

SPORT



Bangladesh archers pose with chief guest Deputy Minister for Youth and Sports Arif Khan Joy after being crowned champions in the 2nd ISSF International Solidarity Archery Championships at the Maulana Bhasani Hockey Stadium yesterday.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Recurve archers frustrate

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Hosts Bangladesh emerged champions in the 2nd ISSF International Solidarity Archery Championships after compound archers sealed the show on the final day at the Maulana Bhasani Hockey Stadium yesterday.

Bangladesh had a good chance of surpassing previous edition's success of six gold medals but they had to be satisfied with only five out of the nine gold medals they competed for on the concluding day in windy conditions. Recurve archers frustrated by bagging only one gold medal in four finals after compound archers had given them a great start by winning four out of five finals.

Bangladesh won gold in men's individual compound, women's individual compound, men's team compound and women's team compound but lost the mixed compound event in the morning to leave the onus on the recurve archers.

Women's compound team, comprising Roksana Akter, Bonna Akter and Ritu Akter, easily beat Morocco by 216-152 points to deliver the first gold while men's compound team, featuring

Ashim Kumar Das, Abul Kashem Mamum and Ashikuzzaman Anoy, ensured the second gold with an emphatic 225-205 point win over Iraq, who however beat Bangladesh in mixed compound event by 146-143 points after Roksana hit just 5 out of 10 in one of her final shots.

Ashim delivered the third gold in an all-Bangladeshi final in men's compound by beating his more illustrious teammate Mamun by 140-134 points before Roksana unexpectedly beat last edition's gold medallist Fatimah Al Mashhadani of Iraq by 136-133 points amid strong winds.

However, disappointment followed soon as the recurve archers, the main concentration of Bangladesh's archery in their bid to winning an Olympic medal, lost three finals in men's individual recurve, women's recurve team and mixed recurve. Men's recurve team restored some pride after beating minnows Nepal in 5-1 sets.

Women's recurve team lost to Azerbaijan in 5-4 sets despite taking the lead twice, thanks to poor performance by Nasrin Akter, who could not hit the board in tiebreaking set while the mixed team suffered 5-1 sets defeat against Turkey, again due to poor shots from Nasrin.

Men's recurve team, however, did not face

any problem to beat Nepal in 5-1 sets to win the fifth gold medal but Roman Sana, the country's best archer, lost the men's individual recurve event in 7-1 sets against Abdalelah Binali of Saudi Arabia.

Despite those disappointments, Bangladesh finished with five gold, five silver and one bronze medal, followed by Iraq who won one gold, two silver and one bronze medal.

"I am not happy with some performance. Even though there were some tough matches especially in recurve events, there is no excuse and we have to work more with the archers," Bangladesh coach Martin Frederick said.

"Our archers are good and have ability to perform but we have to improve in the finals. I have been here for only three months and now I know the level of the archers and what I have to do," said the German, who was, however, surprised to learn that Bangladesh Archery Federation has set a target of winning at least a medal in the 2020 Olympics.

"Winning a medal in the 2020 Olympics is not realistic. Bangladesh is not in a situation to win a medal in Olympics. We will try to make own qualification for Olympic Games and that is the goal," said the 50-year-old.

Roksana, Ashim shine

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While country's number one recurve archer Roman Sana failed to shine in two successive international championships, Roksana Akter and Ashim Kumar Das drew attention by winning gold medals in their respective individual compound events of the 2nd ISSF International Solidarity Archery Championships at the Maulana Bhasani Hockey Stadium yesterday.

Everyone perhaps kept Roksana out of consideration in women's individual compound final, especially when her opponent was last edition's gold medallist Fatimah Al Mashhadani of Iraq, who also won gold in 2015 Youth World Championship. But the girl from Savar stunned everyone to win the keenly contested final, claiming her first international gold medal since winning gold in the South Asian Archery Championships in March this year.

"There was obviously some pressure on me because she [Fatimah] won the gold in the last edition, but I was focused on winning," said a smiling Roksana, who was once pressurised by her husband's family to quit archery. "I grew confident after a good practice session in the morning but I could not get off to a good start and was mentally down a little bit before coach Ziaul Haque encouraged me saying that there was still a lot of time left. And I forgot the previous shots and looked forward," said Roksana, who took up the game in 2012.

Replying to a query, Roksana said, "What I have been

scoring at the moment is not good enough to compete at high-level competitions. If I can improve qualification scores to 690-695 from 670-675, I will have confidence to fight against the world's best archers in elimination round."

Ashim Kumar, however, is producing world-class scores regularly in the qualification round and the 28-year-old from Kurigram bagged gold medal in men's compound event after becoming first in the qualification round with a career-best score of 690.

"Though Mamun bhai is more experienced than me, he did not do well in the finals of team and mixed compound event and since then I was confident that I would win gold if I could put my natural performance," said Ashim, who got inspiration to play archery after watching Indian female archer Deepika Kumari on television.

Ashim, who has an agriculture diploma, started to play archery individually in 2014 after buying a bamboo bow with Tk 15,000 and was severely criticised by his neighbours but he never gave up, instead contacted with archery coaches for tips. He eventually made it to the national team this year and represented Bangladesh B Team in SA Archery Championship and delivered gold medal in his second international appearance.

"What I have been scoring at the moment is good enough to play in World Cup and Asian Archery but it will be tough to fight in quarterfinals, semifinals and final. I want to improve my qualification scores to compete in elimination round," said Ashim.



Ashim Kumar Das (L) and Roksana Akter proudly show their gold medals.

PHOTO: STAR

Tigresses lurch from bad to worse

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The Bangladesh women's cricket team's batting woes went from bad in Potchefstroom to worse in Kimberley as they crashed to defeat in the five-match ODI series against their South African counterparts with two matches still to be played. The home side posted a punishing nine-wicket victory with 214 balls remaining in the third ODI at the Diamond Oval in Kimberley yesterday to take an unassailable 3-0 lead.

The visitors scored 164 runs in chase of 271 to suffer a 106-run defeat

SCORES IN BRIEF

Bangladesh: 71 all out in 36.5 overs (Nigar 33 not out; Kapp 2-14, Khaka 3-16)
South Africa: 72 for 1 in 14.2 overs (Lee 44 not out, Chetty 15 not out; Nahida 1-19)
Result: South Africa women won by 9 wickets and led the 5-match series 3-0.

in the first game, and were then bundled out for 89 in the second game to endure another nine-wicket defeat at Senwes Park in Potchefstroom. In Kimberley yesterday, they could manage just 71 before being bundled out in

36.5 overs.

Wicketkeeper Nigar Sultana was the top scorer with an unbeaten 33 off 97 balls that contained three boundaries and Panna Ghosh was the other batter to reach double digits with 12 runs.

Home pacer Ayabonga Khaka claimed three wickets for 16 runs while her new ball partner Marizanne Kapp took two for 14.

In reply, South Africa reached the target in 14.2 overs for the solitary loss of opener Andrie Steyn, who scored 12. Lizelle Lee hit an unbeaten 44 off 51 balls with five fours and a six.

Bangladesh will take on the hosts in the fourth ODI on May 11 at the Diamond Oval in Kimberley.

BCB names 2 HP squads

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The Bangladesh Cricket Board [BCB] announced a 24-member High Performance core squad and a 15-member specialised pace bowling squad yesterday.

Opening batsman Mizanur Rahman, who has been in prolific form in the domestic circuit, was rewarded for his brilliant run as was young off spinner Nayeem Hasan and left-handed batsman Fardeen Hossain in the core squad along with other young talented players. The 16-week camp will start from May 28.

The likes of Afif Hossain, Saifuddin and Zakir Hasan - who were not included in the Tigers' preliminary squad - were also included in the HP squad.

HP head coach Simon Helmot is currently working as the assistant coach of Sunrisers Hyderabad in the Indian Premier League and local coach Jafrul Ehsan will conduct the core training camp until Helmot returns after the conclusion of IPL.

The selectors named promising pacers like Yeasin Arafat, Shoriful Islam and Qazi Onik alongside the likes of Taskin Ahmed, Kamrul Islam in the specialised pace bowling camp. They will have a strength and conditioning camp in Cox's Bazar from May 24 to June 1. The selected bowlers will later join the HP core squad.

HP Core Squad: Saif, Shadman, Naiem, Mizanur, Fardeen, Robiul, Mazid, Zakir, Afif, Yasir, Saifuddin, Mahidul, Hridoy, Mahedi, Asif, Tanvir, Nayeem, Rishad, Onik, Robiul, Mahmud, Yeasin, Khaled, Ebadot.

Specialised Pace bowling squad: Jayed, Kamrul, Khaled, Ebadot, Imran, Abul, Saifuddin, Hosen, Hider, Yeasin, Mahmud, Onik, Robiul, Shoriful, Taskin.

Disrespect instead of reciprocity?

Bangladesh's Australia tour reportedly scrapped

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Bangladesh's planned tour of Australia in August-September this year, the existence of which has been subject so far to an inordinate level of indecisiveness and evasion from Cricket Australia, keeps getting murkier in the months leading up to it. It became foggy still yesterday as ESPNcricinfo published an article that declared Bangladesh's tour cancelled, carrying quotes that CA chief executive James Sutherland gave the site 'earlier this year' saying that the tour would not be commercially viable.

He had also intimated this to the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) earlier this year, but presently it seems that even board high-ups in Bangladesh are reduced to getting the tour's status updates from the media. When contacted yesterday, BCB CEO Nizamuddin Chowdhury said that the board had no knowledge of the cancellation, if indeed the tour is cancelled. If it has been cancelled, at the very least it shows disrespect and a lack of professionalism from CA towards BCB because they are yet to respond to a counterproposal that the BCB sent immediately after receiving CA's commercial viability letter. Meanwhile, on April 30, a story on CA's official website revealed their home schedule for 2018-19, but there is not even a mention of Bangladesh or the planned tour.

"Three or four months ago Australia sent us a letter expressing that they will not host us for financial reasons," Chowdhury told The Daily Star yesterday evening. "We issued a counterproposal immediately to shorten the tour by playing ODIs only. We are yet to receive any response."

The International Cricket Council's (ICC's) Future Tours Programme (FTP) -- which is supposed to govern and regulate bilateral ties between member countries -- shows two Tests and three ODIs between Bangladesh and Australia in Australia in August-September this year.

"It [the tour] had been mutually agreed upon before being inducted into the FTP. It is unfortunate on the part of the member [CA] not to fulfil that commitment, especially if

the reasoning is commercial or financial concerns. We also have FTP commitments that are not financially viable, but we honour those commitments."

As Chowdhury said, the current FTP is based on reciprocal arrangements between boards. Even before CA's refusal to host Bangladesh, reciprocity was not the word to describe relationships between the boards. Bangladesh toured Australia just once, in 2003, but the FTP -- which was binding in its first cycle but has not been since -- dictates that member countries play each other home and away twice during an eight-year cycle.

"This is an issue that has been discussed in the ICC meetings and members are voicing their support for the FTP agreement to be reintroduced so that agreements become binding," Chowdhury added.

In ESPNcricinfo's report, Sutherland's quotes told the story of a board blatantly disregarding the FTP. "Every six years you are at least committed to playing away, but we don't have to play at home or we can vary the programme at home according to our needs and I think we just got squeezed a little bit." This attacks the very notion of reciprocity, because it is only logical that one country will host while the other tours, and if every country had the attitude that CA is presenting, international cricket would come to a halt. But according to Sutherland, "There's obviously an element of reciprocity between what we do, we do that with England, India and South Africa."

He also said that when the next cycle, incorporating the World Test Championship, comes around and playing Bangladesh would matter in terms of points, then they would host the Tigers. But seeing how commercial viability seems to rule the roost, what guarantee is there that they will invite Bangladesh if they have enough points in the bank? The dysfunctional ICC -- who recently had to prematurely release the 2019 World Cup schedule because it was leaked to the media -- certainly cannot make any guarantees because they are presiding over a system that prioritises individual boards' commercial aspirations instead of cricket's global ones.

Dates announced for Ban-Afg series

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The Afghanistan Cricket Board [ACB] announced the schedule for the upcoming three-match T20I series against Bangladesh yesterday with the first T20I to take place on June 3. The second and third game of the series are scheduled on June 5 and 7 respectively. All the matches of the series will be played at the Rajiv Gandhi International Cricket Stadium in Dehradun and the games will take place under lights starting from 8.30 pm Bangladesh time.

"ACB is delighted to host Bangladesh for the T20I series in Dehradun in early June which will be a good opportunity for both sides to play competitive cricket. Similarly, cricket fans have also previously enjoyed games between the two sides and this will be yet another opportunity for them to witness their sides play against each other," Atif Mashal the chairman of the ACB said in ACB's official website.

Earlier, Bangladesh Cricket Board [BCB] cricket operations committee chairman and former national captain Akram Khan informed that the board is satisfied with the venue and other facilities in the Indian city of Dehradun for the upcoming series against Afghanistan yesterday.

"According to the report the venue, hotel and other facilities are good but it takes around 40-45 minutes to reach the venue from the hotel," Akram said at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

Afghanistan and Bangladesh have faced each other once in a T20I in the 2014 ICC World Twenty20 which the Tigers won by nine wickets. Afghanistan is currently ranked 8th while Bangladesh are ranked 10th in the ICCT20I team rankings.

FIXTURES

Date	Match	Venue
June 3	First T20I	Dehradun
June 5	Second T20I	Dehradun
June 7	Third T20I	Dehradun



Abahani's Ashrafur Islam (C) controls the ball during a Premier Division Hockey League fixture against Azad SC at the Maulna Bhasani Hockey Stadium yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR