



# GoodSport NEWS

S R I L A N K A O L Y M P I C W E E K L Y N E W S B U L L E T I N

**SPORTS NEWS**

*Commonwealth and Asian Games preparations*



**ON YOUR  
MARK.**

**GET  
SET!!!!**

**O**n your mark. Get set..... well; ladies and gentlemen now it is time to focus and set your target on how we Lankans are completing the final leg of preparations for the Commonwealth and Asian Games which are lined up in a perimeter of approximately four months in mid-2022.

Customarily GoodSport once again is running the extra yard focusing upon preparation and take you through the pros and cons of the exercise of letting you how it's going to be through the eyes of experts.

The ice-breaker for this would be athletics. By far the most popular of the events in the module of the Commonwealth Games and the Asian Games and going through the motions of building up the momentum is none other than youthful junior commonwealth games triple gold medalist (short distance) Shehan Ambepitiya who once was tagged as the fastest man in South Asia.



GoodSport inquired – “Considering the upcoming Commonwealth and Asian Games the track and field segment how ready are these athletes to are going to be ....

"It is a huge task indeed? Yet, between the lines the authority also given the message to the effect that there will be no freebies at these at these games. Qualification will be the open sesame for participation.

From page 01

Ambepitiya who is really in the midst of the build-up said “It’s really a huge task when it comes to Asian Games and the Commonwealth Games. What I believe is that the Commonwealth Games when it comes athletics, it’s quite a task. Because when you take the Commonwealth globe; except for the US most of the other big guns are on the track. So, at the Commonwealth Games athletics may be a difficult proposition—there is Jamaica and the other Caribbean nations, then some of the European challenges then Australia and New Zealand and it is a different challenge, most of these countries produce good track and field athletes.

However, when it comes to the Asian Games, I feel that we have a huge potential in winning several medals. Even in the past Sri Lanka has won eleven gold medals at the Asian Games and out of which ten have been brought home by the athletes.”

At that point GoodSport pointed out that nonetheless Sri Lanka has not won any athletics medals during the past two to three Asian Games?

Ambepitiya observed “What I do believe is that we have always been there. If you delve into the performances during the past couple competitions, we have been in some good positions. In the 400metres we became the fourth.

“There was an instance in the 4 x 400 relay we ended up in the fourth position. So, we have been there and in contention for a medal and not rank outsiders.

“I feel we have the potential, but then again, we have not had a really good plan. We won the last Asian Games medal in athletics in the year 2002 in Busan and there has been blank sheet in athletics thereafter. I believe the reason is that we do not have a proper plan prior to the Asian Games.

**“ Considering the up-coming Commonwealth and Asian Games the track and field segment how ready are these athletes to are going to be .... It is a huge task indeed?”**

“Now if you take the 2022 Asian Games in athletics, I do not think that we are ready for it or we have a proper plan to face the challenge and win medals. Now at these games we have some good athletes but do we have a plan? How are going convert these opportunities to medals? So, what I believe is we have another six months and if we start from today, we might be able convert these potential athletes into medal winners.

Continued on Page 03



Yupun on lane 5 at the TOKYO 2020 Olympics

From page 02

GoodSport then asked what about the lack of real international exposure in a planned manner?

“Exactly that is the reason. That is what I have been talking about. We should have a plan as to how we could give international exposure to these athletes.

“They should be competing at regular intervals and enhance their exposure and only then that the athletes could convert that experience into Asian and other high-end medals. But, I have not seen any athletes competing in any international events – may be last year there were less openings because of the Pandemic, but if you take Yupun Abeykone who is the current 100metres national champion in Sri Lanka; he is training in Italy.

“He is based in Italy and he have had the opportunity to take part in many international events. That is why he got the opportunity to be a part of the 2020 Olympics also.

“Then there is the high jumper Ushan Thivanka. He is out High Jump champion. He got many opportunities because he is based in the United States of America. He improved his performances. When it comes to Asian Games my trump card would be Ushan Thivanka – the High Jumper while for Yupun it would be a task. In China there is 100m runner who does a 9.5secs.



*Ushan Thiwanka has a lot of promise*

Then we have the 4 x 400 relay. Women’s long jump, the men’s long jump and there is the women’s 800metres. We have four to five potential athletes but, we have to go with a proper medal winning plan.

***“We should have a plan as to how we could give international exposure to these athletes.***

***They should be competing at regular intervals and enhance their exposure and only then that the athletes could convert that experience into Asian and other high-end medals.”***

“However, except for these two athletes none of the other athletes have quality international exposure. As a result, the others have not elevated themselves as expected. What our athletes need is international exposure.

Then GoodSport queried about the upcoming talent and any one noteworthy?

Ambepitiya said “We have several programmes to identify young athletes like Crysbro Next Champ. There we identify talented young athletes and groom them for the next Commonwealth and Asian Games and the Junior Asian Championships as well.

“I believe such programmes will give the opportunities to the next generation of Sri Lankan athletes who are knocking on the door.”

# BRITISH COUNCIL AND BIRMINGHAM 2022 COMMONWEALTH GAMES LAUNCH SCHOOL-LINKING PARTNERSHIP

**60** schools in the West Midlands have been twinned with 60 schools across 10 Commonwealth countries.

Pupils will learn about other cultures in the Commonwealth through a programme of sports and arts Programme launched with a live link up between Thorns Collegiate Academy in Brierley Hill and Kotagaloluwa Sri Jinarathana Junior School in Sri Lanka Pupils from the West Midlands took part in a video call with children in Sri Lanka at the official launch of Commonwealth Connections – a partnership between the British Council and the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games.

The project links 60 primary, secondary and special schools in the West Midlands with 60 schools across 10 Commonwealth countries.

Through the twinning project young people will explore cultures and beliefs and learn how to communicate with people from different backgrounds and perspectives through a programme of sporting and artistic activities.

Attending the launch at Thorns Collegiate Academy in Dudley were teachers and pupils from six schools in the Dudley area who took part in a live link up with six schools in Sri Lanka.

The pupils from each country took turns to perform demonstrations over a live video link.

The children in Sri Lanka showed off their martial arts skills while pupils in the UK performed a fusion dance.

They were joined by Commonwealth Championships gold medalist Tom Davis and Paralympic gold medallist Liz Johnson – both athlete mentors for the Youth Sport Trust – and Birmingham 2022 mascot Perry the Bull. The event included team building and leadership development activities.

It was officially launched by UK Commonwealth Envoy Jo Lomas, Kate Ewart-Biggs deputy chief executive of the British Council, and Alton Brown, Head of Youth Programmes and Policy at Birmingham 2022.

The £500k project is co-funded by the Commonwealth Games Organising Committee and the British Council.

The British Council is delivering the project in partnership with Birmingham Education Partnership (BEP) and the children’s charity the Youth Sport Trust (YST).

BEP has nominated its flagship Birmingham ArtsSchool to lead on delivery of the arts and culture strand of the project.

The project will run until July 2022 and will build excitement among young people and their communities in the build up to the 2022 Commonwealth Games in Birmingham. British Council deputy chief executive Kate Ewart-Biggs said: “It’s important to get children thinking internationally and learning about different cultures around the world.



From page 04

"We're proud to have used our long-established network of schools and education leaders around the world to provide these international connections. The Games are a fantastic opportunity to develop relationships with other Commonwealth countries by bringing people together."

Birmingham 2022 Head of Youth Programmes & Policy Alton Brown said: "It was fantastic to see the children engaging and sharing experiences with pupils from Sri Lanka. The Commonwealth Connections programme allows schools from across the globe to be inspired by the Games and learn about sport, arts and culture from different parts of the world. As part of our Youth Programme, we are creating opportunities for children and young people and celebrating them as our next generation of changemakers."

Project Arts Lead, representing BEP and Birmingham Arts School, Julie Ward said: "Arts and cultural activities can provide powerful learning tools that go beyond text books helping to build confidence and important life skills. When applied to international exchange contexts the dialogue that takes place offers new insights for the participants as they share the things they love about where they live and address the challenges facing them. The children of today's Commonwealth are the creative problem-solvers of tomorrow. This project puts them on the world stage and gives them a head start. We should all be very proud of them."



Commonwealth Games Paralympic gold medallist and Youth Sport Trust Athlete Mentor, Liz Johnson, said: "Sport has such power to bring people together and break down barriers."

"I'm so excited to be involved in this programme and to share my experiences with young people across the Commonwealth. They will have the amazing opportunity to connect with others who go to schools elsewhere in the world and live completely different lives to them."

"On Children's Mental Health Week, this programme is a timely reminder of the important and powerful role sport can play in young people's lives, fostering inclusive environments, building connections between schools, and developing empathy and trust among young people."

Andy Street, the Mayor of the West Midlands, said: "The Commonwealth Games this summer will be so much more than just 11 days of sporting spectacle."

"They will help provide a wonderful rallying moment to inspire the next generation and connect young people from across the Commonwealth with one another. That's why the Commonwealth Connections programme is so important, as it will encourage pupils to respect & understand different cultures, beliefs and backgrounds. I look forward to seeing the programme in full swing as it brings people together in lots of different & delightful ways."

Cllr Ian Ward, Leader of Birmingham City Council, said: "One of the many reasons we bid for the Commonwealth Games was the knowledge that the event has the power to bring people together in the city and the region."

"Programmes like this, where the Games are a catalyst, are helping build bridges between school pupils here and their peers in the rest of the world, which can only be a good thing for our future. These really are shaping up to the Games for Everyone."

## ASIAN GAMES 2022: INDIAN CRICKET TEAM UNLIKELY TO TAKE PART

*India have not sent a cricket team to the Asian Games in two previous editions, citing international commitments.*

The men's and women's Indian cricket teams are likely to skip the Asian Games 2022 in Hangzhou, China due to prior commitments and scheduling issues.

Cricket at Asian Games 2022 will be played in the T20 format and will be held between September 10 and 25, just weeks ahead of the men's T20 World Cup in October.

Reportedly, the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI), which is the governing body for the sport in the country, does not want to risk injury to their players before the big-ticket event.

Meanwhile, the Indian women's cricket team has a white-ball tour of England scheduled on the same dates as the Asian Games 2022.

"As far as the Asian Games in Hangzhou is concerned, a final decision on whether to send both men's and women's teams will be taken later and based on our existing commitments," BCCI secretary Jay Shah told Reuters.

In July last year, India fielded two separate cricket teams simultaneously at the international stage.

While the Virat Kohli-led team was camped in England, another squad led by Shikhar Dhawan toured Sri Lanka.

It was the first time since 1998 that India had split their cricket teams. Back then, one team competed at the Commonwealth Games in Malaysia while the other faced Pakistan in Canada in the Sahara Cup.

The BCCI, however, has confirmed that they will give preference to bilateral series, especially after the COVID-19 pandemic.

"The BCCI has always stood by member boards and helped them in these difficult times. The board firmly believes in honouring its bilateral commitments," Jay Shah added.

Cricket has featured at the Asian Games twice – in 2010 and 2014 – but India did not send a team on both occasions due to international commitments.

Bangladesh and Sri Lanka have won a gold medal each in the men's cricket tournaments while Pakistan clinched the title in the women's event in both editions.

Apart from the Asian Games, cricket also makes a comeback to the Commonwealth Games this year.

The Indian women are one of the eight sides slated to take part in the Commonwealth Games 2022 T20 cricket tournament, which begins on July 29.



# *Congratulations !*



TABLE TENNIS UP AND COMING SENSATION SENURA SILVA HAS DONE IT AGAIN. THIS TIME HE HAS TAKEN PART IN THE WORLD TABLE TENNIS YOUTH CHAMPIONSHIPS IN SPA, BELGIUM AND METZ, FRANCE. HE QUALIFIED FOR THE FIRST 64 ROUND IN THE U17 AND U19 AGE CATEGORIES IN BOTH TOURNAMENTS.

