

SPORT



Saiful Islam (L) and Sohagi Akter celebrate after winning 200m sprint gold medals on the first day of the 13th Summer Athletics Championships at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

Saiful, Sohagi spring surprises

SPORTS REPORTER

Teenage sprinter Saiful Islam Khan Sunny hogged the limelight on the first day of the NRB Commercial Bank 13th Summer Athletics Championships by dethroning Shariful Islam in men's 200m sprint at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

Saiful, participating in his second senior meet since winning a silver medal in the same event in the 2016 National Athletics Championships, clocked 21.66 seconds (hand-time) to beat Shariful by 0.14 seconds. The country's fastest man Mezbah Uddin Ahmed clocked 22.00 seconds to take third position.

With only one month's preparation under BKSP coach Abdullah Hel Kafi, Saiful, representing Bangladesh jail on a contract basis, stunned all to be crowned champion. However, his feat is no surprise as he had earlier set two national records in 100m (10.53 seconds) and 200m (21.60 seconds) in the Junior National Athletics Championships in 2015.

"I am really happy to win the first gold medal in my second meet at senior level because I am not playing for as long as Mezbah bhai. I came into athletics in 2012," said Saiful, who just passed his SSC exams from Bangladesh Krira Shikkha Prothasthan this year.

"I was doubtful about producing a good result because I started training late after finishing the exams but Kafi sir inspired me and I followed his instructions perfectly during the one-month training," said the lad from Brahmanbaria, who recently took part in the 2nd Asian Youth Athletics Championship in Thailand where he qualified for the 200m semifinals with a timing of 22.50 seconds (electronic board).

Saiful dreams of competing in the South Asian (SA) Games in 2019 and has urged the federation to arrange long-term training for the athletes under the guidance of a

foreign coach.

"As the SA Games is still one-and-a-half years away, the federation should start long-term training from now on with athletes who have good timing and possibility of winning medals. Though the local coaches are good, it would be better to appoint a foreign coach," opined Saiful.

Meanwhile, in women's 200m sprint, Sohagi Akter won her maiden gold with a timing of 25.10 seconds while Jakia Sultana and Ayesha Akter finished second and third by clocking 25.60 and 25.90 seconds respectively.

Sohagi, too, urged long-term training to break the SA Games medal-drought. She asked authorities to send athletes to international meets in a bid to improve their timing.

"If we can participate in international meets regularly and put up consistent performances, then it will be possible to win medal in SA Games. Besides, we also need long-term training as there is no alternative to that in order to get results," said Sohagi.

In the day's other events, Mohammad Al Amin (men's 1500m), Sumi Akter (women's 1500m), Irit Akter (women's 1000m), Shrabani Malik (women's shot put), Mohammad Nuruzzaman (marathon), M Sajib Hossain (men's high jump) and M Alamgir (men's 400m) won gold medals.

Meanwhile, Lily Akter, an athlete from Rajbari, fell sick after completing the women's 200m sprint heat in the morning. She was immediately rushed to Dhaka Medical College by deputy minister Arif Khan Joy's vehicle as there were no ambulances available at the stadium.

The organisers however claimed that the ambulance was kept outside the stadium and they did send Lily to the hospital on the minister's instruction. Lily was recovering at the Sultana Kamal Women's Sports Complex, it has been learnt.

BCB to rehire Ramanayake?

SPORTS REPORTER

Speculation was rife at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium yesterday that Champa Ramanayake would be hired by the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) as a bowling consultant for their players at all levels of cricket aside from the national team.

Ramanayake had served as the Tigers' bowling coach for six years between 2008 and 2010 so he will be familiar with the ins and outs of Bangladesh cricket. There are also plans for a camp to be arranged under the Sri Lankan's supervision, where he will train promising pace bowlers.

Bangladesh have already got a legendary bowling coach in the form of Courtney Walsh to lead the national side, but with a busy schedule coming up for the national team it will be difficult for Walsh to have an impact on the age-level and High Performance cricketers, which is one of the reasons that Sri Lanka may be brought in.

Ramanayake resigned his post as Sri Lanka's bowling coach after their series against Zimbabwe, citing personal reasons. He had held the post for two years in his second stint after coming in to replace Chaminda Vaas. Prior to Vaas, who will replace him again, he held the position for two years.

U-23s lose despite taking lead

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh U-23 team surrendered a first-half lead in a 1-3 defeat against Tajikistan in their second match of the AFC U-23 Championship Qualifiers at the Faisal Al-Husseini Stadium in West Bank, Palestine yesterday.

The second defeat in as many matches means Bangladesh were eliminated from the qualification race, with the mere formality of the third match against hosts Palestine to be carried out tomorrow.

Smarting from a morale shattering 7-0 defeat at the hands of Jordan in the opening match, the boys in red and green surprisingly stood tall against Tajikistan, who are 51 places ahead as far as FIFA rankings for senior teams are

concerned.

Compared to the match against Jordan, Bangladesh played better and kept control of the ball and fought equally in the first half.

But the scenario changed at the start of the second half with Bangladesh 1-0 up, and Tajikistan gradually established their control on the game, putting pressure on the attacking third and forcing Bangladesh to make erratic passes in the midfield. The pressure was too much for the Bangladesh defence, who failed to deal with the Tajikistan attacks.

Bangladesh grabbed the lead in the 33rd minute when striker Sohel Mia tapped in from close range after a Sohel Nara drive took a deflection off a Tajikistan defender and fell to the feet of Sohel Mia at near post.

After resumption, Tajikistan nudged the ante and levelled the margin in the

55th minute. Safarov Amiridzhon equalised with a nice move, capitalising on a back-pass from defender Nurul Naim Faisal and firing home after dancing past two defenders and goalkeeper Anisur Rahman.

The Bangladesh goalie then brought down Safarov inside the box to concede a penalty kick in the 66th minute. Babajanov Bozom then slammed home the rebound after his initial shot was blocked by Anisur.

Bangladesh again looked a bit organised to press the opposition for an equaliser but they could not create any scoring opportunity, rather they conceded the third goal four minutes from time when Abduqafarove Oibek darted inside the box from the right and put a square-pass to defender Zoir Juraboev, who fired home from close range.



Green University advanced to the quarterfinals of the Faraz Challenge Cup Inter-University Football Tournament with a convincing 6-1 win over City University at the Bishreshtha Shaheed Mostafa Kamal Stadium yesterday.

Booze cut for fans at Lord's

AFP, London

English cricket ground Lord's is clamping down on alcohol allowance for fans after a recent "incident" at the first Test between England and South Africa, the Marylebone Cricket Club announced.

Fans at the famous stadium have long been allowed to bring in as much of their own booze as they like, but new rules suggest that this will be a thing of the past.

Lord's members may only be allowed to take up to two pints of beer into the grounds if it is under six per cent alcohol, or a single 75cl bottle of wine if it is between six and 18 per cent - the same restrictions as Wimbledon.

Chandimal to miss first Test

AFP, Colombo



Rangana Herath will lead Sri Lanka in the first Test against India after Dinesh Chandimal was admitted to hospital Friday with pneumonia, chief selector Sanath Jayasuriya said.

"He (Chandimal) was down with flu, but today it got worse and he was taken to hospital," Jayasuriya told AFP. "He is down with pneumonia and will not be able to play the first Test starting on Wednesday."

Jayasuriya said Chandimal's health would be monitored before a call is taken on his availability for the second Test.

Chandimal was named as skipper of the Test squad last week after Angelo Mathews quit following a humiliating 3-2 defeat in the one-day international series against Zimbabwe.

Herath, 39, took 11 wickets in the one-off Test against Zimbabwe with his left-arm spin to jump to the second place in world rankings behind India's Ravindra Jadeja.

India and Sri Lanka will play three Tests, five one-day internationals and one T20 in their first series involving all three formats of the game in eight years.

India hails women cricketers

AFP, New Delhi



Where the men failed, India is hoping its female cricketers can blaze to glory when they face England in the World Cup final on Sunday.

Images of captain Mithali Raj and star batswoman Harmanpreet Kaur adorned front pages and dominated social media after India stunned defending champions Australia in Thursday's semifinal.

Kaur hit an unbeaten 171 to propel India into the final at Lord's, England's spiritual home.

The win comes as a welcome boost with India in need of cricket cheer after the men's team capitulated to Pakistan in the Champions Trophy final last month.

The performance came as no surprise to former players who believe Indian women's team is destined for the big time.

"Hats off to Harmanpreet. It's a great victory for the Indian women's cricket team and for women's cricket in India," former team captain Diana Eduljee told NDTV.

"I thank the girls for the opportunity they have given to all women cricketers and the future of women's cricket is now here to stay in India."

"I am sure this victory is going to be historic as we have already beaten New Zealand, Australia and England. I'd think the World Cup is already in India irrespective of whatever happens on Sunday," added Eduljee.

Kaur, who won the World Cup with the men's team, said he was "filled with pride" after seeing the women in action against the Aussies.

Cricketer icon Sachin Tendulkar tweeted: "Brilliant finish by the #WomenInBlue... Here we come Lord's!"

Kaur, who last year became the first Indian woman to play in the women's Big Bash League in Australia, grabbed the limelight with a 115-ball innings laced with 20 fours and 7 sixes.

Widely described as an "unforgettable knock" on the social media, Kaur's efforts took India to their second women's World Cup final after they were beaten by Australia at Centurion in 2005.

"This is a genuinely Kapil-Dev-at-Tunbridge-Wells kind of innings," leading Indian commentator Harsha Bhogle tweeted, comparing it to Dev's 175 against Zimbabwe in a 1983 World Cup match.

"Hope it inspires other young girls to follow."

ESPNcricinfo senior editor Sharada Ugra called the win a "turning point" in Indian women's cricket, but said the performance was not a surprise.

FARAZ CHALLENGE CUP

Last 8 lineup completed

SPORTS REPORTER

The quarterfinal lineup of the Walton Inter-University Football Tournament was completed yesterday with Independent University Bangladesh (IUB) and University of Liberal Arts Bangladesh (ULAB) booking their last-eight berths at the Bishreshtha Shaheed Mostafa Kamal Stadium yesterday.

IUB beat North South University 1-0 to emerge Group B champions and took ULAB to the quarterfinals as group runners-up.

The university handed a 6-1 defeat to City University. Gono University defeated Abanashullah University 2-0 while Prime Asia University got a walkover against IUBAT.

The four quarterfinals will be held tomorrow at the same venue. The champions will be awarded a trophy, named the Faraz Challenge Cup, as well as Tk2 lakh as prize money.