

Kabaddi fever grips city

■ First day, first match leaves fans dejected as opponents upset India 32-34

■ All tickets at city's packed TransStadia in Kankaria sold out till October 18

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Ahmedabad: The city's long wait to host the Kabaddi World Cup ended on Friday as a packed house and a plethora of stars thronged the multi-purpose stadium, TransStadia, for the opening ceremony and the two matches on the first day of the fortnight-long tournament.

The full house of 2,200, which was mainly made up of Indian fans, however witnessed a shock result in the first match of the tournament as hosts and favourites India were stunned 32-34 by a gritty South Korea team. Another strong favourite Iran, however, stuck to the script as they decimated USA 52-15.

Earlier, spectators started taking their seats almost three hours before the opening ceremony. As more spectators filed in, the mood in the arena started reaching a crescendo with groups looking to outdo each other with their 'screaming matches'. The 'mobile flash' wave also lifted the energy of the crowd and got them involved as the build-up continued to the opening ceremony. A few South Korean fans were also seen



Foreign flavour at the venue

People from South Korea, US, United Kingdom, Japan were also seen at the venue. While most of them said they support the Indian team, the Korean fans, understandably said they would be supporting their team on the day. While most of them admitted they don't understand kabaddi, they said the energy and buzz around the tournament drew them to the venue.

TICKETS IN DEMAND

Fleets of fans faced disappointment at the ticket booth at TransStadia on Friday as match day tickets were already sold out until October 18.

A group of engineering students were among those who left disappointed from the venue of the Kabaddi World Cup.

"We came here to buy India's group stage match tickets but as they are already sold out, we managed to buy semi-final tickets as we are confident India will win that match and enter the finals," they said.

Sports fans apart, there were also three young budding Kabaddi players, who failed to get their hands on tickets.

enjoying themselves among the spectators.

Bollywood actors Abhishek Bachchan and Sunil Shetty, Keshav Bansal, director of Intex Tech-

nologies and owner of Gujarat Lions, were also spotted in the crowd. Bachchan, who owns Jaipur Pink Panthers in the Pro Kabaddi League, was seen shout-

ing encouragement to the Indian team, even as he sent a message to India captain Anup Kumar by punching his arms in the air.