

SPORT



Archers Sohel Rana and Sushmita Banik, both members of their respective compound men's and women's teams that won gold medals, pose for photographs after winning the compound mixed event in Pokhara yesterday. It was Bangladesh's most successful day in the history of the South Asian Games as they grabbed all six gold medals from archery team events while the women's cricket team had their own success. PHOTO: COLLECTED

Archery gets Ety a life of gold

ATIQUÉ ANAM from Pokhara



14-year-old Ety Khatun could have been doing household chores in a village in Chuwadanga had she not restrained her parents from arranging her marriage two

years ago.

However, she did successfully restrain them and soon after found archery as an escape route. Yesterday, she was instead standing proudly on the top of the podium of the 13th South Asian Games in Pokhara proudly displaying the two gold medals she won from archery events.

It has been a fairytale transition for the youngster, whose parents wanted to marry her off at a very early age to 'get a burden off their shoulders'.

But her talent was instantly spotted by coaches when she turned up for the archery talent-hunt programme in her district in December, 2016. She continued to resist pressure from her parents, before finally convincing them of her worth with a bronze medal in her first appearance at the

national archery meet in 2018.

Fast-tracked into the national team, Ety has been going from strength to strength and reached the pinnacle of her fledgling career by winning two gold medals, a day after she had stunned the favourite, Olympic qualifier Karma from Bhutan, with a straight 6-0 set-point victory.

Bangladesh Archery Federation general secretary Kazi Razibuddin Ahmed Chapal spoke highly of the talent of this youngster.

"She is a wonder," Chapal said. "Coaches can read from the stance of an archer and the way one holds the arrow whether he or she will be a great player. Our coach Martin Frederick was very excited when he first saw her."

The archer herself, though, was not willing to talk too much about her journey in archery and her feelings after the twin-gold haul because she was trying to stay focused for Monday's individual final.

"We knew we would do well but did not think we would win so many gold medals," Ety said. "I will answer the rest of your questions on Monday."



ANOTHER STAR IN THE MAKING: Ety Khatun, a 14-year old member of the gold-winning recurve women's team, celebrates her success along with Bangladesh archery's poster-boy Roman Sana after winning the gold medal in the recurve mixed team event in Pokhara yesterday. PHOTO: COLLECTED



ANOTHER FEATHER IN THEIR CAP: Salma Khatun and her troops bask in glory after a thrilling two-run win against their Sri Lankan counterparts. The victory gave them the gold medal in the first-ever women's cricket event of the South Asian Games in Pokhara yesterday. [Bottom] Salma, who captained the Bangladesh women's team to a historic Asia Cup win in Malaysia last year, lifts the trophy. PHOTO: ATIQUÉ ANAM/BCB

Booters make meek exit

SPORTS REPORTER



Bangladesh failed miserably in trying to lift their performance for the do-or-die match in the football event of the South Asian (SA) Games and exited the race for gold after a 1-0 defeat to defending champions Nepal at the Dasarath Rangasala in Kathmandu yesterday.

A second defeat in four matches means two-time champions Bangladesh finished third with four points in the five-team group table, leaving Tuesday's gold-deciding match to be contested by Bhutan and hosts Nepal, who finished on nine and 10 points from four outings respectively.

After some bold performances from the Red and Greens in the joint qualifiers for the World Cup and Asian Cup, expectations of regaining a gold medal in the regional multi-sport extravaganza after nine years were heightened. But Jamie Day's charges frustrated with consistently poor performances from an Olympic squad that consisted of 16 players from the senior national team.

Bangladesh had no option other than going for a win to equal Nepal on points and topple the defending champions on head-to-head if they were to set a final against Bhutan, but Bangladesh lacked composure in the attacking third and had only two shots on target.

Misplaced passes and potshots were eyesores but losing their temperament and arguing with the referee's decisions time and again was unexpected, especially when the team needed to stay calm against a team that have always been formidable in their home ground in front of capacity crowds.

Nepal, coming into the match after hurrying in search of an equaliser and the previous day, stunned Bangladesh and took an 11th-minute lead. Nepal captain Sujal Shrestha released a cutback between two Bangladeshi players to an unmarked Sunil Bal, who brilliantly shaped his body and placed the ball to the far post with his right foot from inside six-yard box.

After conceding, Bangladesh looked hurried in search of an equaliser and the pressure mounted on Nepal. The hosts conceded six corners in the first half, but there was a lack of bite upfront and Nepal goalkeeper Bikesh Kuthu did well under the post to thwart all aerial balls.

Bangladesh survived a close-call in the 56th minute when a shot from Sunil narrowly missed the far post and the hosts came close to conceding in the 61st minute when Jamal Bhuiyan set up Mohammad Ibrahim only to see the latter's shot go inches wide of the far post.

Jamal Bhuiyan's red card in stoppage time was rubbing salt in the wound for Bangladesh, who had to settle for back-to-back bronze medals.

Tigresses clinch gold in nail-biter

SPORTS REPORTER from Kathmandu



Jahanara Alam defended seven runs off the final over as Bangladesh sealed a nail-biting victory against Sri Lanka by two runs in Pokhara yesterday to clinch the gold medal in the women's cricket event at the 13th South Asian Games.

Bangladesh's premier pace bowler came to bowl the last over as Sri Lanka looked on course for an upset win in chase of just score 91 for eight from their 20 overs.

But Jahanara conceded only two runs off the first three balls, pressuring Kahini Apsara, who till then looked comfortable in the middle, batting on 23 off 26 deliveries. The right-hander, however, succumbed to the pressure, getting run out while trying to go for a risky double.

The next ball went for a single before another run-out off the last ball handed Bangladesh the title of the inaugural edition of the women's competition in these regional games.

Jahanara, who has seen Bangladesh through in many a pressure match like this before, said she was confident of the victory.

"I was thinking that they need five runs instead of seven from the last over. I made the equation in my mind like that and I knew if I could bowl two or three dot balls, they would be under pressure," said Jahanara, who ended with figures of one for 17.

It was a collective effort from the Bangladesh bowlers, with Nahida Akter playing the lead role by taking one wicket for only nine runs,



offsetting the pressure of a couple of dropped chances. But Spears threatened to take the game away from Bangladesh, only for Jahanara to steal victory.

Earlier, Bangladesh had made a brisk start, moving to 36 for one in six overs before losing back-to-back wickets. Thanks to an unbeaten 29 from Nigar Sultana and 15 from Fahima Khatun, Bangladesh managed to set up a total which eventually proved to be just enough.

Skipper Salma Khatun, who was a member of Bangladesh's silver wins in both the 2010 and 2014 Asian Games and captained the side to famous Asia Cup win in Malaysia last year, was happy to add another accolade to the team's cabinet.

"We may have won the title in the Asia Cup, but winning the SA Games gold is special because the SA Games is the biggest event of this region. This is a special victory because we won the title of the first edition of the event," said the skipper, who gave away only 12 runs for one wicket after having failed with the bat.

The veteran all-rounder hoped that this victory would catapult the side to greater things in the future.

MEN'S TEAM LOSE TO SL IN FINAL'S DRESS REHEARSAL

Meanwhile, the men's team suffered a shock nine-wicket defeat in their final round-robin game in Kathmandu against Sri Lanka, a team they will face today too, in the final.

After being asked to bat first, Bangladesh, who rested Soumya Sarkar and skipper Nazmul Hossain ahead of the key match, set up 150 for six, thanks to a 38-ball 44 from wicketkeeper Mahidul Islam Angkon and a 45-ball 51 from Yasir Ali.

Sri Lanka hardly broke a sweat and cruised to the target in 16.1 overs, losing just a single wicket.

Opener Pathum Nissanka blasted 67 off 52 deliveries while Lasith Croospulle smashed 73 runs off 41 balls.

Bangladesh captain Nazmul was not all that worried by the result as he felt it was a test of their depth in difficult conditions.

"I don't see it as a negative. We rested a few regular players because we will be playing four matches on the trot. We also reshuffled the batting order to give the lower-order batters some time in the middle ahead of the final," the captain said after the match.

The final is scheduled to begin at 1:15pm (Bangladesh time) at the Tribhuvan University Ground today.

SHORT CORNER

Ramdin wins hearts with gesture

West Indies cricketer Denesh Ramdin has won hearts with a sweet gesture towards a young Indian fan ahead of the 2nd T20I against India in Thiruvananthapuram on Sunday.

According to media reports, Ramdin got down from the team bus, which was travelling to the stadium when he saw a young girl waving. He then gave her two tickets for the match and a gift.

Ramdin is one of the old guards in the West Indies team, alongside Kieron Pollard and Lendl Simmons, who had once been frozen out of the Caribbean side, but who have now returned to the fold. -- AGENCIES

Farhan to lead Afghans in U-19 World Cup

Opening batsman Farhan Zakhil will lead Afghanistan's Under-19 set-up in the upcoming Under-19 World Cup to be held in South Africa in January and February next year.

The 16-year-old, who has already played 13 first-class games, made his Under-19 debut when Afghanistan took on India in March this year. He also led the side in the Under-19 Asia Cup and the recently-concluded one-day series versus India. The right-handed batsman already has three first-class hundreds, including an unbeaten 167 against the Boost Region.

Squad: Farhan Zakhil (C), Sediq Atal, Rahmanullah Zadran, Ibrahim Zadran, Ishaq Mohammadi, Noor Ahmad, Shafiqullah Ghafari, Jamshid Mir Alikhil, Abdul Rahman, Abid Taniwal, Fazal Haq, Imran Mir, Zohaib

Zamankhil, Asif Musazai and Abid Mohammadi. -- AGENCIES

Smith set to be CSA's director of cricket

Former Test captain Graeme Smith is set to become Cricket South Africa's director of cricket, according to CSA president Chris Nenzani, but South African cricket's crisis continued, with Nenzani and his remaining board members refusing to heed calls to resign.

Tony Irish, chief executive of the SA Cricketers Association (SACA), which called on Friday for Nenzani and the entire board to resign, said in a tweet: "Appalled that the president and board of CSA have taken no responsibility for cricket's biggest crisis. Now clinging to power."

Asked for clarification, Irish described his tweet as "my initial reaction." He said SACA was likely to make a detailed response on Sunday or Monday.

"I am happy to announce that we have engaged Graeme Smith and I am confirming that by next week Wednesday all of the negotiations around the contract terms that need to take place would have been concluded," said Nenzani. -- AFP



We may have won the title in the Asia Cup, but winning the SA Games gold is special because the SA Games is the biggest event of this region. This is a special victory because we won the title of the first edition of the event.

SALMA KHATUN
BANGLADESH CAPTAIN