

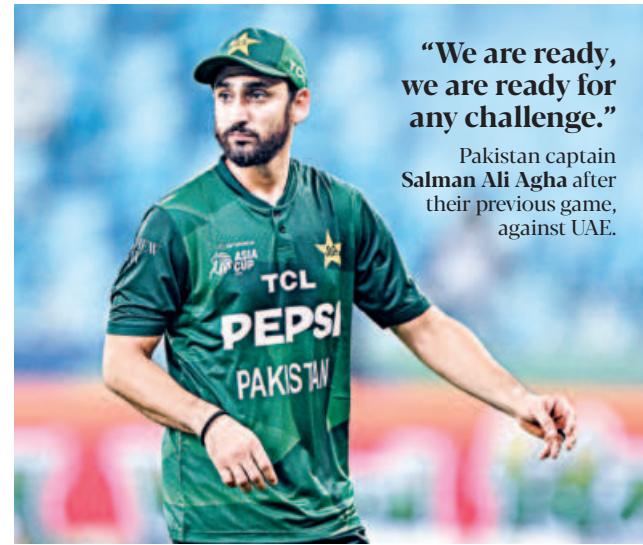
"It doesn't give us an edge that we have played them once and had a good game. So, we will have to start well from scratch."

India captain Suryakumar Yadav in pre-match press conference yesterday.

India have had the upper hand in T20Is against Pakistan, winning 11 of their 14 encounters. However, Pakistan's three wins include two in Dubai.

In the Asia Cup, the two sides have faced each other 20 times. India have come out on top 11 times, Pakistan have won six, and three matches were abandoned because of bad weather.

Pakistan's most recent Asia Cup win over India was in the 2022 edition, which was played in the 20-over format in the UAE.



"We are ready, we are ready for any challenge."

Pakistan captain Salman Ali Agha after their previous game, against UAE.

Cricket caught behind in rhetoric

EKUSH TAPADER FROM DUBAI

A simple gesture of formality withheld can snowball into a storm, and India captain Suryakumar Yadav is learning that lesson the hard way in the ongoing Asia Cup.

As eternal rivals India and Pakistan are set for a rematch after a week in their first Super Four fixture, what should have been about the talking points related to strengths and weaknesses and key matchups has instead been hijacked by the nagging question: will India will again refuse to shake hands post-match and, in the broad spectrum, will politics again overshadow play?

The outside noise after the two teams' group stage game has become so overwhelming that Yadav admits he feels like switching off his phone just to get some rest. However, it is apparently not an option, as between games he has to attend official engagements where the Pakistan-related questions -- often little to do with

cricket -- always find their way into the room.

The non-handshake saga has turned so sensitive that even former India captains are treading carefully. Sunil Gavaskar, when asked during Thursday's Afghanistan-Sri Lanka match, dodged it entirely: "Look, any comment on this right now is risky."

Sourav Ganguly's response was equally telling. Although he made it clear he did not approve of the move, he stopped short of criticism: "The team did what they thought was best. I don't have a comment on this."

Cricket and politics keep getting entangled like stubborn weeds, and it is cricket that loses the most. Ganguly added a reminder that reached far beyond the boundary ropes: "This [mixing of politics with sport] should not happen... Other sports don't see it this much, but in cricket, it happens more."

In their previous meet, the gulf in

class was clear, continuing the trend in recent years; the rivalry felt far from being fierce, as India outclassed Pakistan by a staggering seven-wicket margin. A Bangladesh supporter observed recently, "Tickets for the India-Pakistan match are still widely available, but tickets for Bangladesh-Sri Lanka [match yesterday] already sold out."

On the rivalry, the India skipper himself brushed it off with almost theatrical dismissal. "I don't know what rivalry you people are talking about," said Yadav in yesterday's pre-match presser.

Hot favourites India barely broke a sweat in their previous game. Against Oman, Jasprit Bumrah was rested, part-timers bowled, Yadav refused to bat -- almost a glorified practice match. Pakistan, by contrast, enter the Super Four under pressure; their batting unit under scrutiny, and pride dented by defeat to India.

Outside the nets at the ICC Academy,

fans surround their bus offering advice. Shaheen Afridi and others walk in with heads down and ears closed, with or without headphones. Another defeat, however, could turn those words from murmurs to roars.

The non-handshake fiasco itself dragged right into Pakistan's final group match, against hosts UAE. They even threatened a boycott unless match referee Andy Pycroft was removed. The game began an hour late -- an unprecedented event, given the context. And resuming their stance, the men in green went on to boycott yesterday's pre-match press conference.

At the Dubai International Cricket Stadium tonight, it thus remains to be seen whether cricket can express its typical glorious nature on one of the biggest stages, or whether every ball must carry the weight of unwanted, unspoken agendas.

TEN CRICKET
England vs Ireland
3rd T20I
Live from 6:30 pm
T SPORTS, NAGORIK TV
Asia Cup T20

India vs Pakistan
Live from 8:30 pm
STAR SPORTS SELECT HD1
English Premier League
Arsenal vs Man City
Live from 9:30 pm

A Bangladesh player attempts in vain as his Iranian counterpart takes a shot at goal during their first Group G fixture of the AFC Futsal Asian Cup Qualifiers in Kuantan, Malaysia yesterday. Although Bangladesh initially kept the defending champions at bay till the ninth minute, once the first goal was scored, the floodgates opened, culminating in a 12-0 defeat for Bangladesh in their first-ever international futsal match.



Bangladesh players celebrate their come-from-behind 2-1 victory over hosts Maldives in the ongoing Commonwealth Beach Handball Championship in Kulhudhuffushi yesterday, sealing their place in the semifinals with a game still to play in the six-team tournament. Earlier, Bangladesh had defeated India 2-1 and South Africa in straight sets, 2-0, before losing to Sri Lanka 2-0, with Khokon Molla starring in all three wins so far.

PHOTO: HANDBALL MALDIVES

Salma breaks new ground as selector

SPORTS REPORTER

Former Bangladesh skipper Salma Khatun has called time on a trailblazing career as a cricketer and is set to embark on a brand new challenge as the first-ever female selector of the national women's team.

The 34-year-old confirmed the development to The Daily Star on Saturday, adding that the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) president Aminul Islam Bulbul and women's wing chairman Nazmul Abedeen Fahim informed her after the board of directors meeting.

Salma is expected to join Sazzad Ahmed Shipon in the two-person selection panel and begin her duties on October 1.

"I will no longer play. I have already informed it," Salma said, adding that she will try to uphold fairness as selector.

"There will be competition and obstacles in every job. Amidst all of

it, I will try my best to remain fair. Can't guarantee that I won't make any mistakes, but I will always try to ensure that everything happens in a fair manner," she added.

Salma, who last featured for Mohammmedan Sporting Club in this year's Women's Dhaka Premier League and finished as the second highest wicket-taker with 18 scalps, is a key figure in the country's women's cricket.

She had led the Tigresses in both their inaugural WODI and WT20I matches in 2011 and 2012 respectively. The all-rounder represented Bangladesh in 46 WODIs and 95 WT20Is and scored over 1000 runs and picked up 136 wickets across formats.

She lost her place in the WODI

side in 2022 after the New Zealand tour and last played a WT20I against India in Mirpur in 2023.

BCB's media committee chairman Iftekhar Rahman Mithu termed Salma's appointment as "revolutionary".

"I think this is a revolutionary decision by our president, as having someone like Salma involved will provide great support for women's cricket," Mithu told reporters in Mirpur after the board of directors meeting.

Meanwhile, the BCB also appointed former Bangladesh pacer Hasibul Hossain Shanto in the men's team's selection panel. Shanto will join as the third selector alongside Gazi Ashraf Hossain Lipu and Abdur Razzak.



Ryan Gravenberch celebrates with Mohamed Salah and Conor Bradley after scoring Liverpool's opener in a 2-1 Merseyside derby win over Everton at Anfield yesterday. Hugo Ekitike doubled the lead before Idrissa Gueye's reply set up a tense finish, but Arne Slot's men held firm to stay perfect in the Premier League with five wins in five matches.

IFIC

গ্রাহকহৃ শক্তি
সাফল্যহৃ সাহস
যাত্রা দুর্নিবার

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আমার দ্যাঙ্ক
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মুদ্রক ডেলিভারি

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