



Like every year, Bangladesh Football Federation yesterday organised an exhibition match featuring retired footballers of the national team and club sides at its artificial turf to celebrate Victory Day. The Red Team won this exhibition match against Green Team 3-0, but it was the camaraderie and spirit of sportsmanship which shone through. (Inset) An elderly person watches the game from a nearby apartment with a national flag flying from the balcony.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

## Alif stuns Ruman as young archers come to the fore

SPORTS REPORTER

Unheralded Abdur Rahman Alif stunned archery star Ruman Sana in the semifinal before clinching the gold medal in the men's recurve individual event of the Shaheed Ahsan Ullah Victory Day Archery tournament yesterday.

None of the SA Games gold medallists, except Ibi Khatun, were able to shine in a tournament where just 27 archers participated. The participants had all been part of the national camp at Shaheed Ahsan Ullah Master Stadium in Tongi ahead of the return of competitive archery after 11 months, including the long lay-off caused by the ongoing coronavirus pandemic.

The archers had virtually been out of competition since the clean sweep in 10 archery events of the South Asian Games in Nepal last December but they were engaged in training for the now-deferred Tokyo Olympics till March 25 before the government instructed to close all sports activities following the Covid-19 outbreak. The archers then gradually started training from the middle of August and had gotten nearly four months of practice before the competition, which ended yesterday.

Alif, a grade-nine student of BKSP, outclassed his grade-11 teammate Prodipta Chakma by 6-0 set points to win the gold medal in the competition full of national archers. Ruman -- the country's second athlete to gain direct qualification to the summer Olympics -- lost to Tamimul Islam by 0-6 set points in the bronze-medal deciding match.

"I had a problem in shooting, that's why I could not perform well. You know such things can happen as the performance isn't always the same. So, I am not worried about it and not even unhappy with the performance, because I believe I can come

back strongly through hard work," Tokyo Olympics qualifier Ruman Sana told The Daily Star yesterday.

"I have been working on fixing my shooting problems and if I can gain confidence in the coming days and get opportunities to play tournaments regularly, I believe I can do well," said the SA Games gold medallist.

"It is also a good sign for us that junior archers are performing well as they made world-class scores. They also played well in the knockout matches with Tamimul and Alif performing well. Alif is the most junior archer, but did really well. It is also a good sign that the country will not depend just on Ruman because junior archers are also making their presence felt. I hope many Ruman Sanas will be produced in the future and these junior players will bring medals from Olympics or World Championships, even if I can't do it," said Ruman.

Only Ibi Khatun, another SA Games gold medallist, stayed true to form and won the gold medal by beating Beauty Roy 6-5 in the women's recurve individual event while Mahanaz Akter Monira won bronze beating Diya Siddique 6-4.

In the men's compound individual event, Ashiquzzaman grabbed gold by beating Siam Siddik by 139-138 points and SA Games gold medallist Sohel Rana had to be content with a bronze medal with a 145-139 win over Ashim Kumer Das.

In the women's recurve individual event, Shyamoli Roy beat Banna Akter in a tiebreak to win gold after the match was tied at 141-141. Tania Rima won bronze in the same event.

In the mixed recurve event, the pair of Alif and Beauty Roy beat Emdadul Haque Milon and Eti Khatun to win gold by 6-0 set points while Ashim and Rima beat Sohel and Bonna 154-151 to bag mixed compound gold.



Abdur Rahman Alif beat Ruman Sana, the country's best archer, on way to winning gold medal in Victory Day Archery yesterday.

PHOTO: BAF

## 2030 Asian Games in Doha

AFP, MUSCAT

Doha will host the 2030 Asian Games, the Olympic Council of Asia announced Wednesday, while Riyadh was named as host of the 2034 edition under a compromise agreed between the rivals.

An executive board meeting of the Olympic Council of Asia (OCA) unanimously approved the proposal to name the runner-up in the two-horse race. "I can now announce... that the city who had the highest vote and will host 2030 is Doha. The second hosting city, for 2034, is Riyadh," said OCA president Sheikh Ahmad Al-Fahad Al-Sabah.

## Squads for Windies series chalked out

SPORTS REPORTER



While cricketers have been playing in the Bangladesh T20 Cup, the final of which is scheduled to take place on December 18, selectors have already chalked out primary squads for the upcoming West Indies series following a meeting with head coach Russell Domingo, Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) Cricket Operations Committee Chairman Akram Khan informed.

He added that they expected to begin the national camp by the end of this month.

Cricket West Indies (CWI) on Tuesday confirmed their national team will arrive in Bangladesh on

January 10 and play a one-day warm-up match at BKSP after one week of quarantine ahead of the first of the three-match ODI series on January 20.

After the three-match ODI series concludes on January 25, the visitors

The national team's foreign staff, including head coach Russell Domingo, is expected to arrive in the country by the first week of January.

will play a four-day warm-up game at Chattogram's MA Aziz Stadium ahead of the two-Test series. Initially, the plan was to have two T20s, three ODIs, and three Tests, but the visitors urged the BCB for a shorter tour.

"We are expecting to start the national camp by the end of this month or the first week of January. We have to create a bio-secure bubble to start camp and we are planning to form a bigger squad who will stay in the bio-secure bubble," said Akram.

According to the former Bangladesh captain, the national team's foreign staff, including head coach Russell Domingo, is expected to arrive in the country by the first week of January.

"As players and the coaches will have to stay in the bubble for a long time, we are considering starting the camp not long before the series. Foreign coaches, including Russell Domingo, are expected to join the team by the first week of January," he added.



## 'Benzema best ever French striker'

REUTERS, Madrid

Real Madrid coach Zinedine Zidane hailed his forward Karim Benzema as the best French striker of all time after his two goals helped them beat a stubborn Athletic Bilbao 3-1 at home on Tuesday in La Liga.

Madrid played the final 77 minutes with an extra man after Raul Garcia's early red card, but the visitors did not make life easy for the champions and Ander Capa scored in the second half to cancel out Toni Kroos's opening strike. Benzema, however, showed his class late in the game, restoring Madrid's lead by heading in a Dani Carvajal cross before rounding off the victory by finishing off a rapid counterattack in added time.

The coach was asked if his compatriot was the best French striker ever after the game and he had no doubts. "For me he is the best, because he has spent so long at Real Madrid and he keeps proving himself," Zidane told a news conference. "He has played over 500 games and scored so many goals. His achievements and honours speak for themselves. For me he is the best, of course."

Benzema has turned into a talismanic figure for Real since Cristiano Ronaldo's departure in 2018 but has not featured for France since 2015 following an incident involving his then national team mate Mathieu Valbuena.

But Zidane still ranked him above the likes of France greats Thierry Henry, David Trezeguet and current players Antoine Griezmann and Kylian Mbappe.

"He is a more complete player now than he used to be. He is not a pure number nine, he doesn't just think about scoring goals and that's what I love about him," Zidane added.

## Opener issue as Aus-Ind series begins under lights

REUTERS, SYDNEY



India, having claimed a first series triumph on their last trip Down Under, will again look to break new ground when they lock horns with the Australians on Thursday in the opening Test under the lights of Adelaide Oval.

Australia have featured in half of the 14 day-night matches played in Test cricket and won all seven by comfortable margins, five of them at the picturesque ground by the River Torrens.

India also won their only day-night Test but the Bangladesh pace attack at Eden Gardens last year probably did



not present as much of a threat in the evening sessions as Australia's will. Australia's pace battalion have



flourished with the pink ball and India's fine array of batsmen will have to be at their best if they are to hand their hosts a first Test defeat under the lights.

Skipper Tim Paine said over the last few days Australia had also enjoyed a decent refresher course to prepare for the match, which will be played in front of a restricted crowd of 21,000.

"We've managed to get three nights on the centre wicket at the Adelaide Oval, which I think is going to be a huge advantage to our team," he told reporters on Wednesday.

"The hardest thing about a pink ball Test is you normally get it once a year and so you are learning on the job in conditions that are just so foreign to us."

India's pace attack was a key factor in their series win two years ago and the tourists are confident they still have enough firepower even without the injured Ishant Sharma.

It is at the top of both batting orders that the biggest questions

remain, with Australia missing David Warner for the first Test at least and India without Rohit Sharma until he completes 14 days of quarantine.

While India look likely to stick with an out-of-form Prithvi Shaw to partner Mayank Agarwal, Australia's plans were thrown into disarray when a concussion ruled out potential debutant Will Pucovski.

Add to that a form slump for Warner's incumbent partner Joe Burns and Australia's opening partnership could have very much an ad hoc look to it.

Paine was talking up Burns's pedigree on Wednesday, however, and with young all-rounder Cameron Green set to make his debut lower down the order, it looks like Australia will move a middle order batsman up to open.

Steve Smith trained on Wednesday despite a sore back, which means fans will be able to watch the world's two best batsmen in Adelaide for the only time in the series.

## Honours even in Inzaghi derby

REUTERS, UNDATED



Simone Inzaghi's Lazio dropped more points as his brother Filippo's Benevento frustrated their visitors to Campania in a 1-1 draw in Serie A on Tuesday.

Lazio raced into a first-half lead through a familiar source in Ciro Immobile and the Lazio forward will not score many better goals than his 25th-minute volley.

However, Pasquale Schiattarella's strike on the stroke of halftime, another well-taken volley, levelled the scores.

This was only the second meeting between the Inzaghi brothers as coaches. Simone won the previous encounter, when Lazio beat Bologna, then coached by Filippo, in December 2018. Filippo and Simone are incredibly close and talk at least once a day, so how did they handle the build-up to this match?

"It was a strange game, an emotional evening to play against my brother's team, the side I usually cheer on as their Number One Fan. I found a photograph today of me and Simone in Piacenza at the stadium with a cushion from the arena.

"I had to put it all to one side and focus only on the game for 90 minutes, try to put it out of my mind," confessed Filippo. "It's odd too for our parents, his children, my nephews, but it's the essence of football, being opponents for 90 minutes. We'll have to go through it all again in four months."

"It was really weird last night, as we spoke on the phone at about midnight, the way we usually do. We tend to chat about how the players are going, what we're planning tactically, but obviously we had to steer clear of all that! It was a tricky conversation to have.

