Star SPORT
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Ardina brings some relief for shooters

ATIQUE ANAM *from Kathmandu*

Ardina Ferdous was overcome with joy after she won a silver medal in the women's individual 10m air pistol event of the 13th South Asian Games at the Satdobato Sports Complex in Kathmandu yesterday.

The 26-year-old, who comes from a family with a long tradition in shooting, brought Bangladesh their first individual silver from these Games, which is also the best-ever achievement for individual women's pistol shooting in an international multi-sport event.

"I am really grateful to Allah for this day. Last time, three years ago, I was in a medal-winning position, but a glitch with my pistol deprived me of a medal.

"So I was a bit tensed today, thinking what if something like that happens again," said Ardina, who finished with 234.6 points, losing to eventual gold-winner Parmanantham Shri Nivetha of India by 3.8 points after having trailed by just 0.3 points prior to the start of the gold-deciding shootout between the two.

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> **ARDINA FERDOUS**
> Silver & bronze medals winner

PHOTO: BOA

Ardina Ferdous is all smiles after winning a silver medal in women's 10m air pistol and a bronze in a team event of the 13th South Asian Games in Kathmandu yesterday.

Soon after her final shots, Ardina was mobbed and congratulated by the Bangladesh Shooting Sport Federation officials and her colleagues, who even managed to squeeze out an instant reward of 100 US dollars from the team manager.

It was not as if the country had never won any silver or gold medals on such platforms before -- Bangladesh did win individual gold in Commonwealth Games shooting way back in 2002 and also had individual golds at the SA Games before -- but in recent times Bangladesh's shooting has been losing its medal-hauling capabilities with such continuity that Ardina's feat came almost as a relief for the sport.

Prior to Friday, Bangladesh had won only three silver medals -- all coming in team events whereas India, once Bangladesh's competitors in this sport, have already gotten into double digits in the gold medal haul. And they are managing to turn it into a monopoly this time too, despite leaving behind a lot of shooters who have already ensured the Olympic quota position.

Shovon Chowdhury, a member of Bangladesh's rifle-shooting team, spoke unreservedly of the true state of the yawning gap between the two countries.

"If India sends their fifth-tier shooters, they will be good enough to win gold medals here," Shovon said, before pointing to an Indian shooter. "See the kit she is carrying over there? That's a set of ammunition for her personal pratice. She can import these ammunitions from abroad, with the federation's money and without paying any tax," said the shooter frustratedly.

A female member of the team, also frustrated, said: "India have a coach for every two or three shooters while we have just one for the entire team, one in rifle and one in pistol. Money is a big issue in this sport but obviously there are other issues involved."

Money, or a lack of sponsors, was cited as the official reason when Danish rifle coach Klavs Christensen's four-year contract was not renewed at the end of his third year in October 2018. Under Christensen, Bangladesh had shown signs of steady progress, with Abdullahel Baki winning silver in the 2016 Commonwealth Games and Arnab Sharar sealing a Youth Olympics place. But since his departure, Bangladesh's rifle shooters were without a guide until former national shooter Saiful Alam Rinki was appointed as coach only two months before the SA Games.

With Baki's failure to win a silver or gold in 10m air rifle, the only hope of an individual gold medal in shooting rests with Shakil Ahmed, a gold medallist in the 2016 SA Games. There is slight hope in two mixed events too, featuring Baki with Atkia Hasan Disha in rifle and Shakil with Ardina in pistol. Unless those events fetch a gold medal, Bangladesh will end these regional games without a gold for the first time since 2006 and for the second time overall.

The travails of tallying medals

SPORTS REPORTER *from Kathmandu*

The 13th South Asian Games being held in three cities of Nepal is doing its best to keep the journalists and readers guessing.

Given that it is being held in a third-world country, the facilities and flow of information should not be expected to be as smooth as in events such as the Olympics or Commonwealth Games held in developed nations, equipped with better sporting and communication infrastructure.

But what the journalists coming to Kathmandu, Pokhara and Janakpur are facing could be described as confusing, at best tiring, when it comes to gathering information regarding the medals count.

In bigger and better managed events, there are result sheets and starting lists, including Games record, provided to journalists by the organisers. Those are usually available on racks at every venue and can also be printed out from the official website.

Barring a few exceptions, there are no such arrangements in most venues here. However, the most frustrating part is the official website of these Games, which continues to give confusing updates on the medals tally, correcting the figures a few times a day. The local newspapers reported various accounts of medal-tally on the first two days before converging on the official version.

That official version, though, as far as Bangladesh's medals are concerned, does not quite match the official version of the Bangladesh Olympic Association, which is tallying the country's medals with representatives at every venue.

Brought to the notice of the Local Organising Committee, which has bestowed the task of tallying to medals to local journalist-turned-officials, one such person responsible for record-keeping said: 'Please bring your list of all the medals. We will update our medals tally after checking those provided by you.'

Locals have to be the match-winners: Nixon

SPORTS REPORTER

With the Bangabandhu Bangladesh Premier League (BBPL) being solely organised by the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB), without any involvement of any franchises, it has been touted by the BCB as the perfect platform for local players to get more exposure and an excellent opportunity for them to step up and prove their mettle.

The teams have practised as usual for the country's biggest domestic T20 league and while some of the foreign coaches are yet to join, Chattogram Challengers' head coach Paul Nixon joined the squad yesterday during their practice session in Mirpur and the Englishman too said that local players will have to be the game-changers in the BBPL.

"I have spoken to the group when I first arrived. It is important that our local players believe that they are match-winners. They have got to get hold of the games and be the guys. It is a wonderful opportunity to do well," Nixon told reporters.

Nixon will be working with the likes of Mahmudullah Riyad, Imrul Kayes, Rubel Hossain, Nurul Hasan, Nasir Hossain and Junaid Sidique. The Chattogram Challengers have Chris Gayle as one of their foreign signing, but with the 40-year-old is expected to join the team in the latter stages due to a hamstring injury, the onus will be upon the local players to make a difference.

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> Ctg Challengers' head coach

"I think it is going to be harder for the bigger names coming in to do well. But these guys [local players] are the workhorses and I think they can win the games. They know the ground and they know the pitches well. They need to believe that. And the way I have seen them play, I am really excited," continued Nixon.

Nixon said that the players would need to play smart cricket in order to achieve their goal, which is always to win.

"The goal is to win. That is why we turn up and that is why we get out of bed in the morning. But as long as we get day-by-day progressions with our skills and our ideas and we are open to new ideas and open to being smart… T20 cricket is about being smart. We have got to try and almost keep our ego away from the game and we have got to be smart. We have got some wonderful players from Bangladesh and these guys have to be the match-winners -- that is really important."

Chattogram Challengers head coach Paul Nixon (inset), who joined the team during their practise session yesterday, was of the opinion that the onus will be on the likes of Nasir Hossain (C), Rubel Hossain (2nd from R) and other local players in the upcoming BBPL to make the difference.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Tickets added for opener

SPORTS REPORTER

Due to huge demand for tickets for the opening ceremony of the Bangabandhu Bangladesh Premier League (BBPL) on December 8, the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) has decided to include a new seating category to accommodate more spectators as tickets go on sale across various outlets in Dhaka from today.

The most expensive tickets are for on-ground seating, which cost Tk 10,000 while the newly introduced on-ground seating ticket price is Tk 5,000. The cost of grandstand tickets are Tk 2,500 each and clubhouse tickets will cost Tk 1,000.

Tickets will be available at the booth adjacent to Gate 1 of the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur, the ticket booth at the Shaheed Suhrawardi Indoor Stadium, The Westin Dhaka, Fahim Music and Café Eden from 9.30 am to 6:00 pm.

Fans can also buy tickets online at shohoz.com, paypoint.com.bd and gadgetbangla.com.

Earlier, BCB President Nazmul Hassan had said that they were preparing to accommodate a total of around 8,000 spectators at the stadium which has a usual full capacity of 25,000 spectators.

While the arrangement is for 8,000 people overall, there are separate quotas for clubs, BCB councillors and various organisations.

Preparations for a grand BBPL opening ceremony tomorrow are well underway at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur. This picture taken yesterday shows nearly all of the eastern half of the ground taken up by a sprawling stage, in front of which will be situated special on-ground seats.

PHOTO: STAR

CSA chief suspended

AFP, *Johannesburg*

Cricket South Africa (CSA) announced on Friday that chief executive Thabang Moroe had been suspended on allegations of misconduct as the body faces a mounting crisis.

Shortly before it was announced that Moroe had been suspended, the South African Cricketers' Association (SACA) called for the resignation of Moroe and the entire CSA board, while a major sponsor announced it would not renew its agreement, linking their withdrawal directly to events which have engulfed the governing body.

It also followed a call by the Gauteng Lions, one of CSA's major provincial affiliates, for the resignation of Moroe and the board.

Gauteng claimed the support of seven other affiliates, which would give those calling for change a majority on the 14-strong Members' Council, which in turn elects the board.

CSA said in a statement that Moroe had been placed on "precautionary suspension" on full pay following reports from CSA's social and ethics committee and the audit and risk committee.

SHORT CORNER

Soumya makes hay against Bhutan

Bangladesh's expected strong showing in the SA Games T20 men's cricket event continued as the men in red and green outclassed Bhutan by 10 wickets with 13.1 overs to spare.

Soumya Sarkar filled his boots with an unbeaten 50 off just 28 balls with five fours and a six as Bangladesh raced past Bhutan's 69 for seven. Fellow opener Mohammad Naim was unbeaten on 16 off 13 balls at the other end.

Earlier, Bhutan were restricted to a paltry total with Bangladesh's Manik Khan taking two wickets for nine runs in four overs. Mehedin Hasan Rana, Tanvir Islam, Minhajul Abedin Afridi and Soumya took one wicket each.

Bangladesh's next match is against Nepal today. --SPORTS REPORTER

TV umpire to call no-balls

Cricket is to trial using a TV umpire instead of the on-field official to call no-balls in the series between India and West Indies, following a rash of mistakes.

The Twenty20 and one-day games, starting with the first T20 in Hyderabad on Friday, "will be contested trialing technology to call front foot no balls", the International Cricket Council said.

"Throughout the trial, the third umpire will be responsible for monitoring every ball bowled and identifying whether there has been any front foot infringement," an ICC statement said on Thursday.

"If there has been an infringement on the front foot, the third umpire will communicate this to the on-field umpire who will subsequently call a no-ball." -- AFP

Magic trick after taking a wicket!

Before he became a full-time cricketer, South African spin bowler Tabraiz Shamsi wanted to become a professional magician.

Now Shamsi has brought his old passion to the cricket field. His extravagant celebrations after taking a wicket have attracted social media interest across the cricket-playing world.

The left-arm wrist spinner's latest trick is to take a large red handkerchief out of his pocket and, with a flick of his wrist, turn it into a metre-long wand.

"I have always wanted to enjoy myself on the cricket field," Shamsi told AFP on Friday.

"There's a lot of pressure playing professional cricket and sometimes you forget why you started playing cricket in the first place.

"It's a bit of fun. Not everyone likes it but my intentions are all good. I want to get more kids to enjoy the game." --AFP