

#### Tearful Djokovic pays tribute to Kobe

AFP, Melbourne



Serbian tennis great Novak Djokovic teared up on Tuesday as he paid tribute to late basketball star Kobe Bryant, describing him as a "mentor" and a "friend" for the past 10 years.

Djokovic, speaking after his Australian Open quarterfinal win against Milos Raonic, said it was "heartbreaking" to hear about Bryant, who died in a helicopter crash along with his daughter and seven others.

"He was one of the greatest athletes of all time, he inspired myself and many other people around the world," Djokovic said in an on-court interview at Rod Laver Arena, wearing a tracksuit with the initials KB.

"I had the fortune to have a personal relationship with him over the past 10 years. When I needed some advice and some support he was there for me. "He was my mentor, my friend and it's just heartbreaking

to see and to hear what has happened to him and his daughter," Djokovic said, before breaking off to compose himself.

Djokovic and many other legends of tennis, including Billie Jean King and Martina Navratilova, have voiced their grief over the death of the former LA Lakers shooting guard, regarded as one of the greatest basketball players in history.

On Monday, Australia's Nick Kyrgios arrived for his quarterfinal wearing a Lakers shirt, and American doubles pair Coco Gauff and Caty McNally had tributes to Bryant scrawled on their trainers.



## Sana gets a promotion

SPORTS REPORTER



South Asian Games' triple gold medallist archer Ruman Sana has been promoted to the lance naik post from soldier's post during a reception

yesterday hosted by the Bangladesh Ansar and VDP to its athletes who won medals at the regional multi-sports extravaganza in Nepal in December last year.

Bangladesh had a 464-athlete contingent who won a total of 142 medals -- 19 gold, 33 silver and 90 bronze. Out of those medals, eight gold, 13 silver and 47 bronze medals were won by 144 athletes from Bangladesh Ansar and VDP.

Ansar and VDP, one of the top year directly qualified for the 2020 education, age, height, etc.

Tokyo Olympics.

"It is a big inspiration for me. I will now get more facilities from Ansar to take care of my family. I think this recognition and prizemoney will increase my responsibility to perform better at international level," Sana told reporters at the headquarters of Bangladesh Ansar and VDP in Khilgaon.

"I think this promotion and cashaward will also encourage other Ansar athletes to produce better results at international level," Sana said, urging Bangladesh Ansar to scout more talented athletes from outside the services team.

Bangladesh Ansar and VDP's director general Major General Kazi Sharif Kaikobad informed that they have started services teams of the country, handed the process of giving permanent jobs to over Tk 33.25 lakh among the winners athletes who produce good results even apart from promoting Sana, who last if they do not match criteria such as



Ruman Sana and his Ansar mates pose for photographs during a reception afforded to them for their success at the South Asian Games at the Bangladesh Ansar and VDP Academy yesterday. PHOTO: COLLECTED

# Miracle escape sets Federer up against Djokovic



Swiss great Roger Federer said "I believe in miracles" after he saved seven match points in a five-set nail-biter against 100th-

ranked Tennys Sandgren to go into an Australian Open semifinal with Novak Djokovic on Tuesday. The six-time champion, struggling

physically, saved three match points at 4-5 in the fourth set and four more in the tie-breaker to scrape through 6-3, 2-6, 2-6, 7-6 (10/8), 6-3. Federer, 38, now goes into an

unmissable semifinal with Djokovic, who blunted Milos Raonic's razor serve to win 6-4, 6-3, 7-6 (7/1) and move two wins from an eighth Melbourne title. Djokovic, despite trouble with his

contact lenses, ended Raonic's run of 63 straight games in the tournament without a break of serve and moves smoothly into the semis for the loss of just one set so far.

He paid tribute to the great escape by Federer, ahead of a semifinal that reprises his epic win over the Swiss in last year's Wimbledon decider.

"What he did today was really amazing, to come back and save seven match points at his age," Djokovic said. "He's still playing such a great tennis and proving that he deserves to be up there. He's a great fighter. Obviously I have lots of respect for

Federer's match was incident-

for an audible obscenity before going off-court for treatment on a groin

Still hampered by the injury, he somehow forced a fifth set and began to regain control against the bigserving American.

"I believe in miracles," Federer said, revealing that he thought his groin strain had ended his chances. "There could be rain, there could be all kinds

"(I thought) just let him finish me off in style, and he didn't do that. I'm incredibly lucky tonight, today -- I don't even know what time it is."

Sandgren, achingly close to can count himself unlucky especially after a ball girl accidentally collided with him during the pivotal tiebreaker, which he lost.

Federer has made heavy weather of reaching his 46th Major semifinal. He was two points from defeat by John Millman in a fifth-set tie-breaker in round three, and dropped a set against 67th-ranked Marton Fucsovics in round four.

In the women's draw Australia's world number one Ashleigh Barty dismissed two-time Wimbledon champion Petra Kvitova in impressive style to reach the semis for the first

The unflappable Barty beat the Czech 7-6 (8/6), 6-2 and will be favourite in her semifinal against

packed and he received a rare warning America's Sofia Kenin -- sending hopes soaring of a first home winner

> The French Open champion, who once quit tennis to play cricket and has been steadily rising since her return, is the tournament's poster girl with her image plastered all over Melbourne.

> But she said: "I'd prefer to just be sitting at home just living my quiet

Kenin, whose career is also on the up, made her first Grand Slam semifinal and with it will rise to at least 12 in the rankings -- making her the second-highest American behind Serena Williams.

The feisty 21-year-old was a 6-4, 6-4 becoming the lowest-ranked player to winner over Ons Jabeur, halting the beat Federer at the Australian Open, Tunisian's historic run which made her the first Arab woman to reach a Major quarterfinal.

"She's a really tough player, I knew she's going to come out playing strong," Kenin said. "She's had really good matches, good wins. It wasn't an easy battle -- all respect to her."

Jabeur has ignited interest back home with her run to the last eight, even receiving a good-luck phone call from her president.

"I think I proved that I can be in the quarterfinals in a Grand Slam, even if I have a lot of things to improve physically and mentally," said the 25-year-old, who will now move inside the top 50.

"I proved to myself that I could do a lot of great things. I'm happy that I played this way."

### Tunisia hails



AFP, Melbourne

A phone call from her president wasn't enough to help Tunisia's Ons Jabeur as she bowed out of the Australian Open after her historic run to the quarterfinals on Tuesday.

Jabeur, the first Arab woman to reach the last eight of a Grand Slam, went down 6-4, 6-4 to the American Sofia Kenin.

Jabeur, the first Tunisian woman to win a main-draw match at the Australian Open, said: "I heard a lot from Tunisia, my phone is still going crazy right now.

"I actually talked to the president of Tunisia. He called me and wished me good luck, that was really nice of him. I talked to a lot of politicians in Tunisia. They called me also.

"Everyone is crazy. A lot of people are calling and wishing me good luck.

The 25-year-old said her phone was still red-hot even after defeat.

"Still actually receiving really good messages that they are proud," she said.

#### Solskjaer seeks spirit of PSG

MU prepare to face Man City

**A**FP, London



Ole Gunnar Solskjaer says Manchester United need to harness the spirit of Paris Saint-Germain and put in a "perfect performance" if they are to overcome Manchester City and reach the League Cup final.

United face an uphill battle after losing the first leg of their semifinal against 3-1 at Old Trafford. Marcus Rashford's goal gives United a glimmer of hope heading to the Etihad Stadium on Wednesday and Solskjaer said the stunning comeback win against PSG in the Champions League last March can be an inspiration.

United were 2-0 down after the first leg and then 3-1 down on aggregate in Paris before storming back to win on away goals.

"Well, it looked like it was over at half-time," he said, referring to the first leg of the City match. "I have to say the second part of that first half, they outplayed us for a while and it's hard. "But then when we got the goal, of course you're back in it, we hope for another one.

"But now we've got to go into the memory bank and think PSG because we've done it against good teams before and it gives us some hope, and the game in December (when United won 2-1 against City) of course gives us

hope that we can do something there.' Sporting midfielder Bruno Fernandes reportedly remains a target for the club, while a number of enquiries have been made as United look at possible attacking options.

"Of course it is a difficult window. It always has been. I can't remember how many good ones we've brought in, good deals that we've brought in in January. Henrik (Larsson) was good, Nemanja (Vidic) and Patrice (Evra) were two good ones.'

#### Drogba, Park for bushfire charity match

AFP, Sydney

Football greats Didier Drogba, Emile Heskey and Park Ji-sung will headline a match in Sydney to raise money for bushfire relief, organisers said Tuesday.

Fires have ravaged large tracts of the country, leaving 33 people dead and thousands of homes destroyed, and sports stars around the world have been rallying to support recovery efforts.

Football Federation Australia said the match is set for May 23 and the funds raised will be used to restore soccer facilities damaged by the blazes.

The game will also honour the brave men and women who have put their own lives at risk during this unprecedented natural disaster", he added

Joining Drogba, Heskey and Park will be a who's who of football, including former Juventus star David Trezeguet, Manchester United icon Dwight Yorke and ex-Chelsea striker Tore

#### Chelsea on course to face Liverpool

AFP, London



Premier League leaders Liverpool will face Chelsea in the FA Cup fifth round if Jurgen Klopp's understudies win their replay against Shrewsbury.

Third-tier Shrewsbury fought back to draw 2-2 with Liverpool on Sunday, earning a replay at Anfield.

FA Cup holders Manchester City have been given a trip to second-tier Sheffield

Wednesday. Manchester United will visit the winners of the replay between Northampton and Derby, who feature former United star Wayne Rooney in their squad.

Oxford's reward for a replay victory over top-flight Newcastle would be a trip to Championship leaders West Brom.

League One side Portsmouth will face Premier League opposition at Fratton Park after being drawn against Bournemouth or Arsenal.



Arsenal booked their place in the FA Cup fifth round with their youngsters securing a 2-1 win over Bournemouth on Tuesday. PHOTO: TWITTER



#### **Emphatic Eriksen** moves to Inter



Christian Eriksen said he was desperate to join Inter Milan this month after completing a protracted move from Tottenham on Tuesday.

Eriksen, 27, has signed a contact until 2024 with the Italian giants after the clubs reached an agreement for a reported transfer fee of 20 million euros (£17 million, \$22 million).

"I couldn't wait to join," Eriksen told Inter TV. "It's wonderful to be here and I'm happy to be a new Inter player. I'm very excited and can't wait to introduce myself to the fans. I've already experienced their warmth, it's been a fantastic welcome. I feel great."

Eriksen made 305 appearances for Spurs after joining from Ajax in 2013, scoring 69 goals.

"The numbers say that I did really well in England. It's now time to start a new challenge, I'm really happy to have the opportunity to play in Serie A for a big team. Inter is a fantastic club.