

## BOA optimistic about 2nd Youth Games

SPORTS REPORTER



The Bangladesh Olympic Association (BOA) is hopeful of organising the Sheikh Kamal 2nd Bangladesh Youth Games in a more cohesive way than the inaugural edition held in 2018, as 60,000 athletes, officials, technical staff and organisers across the country gear up to participate.

The first phase of the 2nd Youth (U-17) Games is set to get underway from January 2, with 495 upazillas taking part in the meet. The second phase will see the participation of 64 districts between January 16-22. The final phase, featuring eight divisions, will be held in Dhaka from February 26 to March 4. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina consented to opening the final round of Youth Games at the Army Stadium in Banani on February 26 as the chief guest.

Around 50,000 athletes, officials, technical staff and organisers had participated last time around.

Asked whether athletes sporting *salwar kameez* and running barefoot would be seen again at the upazila level, BOA vice-president and media committee chairman Bashir Ahmed replied: "After taking in the experience of the first edition, the BOA has already released Tk 3.5 crore to prepare athletes at upazilla level this time around. So we are hopeful the scenario will be much better."

BOA joint secretary general Ashikur Rahman Miku added: "We have identified the loopholes after taking the experience of the first edition into consideration. To operate smoothly, the representatives from the BOA and respective federations will be there to monitor everything."

This time, 24 disciplines, three more than in the first edition, were included in the Games, which will offer 492 gold medals from 198 events.

Bashir Ahmed said: "The inaugural edition of the Youth Games produced a lot of talented athletes who later shone in the Bangladesh Games, thus making their way to the national squad. We have also provided 36 players with further training at BKSP. This time, we are determined to continue the talent hunt and provide advanced training."

BOA treasurer AK Sarker, chief coordinator of Youth Games brigadier general Ashraf and BOA member Sirajuddin Mohammad Alamgir were also present on the occasion.



## Man Utd 'looking for a striker'

AFP, Manchester

Manchester United made a positive start to life without Cristiano Ronaldo as Marcus Rashford and Anthony Martial stepped out from the Portuguese's shadow to score in a 3-0 win over Nottingham Forest on Tuesday.

But manager Erik ten Hag is still targeting a striker to replace Ronaldo in the transfer market to make the Red Devils more clinical in the final third.

Ronaldo's rollercoaster second spell at Old Trafford came to an end during the World Cup break after an explosive interview in which he took aim at Ten Hag and the club's owners.

On the field, his influence had already waned since the Dutch coach took charge at the start of the season.

"We are looking for a striker because games are coming every three days," added Ten Hag. "It's tough and we want to play in all the leagues. Hopefully we can keep going till the end of the season, so we need numbers in the squad."

## Domingo saga finally concludes

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Russell Domingo finally tendering his resignation as head coach of Bangladesh yesterday did not come as a surprise to the cricketing fraternity, with the move on the cards ever since whispers broke out that the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) was unwilling to continue with the South African into the new year.

The straw that broke the camel's back was perhaps Bangladesh's loss to Zimbabwe in both ODI and T20I series this year, following which the BCB sidelined the South African by appointing Sridharan Sriram as a T20 consultant for three months. The board clarified things by revealing that the former India all-rounder would act as head coach of the T20I side while Domingo took charge the Test and ODI teams.

There were rumours that Domingo would resign after that decision ahead of the T20 World Cup in August this year, but the South African informed he was willing to continue for the home series against India.

BCB president Nazmul Hassan Papon and board directors had previously expressed dissatisfaction regarding the fact that that Domingo did not have control and authority over players. They also

### BANGLADESH UNDER RUSSELL DOMINGO

ODI	TEST
Match: 30	Match: 22
Won: 21	Won: 3
Lost: 9	Lost: 17
	Draw: 2
T20I	
Match: 46	
Won: 19	Lost: 26
No result: 1	

criticised the 48-year-old for being unable to provide his plans to the board.

"We need a coach who has an impact and influence on the team. You will soon see some changes. We are trying. We want a very strong team that can play quality cricket. We want a highly competitive team. We were close to beating India, but it is tough to beat this team. We beat England and Australia on this ground, but India are a tougher side in these conditions," BCB cricket operations chairman Jalal Yunus told the media after defeat in the first Test against India this month.

Domingo flew home for Christmas holidays after the

completion of the India series and just two days after that series, he handed in his resignation. Domingo had joined as head coach in September 2019, a few months after the BCB sacked Steve Rhodes following that year's World Cup.

The South African showed his boldness by opposing the strategy of tailor-made pitches at home in the Tests, pressing the importance of sporting tracks and placing an emphasis on featuring more pacers in the playing eleven.

During Domingo's three-year tenure, the Tigers have had their fair shares of ups and downs. Bangladesh won T20I series against Australia and New Zealand at home last year and recorded a maiden ODI series win in South Africa. They also won the ODI series 2-1 win against India recently.

The Tigers first-ever win in New Zealand, which came at the start of 2022 during the historic Mount Maunganui Test, was perhaps Bangladesh's biggest success in the longest format and was also one of Domingo's most significant achievements.

However, Domingo's exit once again showcased the lack of clarity and communication between the board and coach as the trend of bitter separations continued in Bangladesh cricket.

## Williamson and Latham punish fumbling Pakistan

AFP, Karachi

Kane Williamson and Tom Latham hit contrasting hundreds Wednesday to propel New Zealand to 440-6 at the close on the third day of the first Test against Pakistan in Karachi.

Williamson survived two stumpings and a leg-before decision before knocking an unbeaten 105, while Ish Sodhi was on one, with the tourists leading by two runs.

Williamson's 25th Test century is his first in international cricket since he racked up 238, also against Pakistan, in Christchurch in January last year.

He built on a solid foundation laid down by openers Latham, who cracked 113 en route to his 13th Test century, and Devon Conway, who fell for 92.

With the National Stadium pitch likely to take spin on the last two days, New Zealand will look to press home their advantage in the first Test of the two-match series, their first in Pakistan since 2002.

Williamson pushed fast bowler Mohammad Wasim for a sharp single to complete his hundred, a fifth against Pakistan. In all he has batted for 356 minutes, cracking 11 boundaries.

Latham, who hit ten boundaries in his 288-minute knock, thinks New Zealand are in good shape to push for a win.

"The pitch has started to take more turn from the footmarks so obviously it's not going to get any easier for batting," he said. "Hopefully, from the position we are in, we can get as many ahead as possible and put Pakistan under pressure."



Liton Das is in a jovial mood during the holiday season and he has every reason to be, having amassed an impressive 1921 runs across all three formats this year -- the highest ever by a Bangladesh batter in a calendar year. To top his 2022 cake with a cherry, Liton sailed past Virat Kohli in the latest Test batters' rankings as he moved up two places to the 12th position -- the best ranking among his compatriots -- while the Indian batting maestro slipped to 14th.

PHOTO: FACEBOOK

## 'Highly motivated' Nadal ready for Djokovic challenge

AFP, Sydney

A "highly motivated" Rafael Nadal welcomed rival Novak Djokovic's much anticipated return to the Australian Open as "good for tennis" Wednesday, while brushing off suggestions this may be his last tilt at the season-opening Grand Slam.

The 36-year-old Spanish great, who recently became a father, is beginning his new season at the United Cup, a new mixed-teams event starting Thursday in Sydney, Brisbane and Perth.

It will provide a warm-up for his defence of the Australian Open title next month at Melbourne Park, where he swept past Russian Daniil Medvedev to win this year in an epic five-setter.

That victory came after arch-rival and nine-time Australian Open winner Novak Djokovic was detained and deported ahead of the tournament after refusing to get vaccinated for Covid-19.

Australia has since lifted its requirement for visitors to show proof of vaccination against Covid. The Serb arrived back in the country on Tuesday for the first time since being turfed out.

Nadal, who has a record men's 22 Grand Slam titles to Djokovic's 21, said he was happy to see his superstar rival back.

"Novak is here, good for tennis, good for probably the fans," the world number two said in Sydney. "Let's see, no? Best players



Reigning Australian and French Open champion Rafael Nadal warms up ahead of kick-starting another year, while women's world No. 1 Iga Swiatek, who clinched eight singles titles in 2022, concentrates on maintaining her dazzling run. The duo begins the new season with the United Cup, starting today in Australia.

PHOTO: TWITTER



on court always win."

Fifth-ranked Djokovic will begin his quest for an incredible 10th title at Melbourne Park at the Adelaide International from Sunday.

Nadal backed up his Australian Open win this year with a 14th French Open but struggled with injury after withdrawing from the

Wimbledon semi-final with an abdominal tear in July.

Despite a poor second half of the year, Nadal said he was raring to go again with a clash first up at the United Cup against British world number 14 Cameron Norrie ahead of a blockbuster showdown with Australia's Nick Kyrgios.

"The highest motivation to try to start well. It's always important to start well for me, for the confidence," he said.

"The last few months haven't been easy for me. Main thing for me now is recover the positive feelings on court, being competitive. I hope to. I am ready to make that happen, but let's see."

Nadal played his first Australian Open in 2004. He is now a father, and with a history of injuries he was asked if this could be his last trip to Australia.

"As a professional, you never know, hopefully not," he said.

"I mean, when you are at the age of 36, you never know when it's going to be the last one. It's obvious, but I don't like to talk about that because I am not in that mood now."

"I'm just focused on trying to play at the highest level possible and give myself possibilities to keep being competitive, to fight for anything. That's my goal now."

"I'm not thinking about it being my last time here. I am happy doing what I am doing. I'm looking forward to keep doing this."

Meanwhile, Nick Kyrgios stunned his teammates by pulling out of the United Cup Wednesday on the eve of the tournament, soon after Rafael Nadal said the Australian had "all the weapons" to win a Grand Slam.

The temperamental star withdrew ahead of the new mixed-teams event in Sydney, Brisbane and Perth, depriving fans of a scheduled clash between him and the Spanish great.

Instead, Alex de Minaur will face Nadal in a round-robin singles match.

Greek tennis star Stefanos Tsitsipas on Wednesday told rival Nick Kyrgios to "enjoy his holidays", after the Australian stunned his team by withdrawing from the United Cup at the last minute.