

## Boxer Selim 'satisfied' in defeat

SPORTS REPORTER from Hangzhou

The judges from Croatia, Latvia, France, Italy and Ireland might not have given their verdict in favour of Selim Hossain, but the Bangladeshi boxer won the hearts of audience in the gallery before he went down fighting against Shudai Harada of Japan in the quarterfinals of 57kg category in Asian Games yesterday.

Selim, who astonished everyone by reaching the quarterfinals by defeating Sri Lankan Arachchinge Podi and Tajik Asror Vokhidov in the first two rounds, ensured that it would not be a one-sided bout, even though the scoreline eventually suggested otherwise.

The lad from Rajshahi fought neck and neck in all three three-minute rounds, but all five judges ended up awarding 30 points to Shudai and 27 points to Selim.

"I am satisfied with how I performed on such a big stage. I'm happy to leave by performing a good show," Selim remarked after the match.

"I worked hard to study my Japanese opponent, but he is much faster and has better power and technique. Actually, I was unable to combat him in the manner that I desired, but I did my best," Selim said of his opponent, who was placed 33rd in the World Championships held in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, in April 2023.

**Men's cricket campaign begins today**

Bangladesh men's cricket team, who brought the country's first Asiad gold medal in 2010 and followed it up with a bronze in 2014, are set to begin their Asian Games campaign by taking on Malaysia in the quarterfinal at



People walk inside Narendra Modi Stadium complex ahead of the ICC Men's ODI World Cup in Ahmedabad, where the opening match between defending champions England and last edition's beaten finalists New Zealand will get the showpiece event underway tomorrow. (Inset) Bangladesh all-rounder Mehedi Hasan Miraz poses for a photograph yesterday after the team reached Dharamshala, where they will begin their campaign against Afghanistan on October 7.

PHOTO: AFP/FACEBOOK

## No opening ceremony?

AGENCIES

The highly anticipated ICC Men's Cricket World Cup is all set to commence on October 5 at the Narendra Modi Cricket stadium in Ahmedabad, featuring a match between the two finalists of the previous edition, England and New Zealand.

However, according to latest reports in Indian media, there will be no opening ceremony for this prestigious event.

The Board of Control for Cricket in India had planned a grand opening ceremony on October 4, a day before the tournament's opening match at the same venue.

The ceremony was supposed to feature renowned Bollywood stars such as Ranveer Singh, Arijit Singh, Tamannaah Bhatia, Shreyas Ghoshal, and Asha Bhosle.

The star-studded opening ceremony was scheduled to follow the Captains' Day event at the Narendra Modi Stadium. While the Captains' Day event is still on track, no official announcement has been made regarding the cancellation of the opening ceremony.



Zhejiang University of Technology Pingfeng Cricket field today.

This time the Bangladesh squad is comparatively depleted, but captain Saif Hassan stated that their "target is to win the gold".

Bangladesh players are enjoying the experience of participating in the Asiad for the first time amid "a lot of players from different disciplines from different countries", informed the Bangladesh captain.

**Kabaddi tastes bitter defeat**

Bangladesh men's kabaddi team suffered a massive 55-18 defeat to gold aspirants India in their second Pool A match at Xiaoshan Guali Sports Centre in Hangzhou yesterday.

A defeat at the hands of India, who beat Bangladesh 52-21 in the 2018 Games, was expected but the margin of defeat was not; especially after Bangladesh won three Bangabandhu Gold Cup international kabaddi tournaments in successive years under the supervision of the Indian coaches.

"We know India is very strong but our players also played very well; though most of our players haven't had much experience," said Bangladesh coach Ramesh Giri Bhendi, further stating that he hopes to see his charges "perform well in upcoming matches" against Chinese Taipei and Thailand and qualify for the semifinals to seal at least a bronze.

**Weightlifter Nayeem fumbles on Asiad debut**

Sheikh Nayeem Hossain had an Asian Games debut to forget as the 27-year-old weightlifter failed to lift four out of his six attempts in the B section of 73kg category at Xiaoshan Sports Center Gymnasium yesterday.

## England look to deny India home WC win

REUTERS, New Delhi

England hope to ride their formidable batting firepower to a second successive World Cup title but if India's crafty spinners and sprightly pace attack can fully exploit home conditions the country's cricket-mad fans could have something to celebrate.

Since failing to make it out of the pool phase at the 2015 Cricket World Cup, England have been transformed into limited-overs juggernauts, winning the 2019 title and last year's Twenty20 World Cup.

They have been blessed with a steady supply of exciting match-winners, which has encouraged them to try to redefine test cricket with their relentless, aggressive approach to the game.

Eight members of their triumphant 2019 squad are back to help England try to become only the third team to defend the ODI World Cup title after West Indies and Australia.

The group includes Jos Buttler, who seems immune to the pressure of a captaincy which has weighed heavily on others.

Star all-rounder Ben Stokes has come out of ODI 'retirement' and is back in the squad, albeit purely as a batter, and has picked up where he left off by belting 182 against New Zealand last month – the highest ODI score by an English batter.

But while England's only batting

headache is who to leave out, their bowling stocks look much thinner, with Jofra Archer missing through injury and lingering concerns about fellow speedster Mark Wood's fitness.

Hosts India have no such concerns and skipper Rohit Sharma has all his frontline players back and raring to go as the hosts look to repeat their 2011 success on home soil.

Rohit and Shubman Gill have formed a profitable opening partnership, with the inimitable Virat Kohli waiting in the wings at number three, and India also have players like Ishan Kishan and Suryakumar Yadav who can come



up with a match-winning innings.

Their star-studded batting lineup is backed by a speedy pace attack led by Jasprit Bumrah, with left-arm wristspinner Kuldeep Yadav likely to provide the X-factor.

The Australians no longer carry the same swagger that saw them win four of the last six World Cups, but it would be a mistake to write off the five-time champions despite their injury woes.

Skipper Pat Cummins and batting mainstay Steve Smith are among those returning from injury layoffs, while opener Travis Head is set to miss the early matches having fractured his hand in South Africa last month.

However, Australia will take heart from Mitchell Marsh's red-hot form at the top of the order, as well as Marnus Labuschagne's revival just ahead of the showpiece event.

They also possess an enviable collection of all-rounders in Marsh, Cameron Green, Marcus Stoinis, Sean Abbott and Glenn Maxwell, which could come in handy.

Outside the top three, Pakistan's 'cornered tigers' have been jolted by the injury to pace spearhead Naseem Shah but Babar Azam's side are capable of causing upsets.

Also in the reckoning are New Zealand, who fell agonisingly short of the title four years ago after the tied final at Lord's saw England crowned champions via a now-scraped boundary countback rule.



## India travel 3,400km for washed out game

AFP, Thiruvananthapuram

India's superstar cricketers endured a 3,400km (2,170 miles) cross-country journey to play a World Cup warm-up only for the match to be abandoned without a ball being bowled on Tuesday.

India were to face the Netherlands in Thiruvananthapuram, on the southern tip of India, but they were left kicking their heels due to torrential rain.

On Saturday, their scheduled game against defending champions England up in the north-eastern city of Guwahati was also washed out.

In total, the wet weather has so far forced three warm-up matches to be abandoned while three others have been rain-affected, leaving teams and players frustrated ahead of the tournament's start on Thursday.

The Netherlands have also had two washouts, including Saturday's match against Australia which ended in a no result when rain ended their chase in 14.2 overs.

That game was also played in Thiruvananthapuram, sparing the Dutch a fruitless trip to another venue.

However, the weather forecast for the rest of the week in Ahmedabad, Hyderabad and Dharamshala – venues for first three days of the tournament – is optimistic with sunshine instead of showers.

England will play New Zealand in the tournament opener at the world's biggest cricket stadium in Ahmedabad on Thursday.

## Leipzig seek revenge over City

AFP, Paris

RB Leipzig coach Marco Rose said last season's 7-0 thrashing by Manchester City was "history" as the two sides prepare to meet again in the Champions League in Germany on Wednesday.

City's rampant victory in their home leg of the last 16 tie, with Erling Haaland scoring five goals in 60 minutes, was one of the English side's key victories on the way to winning the Champions League for the first time last season.

"It wasn't part of the preparation for the game, because it's history," Rose said in Leipzig on Tuesday.

"Everything came together for them in that match and of course we were hugely dissatisfied with the size of the result.

"But we're in a new season and we're doing pretty well right now."

Leipzig have won seven of nine games in all competitions this season and come into the match fresh from a 2-2 home draw with German champions Bayern Munich.

Rose said his side could draw positives from the home leg against City last season, where Leipzig fought hard to draw 1-1.

"We know that we played very well at home and for that to happen again tomorrow, we have to run a lot and we have to suffer."

Rose said "yes" when asked if City were the best side in the world.

"But that doesn't help us and it doesn't help City," he added. "It's football and we will play 11 against 11."

"We know City's quality. We will need a top performance and a slice of luck."

City come into the match in a rare run of poor form, having lost two games in a row for the first time since January.

The English champions are also missing midfielders Kevin de Bruyne and Bernardo Silva.

Rose however praised City's squad depth, saying "even when de Bruyne and Bernardo Silva are missing, then in comes (Mateo) Kovacic, then in comes Phil Foden, who has developed really well."

**Are PSG serious contenders?**  
A summer of change has left Paris Saint-Germain with a radically revamped squad,



shorn of some of its biggest stars, and for now they remain a work in progress in what could be Kylian Mbappe's final season in the French capital.

They face Newcastle United in the Champions League on Wednesday in a tie that captures the imagination beyond its significance as the first meeting of the clubs backed by Qatar and Saudi Arabia respectively.

PSG already have the upper hand in a tough Group F after beating Borussia Dortmund 2-0 a fortnight ago while Newcastle drew 0-0 with AC Milan.

Avoid defeat at St James' Park and Luis Enrique's team will be well on course to qualify for the knockout stages.



**Porto chance for Barca to prove progress**

After consecutive premature and humiliating Champions League exits, Barcelona visit Porto on Wednesday aiming to make a statement in their trickiest group stage fixture.

Xavi Hernandez's side, five-time winners of the competition, have set their sights on returning to Europe's elite, with that goal informing their transfer strategy last summer.

After two consecutive tough group stage draws, this season Barcelona had more fortune.

They waltzed past Belgian champions Royal Antwerp with a 5-0 triumph in their opener but Xavi was quick to acknowledge it means little in terms of their overall chances, given they also thrashed Viktoria Plzen 5-1 in their first match last year.

"It's too soon (to say we can win it), last year we were in the same situation and it didn't go well, we have to be cautious," Xavi told reporters.

"We have to continue like this, we're on a good path... next up we have the most complicated match of the group, in Porto. We have the capacity, the confidence, but in the next game we have what I would say is the hardest game."

The clash at the Estadio Do Dragao against Porto, who did not come through the group in both of the last two seasons, will be a useful barometer of whether Barcelona are close to the level they want to be.

## Australian Open extends to 15 days

AFP, Sydney

The Australian Open said Tuesday it is adding a day to become a 15-day event in an effort to curb late-night matches – after Briton Andy Murray notably played until 4:05 am.

The annual Melbourne-based tournament, the first of four Grand Slam contests each year, will now start a day earlier on a Sunday.

"We have listened to feedback from the players and fans and are excited to deliver a solution to minimise late finishes," Australian Open tournament director Craig Tiley said.

"The additional day will achieve this, benefiting scheduling for fans and players alike." The Australian Open did not specifically mention Murray's late-night match in Melbourne this year, which set off public debate about the tournament's schedule.

Murray memorably asked during his epic five-set victory: "Why are we playing at 3 am?"

His five-hour, 45-minute match against Australian player Thanasi Kokkinakis finally ended at 4:05 am.

"It's not beneficial for the umpires, the officials. I don't think it's amazing for the fans. It's not good for the players," he said after the match in January.

Next year's tournament will be played from January 14-28.