



The golden boys of Bangladesh (L-R) Abdulla-Hel-Baki, Asif Hossain Khan and Shovon Chowdhury show their medals after the men's 10m air rifle shooting events at the National Shooting Range in Gulshan yesterday.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

## Asif's golden return

SPORTS REPORTER



Asif Hossain Khan made a triumphant return to competitive shooting when he led Bangladesh from the front to win the men's 10m air rifle team event gold of the 11th South Asian Games at the National Shooting Range in Gulshan yesterday.

And it could have been a delightful double for the ace shooter hot on the heels of Sharmin Akhter Ratna's poem of a success in the women's 10m air rifle on Tuesday had he not lost his concentration completely while firing his penultimate shot.

Asif's penultimate shot in the shoot-off fetched him a career low 6.8 points that also cost him and the country a gold in the individual event. As a result, he had to be content with the silver, but his spectacular return after a career-threatening brutal beating by police in 2006 at this very place reminded everybody that class is permanent.

After the heroics of the woman shooters the previous day, when Bangladesh won both the

team event and individual gold, the spotlight was on the celebrated shooter, Asif, and he delighted everybody on way to winning the team event gold in company with two young prospects -- Abdulla-Hel-Baki and Shovon Chowdhury.

However one dramatic fall out in the ninth shot of the exciting shoot-off saw India's Imran Hasan Khan turned the table on him to clinch the individual gold. Despite the late slip Asif was understandably happy because it gave him a new lease of life after that shameful incident that almost threw the Commonwealth Games gold medalist into oblivion.

"At first my apologies to my countrymen because I deprived them from a sure gold. For a fraction of a second I lost my concentration and it cost me dearly. But I am still happy with today's outcome because it's like I make a new start in my career," said a delighted Asif, who had been struggling to regain his form over the last two years. Asif even had to fight hard in trials to get the ticket as the last shooter to participate in the biggest regional sporting extravaganza.

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## Hosts toy with Nepal

### Have to beat India to play final

SPORTS REPORTER



Bangladesh blew away an awful Nepal 24-0 in hockey of the 11th South Africa (SA) Games at the Maulana Bhasani National Hockey Stadium yesterday to record their highest margin of victory in international hockey and kept alive their hopes of playing in the final.

In the other match of the day, also at the same venue, India thrashed perennial rivals Pakistan 5-1 to move one step closer to the final.

Bangladesh's previous biggest victory was against the same team at the Madras SAFF Games in 1995 when they had won 12-1. This is also the highest scoring match of this Games so far.

Bangladesh started the game in flying colours, getting on the scoresheet as early as the fifth minute thanks to defender Mamunur Rahman Chayan through a penalty corner. Chayan got eight more goals during the game, all coming from penalty corners.

Bangladesh, who had failed to convert any of the seven penalty corners they won against

Pakistan, converted as many as ten in this game. Only one came from penalty stroke while the other thirteen came from open play.

Apart from Chayan's nine, Rasel Mahmud Jimmy bagged six, Sazzad John three, Zahidul Islam Rajon and Kamruzzaman Rana two each while Sheikh Mohammad Nannu and Pushkor Khisha Mimu got one each to their names.

It was a match more for the statisticians than reporters as the hosts continuously pounded the opposition defence with myriad attacks and were getting goals every other minute. Bangladesh led the first half 10-0 and anyone who would have thought they were going to sit back a bit, were proved very wrong as the hosts stepped up the charge and scored four more than they did in the first half.

However, Bangladesh will have to beat India in their last game to qualify for the gold deciding match. Coach Gerhard Peter Rach said he was happy with the performance even though he had asked his players to score one more than they did before the match.

"I am not only hopeful, but almost certain

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## Bronze in men's kabaddi

### Women play final against India today

SPORTS REPORTER



Bangladesh's hopes of playing in the final of men's kabaddi in the 11th South Asian Games were dashed as they suffered a massive 34-11 defeat to holders India in their last group match at the Outer Stadium Kabaddi Court yesterday.

The win against the hosts meant India qualify for the final as the group leaders and play against Pakistan, who also confirmed their final's berth with an easy 44-16 victory over Nepal in the day's second match.

After losing to Pakistan on Tuesday, Bangladesh needed nothing but a win against so far undefeated India to qualify for the final but they never looked to have that urge during the game. India took control of the match from the beginning and earned two creditable lonas in the first half to take the game away from the hosts with a 28-8 lead before the breather.

It seemed that Bangladesh had already conceded defeat even before facing India, who earned some valuable points in the first five minutes. India were reduced to four men inside the first two minutes of the second half, but Bangladesh failed to capitalise on that opportunity as India successfully recovered to blitz

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## Zahid stunner sinks Maldives

SPORTS REPORTER



A sublime solo effort from midfielder Zahid Hossain gave Bangladesh a 1-0 victory over Maldives and helped them emerge as group champions in the South Asian Games football at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday. With three victories in their three matches, Bangladesh will play their semifinal against group B runners up India on Friday. Maldives will face group B champions Afghanistan on the same day.

Both teams having already confirmed their semifinal place, gave their senior and more experienced players a welcome break and fielded a youthful and relatively inexperienced sides. Bangladesh rested seven players from their last game including skipper Aminul Haque and striking duo Enamul Haque and

Zahid Hassan Ameli. Maldives too rested some of their key players including Ashfaq Ali, Nasser Mukhtar and Umair Mohammad.

Zahid Hossain who missed the SAFF Championship in December due to injury was included in the side for the first time in the competition. The young winger grabbed the opportunity with both hands and produced a moment of brilliance to make the difference in the game. Just before the breather, receiving the ball from the midfield he danced past two defenders towards the box from the left, shimmied past another before releasing a cheeky chip over the keeper's head on the far post. It was a moment to behold as the crowd leapt to their feet in adulation of being witness to some magic.

An ecstatic Zahid Hossain was overwhelmed with emotions scoring a wonderful goal after a long layoff, "I am delighted with the part I played

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PHOTO: STAR

SIX-SHOOTER: Bangladesh star Rasel Mahmud Jimmy (C) dribbles his way through a host of Nepal players during their South Asian Games hockey match at the Maulana Bhasani National Stadium yesterday. Jimmy scored 6 goals as Bangladesh destroyed Nepal 24-0.

## Bangladesh h'ball group champs

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh emerged Group B champions in handball of the 11th South Asian Games with an emphatic 48-18 win over Afghanistan at the newly-built Handball Stadium adjacent to Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday to set up a semifinal clash against India.

Fresh from a 40-18 win over Nepal, Bangladesh put up another spirited show to send Afghanistan, who lost to Nepal 33-23 in their first game, packing. Afghanistan's second successive defeat meant Nepal qualified for the last four and play the semifinal against Pakistan, who emerged Group A champions with a hard-fought 33-31 win over India.

Both semifinals will be played today at the same venue.

Bangladesh, who are hoping to clinch the gold medal in a discipline included in the regional extravaganza for the first time, didn't give any room to the opposition and controlled the game from the word go. The hosts dominated the first half 26-5 and finished it with an impressive margin of 48-18. Waliur Rahman was the most successful scorer with eight goals, Khairuzzaman and Rasel Chakma scored seven goal each while Saiduzzaman found the back of Afghanistan net six times.

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PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

Teammates converge to congratulate Zahid Hossain (jersey number 19) after he scored a stunning goal in Bangladesh's 1-0 win against Maldives in the South Asian Games at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

MEDALS TABLE				
Country	G	S	B	Ttl
India	20	6	8	34
Pakistan	6	11	4	21
Bangladesh	4	5	12	21
Sri Lanka	3	11	6	20
Nepal	0	0	7	7
Afghanistan	0	0	5	5

## NZ torment Tigers

Cricket

SPORTS REPORTER

The Tigers made a terrible start in the New Zealand tour with a ten-wicket defeat in the Twenty20 match against the Black Caps at the Seddon Park in Hamilton yesterday.

It turned into a total mismatch after Shakib Al Hasan's men showed a pathetic batting display before they were bundled out for 78 runs with 2.3 overs to spare.

New Zealand took only 8.2 overs to overtake the total and confirmed the visitor's embarrassing defeat in the tour opener.

The visiting Bangladesh will now play their first one-day match of the three-match series on February 5 at the McLean Park in Napier.

CricInfo adds: A mediocre bowling performance was not helped by an error-ridden fielding effort by the tourists, who dropped straightforward chances from each of the New Zealand openers. The match was, however, already lost by the visiting batsmen, who crashed to an embarrassing 78 after putting themselves in on what seemed to be a good batting surface.

Daniel Vettori and spin partner Nathan McCullum completely foxed the Bangladesh middle order, snaring 5 wickets for 21 runs between them. Man-of-the-match Vettori picked 3 for 6 and was close to unplayable, utilising the bounce and turn of the Hamilton wicket to brilliant effect.

Daryl Tuffey ended with two wickets thanks to a tight line and length both in his opening spell and against the tail. Jacob Oram and James Franklin shared three wickets between them in the middle overs.

Tamim Iqbal started off well, smashing Tim Southee over midwicket and straight down the ground in the second over, but

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PHOTO: STAR

A Bangladesh player (C) goes airborne as he is about to shoot during their South Asian Games men's handball match against Afghanistan at the newly-built Handball Stadium yesterday.

## Badminton goes all Indian

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh bagged bronze medal in the mixed doubles event of badminton in the 11th South Asian Games despite having lost to their semifinal clash against the Indian counterparts at the newly-built Wooden Floor Stadium yesterday.

It, however, became an all-Indian final in the mixed doubles, the men's doubles and singles, women's doubles and singles. India had earlier bagged both gold medals in the men's and women's teams events.

Bangladesh pair Shapla Akter and Rasel Kabir suffered a 21-14 and 21-6 defeat to Indian Ashwini Ponnappa and Diyu Viliyaveetil, who will play the mixed doubles final against compatriots Aparna Balan and Sanave Thomas. The Aparna-Thomas pair beat Sri Lankan duo of Renu C Hettiarachching and Niluka Karunaratne 21-14 and 21-13.

In the women's doubles

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## Pakistan blow Nepal away

SPORTS REPORTER



Pakistan toyed with Nepal to secure a massive 91-run victory in the 11th South Asian Games cricket at the Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

A superb top-order batting enabled Pakistan to score 173 runs for two wickets in their share of 20 overs after deciding to bat. And Umar Amin and Ali Waqas gave them a flying start as they put the Nepal bowlers to the sword during their 75-run association in 7.5 overs.

Umar top scored with 53 off 32 balls that featured four boundaries and two sixes while Ali added 27 off 25 deliveries with the help of four fours.

Both the batsmen returned to pavilion in quick succession only to handover the batons to Ali Asad, who smashed three fours and a six in a 33-ball 45 and Adil Amin who remained not out on 35 off 20 balls that contained four boundaries.

In reply, Nepal batted without any purpose and finished their 20-over quota for 82 runs.

Nayyar Abbas and Kamran Hussain claimed two wickets each. In the today's match, Bangladesh play Maldives at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium at 9:30am while Sri Lanka meet Pakistan at the same venue at 1:30pm.

BRIEF SCORES

PAKISTAN: 173 for 2 in 20 overs (Umar 53, Waqas 27, Asad 45 not out, Adil 35 not out)  
NEPAL: 82 for 8 in 20 overs (Anil 15, Pradeep 21, Malla 21 not out; Abbas 2-15, Kamran 2-20)  
Result: Pakistan won by 91 runs.

What to WATCH

BTV

SOUTH ASIAN GAMES (WOMEN'S FOOTBALL)

Pakistan v Sri Lanka

Live from 9:00am

India v Nepal

Live from 5:00pm

ATN Bangla

SOUTH ASIAN GAMES (CRICKET)

Bangladesh v Maldives

Live from 9:30am

Sri Lanka v Pakistan

Live from 1:30pm

ESPN

Sportscentre India

Sports News

Live at 8:30pm