

"The audiences will have expectations, and they want us to play good cricket. We want to show Bangladesh people how well we can perform."

Bangladesh captain
Najmul Hossain Shanto



Sri Lanka complain to ICC

AFP, Colombo

Sri Lanka said Friday they have complained to the International Cricket Council over their T20 World Cup team's treatment and conditions in co-host the United States.

The sports minister Harin Fernando alleged other teams had it better and said Sri Lanka had lodged a formal protest after the squad was held up by a seven-hour flight delay at a Florida airport.

He said Sri Lanka had also been given accommodation more than 90 minutes' drive from the practice stadium when they reached New York. He said India's team had been put up much closer.

Sri Lanka lost to South Africa by six wickets in their opening match on Monday in New York.

"Sri Lanka Cricket has complained to the ICC," Fernando told parliament.

"Different countries are being treated differently. We have called for an explanation from the organisers of the tournament."



Jannik Sinner (L) and Carlos Alcaraz – two of the biggest stars of tennis' new generation -- pose for a picture prior to the first men's singles semifinal match of the French Open on Court Philippe-Chatrier at the Roland Garros on Friday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Paris hangs Olympic rings on Eiffel Tower

AFP, Paris

As the countdown to the Olympics passed the 50 day mark, Paris hoisted its rings on the Eiffel Tower overnight and showed them off on Friday morning.

Workers assembled the prefabricated steel rings and after dark on Thursday lifted the logo, weighing 30 tonnes and 29 metres long, into place between two legs of the tower just above its first level.

Pierre Engel, an engineer at ArcelorMittal, the steel company that manufactured the rings from recycled material, said tests and studies had been carried out for many months to ensure the success of the operation.

The rings, each nine metres in diameter, will be illuminated every night.

"It will be one of the images of the Games," predicted Thierry Reboul, Director of Events and Ceremonies at the Paris Organising Committee for the Olympic Games.

Only two other buildings in Paris have the five rings attached to their facades.

Earlier in the week, the rings were also hoisted at the Paris La Defense Arena, in suburban Nanterre, where the Olympic and Paralympic swimming events will be held.

Old foes set for pivotal clash

AGENCIES

Two of cricket's greatest rivals, England and Australia, are set to produce a high-octane encounter in today's ICC Men's T20 World Cup fixture at the Kensington Oval in Barbados.

This Group B clash carries immense significance, particularly for the defending champions England, who find themselves in a tricky situation following their opening game washout against Scotland.

In contrast, Australia secured a comfortable 39-run victory in their campaign opener against Oman, placing them in a more favourable position. But the men in yellow had to largely depend on an all-round exploits from Marcus Stoinis.

Former England spinner Graeme Swann has labelled the match as a "must win" for England after their disappointing show against Scotland, where England's inability to take a wicket and the sloppy fielding during the rain-affected game has raised concerns as George Munsey and Michael Jones capitalised on England's lapses before piling up 90 runs in 10 overs.

"I do think it puts the next game against Australia as a must win. They need to go with a very aggressive attitude and take them on. If they go at them hard, they can win," Swann stated.

Swann, however, remains optimistic about England's prospects, but he acknowledges the urgency of the situation. Despite the hiccups, he believes England has the potential to clinch back-to-back T20 World Cup titles.

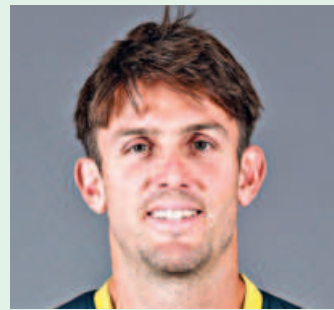
"I think on paper we are as strong a team as anybody, and Australia are the team to beat," Swann remarked.

England head coach Matthew Mott is also focused on the upcoming showdown, emphasising its significance following the



Australia have a better record at the Kensington Oval in Barbados, the venue for the showdown, as they won four of their seven T20s there while England have a 50 percent win record at the venue having won six of their 12 matches.

In 28 T20s at the venue, teams batting first have come out on top on 19 occasions in contrast to the nine wins by teams chasing.



England edge Australia in head-to-head records in T20s with 11 wins to their names against Australia's 10 in 23 encounters overall. Two matches between the sides produced no results.

England also boast a slender 2-1 lead over Australia in T20 World Cups, with wins in 2010 and 2021 editions. In the last five T20 meetings, England have won three and lost one against their arch-rivals, with the other match ending in a no result.

no result against Scotland.

"I definitely think Australia is a big game... and then depending on how we go there, we reset and go again," Mott commented.

For England, a loss to Australia would severely dent their hopes of advancing, especially after Scotland's victory over Namibia. This scenario could potentially bring run-rate into the equation later in determining the second team to advance from the group.

Both teams are aware of the stakes. England must execute their aggressive

playing style and utilise depth in both batting and bowling to overcome a formidable Australian side. For the 2021 champions Australia, on the other hand, continuing their winning momentum could pave the way for a historic treble, having already secured the World Test Championship and last year's ODI World Cup.

As the tournament, still in its early days, gears up to reach fever pitch, this England-Australia face-off promises to deliver drama and high-quality cricket, keeping fans on the edge of their seats.

South Africa look to overcome Dutch past

SPORTS REPORTER

South Africa will look to build on their dominant victory against Sri Lanka in the T20 World Cup on Monday but face a tricky opposition in the Netherlands against whom the Proteas suffered a memorable upset in the 2022 edition of the tournament.

The Proteas bundled out the Lankans for 77 at the Nassau County International Cricket Stadium in New York and after a few hiccups got across the line eventually.

At the same venue today, Aiden Markram's side will be wary of the Dutch courage that was the death of the Proteas in that Super 12 encounter in 2022.

The defeat eventually knocked the Proteas out of the tournament.

The Dutch will also come into the contest with the confidence of a win as they beat Nepal in their opening fixture on Tuesday.

However, the Dutch will undoubtedly be aware of the fact that they would need to up their game to rattle a star-studded South Africa.

In T20s, the two sides have only ever met in T20 World Cups and are even on head-to-head records.

The Proteas won the first meeting in the 2014 edition and the Dutch stunned them in the second in Australia.



Southgate wants England to refocus

AFP, London

Gareth Southgate has urged his England players to refocus after he dropped Jack Grealish, James Maddison and Harry Maguire from his Euro 2024 squad.

Southgate believes his group now need to come together after an emotional day as they start to focus on their bid to win a first major trophy since the 1966 World Cup.

"I didn't want to keep the players waiting until Friday. I think that would have been a mess, really," Southgate told the BBC.

"It wouldn't have been fair on the players that we've released, wouldn't have been fair on the players that were waiting to have confirmation that they were in."

"Inevitably, we knew when we named a 33 there would be a period of a nice prep camp, and then there was going to be a couple of days where there would be a lot of anxiety and a difficult couple of days for us all."

"But we'll close that down later tonight and now tomorrow everybody's heads are clear."

England play Iceland at Wembley on Friday in their last warm-up before the Euros.

Paolini stands in way of treble-chasing Swiatek

AFP, Paris

Iga Swiatek goes into Saturday's French Open final as the overwhelming favourite in her quest for a third successive Roland Garros title against surprise challenger Jasmine Paolini of Italy.

Swiatek, the world number one from Poland, is attempting to become the fourth woman in the Open era to lift the Coupe Suzanne Lenglen four times -- after Justine Henin, Chris Evert and Steffi Graf.

Only two have won the French Open three years in a row -- Henin (2005-07) and Monica Seles (1990-92) -- but Swiatek's supremacy on the clay in Paris has attracted comparisons with Rafael Nadal, winner of 14 men's titles and who holds a 112-4 record at Roland Garros.

"We'll see in 14 years if the journey is similar. That's obviously really nice for me," said Swiatek.

"I would never expect anybody to compare me to Rafa because for me he's above everybody, and he's a total legend."

The 23-year-old Swiatek has won all four of her previous Grand Slam finals and will bid to extend

that run against Paolini. Swiatek has won both her previous meetings with 12th seed Paolini, although the last of those was at the 2022 US Open and the Italian is enjoying by far the best year of her career.

Paolini, 28, will be appearing in her first Grand Slam final after defeating Russian 17-year-old



sensation Mirra Andreeva in the last four. That came after she knocked out former Wimbledon champion Elena Rybakina, the only player to beat Swiatek on clay this season.

It is an astonishing transformation for a player who had never gone beyond the second round of a major before the start of this year.

The world number 15 had

won a total of four matches in 16 Grand Slam appearances before advancing to the fourth round of the Australian Open in January.

Now she is one win away from an improbable title as she tries to emulate compatriot Francesca Schiavone, who won the 2010 French Open. Paolini's doubles partner Sara Errani lost the 2012



final to Maria Sharapova.

Paolini is the first Italian woman through to a Grand Slam final since Flavia Pennetta beat Roberta Vinci to win the 2015 US Open.

"I was watching the other Italians make it in the finals, and also won Grand Slams, but (to) imagine that can be myself was tough," said Paolini.

"Of course, I wished, but now it's

something crazy for me. I'm really happy. Also surprised. I never dreamed to be, you know, number one, Grand Slam champion. Never dreamed so big. Never," she added.

The question before the tournament was whether anyone could stop Swiatek, who arrived in Paris having won titles in Madrid and Rome.

Her last defeat in Paris came to Maria Sakkari in the 2021 quarter-finals. Swiatek's only other loss here was in the fourth round of her French Open debut in 2019.

She takes nothing for granted and is trying to just focus on delivering another accomplished performance.

"Sometimes, yeah, it's hard not to see what's at stake and what the atmosphere is around these matches. So still I'm not used to it. It's not the routine."

It's certainly uncharted territory for Paolini, who this time last year was playing a WTA 125 event, below the top tier, in Croatia.

The biggest moment of her career now lies before her, with the toughest current assignment in women's tennis standing between her and French Open glory.



Bangladesh football team captain Jamal Bhuiyan posted this photo on his official Facebook page yesterday of him sitting beside Sheikh Morsalin as the team flew to Qatar to play against Lebanon on June 11 following their 2-0 defeat against Australia at home in the penultimate World Cup Qualifiers fixture on Thursday.

PHOTO: FACEBOOK