

# United Korea to move ahead despite first loss

AFP | Jakarta

A joint Korean women's basketball team recorded their first loss at the Asian Games on Friday but their coach insisted the players have put aside their national identities and are determined to win as a united squad.

A 200-strong army of Korean fans -- sporting T-shirts bearing the unified Korean flag and the slogan "One dream, one Korea" -- cheered on the team, fresh from a thunderous win against hosts Indonesia on Wednesday.

But the drums and chants were in the end not enough and the team went down to Taiwan 87-85 in their second league encounter.

Nevertheless, Korea's assistant coach Ha Sook-rye told AFP there is a feeling of togetherness among the players.

"Everything is fine and we have a really good team," she said in response to a question on how the North and South players get along.

"I don't know what people feel but it is one team and we never think about North or South Korea."

The hard-fought encounter saw the Koreans get off to a winning start in the first quarter but



Hana Park, playing for the unified Korean team, dribbles around Indonesia's Gabriel Sophia

Taiwan quickly bounced back.

North Korean Ro Suk Yong, one of three Pyongyang-based players, was once again the team's top-scorer with 32 points, after bagging 22 against Indonesia.

Chief coach Lee Moon-kyu said better communication between the players would improve their chances in the 5x5 basketball.

"Communication is a problem because they were short of practice time. There was just two weeks of preparation before

coming here," Lee, who hails from South Korea, told reporters after the loss.

"Ro Suk Yong played really well for us. Among the players there is no other feeling than to play well together. So with more on-court time they will improve," he said of his side, who will play India next on Monday.

Kyungeun Lee, a 19-year-old fan from South Korea, told AFP that "it feels so good to be watching our sport as one country".

“Everything is fine and we have a really good team. I don't know what people feel but it is one team and we never think about North or South Korea

KOREA'S ASSISTANT COACH HA SOOK-RYE

"I don't find any difference while cheering for South Korea or United Korea," she added with a smile.

Fellow fan Junyoung Park, a 20-year-old student from South Korea, told AFP he was disappointed but he still had high hopes for the tournament "as our unified team is more stronger".

South Korea are the defending champions in women's basketball, defeating China on home turf at the Incheon Games in 2014.

North and South Korea are also fielding united teams in canoeing and rowing at the Asian Games in the latest sign of thawing relations on the troubled peninsula.

# 'Big blow' as India's Paes pulls out of Asiad tennis

Palembang | Indonesia

Five-time gold medallist Leander Paes has pulled out of the Asian Games in a row over his doubles partner, dealing a heavy blow to India's tennis hopes.

Paes, who has 18 Grand Slam doubles titles and eight Asian Games medals in all, had been paired with Sumit Nagal, a singles specialist ranked at 300th in the world.

"Despite my repeated requests, from so many weeks in advance, it is sad that we have not been able to put a doubles specialist in the team for a credible second doubles pairing for the Asian Games," Paes said in a statement.

"I believe that my absence would only help the rest to play more events, be it doubles or mixed doubles," added the 45-year-old.

Indian captain Zeeshan Ali called the last-minute pull-out "very disappointing" and said it had diminished the team's medal chances.

"It is obviously very disappointing to not to have Leander. It is a big blow to us," Ali told the Press Trust of India news agency in Palembang on Friday.

"But then again he is a com-



Leander Paes

plete professional. It is his decision completely and his patriotism for the country cannot be questioned.

"Having said that, Paes needed to be here irrespective of whoever he was going to play with as he volunteered to represent the country," Ali said.

Paes made his Davis Cup debut in 1990 and has since competed in 56 ties, amassing a total win-loss record in singles and doubles of 91-35.

# Son Heung-min's Asian Games hopes rocked by Malaysia

AFP | Soreang, Indonesia

Son Heung-min's hopes of avoiding military service by securing Asian Games gold suffered a blow Friday as South Korea were stunned 2-1 by minnows Malaysia.

The Tottenham Hotspur forward came off the bench just before the hour-mark but couldn't help the defending champions overturn a two-goal deficit, after Safawi Rasid's first-half double for 171st-ranked Malaysia.

Son is skipping Premier

League action for the regional Olympics, where victory would mean an exemption from South Korea's 21 months of military service.

Son, 26, was released by Spurs for the tournament, which represents his final chance to avoid nearly two years in military barracks -- a serious setback to his career.

South Korea, who thrashed Bahrain 6-0 in their opening match, dominated possession in the second half, particularly after Son's introduction, but were unable to claw their



Son Heung-min

way back.

Japan-based striker Hwang Ui-jo, who is also facing his final chance to avoid military service, pulled one goal back for the Koreans late on.

And Son had a golden chance to equalise with a free-kick just outside the box in the last minute, but he placed it inches wide of the post.

Malaysia, 114 places lower than their opponents in the FIFA rankings, were happy to sit deep and play on the break, and frustrated the South Koreans further with frequent



stoppages.

Malaysia's Rasid opened the scoring after just five minutes and he cannoned his second in off the post in first-half injury time.

# Mbappe set for first PSG appearance after World Cup

AFP | Paris

World Cup winner Kylian Mbappe has been named in Paris Saint-Germain's squad for the first time this season as the French champions go to Guingamp in Ligue 1 on Saturday.

Mbappe did not play in their league opener, a 3-0 win over



Kylian Mbappe

Caen last weekend, having only returned to training a few days earlier following a post-World Cup holiday.

The 19-year-old, who scored one of France's goals in their 4-2 win over Croatia in last month's final in Moscow, will hope to feature alongside Neymar in the PSG attack in Brittany.

However, Edinson Cavani is again missing as he continues his recovery from a calf injury suffered during Uruguay's run to the quarter-finals in Russia.

Also named in PSG's squad is Thilo Kehrer, the Germany under-21 defender who completed a reported 37 million-euro (\$42.3 million) move to the French capital from Schalke on Thursday, signing a five-year deal.

Kehrer will hope to quickly break into Thomas Tuchel's side, but the German coach has left his compatriots Kevin Trapp and Julian Draxler out of his squad for the game.

# Geraint Thomas to lead Tour of Germany field

AFP | Paris

Geraint Thomas said on Friday that he will make his first stage-race appearance since his stunning Tour de France victory in next week's Tour of Germany.

Team Sky Welsh star will lead the 132-strong field for the four-day race, which starts on Thursday in Konlenz, in his first stage race since completing his stunning victory in Paris last month.

Thomas's presence will boost the profile of the Tour of Germany, which is back on the cycling calendar after a ten-year hiatus.

"I've won Bayern-Rundfahrt (Tour of Bavaria) twice and I really enjoy racing in Germany," said the 32-year-old Welshman.

"It's a lovely country and I really enjoy going there.

"It will be great to race the Deutschland Tour.

"I went to see my coach Tim Kerrison after the Tour and we outlined the Deutschland Tour as a great race to make my



Geraint Thomas

comeback.

"I'm looking forward to it." Thomas has good memories of racing in Germany.

He was fastest in the opening individual time-trial in Dueseldorf when the 2017 Tour de France started in Germany and he won the Tour of Bavaria in both 2011 and 2014.

The rest of this year's Tour of Germany field will be an-

nounced on Monday, but the presence of Thomas is a big coup for race organisers.

"The best German young riders will ride together with the winner of the Tour de France. This only happens at the Tour of Germany," said organiser Claude Rach.

"This is a dream debut for the new Deutschland Tour.

"During the four days, we will

132

pro riders will fight for the leader jerseys on their way from Koblenz to Stuttgart during Tour of Germany

create Germany's biggest natural stadium."

The Tour of Germany is being held for the first time since organisers cancelled the 2009 race after a series of high-profile doping cases damaged cycling's reputation.

It was traditionally a nine-day event, but organisers hope to extend it in the future.

Thomas and Chris Froome, a four-time Tour de France winner, announced on Thursday that they will compete in next month's Tour of Britain rather than the final Grand Tour of the season, the Vuelta a Espana.