

## Rooftop tennis amid lockdown

Two young girls in Italy took their tennis games to a higher level despite a nationwide lockdown as they staged a remarkable rally from the rooftops of neighbouring buildings. The girls in the Ligurian town of Finale Ligure coolly managed a 12-shot rally featuring forehands and backhands during a 24-second video posted on Facebook last Friday by a tennis club.

-- REUTERS



BEHIND THE LENS:

# Sorrow in click, pleasure in outcome

If times were normal, professional sports photographers would be roaming around the city capturing the best shots from the Dhaka Premier Cricket League, Bangladesh Premier League or other sporting action. Everything, however, has come to a standstill because of the coronavirus pandemic. For all concerned, and especially those in sport, the memory lane is the one most travelled during this unwanted break. And the photographers are also providing pictures of the good old days but they have their own stories behind the memorable pictures. The Daily Star Sport took the opportunity to share the joy, sorrow, and pleasure of their special clicks. Here, our own Firoz Ahmed talks about stories behind his best captures.

It was one of the hardest moments in my professional career. I was shell shocked when I read the news in the morning about Mohammad Ashraful's involvement in match-fixing during the Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) in 2013. It took me some time to calm down because he was my favourite cricketer.

He was our first cricketing superstar and I loved his every movement. It was always a thrill for me to press the button to capture his best shots. His presence was always pleasing; I especially loved to frame his photograph with the infectious, innocent smile.

So, I couldn't believe myself... was it true? But I calmed myself down because I thought, as a professional photographer, I had to take the best shot of him on this day no matter how painful



it would be for me. The main challenge remained finding him. I first rushed to the cricket board's

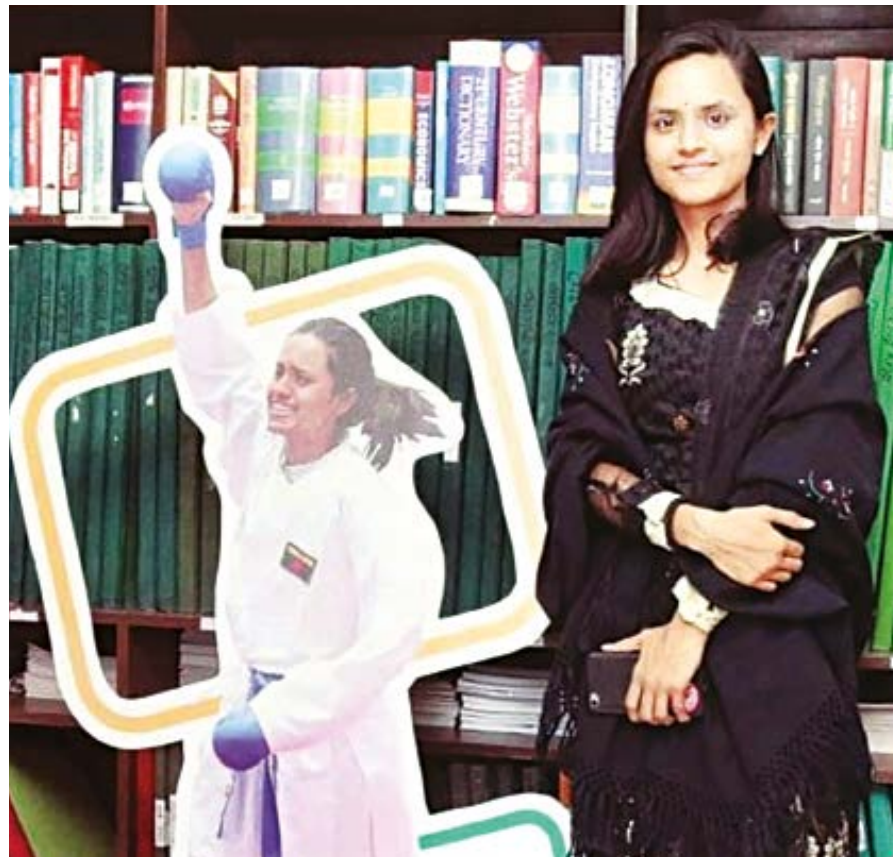
headquarters in Mirpur and then I was asking around to know his exact whereabouts.

The anxiety increased as the daylight began fading. How could I manage a good picture had I not got enough light?

Finally, I got news of his whereabouts and rushed there only to face the toughest challenge in my career.

Ashraful came down to the ground floor at his Banashree residence with little daylight remaining and broke down in tears while talking to reporters. And I had to control myself to capture the best shot of the deep sorrow of a man, pictures of whose smiling face were my favourite.

Seven years have passed since the event took place but the photograph still draws my attention because it's my favourite picture as it depicts all the sorrow of a fallen star.



## Priya's fight for a better future

ANISUR RAHMAN

Determination and hard work might have given Marzan Akter Priya overwhelming success within three years of stepping into the karate mat, but the South Asian (SA) Games gold medallist is seemingly losing interest in the sport due to its bleak future in Bangladesh.

Just four months ago Priya, a student of fine arts department of Jagannath University, hit the headlines by bagging a gold medal in 55-kg category in the regional sports extravaganza in Nepal.

The very next day, she hit the headlines again, this time after being admitted to a hospital in Kathmandu following an injury she sustained on the lower part of her ear while playing against a Sri Lankan opponent in a team semifinal clash. The youngster recovered from her injury and was released from the hospital hours later, much to the relief of the people of the country.

Priya, who took to karate against her parents' will and later touched highest success in South Asia, is now more focused on her studies after refusing to accept a soldier's job in Bangladesh Army.

"I was supposed to join Bangladesh Army but I changed my mind and did not join as there is no rank/post except for soldier for the athletes. So I stepped back thinking of my future and concentrated on my studies," Priya told The Daily Star over phone.

Priya is concentrating on her studies because she believes the future for athletes in Bangladesh, except for the ones in cricket and football, is not a good one.

"Athletes in Bangladesh can't continue sports and studies together because they have few opportunities in job market. So at one point, athletes get frustrated and drop out of sports and get involved with higher studies or business to ensure a secured future," said the Karateka.

She, however, said that there are some exceptional players, who stick to sports due to their passion but they too are left with little option for a good job, which leaves them in hardship after retirement.

"The biggest strength of anyone is his/her family but a player fights against the family to come into sports. But when it comes to survival, they lose this fighting attitude. In that sense I don't see any prospect of sports in Bangladesh. However, if sports are properly nursed, then there can be good prospect," believes Priya.

"For example, archery is now being well nursed. Archery has international coach because of the financial support from the sponsors. That's why Ruman Sana is now Ruman Sana," Priya said, adding that she would try to do better in karate but everything depends on how others come forward to help her.

Priya, however, said she enjoyed moments after returning from Nepal as everyone including her relatives, friends, teachers and well-wishers congratulated her and inquired about her health. She also got a big surprise from her teachers, who arranged a special final exam of the first semester which she missed due to the games. Priya believes she might not have gotten this opportunity had it not been for the gold medal.

## FIFA gives Masuk Mia compensation

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh midfielder Masuk Mia Jonny recently received the second instalment, worth approximately Tk 4 lakh, as compensation from FIFA under the club protection scheme.

The Bashundhara Kings midfielder sustained an ACL injury during a practice session ahead of the September 10, 2019 World Cup qualifying tie against Afghanistan.

He underwent surgery in October last year and has been out of football since then.

FIFA had, in February, released the first instalment of the money and will release the third instalment -- both worth Tk 4 lakh each -- after assessing the present condition of Jonny, said a Bangladesh Football Federation official yesterday.

## Chess has adapted well to shutdowns: Anand

PTI



Five-time world champion Viswanathan Anand feels chess has adapted quite well to the coronavirus-forced shutdowns across the globe by simply going online just as he has been doing to stay in touch with family while being stuck in Germany for a couple of months now.

Anand had gone to Germany in February to compete for SC Baden in the Bundesliga Chess. However, travel restrictions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic have ensured that he has been unable to return home.

"I would say Germany is pretty comfortable. I am in a small town. I have had a chance to go out a couple of times for a walk...of course, keeping a safe distance," he told PTI from his current base near Frankfurt.

"Also, (I) do some shopping



and essential stuff like that. I have friends living nearby and that's a big comfort," he said.

The 50-year-old reflected on sports in time of worldwide lockdowns and said chess seems to have coped well.

"Nobody really knows what the impact (of COVID-19) on the economy will be. First of all, let's take

chess. Chess was already something that happened a lot on the internet. So, it has been smooth to adapt to going completely online," he said.

"Even so, it is a bit of shock that so many tournaments got cancelled and everyone is sitting at home. playing chess on the internet is lot of fun

"(But) organising a chess tournament (online) requires some skill. Where do you place the arbiter? How do you monitor things? and so on...yet chess has adapted relatively easily," he added.

As for how he has been doing while being away from his family for such a long duration, Anand said he has tried to stay positive by devoting time to some aspects of his game, which he ignored earlier.

"I have a chance to do some chess work that I never had time for. I have a lot of time to wander around the internet just looking for information on this or that."



## Nadal frustrated, Federer happy

AFP, Madrid

Rafael Nadal on Monday expressed frustration that tennis players remain unable to practise due to the coronavirus pandemic, while Roger Federer revealed he was happy with his recovery from knee surgery.

The Spanish government has extended the country's state of alarm until May 9, with the entire population confined to their homes except a small number working in specific sectors, leaving Nadal perplexed as to why he can't train.

"It's true I don't understand very well because we cannot play tennis when many people are going to work and even more so in our sport, where we keep at a large and safe distance and we play on opposite sides of the court," Nadal said during an Instagram Live.

"But I understand that we are in a very

critical situation, that the government is dealing with something unprecedented and I understand that the last thing they think of is who can train and who cannot train."

Nadal treated tennis fans to an Instagram Live in which he spoke to both Roger Federer and Andy Murray about their experiences during lockdown.

Federer meanwhile gave an update on his right knee after the 20-time major winner decided to undergo surgery in February.

"I've been hitting a bit against a wall, (doing) rehab with the knee," Federer said. "It's OK, I had a really good first six weeks, then it was a bit slower, now it's getting better again but I have plenty of time. There is no stress, no rush. If there is anything positive (about being in lockdown) that's the only thing really. I just want the knee to be good, it doesn't matter when I return."

## Rest has been good for me, says Rashford

AGENCIES, Manchester

Marcus Rashford admits there were "ups and downs" with former manager Jose Mourinho, but the Manchester United forward feels stronger for the experience.

"It was tough but I think in five or six years' time, you look back on it and they're the moments that will give you that mental toughness," Rashford said. "Because as an all-round player, I think I've improved a lot and a lot of it is down to them two years under Jose."

"Yeah, we had ups and downs, but when I look back on it, it was a tough period but definitely a period that made me better."

Rashford has been out since mid-January with a back injury, which meant representing England at Euro 2020 was up in the air. But the suspension will give him time to recover -- and means he will not have to go into the Euros short of full fitness.

"I was probably going to go back with the team in the middle or end of April, but that would have been a push because I didn't want to miss the summer," Rashford told the Utd Podcast.

"So, for my body, really, it's been good to just let it (rest). I can give it its full duration to rest."



Juventus and Portugal superstar Cristiano Ronaldo provided another glimpse into his life during quarantine, sharing this picture of himself staying in shape. He captioned it: "Work out to improve mind and body."

PHOTO: TWITTER

## Ozil against pay cut

AGENCIES, London

Mesut Ozil is among three Arsenal players stalling on a pay-cut. Ozil, the club's top-earner on £350,000-a-week, is thought to want more time to assess the impact of the coronavirus shutdown before committing to a deal.

The remaining 24 members of the first-team squad have agreed to a 12.5 per cent reduction for 12 months, following a fortnight of intensive talks with the club and a personal intervention by manager Mikel Arteta on Wednesday.

The Spaniard and his core coaching staff have also agreed to the terms.

The players are expected to be fully reimbursed if they qualify for the Champions League in the next two campaigns, while the cut will be reduced to 7.5 percent if they reach the Europa League.

Talks with Ozil and the two others will continue, with the trio not thought to have ruled out a future cut.

The PFA has urged players only to accept deferrals and Ozil's agent said earlier this month: "Deferral is an option but not a cut today when the clubs may still make the same profit as last year. What the exact financial impact is on the clubs, we can see three to six months later but we can't see it today."