



Imranur wins on return, Sumaiya edges Shirin

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

SPORTS REPORTER

Imranur Rahman and Sumaiya Dewan once again emerged as the country's fastest man and woman respectively on an eventful first day of the three-day 17th Summer Athletics Championship, which also witnessed two new national records yesterday.

Fit again Imranur of Bangladesh Navy, who returned to the track for the first time since his participation in last year's the Paris Olympics, clocked 10.64 seconds in men's 100 metres sprint to finish ahead of second-placed Md Abdul Motalab of Bangladesh Army (10.86s) while holder Mohammad Ismail won bronze (10.88s) at the National Stadium in Dhaka.

The women's 100m sprint ended in a photo finish, with Sumaiya beating 16-time champion Shirin Akhter by just 0.02 seconds.

Sumaiya clocked 12.19 seconds and Shirin took 12.21 seconds. Behind the two Bangladesh Navy athletes, Bangladesh Army's Sharifa Khatun (12.41s) finished



third.

Some drama ensued after the race however, as Shirin demanded to see the snap of the photo finish, and the commotion delayed the official result announcement by over an hour.

Imranur was far from his best in the meet, as the UK-based athlete finished way below his national record timing of

10.11 seconds. But he was satisfied after claiming his fifth fastest title in his return to domestic competition after over a year.

"This is my comeback race. All I wanted to do is finish the race healthy. I wasn't too concerned about the timing. It's about the victory and just finishing healthy," said Imranur, thanking his new outfit – Bangladesh Navy – for how they

supported his rehabilitation process.

"Of course, there are many events ahead, Islamic games and South Asian games. So, I'm going to take it step by step. I'm going to go back into training, focus on a lot of missed training that I've had over the last six or seven months... Of course, our main focus is to get the gold in South Asian games," said Imranur.

Sumaiya, who was the country's fastest woman in 2021, had to toil hard for four years to regain the title.

"This time I was quite optimistic about winning gold because I worked hard and tried to overcome my shortcomings in finishing," said Sumaiya before thanking her team, coach and her family members.

At the Army Stadium in Banani, Abdul Alim of Bangladesh Army set a national record in discus throw, clearing 46.94 metres to break the previous record of 44.98m, which belonged to Azharul Islam.

Bangladesh Army's Jannat Begum, whose gender identity has caused some controversy, also set a national record in shotput, clearing 13.91 metres. The previous best was 13.52m from Jakia Akhter.

U-17s' hopes of SAFF title take a blow

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh suffered a 2-0 defeat against India in the SAFF U-17 Women's Championship in Thimphu on Friday, leaving their hopes of completing the circle of winning every age-group title in the balance.

The champions of under-16 event last year conceded conceded the opening goal in the 14th minute, goalkeeper Yearzan Begun failing to stop Pearl Fernandes' left-footed shot despite getting her hands to the ball.

Yearzan had come in for Meghla Roy, who had a rather unconvincing outfit against Bhutan, whom Bangladesh had beaten 3-1 in their opening match.

India continued their domination after the break and doubled the lead in the 76th minute when substitute Bonfilia Shullai volleyed home Alisha Lyngdoh's corner.

With one win from two games, Mahbubur Rahman Litu's charges sit second on the table with three points while favourites India are top of the four-team table with six points and a positive goal-difference of nine.

Nepal, too, have three points following their 2-1



win against Bhutan last night but have an inferior goal-difference to Bangladesh's while Bhutan are yet to open their account.

Litu criticised the team for their lacklustre display. "I think the whole team didn't play well today. The midfield and defence couldn't play proper football. We made some mistakes," Litu told media after the match.

"We will scrutinise these mistakes in the practice sessions and Insha'Allah we will bounce back strongly in the next match," the coach added.

SA HUMBLE HOSTS AUSTRALIA

Matthew Breetzke slammed a superb 88 and speedster Lungi Ngidi claimed five wickets as South Africa crushed Australia by 84 runs to win the second ODI and the three-match series 2-0 in Mackay on Friday. Breetzke's 78-ball knock and another 87-ball 74 from Tristan Stubbs helped the Proteas to 277 all out in 49.1 overs before Ngidi's five for 42 saw the visitors bundle out Australia for 193 in 37.4 overs.

» Only once previously have Australia been bundled out for under 200 in four consecutive ODIs at home, dating back to 2009.

» Australia have just one win in their last eight completed ODIs.

» Breetzke became only the second batter to go past 50 in each of his first four ODI innings -- after India's Navjot Singh Sidhu, who did that during the 1987 World Cup.

» South Africa have now won eight of the last 10 bilateral ODI series against Australia, including each of the last five. They have won 17 of the last 21 completed head-to-head ODIs.



PHOTO: AFP

Napoli start Scudetto defence with striker shortage

AGENCIES

Napoli's Serie A title defence begins under a cloud as striker Romelu Lukaku has been ruled out indefinitely ahead of Saturday's opener at Sassuolo.

The 32-year-old sustained a serious thigh injury in a friendly against Olympiacos and may need surgery, the club confirmed Monday. With reports suggesting Lukaku could be sidelined until November, coach Antonio Conte faces a striker shortage. Lorenzo Lucca appears the only option to lead the line and benefit from the creativity of Kevin De Bruyne and Scott McTominay.

Even if Conte's side flop on Saturday, titles are never won or lost on the opening day -- Napoli lost 3-0 at Hellas Verona last season but went on to claim the Scudetto.

Inter Milan also begin a new era on Monday as Cristian Chivu replaces Simone Inzaghi, who



departed after four years. Despite the coaching change, Inter retain much of last season's squad, which reached the Champions League final and finished Serie A runners-up. Chivu has pledged to give youth opportunities, yet veterans such as goalkeeper Yann Sommer and strikers Marcus Thuram and Lautaro Martinez will lead, with Francesco Pio Esposito waiting in the wings.

Inter could further strengthen if Atalanta's Ademola Lookman completes his transfer, giving

Chivu one of the league's most potent attacks. His challenge will be moulding that talent into consistent goals.

At AC Milan, Massimiliano Allegri's second stint has begun steadily. Their 2-0 Coppa Italia win over Bari showed the strength of a midfield featuring Christian Pulisic, Luka Modric, Ardon Jashari, and Youssouf Fofana. With no injury concerns, Allegri's success hinges on how he shapes that unit both defensively and offensively. Saturday's clash with promoted Cremonese will test the system.

Juventus, meanwhile, turn to Igor Tudor, known for his aggressive style, to restore discipline and ambition. His first test comes Sunday at home against Parma. With uncertainty over Dusan Vlahovic and Douglas Luiz, Tudor may rely on Jonathan David, backed by young talents Kenan Yildiz and Francisco Conceicao.

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