



On a day when Bangladesh failed to add to their tally of four gold medals in the South Asian Games in Nepal, Bangladesh's men's kho kho team went into a frenzy after securing a silver medal following their defeat by 16-9 points against India in the final yesterday.

PHOTO: BOA

## The Bangla-loving Japanese

ATIQUE ANAM from Kathmandu



"Nah, bhalo lage na. Duijon injured hoia gese," said the Bangladesh karate team's Japanese coach Tetsuro Kitamura in clear, if colloquial, Bengali following the women's team's close defeat to Pakistan in the final of the women's kumite event of the 13th South Asian Games in Kathmandu yesterday.

It was nice to hear a Japanese coach speaking such fluent Bengali, but it felt nicer when he spoke of his affection for Bangladesh and its people.

Kitamura first came to Bangladesh in 1985 as a karate coach under a JICA (Japan International Cooperation Agency) project. It is mandatory for every JICA representative to have a basic three-month training on the language of the country to which he or she is sent. That helped him get a grasp of the basics of the language, but his numerous trips and stays in Bangladesh since has made him as fluent as a regular Bangladeshi, as well as fall in love with the local culture.

"This is my first home. I

like the people here and the family bonding. People have a good heart. It's not like this in Japan where people are too busy and too self-centred," said the veteran coach, who also represents a Japanese crab-exporting company that collects crab from hatcheries in Satkhira.

Kitamura, who makes trips to Japan every three months to see his wife, is not the only Japanese coach who has made Bangladesh his home.

Takahiro Taguchi is an adviser of the swimming team who, like



TETSURO KITAMURA

Kitamura, has been coming to Bangladesh for coaching stints since the late 1980s. He too can read and speak Bengali fluently, and does not shy away from cracking a joke or two every often.

When asked for an impromptu interview, Taguchi jokingly said, 'Taka lagbe (will give interview for money)', before gladly obliging.

"I came here first in 1987 and I witnessed the flood of 1988 and the cyclone of 1991. I feel at home here, maybe more than in



TAKAHIRO TAGUCHI

Japan. I like working here," said Taguchi.

While Japan and JICA have been one of the closest friends of Bangladesh in their development activities, things took a tragic turn after a string of terror attacks on foreigners, culminating in the Holey Artisan Bakery attack in 2016 which took the lives of 24 people, including seven Japanese citizens, who were working here.

JICA contemplated stopping their activities in the country but continued with those as the situation improved, thanks to anti-terror drives by the government.

The overall situation of safety and security has also improved much since the time the two coaches first arrived in Dhaka in the late '80s, according to them.

"Earlier people used to steal valuable items. Things are a lot better now. We can move around safely these days and go out on our own at night without any worry," Kitamura said.

Both coaches felt that there were obvious disadvantages of living in Bangladesh rather than in Japan, but the warmth they get from the people keep them returning to Bangladesh and making it their home.

## Cricket salvages gold-less day in Kathmandu

SPORTS REPORTER from Kathmandu



Bangladesh's men's and women's cricket teams registered convincing victories in the T20 events on the fourth day of the South Asian Games, a day that passed with Bangladesh failing to add to their tally of four gold medals.

The men's cricket team romped to a 109-run victory over minnows Maldives, thanks to a five-wicket haul from left-arm spinner Tanvir Islam.

The youngster from the High Performance team bagged five wickets for 19 runs as Bangladesh bowled Maldives out for 65 after posting 174 for the loss of four wickets. Soumya Sarkar (46), Mohammad Naim (48) and skipper Nazmul Hossain Shanto (49) helped Bangladesh post a challenging total, which the Maldivians were simply unable to counter.

Tanvir was happy with a five-wicket haul and admitted that the wicket at the Tribhuvan University Ground was helpful for spin bowling.

"The wicket gripped, turned and bounced a bit, which helped the spinners. I tried to pitch the ball in the right places and got the wickets," said the spinner, who hails from Barishal.

It was Bangladesh's first match and they will take on Bhutan, Nepal and Sri Lanka in their remaining round-robin games.

There was an even more dominant victory for the women's team, who romped to a 10-wicket win over Nepal in Pokhara.

Fielding first, Bangladesh bowled the hosts out for 50 runs, with Rabeya Khan taking four wickets for eight runs. Murshida Khatun's unbeaten 23 and Ayesha Rahman's unbeaten 26 powered Bangladesh to the victory target in 7.4 overs.

**Al Amin jumps to bronze**

Long-jumper Al Amin won a bronze medal to give Bangladesh their second medal from athletics following Mahfuzur Rahman's silver in high-jump the previous day.

The Navy athlete, who had won a bronze at the 2010 Games, cleared 7.6 metres to settle for third position. India's Lokesh Sathiana (7.87m) won gold while his fellow Indian Swaminathan Rabh won silver (7.77m).

"This is a dream medal for me. Considering the state of athletics in Bangladesh, I'm happy with this bronze," said the 30-year-old athlete, adding that they do not get proper facilities in the country.

However, there were frustrating performances in the 200m sprint where Bangladesh's Shirin Akter finished seventh with a timing of 25.59 seconds in the women's event while Saiful Islam finished seventh in the men's event with a timing of 21.70 seconds.

**Silver and bronze in kho kho**

Bangladesh men's kho kho team lost to India by 16-9 points in the final -- a repeat of last edition's final -- to settle for a silver medal. The women's team, meanwhile,



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AL AMIN  
Long-jump bronze winner

beat Sri Lanka by two points to win a bronze medal.

**Bronze rush in wushu**

Bangladesh won seven bronze medals in wushu yesterday. Sadia Akter, Bashana Khandaker and Rita Biswash won bronze in separate weight categories for women while Milon Hossain, Rakib Khandaker, Rubel Khan and Selim Ahmed won in different categories of men's wushu. Bangladesh's Sajib Hossain has, meanwhile, reached the final by beating his Sri Lankan counterpart in his category.

## Still calm before the BBPL storm

SPORTS REPORTER



Even as the Bangabandhu Bangladesh Premier League (BBPL) nears its start date of December 11, the usual pre-BPL excitement is missing. Teams like Dhaka Platoon, Chattogram Challengers, Rangpur Rangers and Sylhet Thunders did start practising at the Academy Ground in Mirpur yesterday but the foreign players and coaches of the respective teams -- other than those of Dhaka Platoon, the only team in BPL with a local coach in the form of Mohammad Salahuddin -- are yet to join.

While the rest of the three teams are supposed to start their practice from today, the foreign players are supposed to join their respective teams from December 8, the slated date for the grand opening ceremony of the country's biggest

domestic T20 league.

Sylhet Thunder all-rounder Mosaddek Hossain, who practised with his team yesterday, said that this edition will be a platform for players to prove their mettle ahead of the T20 World Cup in October 2020.

"BPL is a great platform for creating players. The ones who will play well here will have a chance to feature for the national side. We have the T20 World Cup coming up. I am looking forward to doing well," said the 23-year old all-rounder.

Meanwhile, unlike Mosaddek, Chattogram Challengers' wicketkeeper-batsman Nurul Hasan was inclined to keep his targets to himself.

"I am more willing to work for the aim I have for the BPL rather than just talking about it. I try not to speak out loud about the target I have set for myself," said Nurul after practice in Mirpur yesterday.



Rajshahi Royals opener Liton Das practised individually at the academy ground in Mirpur yesterday ahead of the upcoming seventh edition of the BBPL.

PHOTO: BCB

**Bangladesh's SA Games gold-medalist karateka Marzan Akter Priya was hospitalised after being injured during the team karate semifinal yesterday. She was kicked on the back of her head by a Sri Lankan opponent. Fortunately, scans revealed that she had not sustained any serious injury or concussion and karate federation general secretary Kyaw Shwe Hla confirmed that she was out of danger.**

PHOTO: BOA



## Transfers return, uncertainty remains

SPORTS REPORTER



The Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) is all set to reintroduce the pool system in the next edition of the Dhaka Premier League (DPL), the country's most prestigious fifty-over domestic competition.

It was learned that the Cricket Committee of Dhaka Metropolitan (CCDM) was in the final stages of forming a pool of 48 players, from which each team will pick four players in next year's DPL.

"The proposal to introduce a pool for the DPL was discussed but nothing is finalised yet. We are waiting for CCDM chairman [Kazi Inam Ahmed] to arrive, after which we will take a decision in this regard, and if that is approved, we will prepare the pool accordingly," said a BCB official, who wished to remain anonymous.

When domestic and national players had gone on a three-day strike from October 21 to 23, one of the more important points in their 13-point demand was a return to the traditional players' transfer system by which the players can choose their own clubs and negotiate salaries instead of the players-by-choice lottery system first introduced in 2013.

Faced with the strike that shook the country's cricket, the CCDM had almost instantly agreed to return to the players' transfer system from next season. But with the players' pool in place it is unlikely that all the cricketers will receive the same amount of money that they were expecting earlier. The reason behind the BCB's decision to introduce the players-by-choice system was mainly because of the players high salary demands, which according to the clubs were unrealistic and tough to fulfill.

It was learned that an out-of-favour national cricketer who had played for Tk 20 lakh last season asked for Tk 55 lakh for the next edition and according to Mohammedan Sporting Club official Tarikul Islam Tito, such demands would only cause trouble for the players.

"I think those players will be in trouble unless they start reducing their demands. A club can take a maximum of four players from the pool, but if a club decides to take less than four players, I don't know whether the unpicked players can be picked as they were before or

whether they will have to be cleared first. I am aware that many players are yet to confirm their team despite some of the clubs having already started to form their squads.

As the DPL is the biggest source of income for a majority of domestic players, especially those who do not get a chance to play the lucrative Bangladesh Premier League, the cricketers were desperately waiting for a return to the traditional players' transfer system. It seems, however, that despite a return to the old system there is still some uncertainty.

"One club official contacted me and said that they are thinking of picking me and I accepted their offer, saying that they should pay me in cash. All of a sudden the club official called me and said that they are not ready to sign me up as they want to see how it goes in the transfer market," said an experienced performer, request anonymity.

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TARIKUL ISLAM TITO  
Mohammedan official