

## A near miss for Mahfuza

#### India set the pool afire

SPORTS REPORTER



India set the pool afire by winning four out of five gold medals decided on the opening day of the 11th South Asian Games swimming competition at the National Swimming Complex in Mirpur yesterday.

It was Sri Lanka's Minekasashmini Natasha Karunarathne, who denied the Indians of a sweeping success by winning the women's 50m breaststroke gold.

Hosts Bangladesh might not have achieved the highest honour, but their participants put up a valiant fight and claimed three silver and two bronze medals.

Among the local natants Mahfuza Khatun impressed everybody with a superb effort in the women's 50m breaststroke. And in an exciting duel with Karunarathne, Mahfuza fought neck and neck before falling inches short of the finish line.

Karunarathne finished with 35.15 seconds while Mahfuza, who won the bronze when the Games was last staged in Colombo in 2006, clocked 35:43 seconds.

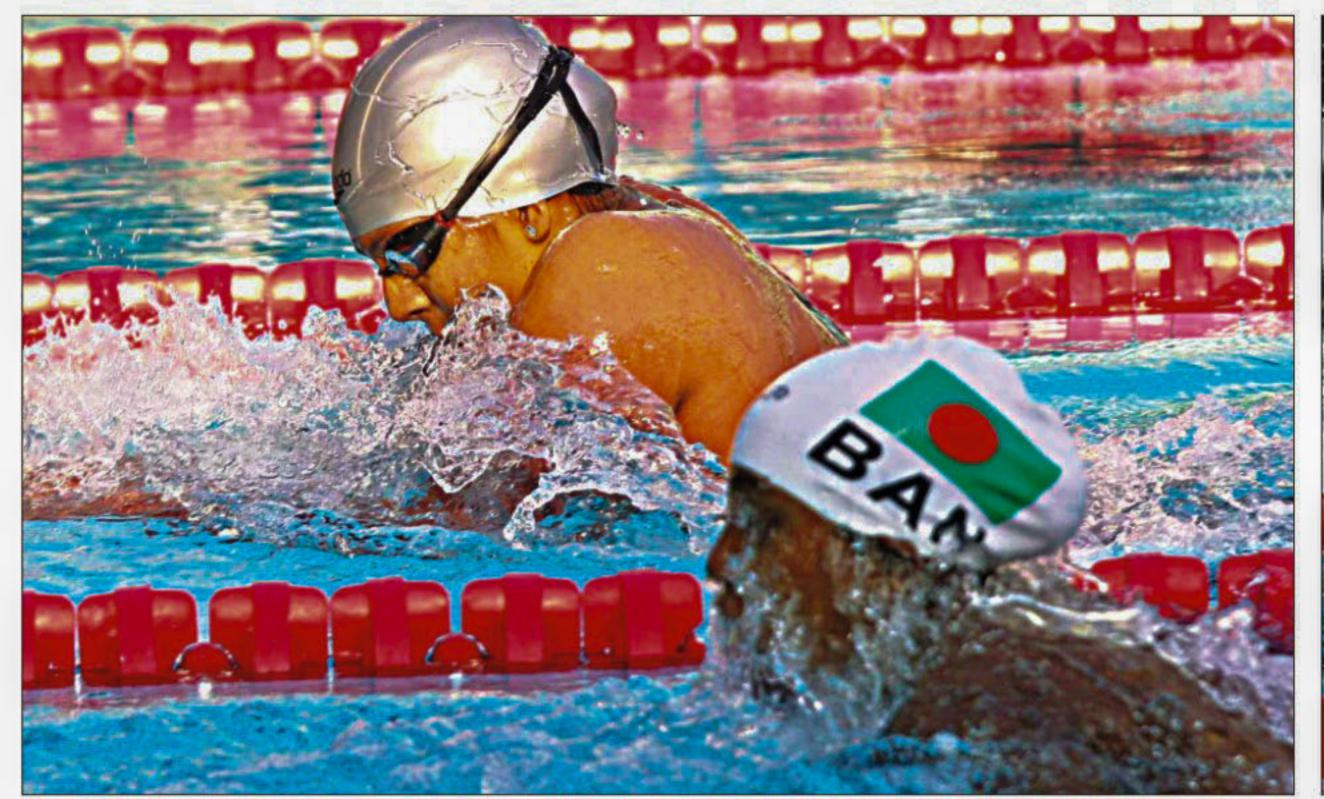
After the near miss Mahfuza wished that she could have been a couple of inches taller.

"You know it was the height that ultimately made the difference," said Mahfuza's coach Park Taegun. It was an effort that no one had expected from the 22-year-old from Jessore as everybody pinned hopes on a more illustrious Dolly Akhter in this event. Dolly secured the bronze with a timing of 36.59sec.

"I am really happy with our performance in the pool on the opening day," said the South Korean coach.

In the men's 100m freestyle, Mahfizur Rahman became the first Bangladeshi to clinch a silver medal in this event. Indian Aaron Agnel D'Souza made a new Games record clocking 52:48sec

SEE PAGE 18 COL 5





(L) Sri Lankan Minekasashmini Natasha Karunarathe edges ahead of Bangladesh's Mahfuza Khatun during the women's 50m breaststroke event while (R) Indian Sandeep Sejwal exults after winning the men's 200m breaststroke in record time during the 11th South Asian Games swimming competition at the National Swimming Complex in Mirpur yesterday.

## Cricketers in final Calls it a day

SPORTS REPORTER



Sabbir Rahman's whirlwind knock was followed by a disciplined bowling effort as Bangladesh stormed into the final of the 11th SA Games cricket competition eliminating Pakistan by 52 runs at the Sher-e-Bangla

National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday. The convincing victory in the do-or-die

game boosted the home team's net run-rate and took them to the top of the five-team table. The home team will now fancy their chances

of winning the gold in the event, introduced in the Games for the first time, when they face-off with Sri Lanka in tomorrow's final at the same venue at 5.30pm.

Sri Lanka earlier confirmed their final berth with an emphatic 147-run victory over Maldives in the first match yesterday. Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Pakistan all won three games each out of four but top two teams

POINTS TABLE					
Teams	Match	Won	Lost	Net Run-rate	Points
Bangladesh	4	3	1	3.34	6
Sri Lanka	4	3	1	2.77	6
Pakistan	4	3	1	1.49	6
Nepal	3	0	3	-4.16	0
Maldives	3	0	3	-7.61	0

have qualified for the gold medal deciding match with better run-rate.

Back to the match, a scintillating 65-run fifth wicket partnership between Nasir Hossain and Sabbir helped Bangladesh put up a challenging total of 156-6 after deciding to bat.

Sabbir came up with an explosive knock o unbeaten 22-ball 46 that contained two fours and four sixes. Sabbir was merciless against Pakistani spinner Adil Amin who was hammered for two sixes and as many fours in 14th

Nasir contributed 45 off 43 balls that featured four boundaries while captain Mohammad Mithun chipped in with run-aball 32 that included only two boundaries.

Nasir then shone with the leather also as the off-spinner caused the initial damage in the Pakistan innings by picking up two quick wickets. In reply to a target of 157, Pakistan lost wickets at regular intervals and were bundled out for 104 runs in 17.3 overs.

Only resistance came from number six batsman Nayyar Abbas who made 37 off 31 balls with five boundaries.

Shuvasish Roy, Nasir and Sanjamul Islam claimed two wickets each.

"We are really happy with the performance because we played according to our plan. We are confident of winning the final. We were a bit upset when we lost to Sri Lanka in the league **SEE PAGE 18 COL 5** 



Bangladesh players celebrate the fall of a Pakistan wicket during their South Asian Games T20 cricket match at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

### Pathetic Tigers

Cricket

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh continued with their poor showing in New Zealand as they suffered a massive 146-run defeat in the first one-day international of the three match series at the McLean Park in Napier yester-

An explosive 40-ball 83 by Jacob Oram, who hit eight fours and five sixes, powered the home side to set a daunting 337-run winning target for

the Tigers. In reply, Tamim Iqbal and Imrul Kayes made a bright start as the opening pair

added 71 runs in 10.4 overs but 3. the rot began once Andrew McKay deceived Imrul, who tried to pull but played too early only to fly to wicketkeeper Brendon McCullum, with a slower

bouncer. Then it was a procession of the batsmen as Mohammad Ashraful, Rokibul Hasan and captain Shakib Al Hasan gave away their wickets to see the Tigers ultimately being bundled out for 190. And the pathetic batting display on top of poor bowling and fielding made sure the visitors suffer another humiliating defeat on the trip after their ten-wicket loss in the tour-opening

Twenty20 match on February

CricInfo adds: New Zealand were pegged back to Africa. 232 for six after 43 overs on a placid pitch by a much improved Bangladesh attack, before the batting Powerplay transformed what might have been an average total into a daunting one. New Zealand pillaged 82 runs for the loss of a solitary wicket during those, elevating the total to a matchwinning 336 for 9.

Oram cashed in on unimpressive death bowling, clobbering the ball to all corners of the ground with nonchalance and a brutal style reminiscent of the early part of his career. Ably supported by Neil Broom,

choose these six players and to insert them into the group of 23. SEE PAGE 18 COL 6

CRICINFO, undated

The English umpire, Mark Benson, has confirmed his retirement from the ICC elite panel, and will see out his career on the county circuit, following his sudden withdrawal from the Adelaide Test between Australia and West Indies in December.

Benson hit the headlines on the opening day of the second Test on December 4, when he was reported to be upset over several incidents involving the Umpire Decision Review System, one of which led to his original decision against Shivnarine Chanderpaul being overturned.

He withdrew from the contest and flew back to England while the match was still taking place, although the ICC later claimed his withdrawal had been on the grounds of ill-health.

"I have enjoyed my time on the elite panel immensely," said Benson in an ICC statement on Friday. "The opportunity to be part of the global game has given me memories that I will always treasure. But travel and being away from home takes its toll on the family and some warning bells have started to ring regarding my health.

"So, having thought about it carefully, I feel now is the right time for me to step down and move to a more settled and familiar environment in England."

Although Benson's contract was not due to expire until the end of June 2010, he asked if he could be released from it three months early so he could take up a contract with the ECB and this request was granted.

"I'd like to thank the ICC and my umpiring colleagues on the elite panel for their support over the years," added Benson. "Umpiring at the top level has been a very rewarding experience for me and it is not an easy decision to walk away from it but I believe it is the right one as far as my health **SEE PAGE 18 COL 1** 

Lippi needs 6 more players

AFP, Rome

Italy coach Marcello Lippi said on Thursday that he has almost already decided upon his World Cup squad for South The reigning champions

will be in group F with Paraguay, New Zealand and Slovakia and Lippi says there are only a few spaces left up for grabs in his 23-man squad.

"The team is coming together nicely, 17 players are already certainties for the World Cup in South Africa," he said.

"I need just six more to complete the squad. "I have four months left to

"It's a tough choice given that at the moment at least 35 players are playing to a high

## Booters pass India test

#### Take on Afghanistan in final on Monday

SPORTS REPORTER



Bangladesh overcame a gritty challenge from perennial rivals India to record a 1-0 win

under lights at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday. They will take on Afghanistan, who beat Maldives also by a solitary goal scored by Belal Arezou in the

72nd minute in the second

in the men's football semifinals

of the 11th South Asian Games

semifinal, in the final at the same venue on Monday. A poacher's job from substitute Tawhidul Alam Sabuz in the 85-minute made the difference that paved the way for the football-lorn nation to reach the gold-medal match after a

long gap of eleven years. The first half was evenly played by the two sides with

SPORTS REPORTER

yesterday.

none taking any assertive control over the game. From the beginning, Bangladesh tried to penetrate the Indian defence using the flanks but failed to do so against a solid backline which was backed up by a tall keeper in Gurpreet Singh Sandhu. Moreover, the tall Indian defenders made Bangladesh's work harder to get any aerial advantage inside the box. The Indians on the other hand seemed content with their counterattacking game, and tried to catch the Bangladesh defence off guard with sudden counterattacks.

Chances were few and far between for either side.

In the ninth minute, Zahid Hasan Ameli unleashed a fierce left-footer from the left side of the box which was brilliantly parried away by keeper Sandhu for corner.

Five minutes later, one wide of the target from an

Fail to qualify for final

Bangladesh failed to qualify for

the final of hockey in the 11th

South Asian Games after they

were held to a 3-3 draw by favour-

ites India in their last group

match at the Maulana Bhasani Hockey Stadium

choice team to this Games and this draw cost

the hosts a place in the final, but still it was

Bangladesh's best performance against India

in any international. Their previous best per-

formance against these opponents was a 0-1

reverse in the 1986 Seoul Asiad. The two teams

last met in the Asia Cup in Malaysia last year

courtesy of Kamruzzaman Rana and Pushkor

Khisha Marma, to create hopes of a probable

place in the final. But in the second half India

took full advantage of some weary legs and

defensive tactics by the Bangladeshis to score

three goals in sixteen minutes and seemed

Bangladesh went 2-0 up in the first half,

which Bangladesh lost 11-0.

heading for a win.

them through to the final.

True that India did not send their first-

Hosts held by India

heads held high.

look defensive."

were in the final by now."

experience and exposure.

acute angle. Bangladesh's experienced custodian Aminul Haque gave a scary moment to his side on the half-hour mark as he failed to judge the bounce of the ball. The ball was heading for goal, but defender Rezaul Karim got back in time before an Indian striker to save the day for Bangladesh.

Just before the break Mamun let fly a fierce leftfooter more out of desperation, but it found the advertising board instead of the net. Then India's Lalrindika

Ralte took a swerving leftfooted 35-yard freekick from the right side that was heading for the goal and Aminul had to take a few steps backward before jumping to punch is away for a corner.

Bangladesh coach Zoran Djordjevic made a few changes in the second half. He took off Enamul and Shakil early to Mohammad Yousuf headed bring on fresh legs of Mithun

Finally it took a beautiful solo effort from

Bangladesh coach Gerhard Peter Rach said

Mostafa in the last minute of the match to

ensure that Bangladesh left the field with their

his side could have finished the game in the

second half had they not missed some good

chances, citing especially the one missed by

As to why Bangladesh went on the backfoot

in the second half despite dominating the first,

he said, "Well, this is part of hockey, you domi-

nate one half, and the other does the other half.

We did not play defensively in the second half,

but it was their relentless pressure that made us

they lost to a side who are way ahead in terms of

the first half and never looked in awe of their

illustrious opponents. It took the hosts 20

minutes to take the lead when Kamruzzaman

caught the attacking Indians off guard on a counter

**SEE PAGE 18 COL 6** 

The German coach however conceded that

Bangladesh looked a much the better side in

**SEE PAGE 18 COL 2** 

#### sports journalist, editor and cricket statistician, passed away late on February 4 after a prolonged illness at the age of Bhatti was widely

Gul Hameed Bhatti, a leading

Bhatti no

CRICINFO, undated

more

respected and acknowledged in Pakistan and outside as the leading cricket statistician in the country, though his writings and research extended into a number of other sports and fields. Alongside Abid Ali Kazi and the late Nauman Badar, Bhatti launched an association for cricket statisticians in Pakistan, which was responsible for a number of publications. He had built and was maintaining what is thought to be the most comprehensive database on domestic cricket and cricket-

Bhatti had a long, accomplished and fruitful career in sports journalism. It began with The Cricketer (Pakistan) in the early 70s, when the magazine had just come out. Bhatti was in charge initially of sending in reports from the Lahore club scene, but soon took over to oversee a number of editorial areas and eventually **SEE PAGE 18 COL 1** 

ers within Pakistan.

# **MEDALS TABLE**

Bangladesh Sri Lanka Kamruzzaman: "If we got a third goal there, we Afghanistan



#### **Neo Cricket &**

India v South Africa First Test, Day One Live from 10:00am

**ESPN English Premier League** Liverpool v Everton Live from 6:40pm Man United v Portsmouth Live from 8:55pm Tottenham v Aston Villa Live from 11:25pm

**STAR Sports English Premier League** Hull City v Man City Live from 8:55pm

SuperSport3

Primera Liga Barcelona v Getafe Live from 1:00am (Sunday) Real Madrid v Espanyol Live from 3:00am (Sunday) BTV

**SOUTH ASIAN GAMES** (WOMEN'S FOOTBALL) Pakistan v Nepal Live from 5:45pm Bangladesh v India Live from 8:30pm **ATN Bangla** 

**SOUTH ASIAN GAMES** (CRICKET) Maldives v Nepal Live from 10:00am

PHOTO: STAR GOLDEN DREAM SHATTERED: Dejected Bangladesh players sit on the ground at the end of their South Asian Games hockey match against India at the Maulana Bhasani Stadium yesterday. Bangladesh earned a creditable 3-3 draw against the mighty Indians but it was not enough to see

SuperSport2