



Hosts have their work cut out

Sports Reporter

RIDING high on the collective expectations of a nation, Bangladesh, the hosts of the Sixth South Asian Federation Games, have their work cut out as they enter the biggest sporting bonanza of the South Asian region with the largest contingent of the meet that gets underway today amid a grand opening ceremony at the Dhaka Stadium.

Bangladesh are fielding 263 men and women for a maximum of 117 golds in eleven disciplines.

The hosts are taking part in all the disciplines including judo, the maiden entrant, alongside football, athletics, swimming, shooting, volleyball, kabaddi, tennis, table tennis, boxing and wrestling.

The opening day of the eight-day long meet will see Bangladesh giving its best shot as the footballers take on their counterparts from the Maldives, runners-up of the last SAF Games in Colombo in 1991 in the day's second match scheduled for a 8:30 pm start at the Mirpur Stadium.

Reigning champions Pakistan, who are on a hat-trick, having won the football golds in the successive meets in Islamabad and Colombo, will take on Sri Lanka in the first match beginning at 6:30 in the evening at the same venue. Ironically Bangladesh, who are seeded above their six South Asian neighbours according to the latest FIFA rankings, have not won the gold in football for even once. The nearest they came was in 1985, during the second SAF Games held in Dhaka for the first time, losing to India in

the final on a penalty shoot-out following a one-all dead lock during the regulation period.

Trained over two and a half months by FIFA coach Oldrich Svab, Bangladesh will go all-out this year to win the elusive gold. Already a twenty-strong team with Arif Hossain as the captain has been announced.

The Swiss coach, whose accent has been on team game rather than individual brilliance, has kept two very notable players outside the final squad. They are winger Ruman Bn Wali Shabbir and veteran striker Sheikh Mohammed Aslam. Although Bangladesh beat the visiting Myanmar team quite comprehensively in two prep matches held in Dhaka earlier this month, observers feel that the local lads may lack in fire-power. But with the coach seemingly brooking no hesitation or second thoughts, it looks like the hosts are fielding the best possible team in the competition.

The hosts will also feature in another meet on the opening day. At the Ramna Tennis Complex, Bangladesh will play the Maldives in the morning in a discipline that will precede the opening ceremony, to be enacted later in the afternoon. With India entering the fray as the overwhelming favourites with stars like Ramesh Krishnan, Vasudevan and Nataraj, even the zealous patriots will not dream for a gold in tennis. And following India will be Sri Lanka and Pakistan, fairly strong outfits in their own rights.

The bleak future in tennis should be compensated by the performance of the marksmen

and women in shooting, a discipline in which Bangladesh bagged a maximum number of golds in the last meet in Sri Lanka capital Colombo. Ace shooters like Ateequr Rahman and Kazi Shahana Parveen will be backed by some exciting young prospects, and there is no reason why Bangladesh should not better their haul of ten medals, including three golds.

However, in disciplines of traditional interest in a meet a la Olympics like the SAF Games, Bangladesh look destined to disappoint the sports enthusiasts of the country.

Bangladesh's prospects in athletics, despite the forced optimism of the officials, have been hit hard by a number of

events. To start with, Golam Ambia, the fastest of the country who was tipped earlier to emulate the feat of late Shah Alam, the undisputed king of the 100m dash in two successive meets in 1985 and 1987, was struck down by jaundice recently and is unlikely to be tested in his favourite event. His place will probably be taken by the BKSP's Bimal Taralidar who is likely to perform upto the scratch in his maiden international exposure of this magnitude.

The 43-member athletics contingent will miss the experience of Olympic veterans Shah Jalal Mobin and Shahanuddin Chowdhury, both whom did not return from the USA after taking part in the World University

Games earlier this year.

Swimming, another clou of the meet, does not offer a rosy future for the hosts either. Although the redoubtable Mokkiesur Rahman, who captured the lone gold in swimming in the Colombo meet is very much there, the Sri Lankan and Indian swimmers are likely to reign in the pool.

It will be sometime before the hosts will be in a position to pore over the sediment of the sparkling days, but one observation or rather, one should say optimism, will not be preposterous even prior to the Games. Bangladesh should better their performance of 64 medals, including nine golds, in the Second SAF Games here in 1985.

The Sixth SAF Games logo and mascot

Chanchala Chhay, The Vibrant Six, the official emblem of the VI SAF Games, 1993, essentially embodies the Bengali number Six which, besides signifying the ordinal of the Games, has multifarious implications on the leitmotif of the occasion. The six colours, representing the six seasons of the country, are curved out in a rhythmic unity, forming the shape of the Bengali number Six.

The hierarchy of colours, associated with the six different seasons, implies the underlying tone of nature in Bangladesh.

Orange, which stands for summer, is warm; green, with its verdurous vivacity, symbolises the monsoons; autumn, with its azure sky, is represented by blue; golden, which presents the sight of the ripe paddy, speaks of the maturity of the late autumn; mauve brings the hibernal pleasant with its chilly atmosphere; while finally, red adds a flamboyant complexion over the vernal phase of nature, suggesting the euphoria of life.

The colourful semicircular pattern, put into a track-like shape of oblique straight lines, is placed under the miniate sun, representing Bangladesh, the host country. The six tracks, in the traditional manner, are divided into two teams, one of which is leading. The inner dynamism of the SAF Games is shown by the gradual expansion of the tracks as they move side by side and forward, hinting at the other six SAARC countries.

"Adanya", The Indomitable, is the mascot of the Games. It is as irrepressible as the sprightly child of the legendary Royal Bengal Tiger, the pride of the world's largest mangrove forest — the Sundarbans, in southern Bangladesh. The cub, not only cute but naughty too, wearing a lungi, befits the vivacity and vitality of South Asia's youth.



Firoyza Khatoun, the country's fastest woman, may find the pace set by her regional rivals too hot to handle.



Shoma, one of Bangladesh's bright gold medal hopes, during practice at the Gulshan Shooting Complex.

VI SAF GAMES DHAKA 1993

COMPETITION & PRACTICE VENUES OF PARTICIPATING TEAMS

SL.No.	Discipline	Dates	Competition Venues	Practice Venues	Phone No.
1	Athletics	22,23,24,25	Mirpur Stadium, Dhaka	Army Stadium & Mirpur Stadium	805108 Mirpur 383701 Mirpur
2	Swimming	21,22,23 24, 25, 26	National Swimming Complex Mirpur, Dhaka	Navy/Dhanmondi Women Complex/Dhaka Stadium	805142 Mirpur
3	Volleyball	21,22,23 24,25,26	National Indoor Stadium Mirpur, Dhaka	Mirpur indoor stadium Dhanmondi women complex	805142 Mirpur
4	Wrestling	23,24,25	Stadium Hockey	Wooden-floor Gymnasium	254466
5	Judo	22,23,24	National Indoor Stadium Mirpur, Dhaka	NSC Gymnasium/Mirpur Indoor Stadium	805142 Mirpur
6	Kabadi	22,23,24,25	Outer Stadium	Kabaddi Ground, Dhaka	236788
7	Boxing	21,22,23 24, 25	National Stadium	Boxing Stadium, Dhaka	882770
8	Tennis	22, 22,23 24,25,26	Tennis Complex Ramna, Dhaka	Tennis Complex/Officers Club, Dhaka Club	506650
9	Shooting	21,22,23 24,25,26	Shooting Complex Gulshan, Dhaka B K S P Tirani Savar	Shooting Complex, Gulshan	834099 Savar 610260 Gulshan
10	Table Tennis	21,22,23 24,25,26	Dhanmondi Gymnasium Dhanmondi, Dhaka	Dhanmondi Gymnasium	816682
11	Football	20,22,24,26	National Stadium II National Stadium I	Maldives—Air Force FB Ground Sri Lanka—Physical College Ground India - BDR Ground Pakistan - Rajarbagh FB Ground Nepal - Mirpur Outer Stadium Bangladesh - Navy Football Ground	264466

Games to foster regional amity

All preparations are complete as the region's biggest sports extravaganza — the Sixth South Asian Federation (SAF) Games — kick off today amid great fanfare.

Speaking at a press briefing at Sonargon Hotel last night, the organisers hoped the regional sporting meet would help lift the spirits of the people living in South Asia and inspire them to strive for attaining Olympian heights.

Meanwhile, the Executive Committee of the South Asian Sports Federation (SASF), at its 15th meeting in Dhaka Saturday night, admitted two new members — Afghanistan and Uzbekistan — into the South Asian Sports Federation.

The decision was taken as per the advice of the Olympic Council of Asia (OCA) as well as the International Olympic Council, said Gias Kamal Chowdhury, President of the Bangladesh Olympic Association (BOA). Bangladesh who presided over the meeting. The inclusion of these two countries, though not members of the SAARC, was prompted by the new zoning policy of the OCA.

By Staff Correspondent

Information Minister Barrister Nazmul Huda, Post and Telecommunications Minister Tariqul Islam and senior members of the Games Organising Committee also spoke at the press briefing.

Highlighting Bangladesh's efforts for increasing regional cooperation in the sports arena, Gias Kamal Chowdhury announced that the Seventh SAF Games would take place at Madras in the Indian state of Tamil Nadu, in 1995. The 1997 Games are likely to be held in Kathmandu, Nepal.

Eleven hundred and ninety-seven athletes from the seven-nation South Asian Association of Regional Cooperation (SAARC) are taking part in the meet.

Hosts Bangladesh have fielded the highest number of 263 participants.

The break up of the other participating nations is: India — 248; Bhutan — 14; Sri Lanka — 250; the Maldives — 77; Nepal — 174; and Pakistan — 171.

Besides, there are some 200 officials from the participating countries.

Organisers of the SAF Games informed newsmen from

home and abroad that all the participants have arrived in time and they have been comfortably accommodated at different city hotels.

Sixteen different committees have been engaged to look after them, they said.

The BOA president said that the SASF would meet within the next six months to finalise the flag and the official emblem for the SAF Games.

Speaking on the occasion, the Information Minister welcomed some eighty foreign journalists now in the country to cover the Games.

He also called upon them to highlight the Games to lift the SAARC spirit.

A media centre has been opened at the Purbani Hotel Annex to facilitate the journalists to cover the meet, he said.

Post and Telecommunications Minister Tariqul Islam said that the government has spent taka 90 crore to make the Sixth SAF games an all-out success. This amount includes the cost of building new, modern infrastructure, such as an indoor stadium and a swimming pool.

VI SAF GAMES TRIVIA

Sports Reporter

A sum of Taka 40,70,000 will be needed to pay for the transportation of athletes, officials, mediamen and technical personnel — estimated to total about 1300 — during the week-long regional sporting gala.

According to the transport committee of the Games Organising Committee, about two hundred vehicles will be pressed into service to ferry people to and from the various city venues for the 11-sport extravaganza.

Nepal, which hosted the inaugural SAF Games in Kathmandu in 1984, will have the honour of leading the team marchpast at today's grand opening ceremony.

This will be according to the Bangla alphabetical order.

The Himalayan kingdom will be followed by Pakistan, India, Bhutan, the Maldives and Sri Lanka. Bangladesh, as the hosts, will bring up the rear.

The Bangladesh Sports Journalists' Association (BSJA) will award the best male and female athletes of the Sixth SAF Games.

Hearty Welcome to the Participants of the 6th SAF Games

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