

# Tennis Queen

creating a world record if she played a few more years. "I did not really think too much on breaking a world record," says Linu. "I was just playing. I am very thankful to Mr. Helal who helped me send all my documents and data to the authority of the Guinness Book of World Records. I was the only table tennis player in the world to win 16 consecutive national championships. That helped me to create history. They declared my name in 2002." Linu stood 5th in 1980's Asian Table Tennis Championship which took place in Japan.

In the 1982 Pentagula championship she stood runner up in the mixed doubles. In the 1997 Independent Cup she stood champion in three categories. She gives maximum credit to her family members who were key figures behind her success. She is grateful to Helaluddin as well.

While Linu is quite happy that she has made her country proud she is still a little disgruntled by the way she has been treated by Bangladesh Biman, her official sponsor, for which she played 18 years, winning 14 championships. "Biman has given me nothing. No job, no salary, only pocket money. The government did the same. Today cricket is getting maximum priority. They are getting big sponsors, jobs, all kinds of opportunities. If one-third of this money and opportunities are given for table tennis, players will be able to give their best. The government should back them up providing sufficient opportunity like proper physical training, good food, money, jobs, etc." She added, "I know of such table tennis players who have Masters degrees but no job. If the government gives them financial assurance they will be able to push themselves professionally."

"In our time the playing environment was very good. There was a feeling of comradeship among the boys and girls. We had both opportunities and the interest to practice and we were very helpful towards each other." She added further, "If a girl practices with a boy then she can do better and her performance gets more polished. Boys of my time were very helpful. Nowadays, this environment has changed. Today's players wear modern dresses but do not have a modern mentality. Today a



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male player does not want to practice with a female player."

Linu believes that if Biman and Ansar sponsor table tennis players, they will do better. Once again the government has to help train the players. Linu says, "Five minutes of warm up is not enough. One must have proper physical fitness. Because only a physically fit player can be a good player. Players must be serious, sincere and dedicated to their profession. To some extent players themselves are responsible for their failure."

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Always a bit of a tomboy, Linu has devoted herself to sports and still has not found Mr. Right. But then Linu's first love has always been undeniably table tennis. ■