



A Colombia's fan take a selfie at the Ploshchad Revolutsii metro station before the match — REUTERS

## India announces 524 athletes for Asian Games

**NEW DELHI, JULY 3 /-** The Indian Olympic Association (IOA) today announced a 524-member contingent of athletes for the August 18-September 2 Asian Games in Indonesia where they will vie for medals in 36 disciplines. The contingent comprises 277 men and 247 women athletes. In the 2014 Incheon Asian Games, the Indian contingent featured 541 athletes across 38 disciplines. Eight new sports disciplines have been added where the country has shown promise. They are Karate, Kurash, Pencak Silat, Roller Skating, Sambo, Sepaktakraw, Triathlon and Soft Tennis.

The other disciplines where India will take part in are Archery, Athletics, Badminton, Basketball, Boxing, Bowling, Canoe-Kayak (Sprint), Canoe-Kayak (Slalom), Cycling, Equestrian, Fencing, Gymnastics, Golf, Handball, Hockey, Judo, Kabaddi, Karate, Kurash, Pencak Silat, Roller Skating, Rowing, Sailing, Sambo, Sepaktakraw, Shooting, Squash, Aquatics, Swimming, Aquatics - Diving, Tennis, Taekwondo, Triathlon, Soft Tennis, Table Tennis, Volleyball, Weightlifting, Wrestling and Wushu. Athletics will have the highest number of representation with 52 eyeing for medals. In June, the IOA had submitted a provisional list to the Sports Ministry which had the names of 2970 athletes and officials. The final list has now been pruned down further to 524 athletes who have attained the qualification criteria in their respective disciplines. The contingent has been selected keeping in mind the Indian Olympic Association's long term vision of preparing and encouraging the most deserving athletes for the 2020 Tokyo Olympics based on their attaining qualification criteria, said IOA secretary general Rajeev Mehta. The IOA has decided against sending the men and women football teams this time as they are ineligible under the existing criteria set by the Olympic body. The decision has led to a controversy with All India Football Federation calling IOA's decision 'myopic'. (PTI)

## India A complete domination with tri-series title

**LONDON, JULY 3 /-** India A completed their domination in the 50-over tri-series with a five-wicket thumping of England Lions in the final at the Kennington Oval here. It was yet another complete performance from the Indians, who restricted the Lions to 264 for nine before breezing to the target in 48.2 overs courtesy Rishabh Pant (64 not out off 62 balls), Mayank Agarwal (40 off 41) and captain Shreyas Iyer (44 off 44).

The pacetrio of Shardul Thakur (2/42), Deepak Chahar (3/58) and Khaleel Ahmed (3/48) had brought back India A in the game after Lions were comfortably placed at 185 for two in the 34th over. Sam Hain's 108 off 122 balls went in vain and so did the effort of Liam Livingstone (83 off 82). India A never looked back after losing the tri-series opener to Lions, beating the hosts and the West Indies A twice to lift the trophy. While Pant starred in the all-important final, the undisputed star batsman of the series was Agarwal whom the national selectors will find difficult to ignore following his three hundreds on the tour.

"It was a good test for me as well as the team. Both teams fought hard through the series," said Pant, who will be staying back for the three unofficial Tests against England Lions and West Indies A. "The boys have been practising really hard and eventually we got the result we wanted. Everyone wants to play the country and if you do well, you will get the chance," added Pant, who was ignored for the ongoing limited overs series between India and England. Chahar and Krunal Pandya are the two players from the squad who have been called up for India's three-match T20 series against England. Chahar was rewarded for his performance on the A tour where he has picked 16 wickets so far including 10 in tri-series. U-19 stars Prithvi Shaw and Shubman Gill too gave a good account of themselves. Shaw struck a 102 against the West Indies A while Gill scored a couple of half centuries. (PTI)

## Croatia to face Russia, heat, humidity and hostile crowd in FIFA World Cup 2018 quarterfinal

**SOCHI (RUSSIA), JULY 3 /-** A hostile will have to face the humidity of a hostile crowd when they take on host nation Russia in Saturday's World Cup quarter-final after beating Denmark on penalties, coach Zlatko Dalic said. Having been based near St Petersburg, Dalic and his squad moved to Sochi on the Black Sea coast on Monday following their last 16 shootout win over Denmark to acclimatize themselves ahead of the clash with the Russians at the Fisht Stadium. "We arrived here today and we have five days to get used to the temperatures and the humidity," Dalic said. "It was 15 to 18 degrees in our camp, it was much colder and that is perhaps why it was difficult for us to play in Rostov (against Iceland in the group stage), and to play last night's match (in Nizhny Novgorod), in much higher temperatures." Having won all of their Group D games, the Croatians struggled to break down the stubborn Danes as the game finished in a 1-1 draw after extra time but Dalic praised the resolve

and team spirit of his players. "I already said yesterday that all the teams who had to be basing their play only on prominent indi-



vidual players have gone out. Teams, team play is what works," he said. Dalic added that he and his players were well aware that the

Croatia fans would be vastly outnumbered by their Russian counterparts when they face the hosts. "The entire country is now behind them, 90 percent, 95 percent of the supporters at the stadium will be Russia supporters and this will not be easy for us, but we are focused on our supporters and want the joy in Croatia to last as long as possible," the 51-year-old said. "We can see the atmosphere here, we know what the atmosphere is at home, we are following that via the internet and we are getting messages." Dalic led Croatia to a playoff win over Greece to secure a place at the World Cup shortly after taking over in October 2017 and he is looking forward to more celebrations on Saturday. "I think this is the whole point of football - to bring joy to supporters. It's not just about winning but football can bring so many people together and bring them so much joy, and we will try to make our people happy," he said.

## Possession no longer the law for achieving World Cup success

**SAMARA, RUSSIA, JULY 3 /-** When Spain won the World Cup in 2010 by guarding possession with near infinite zeal a new maxim was etched into football's textbook of received wisdom: hog the ball and you'll win the match. Such was the dominance of Vicente del Bosque's elegant side, whose devotion to metronomic pass and move also helped them win the 2012 European Championship, that few dissenting voices were heard.

Other ways of playing that did not involve passing teams to death were supposedly consigned to the dustbin of football history, along with 'kick and rush' and Herbert Chapman's W-M formation, with possession football heralded as the peak of the sport's technical and tactical evolution. If further evidence was needed we were told to look at Pep Guardiola's Barcelona, who kept the Spanish top flight and Champions League alive by their choke hold for a few years from 2009.

Yet if the World Cup in Russia has taught us anything, it is that possession is no longer the law in football and

what was once deemed the only route to global glory is seemingly now a shortcut out of the tournament. The three sides who have bossed the ball the most in Russia, Spain, Germany and Argentina have all said "do svidaniya" before the quarter-finals. Spain averaged 69 percent of the ball in their four games, peaking with a 75 percent share in their last-16 clash with Russia, according to FIFA statistics. It did not translate into goals or glory, however, as they were sent packing on penalties after laboring like an aging heavyweight, seemingly bewildered that his once formidable jab was no little more than a minor irritation. Germany arrived as world champions, but left after the group stage having racked up a 67 percent possession average in their three matches, which ended in two defeats and one desperate stoppage-time win over Sweden. Argentina fared little better having struggled through their first three matches and scraped into the knockouts and they were dispatched by France in the last 16, ending the tournament with a 64 percent

possession average. France won their match 4-3, having only had the ball 41 percent of the time and if that sounds counter-intuitive then Uruguay's last-16 win over Portugal was even more remarkable. Oscar Tabarez's side mustered 39 percent possession but completed a 2-1 win that far from being a smash-and-grab looked more like a perfectly-executed gameplan. "There is very often this mistaken assumption that ball possession leads to scoring opportunities," Tabarez said. "But even if you don't have much ball possession you can still inflict yourself on opponents in different ways." Perhaps it is too early to sound the death knell for possession football, which still has remarkably successful proponents. Guardiola's Manchester City side blitzed their way to the Premier League title, often giving opponents little more than a sniff of the ball. Yet with even the smallest nations at the World Cup now capable of manning the barricades with rigidly organised defences, jealously guarding possession is no longer the cure-all it was once perceived to be.

## Poland's coach to step down after World Cup humiliation

**WARSAW, JULY 3 /-** Poland's coach Adam Nawalka will step down at the end of July after his team crashed out of the group stage of the 2018 World Cup tournament.

"We have decided that Adam Nawalka will remain Poland's team coach until July, and after that day we will be looking for a new coach. We will try to build a national team in a new way," the head of the Polish Football Association, Zbigniew Boniek, said during a joint news conference with Nawalka. The 60-year-old, whose contract was expiring after the World Cup anyway, and the Polish FA decided not to extend it, Boniek said. "Of course I feel responsible that we did not meet expectations, we did not meet our plans, our ambitions, our fans' expectations... that we disappointed and I take full responsibility for that...," said Nawalka. Poland lost their two opening games and were the first European side to be knocked out of the competition, while Nawalka's tactics and choice of players were widely questioned. A win in the third and final group match against Japan was not enough to change the outcome.

## Prannyos stuns Lin Dan at Indonesia Open

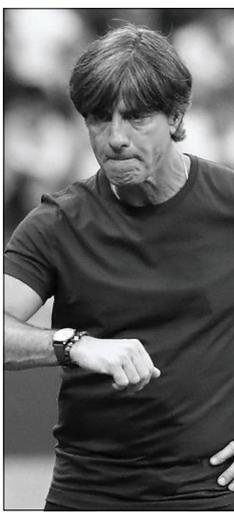
**JAKARTA, JULY 3 /-** HS Prannyos stunned the legendary Lin Dan of China while competing in the Indonesian Open badminton event on Tuesday. World No. 13 Prannyos started off well against eighth-ranked Lin Dan, winning the first game 21-15. However, the Chinese shuttler came back strong to win the second 21-9 and level the match. Prannyos then dug deep into his reservoir to see off the iconic shuttler 21-14 at the USD 1,250,000 event. Prannyos had also got the better of Lin Dan at the 2015 French Open. In other matches, Verma scraped past Gemko 21-9, 12-21, 22-20 in a match lasting little over an hour. However it was curtains for women's doubles pair of Jakkampudi Meghana and Poorvisha S Ram, who went down to the Indonesian pair of Agatha Amanuela and Siti Fadia Silva Ramadhanti 11-21, 18-21.

## Joachim Loew set to stay as Germany coach despite World Cup debacle

**BERLIN, JULY 3 /-** Germany coach Joachim Loew will remain in his job despite the World Cup debacle which saw the holders crash out after the group stages, according to reports on Tuesday.

Both Germany's best-selling daily Bild and Sport Bild magazine say the 58-year-old will stay on to rebuild the national team, which finished bottom of their group in Russia. The Germans bowed out after shock defeats to Mexico and South Korea. It was the first time since 1938 that a Germany side failed to get past the first round at a World Cup finals - a huge dent to Loew's reputation after 12 successful years in charge. The German Football Association (DFB) has yet to confirm the reports, but Loew has a contract until the 2022 World Cup. Loew returned from Russia considering his future, but the DFB said they would not sack him. He has promised a clearout of the squad and several of the World Cup winners who underperformed so badly in Russia may have played their last game for their country. "It needs far-reaching measures, it needs clear change," Loew said last week when Germany arrived home in disgrace. Senior players Sami Khedira, Toni Kroos and Thomas Mueller have given Loew their backing, yet could all face the axe after poor displays. There are,

however, reports of player disgruntlement in other quarters with Loew. Frankfurt-based newspaper FAZ quoted unnamed Germany players who said the squad was deeply divided between senior and younger players in Russia. There was also resentment to the special status given to captain Manuel Neuer. The goalkeeper played all three group games, ahead of Barcelona star Marc-Andre Ter Stegen, even though Neuer had just returned from eight months sidelined by a foot fracture. That was "a problem for some players" as Loew had said he would only use those who were playing well regularly. Other complaints included Loew giving priority to established players, the choice of Germany's isolated World Cup base in south-west Moscow and the poor handling of the pre-World Cup scandal involving Mesut Ozil and Ilkay Gundogan. Their loyalty to Germany was brought into question on the eve of the World Cup after meeting Turkey president Recep Tayyip Erdogan, who Gundogan presented with a jersey signed "to my president". Both players were booed by German fans during pre-World Cup friendlies, which overshadowed preparations for the finals. Ozil refused to comment on the controversy during the World Cup while Gundogan gave a single interview in which he said the furore was "a difficult experience".



## Ensure teams get good playing conditions on away tours: ICC to member boards

**DUBAI, JULY 3 /-** The International Cricket Council (ICC) has asked its member boards to ensure that visiting sides get to prepare in playing conditions that are at par with the ones provided to the home team, emphasising on net bowlers and training pitches. At the ICC annual conference that concluded in Dublin yesterday, its Chief Executive Committee (CEC) decided that the teams should be provided all the resources by the host board to ensure the best possible preparation for an away side. "The visiting team should also be provided with an opportunity to prepare for upcoming international matches under similar conditions to those they will play in during the series including the same standard and

variety of net bowlers and training pitches. Teams should also be provided with the opportunity to mix socially," said the ICC in a statement. "The visiting teams often get to play tour warm-up games in conditions contrasting to what they eventually face in the series." CEC also agreed to make changes to the way tours are conducted as part of a collective effort to build a culture of respect in the game. This includes the philosophy that the touring team should be treated as guests in the country with the standard of accommodation, travel and catering equal to that which the home team receives." It said further.

Among other decisions taken at the annual conference, the CEC approved the playing

conditions and points structure for the World Test Championship (WTC) which begins right after the 2019 World Cup. "This includes the points structure which was recommended by the ICC Cricket Committee and the provision of a reserve day to enable any time lost through bad weather to be made up for the final. The full playing conditions will be drafted over the coming weeks and published in due course." The CEC also confirmed that whilst all World Test Championship games must be 5-day Test matches, four day Tests can continue to be played by Members," read the ICC statement. It has been learnt that a maximum of 120 points will be on offer in each series of the WTC where points will be

awarded for each game rather than series, pushing teams even further. This has been done because all teams don't play the same amount of Tests in a two-year period. The governing body also decided to accord T20 International status to the Women's Asia Cup matches held last month. "It was agreed, in light of the recent decision to award international status to all women's T20 matches played between ICC Members after 1 July 2018, to retrospectively grant all matches at the recent Women's T20 Asia Cup T20 status."

All member men's senior teams will be awarded T20I status on 1 January 2019, which will be the cut-off point for qualification to the ICC World T20 2020. (PTI)

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