

Khaliq, Vaidyanathan clinch tennis singles golds

By Mir Ashfaq Zaman

Pakistan finally made a notch in the SAF Games tennis championships when Muhammad Khaliq rather unexpectedly clinched the men's singles beating crowd favourite Vasudev Reddy of India 2-6, 6-2, 6-2 in the final at the Ramna Tennis Complex yesterday.

In the last match of the six-day meet, Khaliq got off to a



India's Nirupama Vaidyanathan making a fore-hand return from the baseline against Sri Lanka's Lihini Weerasurya in the women's singles final of the Sixth SAF Games at the Ramna Tennis Complex yesterday. Vaidyanathan won the match 7-5, 7-5 to clinch the gold. — Star photo

nightmarish start against the hard-hitting Indian, conceding a game on his first service. Reddy, with his power tennis, completely dominated the first and romped through with another break on the seventh game.

Having been totally outpaced in the first set, the Pakistani national champion modified his strategy in the second. Instead of trying to keep up with Reddy in pace and power, the Lahore-born player concentrated on playing from the baseline. He mixed more spin to his first serve and followed up with deep, slicing shots across the court to pin Reddy to the baseline.

The Indian found the sudden change in pace quite difficult to

the Pakistani go 4-2 up. Khaliq held his serve in the next game but Reddy was broken again in the following to leave the Pakistani with the gold.

After the match the number one Pakistani, who was beaming with joy, admitted the change of pace had made a significant difference and played a major role in his victory. Khaliq, who is likely to accompany the Davis Cup squad to Singapore for a qualifying round match, also said the Indian's erratic play made it easier for him.

Reddy attributed the reason for his defeat to plain poor performance. "I have lost a lot of points on service and my first

service was really not working," said the dark Indian.

When asked about a couple of faulty line calls, Reddy said, "Some calls went against me and some against him. That's nothing, you see, it's a part of the game."

VAIDYANATHAN'S TITLE

While Reddy was quite generous towards the line judges, Sri Lanka's Lihini Weerasurya couldn't hide her anger during the women's singles final against Indian Nirupama Vaidyanathan earlier in the afternoon.

The match was a complete mess up from the organisers' point of view as the infuriated fans forced them to replace one of the line judges, who had quite religiously been making dubious calls.

So bizarre were some of the rulings that one spectator quipped, "The audience could do better than that."

On two occasions, Weerasurya walked up to the chair umpire and argued which resulted in interruptions for a few minutes in each case.

Apart from that, Weerasurya could only blame herself for the loss as she was painfully inconsistent throughout the match, making no less than ten double faults in the process. Besides, she was shaky and hardly rushed to the net for volleys, which is a distinctive feature of her game.

On the eighth game of the first set, the diminutive Lankan dissipated a 40-15 lead on Vaidyanathan's serve to let the Indian off the hook. Moreover, trailing 30-40 in the tenth, she double-faulted to concede the Indian a break. Vaidyanathan, the number one female player of her country, served out the next game to clinch the set.

The second set, which was to be the last as it proved later on, began well for the Lankan as she broke Vaidyanathan on her second service game but again errors crept into Weerasurya's game. The Lankan, who struggled with her service throughout, came up with two double-faults to let Vaidyanathan, whom she had beaten during the women's team final, break back.

the two traded breaks till 5-5 and then Vaidyanathan got the crucial break in the eleventh game and held her serve to wrap up the set 7-5 and with it the title.

"I didn't expect anything. I just wanted to play my game," said the player from Tamil Nadu.

About the erroneous line calls, Vaidyanathan, like Reddy, maintained, "It is all part of the game, so there's no point arguing about that. Besides, if you argue you actually lose two points because you can't concentrate on the next point."

India finished atop the medals table with four gold while Sri Lanka got two. Pakistan got the other one on offer in the competition.



The manager and captain of the victorious Pakistan kabaddi squad with the trophy after beating Sri Lanka at the Hockey Stadium yesterday. — Star photo



(From left) Vasudev Reddy of India (silver), Muhammad Khaliq of Pakistan (gold) on the winners podium with the two bronze medalists of the sixth SAF Games tennis. — Star photo



The Indian football captain Sathyan Vatta receiving the fair play trophy from the president of the Olympic Council of Asia (OCA) Sheikh Ahmed Al-Sabah at the Mirpur Stadium yesterday. — Star photo



The Pakistani shooters who took the gold in the Free Pistol 60 shots event on the concluding day of the Sixth SAF Games competition at the Gulshan Range yesterday. — Star photo



The Indian team of Harinder Singh, Amarinder Singh and Indrajeet Singh who won the gold in the clay target event in the Sixth SAF Games at the BKSP shooting range in Savar yesterday. — Star photo



The new Sixth SAF Games volleyball champions Pakistan pose together after beating Sri Lanka 15-3, 12-15, 15-10, 15-6 at the Hockey Stadium yesterday. — Star photo



The Indian women spikers who won the gold after beating defending champions Sri Lanka 15-3, 12-15, 15-10, 15-6 at the Mirpur indoor stadium yesterday. — Star photo

Prasad, Darsha best athletes of SAF Games

The South Asian Sports Press Commission (SASPC) unanimously selected athletes Bahadur Prasad of India and Damayanthi Darsha of Sri Lanka as the sportsman and woman of the Sixth SAF Games, according to a press release issued here yesterday.

The selections were made from eight nominees they were: Sebastian Xavier, Bahadur Prasad, Rupa Ganguly and Rosa Kutti of India, Puspa Mali and Damayanthi Darsha of Sri Lanka, Kamal Salman Masood of Pakistan and Bimal Chandra Tarafder of Bangladesh.

Pakistan clinch SAF kabaddi crown

By L Gani

As expected Pakistan routed novices Sri Lanka 41-8 to be crowned the new Sixth South Asian Federation (SAF) Games kabaddi champions in their last match at the Hockey Stadium yesterday.

Pakistan, who came into their final encounter with unbeaten record having disposed of title aspirants and hosts Bangladesh 16-14 and upset two-time defending champions India 21-13, were not going to give the hapless Lankans any chances to spoil their clean sheet and right from the start the muscular Pakistanis overwhelmed their opponents with countless number of attacks. By the end of the first period the winners had built up a huge 21-5 lead.

The second half was played with same vigour with Pakistan asserting their authority early on and never surrendering it. The Lankans who were totally outclassed never gave up but they could only manage to add three more points to their credit.

For Pakistan winning the title was long overdue, previously their best achievement was a silver medal in the Fourth SAF Games on home soil in 1989 and the bronzes in 1990 Beijing Asiad and the Third SAF Games in Calcutta in 1987.

India claimed the silver medal beating hosts Bangladesh 41-23.

The Indians who had earlier lost to Pakistan to end their reign bounced back splendidly to annihilate the Bangladeshis. The first half finished with India taking a 21-4 lead.

The second session was a different story with Bangladesh keeping India busy. In the end they managed to increase their score to respectability but it was not enough to mount a challenge to the superior Indians.

Rain ruins Cash's comeback

MELBOURNE, Dec 26: Heavy rain prevented former Wimbledon champion Pat Cash from playing his first singles match in 12 months, reports AP.

Cash was to play fellow Australian John Fitzgerald in his opening match of the Colonial Classic grass court event at Kooyong on Sunday, but persistent rain washed out all play for the day.

Cash, Wimbledon champion in 1987, has not played a singles match since injuring his left knee late last year. He underwent surgery on the injury in June.

"It's been a long hard struggle, but I'm back ready again," Cash said while waiting for a decision on whether play would be abandoned for the day.

He said he planned to play the South Australian Open in Adelaide and the New South Wales Open in Sydney in early January before asking for a wild card into the Australian Open from Jan 17-30.

"I've only been playing for three or four weeks, so this will be a good test," Cash said. "I feel like I'm moving well and hitting the ball well, but I need matches."

Cash is drawn to play Russian Alexander Volkov, Karel Novacek of the Czech Republic and his former Australian Davis Cup teammate Fitzgerald in Group B of the exhibition, which continues through Thursday.

Top seed Thomas Muster of Austria, Australian Todd Woodbridge, New Zealander Brett Steven and Spaniard Emilio Sanchez will contest Group A, with the two group winners meeting in the final.

The round-robin women's tournament sees top-seeded German Sabine Hack facing Andrea Strnadova of the Czech Republic and Australians Louise Field and Rachel McQuillan in Group A.

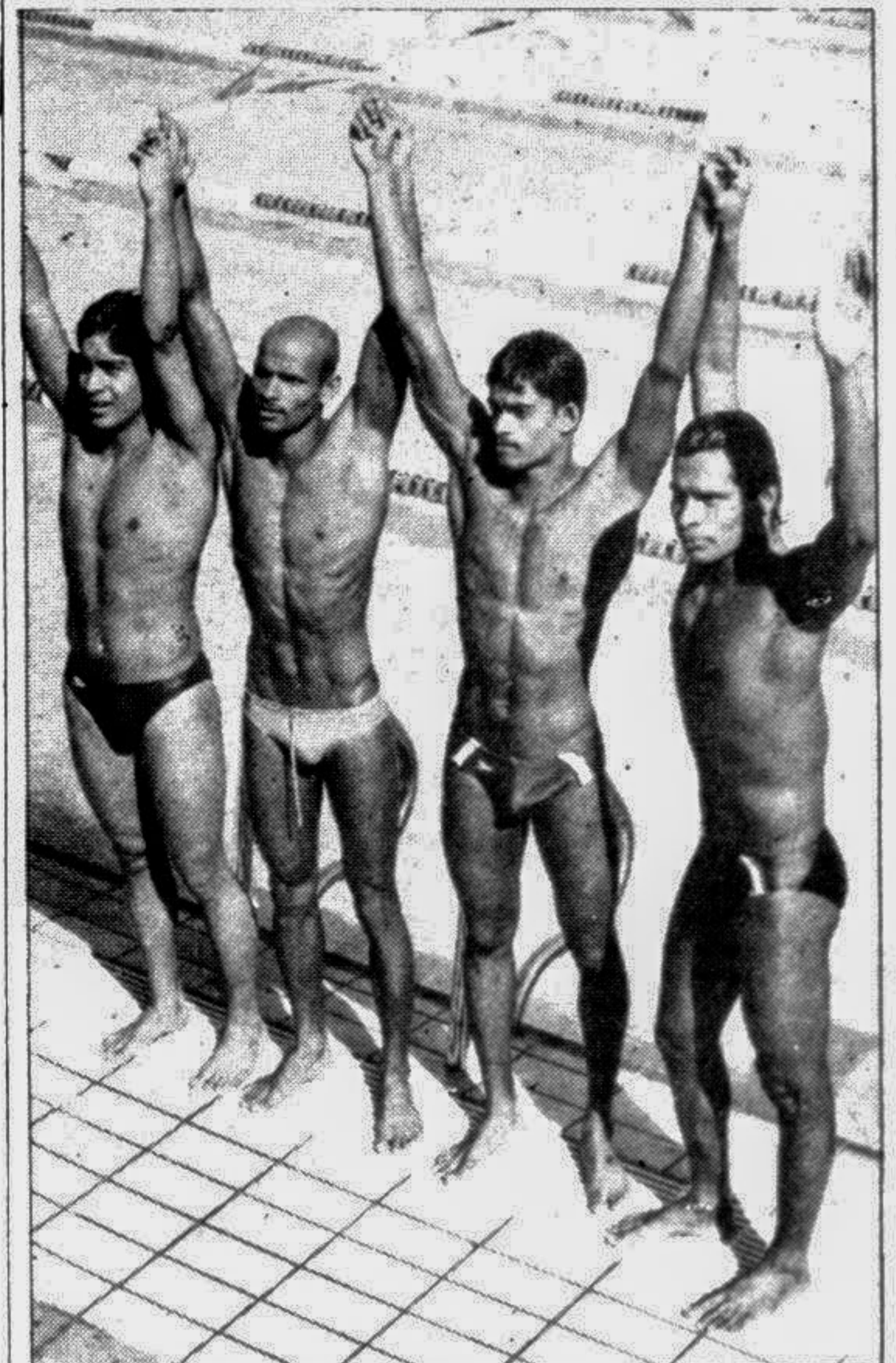
The other group comprises Australians Nicole Provis, Liz Smylie and Jenny Byrne, along with Catherine Tarrier of France.

Indians end it in a blaze of glory

By N K Baisakhi

It all ended in a blaze of glory for the Indian swimmers. By mopping up the final two gold medals of the South Asian Federation Games meet yesterday, they walked away with 11 of the 16 medals handed out in six days of competition.

They handled their new-found stardom as well as they had tackled their rivals in the



The Indian quartet of Sebastian Xavier, Bhanu Sachdeva, Suresh Kumar and Sanal P Kumar after clinching the gold in the 4X100 metre medley relay at the Mirpur pool yesterday. — Star photo

Mirpur pool. The pressure of competing off their backs, they lazed around, signed hundreds of autographs, shook as many hands, and posed for innumerable pictures with fans.

But they had to work hard for the fame and the concluding day's competitions yesterday were no less challenging than the earlier days.

The Indian team finally won a relay, getting the gold in the 4X100m medley, the final event of the meet. The coaches were taking no chances with this one, after the squad had let two relay golds slip away earlier.

Bhanu Sachdeva and Suresh Kumar were the natural choices, for swimming the backstroke and butterfly legs, having won the individual events earlier. The surprise came in the form of freestyle winner Sebastian Xavier swimming the breast-stroke and P Sanal Kumar the freestyle leg.

The move paid off. As usual, Bhanu shot off the blocks to hand Sebastian a substantial lead. The others did well to hold on in the face of stiff resistance.

Twice the Indians looked like being in danger. In the breast-stroke, Xavier was hard-pressed to stay ahead of 100m champion Mukhlesur Rahman of Bangladesh. In the freestyle, Sri Lanka's Ghefari Dulapandan fought tooth-and-nail to pull ahead of Sanal Kumar. But the Indian clung to his lead.

Apparently, the shuffling of the line-up was no gamble. "The decision was deliberate," revealed coach M R Mohite when asked if the team might have done better had Xavier been swimming the freestyle. "He was the best available we had in the breast-stroke."

Despite the flutter the relay caused, the coach said he had been sure of the gold. "Otherwise we would have drowned the four in this pool," he half-threatened. "With three individual champions swimming, it would have been a disgrace if they had lost."

Both coaches, K V Sharma and Mohite, said the team would have rewritten the SAF record if all the swimmers had been fit. It may be recalled that Rajeev Nagpal and Sebastian Xavier had chest infections, caught while practising in Delhi's cold.

The Sri Lankans went on to take the silver in the relay, and the hosts the bronze. The Indians clocked four minutes 9.97 seconds for the gold.

Earlier, young Jai Abhijith had proved his all-round prowess by winning the 400m individual medley for his second individual gold of the meet. He had to contend with 14-year-old Kamal Salman Masud, Pakistan's find of the meet; before he could take the first spot.

It was the backstroke that won the race for the Indian. Abhijith and Kamal had been neck-and-neck in the butterfly leg, the Indian touching just a shade ahead at the 100m mark. Masud's backstroke turned out

to be weak, as did that of Bangladesh's Yeasin Ali, who had kept up with the two so far. He had been overtaken by Sri Lanka's Dulapandan when Abhijith crossed 200m.

The Indian progressed slowly in the breast-stroke and Masud showed signs of catching up.

But the Bangalore schoolboy had carved out too big a lead. In the freestyle he just widened it to finish about five bodylengths ahead of the Pakistani.

RESULTS

400m IM: 1. J Abhijith (India) 4:55.11; 2. Kamal Salman Masud (Pakistan) 4:59.35; 3. Ghefari Dulapandan (Sri Lanka) 5:05.67.

4X100m medley relay: 1. India (Bhanu Sachdeva, Sebastian Xavier, Suresh Kumar, P Sanal Kumar) 4:09.97; 2. Sri Lanka (Tivanka Kevin de Alwis, Intikab Sikkander, Nishintha Kevin de Costa, Ghefari Dulapandan) 4:12.60; 3. Bangladesh (Kawsar Ahmed, Mukhlesur Rahman, Selim Miah, Harun-or-Rashid) 4:14.31.

India topped the medals table with a haul of 18 medals, including 11 golds.

Bangladesh and Pakistan finished with two golds each but the latter piped the hosts in the total haul of 12 medals.

MEDALS TABLE

Following is the complete medals table of the swimming competition in the Sixth SAF Games:

	G	S	B	T
India	11	5	2	18
Pakistan	2	4	6	12
Bangladesh	2	3	4	9
Sri Lanka	1	4	4	9

AB Bank cricket

A 30-over friendly cricket match between the Chairman-XI and President-XI of the Arab Bangladesh Bank Limited was held recently at the old DOHS ground, says a press release.

The Chairman side batted first and scored 157 for nine.

In reply the President-XI made 149 all out.

The match was inaugurated by president and managing director of the bank A K M Ghaffar.

Carron video demonstration

The International Carron Federation in collaboration with the Bangladesh Carron Association will hold a video demonstration and display of carron equipment today at 10 am at the Hotel Purbani, says a press release.

Gias Kamal Chowdhury, president of the Bangladesh Olympic Association (BOA) will inaugurate the demonstration as chief guest while Zahir Nasser, president of the Maldives Olympic Committee will preside.

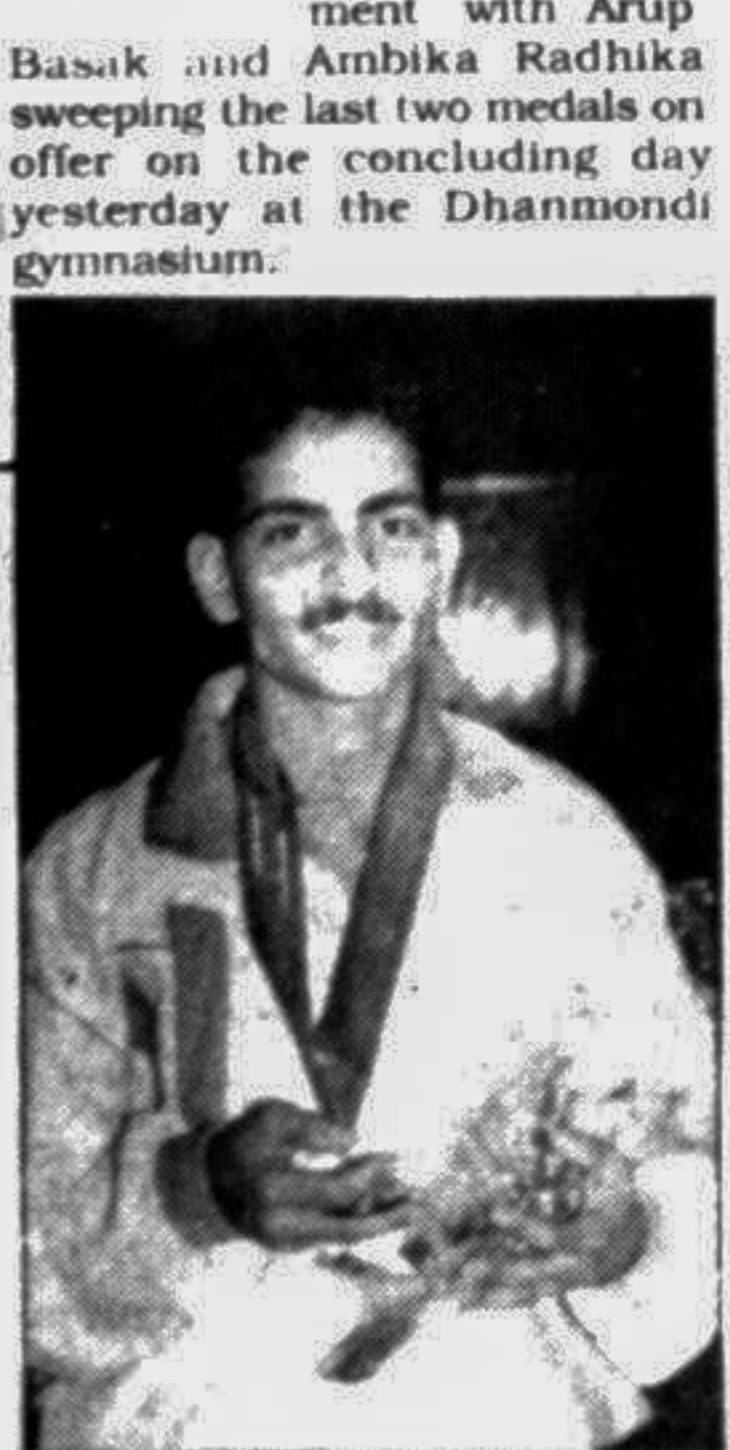
Ispahani soccer

CHIHTAONG, Dec 26: The final match of 'Ispahani Metropolitan Pioneer football league '93', sponsored by Ispahani Group of Companies will be held tomorrow at 3:00 pm at the local Dampara Police Lines ground, reports ISS.

Basak, Radhika round up Indian TT triumph

By Salim Md Sadikh

India quite predictably rounded up all the golds in the SAF Games table tennis tournament with Arup Basak and Ambika Radhika sweeping the last two medals on offer on the concluding day yesterday at the Dhanmondi gymnasium.



ARUP BASAK... tennis gold

Apart from the seven golds, Indian paddlers also bagged four silvers and one bronze to finish with a handsome haul of 12 medals overall. Pakistan's collection rose to five — two of them of the silver colour — with yesterday's bronze in the men's singles.

Sri Lanka got one silver and two bronzes while Bangladesh got their only medal, a bronze, in the men's team event.

Basak, who had a grueling five-setter against Pakistani Asim Qureshi in the semifinal, didn't show any sign of fatigue in his final against his highly

rated compatriot Chetan Baboor and waltzed away to an unexpectedly easy 23-21, 13-21, 21-15 and 21-15 victory.

In the last match of the meet, in the evening, Basak played with amazing accuracy and forced Baboor to make mistakes, which the Swedish professional league player quite often did.

After losing a tight first set in duce, Baboor made a brief fightback and showed why he is termed the most prospective of the Indian paddlers, producing a fine blend of table tennis to draw level.

But that was the only consistent patch in the tall Indian's performance as he seemingly lost concentration for the rest of the four set affair. He cursed and swore as frustration sneaked in over each and every missed shot. On the other hand, his stockier compatriot increasingly grew in confidence and came up with blazing returns frequently. As things moved on the outcome became quite apparent.

In the women's singles final, the first of the two all-Indian encounters scheduled for the day, Radhika didn't quite face the challenge she had expected to come from Kanchan Dhawan.

Only the first set marked the difference, in an otherwise lopsided affair in which Radhika prevailed 22-20, 21-17 and 21-10.

In the semifinal, Radhika had even an easier encounter against Ghazala Roobi of Pakistan, who didn't have enough tricks in her bag to stop the Indian from racing away to a 21-8, 21-12 and 21-11 win.

Dhawan had a similar sailing into the final, eliminating Deepika S Rodrigo of Sri Lanka 21-10, 21-11 and 21-10 in her semifinal engagement. The morning session yesterday saw the faint host hopes of entering the medals round evaporate with Zobera Rahman Linu, who beat Sandhya Shakya of Nepal 17-21, 12-21, 21-16, 21-14 and 21-12 in her first round match en route to be in the last eight, going down to Deepika, the eventual bronze medalist. Linu won only one set in her 14-21, 21-19, 18-21 and

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RADHIKA AMBIKA 16-21 defeat.

In the men's event, the pain was even more acute with national champion Mosaddequl Haq Kochi squandering a 2-0 lead against Bilal Yasin, one of the losing semifinalists, to bow out 21-16, 21-16, 18-21, 12-21 and 18-21.

The other local paddler who made it to the quarterfinals, Nasimul Hassan Kochi, was also shown the way out in the round of eight by the eventual champion. Only in the third set, Kochi managed to cause some worry for Basak, but the Indian overcame the stiff challenge to win 21-14, 21-14 and 22-20.