

Rinky brings long-distance running into focus

SPORTS REPORTER

Rinky Biswas capped a remarkable campaign at the 17th Summer Athletics Championships by setting a third consecutive national record on the final day at the National Stadium yesterday, urging the Bangladesh Athletics Federation (BAF) to put more focus on the country's long-distance runners.

Bangladesh Navy's Rinky clinched her fourth gold medal of the meet with a record-breaking performance in the 10,000m run, clocking 39:14.73.

Running barefoot for comfort, Rinky dominated the three-day competition, rewriting the record books in every long-distance event she entered. On the first two days, she set national records in the 5000m (18:20) and 3000m (10:27.6) events. She also claimed her maiden senior-level gold in the 1500m on the opening day, eventually winning the best female athlete of the championships.

In total, seven national records were set during the meet, with three coming on the final day alone.

Rinky does not want to stop here, as she aims to represent the country at international meets. BAF hardly ever sends long-distance runners to international events, but Rinky wants to change the narrative.

"The federation should consider sending long-distance runners to international meets. With proper training, diet, facilities, we can also deliver good results," she said.

Interestingly, Rinky was once on track to become a footballer. However, her endurance caught the eye of coach Dilip Chakrabarti, who introduced her to athletics at the Junior Championships in 2018. That same year, at

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Rinky Biswas
Long-distance runner

just 11 years old, the Narail native broke national record in 1500m. Her exploits attracted the attention of Bangladesh Navy, who brought her in as a contractual runner.

Since then, she has become one of the country's most dominant long-distance athletes. Though she has lost count of her gold medals over the past eight years, she vividly remembers when she set records in the 3000m (in 2019), 5000m (2021), and 10,000m (2022).

"With four golds this time, I think my medal tally has crossed 10," Rinky said after her latest triumph. "But what makes this special is that I managed to break [all my] records in all three long-distance events in a single competition while also winning every race I entered."

The Grade II student said her confidence stemmed from strong performances in training, where she had already broken national records. "I was confident I could achieve something big this time. I believed in myself, and I'm happy to have done it. Now, I hope Bangladesh Navy rewards me with a permanent job," she said.

Despite her success, Rinky believes she can go faster if given proper support. "I think I can improve my timing, but I need better training facilities from the federation and Bangladesh Navy," she added.

In the 200m events, Tareq Rahman and Sharifa Khatun emerged champions. Tareq won gold on his 200m debut, clocking 22.04 seconds after UK-based sprinter Imranur Rahman pulled out midway with a hamstring injury. His coach said Imranur will need two weeks to recover.

Sharifa edged veteran Shirin Akhter by a whisker, taking gold in 25.24 seconds. Shirin, a 16-time fastest woman, clocked 25.27 to settle for silver -- her second after losing the 100m crown to Sumiya Akhter on day one.

Bangladesh Army topped the medal tally with 26 gold, 21 silver, and 15 bronze medals. Bangladesh Navy followed with 13 gold, 16 silver, and 12 bronze, while Bangladesh Police finished third with one gold and two bronze medals.

SAFF U-17 WOMEN'S CHAMPIONSHIP

Bangladesh keep title hopes alive

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh kept their SAFF Women's U-17 Championship title hopes alive with a 3-0 victory over Nepal in their third group match on Sunday at the Changlimithang Stadium in Thimphu. While the performance wasn't particularly dominant, Mahbubur Rahman Litu's side secured a comfortable win courtesy of goals from Thuinuye Marma, Sauravi Akanda Prity, and Reya.

The result sees Bangladesh remain second in the four-team table with six points from three matches. India, who had previously beaten Bangladesh 2-0, lead the standings with a perfect record of nine points. Earlier in the day, India demolished Bhutan 8-0 and now boast a goal difference of +17, compared to Bangladesh's +3.

All four teams face each other twice in the tournament, with the return fixtures set for Tuesday -- Bangladesh will again take on Nepal, while India meet Bhutan.

Bangladesh could have in fact finished with a much bigger margin of victory had Prity, last year's U-16 top scorer, converted

more of her chances. She missed several opportunities, including a golden chance in the 35th minute after powering past multiple defenders, only to shoot wide from inside the box.

The breakthrough came six minutes later when Thuinuye fired into the top-left corner from just inside the box, capitalising on Nepal's failure to clear a cross from Mamoni Chakma. Four minutes after that, Prity doubled the lead with a strike from outside the area, punishing Nepal goalkeeper Laxmi Oli for rushing out to clear a long ball intended for Alpi Akter.

Bangladesh, however, struggled to maintain momentum in the second half. Nepal created more chances, with Sahara Limbu striking the post in the 55th minute before failing to beat goalkeeper Yearzan Bagum in a one-on-one just minutes later.

Prity came close again late in the match, hitting the near post twice, while Thuinuye also rattled the woodwork with a long-range effort. Eventually, substitute forward Reya sealed the win a minute before full-time, rounding the keeper and finishing confidently.



Exhausted yet relieved, Rinky Biswas drags herself across the finish line to set a women's 10,000m record -- her third in four events -- on the concluding day of the 17th Summer Athletics Championships at the National Stadium in Dhaka yesterday. (Inset) Country's fastest sprinter Imranur Rahman is stretchered off the field following a hamstring injury during the men's 200m event.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED



Uncertainty grows over BCB polls amid conspiracy claims

SPORTS REPORTER

Concerns and confusion over the upcoming elections of the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) continues to grow with Dhaka-based clubs hurling conspiracy allegations and the board showing no urgency even though the deadline is getting close.

According to Article 15.1 of the BCB constitution, the term of the board of directors would end

September 7.

With so little time left, the board officials should be busy in election-related tasks. But when this newspaper reached out to a top board official, he was unwilling to say whether there was any development and said many rumours were swirling around.

Another top official was yet to hear from the BCB honcho when the polls will take place, saying, "I have heard that the elections will be held

materialised yesterday as 76 Dhaka clubs under the banner of Dhaka Cricket Club Organisers' Association held a press conference, alleging conspiracy to sabotage the upcoming BCB elections.

"We have come to know that there is a conspiracy to run the board through an ad-hoc committee. The BCB constitution does not have provision for running the board through an ad-hoc committee. The current situation doesn't warrant an ad-hoc committee. We want elections," said the organisation's president Rafiqul Islam.

However, the organisers did not provide any evidence to support their allegations.

The club organisers also expressed concerns over the ad-hoc committees that are currently running the 60 district and five divisional cricket bodies.

"Many capable names have been removed from the ad-hoc committees. But there is no set rule that BCB councillors will have to be picked from the ad-hoc committee. We are hoping that capable people will become BCB councillors," Rafiqul added.

According to the current make-up of the BCB board of directors, 12 councillors come from Dhaka-based clubs, 10 from district and divisional bodies, two are nominated by the NSC, one comes from organisations.

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Rafiqul Islam
President of Dhaka Cricket Club Organisers' Association

four years from the date of its first meeting. The incumbent board held its first meeting on October 7, 2021, hence, the election would have to be held by October 7 this year.

In accordance with sections 9.1, 9.2 and 9.3 of the constitution, the BCB CEO has to notify the concerned parties for the nomination of councillors to form the next general assembly, and according to the timeline, it has to be done by

in the first week [of October] from board members but I have not heard it from the BCB president."

Another BCB director claimed that 'dirty games' are taking place, making him reconsider his participation in the polls. Recently, long-serving director Mahbub Anam had told a national daily that he will not participate in the polls.

With such insinuations going around, another development

Afghanistan name spin-heavy Asia Cup squad

AFP, Kabul

Fast-rising Afghanistan announced a spin-heavy squad on Sunday, led by Rashid Khan, for the upcoming T20 tri-series and Asia Cup to be played in UAE.

Along with Rashid, Afghanistan will have Noor Ahmad, Mujeeb Ur Rahman, Mohammad Nabi and uncapped AM Ghazanfar in the spin department as they play their first T20Is this year.

The tri-series, also involving Pakistan and the hosts UAE, starts in Sharjah on Friday, while the six-nation Asia Cup begins on September 9.

Fazlhaq Farooqi, Naveen-ul-Haq, Azmatullah Omarzai, and Gulbadin Naib are the fast-bowling options.

Afghanistan face Pakistan in the opening match of the tri-series on Friday.

For the Asia Cup, Afghanistan are drawn in Group B with Bangladesh, Hong Kong and Sri Lanka.

Afghanistan face Hong Kong in the opening match of the Asia Cup in Abu Dhabi on September 9.

Afghanistan also announced a series of three one-day internationals and three T20Is with Bangladesh after the Asia Cup, also in the UAE.

The T20Is are on October 2, 3 and 5 in Sharjah, while the ODIs will be played from 8-14 in Abu Dhabi.

‘All good things must come to an end’

AFP, Mumbai

Batter Cheteshwar Pujara announced his retirement from all forms of Indian cricket on Sunday, bringing an end to an international sporting career that spanned over a decade.

Pujara has played 103 Tests and five ODIs, last featuring for India in the World Test Championship 2023 final against Australia.

The batter made his Test debut for India in 2010 and throughout his playing journey racked up 7,195 Test runs at an average of 43.60.

On Sunday, the 37-year-old said he was hanging up his boots, noting that "all good things must come to an end".

"Wearing the Indian jersey, singing the anthem, and trying my best each time I stepped on the field -- it's impossible to put into words what it truly meant," Pujara said in a social media post.

"But as they say, all good things must come to an end, and with immense gratitude, I have decided to retire from all forms of Indian cricket."

"As a little boy from the small town of Rajkot, along with my parents, I set out to aim for the stars, and dreamt to be a part of the Indian cricket team," the cricketer continued.

"Little did I know then that this game would give me so much -- invaluable opportunities, experiences, purpose, love, and above all a chance to represent my state and this great nation."

Pujara, a rare five-day specialist in the age of T20 and white-ball performers, has in the past attributed his staying power to discipline.

"I have certain routines, fitness, little bit of meditation," he told reporters in 2023.



AUSSIES SALVAGE PRIDE IN STYLE

For the first time, the top three of Australia smashed tons as Cameron Green, Travis Head, and Mitchell Marsh all reached three figures in their record-breaking 276-run win over South Africa in the third and final ODI on Sunday in Mackay. Playing for pride after already conceding the series 2-0, Australia posted an ominous 431-2 before bundling the visitors out for 155 in 24.5 overs.

🔥 431-2 is Australia's second-highest ODI total, behind only the 434-4 scored against South Africa in 2006.

🔥 The 276-run win was Australia's second-biggest ODI victory (by runs) after their 309-run victory over the Netherlands in the 2023 World Cup.

🔥 It was also South Africa's heaviest ODI defeat, surpassing the 243-run loss to India in the 2023 World Cup.

🔥 Despite the heavy defeat, South Africa have now won more ODI series against Australia (9) than against any other opponent.

🔥 Cameron Green, unbeaten on 118 off 55, raced to his maiden ODI ton in just 47 balls -- scoring the second-fastest ton by an Australian after Glenn Maxwell's 40-ball ton against the Netherlands in the 2023 World Cup.

🔥 Mitchell Marsh's 100 off 106 helped him reach exactly 3000 runs in the format. This was also his maiden ton as ODI skipper.

🔥 Cooper Connolly (5-22) recorded the best figures by an Australian spinner in ODIs. At 22 years, 2 days, he became the youngest Australian to claim a five-for in the format.

PHOTO: AFP