

**Thursday January 8, 2009**



## **Daren stuns top Thai**

**Reports: RAJES PAUL**

**KUALA LUMPUR:** Malaysia's back-up men's singles elite shuttler Liew Daren achieved a career high on a day when an Indonesian rising star gave favourite Lee Chong Wei a run for his money in first-round matches of the Malaysian Open at the Putra Stadium in Bukit Jalil here yesterday.

The 22-year-old Daren, who is not even ranked among the top 100 in the world, dumped Thai number one Boonsak Ponsana with a hard-fought 24-22, 19-21, 21-17 win in 69 minutes. He will take on Taiwanese Hsieh Hsuan-yi for a place in the quarter-finals.

Daren could have scored a straight-game win over Boonsak, who is ranked 13th in the world, after taking a comfortable lead at 19-14 in the second game. But he lacked the experience to seal it. He came back more fired up in the rubber game and hung on to win the match.

It is only the second appearance for Daren in the Super Series. He also featured in the Malaysian Open last year but failed to make the main draw. "If not for the withdrawal of the Chinese players, I wouldn't be playing in this tournament," said the world No. 140 who came through from the qualifiers this time.

"My hope was to take a game off Boonsak but I won the match. It is unbelievable. The top players often get off to a slow start in their opening match and I took the advantage of it by attacking from the start."

Daren said the win was more than just a good result for him. "I have the problem of losing after holding a lead. I was on the verge of winning at 19-17 against Chen Hong in the Macau Open last year but I lost.

"It was demoralising. This time, I did not give up and I think it is a personal breakthrough for me. I will give my best tomorrow," he said.