

BAM needs to crack the whip to improve singles play

It's time for the Badminton Association of Malaysia (BAM) to "be cruel to be kind" after the men's team was again found lacking in depth in the singles department. Those who can no longer perform and those whose progress have stagnated have to make way for those with potential.

In the Guangzhou Asian Games on Saturday, Malaysia suffered a crushing 2-3 defeat by Thailand in the quarter-finals. It was Malaysia's first loss to the Thais in 30 years.

The vulnerability of Malaysia's singles players was again evident for all to see when 23-year-old Liew Daren failed to rise to the occasion, going down Thai junior S. Avihingsanon in straight games. In fact, it was the second time Daren has lost to the 20-year-old Thai after the Malaysian International Challenge last year.

Thailand's exploits are clear indications that they are producing young winners while Malaysia continue to pin their hopes on aging shuttlers. The coaches are aware of the yawning gap between Lee Chong Wei and the rest of the players in the national team but something drastic needs to be done

to replenish the pool of talent that is fast drying up.

Coach Misbun Sidek has no immediate answer for the sad situation.

"Like it or not, this is the group of players we have. There is no one better than the current back-up shuttlers (Daren, Chan Kwong Beng and Tan Chun Seang)," Sidek said on Sunday. "But yes, we will have to look into this situation."

Daren has pleaded for more time to prove himself after flopping in his first outing on the big stage.

"He (the Thai) handled the pressure better than me. I was tense and made a lot of mistakes. I have failed but I hope to learn from this and come back stronger," said Daren, who will head for the Hong Kong Open next.

With a stronger cast in the Hong Kong Open, Daren is unlikely to survive the early rounds. But whether he, like many others, remains with the BAM for another five years will depend on what the national body wants for the future — mediocrity or meritocracy.

- THE STAR (MALAYSIA)

Pradesh, has been roped in by the organizers to perform at the Nov 27 event.

Ravi K Tripathi has been invited by the Guangzhou Asian Games Opening and Closing Ceremonies Operation Center to perform on the closing day on Nov 27.

Most importantly, Ravi is the sole Indian artist, who will get a chance to showcase his talent in one of the biggest sports extravaganza in Asia.

"I am really excited as performing before such a huge audience is a great honor for me. It's a lifetime achievement," Ravi said.

Ravi has already performed with Hollywood star Jackie Chan in the 16th Asian Games countdown show held in Guangzhou last year. And since then there has been no looking back for the young singer and till date Ravi had performed in nearly 50 shows in China.

"I will be performing Jai Ho, besides a Chinese song. For this I have learnt Chinese diction specially," he said.

- PRESS TRUST OF INDIA



ZHANG CHENLIANG / CHINA DAILY

Sepak takraw goes on despite festival

The national sepak takraw squad will be in action on Aidil Adha morning although their families and friends will be celebrating the festival at home.

The Malaysian team are down to play host nation China at 8:30 am at the Haizhu Sports Center.

"These are among sacrifices that athletes will have to make as players representing the country," said coach Iskandar Arshad.

Malaysia who last won the gold medal at the Hiroshima Asian Games in 1994, are drawn in Group B with India, China and Japan while Group A comprise Thailand, the Republic of Korea and Indonesia.

Meanwhile, in conjunction with Aidil Adha, the organizers of the Games, GAGOC, have also organized a Aidil Adha sunat prayer session for athletes at the Games Village.

- BERNAMA (MALAYSIA)

Host city gets a sporting facelift

Beijing did it, and so did Shanghai. So why not Guangzhou?

This city of 10 million people in southern China has been thrust into the spotlight as the host of the Asian Games that got under way last Friday.

The event has offered Guangzhou an opportunity to emulate Beijing, which transformed itself

for the 2008 Summer Olympic Games, and Shanghai, which went on a construction spree for the recently completed Shanghai World Expo 2010.

The Guangzhou city government has earmarked more than 1 trillion yen (US\$12.1 billion) for urban redevelopment and infrastructure projects.

At the same time, the city must grapple with glaring contradictions, not the least of which is a growing disparity in wealth among residents.

A new symbol of Guangzhou's prosperity was completed in October along the banks of the Pearl River. A 610-meter TV tower offers panoramic views of the city, and its observation deck, at a height of 433 meters, has been

attracting several thousand visitors daily despite the 150 yuan (about 1,800 yen) cost of a ticket.

"This area used to be nothing but rice fields, but now there are buildings everywhere," said Zhang Yongbiao, 71, who was visiting from neighboring Foshan. "I have been able to see with my own eyes the level of development in Guangzhou."

- THE ASAHI SHIMBUN (JAPAN)

Indian flavor in closing ceremony

The closing ceremony of the Asian Games in China will have an Indian flavor as a singer from Lucknow, capital city of Uttar

Preparations were simply perfect

While Indonesia has been busy debating how much money should be spent and where the various sporting events should be held for the Southeast Asian (SEA) Games, the Chinese city of Guangzhou began preparing for the 16th Asian Games six years in advance.

Guangzhou, (one of) the richest cities in China, has spent 13.6 billion yuan (US\$2.04 billion) on the Asian Games and the Asian Para Games, slightly lower than the 2006 Asian Games, which cost host Doha \$2.8 billion.

As last-minute preparations have tarnished the image of many countries in the past, including the recent New Delhi Commonwealth Games, the Guangzhou administration has been meticulous throughout the entire preparation process.

Since Guangzhou won the bid to host the 2010 Games in July 2004, the administration has been dedicated to improving water and air quality, dwelling conditions and transportation in the city.

IOC President Jacques Rogge praised the city. "Guangzhou definitely has the skill to (host the Olympics)," he told reporters Saturday. "Guangzhou has the expertise and experience from these games."

-THE JAKARTA POST