

Swimmer Mukhesur Rahman who has been doing a yeoman's job for Bangladesh in the last couple of years grins cheek by jowl with compatriot Mizanur Rahman Qarar after the latter set a new SAF Games record and robbed Mukhes of what would have been his third successive gold in men's 200m breast-stroke.

Two SAF Games records broken

Mizan, Abhijit rule the pool

Sports Reporter

Eighteen-year old Mizanur Rahman Qarar of Bangladesh set the pattern of a day marked by the refreshing reign of youth over age and experience when he set the first of the two new records on the inaugural day of the swimming competition in the Sixth South Asian Federation (SAF) Games yesterday.

more countries — Uzbekistan and Afghanistan — would be in the fray in the next meet to be held in the Indian city of Madras in 1995. Mizan took 2:33.38 seconds in the men's breast-stroke, to set a new record in the annals of the Games.

In tears, not just because of an on-top-of-the-world feeling but also because of the pain in his stiff leg muscles, Mizan hugged by his bearded father Amanullah Qarar gave vent to his feelings in the too detectable

ament when, in his first international exposure in Calcutta the same year, he took the gold in the 200m breast-stroke with a timing of 2:40 seconds.

Not really the type to gripe and grumble, Mizan could not hide his annoyance over the performance of the authorities. "They were supposed to keep the water a bit on the lukewarm side. It was too chilling in the morning and a stiff leg muscle did not help."

Success did not really seem to have gone to Mizan's head. He knows he has still miles to go. "I would request the government to send me abroad for long-term coaching. I am sure I can improve upon my performance."

Mukhesur Rahman, who won the lone swimming gold for Bangladesh in the Colombo Games, clocked 2:37.35 seconds to come a silvery second. The brilliant Navy swimmer should not have any regrets for losing to his more promising compatriot. After all, Mukhes, who had also provided the saving grace for the utterly flailed Bangladesh contingent in the fourth Games in Islamabad by winning the lone gold for his country, has more than done his job.

BREAK-UP OF MEDALS

Shooting:	G	S	B
Bangladesh	4	3	0
Shri Lanka	2	1	1
India	0	1	4
Pakistan	0	1	1
Swimming:			
India	1	1	2
Bangladesh	1	1	0
Shri Lanka	1	0	0
Pakistan	0	1	1
Maldives	0	0	0
Tennis:			
India	1	1	0
Shri Lanka	1	1	0
Bangladesh	0	0	2
Pakistan	0	0	1

Note: Both Bangladesh and Pakistan got bronze.



ABHIJIT... gold

Mixed day for local paddlers

Sports Reporter

The host paddlers stayed in contention for the gold in the men's team event but the women's squad was knocked out of the race on the opening day of the SAF Games table tennis tournament at the Dhamondi gymnasium yesterday.

The men's team won both their Group B matches in straight sets against Maldives and Bhutan. They now have one game in hand against Pakistan. If the hosts win they will go straight to the final.

In the morning, Moaddequl Haq Kochi beat Ahmed Ibrahim 21-7, 21-11, Nasimul Haasan Kochi outplayed 21-18, 21-9 and Saiful Haq Sadi beat Ali Rashid 21-11, 21-18 to designate a 3-0 victory over the Maldivians.

In the afternoon session, Kochi and Rochi also had easy wins against their respective opponents but Sadi was stretched to deceive in the first set before winning eventually.

The female table tennis players also started strongly, winning their first match against Nepal in straight sets with Zohera Rahman Lina, Julekha Akhter prevailing over their respective opponents in the singles and then teaming up to win the doubles.

But they could not maintain the momentum against the Shri Lankan girls. Only Lina, in her singles match against D Rodrigo, put up a brave fight.

Pakistan and India both ended the day on a winning note registering two victories each in as many matches.



The jubilant Sri Lankan quartet of Nishantha De Costa, Pradeep Chandrika, Gheffari Dulapandana and Intikhab Sikander after winning the 4X100 m relay gold at the National Swimming Complex in Mirpur yesterday.

Host spikers lose openers

Sports Reporter

Bangladesh women's squad was comprehensively beaten by the Sri Lankans in straight sets in the inaugural match of the sixth SAF Games volleyball tournament at the Mirpur Indoor Stadium yesterday.

In front of a cheering partisan crowd, the local girls came up with little resistance against their technically superior opponents and went down 9-15, 1-15, 1-15.

The men's squad also faced similar fate in their opener against a strong Indian side, losing 9-15, 3-15, 6-15.

In the other matches of the day, Pakistan defeated Nepal 15-10, 15-4, 15-11 and Shri Lanka downed Maldives 15-4, 15-7.

Young Masood wins first medal for Pakistan

S A Bokhari, Guest Writer

Young and upcoming swimmer Kamal Salman Masood won the first medal for Pakistan — a silver — when he improved the previous SAF Games record, clocking a time of 17:02.54 in the 1500m freestyle.

Fourteen-year-old Abhijit of India won the first gold medal for India in the same event clocking a fine timing of 16:53.85.

Kamal Masood started the 30-lap race splendidly along with Abhijit, and both were neck-and-neck till 22 laps, but after the 23rd the Indian, showing better stamina and forceful arms, tore away to take a big lead and finished the race 15 strokes ahead of Masood.

The upcoming swimmer of Pakistan showed lot of improvement in every competitions. The previous Games record was 17:11.82. Kamal Masood performance was considered top by President of the POA, Syed Wajid Ali Shah and M Latif Butt, the Secretary General, were present at the new temperature-controlled Mirpur pool, among a crowd of over four thousand.

However the organisers failed to provide line-ups of all the three finals which were completed on the day. The seating arrangements for the spectators were also rather poor. The swimming medals were awarded by Raja Randhir Singh of India, who is the secretary of the Olympic Council of Asia.

Qatar football chief meets Oli

The visiting president of Qatar Football Association Mohammad Bin Hammam called on Communication Minister Oli Ahmed at his Red Bhaban office yesterday, reports UNB.

The minister, also the president of Bangladesh Football Federation during the meeting gave an overview of the steps taken by the government to develop the game in the country.

The vice-president of the Asian Football Confederation Hafizuddin Ahmed MP and member of Qatar Football Association Mohammad-Al-Mishaid were also present at the meeting.

Martin recalled

BRISBANE, Dec 21: Promising middle-order batsman Damien Martin was Tuesday recalled to the Australian cricket team to face South Africa in the first Test match, which starts Sunday in Melbourne, reports AP.

Martin comes into the Australian squad of 12 to replace Steve Waugh, who is sidelined by a torn hamstring.

Maradona calls it a 'farce'

BUENOS AIRES, Dec 21: Argentina captain Diego Maradona described Sunday's World Cup draw as "a real farce," reports Reuters.

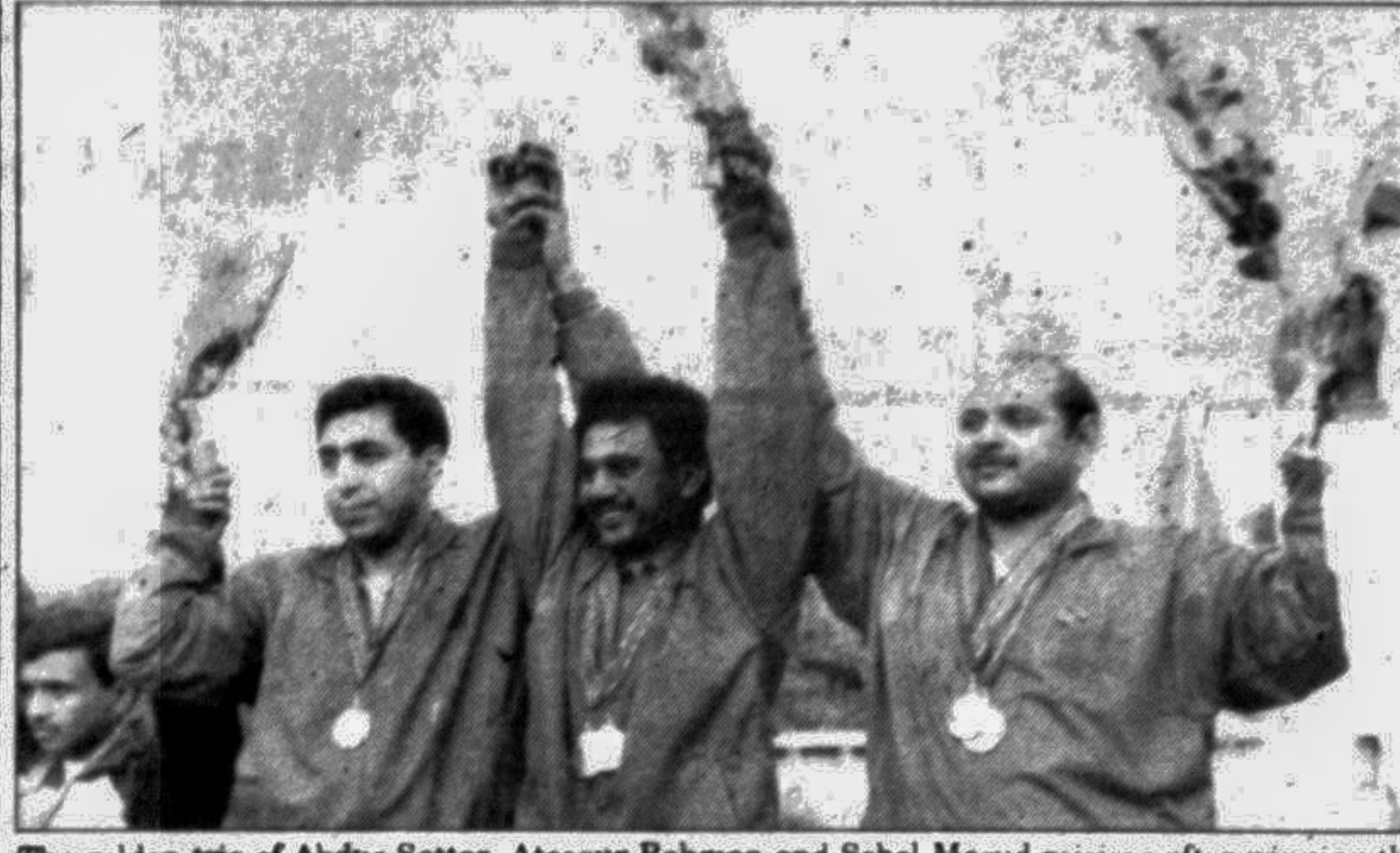
"Everyone knew in advance which teams would be in each group and where certain sides would play," he told the Radio America station.

"There's killing soccer with these antics. I've never understood such rigmorale ceremonies... the same thing happened in the (1990) World Cup draw in Italy and I denounced it then."

Maradona, banned for 18 months in 1991 by soccer's World governing body FIFA for cocaine use, said Argentina were "well positioned" to reach the second round of the finals after being drawn to play Greece, Nigeria and Bulgaria in the first phase.

"It's a very good group — it might be difficult but not impossible," he said. Argentine newspapers were especially upbeat on the twice world champions' group rivals. "Bingo in Vegas," was the headline of the mass-circulation Clarin.

"The draw was favourable because all the others are second-class teams in world football," it said.



The golden trio of Abdus-Sattar, Ateequr Rahman and Sohail Masud rejoices after winning the gold in the team event of the 10m air pistol at the Gulshan Shooting Range.

Ateeq shoots the first Games gold

Sports Reporter

Ateequr Rahman was the man of the moment of the Sixth SAF Games as the ace shooter of the country won the first of the 117 golds up for grabs, to ensure the hosts led the table on the first day of the medal events.

Yesterd ay at the renovated Gulshan shooting range, Ateeq and Saiful Alam Chowdhury Rinki won individual golds for themselves and confirmed two golds in the team events for Bangladesh, too.

Ateeq, the 28-year-old Chittagongian who won a gold for Bangladesh in the 1990 Commonwealth Games in Auckland, to follow it up with achievements in the Colombo SAF Games two years ago, scored 569 out of a possible 600 in the men's air pistol 60 shots.

It was new meet record, shattering the previous score of 562, achieved by Ateeq himself in Colombo.

The married crack-shot, who takes care of the family packaging business, Ateeq made remarkable recovery yesterday. He started in a very unpromising fashion.

"I was very tardy at the start. But I made up for it well in the last ten minutes. It was a literal rapid fire session for me," observed a delighted Ateeq.

"I don't know why of late I

have been suffering from a want of motivation. The Chinese coach Liu refuelled me with zest and all that. I owe this success to him," Ateeq reaction moved from the subjective pastures to a more objective ground.

Ateeq, Anif and Nini together followed Ateeq with a score of 566.

Abdus Sattar Nini, another gold medalist at Auckland, took the bronze with a score of 552.

Ateeq, Anif and Nini together totalled 1667 to take the team gold. They finished five points clear of the Pakistani trio of Inamullah Khan, Sajid Iqbal and Mohammad Abbas who took the silver for their total of 1662.

The Indian team of Ashok Pandit, Jaspal Rama and T K Sikdar copped the bronze with a haul of 1660 points.

Saiful Alam Chowdhury Rinki, the 25-year-old volleyball player of the Bangladesh Air Force, transformed grief into grim determination to present Bangladesh two more golds.

In the men's individual air rifle 60 shots Rinki, who lost his sister only a few days ago, scored 580 out of 600 to snatch the gold.

His compatriot Fazle Rabbi followed him with a haul of 578 points to settle for the silver.

Syed Ashab Faiyaz, another Bangladeshi, took the bronze for his score of 569.

The total of this trio, which added up to 1727, was enough to take the silver while the Sri Lankans bagged the bronze with a collective score of 1655.

However, the fancied female shooters of the country were a big let down. In the lone event billed for women yesterday, the Bangladeshi trio of the seasoned Kazi Shahana Parveen, Farzana Hossain Shoma and Fawzia Azam could only take the silver in the air rifle 40 shots.

Shahana, who brought the country's first gold in the fifth games in '91, scored 374 while Shoma, another prospective gold winner, managed 369. Fawzia scored 368. The grand total of these three was 1111, a long way behind the gold winning Sri Lankan team which totalled 1131.

The individual gold of this event went to Pushpamali Ramanayake who scored 385.

She was followed by compatriots Malini Wickremasinghe who collected 383, and Chandrika Wickremasinghe, who managed a bronze for her effort of 363 points.

Competition resumes at noon today.



Saiful Alam Chowdhury (C) atop the winners' podium along with Fazle Elahi and Faiyaz after winning the gold in men's air rifle team shooting event. The trio ensured a sweep of all four gold medals (including two individual golds) up for grab on the opening day of shooting of the Sixth SAF Games at the Gulshan Shooting Range yesterday.

A quiet start by the giants

By Manik Banerjee, Guest Writer

India — known as the super power in the seven-nation SAF Games, started their campaign in the sixth version of the biennial meet on a poor note yesterday as they could win only a couple of gold medals out of the nine titles which were settled on the second day of the eight-day championships.

The saving grace for India was the fourteen-year-old school boy from Karnataka who picked up the first gold for his country in this meet by winning the 1500-metre freestyle swimming event and setting a new meet record. The Indian men's tennis team also retained their title won in Colombo in 1991 by defeating Sri Lanka in straight sets.

At the end of the day India's tally was two golds, three silvers and six bronzes. Apart from the Indian swimming quartet, which came second in the relay (4x100), the Indian women's tennis team failed to retain the crown in the team event, losing the final to Sri Lanka.

However, in the other team events, volleyball and table tennis, India did well. While in volleyball India, in a one-sided affair, trounced Bangladesh in straight sets 15-9, 15-3 and 15-6, its men's table tennis team also inflicted a 3-0 defeat on Shri Lanka.

In table tennis, after S Ra-

man gave flying start defeating CC Armolda 21-11 and 21-12, Arup Basak buttressed the lead outplaying C Dushmantha 21-14 and 21-13. Veteran Kamlesh Mehta made it 3-0, drubbing I Prasad 21-9 and 21-10.

India's worst performance of the day came at the Gulshan shooting range where they could gather only one silver in the men's air rifle (60 shots) team event and four bronzes, which came through the men's air pistol for 60 shots, women's air rifle for 40 shots — both in the team event — and Kuhel Ganguly (women's individual 40 shots) and TC Palangappa (men's air rifle 60 shots).

In table tennis, after S Ra-

Of rats and elephants

Asoka Goonetilleke Sports Editor Divaina Shri Lanka

I was just descending the steps of the NSC building along with other hundred odd journalists and non-journalists, the other day. A rat crossed the garden, entered the building and tried to climb up the steps. None witnessed this 'ratty' attempt as they were talking about the media kit and what it contained. Powder for working journalists! However, amidst dust, noise and the like, the rat ran riot. I deemed it as a bad omen!

I was yet to see the opening ceremony of the VI SAF Games, but was told it would be a riot of colours, thrilling music, a record crowd, para jumps, etc. Dreams did come true, but not for those who jumped over the fence.

Every opening ceremony differs from the previous. The best I've seen, visiting journalists commented, was in Colombo two years ago. That's what I heard at the Seoul Olympiad. But Barcelona overran it. Atlanta the next, showed what it had in store for us on the Barcelona Games 'closing' stage. So, it is, undoubtedly the best opening ceremony I have seen (so far) in Dhaka. Oh, come on, who invented this para jumping? Nowadays every country has a fighting army and para jumpers are no exception. I believe that's the only unnatural thing, be it the SAFS Games or the Olympics.

If someone drags me to a dark alley in Dhaka and asks what is the most thrilling event in the opening ceremony, where the Bangladesh National Anthem got a delayed start, I would screen and say "The elephants". The elephants are very familiar to Sri Lankans. Just like 'Ceylon Tea' the international belief is that the Sri Lankan elephant is the most beautiful elephant in the world.

Well, anyway, there wouldn't be any SAFS Games, in future, and instead the South Central Asian Games in Madras, 1995. But rats and elephants may exist!

The Dhaka Games are in full swing now and all participating nations, quite sportingly, have set the battle plan to dismantle India's monopoly, unchanged for five SAFS chapters.

From the Shri Lanka point of view, the teams, definitely the athletes have dual responsibilities: a message which runs non-stop in the pipeline between the officials and athletes, says "Win, Win, failing, retain the glory won in Colombo."

It looks the members of the Shri Lanka contingent have got the message clear. Nailing the double SAFS soccer gold medalist and the reigning champions Pakistan 2-1 is quite a good start and a moral booster. But, you may keep the kabaddi gold.

It is tragic if one forgets the importance of the SAFS concept. If not for the SAFS Games none would talk about a Sugath Tilckeratne, the schoolboy prodigy of Shri Lanka who belted a 47.00 in the 400m at the Manila ATP. He did not win. But won our hearts. This goes for all athletes of the region, whose breeding ground, may be the ladder, to much higher international circuits.

I thought I would take a break and went to see my good old friend Nazeem Firdous, at the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Bangladesh, in Kawran Bazar. We had so many things to talk about and none wanted to depart since it was a meeting after seven long years.

At the forceful departure, my friend quoted Rabindranath Tagore and said, "If I remember right, 'If men must go, you have to go. So let him go.'" "Tell Tagore, that I would be back," I replied.

Don't cry for me Bangladesh, please.

Top seeds in trouble

GRONINGEN, Netherlands, Dec 21: The top seeds dropped half a point behind the leaders on Monday after a cautious second round of a qualification tournament held by the rebel professional Chess Association (PCA), reports Reuters.

Indian Viswanathan Anand, the world's fastest playing Grandmaster and top seed in the 230,000 dollar championship in the northern Dutch city of Groningen, was held to a draw by young Russian Sergei Trivakov, but seemed unconcerned.

"I have learned not to make my run too early," said Anand, 24, referring to his brilliant start and subsequent collapse in the official World Championship Interzonal tournament.

The Groningen tournament is being staged to find an opponent to challenge Russia's Garry Kasparov, the world number one, for his unofficial world title.

Both Karpov and Kasparov have dismissed the possibility of a unification match between the two.



Pushpamali Ramanayaka of Shri Lanka, who won the gold in the women's air rifle, seen in action at the Gulshan Shooting Range yesterday.