



Bangladesh's Under 18 hockey team did the nation proud by winning the AHF Under 18 tournament for the third time on the trot. With the country's junior hockey players making the grade, one can hope for a brighter future with regards to this game.

## Maintaining as opposed to sustaining

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and SAKEB SUBHAN

Halfway through the Rio 2016 Olympic Games, the unlikeliest of things happened—Bangladesh was celebrating an Olympic gold. It was highly unlikely because in all their previous forays in the Games, Bangladeshi athletes had only ever qualified for the greatest sporting showcase with wildcard entries.

2016 was the first time that an athlete, golfer Siddikur Rahman, had qualified on merit. But he, along with the rest of the Bangladeshi contingent of

swimmers, shooters, archers and sprinters, had failed to get even close to a podium finish.

It is also around this time that it should be mentioned that the 'Bangladeshi' success story, while being celebrated in some quarters, also elicited sneers of derision from others, namely in the social media echo chamber. It was after all Russia who was credited with the gold won by Margarita Mamun, whose late father was a Bangladeshi-born engineer settled in Russia. Never mind that the gold winner herself was quoted by Reuters as saying that it was a gold for

two countries or that she had visited her father's native Kashipur village thrice in her 20 years; there was a ring of rationality in the social media ruckus about Bangladeshis claiming what really was a foreigner's achievement just because of an accident of birth.

One major cause for the discontent was the realisation that, with the existing facilities and infrastructure on offer here, home-grown success in rhythmic gymnastics would just not have been possible. It is the nature versus nurture debate, only here it is not so much a debate because in

sport, the environment in which athletes grow up and the opportunities they can avail make all the difference, because in global competition they will come up against opponents both talented and profoundly prepared.

Reports, although hard to verify because of the shoddy nature of recordkeeping in the less popular sports like gymnastics, emerged that on one of her visits Margarita—the daughter of a Russian gymnast mother—had wanted to compete for Bangladesh and even turned up for an age-

level trial. The story goes that she was not given due attention, or perhaps the family realised that this is not a country that will make full use of her talent or passion. Margarita's is a success story that throws into stark relief Bangladeshi sports' failure to plan and create sustainable success. Sustainable development is perhaps fast becoming one of those buzzwords that many use without fully grasping, but at its heart is a marriage of policy with grassroots intent.

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In the 50m pistol category at the South Asian Games, Shakil Ahmed brought home the gold medal for Bangladesh.



Mabiya Akter Simanta was in tears while singing the national anthem. It was sight to behold. The teenager from Madaripur had won gold in weightlifting during the 2016 South Asian Games and, understandably so, couldn't control her emotions. Her reaction left the entire nation in a trance.

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