#### SIXTH GAMES FINAL MEDALS TABLE

Final medals table of the Sixth Bangladesh Games: 15 17 11 13 Police Titas Gas **Gulshan Shooting Club** Chittagong Rifles Club **Dhaka Rifles Club Dhaka University** Customs Narayangani Rifles Club Jhenidah BKSP Sonali Bank Agrani Bank Shaheenbagh Rowing Club **Dhaka City Corporation** Laxmipur Uttaran Rowing Club **Dhaka Sadar Rowing Club** Muktijoddha Sangsad BDR School & College Dhaka Zilla Jessore Zilla Air Force Narayanganj Zilla Narail Zilla Rajdhani Shooting Club RAJUK Rajshahi Education Board Khulna Zilla Rajshahi Zilla Sonargaon Hotel Khustia Rifles Club **Dhaka Rowing Club** Dhanmondi Rowing Club Chittagong PA

(One bronze apiece was earned by Dhaka DSA. Sutalari Rowing Club, Khagrachhari DSA, Joypurhat DSA, Chapainwabganj DSA, Jamalpur DSA, BADC, Janata Shooting Club. Tangail DSA, Chittagong Division, Gaibandha DSA, Bogra Madrasa Education Board, Bhola DSA, Mymensingh DSA, Fire Service, Uttara Rowing Club, Munshigani DSA, Dhaka Physical Training College. Bagerhat DSA, Comilla DSA and Kushtia DSA).

Rangamati Zilla

Dhaka Division

Chittagong DSA

Chittagong DSA

Sadharan Bima

Islamic University

Women Sports Asson

Janata Bank

Netrokona

Motijheel School & College

### Elina clinches badminton gold

Sports Reporter

Elina of Biman clinched the eves' singles gold in the Sixth Bangladesh Games badminton competition defeating her teammate Noori in the final held yesterday at the National Indoor Stadium

On the concluding day of the eight-day meet. Elina registered a comfortable 11-1, 11-4 win to earn the gold

Elina apart, Mahbubur Rab and Sarwar of Biman won the day's other final, men's doubles against Sumon and Shakil of the same team 3-15, 15-8, 15-11

With yesterday's two golds. total five golds were decided in the Games with Biman enjoying clean sweep bagging all the five. The following are the winners: Men's singles - Russel Kabir

Sumon (Biman) Women's singles - Elina (Biman)

Men's doubles — Mahbubur and Sarwar (Biman)

Women's doubles — Konica and Momo (Birnan) Mixed doubles - Juthi and Mahbubur (Biman)

#### Bad day for Bangladeshis

JAIPUR, Dec 25: Indian women overwhelmed their Bangladeshi counterparts 32-12 on the second day of the first South Asian handball tournament here today, reports PTI.

In the men's section, Pakistan scrapped past Bangladesh

#### Teenager's triple drug offence

LONDON, Dec 25: Charlton athletic teenager Jay Notley was given a three-month reprieve after the Football Association (FA) deferred its sentence for a triple drugs offence on Monday, reports AFP.

The 18-year-old midfielder admitted taking cannabis, cocaine and ecstasy before testing positive when the FA's mobile doping unit turned up at the London club's training ground six weeks ago.

Notley, who was accompanied by his parents to Monday's hearing, will not be allowed to play during the three-month period when he will undergo rehabilitation and conuselling.

Charlton manager Alan Curbishley welcomed the FA's decision, saying: "he didn't take the substances to enhance his performance and now we feel he should be left along for rehabil-

itation. Last season two other Charlton players. Roger Stanislaus and Craig Whitington, were banned for a year and six months respectively for drugs

offences. Two seasons ago, England under-21 player Lee Bowyer. now at Leeds and Dean Chandler were detected using

cannabis. But Curbishley added: "No other club has done as much as us to try and curb the problem of drugs."



Noted singer Abida Sultana singing the closing song of the Sixth Bangladesh Games at the Dhaka Stadium yesterday. - Star photo

# Games conclude with a bang

Sports Reporter

The wintry sky exploded with a magnificent nova as the last rite of the Sixth Bangladesh Games was performed at the Dhaka National Stadium vesterday.

Brilliant fire-works lit up the sky while an array of fireballs depicted the word "samapta" with the curtains drawing on the eight-day long effulgence of the quadrennial extravaganza. The heat is gone. the dust has settled, and the capital which played the hosts for the sixth consecutive occasion was left with the sediments of the hectic days.

The blitzkrieg was preceded by the formal closing ceremony of the country's biggest sporting spectacle. The sacred flame at the northern gate of the Stadium which was alight since December 18 was put out at around 4:30 pm with the bugler playing the retreat.

Education Minister A S H Sadeq, chief guest of the twohour long colourful concluding ceremony, after a bout of speeches from the members of the organising committee. promised a better assembly when the meet is staged in the year 2000. Aided by pre-recorded music.

blaring from the impressive music system, members of different groups put up a fascinating choreographic display. The nearly half-packed Dhaka Stadium danced and sang to the tunes as the motley actors and actresses of Azimpur Girls School, the Garos with their traditional attires, Abdur Rahman Bayati's bandana group and many others bemused

the audience like a dance hall cutpurse. Saddled on a mobile stage.

country's well-known crooner Abida Sultana sang the parting song while Rathindra Nath Roy. prominent vocalist of Swadhin Bangla Betar Kendra. rendered popular songs of our liberation war in 1971.

Finally, the bonanza of all bonanzas - the firework show captivated the spectators in a ten-minute long effulgent radiance in the blacked out big bowl.

Over four thousand athletes including 631 women from different districts and organisations took part in 23 disciplines athletics, swimming, boxing. wrestling, bodybuilding weightlifting, judo and karate, kho-kho, badminton, table tennis, tennis, squash, rowing, shooting, cycling, gymnastics, kabaddi, volleyball, basketball, handball, hockey and football. At stake were 211 gold medals and as many silvers and



Twenty-three new national records, including the highest six in shooting, were set up in the meet and some athletes carved a niche in the hearts of millions by their sheer bril-

It will be quite sometime before people forget Rehana Zaman, who secured ten swimming golds, a record in the annals of the country's sports. The 27-year-old natant from Narayanganj, who set the pool afire from day one, may not be around in the next Bangladesh Games, but her endurance and appetite for glory will inspire

the upcoming youngsters. Illias Hossain with six golds in swimming has also ushered a hope to fill the void of Qarar Mizanur Rahman, the lone SAF gold medalist who along with country's fastest man Bimal Chandra Tarafdar unfortunately stayed back in the United States after the Centenary Olympic Games at Atlanta.

On the other hand, Mahaboob Alam, who retained his position as the undisputed champ in 200m run, earned a delightful double by becoming the fastest man of the country. But it was sadness for Mahaboob as well as for sports that the callous Bangladesh Athletic Federation officials failed to install the electronic device to read the timings of his unique

In shooting, where Bangladesh can boast of international standard, Atiqur Rahman, the winner of a Commonwealth gold, staged a comeback with two golds including a record in his favourite event, free pistol. Among the participating

teams, Bangladesh Ansars with the highest haul of 69 golds, 49 silvers and 35 bronzes, once again established its supremacy in the Games while Bangladesh Army with 31 golds, 29 silvers, 23 bronzes finished in the distant second position.

## Tendulkar hopes to keep going

# First Test begins today



BURBAN, Dec 25 india resisted the temptation to play two spinners in their side for the opening Test against South Africa when they announced a 12-man squad at

Leg-spinner Anil Kumble recently recovered from split webbing in his right hand, was an automatic selection as India's premier strike bowler

along with paceman Javagal

Kingsmead today, reports

Srinath. But left-arm Spinner Venkatapathy Raju, tipped by some as a likely inclusion for the Durban Test because of South Africa's occasional struggles against the turning ball in India, has been omitted from the 12.

instead, india's attack will be led by seamers Srinath. Venkatesh Prasad and David Johnson, with the world-class threat of wrist-spinner Kumble, their probable trump card.

Captain Sachin Tendulkar and Saurav Ganguly provide the back-up seam while opening batsman Woorkeri Raman can be employed with his occasional slow left-arm.

Batsman V V S Laxman is expected to be named as 12th man at Kingsmead on Thurs-

India finished their prepa ration for the first Test in a three-match series against South Africa with a three-hour work-out at Kingsmead on Christmas Day

Captain Tendulkar, in confident mood after his side's re-



SACHIN TENDULKAR cent 2-1 series victory at home. said his team were looking to

keep the momentum going. We want to maintain the positive outlook which we had in India - where all three Tests fi....hed with results." Tendulkar said

'it will also be imperative here in South Africa that our

batsmen hit the loose ball whenever possible - and a positive outlook will help with

While India's Test record has been disappointing away from home over the past decade. Tendulkar feels his side can now turn the corner.

"We haven't performed as well abroad as at home over the past 10 years, but I believe that India now has the batting and the bowling to do well abroad."

South Africa, who also completed their last-minute preparation with three hours of nets and fielding practice on Christmas Day, will only name their Test side from a 13-man squad on Thursday morning. Pacemen Allan Donald and

Shaun Pollock are both available again their recovering from ankle injuries. SOUTH AFRICA (from): Gary

Kirsten, Andrew Hudson, Adam Bacher, Herschelle Gibbs. Daryll Cullinan, Hansie Cronje (captain), Jacques Kallis, Brian McMillan, Shaun Pollock, Lance Klusener, Dave Richardson, Allan Donald, Paul

Adams. INDIA: Vikram Rathore. Woorkeri Raman, Saurav Ganguly, Sachin Tendulkar (captain), Rahul Dravid, Mohammad Azharuddin. Nayan Mongia, Antl Kumble, Javagal Srinath, David Johnson, Venkatesh Prasad, V V S



A combined team of Police and BDR performing during the closing ceremony of the Sixth Bangladesh Games at the Dhaka Stadium yesterday .

### Cricketers on the road

Sports Reporter

Cricketers have finally decided to go for a greater movement to regain control of Dhaka Stadium for the ongoing cricket league, senior national cricketers informed this reporter.

According to their plan, all the cricketers called for the national camp and all other Dhaka-based cricketers will practise on the road in front of the Jatiya Press Club this morning at 8:30 am to protest the NSC decision of giving the Stadium to football during the middle of the cricketing season. After the protest practice, they will hold a press conference where senior cricketers will outline their future progra-

Meanwhile, the Cricket Committee of Dhaka Metropolis (CCDM) has decided to resume the Premier and First Division cricket leagues from December

The decision was taken last night in a CCDM meeting following an instruction of the BCB president Saber Hossain Chowdhury, MP, who is now in the USA. He is expected to be back by January 3.

Earlier, all the 22 premier and First Division clubs went on a boycott of the leagues in protest of the NSC decision of allotting Dhaka Stadium to football during the cricket sea-

The fixture of the remaining parts of the leagues will be finalised today.

UNB adds: The Premier cricket league resumes next Saturday at the BKSP ground and Dhanmondi Cricket Stadium without the participation of reigning champions Mohammedan SC and Greater Mymensingh Crickets Club

Mohammedan and GMCC have refused to take part the ongoing league. Their decision was announced during the meeting of the CCDM held at the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) office on Wednesday evening. All the 22 senior division clubs were represented at the meeting

Earlier, CCDM declared an indefinite boycott from December 21 as the NSC suspended the BCB's authority on the sports venues, particularly the Dhaka National Stadium. till January 11 for holding the Bangabandhu Invitational Football Tournament.

WC qualifiers

#### **USA** begin final round in March

NEW YORK, Dec 25: The US national soccer team will open their final World Cup qualifying on March 2 at Jamaica, reports AP.

The American team, which made the round of 16 in the 1994 World Cup staged in the United States, is grouped with Jamaica, Mexico, Canada, Costa Rica and El Salvador in the qualifying round featuring teams from North and Central America and the Caribbean. The top three teams advance

to the 1998 World Cup in France. Each team plays five opponents in a home-and-home series, with the qualifying round ending in November. No sites have been selected

for the five US games, although stadiums in California, New Jersey and Massachusetts are under consideration

# An apology to cricket

S Ashfaqul Haque & Al-Amin

If failure is the pillar of success, then we already have a pillar twice as high as the Himalayan mountain. But, ironically the desired successes are nowhere in sight. In the annals of our sports history, with the harsh reality of mountainous failures, one always fails to gather the necessary courage to recall the handful of delightful memories.

Just when the sports-crazy nation, after the Asian Cricket Council Trophy triumph in Malaysia, started being hopeful, albeit a bit ambitious about the countryis emergence in the elite echelon of international cricket, the bubbles of the adored aspirations are destined to be burst mischievously by the pugnacious sports bosses. Cricket which brought the only glory in sports the year that is whistling by, has been thrown into the hollows of darkness. We could not make it to the

1996 World Cup cricket finals

after failing to qualify in Kenya in 1994 as one the top three finishers in the International Cricket Council Trophy tournament of non-Test playing nations where Bangladesh was tipped as the favourites. That sorry episode had not only denied us international access but also detracted us from the race to join the ivy league of cricket-playing nations. But, winning the ACC Trophy in September this year has since been considered a big shot in the arm in our campaign for the 1999 World Cup to be held in England. And, if we want to see our cricketers in that exciting extravaganza, our cricketers must meet the qualifying criteria by securing their berth among the top-down three in the ICC Trophy, scheduled for next March in Kuala Lumpur.

So, it was expected that our cricketers will go through as good a preparation as possible before showing up in Malaysia But, at a time when our cricketers were having a smooth run of exercises, the whole scenario suddenly took an ominous turn following a circular from the National Sports Council (NSC)

The governing body of local sports in an astonishing move virtually stopped all cricketing activities, thereby ICC preparations, by announcing its arbitrary desire to allocate the Dhaka Stadium for the opening and closing ceremonies of the sixth Bangladesh Games as well as for the entire Bangabandhu Cup invitational football tournament to be held from Dec 31.

This one single injudicious decision by the NSC chairman Obaidul Quader Chowdhury, the state minister for youth and sports, not only put a spoke in the ongoing Premier cricket league but also sparked off countrywide resentment among sports-lovers. The bewildered Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) is now in a dilemma while our cricketers. out of action for the last couple of weeks, have been staging demonstrations protesting the suicidal NSC act. The wicket at the Dhaka Stadium, which was turned upside down on Dec 22. would not be again ready for cricket before February. And, the ICC trophy will be just one

month away With higher glory beckoning the country and our cricket going through a very crucial period, one wonders what made the sports supremo of the country, concentrate on the less significant by bypassing cricket - the sports that promises a better future.

We are not against football but the burning question bugging the mind of millions is why on earth Dhaka Stadium was chosen for the Bangladesh Games when there was a more acceptable venue in Mirpur National stadium? When anywhere in the world stadiums sans athletic turf are not selected for the opening and closing ceremony, our swanky sports bosses opt for the exceptional for reasons best known to them. It was reported that the authorities negated Mirpur Stadium as a possible venue terming it as troublesome and remote. But. during the 8-day long Bangladesh Games meet it was found that hardly a few

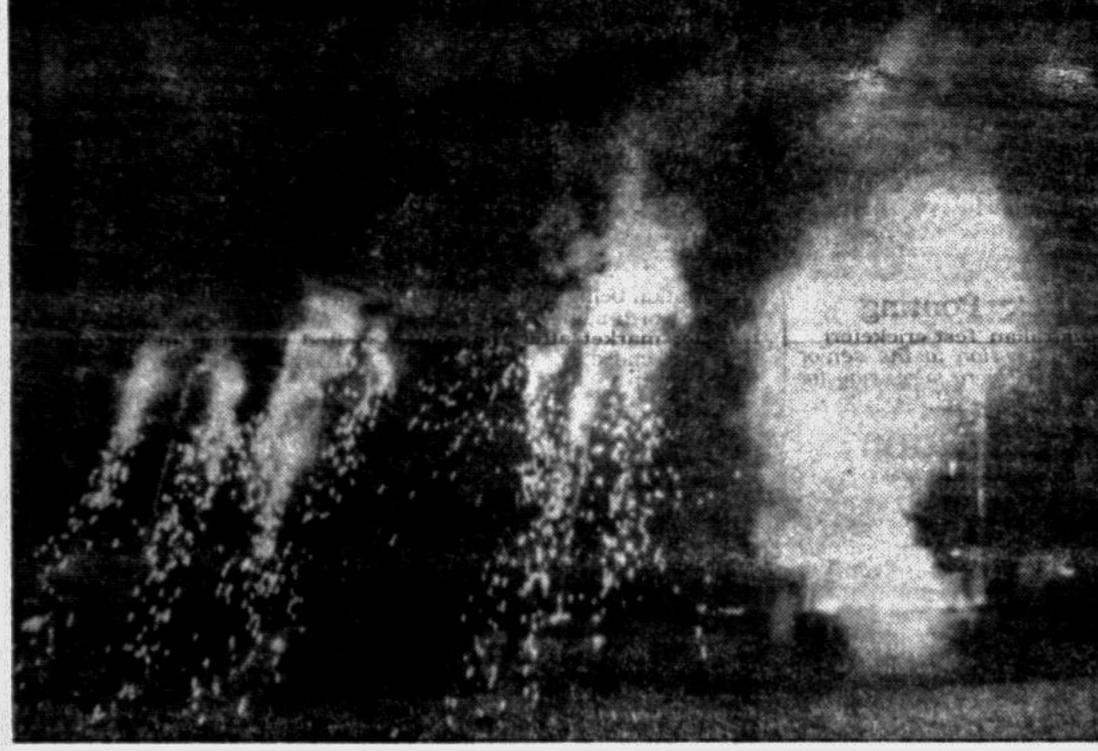
thousand spectators visited the entry-free arena. This is certainly a disappointing revelation at the end of the day for the NSC chairman whose unwise ploy to attract a full-house eventually backfired.

The other question is what would have been lost if the Bangobandhu invitational football tourney is staged at the Mirpur Stadium without hampering normal cricketing activities. The uncanny officials of the Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF), who without considering the countryis greater interest, staged a coup of sorts and in a haste embarked to organise an international club-level meet that eventually proved successful in driving away the cricketers from the paiying grounds, especially from the Dhaka Stadium. Moreover, it was known

long before that two influential

members of the ICC. South African Ali Bacher and Pakistani Majid Khan, will arrive Dhaka on Jan 9 to inspect the infrastructure and prospecta of our cricket following Bangladeshis plea for Test and one-day status But, if everything goes as the NSC chairman desires, the two, who are to table their reports on Bangladesh in the June meeting of the ICC, may miss our cricketers in action, but will certainly discover themselves amidst the football carnival at the Dhaka Stadium, internationally recognised as a Test venue Albeit, India and Pakistan cricket boards have jointly recommended our claim for the status, it is obvious that the two inspecting guests would not feel likewise after witness ing the hoax. There is still time for

amends. The sports minister does not belong to football only. For a man who went with sweets to ZIA to receive the treiumphant Bangladesh cricketers after the ACC tournament. the nation of alone. It is not too much to ask that he does what this cricket fanatics expect of him - give back the Dhaka Stadium to cricket.



A scene of the colourful fire works during the closing ceremony of the Sixth Bangladesh Games at the Dhaka Stadium yesterday. - Star photo

# Newcastle hoping against hope



LONDON, Dec 25 (AFP): World record striker Alan Shearer is relishing his first re-

turn to Ewood Park since his 15 million pound transfer to Newcastle from Blackburn where he hopes to relaunch the magpies faltering title challenge. England's top striker spent

four happy years with Blackburn, leading them to the 1995 Premiership title as his goalscoring exploits made him an idol with Rovers' fans. But the England skipper said

Friday he will not feel nostalgic about that chapter of his life when he steps out in the black and white stripes on Thursday. "In football, you can't look

back," Shearer explained. I had four tremendous years there. won a trophy, scored a lot of goals, and made a lot of friends. but I've got the move I always wanted so I'm looking to the future now. Newcastle will be searching

their first win in six games, a run which has left them seven points behind leaders Liver pool, although with a game in But Shearer believes Kevin

Keegan's men can take heart

from Monday's 1-1 home draw with Liverpool as they did to enter the new year on the back of a vital win. "We're expecting a really tough one against Blackburn. but our second-half performance against Liverpool has

given us something to build on."

Shearer said. "It was our best

performance for a while." Rovers' Scottish international defender Colin Hendry. who will be handed the task of marking Shearer, said that, while his former teammate would be given a warm reception on his return, after the kickoff "he will become just an-

other opposing player. Blackburn's caretaker boss Tony Parkes, who will hand over the reins to Swedish coach Sven Goran Eriksson at the end of the season, paid a warm tribute to the England skipper, saying that "Alan did a wonderful job during his time here and no one can over take that away Newcastle go into Thursday's

encounter without injured

wingers David Ginola and Keith

Gillespie, who have calf and groin strains. But their other former Blackburn man. David Batty, returns from suspension The Geordies will be seeking revenge for last season's 2-1 defeat in the fixture, a result

which virtually ended New-

castle's title dreams.

Leaders Liverpool meanwhile host Leicester looking to cement their three-point lead. Manager Roy Evans is expected to retain an unchanged

side following the away draw at Newcastle. With nine goals in their last two Anfield appearances. Liverpool are unlikely to take their

foot off the brake against a side whose primary aim this campaign is to retain their place among the elite. Martin O' Neill's injury-hit side will again be missing influential skipper Steve Walsh,

who underwent a hernia opera-

tion last week

Second-placed Arsenal travel to Hillsborough to face Sheffield Wednesday with star striker lan Wright the focus of attention after his sending off in last week's defeat at Nottingham Forest.

The Gunners' veteran hotshot, already facing a threematch ban for his red card at the city ground - which could yet be overturned on video evidence - should be on his best behaviour knowing that a booking could land him with a five-match ban going into the new year Arsenal's worries do not end

there as French under-21 midfielder Patrick Vieira still has to complete a two-match ban and right back Lee Dixon is set to miss Thursday's clash with Ankle trouble. On a brighter note, skipper Tony Adams returns after a

one-match ban. In-form Aston Villa face Chelsea at Villa Park seeding to record their sixth straight win following Sunday's 5-0 thrash-ing of Wimbledon.

Manager Brian Little will

almost certainly keep faith with the same line-up, with Serb striker Savo Milosevic who had been set to quit Villa for Italy - again set to lead the line following Sunday's twogoal show

Scott Minto is set to return to the Chelsea defence in place of youngster Neil Clement. while French stopper Frank Leboeuf is back after suspension, but captain Dennis Wise is still banned.

Champions Manchester United, who travel to Nottingham Forest aiming to relaunch their bid for a fourth title in five years, could welcome back seven million-pound man Andy Cole after two months out with injury

Cole, who has never reproduced the form he once showed for Newcastle since moving to Old Trafford two years ago, is poised to take his place on the bench after coming through a reserve game this week against Derby reserves in which he hit the opening goal in a 2-2 draw.

"It was a good game for him and I was able to monitor how he was done said United boss Alex Ferguson. "I don't see any



ALAN SHEARER

point in waiting until January 8 for the next reserve game, so he will probably be a substitute soon." That call should come Thursday. Cole was first struck down

with pneumonia during the

summer then broke both shins

in a reserve game at Anfield in October: Elsewhere. Everton striker Nick Barmby returns to Middlesbrough ready to plunge his struggling former club deeper into the relegation mire.

Boro have not won in their past 12 outings and boss Bryan Robson even reportedly toying with the idea of throwing himself back into the fray given his side's massive injury problems. Brazilian midfield maestro

Juniho, Steve Vickers and Curtis Fleming are in with a chance of playing but Nigel Pearson. Phil Stamp and Alan Moore are ruled out Robson has also had to contend with yet more controversy

regarding expensive foreign

imports Emerson and Fabrizio

Ravanelli, who earlier this week slammed Premiership clubs for "inadequate" training schedules In addition, the club faces a Premier league enquiry to call of its trip earlier this month to

Blackburn because of injuries and illness. A Premier league commission will debate the affair in the

new year and could dock the teesiders the three points. - Barmby, who ironically scored in Boro's last win, at Everton, in September before

moving to Goodison Park, is

bang on form as Everton creep

up the table. He will be keen to show Robson what he has been missing on Thursday. Everton boss Joe Royle is expecting to field a makeshift defence with David Unsworth starting a two-match ban and Craig Short and Andy Hinch-

cliffe hit by injuries. Short could be out for a month with ankle ligament damage while Hinchcliffe has a knee injury. Marc Hottiger and untried youngsters Graham

Allen and Richard Dunn stand by.