRO said that Prime Minister Narendra Modi will virtually inaugurate the Jammu Railway Division from New Delhi on January 6.

Sources in Northern Railways said that after the inauguration of the Jammu Railway Division, the CRS will conduct the final inspection on January 7 and 8. Senior officials, including the CAO/USBRL, CBE, CSE, COM-G, CEGB from HQ, DRM/FZR, and other officers, will accompany the CRS during the inspection.

Indian Railways is set to introduce a new Vande Bharat train and two Mail/Express trains for the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir. These trains will operate between Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Katra (SVDK) and Srinagar railway stations and will be maintained by the Northern Railway zone.

**GOI Vows**

the ecosystem of terrorism in J&K has almost ended.

Union Home Minister Amit Shah, according to the report, has directed agencies to replicate the successes achieved in Kashmir through the "Area Domination Plan and Zero Terror Plan" in the Jammu division.

"The government is committed to setting an example by cracking down on terrorists through innovative means. In line with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Zero Tolerance Policy against terrorism, the goal of 'terror free Jammu and Kashmir' will be achieved at the earliest," the report states.

Referring to the successful back-to-back elections held in J&K in 2024 without any boycott call or fear of separatists and terrorists, the MHA report states: "Unprecedented participation of the J&K people in the Assembly and Lok Sabha elections shows that they have full faith in democracy."

"In the 2024 Lok Sabha election J&K secured 35-year-high voter turnout at

58.46%. In the 2024 assembly election, J&K witnessed a meteoric 63.88% voter turnout," it added.

**'New Reservations**

of the Prime Minister, the MHA undertook a slew of measures to enshrine peace, equality, and justice at the center of J&K's governance and society."

"Under the aegis of this broad vision, the Parliament passed the Constitution (Jammu and Kashmir) Scheduled Tribes Order (Amendment) Bill, 2024, a historic bill aimed at empowering the Pahari ethnic group, Padari tribes, Koli, and Gadda Brahmin," reads the report.

"The bill directly pivots the essence of social equity to the hills and valleys of Jammu and Kashmir by providing for reservations for deserving communities. The bill heralds a new sense of belonging and unity among the people," it added.

The inclusion of these communities in the list of Scheduled Tribes in Jammu and Kashmir, according to the MHA report, will have absolutely no impact on the current level of reservations available to the existing Scheduled Tribe communities such as Gujjars and Bakarwals. They will continue to get reservations like before. (KNO)

**'Era Of Recommendations**

appointment letters for J&K Combined Examination-2024 and compassionate appointments through video conferencing from New Delhi," the report states.

Referring to the launch of e-buses the report states that to make commuting easy Union Home Minister Amit Shah launched 100 air-conditioned eco-friendly buses in Jammu region.

The report states that in pursuit of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision to build a developed and prosperous Ladakh, MHA decided to create 5 new districts in the Union Territory.

The new districts, namely Zanskar, Drass, Sham, Nubra, and Changthang, will take the benefits meant for the

people to their doorsteps by bolstering governance in every nook and cranny.

"There will now be a total of seven districts in Ladakh, including Leh and Kargil. Being extremely difficult and inaccessible, at present district administration is facing many difficulties in reaching the grassroots level," the report states, adding, "After the formation of these districts more and more people have been able to take advantage of all the public welfare schemes of the Central Government and Ladakh Administration."

**ACB Transitions**

Supervisory officers are instructed to withhold approval of any challan until all necessary information is entered into the CCTNS," he said.

**4 MLAs Skip**

Legislative Assembly prior to the commencement of the ensuing Budget session. (KNO)

**By-polls To 2 J&K**

one Pakistan occupied Jammu Kashmir (PoJK) refugee.

Meanwhile, there has been no word yet on elections to four Rajya Sabha seats from Jammu and Kashmir which are vacant since February 2021. The elections earlier couldn't be held in absence of the Legislature. However, the new House was constituted in the middle of October and even after passage of two and half months, the Commission is yet to announce the elections.

As per the procedure, the Rajya Sabha Secretariat has to refer the vacancies to the Election Commission which has to announce the election schedule. Process for the elections is conducted by the Legislative Assembly Secretary, who acts as the Returning Officer.

The alliance of National Conference, Congress and Independents can win three out of four Rajya Sabha seats while the BJP will be safe on one seat going by numbers the major parties enjoy in the Legislative Assembly.

In 2019, PDP-BJP alliance with 54 seats (PDP 28 and BJP 26) had won three seats (two PDP and one BJP) while fourth seat had gone to Ghulam

Nabi Azad, former Chief Minister of Jammu and Kashmir who was with the Congress then with the support of NC and Congress, who had 27 MLAs (NC 15 and Congress 12). Four MLAs of other parties and Independents had supported Azad.

As per the past practices, the Election Commission issued three notifications for Rajya Sabha elections in Jammu and Kashmir. One election is held for two seats while two separate elections are held for one seat each. If the similar practice is followed, two seats on which separate elections will be held will go to the ruling Alliance which already has 54 MLAs with it. While two seats on which one election will be held will be equally divided among NC-led Alliance and the BJP.

Last election to four seats of Rajya Sabha from Jammu and Kashmir was held in February 2015 when the then BJP-PDP alliance won three seats and NC-Congress one. Fayaz Ahmad Mir and Nazir Ahmad Laway (both PDP), Shamsheer Singh Manhas (BJP) and Ghulam Nabi Azad, former Chief Minister of J&K and then in Congress were elected. BJP's Chander Mohan Sharma had lost the election.

**HC Quashes**

authority was not really and genuinely satisfied as regards the necessity for detaining the (detainee)".

Subsequently the court ordered release of Bhat provided he is not required in connection with any other case.

**J&K IAS Officers**

is mandated under Rule 16(2) of the AIS (Conduct) Rules, which stipulates the timely submission of property returns to maintain transparency within the administrative system.

The circular also referred to Rule 3(1) of the IAS (Pay) Rules, revised through a notification dated December 30, 2021, further strengthening the obligation for officers to declare their assets.

This move reflects the government's ongoing efforts to uphold ethical governance and foster a culture of transparency within the administrative

framework.

**NC Govt Fails**

a U-turn on his promises.

"Making U-turns has been a tradition of Abdullah and the NC governments. When out of power, they used to say we will throw (electricity) meters in Tawi (river) in Jammu and Jhelum (river) in Kashmir. But now that they are in power, they are saying round-the-clock electricity will be provided only when 100 percent metering is completed," he added.

The BJP spokesperson asked Abdullah to come up to the expectations of people, saying they have high hopes with him.

"You had made huge promises, but have failed in fulfilling them. We condemn that people had to face difficulties even due to little snowfall," he said.

On the BJP's performance in Kashmir, Thakur said the assembly elections were conducted in a peaceful atmosphere without any violence or fear.

"The BJP government has put the last nail in the coffin of terrorism in Kashmir and today Kashmir is terror-free," he added.

Thakur said Prime Minister Narendra Modi would connect Kashmir with the rest of the country through a Vande Bharat train on January 26.

The BJP's J&K unit also said the party has added 1.75 lakh new members in the valley in its membership drive.

The BJP had 3.5 lakh members after the last membership drive in 2019.

**J&K Bank Rolls**

to settle their accounts with the best possible incentives and concessions. I encourage all account holders eligible under this scheme to seize this golden opportunity and benefit from this comprehensive relief package."

He further emphasized upon the proactive outreach, saying, "I urge all our teams to directly engage with borrowers, explain the scheme's benefits in detail, and work collaboratively for its effective implementation to achieve maximum resolutions."

He expressed confidence that the scheme would help borrowers resolve their liabilities and strengthen

the Bank's NPA recovery efforts. Addressing concerns of various stakeholders including trade bodies, he reaffirmed the Bank's commitment to support the genuinely stressed borrowers while maintaining the Bank's strong financial performance.

Earlier, General Manager (IAPMD) Rajesh Malla Tickoo provided an overview of the Bank's NPA scenario, highlighting how the steep reduction in the Bank's GNPA ratio - from nearly 9% few years ago to 3.95% in September 2024 - underscores the Bank's focused approach to asset quality. He described the Special OTS scheme as a key step in furthering this success.

A detailed presentation outlining the scheme's features and implementation plan was also shared with participants during the launch. The function concluded with the participants expressing confidence and assuring active participation from operative levels to ensure the scheme's success.

Pertinently, valid for three months ending on 31st March - 2025, the scheme is non-discretionary and non-discriminatory, offering incentives for early repayment of OTS amount. As per the scheme, the sanction will be accorded and conveyed within 7 days from the date of receipt of application.

**Prioritise Public**

party who has participated in the tender process can challenge the terms and conditions of the tender, the court said that by participating in the bidding process, the bidder implicitly agrees to the rules, conditions, and requirements outlined in the tender document.

"Therefore, no opportunity is left with the party to challenge the same at a later stage, as he/she accepts the terms and conditions of the same and waives off his/her right while being silent during or before participating in the tender process," the court said while underscoring that the stand of the Apex Court was clear in various authoritative pronouncements that once a party participates in the tender process without any grouse or demur, it is presumed that he/she is aware of all the terms and conditions of the document and subsequently is estopped under law to question the same.

*28<sup>th</sup>* year OF PUBLICATION

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# Head Coach Gambhir's Handling Of India's Transition Raises Eyebrows

Press Trust of India

**SYDNEY:** As Indian cricket deals with the fading form of its two stalwarts in captain Rohit Sharma and senior batter Virat Kohli, head coach Gautam Gambhir and his support staff's role in handling a team in transition has also come into focus. The ongoing Border-Gavaskar Trophy has been a difficult ride for the side has struggled to get the right combination in the face of an aggressive and highly-driven Australian team. The visitors will be playing the must-win fifth and final Test here from Friday.

The on-field roller-coaster is causing some off-field issues as well with murmurs of unrest in the dressing room beginning to grow.

It is learnt that Gambhir is not on the same page with most of the players in the team and the communication isn't as good as it used to be during the time of Ravi Shastri and Rahul Dravid.



Skipper Rohit Sharma has maintained that he speaks individually to the players about selection issues. But after Gambhir took charge in July, Rohit, it is said, hasn't actually given clarity to some of

the not-so-junior players about why they were being excluded at times from the side.

His own poor form hasn't helped Rohit's cause. But it is also reliably learnt that Gambhir, who is considered a more

assertive person, hasn't earned a lot of confidence from the group of players, who aren't as old as Kohli or Rohit but are also not rookies like Harshit Rana or Nitish Reddy.

"There is a Test match to be

played and then there is Champions Trophy. If the performance doesn't improve, even Gautam Gambhir's position wouldn't be safe," a senior BCCI official told PTI on conditions of anonymity.

Gambhir's equation with the selection committee is also not particularly clear at this point.

There are players in the team, who are feeling insecure because of his proclivity to experiment with the playing eleven. In the ongoing BGT, a punt like Nitish Reddy has worked out brilliantly but the handling of Shubman Gill is still being debated.

But if India's performance is not drastically better in the Champions Trophy in February-March, Gambhir will certainly have his wings clipped.

"He was never BCCI's first choice (it was VVS Laxman) and some of the well-known overseas names didn't want to coach all three formats, so he was a compromise. Obviously, some other compulsions were also there," the official said.

## Ahmed Taha Masoody Shines At World Pencak Silat Championship

Observer News Service

**SRINAGAR:** In a proud moment for J&K, Ahmed Taha Masoody, a young martial artist from Srinagar, brought laurels to India by securing a bronze medal at the prestigious 5th Junior World Pencak Silat Championship. The championship was held from December 18 to 22 at the Sports City ADNEC Center in Abu Dhabi, UAE. The event saw participation from 1,100 athletes representing 55 countries, making it one of the most competitive tournaments in the sport.

Ahmed's incredible performance stood out among a field of highly skilled athletes from across the globe. By clinching the bronze medal, he showcased not only his talent but also the growing presence of Indian athletes in Pencak Silat on the world stage.

This achievement was made possible through Ahmed's unwavering dedication, the unflinching support of his family, and the guidance of his coaches, especially Mohd Iqbal, the Coach of the Pencak Silat Federation of India. Iqbal has been instrumental in identifying



and nurturing young talent in the country.

Ahmed's success at the world championship follows an exceptional performance in November 2024, where he secured four gold medals at two national-level Pencak Silat championships.

Hailing from the picturesque valley of Kashmir, Ahmed's journey to global recognition is a testament to resilience and determination. Despite facing challenges such as limited facilities and resources in his home state, Ahmed's passion for Pencak Silat, combined with the support of his family and coaches, has propelled him to extraordinary heights.

The championship, organized under the auspices of the international Pencak Si-

lat federation, was a grand celebration of martial arts. Athletes from traditional Pencak Silat powerhouses such as Indonesia, Malaysia, Vietnam, and the Philippines dominated the event.

Ahmed expressed his gratitude to his family, coaches, and Mohd Iqbal for their constant support. "Winning a medal at the world championship has been a dream come true. It wouldn't have been possible without the encouragement of my family and the mentorship of Mr. Iqbal, who has been a guiding light throughout my journey," he said.

As Ahmed continues to rise in the world of Pencak Silat, his achievements underline the importance of nurturing young talent and supporting athletes at the grassroots level.

## 'Rohit Has Earned Right To Walk Away On His Own Terms'

Press Trust of India

**SYDNEY:** Former Australia captain Michael Clarke says India skipper Rohit Sharma has earned the right to walk away from Test cricket on his own terms notwithstanding his barren run with the bat Down Under.

Pressure has been gradually building on Rohit who is yet to play a knock of significance in the three Tests he has played so far in the Border-Gavaskar Trophy. Another stalwart in the team, Virat Kohli, is also facing the heat for repeatedly falling to balls outside the off-stump in the series.

"You see that with a number of players -- to some people the captaincy helps for others it doesn't. I certainly think he'll plat at Sydney. I don't think they'll drop him. I think Rohit has earned the right and he's captain. When you are captain you get a little more leeway as well," Clarke told ESPN ahead of the fifth Test beginning here on Friday.

"But those numbers don't read great. But they'll allow Rohit to walk away on his own terms. No idea if Sydney will be his last Test. I'm not sure what he is thinking, or what India's got coming up Test cricket wise.

"I'm not sure how Rohit feels captaincy wise..he's just had his second child so who knows what's going to happen there but I'll imagine he will certainly play in Sydney," he added.



Rohit averages 30.58 as captain but before that he scored runs at an average of 46.87.

Another former Australia captain Aaron Finch also weighed in on the debate.

"The alarming thing for me is how well they played under Bumrah's captaincy in Perth (in first Test) and they have come back here and looks like an unsettled line up since Rohit's come back in. But he's still a great player, he's a beautiful player to watch and I hope he gets some runs," said Finch.

**Reddy A Genius, Must Bat Six**

Clarke also feels that Nitish Kumar Reddy must bat higher up the order after smashing a hundred at number 8 at the MCG.

"Reddy, this young kid batting at number eight, is a genius. I think he has definitely got to bat seven if not six. He has been India's leading run-scorer, 21 years of age, unbelievable. He has been underrated in the entire series," Clarke told Beyond 23 Cricket Podcast.

### Short TAKES

#### Australian PM Meets Teams Ahead Of Sydney Test

Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese on Wednesday interacted with the cricket teams of India and Australia ahead of the decisive fifth Test and effusively praised pacer Jasprit Bumrah for his exploits in the Border Gavaskar Trophy.

Australia are leading the series 2-1 and the outcome of the Sydney Test will determine if the hosts regain the trophy after more than a decade.

"The Australian and Indian teams have already given us an incredible summer of cricket," Albanese commented as he posted pics with the two teams.

"When the fifth test starts on Friday, the SCG will be a sea of pink in support of the great work of the McGrath Foundation. Go Australia!," read another post from him.

According to the local media, Albanese acknowledged Bumrah's superb performance in the series. The Indian spearhead has taken 30 wickets in the series so far and also became the fastest Indian pacer to 200 wickets, achieving the feat in his 44th game.

#### Bumrah Eclipses Ashwin's Record In Latest ICC Rankings

India's pace spearhead Jasprit Bumrah on Wednesday bettered spin stalwart Ravichandran Ashwin's all-time rating-point record by an Indian in the latest ICC rankings when he touched the 907-point mark.

Ashwin's highest rating was 904, achieved in December 2016. The 907 ranking points also placed Bumrah as joint-17th in the all-time list with Derek Underwood of England.

Ahead of the Boxing Day Test in Melbourne last week, Bumrah had equalled the record (904) held by Ashwin in the ranking for bowlers.

However, another superb performance at the MCG, where he got nine wickets, albeit in a losing cause, helped him consolidate his lead as the No. 1 Test bowler in the recent update.

Australia skipper Pat Cummins earned 15 rating points following his six wickets at MCG to jump a place to No. 3.

He also secured a third place in the Test all-rounder rankings after he notched up 90 vital runs across two innings during Australia's 184-run win in the fourth Test.

#### Pressure Mounts On Barcelona To Register Dani Olmo

Barcelona applied for new players' licences for Dani Olmo and Pau Victor with the Spanish FA (RFEF) on Tuesday, while the club denied claims of requesting any delay from governing bodies for their registrations.

The announcement was made hours before the midnight registration deadline.

Barcelona lost a second appeal to register the players for the remainder of the season on Monday, with the club unable to meet LaLiga's wage cap.

Barcelona signed Olmo in August for around 55 million euros (\$57.22 million) but the attacking midfielder was registered for only the first half of the season.

The club managed to register Olmo and forward Victor after long-term injuries kept first-team players out of the squad for months, allowing them to allocate a portion of their wages.

Efforts to extend both registrations have hit repeated road blocks, with Barcelona's appeals dismissed by LaLiga and various judicial authorities.

While Olmo and Victor will be free agents after the deadline, Barcelona could meet the economic requirements to sign them before the transfer market closes in February.

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