

Sindhu eyes Badminton Asia Championships title

WUHAN (China): Three years after winning a bronze at the Gimcheon edition, PV Sindhu will once again eye a superlative performance when she leads the Indian challenge at the Badminton Asia Championships starting on Tuesday.

The Rio Olympic silver medallist had clinched the Syed Modi Grand Prix Gold in January this year before annexing the India Super Series title early this month.

The fourth seed Sindhu then reached the quarterfinals at the Singapore Open, where she lost to Olympic champion Carolina Marin. The Indian ace will look for another consistent show this week.

The 21-year-old from Hyderabad will square off against Indonesia's Dinar Dyah Ayustine in the opening round.

Another shuttler from Hyderabad Saina Nehwal, who had skipped Singapore Open to work on her game after losing in the first round of Malaysia Open, will open her campaign against Japan's Sayaka Sato at the Wuhan Sports Center Gynasium.

The World No. 8 Indian has a 6-1 head-to-head record against the Japanese, having last beaten her at the Hong Kong Open last year.

The London Olympic bronze medallist had clinched the Malaysia Masters Grand Prix Gold in January after recovering from a career-threatening knee injury. She reached the quarterfinals of All England championship and India Open.

In men's singles, Ajay Jayaram, who reached a career-best World No. 13 last Thursday, will face a tough competitor in fifth seeded Chinese Tian Houwei, who clinched the China Masters Grand Prix Gold yesterday.

"I have a tough first round against Tian. The goal as of now is to get past that first hurdle," Jayaram said.

H S Prannoy, who had skipped Malaysia and Singapore Open, to change a few things in his game ahead of future tournaments, will take on Hong Kong's Ng Ka Long Angus, seeded eighth.

"I had a good two and a half weeks of training after I decided to skip Malaysia and Singapore Open as I felt I am performing below par. Quite a few things needed to be changed and I think I am now in good shape to play a tournament," Prannoy told PTI. "I am in the Sudirman Cup team. I'll also be playing Indonesia and Australia Super Series next," he added. Among others, Indian mixed doubles pair of Pranaav Jerry Chopra and N Sikki Reddy will have a tough task at hand when they face top seeded Chinese combo of Zheng Siwei and Chen Qingchen in the opening round. In women's doubles, Ashwini Ponnappa and Sikki will meet Korean combo of Chae Yoo Jung and Kim So Yeong, while Jakkampudi Meghana and Poorvisha S Ram will take on another Korean pair of Jung Kyung Eun and Shin Seung Chan, seeded second. Manu Attri and B Sumeeth Reddy will take on fifth seeded Chinese pair of Fu Haifeng and Zhang Nan in men's doubles competition.