



LIFTING SILVER: Akramul Huq of Bangladesh completes a clean lift on way to winning the silver in the 56kg weight category on the first day of SA Games' weightlifting event at the National Sports Council Gymnasium yesterday.

Akram lifts silver

SPORTS REPORTER



Bangladesh's Akramul Huq narrowly missed the gold medal on the opening day of weightlifting in the 11th South Asian (SA) Games at the National Sports Council Gymnasium

yesterday.

Akram finished just behind Sri Lanka's Kamal Wattse, who won gold in the 56-kg category with a total lift of 230 kilograms, Akram managed to lift 228 kilograms to remain content with the silver.

Akram, who won a bronze medal in the Colombo SA Games in 2006 with a lift of 218kgs, made a promising start by snatching 102 kgs in his second attempt, but failed to succeed in the third with a weight of 103 kgs in snatch.

Akram lifted seven kilograms more than gold medalist Kamal in snatch, but the Bangladeshi weightlifter fell short by nine kilograms in the clean with Kamal clearing 135 kgs in his third attempt in the clean and jerk after his first and second attempts read 123 kgs and 131 kgs.

In clean and jerk, Akram started with 123

kgs and then succeeded with 126 kgs in his second attempt, but he failed to clear 128kgs in his third attempt.

"I feel sad because I was confident of winning the gold medal," was the first reaction from Akram, who, however, was happy with silver medal.

"I can't think that I missed the gold medal because of not lifting only two kilograms," said the weightlifter adding that he lost his balance a bit in the final attempt to lifting 103 kgs in the clean and jerk.

He however promised to do better in the next SA Games and upcoming Commonwealth Games.

"We have the ability to do well in the Commonwealth Games, but the authority will have to continue the training programme," appealed the weightlifter from Meherpur.

Pakistani Abdullah Ghafoor bagged the bronze lifting a total weight of 222 kgs.

Meanwhile, favourite Indian weightlifter S Srinuvas was disqualified from the 56-kg category after he saw his three attempts of lifting 103 kgs in snatch go in vain.

In the day's other two events in weightlifting, Indian Sarang Rustam won the

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Women keep hopes alive

SPORTS REPORTER



Bangladesh women's football team kept their hopes of playing in the final of the 11th South Asian Games football event alive with a 2-0 defeat over Sri Lanka in their second match at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

Smarting from a 1-0 defeat against Nepal in their first match, Bangladesh needed nothing but a win to stay in the race and Aungmying Marma put the hosts ahead as early as the seventh minute as she lobbed the ball over the advancing Sri Lanka goalkeeper from outside the box.

After resumption, the hosts continued their domination and doubled the lead one minute from time as Suinu Pru Marma found the back of the Sri Lanka net with an angular shot to seal the fate of the game.

Favourites India recorded their second successive victory with a comprehensive 6-0 win over rivals Pakistan, thanks to a hat-trick from Oinam Bembem Devi.

Sasmita Malik opened the floodgates striking in the seventh minute before Oinam struck the event's second hat-trick scoring in the 10th, 11th and 17th minutes. Sasmita struck her second goal in the 28th minute as India went for the breather with a comfortable 5-0 lead.

India, who handed an 8-1 defeat to Sri Lanka in the opener, managed a single goal in the second half through Laishram Noabi Chanu who scored the team's sixth in the stoppage time. Bangladesh will take on Pakistan tomorrow.

Bangladesh eye last four berth today

SPORTS REPORTER



Fresh from their 3-0 win over Nepal, Bangladesh are looking forward to sealing their semi-finals berth of 11th South Asian (SA) Games football event when the hosts take on Bhutan in their second group match at the Bangabandhu National Stadium today.

The game will kick off at 6:15pm following the match between Maldives and Nepal from 3:30pm at the same venue.

The hosts' 3-0 winning start on Saturday is being considered their best in 21 years for Bangladesh, who had been struggling to find a winning start after the fourth SA Games in Islamabad in 1989.

But although the hosts see the triumph against Nepal as a moral-booster, they are eagerly waiting to putting up even better performance against Bhutan, who never beat Bangladesh in the Games' history. Bangladesh beat Bhutan twice -- in the first and third editions of the Games in 1984 and 1987 respectively.

"Actually we could not perform according to our plan against Nepal and yet we won convincingly. Now we are all waiting to put up another good show against the Bhutanese," said captain Aminul Haq at Hotel Sheraton yesterday.

Aminul also said that the morale of the

players was high after the Nepal triumph and they were thinking of going match by match.

The hosts had a few lapses in the match against Nepal and the problem was nowhere but in backline, which found debutants Mintu Sheikh and Rezaul Karim Reza a bit shaky, but veteran defender Wali Faisal believed Mintu and Reza would play better against Bhutan.

"May be they were a bit shaky because it was their first international match and at times they left the defence open because they were not aware of their positions," said Wali. "But, they are good defenders and I think they will be able to stand tall against Bhutan."

Wali also was not seen overlapping the right flank to release any cross for the forwards and the defender said that he did not dare to go up front exposing the backline as Mintu and Reza had no experience of playing international match.

He, however, observed that the boys chased the opponents from the beginning to the end and it resulted in leaving them tired to allow the opponents take control of the match for some time in the second half.

Right-back Nasir, however, was seen moving up through the right flank to play his natural game and the defender also believed they would be able to cross the second hurdle to secure a semifinals place with a match in hand.

Bangladesh's Serbian coach Zoran Djordjevic gave the boys a rest in the morning

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Bangladesh's Aungmying Marma (C) is all smiles after scoring the opening goal against Sri Lanka in the 11th SA Games. The Bangladesh women's football team won the match 2-0 at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

Fabulous Federer



AP, Melbourne

Roger Federer dismantled Andy Murray in the Australian Open final Sunday to extend his own record to 16 Grand Slam titles and prolong the British drought.

Federer collected his fourth Australian Open title with a 6-3, 6-4, 7-6 (11) win at Rod Laver Arena that, apart from the tiebreaker, lacked the drama and raw emotion of his five-set loss here last year to then No. 1-ranked Rafael Nadal.

Last year, Federer sobbed when Rod Laver presented the winners' trophy to Nadal, having missed a chance to equal Pete Sampras' record 14 career majors.

This time, Murray was on the verge of tears, drawing deep breaths as he apologized for failing to end a 74-year-old drought for British men at the Grand Slam tournaments.

"Firstly, congratulations Roger, his achievements in tennis are incredible, to keep doing it year after year are pretty incredible," the 22-year-old Scot said. "He was a lot better than me tonight."

"Hopefully, one time I can come back and win here," he added, his voice breaking. "I got great support back home the last couple of weeks. Sorry I couldn't do it for you tonight but..."

Murray could barely finish his thank you, explaining: "I can cry like Roger; it's just a shame I can't play like him."

Federer, who had to be consoled by Nadal last year, offered Murray some reassurance.

not to win a Grand Slam, so don't worry about it."

Federer dropped serve only twice in the match and hit 46 winners. He said he felt as good as ever.

"I'm over the moon winning this again. I think I played some of my best tennis in my life these last two weeks," he said.

Federer saved five set points and wasted two match points in the tiebreaker with some uncharacteristic shot selection before clinching it when Murray netted a backhand after 2 hours, 41 minutes.

Murray was desperate to become the first British man

since Fred Perry in 1936 to win one of the four tennis majors, but seldom had the answers to Federer's unrivaled finals experience.

He had set a record for British men just by reaching two major finals in the Open era.

Federer was playing in his 22nd Grand Slam final and 18th of the last 19.

He also beat Murray in straight sets in the 2008 U.S. Open final, the only previous meeting between the pair at a Grand Slam.

Murray still holds a 6-5 advantage over Federer in

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Swiss superstar Roger Federer celebrates after winning the singles final against British Andy Murray at the Australian Open in Melbourne yesterday. Federer won 6-3, 6-4, 7-6.

PHOTO: AFP

MEDALS TABLE				
Country	Gold	Silver	Bronze	Total
India	5	0	1	6
Sri Lanka	2	2	1	5
Pakistan	1	5	1	7
Bangladesh	0	1	4	5
Afghanistan	0	0	1	1
Nepal	0	0	1	1

Frustrating start for judokas

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh made a frustrating start in judo of the 11th South Asian Games when their two favourite judokas finished third in their respective categories at the Bangladesh Krira Shikha Protisthan yesterday.

Prior to the start of the regional extravaganza, judo organisers had picked Habibur Rahman and Sushil Chandra Mohonto as their two best chances to win gold in their respective events, but both of them had to be content with bronze medals in their respective 73kg and 81kg categories.

Gold medals in the two categories went to India and Pakistan. India's Balvinder Singh beat Pakistan's Karamat Butt in the 73kg category in the final while Pakistan's Tanveer Ahmed defeated Sri Lankan Sujith Kumara Hapuarachchi to win gold in the 81kg category.

India also bagged gold in the 90kg category with Vikram Solanki beating Sri Lanka's Dewalge Krishan Priyadarshana. Judo Tariqul Islam of Bangladesh bagged bronze medal jointly with Afghanistan's Mohammad Tawfiq.

Afghanistan in semis

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Chittagong



Afghanistan became the first team to qualify for the semifinals of football in the 11th South Asian Games as they handed a 2-1 defeat to Pakistan in their Group B match at the MA Aziz Stadium in Chittagong yesterday.

Belal Arezou scored both goals for Afghanistan while Pakistan captain Arif Mehmood scored the only goal for his side.

Two wins in two matches confirmed Afghanistan's place in the last four with one match remaining. Sri Lanka are the frontrunners to join Afghanistan after they played out a goalless draw with India in the first match of the day at the same venue. Sri Lanka had won their opening match against Pakistan while India lost their first match at the hands of Afghanistan on Friday.

In the Afghanistan versus Pakistan match, Belal scored the opening goal in the 16th minute before Arif equalised in the 67th minute.

Belal scored the deciding goal for the Afghans seven minutes from time to book their place in the semifinals. Seeing an advancing keeper, Belal lobbed the ball over from left into the Pakistan net.

In the earlier match of the day, India failed to break the Sri Lankan defence despite going all out for a win. After a listless performance in the first half, India stepped up the charge to find an elusive goal in the second but failed to find the

back of the net.

The Lankans played defensive football for most of the match and hardly threatened the opposition goal.

In the 58th minute, India captain Jeje Lalpekhlua received a flying pass from Jewel Raja Sheikh and found Sri Lanka custodian Viraj alone inside the penalty area, but his shot went sailing over the post.

Then with 17 minutes remaining of regular time, Lalrindika Ratle shot one from outside the penalty area directly at the keeper who parried it which fell kindly for Milan Singha, but Milan's shot failed to find the target.

Two minutes later, Sri Lanka found an opening when WHC Gunaratne floated an excellent corner for captain Ruwanthilke whose header flew over the bar. In the last phase of the game, the Lankans sat back instead of looking to attack.

Few referring controversies created resentment among the players during the match which was reflected in the post match press briefing too.

TEAMS
SRI LANKA: Riyal Subeb, Sameera Perera, Sachith Aloka De Silva, T Rizi Tuwan, MS Kaiz, Cpprd Dalpethda, WRD Ruwanthilke, I Mohammad, A Viraj, Rnamab Warakagwala, WHC Gunaratne.

INDIA: Gurpreet Singh, Vishal Kumar, Inderpreet Singh, Raju Eknath, Lalrozama Fanai, Jewel Raja, Subodh Kumar, Milan Singh, Lalrindika Ratle, Jeje Lalpekhlua and Malsawn Fela.

Nepal humbled again

SPORTS REPORTER



Defending champions Pakistan got off to a flying start in the men's hockey event of the 11th South Asian Games with an awesome 19-0 win over minnows Nepal in their first match at Maulana Bhasani National Hockey Stadium yesterday.

Abdul Qayyum scored highest six goals followed by Wasif Siddique, who found the back of the net five times. Apart from the duo, captain Sabtain Reza and Zeeshan Ali struck two goals each while Mohsin Bilal, Zubair Ahmed,

Abdul Khaleq and Naghman Ahmed netted one goal each against the Nepalese, who were humiliated by India 21-0 just the day before. Yesterday's scorelines meant that the Himalayan kingdom conceded 40 goals in two days.

In the day's second match, India recorded their second successive victory with a 7-1 win over Sri Lanka after leading the first half 3-1.

Bikash and Raganath struck two goals each while Dharmav, Ajitesh and Promod netted one goal apiece. Abeyaratne scored the lone goal for Sri Lanka, who also lost their first match to hosts Bangladesh 3-1.

India want to host next SA Games

SPORTS REPORTER

India have expressed their willingness to host the 12th South Asian Games sometime before 2014 during an Executive Committee Meeting of South Asia Olympic Council (SAOC) yesterday.

The exact place and timing of the games will be decided in the 42nd Executive Committee Meeting of South Asia Olympic Council (SAOC).

The 41st meeting yesterday was presided over by the president of SAOC and Bangladesh Olympic Association (BOA) General Md Abdul Mubeen.

Delegations from all the participating countries took part in the meeting and they expressed their satisfaction over the gala opening ceremony. Some observations and suggestions also came up

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BTV	
SOUTH ASIAN GAMES MEN'S FOOTBALL	
Maldives v Nepal	Live from 3:30pm
Bangladesh v Bhutan	Live from 6:20pm
ATN Bangla	
SOUTH ASIAN GAMES CRICKET	
Sri Lanka v Nepal	Live from 1:00pm
ESPN	
Sportscentre India	
Sports News	Live at 8:30pm
English Premier League	
Sunderland v Stoke City	Live from 2:00am (Tuesday)