

Games best for China

High jump gold goes to Radzivil

AFP, Guangzhou

Powerhouse China made Guangzhou its most successful Asian Games ever on Friday as Bangladesh beat Afghanistan to win not just the cricket but their first gold medal in Asiad history.

When Feng Lanlan clinched the women's 68kg karate title it pushed China's total golds to 184, shattering their previous best at the Beijing Asiad in 1990, a tally no other country has reached since the Games began in 1951.

Guangzhou had already become their most dominant in terms of total medals when they marched past the 341 set in 1990.

On the 14th and penultimate day of action, the hosts stretched their gold haul to 196 as they build-up to an assault on the United States at the London Olympics in 2012.

Other title showdowns saw India win the men's and women's kabaddi golds while China's women defeated Japan in the handball decider.

On the final day of athletics, Bahrain's Ethiopian-born Mimi Gebregeorges won the women's 5,000m ahead of Indian pair Preeja

Sreedharan and Kavita Raut.

"I just killed myself to win," she said after adding the title to her 1,500m bronze.

Bahrain's Bilisuma Shugi Gelassa, another Ethiopian, clinched the men's 10,000m after a late burst of speed in the final 30m saw him pip Qatar's Kenyan-born Essa Rashed at the line.

China won the men's 4x100m relay and Thailand unexpectedly took the women's title, while another Chinese, Li Yanxi, leapt furthest to win the men's triple jump and Uzbekistan's Svetlana Radzivil claimed high jump honours.

China's world beating divers, meanwhile, completed a predictable clean-sweep of all 10 gold with world number one He Zi capping a hugely successful season by taking her first Asian Games title in the women's 3m springboard.

"I'm not very satisfied, I didn't dive well," said He, despite ensuring China kept their 100 percent record in this event that has stretched back to Tehran in 1974.

The springboard was also notable for Cho Sut Ian taking bronze -- the first diving medal ever won by former Portuguese colony Macau.

Rising star Cao Yuan capped their night by bagging the men's 10m platform title to hand his country a perfect 10-out-of-10 for the eighth time at an Asian Games.

Pakistan angry at India snub

AFP, Guangzhou

Pakistan reopened old wounds with India on Friday by insisting their bitter rivals were wrong to snub the Asian Games by refusing to send a cricket team.

Pakistan coach Sadiq Mohammad insisted that more pressure should have been put on India to respect the Guangzhou tournament, the first time the sport has featured at the Asiad.

"India said they would come and they said cricket should be in the Asian Games. God knows why they are not here. Somebody should have put added pressure on them," said Sadiq.

India snubbed the Asian Games because of international commitments faced by their team with a home series against New Zealand and an eagerly-awaited tour of South Africa about to get underway.

Sadiq said that despite Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh also having Test and one-day international programmes to respect, all three still send second-string teams to both the men's and women's events in Guangzhou.

"India said they had to play New Zealand, but our main team had matches to play against South Africa," added Sadiq.

"India should have taken part in the Asian Games because this would have been a great opportunity for the young players to gain experience."

Pakistan wrapped up their Asian Games with a bronze medal after skipper Khalid Latif smashed an unbeaten 53 off 42 balls in a six-wicket win over Sri Lanka.

Latif, whose five one-day internationals made him the only capped player in his young team, hit four sixes and two fours to lift Pakistan past Sri Lanka's 135 all out with two overs to spare.

Three of those sixes came in one over from leg-spinner Malinga Bandara, boosting the total after Pakistan had lost four wickets for 85 runs.

Bilawal Bhatti returned unbeaten on a quickfire 24 off 14 balls that included the winning hit for a six off Nuwan Zoysa.

Pakistan made amends for the 22-run defeat in Thursday's semifinal against Afghanistan.

Rain to sing at closing ceremony

AFP, Guangzhou

Korean pop sensation Rain will sing and dance at the closing ceremony of the Asian Games as part of a promotion for the 2014 Incheon Asiad, organisers said Friday.

The pop star also known as Jung Ji-Hoon will sing three songs at Saturday's closing ceremony which will be televised throughout Asia, Lee Dong-Me, an official with the Incheon organising committee of the Asian Games said.

Rain has sold millions of records throughout Asia after bursting on to the pop scene early this decade. He has also performed at Madison Square Garden in New York and at Las Vegas.

Div I cricket

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In the new BKSP ground, high-flyers Sheikh Jamal (220-3) banked on Majid's steady 94 to beat Khealaghar Samaj Kallyan Samity (214-9) by seven wickets.



Australia's Michael Hussey plays a square drive on the second day of the first Ashes Test against England at the Gabba in Brisbane yesterday.

SL-WI TEST

Rain spoils Day 4

AFP, Colombo

No play was possible due to rain on the penultimate day of the second Test between Sri Lanka and the West Indies in Colombo on Friday.

The West Indies were 165-5 in their first innings in reply to Sri Lanka's 387-9 declared on Thursday, with Carlton Baugh unbeaten on four and Dwayne Bravo on one not out.

With just one day remaining, the Test is heading for a draw. The opening match of the three-Test series also ended in a draw in Galle.

Bronze for Pakistan

AFP, Guangzhou

Skipper Khalid Latif smashed an unbeaten 53 off 42 balls as Pakistan won the cricket bronze medal at the Asian Games with a six-wicket win over Sri Lanka on Friday.

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Pakistan made amends for the 22-run defeat in Thursday's semi-final against Afghanistan, who take on Bangladesh in the final later on Friday.

Sri Lanka's total revolved around an opening stand of 53 in eight overs between Zoysa and Jeevantha Kulatunga.

Kulatunga top-scored with 31, while Zoysa, who played 30 Tests and 95 one-dayers primarily as a left-arm seamer, hit two fours and a six in a run-a-ball 24.

Dilshan Munaweera's 28 carried Sri Lanka to 100-3 by the 15th over, before the last seven wickets crashed for 35 runs, four batsmen being run out.

Left-arm spinner Raza Hassan was Pakistan's best bowler with 2-19 from his four overs.

Hussey battling away

AFP, Brisbane

Mike Hussey anchored a mid-innings revival to propel Australia towards England's first innings total when rain ended play on the second day of the opening Ashes Test at the Gabba on Friday.

The veteran left-hander dispelled doubts over his place in the team after a lean trot to spearhead Australia's fightback following the loss of four wickets in the post-lunch session.

When rain forced play to be abandoned at 4:45 pm (0645 GMT), Australia were 220 for five and trailing England by 35 runs with Hussey unbeaten on 81 and wicketkeeper Brad Haddin not out 22.

"The game's pretty interestingly poised, it's pretty tight, it's probably 50-50 at the moment and the first two hours tomorrow it will be interesting to see what happens," Hussey said.

Hussey showed the beneficial effects of his restorative 118 for Western Australia in the leadup Sheffield Shield game last weekend to carry on his form renaissance with an enterprising knock of 13 fours and a six off 144 balls.

The 35-year-old campaigner survived a near catch in the slips off his first ball to share in an unbroken 77-run partnership for the sixth wicket with Haddin to refuel Australia's charge after England's first innings 260.

"It just goes to show how much the game is a fine line," Hussey said.

"Even with that first one (ball) I was hoping and praying that it was going to fall short and thankfully it did, a foot more and I would have been gone for a first-ball duck."

Hussey went on to blunt the English momentum after Australia had been rocked by the loss of four wickets after lunch to slump to 143 for five.

Pacemen Steve Finn and James Anderson were England's heroes, bowling the tourists back into contention straight after lunch.

Anderson claimed the prized wicket of master batsman Ricky Ponting for 10 with the second ball after the interval.

Ponting attempted to glance down the leg-side only to get a fine edge to Matt Prior.

It was a massive wicket for England with Ponting averaging 66.44 in his 14 Tests at the Gabba and who set up the last Ashes series down under four years ago when he scored 196 in the first innings of the corresponding Test.

Finn produced a spectacular return catch to dismiss opener Simon Katich off his bowling for 50.

The young Middlesex quick flung his giant frame to the ground to take a sprawling return catch in the 37th over.

"We're happy with our day's work as a unit," Finn said. "I thought the other bowlers bowled fantastically well and that's been the nature of the game, it's ebb and flowed and it's going to be nice to have the new ball at 9.30 tomorrow."

It was Katich's 25th half-century in 55 Tests and his fourth against England.

Michael Clarke struggled for fluency

throughout his 50-ball stay at the crease before his fitful innings came to an end on nine when he attempted a pull shot off Finn only to top edge a catch to Prior.

Clarke had been suffering back trouble before being cleared to play in the Ashes opener.

It was Prior's 100th Test dismissal -- 96 catches and four stumpings -- in his 36th Test match.

The inconsistent Marcus North lasted just eight balls for one before he prodded forward and edged off-spinner Graeme Swann to Paul Collingwood at slip, leaving Australia at 143 for five in the 53rd over.

It was the fourth time Swann had taken the wicket of the West Australian left-hander in Tests.

At stumps, Finn had 2-61 off 15 overs and Anderson 2-40 off 21 overs.

Australia lost only the wicket of Shane Watson in the morning session after resuming at 25 without loss.

Watson beat off an England referral for lbw but he was out to Anderson's next ball when he edged to Andrew Strauss at first slip for 36.

England have not won the Brisbane Test since Mike Gatting's team prevailed by seven wickets six tours ago, on the way to their last Australian series victory in 1986/87.

SCORES IN BRIEF

ENGLAND: First innings 260 (Cook 67, Trott 29, Pietersen 43, Bell 76, Swann 10, Anderson 11; Siddle 6-54, Doherty 2-41)

AUSTRALIA: First innings 220 for 5 (Watson 36, Katich 50, Hussey 81 not out, Haddin 22 not out; Anderson 2-40, Finn 2-61)



State Minister for Youth and Sports Ahad Ali Sarkar inaugurates the Prime Bank Dhaka Sports Carnival at Dhaka Club yesterday.

Modi breaks silence

AFP, New Delhi

The sacked former head of the Indian Premier League said he is the victim of a "witch hunt" in his first major interview since being forced from office under a cloud of allegations.

Modi, the brash driving force behind the money-spinning IPL, was removed as the chairman of the cricket tournament and other senior positions in the national game in September.

Last month, India's cricket body, the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI), lodged a complaint with police over the misappropriation of funds totalling 4.68 billion rupees (106 million dollars) during IPL events.

Police in the southern city of Chennai, where the BCCI is based, registered a case against Modi and six others "on charges including criminal conspiracy, cheating and falsification of accounts."

"What I did was absolutely by the book," Modi told former BBC sports journalist Mihir Bose in an interview posted on Modi's personal website and YouTube late Thursday.

Since the allegations surfaced Modi has been in London amid pressure from Indian authorities to return home to speak to investigators.

"Whatever is on is like a witch hunt," he said, adding he was cooperating fully with Indian authorities through teleconferences.

He said he had launched a "pioneering cricket initiative", adding that he had shared the same fate as other pioneers who ended up "with arrows in their backs."

"I can very clearly tell you that I have not pocketed any money from the IPL," he said.

Modi also denied rigging bidding for the lucrative franchises in the league, insisting it was an "open bid" and saying that he had hired the best legal minds to ensure the process was above board.

Responding to charges that he used the tournament as a personal fiefdom that benefited his associates, he said he got friends and relatives to bid for the teams because no-one else would.

"When I conceived the IPL, everyone thought it was a hare-brained scheme. None of the existing financiers for the game wanted to be part of the financing," he said.

"The only way we could take this forward was to bring in friends and family," he said. "Now it has become so successful people are pointing and saying, 'You gave it and to friends and family.'"

"Where we all these people when we were conceiving the league?"

Clarke struggles

AFP, Brisbane

Australia's decision to play an apparently injured Michael Clarke in the first Ashes Test is sure to be questioned after he struggled for just nine runs in the first innings here on Friday.

Clarke's preparation for the first Test was hampered by injury after a long-standing back problem flared up while he was playing a Sheffield Shield match earlier this month.

He was rested for the subsequent Shield match against Tasmania last week but was cleared for the opening Test, with the Australian vice-captain dismissing the injury as a minor complaint.

However, he appeared restricted in the field during England's first innings on Thursday and laboured during his time at the crease.

Clarke took an age to get off the mark, surviving a confident caught behind shout before he had scored, then battled for 50 balls before getting a top edge to wicketkeeper Matt Prior off a Steven Finn short ball.

His dismissal looked almost inevitable and he appeared to be a shadow of the elegant batsman who averages almost 56 in Ashes Test matches.

But teammate Mike Hussey said he thought Clarke wasn't hampered by the injury.

"He was running fine," Hussey said.

"He was obviously feeling a bit sore leading into the game. He's very diligent with his rehab and physio and things like that, so he's got it (his back) the best he possibly can."

"And to be frank we need him. This is the Ashes, the biggest series of our lives and he's one of the best batsmen in the country, and we definitely need him in the batting order."

"I don't know if he's 100 percent fit but whatever he is, he's a very, very important member of the team."

With the under-pressure Marcus North also falling cheaply on Friday, selectors will be anxiously watching Clarke over the next few days.

Murray moves to semis

AFP, London

Andy Murray stormed into the semi-finals of the ATP World Tour Finals with a crushing 6-2, 6-2 win against Spanish seventh seed David Ferrer on Thursday.

Murray knew from bitter experience that the complex nature of the round-robin system at the prestigious end-of-year event could prove treacherous.

The British number one was eliminated in the group stages here at London's O2 Arena last year despite winning two of his three matches because overall he had won one game less than Juan Martin Del Potro.

But this time the maths were in Murray's favour as Roger Federer's straight sets win over Robin Soderling earlier on Thursday eased his path to the last four.

Federer had clinched his place on top of Group B with that win and, as a result, Murray walked onto court aware that he needed only one set to book his place in the last four.

He achieved that aim comfortably and was in complete control as he wrapped up the win in just one hour and nine minutes.

Murray hopes to face world number one Rafael Nadal in Saturday's semi-finals, even though he knows it will tough to beat the Spaniard.

He said: "I knew before I needed to win one set and David needed to win comfortably so it was quite a strange position to be in."

"David started well but I returned well to get myself back into it. It feels great to be in the semis in London. They've put on an unbelievable tournament here and it's been almost packed every match."

"I'd like to play against Rafael Nadal in the semifinals. It would be an incredibly tough match. I've watched his matches here and he's been playing unbelievably well."

"I don't seem to beat those guys in the big matches. I'll try and win. But I'm not sure I've got a whole lot of chance if I play against him."

Ferrer added: "Andy started a little bit nervously but after that he played really good."

"I don't think I was focused. I had a lot of problems physically and mentality. It is difficult to play with these guys and if I am not perfect, 100 percent, it is impossible."

After demolishing Soderling in impressive fashion in his opening match, Murray cut a forlorn figure as he was out-classed by Federer on Tuesday.

It briefly seemed he would stumble again as Ferrer, who had beaten Murray in their two meetings this year in Rome and Madrid, broke for a 2-0 lead after the home favourite tamely netted a backhand.

But Murray hit straight back in the next game as he converted the third of three break points with a ferocious backhand down the line.

His tentative start was soon a distant memory. Murray produced some breath-taking tennis and he broke again in the fifth game thanks to a well-timed foray to the net that ended with a volleyed winner.

Ferrer's climb up the rankings has been driven by his tremendous energy and efficient defence. Unfortunately for him, Murray also has those assets and can call on a greater array of shot-making skills as well.

BJMC back

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"The authority should have given at least 15 days to practice on the turf as the boys and girls are used to practice on the ground and road and they become tired after just one to two laps on the turf," said Kuddus.

"It was tough to speed up and I had to give extra effort in the race," said Mostafizur Rahman, who was a member of Ansar's 24km team trail event and finished second behind the BJMC team.

It was seen that most of the Bangladesh Athletic Federation officials were on hand to assist the cycling events and they had no objection to hold the cycling on the turf.

"During the SA Games preparation and the BNS renovation, some heavy weights vans were driven on the turf and that caused huge damage and considering those, it is no problem to hold a cycling competition on the turf," said BAF general secretary Shah Alam.

Roquibul's mother passes away

SPORTS REPORTER

Saleha Banoo, mother of former Bangladesh cricket captain ASM Roquibul Hasan died of old-age complication yesterday.

She was 85.

Saleha left behind two sons and four daughters. She was laid to rest at the Azimpur graveyard after a namaj-e-janaza was held at the Adabor Mosque after Maghrib prayer and a Qul-khani will be held on Sunday at her Adabor residence.

Bangladesh Cricket Board expressed their condolences at the death of Saleha and prayed for her departed soul. They also conveyed their deepest sympathies to the members of the bereaved family.

No lack of confidence

FROM PAGE 17

confidence after his side's recent impressive performance against South Africa and in the domestic T20 competition.

"The guys played very well against South Africa especially the batters were very good and the guys also performed in T20 cricket. They are full of confidence in the team," he said.

He was also confident that his side could accustom themselves with the conditions before the first one-dayer to be held at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur on December 1.

Zimbabwe will play a limited-over warm-up match against BCB XI on November 29 at BKSP.

"The condition is definitely different but it's just a matter of adjusting and we have a few days in hand to practice before we start the series proper. We are hopeful that the boys will take the opportunity to get adjusted to the conditions," hoped Masakadza.

"I think the main thing is to prepare for the World Cup as the guys will be returning to the subcontinent to play (the World Cup) and obviously they will try for a series win," he added.

The second (December 3) and third one-dayers (December 6), which will be day-nighters, will also be held at Mirpur and after that the teams will travel to Chittagong to play the remaining two games scheduled for December 10 and 12 at the Zohur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium.

An upset, and a strike

Peter Rowan, the new ball bowlers, cut a swathe through the Indian top order, to leave them teetering at 17 for five. The fairytale ended there, though, as one Kapil Dev Nikhanj laid waste to their bowling.

Zimbabwe picked up three more wickets, but an unbeaten 126-run stand between Dev and wicketkeeper Syed Kirmani spoiled any plans that Duncan Fletcher might have had. It was an incredible innings from Dev (175* from 138 balls, 16 fours, 6 sixes), but the cricket world is unfortunate to never be able to see that innings. The BBC cameramen were on a strike brought about by pay disputes. An Indian fan at the ground made a fortune by recording the innings from his place in the stands on his video camera. He later sold the tape to Dev for a tidy sum.