

## Archers beat Aussies to bag Asia Cup bronze



SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh archers – Sagor Islam, Hakim Ahmed Rubel, and Ram Krishna Saha – beat their Australian counterparts 5-4 yesterday to grab the bronze medal in the men's recurve team event of the Archery Asia Cup World Ranking Tournament, Stage 3, in Singapore.

The evenly contested affair, tied at 4-4 after four sets, went to the tiebreakers where Bangladesh archers were near-flawless and scored 29 points, out of a maximum 30, against Australia's 27.

China, meanwhile, who beat Bangladesh in the semi-finals, won the gold medal while India took the silver in the event.

The 15-member Bangladesh contingent is set to return to the country today.



World number one Iga Swiatek of Poland fought off a comeback from unseeded Czech Karolina Muchova to win 6-2, 5-7, 6-4 and clinch her third French Open and fourth Grand Slam title yesterday. The Pole, who had not dropped a set in the tournament, was 4-1 up in the second before Muchova won four games in a row and forced a decider.

PHOTO: REUTERS

## Kipyegon and Girma smash world records

REUTERS, PARIS

Kenya's Faith Kipyegon shattered the world record in the women's 5,000 metres at the Paris Diamond League meeting on Friday in her first race at the distance in eight years just a week after breaking the world mark in the 1,500m.

It was one of three records to fall, with Lamecha Girma of Ethiopia smashing the 3,000m steeplechase record and Norway's Jakob Ingebrigtsen running a world's best in the two-mile race.

Kipyegon finished in 14 minutes 5.20 seconds after pulling away from Letesenbet Gidey over the final 400 metres of a spirited battle at Charley Stadium to break the Ethiopian's record of 14:06.62 set on Oct. 7, 2020, in Valencia.

The 29-year-old Kipyegon, two-time Olympic champion in the 1,500m, sprinted the final lap in about 60 seconds to set the record in an event she had only run twice before in 2015.

"I did not think about the world record. I do not know how I made it. I just focused on the green light and tried to stay relaxed and enjoy the race," said Kipyegon.

"... when I saw that it was a world record I was so surprised. It was all about giving my best. I just wanted to improve on my personal best, the world record was not my plan."



## Can Ruud prove Djokovic 'is human' and deny No. 23?

AFP, PARIS

Novak Djokovic admits "history is hovering" over him as he takes on Casper Ruud in the French Open final on Sunday with a men's record 23rd Grand Slam title tantalisingly close.

The 36-year-old Serb can set numerous landmarks in what will be his seventh championship match at Roland Garros.

As well as breaking the 22 Slam tie he shares with Rafael Nadal, he can become both the tournament's oldest champion and the only man to win all four majors on at least three occasions.

"The only thing I can say is that I'm very focused. History is always something that's hovering over me," said Djokovic, the 2016 and 2021 winner in Paris and now the oldest finalist in 93 years.

Djokovic, playing his 34th Grand Slam final, can also return to the world number one ranking with victory over Ruud, replacing Carlos Alcaraz, the man he defeated in the semi-finals.

Victory on Sunday would place him once again halfway to an historic calendar Grand Slam, a sweep of all four majors in the same year which has only ever been achieved by two men.

Rod Laver accomplished it twice, the last coming in 1969.

Djokovic, however, refuses to contemplate such dominance, wary of how the pressure doomed his last bid to pocket all four Slams in the same year when he lost the 2021 US Open final to Daniil Medvedev.

"I'm not thinking about a calendar

slam. I'm thinking really just to win another Grand Slam title here on Sunday, and I'm so close. I know it. I know the feeling," said Djokovic.

Ruud was runner-up to Rafael Nadal in the 2022 final before also losing the championship match at the US Open to Alcaraz.

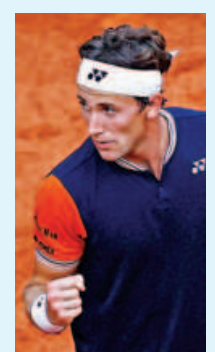
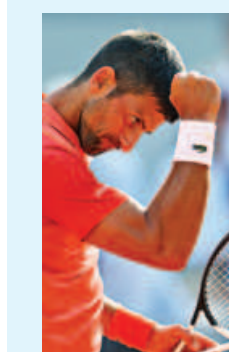
The 24-year-old Norwegian has never defeated Djokovic in four meetings and

"I think it's just a matter of not thinking like, I 'need' to win this match. This is a word that I try to avoid," he said.

Alexander Zverev, defeated in straight sets by Ruud in the semi-finals, believes that Djokovic might crack under the weight of expectation.

"If I would have to bet money, maybe I wouldn't bet on Casper too much. Does he have chances? Yes, he does," said Zverev

DJOKOVIC		RUUD	
17h 44m	Time on court	15h 59m	
193	Games played	198	
2	Sets dropped	3	
295	Winners	277	
39	Aces	32	
73	1st serve win %	71	
37/73	Break points won	35/76	



has yet to win a set.

Despite Ruud's desperately poor record against Djokovic, he can point to his prowess on clay.

Since 2020, he has the most wins on the surface with 87, most finals with 12 and nine titles.

On Sunday, the world number four will attempt to make sure that all the pressure sits squarely on the shoulders of Djokovic.

after a third successive semi-final loss in Paris.

"But I think it couldn't be better for Casper. Novak is one of the best players in the world, that's for sure, but when you're on the brink of history I think that adds a little bit of pressure."

"You remember the US Open final he had with Medvedev? The pressure, you know, we are all human. Novak is human."

## Afghanistan in town for lone Test

SPORTS REPORTER

As members of the Bangladesh Test squad checked into the team hotel and enjoyed a rest day ahead of the upcoming one-off Test series against Afghanistan yesterday, their opponents landed in the country divided into two groups.

The first group of Afghans landed at the Hazrat Shahjalal International airport at 9:00am while the second reached Dhaka at 12:30pm. Both Bangladesh and Afghanistan team are staying at the Pan Pacific Sonargaon hotel in the capital.

The Afghans will definitely miss star spinner Rashid Khan, who was ruled out from the only Test scheduled to begin from June 14 in Mirpur after he sustained a lower back injury during Afghanistan's recent tour of Sri Lanka.

The hosts also have some injury concerns, with the stand-in captain Liton and ODI skipper Tamim Iqbal both suffering from back pain and missing training sessions recently. Pacer Taskin Ahmed also recovered from a side strain injury but it is still uncertain whether he will be able to take part in the Test.

Both teams are scheduled to practice at the home of cricket in Mirpur from today. The Tigers will train in the morning session while Afghanistan will practice from the afternoon.

Bangladesh, led by Shakib Al Hasan, suffered a comprehensive 224-run last and only Test they played against Afghanistan in 2019 in Chattogram.

Afghanistan will return to the country for the Eid Ul Adha break after the Test series before returning on July 1 for the three-match ODI and two-match T20I series.



## India asked to pull off record chase

AGENCIES

The title-decider is living up to its billing after Australia declared on 270 for eight, setting India a monumental 444-run victory target in the World Test Championship (WTC) final yesterday.

In reply, India began their chase aggressively and piled up 110 for three in 25 overs before day four's end, having lost the wickets of Shubman Gill, Rohit Sharma, and Cheteshwar Pujara on the way.

India will have to pull off their highest-ever successful fourth-innings run chase if they are to win their first global ICC trophy in 10 years and avoid suffering back-to-back defeats in WTC finals.

Stumper-batter Alex Carey top-scored for the Australians in their second innings with a dogged 66 off 105 balls, while left-arm spinner Ravindra Jadeja was the pick of the Indian bowlers by claiming three wickets.

India's best-ever fourth-innings run chase was scoring 406 for four against West Indies in Port of Spain in 1976. Their task will look even more daunting since the highest-ever successful run chase at The Oval is 263, which England achieved against Australia more than a century ago, in 1902.

In spite of the odds, India camp had appeared optimistic after the third day and the likes of Shardul Thakur sought inspiration from England who chased down 378 against them in Birmingham last year.

## Messi gets rockstar welcome in China

REUTERS, BEIJING

Argentine superstar Lionel Messi arrived in Beijing on Saturday for a friendly match before leaving a storied European career to join Major League Soccer side Inter Miami as a free agent.

His arrival was announced in a post on the organising International Football Invitation's official Weibo social media site with a video of players stepping off a plane,

ahead of Thursday's Argentina-Australia match in the Chinese capital's recently rebuilt Workers' Stadium.

Messi, who lifted the World Cup in Qatar in December and is widely considered to be one of the game's all-time greats, confirmed this week he will leave French



champions Paris St Germain for the U.S. league.

This is the Argentina captain's seventh visit to China and his first since 2017.

He has received a fervent welcome on each of his previous visits to China, which has a huge soccer fan base despite the struggles of the men's national team, who have played at the World Cup only once.

His arrival was a top-trending topic on Chinese social media on Saturday.

"I'm so excited," said 26-year-old hospital administration worker Guo Wenwen from Guizhou province. Guo has followed Messi since 2014, owns around 30 replica Messi soccer jerseys and regularly posts videos on social media related to the Argentine.

Like many she does not yet have a ticket

for the match but she is going to Beijing anyhow to see if she can get one.

"I'm going to Beijing to try to see him," she told Reuters. "He is my role model, my idol, my spiritual pillar, is the ideal type of company and a source of happiness."

In Beijing, hundreds of fans wearing replica jerseys queued up for hours at the airport and the hotel where Messi was due to stay, with many providing livestreams on social media and some chanting his name as they hoped to catch a glimpse of him. Some contrasted his popularity with the dim view many have of the men's national team.

"Many Chinese fans love soccer but the Chinese national team are just so weak," said Beijing resident Song Gang, 36, who joined the hordes at the hotel on Saturday but like most did not see Messi as he was whisked in a side entrance.

"We hope his visit will have a positive impact for Chinese soccer. But then again, look at the size of our population and our national team has been playing for so many years and the results seem to get worse and worse. I hope they improve."

Australia and Argentina last met at the 2022 World Cup in Qatar in the round of 16, where Messi was among the scorers as his team won 2-1.



Bangladesh pacer Taskin Ahmed poses for a photo before checking into the team hotel in the capital on Saturday ahead of the Tigers' one-off Test against Afghanistan, starting from Wednesday in Mirpur. [Inset] Later in the day, the Tigers in the team hotel attended a Gallup Strength Training Group session, conducted by Allan Brown, the Life Skills, Development and Strengths coach.

PHOTO: STAR/BCB