

Pakistan end gold drought

By Manik Banerjee, Guest Writer

Indian and Pakistani swimmers shared the glory in the pool yesterday, bagging a gold each out of the two finals which were held on the day at the Mirpur pool.

While Sebastian Xavier collected the fifth SAF swimming gold for India, winning the 200 metres individual medley, Pakistan picked up their first gold in this seven-nation meet through their quartet — Muhammed Maroof Bilal Bux, Shabir Hussain and Kamal Salman Masud — who pipped India in the 4x200m freestyle relay.

The 200m IM saw Xavier, favourite to win this event, retaining his title won at Colombo two years ago. He led all the way from the start. Xavier clocked 2 min 16.90 seconds and was followed by compatriot young Jayateertharao Abhijit who timed 2 min 19.82 seconds for the silver. Sri Lankan Ghaffar Dulapandan took the bronze in 2 min 22.19 secs.

Unlike the day's first event, the 4x200m freestyle relay was keenly contested between holders India and Pakistan.

Pakistan forged ahead at the outset through Muhammad Maroof who, with powerful strokes, finished a couple of metres ahead of Sebastian Xavier who failed to live up to his expectation in this event. Pakistan's second swimmer Bilal Bux buttressed the lead as Sanjib Tokas also failed to make up the gap. But at the end of 400 metres, young Abhijit put up a fine show and not only caught up with Pakistan's Sabir Hussain Shah, he also provided India a little lead which, however, went in vain as the anchorman Rajiv Nagpal frittered away the chance. Pakistan's last swimmer, 13-year-old Kamal Salman Masud surged ahead to snatch the lead again after the last turning and finished two strokes ahead of Nagpal.

Pakistan's 8 min 18.47 seconds which clocked 8 min 19.93 secs; Sri Lanka finished about half a length behind to take the bronze with 8m 29.80 seconds. The Bangladeshi quartet finished behind them. According to source close to...



The Pakistani quartet of Muhammed Maroof, Bilal Bux, Sabir Hussain and Kamal Salman Masud, who won the 4x200m freestyle-relay gold with Games record time of 8:18.47 seconds. —Star photo

the Indian swimming camp. Rajiv Nagpal is yet to recover from the cold and cough he was suffering before starting from Delhi.

After completion of eight events over the past three days, India have so far collected 5 golds, 4 silvers and a bronze.

According to Indian coach K V Sharma, India should get the major share out of the remaining swimming eight golds. He said that while Sebastian Xavier should win the titles in the 50m freestyle tomorrow, Bhanu Sachdeva should find no problem in the 200m backstroke today. Besides Suresh Kumar and Abhijit are favourites in the 100m butterfly tomorrow and

400m individual medley respectively. According to the forms displayed so far the 4x100m medley relay Sunday should also go India's way.

The 200m and 400m freestyle titles are likely to be clinched by the Sri Lankans.

Hosts Bangladesh should have another swimming gold today in the 100m breast-stroke.

Qamar Mizarun Rahman, who won the 200m race of this version Tuesday with a time of 2 min 40 seconds, should start as the favourite. The event is scheduled for 11:45 am.

Competition, however, starts at eleven this morning. Three finals and two heats are scheduled.

It hardly matters who wins

By Manash Chakraborty, Guest Writer



Is SAF football the weakest tournament in the world? Standardwise may be, but competitionwise the answer is certainly yes.

To clinch in the championship, a team has to play only three matches. But this is the last chance for the six teams, vying for the medal, to wrap up things so easily. Because, from the next SAF Games, Uzbekistan and Afghanistan will take part in football. Uzbekistan, an old state of the former Soviet Union, is a formidable side. They play European style of soccer, and with their inclusion the competitive flavour of the meet will be so much greater.

Rinat Dasayev, the renowned Soviet goalkeeper, hails from this country and, in all probability, will be in charge of the national team within a short time. Pakhtakore, one of the top Uzbek teams, which came to Calcutta to play the centenary IFA Shield only last month, showed their prowess and carried the shield to their country. There are at least four players in the squad who have good offers from the European clubs, including those from Italy. So India, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka will face stiff challenge from them in the forthcoming Madras Games two years from now.

The fear is not unjustified since the subcontinent is still stuck in the football of the Seventies. Total football, in the shape of the 4-4-2 format, was introduced by Holland in the 1974 World Cup. But till today we are playing the same type of soccer, which is obsolete.

These days, the top teams of the world usually play in a 3-5-2 or even a 3-6-1 formation, with the two central midfielders playing as fore sweepers and sweep from their own penalty box upto the

opponents' 18-yards area. The counter-attack starts from the moment the striker loses the ball. In other words, the attack starts in the opponents' defensive zone. And most of the goals are scored by midfielders or the defenders. Dependence on strikers are less these days. They usually disturb the defenders, and goals come from behind.

But here in South Asia, we follow the primitive style. For goals we look towards Vijayan or Mamun Joarder or Roshan Ramanajee or Md Noman. We cannot dream that Arif Hossain Moon or Satyen are capable of scoring goals. Moreover, in the era of defensive football, the time and area in the midfield are very scarce. No one will spare an inch to the opponent. Hence, for scoring goals dead-ball situations are the only weapon. The corners, the free-kicks and, if luck permits, the penalties are to be transformed into goals. Who scored the winning goal for Germany in last World Cup final? It was Andre Brehme from a penalty kick.

Most of the European teams depend on these dead-ball situations. But in one or two cases, we are the weakest. In the four matches we have seen so far in the current SAF Games, hardly any free-kick and corner kick is worth mentioning. And today Bangladesh is out from the Gold hunt for not converting the penalty which they got in the Maldives match.

It seems that our coaches do not give so much stress on these finer aspects of modern soccer and as a result we are miles away from true international standards. So, whoever wins the tournament, it is immaterial: it is football which is defeated here. That is the most disheartening factor of this relatively poor tournament.

Of lungis, denims and angry mullahs

Asoka Goonetilleke, Guest Writer

For God's sake, get back to your white house now, you are tired enough! Have a good shower, eat, and sleep! Don't drink!

Aye, Aye, Aye, Sir! It was 10.30 pm then, and I was dreaming of a sea of Arrack. Here, I was going to bed, with a rickshaw-wallah.

You, my sweet smelling rickshaw-wallah! I like the way you pedal your noisy machine. But raise your lungi a little for me to see how your thigh muscles work. Ooops! Look at the shoulder movements, just like that of a 20-kg walker. That beautifully brown turban! The way the tail of the turban (gamchha) flies in the air! Better tie that up, man, it might get entangled in the wheels. How would you feel if it really gets jammed in the wheel. You have no breaks, no lights and absolutely no mercy with Takas.

Tell me, how to close my eyes? My wife wants a kurta. Cut pieces for jackets. Son wants a remote controlled car, and the daughter wants stone-wash Levis denims. And I have to pay for laundry, taxi, phone calls and so on. Eat, drink, dance... mmm, oh no. Not that, at any cost. On top of all that, this recurring headache. Just leave my head you damn acher! Please!

There is the start list coming for the marathon. Who will win? Karunaratne of Sri Lanka, with his last SAF best — 2:24.33? Or his archrival, V K L Samarasinghe, who returned to the circuit after a long lay off? Samarasinghe needed 2:16.00 hrs to pass this gruelling test of endurance in Calcutta. It was a

gold then, now plating gone off. It may (not) be Bhadr Thapa of Nepal (2:37.00)? I don't care, chum. Give me the gold for sitting tight for nearly 2.5 hours braving the chilly and humid weather on that morning.

How many golds could Sri Lanka really win? More than 44? Athletics! Give me about twenty, my dream! Their football? Something is better than nothing, as you did not win anything in Colombo. OK, let's go for the bronze!

Boxers must be waiting for me, I'm dead sure. I know, you've not forgotten the way I hit you with the pen. It was not below the belt, I presume. Also, the judokas. Please, don't throw me out of the window. I gripped all of you back at home. It was merely to take you to Dhaka!

My wife hates boxing, though I've challenged her many a times. Remember the last challenge, I mean the eve of my departure to Dhaka? For your good luck, you were in the red corner.

It is good, that women were not allowed to take part in the swimming competition. Back in Islamabad, Reeth Abraham of India, Dileema Peterson of Sri Lanka, both long jumpers, were pelted by some uncontrollable spectators. Pakistani police gave them the deserved ejection. I saw it with my own Japanese eyes.

If I buy a blue denim for my daughter there should be a T shirt to match it. The suit is not complete without a matching pair of shoes. It is big money my darling Kannya (daughter?). When she wears that beautiful suit, imported from Bangladesh, her good friend might feel jealous. Kids are kids. That tiny tot calls me uncle, which I hate. If I buy two suits, one for my daughter, one for her friend, I'm sure my wife will fire at me. "You should have bought two jute bags instead of denims. After all, Bangladesh is world famous for her jute products."

(Wah... Wah... Wah. My dear friend, I told you to bring coffee. Not tea. Just check your horrible watch! It is 6.00 am now.)

German IAAF member dies

DARMSTADT, Germany, Dec 23: Germany's August Kirsch, a council member of world track's governing body, has died at the age of 68, reports AP.

The German Athletics Federation (DLV) said Thursday that Kirsch, a member of the International Amateur Athletic Federation Council since 1981, died Wednesday night at Cologne's University Hospital, near his home in Bergisch Gladbach. Kirsch had also been vice-president of the German Olympic Committee since 1977 and the honorary president of the DLV since 1985.

Nothing was normal in 1993

NEW YORK, Dec 23: James Miller interrupted a heavyweight championship fight by crashing into the ring with a paraglider. Promoter Don King addressed candidates for an advanced degree at a prestigious US business college. Some strange things happened in boxing in 1993. And that's not all, reports AP.

Julio Cesar Chavez was in a fight he didn't win. Evander Holyfield became only the fourth man to win at least part of the heavyweight title twice when he beat champion Riddick Bowe via a majority decision in a rematch on Nov 6 at Caesars Palace in Las Vegas.

Because of Miller, it took Holyfield 21 minutes more than the scheduled 12 rounds. The delay came at 1:10 of the seventh round when Miller crashed against the ring ropes after the chords of his chute got entangled in the television lights beneath the ring canopy. One spectator suffered ahead cut when hit by the cage enclosing Miller's propeller. Bowe's pregnant wife Judy fainted, and Miller was pummeled by ringsiders before taken away by police.

"If he got into the ring, I was going to get out," the 32-year-old Holyfield said. Miller was charged with reckless flying. "You've got to write it on before you can write it off," King advised the future business people in November. He also addressed students at Duke University.

He also advised anyone who would listen that Mike Tyson, the former heavyweight champion, was innocent of the rape charge on which he was convicted in 1992 and deserved a new trial. The Indiana State Court of Appeals, however, rejected by a 2-1 vote in August Tyson's bid to overturn the conviction. Tyson, sentenced to

six years, could be released in the summer of 1995. With Tyson in prison, King's main man continued to be Chavez, but the unbeaten triple champion from Mexico, finished the year with a blemish on his record. A winner of his first 87 fights, with 67 knockouts, dating back to 1980, Chavez had to settle for a draw in a bid for Pernell Whitaker's WBC welterweight title before a paid crowd of 56,969 in the Alamodome Sept 10 at San Antonio, Texas.

Most ringsiders thought Whitaker won. Chavez's WBC super lightweight title was not at stake. Chavez also appeared before the biggest paid crowd in boxing history, 132,274 in Aztec Stadium Feb 20 at Mexico City, when he stopped Greg Haugen in the fifth round of a title defence.

Terry Norris, WBC super welterweight champion; Azumah Nelson, WBC featherweight champion, and Michael Nunn, WBA super middleweight champion, also retained their titles on the Aztec Stadium card. Norris and Nelson made successful defences underneath Chavez in San Antonio, with Nelson keeping his championship on a draw against Jesse James Leija.

Norris, however, lost his title in a shocking upset by Simon Brown in late December. When the 31-year-old Holyfield was outpointed by Bowe Nov 13, 1992, he lost the undisputed championship. He regained only the IBF and WBA titles because Bowe had lost WBC championship recognition for not signing for a defence against Lennox Lewis.

Lewis was given WBC recognition and made two title defences in 1993. He outpointed Tony Tucker May 8 at Las Vegas, then stopped Frank Bruno in the seventh round Oct 2 at Cardiff, Wales. Bowe also made two defences before his loss to Holyfield. He stopped Michael Dokes

in the first round Feb 6 at Madison Square Garden and knocked out Jesse Ferguson in the second round May 22 in RFK Stadium at Washington. Ferguson earned his \$1.5 million pay day against Bowe and also was arrested for allegedly attempting to bribe Ferguson. The 32-year-old 1988 Olympic champion is charged with offering the 36-year-old Ferguson \$100,000 to lose several times during the fight.

Ferguson, who lost a split decision to Mercer in a rematch Nov 19 at Atlantic, was to testify at Mercer's trial set for Dec 6 in New York State Supreme Court. The prosecution, however, said its chief witness would not be available in December because of family medical problems. A court date was scheduled for Jan 10. Michael Bent entered the heavyweight championship picture when he stopped Tommy Morrison in the first round for the WBO title Oct 30 at Tulsa, Okla.; Morrison, who had outpointed George Foreman over 12 rounds June 7 at Las Vegas, Morrison had been scheduled to challenge Lewis in March.

Morrison was arrested in Iowa City, Iowa, early on the morning of Dec 7 on charges of public intoxication and of a punching a student he claimed was staring at him in a restaurant. He pleaded innocent. Probably the best fight of 1993 was staged by two boxers whose total weight was 214 1-2 pounds (97 kilograms), 31 1-2 pounds (14.25 kilograms) less than Bowe weighed when he lost to Holyfield. Michael Carbajal, 107 (48.5 kgs), got up from two knockdowns and knocked out Humberto Gonzalez, 107 1-2 (48.7 kgs) of Mexico in the seventh round and retained the IBF light flyweight title March 13 at Las Vegas.

Baggio — the man of the moment

ROME, Dec 23: Roberto Baggio will take his place among the greats if he is named European footballer-of-the-year as widely expected, on Sunday, reports Reuter.

Baggio, 26, whose film-star good looks, distinctive pony-tail and sublime skills have made him one of the biggest stars in world football today, is hot favourite to take the award and follow the likes of Stanley Matthews, Alfredo Di Stefano, Johan Cruyff, Michel Platini, Rudi Voller and Marco van Basten into European soccer's Hall of Fame.

These are heady days for the attacking utility player who has at last lived up to all his early promise and is now justifying every cent of the 13 million dollar that Juventus paid Fiorentina for his services in 1990 in what was then a world record transfer fee.

In May he helped Juventus win the UEFA CUP — the first

Hosts, India win in kabaddi

Sports Reporter Hosts Bangladesh won their second straight match in the SAF Games kabaddi competition with a hard fought 17-15 win over Nepal at the Outer Stadium yesterday.

The first half was tied at seven-all. India, the defending champions opened their campaign in style with a comprehensive 48-16 thrashing of Sri Lanka at the same venue.

The winners led the first half 28-8. Bangladesh meet Pakistan today in their third match and round off their fixtures against India on Sunday.

major honour of his career. Last week he was named by national coaches polled by the International Football Federation (FIFA) as the world's best player.

Next year he could be the man of lead Italy to an unprecedented fourth World Cup final victory. Not that for someone once dubbed a loser, a man who is a practising Buddhist and a man who has come back three times from serious injury to build a career at the highest level.

Baggio, deadly from set pieces and a fine passer and dribbler of the ball, already has great responsibility on his slim shoulders as soccer-crazy Italians look to him as the spearhead of their country's assault on the World Cup.

He will doubtless fall back on Buddhist forms of meditation to help ease the pressure of a competition which comes at a time when his wife is due to have their second child.

Baggio spoke about his conversion to the eastern faith during a recent television programme centred on the hit film "Little Buddha" by Italian director Bernardo Bertolucci.

"I was playing for Fiorentina at the time and had just suffered a serious injury. I needed something deeper than the catholic religion," he said.

"Today Buddhism helps me control my mind better," added Baggio who first came to international prominence shortly before the 1990 World Cup when Juventus signed him from arch-rivals Fiorentina.

The volatile Florentine fans rioted for several nights in protest while Baggio proved his class with one of the best goals of the World Cup — a superb solo run and chip over Czechoslovak goalkeeper Jan Stejskal.

However, Baggio was not a regular in the Italian side for a

World Cup which ended with the disappointment of semifinal elimination for the host nation.

His first season at Juventus was equally calamitous with Italy's most successful club failing to qualify for European competition for the first time in almost 30 years.

Further disappointment followed the next year when Juventus finished league runners-up to AC Milan and lost the Italian Cup final to Parma.

Questions were asked about Baggio's character and as little as 12 months ago tough Juventus coach Giovanni Trapattoni was openly wondering whether his captain was a true leader.

Baggio finally silenced his critics with match-winning performances, to help Juventus beat Paris St Germain in the UEFA Cup semifinals and overpower Borussia Dortmund in the final — netting five times in the final rounds.

He also emerged as the key player as Italy qualified for the World Cup, scoring five times to take his tally to 19 goals in 32 internationals while his nimble feet and quick brain also make him the main creator for the Italians.

"It's amazing how much he has matured over the past 12 months, how much more of a team player he has become," national coach Arrigo Sacchi said.

Sacchi knows his prize possession must be protected and selects battering ram centre-forward Pierluigi Casiraghi, struggling for his place with club Lazio, to act as Baggio's "Minder" in internationals.

The last Juventus man to win the European footballer-of-the-year award was Frenchman Michel Platini, who collected it in three successive years from 1983 to 1985.

Tennis hopes up in smoke

Sports Reporter

Bangladesh hopes of winning a medal in the Sixth SAF Games tennis ended yesterday when Shekhi Maimuddin and Faisal Syed Haq were comprehensively beaten in the quarterfinals at the Ramana National Tennis Complex.

Maimuddin, who booked a place in the last eight beating Maldivian Amir Mansoor 6-2, 7-5 on Wednesday, could not find his rhythm yesterday against Sri Lankan Seneka Kumara and bowed out 6-1, 6-1.

Faisal Syed Haq fared slightly better than his compatriot in his encounter with Indian Vasudev Reddy and made the big-serving Indian sweat for every point before conceding the match 6-3, 6-4.

In today's semifinal, Reddy takes on Pakistani Mushaf Zia, who rallied from one set down to eliminate Sri Lanka's Jayendra Wijesekera.

Before he could settle down, Zia found himself totally outplayed and he seemed to capitulate a bit too easily, managing only one game in the first set. However, Zia pulled his game together instantaneously and put Wijesekera into the rope in the next two sets. The Pakistani conceded three more games on his way to rounding off the quarterfinal tie 1-6, 6-1, 6-2.

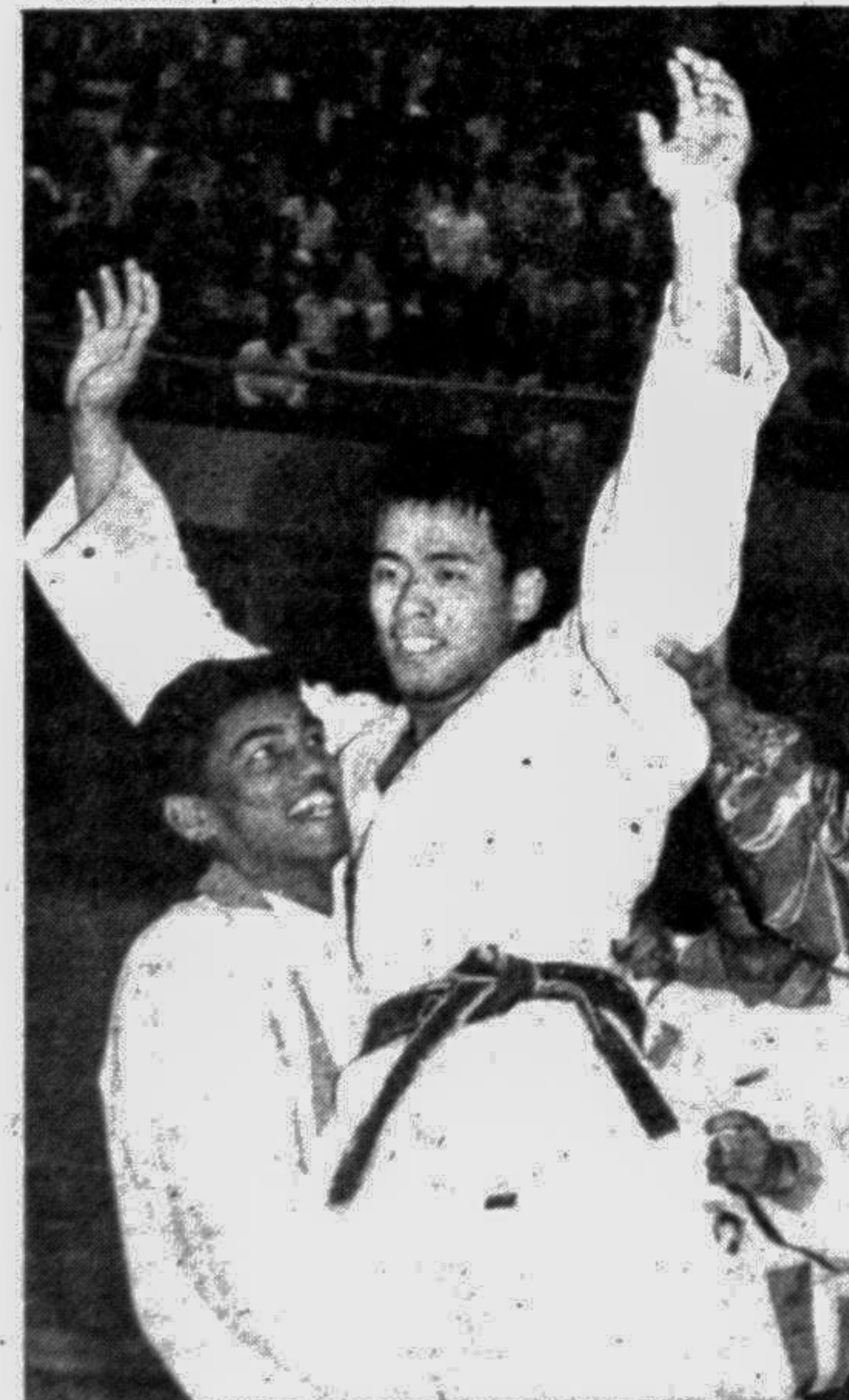
The other semifinal, billed for this morning, pits Seneka Kumara against Muhammed Khalig, the Pakistani national champion who had quite an easy ride against Indian Gaurav Natekar and posted a 6-4, 6-1 win.

In the women's singles, Arati Ponnappa of India and Saranga Sangakara of Sri Lanka breezed into the round of four with comfortable triumphs over Bangladesh's Saathi Sarkar and Sharmin Shirin Siddique respectively.

Ponnappa's semifinal opponent will be Lankan Lihini Weerasurya while the other semifinal, another Indo-Lanka encounter, features Sangakara and Nirupama Vaidyanathan. Both the matches are slated for today. These four fought for the team title Thursday, with the Lankan pair prevailing to bag the gold.

Indian players booked two semifinal places in the men's doubles with the other two going to Pakistan and Sri Lanka.

Reddy and P Srinath went through the toughest of the four quarterfinal ties. The pair was



India's Thapa Tilal rejoices after having clinched the gold in the 65kg category of the Sixth SAF Games judo competition at the Mirpur indoor stadium yesterday. —Star photo

Indian judokas live upto it

Sports Reporter

Indian judokas started from where they had left off Wednesday when the participants of the biggest SAARC country in the newly adapted discipline of the sixth SAF Games, took all the three golds at stake yesterday.

Having swept all the three golds on offer on the first day, Indians have now taken their tally to six.

In the 60 kg category, Narendra Singh of India got gold while B Ramesh of Nepal took the silver and Motalab Hossain of Bangladesh and N KK Rajasingh of Sri Lanka got the bronze.

In 65 kg class Thapa Tilal of India claimed the gold. Armitul Islam of Bangladesh took silver and T H H Bahadur of Nepal and Sri Lanka's K P Chaminda Weerasinghe got the bronze.

Byala Sandeep earned the third gold for India in the 71 kg category. RB Bahadur of Nepal got silver and Shusli Mohammed of Bangladesh and Samaranyake took the bronze.



Narender Singh of India clearing the last hurdle on his way to winning the gold medal of the men's 3000m steeple chase, in the Sixth SAF Games at the Mirpur Stadium yesterday. —Star photo