

100m is a challenge and an honour: Imranur

Imranur Rahman is set to become the first overseas-based sprinter and overall, the third overseas-based athlete to represent Bangladesh in the Olympics. The 31-year-old British-Bangladeshi, who won gold in the 60m event in the 2023 Asian Indoor Championships, spoke to The Daily Star's Anisur Rahman and shared his excitement for the July-August's Paris Games and how he is preparing for the event. Here are the excerpts:

The Daily Star (DS): Since Bangladesh's first appearance in the Olympics in 1984, track and field athletes have represented the country in every edition through wildcards. You will be continuing that tradition this year. How are you feeling after getting this opportunity?
Imranur Rahman (IR): It's an incredible honour to represent Bangladesh on the world's biggest stage. The wildcard entry is a recognition of the hard work and dedication I've put into my sport, and it's a great opportunity to showcase my abilities and make my country proud.

DS: How have you prepared to compete against the world's top sprinters?
IR: Preparation has been intense and focused. I've been working closely with my coach on refining my technique, improving my start and building my stamina. I've also been studying my competitors to understand their strengths and strategies, which will help me perform at my best.
DS: The 100m event is considered the most attractive and prestigious event in the Olympics. How do you view it?
IR: The 100m event is indeed prestigious and highly competitive. It's often the highlight of the track and field events because it showcases the fastest athletes



in the world. Competing in this event is a tremendous challenge and an honour and I'm excited to see how I measure up against the best.
DS: So far, 17 track and field athletes have competed in the Olympics from Bangladesh and none of them have made it past the preliminary round. Are you hoping to become the first?
IR: It's a significant challenge, but I'm focused on giving my best performance. While breaking past records would be a tremendous achievement, my immediate goal is to perform to the best of my abilities and see where that takes me.
DS: You hold the national record in the 100m event, 10.11 seconds. Do you think it

would be enough to qualify for the semifinals?
IR: My personal best of 10.11 seconds is competitive, but the Olympics feature the fastest sprinters in the world. While it's possible that my best could qualify me for the semifinals, it will depend on the competition on the day. I'll focus on executing my race plan and hope for the best.
DS: You have been steadily improving your timing in the 100m race. In 2021, you clocked 10.32 seconds, then 10.29 seconds in 2022 and 10.11 seconds in 2023. Are you hoping to surpass it in Paris?
IR: I've been working hard to continue improving my timings and I want to set

a new personal best at the Olympics. However, every race is different and it's challenging to predict exactly how I will perform. I'll aim to deliver my best effort and hope it translates into a new record. But this is an if, something I cannot control.
DS: This year, you have only competed in the 60m event but you are going to compete in the 100m sprint in Paris. How difficult will it be for you to make that switch?
IR: Switching from the 60m to the 100m does present some challenges, particularly in terms of endurance and race strategy. However, I've been training specifically for the 100m, focusing on maintaining my speed over the longer distance. It will be a test, but I feel prepared.
DS: Apart from you, four other athletes from archery, shooting and swimming are going to take part from Bangladesh. What is your expectation from them in the Olympics?
IR: I have great respect for my fellow athletes and their dedication. Competing in the Olympics is a significant achievement in itself. I hope they perform to the best of their abilities and gain valuable experience. Each of us will strive to make Bangladesh proud in our respective disciplines.

Records that fell at Euro 2024

AFP, Berlin

As the Euro 2024 came to a close on Sunday night with the final between Spain and England, here is a look back at some of the records that fell over the last month at Euro 2024.
Lamine Yamal: Youngest player and scorer
Spain teenage sensation Lamine Yamal made history in his country's opening game against Croatia by becoming the youngest player ever to appear in a European Championship game at the age of 16 years and 338 days.
In doing so he beat the previous record held by beat Poland's Kacper Kozłowski, who was 17 years and 246 days old when he appeared at Euro 2020.
Yamal, of Barcelona, then claimed another piece of history by becoming the youngest player ever to score a goal at the Euros in Spain's 2-1 semi-final win against France, at the age of 16 years and 362 days.

Pepe the oldest player
At the other end of the scale, Portugal defender Pepe claimed the record for the oldest player ever at a European Championship when he took to the field in his team's opening game against the Czech Republic at the age of 41.
He was 41 years and 130 days old by the time he appeared in the quarter-final against France -- an age at which almost every footballer has long since retired.



The Porto centre-back passed the previous mark set by Hungary goalkeeper Gabor Kiraly, who was 40 years and 86 days old when he played against Belgium at Euro 2016.
Modric the oldest scorer
Luka Modric became the tournament's

oldest goalscorer when he netted in Croatia's final game, a 1-1 draw against Italy.
Modric was 38 years and 289 days old, breaking the record set by Austrian Ivica Vastic in 2008 by 32 days.
Croatia were eliminated in the group

stage, meaning that game is set to also go down as Modric's last ever at the tournament.
Ronaldo's sixth Euros
At 39, Cristiano Ronaldo had been hoping to claim the oldest goalscorer record for himself, but he failed to add to his all-time tournament best tally of 14 goals on Portugal's run to the quarter-finals, notably missing a penalty against Slovenia in the last 16.
Ronaldo did, however, claim other records. Having first appeared at the tournament in 2004, Ronaldo competed at an unprecedented sixth European Championship in Germany, and has now made a total of 30 appearances, at least seven more than any other player.
The fastest goal for Bajrami
Albania's Nedis Bajrami netted the fastest ever goal at a European Championship when he put his side ahead after just 23 seconds in their opening game against Italy.
Bajrami pulverised the previous Euros record for the quickest goal of 67 seconds by Dmitri Kirichenko of Russia against Greece in 2004.
However, his team went on to lose the game 2-1.
Merih Demiral of Turkey later scored the second-fastest goal by finding the net against Austria in the round of 16 after just 57 seconds.

Nadal to face Borg!

AFP, Paris

In the world of fantasy tennis, pitting Nadal against Borg may seem everyday but in the real world it has never happened before.
Sadly, although obviously given the age difference, fans at the ATP event in Bastad next week will not be watching the two kings of Roland Garros - Rafael Nadal and Bjorn Borg with 20 French Open titles between them.
Instead Nadal will be up against Leo Borg, the 21-year-old son of the long-retired former world number one, now 68.
"It was crazy because we were looking when they did the draw and my name just popped up against Rafa," said Borg, currently ranked 467 in the world. "I'm feeling very excited and it's going to be a great match."
According to his ATP biography, Borg has never watched a single point of his father's storied career which included six French Open titles and five successive Wimbledon.
Instead he credits Nadal as one of the reasons he turned to tennis as a child, making Friday's practice session together all the more special.
"It was a very good practice and of course he's been my idol since I was very young, so it's going to be a very special moment in my career," Borg said.
"But I'm looking forward to that and I'm feeling really, really excited."
Borg's only ATP Tour match win last year was in Bastad against Elias Ymer.



Bielsa far from satisfied

REUTERS

Uruguay needed a late equaliser and penalties to beat Canada in Saturday's Copa America third-place playoff match, with coach Marcelo Bielsa saying the South American side had performed well below their level.
Uruguay, ranked 14th in the world, were on the verge of a shock defeat to the 48th-ranked Copa America debutants before Luis Suarez scored a stoppage-time goal to force a penalty shootout, which Bielsa's side won 4-3.
"It wasn't a great performance. The draw, at best, was barely deserved. I think that the opponent head coach's decision to prioritize physical aptitude instead of usual starters was more successful," Bielsa told reporters.
"I went with the usual starters in spite of them being weary. There were ups and downs. The chances created by both teams were even, but in all truth, we didn't play well."
"Regarding this third place, I do think Uruguay is one of the three best teams of this tournament. Even if this tournament came after long seasons and the tiredness affects players, I thought that given our roster, we could have played a bit better than what we showed."
Bielsa's counterpart Jesse Marsch said he was proud of the progress the team had made in a short period, adding: "The players are disappointed in the way that we gave the match away."

‘We have the best spin attack in the world’

Bangladesh's women's side are slated to play the Asia Cup in Sri Lanka, scheduled to begin on July 19, with an eye on the upcoming T20 World Cup at home in October. The Tigresses, however, have a lot to work out in the meantime as they suffered a slump in recent times, with batting being their main concern in series losses to Australia and India at home. Head coach **Hashan Tillakaratne** talked about how the Tigresses can recover from this slump, and use their spin advantage and their target in the Asia Cup during an interview with **The Daily Star's Abdullah Al Mehdi**. The excerpts of the interview are as follows:

The Daily Star (DS): How do you see the side going into the Asia Cup and how will the tournament help for the upcoming T20 World Cup at home?
Hashan Tillakaratne (HT): It's a good sign to have youth and experience on your side given that the T20 World Cup is around the corner. This [Asia Cup] is a very good tournament for assessing ourselves and if we play well, we have every chance of winning the Asia Cup.

DS: There were batting mishaps in the last few series. Did you address the issues with the batters?
HT: Quite a few players are pushing for their places in the side. Obviously, everyone wants to play in the World Cup and there is a bit of fear of failure. That's one of the reasons that often they look like they are negative and fearful of playing their shots. We have spoken about it -- about how they can free their minds. We haven't seen their true talents yet but we want them to go out there and express themselves.



DS: Do you feel the team is sufficiently equipped in the spin department, especially with three leg-spinners in the ranks?
HT: I feel we have the best spin bowling attack in the world right now. We have three to four leg spinners and in women's cricket, batters are usually vulnerable to leg-spin. We are very fortunate to have so many. Our spin bowling coach Dinu [Dinuka Hetiaraarachchi] has done a lot for them. Subcontinent surfaces are slow and low and no matter how much effort you put in, they always tend to help spinners. Our spinners are genuine turners of the ball and the condition would support them.
DS: The spin dependency sort of backfired in the last two series against Australia and India. What's your take on it?
HT: I don't think the plans backfired. We had our chances in both the series. We missed chances badly because we fielded poorly against both India and Australia. The bowlers were spot on and they created opportunities.

DS: Has fielding improved?
HT: Fielding has improved and fitness levels have gone up. Right now, I will give them seven out of 10 in terms of fitness.
DS: Bangladesh failed to win a game in the last four T20 World Cups. Do you feel it's Bangladesh's best opportunity this time?
HT: Yes, right now we are in a very good shape and I have a lot of faith in them. We are in good shape to progress to the last four. In the last three to four global tournaments, the players were not ready as they were still learning the trade and developing. They have played a lot of cricket since then and we have won games outside the country (The Tigresses have won an ODI and a T20I against South Africa in December last year). Victories gave them massive experience and they have started to believe that they are capable of beating any side in the world.
DS: Does the burden of expectations sometimes weigh high on skipper Nigar Sultana Joty?
HT: Yes, lots of pressure on her since she is one of our top batters. Sometimes she has to take the side out of trouble and consolidate. So there are lots of things she has to do along with keeping wickets and managing expectations. She is very capable and understands her game well. We are fortunate to have someone like her.



Spain's Carlos Alcaraz celebrates after retaining his Wimbledon crown by defeating Serbia's Novak Djokovic 6-2, 6-2, 7-6 (7/4) in the men's singles final at the All England Lawn Tennis and Croquet Club in London, Britain yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS