



# 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

## WHAT'S HOLDING BACK FOR AN ASIAN GAMES MEDAL FOR SRI LANKA?

*Can we see the light and the end of the breast tape?*

Chronicle says that when Sri Lanka gained its Independence from the British in 1948, Sri Lanka was ahead of many Asian nations and had economic and social indicators comparable to Japan.

Sri Lanka's social indicators were considered "exceptionally high". Literacy was already 21.7% by the late 19<sup>th</sup> century.

In short the little island was on par or above most of the other Asian brethren.

In sports too, Sri Lanka was not short of talent. When the first Asian Games - The 1951 Asian Games - was a multi-sport event celebrated in New Delhi, India from 4 to 11 March 1951 began; Sri Lanka had its own representation.

Pole-Vaulter M. A. Akbar won the first Asian Medal for Sri Lanka with a Silver and up to 1978 the little islanders were regular performers in the medal tally.

Then came the twelve year medal less break till in 1970 Golfer Nandaseena Perera and short distance runner Sriyantha Dissanayake accounted for two silver and a bronze and this pattern continued with the inclusion of Susanthika Jayasinge, Damayathi Dharsha, Sugath Tillekeratne, Sriyani Kulawansa and a host of others.

Yet, thereafter the others in the Asian circuit - especially in the Chinese quarter in the ilk of China, Japan, South Korea changed gear and converted themselves into the real -

Olympic circuit while some of the others reaped medals working to their own strengths. Sri Lanka when won their last track and field medal in 2006 when they bagged a silver and three bronze.

Yes, 2014 Sri Lanka were the recipients of a gold and a bronze, but that came via cricket from the men and the women respectively.

The medal less Lankan track and field yawn was rolled out in 2006. Now for the past 16 years no Lankan athlete has stepped to the Asian Games podium and that is too bad for a nation with special sporting talent like Susanthika Jayasinghe, Muttiah Muralitharan and Sanath Jayasuriya.

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Now comes the Asian games again which occurs every 4 years. Hangzhou the Chinese host city of 2022 Asian games was all set for the extravaganza, but postponed the games to September 2023 due to the pandemic conditions in China. One now prays that the pandemic is really over.

Athletics is the Sri Lanka's most successful sport at the Asian Games which won 10 out of 11 gold medals, 6 out of 11 silver medals and 11 out of 24 bronze medals, from the total medal tally which Sri Lanka won for the last 72 years' history of Asian games.

However, every edition of the Asiad brings a different level of competition.

With 9 months to go for the 2023 edition it's too early to make predictions, but this effort is to make a comparison between Sri Lanka's best performance and Asia's best performance for 2022 in each and every athletics events and find out our medal prospects for 2023 Asian games.

Yupun Abeykoon, 2022 commonwealth games medalist and the most successful Sri Lankan sprinter in the recent past is also the fastest man of Asia for the year 2022.

The rivalry between China and Japan for the sprinting supremacy and the growing performance levels of South East Asian region will make a good competitive ground for Yupun and the men's sprint double.

Gayanthika Aberathna is the only Sri Lankan athlete who has the Asia's best two performances in 2022.

Her 800m record breaking performances in February (2:01.44) and at the Commonwealth Games in August (2:01.20) has proven her consistency throughout the season. If she can continue her super form in 2023, Gayanthika would be the best medal hope of the 2023 Asian Games.



*Yupun Abeykoon*



*Sarangi Silva*



*Gayanthika Abeyratne*



*Ushan Perera*

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Sarangi Silva, the best ever female Long Jumper produced by Sri Lanka leaped 6.65m in February 2022 and ranked 2nd in Asia for the year 2022. If she can register a jump above 6.50 in the final, it would be a medal winning performance. 2018 Asian games Gold medal winning performance was 6.55m.

High Jump Sri Lanka record holder Ushan Thiwanaka Perera (if he is taking part), Javelin Sri Lanka record holder Sumedha Ranasinghe and the 3000m steeplechase Sri Lanka record holder Nilani Rathnayaka have performed brilliantly well in 2022.

However, the world's best athletes will compete with Ushan, Sumedha and Nilani in their respective disciplines;

High Jump World Champion Mutaz Barshim, world silver medalist Woo and world finalist Tomohiro are Asian athletes, Javelin throw Olympic Champion Neeraj Chopra and Commonwealth Games champion Arshad Nadeem are Asian athletes, 3000 m steeplechase world champion Norah Jeruto and world No.4 Winfred Yavi are Asian athletes. With these giants our champions must produce their very best to make a match with them.

2017 Javelin throw Asian Silver medalist Dilhani Lekamge and quarter miler Kalinga Kumarage are in their best form of lives in 2022.

Also the men's 4x400m relay team will get a chance to perform their best and win a medal at 2023 Asian Games.

However, A full season of Athletics ahead before the Asian Games 2023. So there is ample room for young talents to be blossom.

Hope 2023 Hangzhou will be a memorable exercise at Asian Games for Sri Lanka out of all 19 editions.



*Sumedha Ranasinghe*



*Dilhani Lekamge*



*Nilani Rathnayaka*



*Kalinga Kumarage*

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## An analytical comparison of SL athletes with Asian bests for 2023 Asian Games

2018 Asian Games Gold	MEN			Event	WOMEN			2018 Asian Games Gold
	2022 Asian No 1	2022 SL No 1	SL Asian pool Standard		SL Asian pool standard	2022 SL No 1	2022 Asian No 1	
9.92	9.96	9.96	10.14	100m	11.40	11.63	11.05	11.30
20.23	20.13	20.37	20.46	200m	23.46	24.40	22.43	22.96
44.89	45.08	45.70	45.83	400m	52.68	53.73	51.18	50.09
1:46.15	1:45.22	1:51.13	1:47.02	800m	2:01.20	2:01.20	2:01.20	2:01.80
3:44.72	3:36.55	3:46.12	3:39.46	1500m	4:11.40	4:11.45	4:05.30	4:07.88
13:43.17	13:10.69	14:34.26	13:29.80	5000m	15:23.49	16:17.24	14:45.69	15:08.08
29:00.29	27:23.64	30:31.51	27:57.72	10,000m	32:30.21	35:01.28	30:17.64	32:07.23
13.34	13.10	14.05	13.47	110m Hurdles / 100m Hurdles	13.14	13.70	12.73	13.20
47.66	48.89	51.41	49.65	400m Hurdles	56.90	58.73	55.61	55.30
8:22.79	8:11.20	8:57.12	8:32:01	3000m Steeplechase	9:40.20	9:40.24	8:53:02	9:36.52
2.30	2.37	2.27	2.25	High Jump	1.83	1.70	1.97	1.96
5.70	5.94	5.15	5.55	Pole Vault	4.20	3.71	4.60	4.60
8.24	8.36	8.03	8.10	Long Jump	6.46	6.65	6.67	6.55
16.77	17.31	16.61	16.80	Triple Jump	13.61	13.40	14.04	14.26
20.75	20.75	16.95	19.18	Shot Put	17.11	13.49	20.39	19.66
65.71	62.03	45.61	59.43	Discus Throw	57.03	41.65	69.12	65.12
76.88	74.78	50.54	70.64	Hammer Throw	67.56	47.05	74.47	71.42
88.06	90.18	82.18	80.51	Javelin Throw	59.10	59.41	65.68	66.09
7878	8008	7172*	7368	Decathlon / Heptathlon	5311	4569*	6072	6026
1:22:04	1:18:53	1:34.09	-	20km Race Walk	-	1:50:58	1:27:14	1:29:15
2:18:22*	2:05:28	2:29:47	-	Marathon	-	-	2:20:02	2:34:51*
38.16	38.56	40.37	39.21	4 x 100m	44.11	45.35	42.93	42.73
3:00.56	2:59.51	3:06.05	3:06.00	4 x 400m	3:37.99	-	3:33.34	3:28.72

# NO DRUG 'COVER-UP' IN KENYAN ATHLETICS - LORD COE

There is "no suggestion" that there has been any state-sponsored drug cheating in Kenyan athletics despite a series of high-profile doping scandals, says World Athletics President Lord Coe.

Kenya avoided joining Russia in being banned from international competition in November after other nations voiced their concern to the sport's global governing body.

Russia has received several bans after a 2016 report found evidence of a state-sponsored doping programme across many sports - but when it comes to athletics, 40% of those currently serving bans are Kenyan.

"We took a different approach to Kenya from the approach we took with Russia because they were two different cases," Coe told a joint media conference in Nairobi where he praised the work being done by the Kenyan government.

"The case against Russia was about cover ups that were planned at the state authority level, but there is no suggestion that this is the case in Kenya. In fact, quite the reverse.

"The fact that all these agencies are in alignment and prepared to work alongside World Athletics and the Athletic Integrity Unit is a very, very important statement."

Kenya's sports minister, Abadu Namwamba, has pledged to spend \$25m over the next five years to clean up the sport and also hopes to turn doping into a criminal offence.

"Rather than hide from these grim statistics, rather than bury our head in the sand like the proverbial ostrich, we have accepted the challenge," he said.

"We have agreed that we have a problem and we have moved on to prepare on how to confront that problem head on."

Coe chose Kenya as the destination for his first international tour of 2023, meeting not only Namwamba but also the country's new president, William Ruto, national governing body Athletics Kenya, anti-doping authorities and a number of athletes.

"The journey will be a long journey," he warned.

"We should not kid ourselves that this is going to be achieved overnight. But the goal is worth it."

Coe added that he was "pleased" with the commitment that Kenya's authorities had shown, and especially Ruto.

But he stressed that while "plans are all fine and dandy," the task now was to implement and monitor those plans "to make sure that we are making the right kind of progress".

Starting this year, Kenya is expected to increase the number of annual drug tests to 3,000 as well as expand its educational programme.

"Sports is what brands Kenya more than anything else," Namwamba added. "Athletics gives Kenya the global image we enjoy - and we cannot put that reputation at risk."

Seventeen Kenyan athletes failing doping tests in 2022, while a total of 55 are currently serving bans.



Among the officials and athletes Lord Coe met on his visit was African and Commonwealth 100m champion Ferdinand Omanyala (third from right)

# NEW KING AWAITS THE RACQUET GAME — NATIONALS STARTS ON MONDAY

In this part of the world, the Sun does not fail to give a new life to another day, but at times it comes with a new deliverance.

On January 16 2023 will dawn with the sounds of the bugle horn announcing to the request world especially in Sri Lanka, that they are looking for a new king.

King Niluka who reigned the Lankan Badminton World for more than a few moons decided to relinquish the crown after adorning it on 17 straight occasions.

Now there is a calm before the storm and the world of Badminton awaits the next king. The million-dollar question is; will it be another Karunaratne.

The news is Dinuka, a sibling of King Niluka Karunaratne has flown down from Land of King Charles looking to retain the Badminton crown in their heirloom.

As things are the 70<sup>th</sup> Badminton Nationals will be that much more interesting with a lot of prying eyes awaiting the new king.

The court yard will be the MBA arena and dates will be from 16<sup>th</sup> to 22<sup>nd</sup> January.

Besides Dinuka, there are a host of other suiters looking for this enviable crown. Sri Lanka's front line players are sure to be in attendance.

As conducted in previous years too, the Badminton Nationals encompass the Senior and Junior Championships, with latest indications putting the number of entries at well over 1000 drawn from all parts of the country. Notably, this will be the 70<sup>th</sup> Senior Nationals and the 38<sup>th</sup> Junior Nationals.



Sri Lanka Badminton (SLB) will leave no stone unturned to put together a blockbuster tournament that will bring out the best talent in the country.

Sri Lanka's best players back from their recent

The top contenders will be, Buvaneka Goonathilaka, Sachin Dias, Ranthushka Karunatileke, Rasindu Hendahewa, Viren Nettasinghe and Dumindu Abeywickrama and more.

The Women's crown will be contested by Thilini Hendahwa, Kavidi Sirimanage, Nadeesha Gayanthi, Ranithma Liyanage and Varangana Jayawardena.

Yet who knows – there may be unknown flower blooming down Longden Place.

experiences at the Commonwealth Games and other regional international tournaments, are preparing to put on their best performances, which will greatly influence their Ranking and entry into the national pools for 2023.

The tournament, which was not held in 2022, has garnered over 1,500 player registrations this year, reaching close to 1,700 in total. The junior section posted close to 1,300, while the open event drew 84 entries for the men's events and over 40 for the women's events.