

BOA's appeal

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh Olympic Association (BOA) made a passionate appeal to the opposition alliance on Sunday to keep the athletes, officials of the 8th Bangladesh Games and their transports free from hartal.

“Bangladesh Games have started on April 20. About eight thousand athletes and officials are taking part in the biggest sporting event. This sport festival will continue till April 28. We are appealing to the opposition parties to keep the Games free from hartal”, read a BOA press release.

The opposition 18-party alliance led by BNP called 36-hour hartal starting from Tuesday morning and it will definitely disrupt the Games now being held at different sporting facilities in the capital.

AFRICAN adventures

By SAKEB SUBHAN

SAMMY CAB

Taxi rides in Harare are always a pleasant experience. Zimbabweans are a very friendly people, with a walk down any street being filled with greetings and pleasantries, even among strangers. Taxi drivers are among the friendliest. The short ride from the Holiday Inn to the Harare Sports Club is usually filled with conversation about Bangladesh and the team's troubles in Zimbabwe, with the driver usually being modest about his country's surprising superiority over their more-fancied opponents.

But yesterday, when going to the team's practice session, there was something oddly familiar about the taxi driver. As others in his seat have done before, he wondered at why Bangladesh would struggle so against Zimbabwe. But the penny dropped as soon as he smiled -- he was the spitting, although shorter and more heavyset, image of the ever-smiling West Indian captain Darren Sammy. Matirangana guffawed when told of his doppelganger, reinforcing the similarity with the West Indian.

HATTRICK MAIDEN

The Harare Sports Club ground houses a quaint public house, by the name of Maiden Public House, that looks out onto the field of play. It's a sports lovers' haven as the TV screens usually carry live action of Indian Premier League cricket matches or English Premier League football, while just a glance away is some cricket action in the flesh, or on days when there are no matches, the pleasing, carpeted greenery of the cricket field.

But the food here steals the show, owing in no small part to the names given to the dishes. There is the Boundary Platter,

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PHOTO: STAR

Mahfuzur Rahman Sagar clenches his fist after winning the gold in his favourite 50m freestyle event at the National Swimming Complex in Mirpur yesterday.

8TH BANGLADESH GAMES 2013

GAMES CORNER

SPORTS REPORTER

TAEKWONDO

Six events in taekwondo were decided at the National Sports Complex Gymnasium yesterday where Bangladesh Army grabbed two gold medals while BJMC, BGB, Bangladesh Police and Bangladesh Ansar shared one gold each. Zahidul Islam of BJMC won the gold in the men's under-54 kg category, Tamjid Hossain of BGB won gold in the under-58 kg category while Korban Ali of Bangladesh Ansar won gold in the under-63 kg category.

Anwar Hossain of Bangladesh Army won gold in the under-68 kg category, Anwar's teammate Arman Hossain collected gold in the under-74 kg category while Mamunur Rashid of Bangladesh Police won gold in the under-80 kg category.

HANDBALL

Bangladesh Ansar & VDP won the gold in the women's handball event defeating BJMC by 31-23 points in a keenly contested final at the Captain Mansoor Ali Handball Stadium yesterday. The first half of the final was tied at 12-12. Nishi was the highest scorer for Ansar with 11 goals.

Earlier, Dhaka won the bronze medal defeating Dinajpur 20-10 in the third-pace deciding match.

TABLE TENNIS

Bangladesh Ansar and Chittagong Jila Krija Sangstha (CJKS) clinched gold in the team events of table tennis at the Syed Tajuddin Ahmed Indoor Stadium yesterday. CJKS defeated Bangladesh Ansar in 3-1 sets in the men's team event to clinch the gold medal. Biman Bangladesh and Bagerhat shared the bronze medal in this event. In the women's team event, Bangladesh Ansar defeated Dhaka in straight 3-0 sets to win the gold. Rangpur and Narail shared the bronze medal.

HOCKEY

Dhaka will take on Bangladesh Army while BKSP will play against Faridpur in the semifinals of the hockey at the Maulana Bhasani Hockey Stadium today. Army thrashed Jaipurhat 12-0, Dhaka drew against Bangladesh Navy 3-3, BKSP outplayed Satkhira 8-0 and Faridpur Brushed aside Rajshahi 7-1 in their respective group matches to book semifinal berth.

NAVY FORM STRONG CHESS TEAM

Bangladesh Navy formed a strong chess team roping in Grand Masters Enamul Hossain Rajib, Abdullah Al Rakib, Rifat Bin Sattar and FIDE Masters Taibur Rahman Sumon and Nazrana Khan Eva.

Mushfiqur Rahman Mohan, chief coordinator of Navy chess team along with the players met with Chief of Naval Staff Mohammad Farid on this occasion.

KABADDI

Munshiganj were the first team to qualify for the semifinals of women's kabaddi after they won both their matches yesterday. Apart from Munshiganj, Ansar, BJMC, Narail, Bagerhat, Jhenaidah and Rajshahi won one match each.

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Romana rules

SPORTS REPORTER

Romana Akter, a class 9 student of BKSP, hogged the limelight on the opening day of the 8th Bangladesh Games swimming competition after producing two national records at the National Swimming Complex in Mirpur yesterday.

But the girl from Kishorganj wants to pursue a career in other sectors instead of becoming a swimmer in a country where amateur sports like swimming and athletics offer little financial comfort.

Romana clocked 2:44.15 minutes to set new mark in 200m butterfly, erasing the previous record of 2:46.98 minutes clocked by Sonia Akter, who also saw her record 5:56.02 minutes in the 400m individual medley broken by Romana.

The BKSP natant timed 5:55.20 minutes to set new mark.

“I was confident to win gold medals in both events but never thought of setting national records,” said Romana, “but I always try to put on my best whenever I take to the pool.”

After seeing neighbouring brothers and sisters at the pool at Niklee under Kishorganj on her way to school, Romana was inspired to try it in her childhood. Her first big break came in the junior national meet in 2008 when she won two gold medals and was immediately picked by the BKSP scouts. In the last national championships, she won three gold medals including the events she yesterday set new records in.

However, while most female swimmers dream of obtaining a job in athlete's quota

in Bangladesh Ansar, Bangladesh Navy or BJMC through their performances on the pool, Romana wants to pursue her academic career beyond SSC or HSC.

“I want to study in the university and then go up gradually,” said Romana, who is the seventh of 10 siblings.

“However, I will continue to swim alongside my study as part of extra-curricular activities.”

Apart from Romana, other gold grabbers were the familiar faces in the swimming pool as Mahfuzur Rahman Sagar of Bangladesh Navy broke his 50m freestyle record for the fourth time after timing 24.41

MEDAL TABLE			
Teams	Gold	Silver	Bronze
Bangladesh Ansar	4	3	4
BJMC	4	5	-
Bangladesh Army	4	2	2
BKSP	3	-	2
Bangladesh Navy	3	6	2
Engineer RC	2	-	-
Rajshahi DSA	1	2	4
Boarder Guard	1	1	2
Chittagong DSA	1	-	3

seconds. His previous best was 24.44.

“I am the fastest swimmer in the country since 2007 when I broke Monirul's (Islam) 50m freestyle record,” said Sagar who broke his own record twice in 2008 and 2010.

“This is not the end. I believe I will be able to improve by mark next time,” said the Bangladesh Olympian.

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Effort, not expectation

Cricket

SAKEB SUBHAN from Harare

In sports, two sides compete and one will always be defeated, unless like in a Test match, the game finishes in a draw. On most occasions, therefore, it does not do to read too much into a loss. But Bangladesh's loss to Zimbabwe in Harare on Saturday, by 335 runs no less, is not one of those occasions.

Zimbabwe had lost five consecutive Test matches since beating Bangladesh on the Tigers' previous tour in 2011. Just before this tour, a weaker Bangladesh side than the current one had drawn their first Test against Sri Lanka, a momentous achievement as unlike the Tigers' previous draws against top full-strength teams, the match in Galle was not shortened by weather interruptions. In that Test, they occupied the crease for 196 overs and scored a whopping 638 in the first innings with Mushfiqur Rahim scoring the country's first double-century and Mohammad Ashraful announcing his return

with a sublime, chanceless 190. Yet against Zimbabwe, a team many rungs below Sri Lanka in quality, Bangladesh have suffered their second-heaviest defeat in terms of runs.

There are many questions that arise, especially in light of the following figures: Bangladesh scored a combined 281 for the loss of 20 wickets on a pitch where the corresponding statistics for Zimbabwe skipper Brendan Taylor was 273 for once out; the visitors scored 95 for one on the second evening before collapsing to 134 all out on the fourth morning; Bangladesh's batsmen - six of whom have Test centuries to their name -- played a total of 103.3 overs in both innings; of the 17 Zimbabwe wickets to fall, pacers Robiul Islam and Rubel Hossain took 12, but were not backed by a third seamer; and three catches were dropped in the Zimbabwe's first innings, including that of Taylor on 35 which eventually ended at 171.

Why were three seamers not picked? What is the reason behind the wild divergence of results between the second evening and the third morning? But chief among the ques-

tions must be how can a batting outfit that showed unwavering grit to bat out a total of 218 overs against Sri Lanka fold in 103.3 overs against Zimbabwe?

The lively nature of the pitch in Harare cannot be the all-encompassing answer. Instead, it is a damning indictment. On pretty placid conditions in Galle, Bangladesh's batsmen grafted like true Test players, but that aptitude was nowhere in evidence when most required -- on a grass-covered pitch that the Tigers would have been expected to have difficulties with. If somehow, in just over a month since Galle, they had forgotten how to play long innings on a difficult pitch, an object lesson was provided by Taylor, who after his hundred on the first day said that it was the most patient innings he had played.

But the nature of Bangladesh's dismissals in both innings leaves space for only one possible answer. Shakib Al Hasan, Nasir Hossain, Mahmudullah Riyad and Ashraful (in the first innings) all went out playing

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Tamjid Hossain (L) of Border Guard Bangladesh fights Habibur Rahman of Bangladesh Army in the under-58kg category of taekwondo at the NSC Gymnasium yesterday. Tamjid won the gold.

PHOTO: STAR

Digital disruption

SPORTS REPORTER

A day after the 8th Bangladesh games kicked off digitally at the Bangabandhu Stadium, a number of events taking place at different venues were disrupted due to technical glitch.

The electronic scoreboard at the National Swimming Complex in Mirpur, which was said to have been repaired on the eve of the games, malfunctioned during two of the eight events taking place yesterday. The organisers had to resort to hand timing to decide the outcome of those events.

There was a different sort of disruption at the sports facilities surrounding the Bangabandhu Stadium. Heavy loadshedding during the day hours saw the start of the table tennis events deferred by at least an hour while the taekwondo events at the Natinal Sports Council Gymnasium were halted a number of times for the same reason. The taekwondo players however carried on with the game, thanks to the IPS

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U-19s crash against SL counterparts

SPORTS REPORTER

The senior team's debacle in Zimbabwe seems to have taken a toll on the juniors, as Bangladesh U-19 crashed to a 62-run defeat, by virtue of Duckworth-Lewis, against their Sri Lankan counterparts in the first youth one day international at the Sylhet Stadium yesterday.

Batting first, the hosts were bundled out for a paltry 137. Keeper Abu Sayeem top-scored with a 66-ball 43. The Sri Lankan bowlers were on top of their game. Pacer Binura Fernando, with figures of 3 for 32 was the pick of the bowlers. Lakshan

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