



BCCB general secretary Aminul Haq Moni giving away the trophy to captain of the Scholastica team after the final of the 13th Nirman schools cricket tournament at the Dhaka Stadium yesterday. Scholastica crushed Mirpur Bangla High School by 127 runs. — Star photo

Scholastica Dhaka Zone champions

Sports Reporter

A century partnership between opener Shaker Chowdhury and Rubayat Jamil helped Scholastica emerge Dhaka Zone champions in the 13th Nirman schools cricket championship with a huge 127-run win over Mirpur Bangla High School in the final at the Dhaka Stadium yesterday. The two shared 118 runs for the fourth wicket as Scholastica, sent in to bat first, compiled a huge total of 268 for four in their quota of 45 overs. Rubayat, who joined forces with Shaker after the Dhamonidi school lost two wickets for 56 runs, scored a swashbuckling unbeaten 93 embellished with five hits to the fence. The right-handed middle-order batsman, who plays his club cricket for Diny Club in the Yamaha First Division league also shared quick-fire 81 runs for the undefeated fourth with Nayeem Ahmed in the last ten overs after opener Shaker departed for a 115-ball 81. Shaker's 148 minute stay at the Crease featured five hits to the fence while Nayeem remained unbeaten on a 24-ball 32. Facing a daunting task of scoring more than six runs per over, Mirpur Bangla High School surrendered rather meekly making only 141 before being all out in 42.5 overs. Rajon and skipper Aziz, who scored 32 and 30 respectively, were the only successful willow-wielders for the eventual losers. Skipper Junaid Rahman, who led the Scholastica charge with the cherry, was the most successful bowler with three for 23 followed by Hasan, Ridwan and Rahim who shared two wickets apiece. However, the defeat did not dampen the losing finalists' passage into the final round as they move on along with Residential Model School and St. Joseph High School, the losing semifinalists, by virtue of making it to the last four.

Aamir Ishaq shapes City's first win

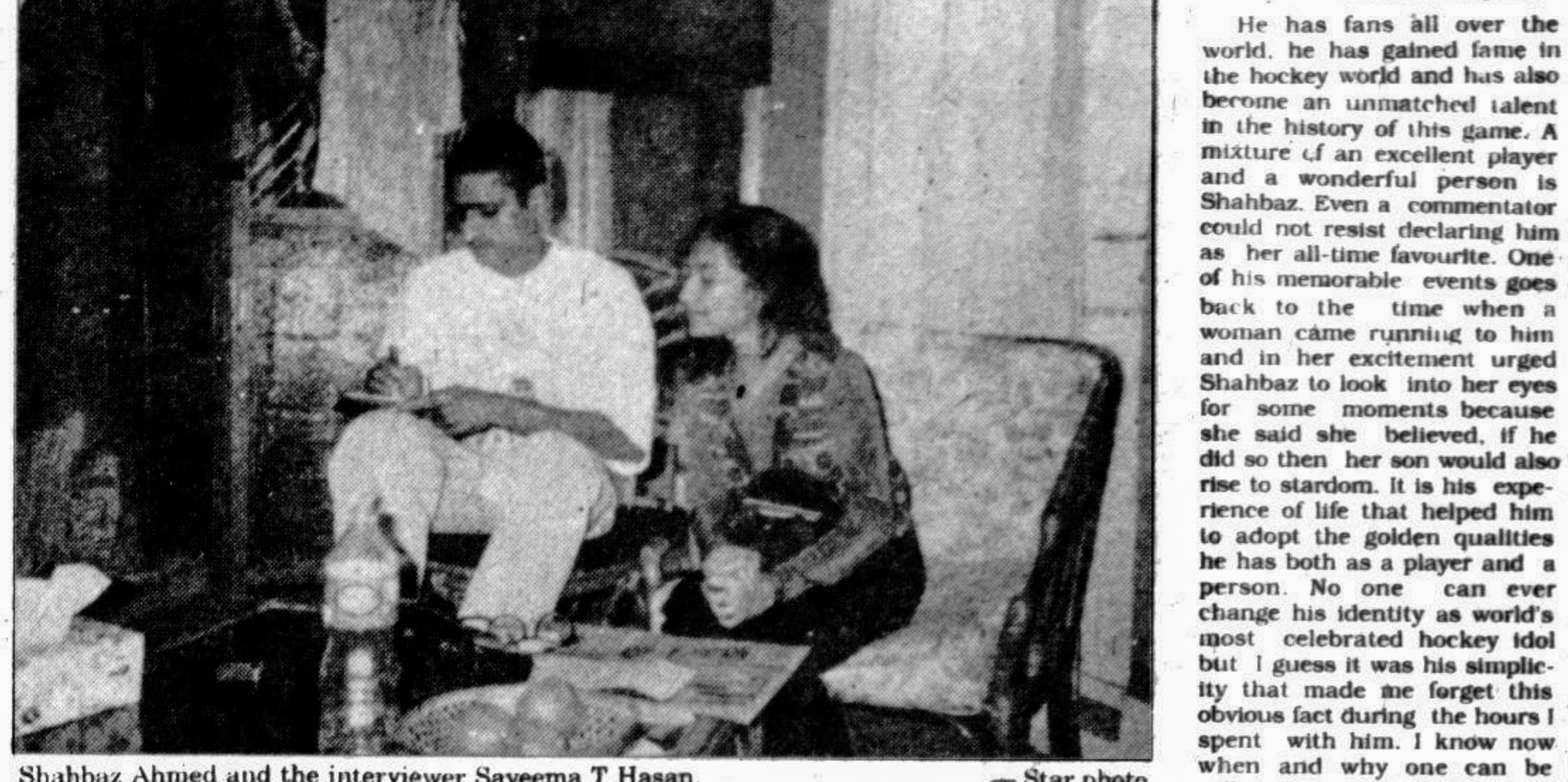
Sports Reporter

Powered by a brilliant century from Pakistani Aamir Ishaq City Club recorded their first win in the Yamaha First Division super league with a 103-run thrashing of Bangladesh Railway at the Dhamonidi Cricket Stadium yesterday. Aamir Ishaq scored on whirlwind 105 as City Club, sent in to bat first, amassed a huge total of 218 for four from their stipulated quota of 45 overs. The prolific Pakistani recruit of City Club who scored a defiant 78 in the previous match, joined forces with opener Arif Hossain after the Mirpur outfit lost their first two wickets for only 22 runs. The right-handed Pakistani bat, who inspired City Club to finish top on completion of the first leg, then steadied the innings sharing 68 runs for the third wicket before Arif returned to the pavilion hilling a patient 40 off 85 ball. Aamir Ishaq, who clubbed eleven fours in his 111-ball knock, then found a willing partner in Sajjad Hossain with whom he shared 117 runs for the fourth wicket and in ensuring in the process City Club crossed the 200 mark. The century partnership finally came to an end when Sajjad departed after scoring a plucky 38 with the scoreboard reading 205 in 42.4 overs. In reply, Bangladesh Railway, who are yet to win a match after three super league engagements, capitulated for only 115 runs in the face of a devastating spell from new-ball bowler Al Amin. Al-Amin ripped through the top orders to finish with five for 20 in his quota of nine overs. Russel with two for 25 gave Al-Amin a good support.

Shahbaz—a fame without vanity

By Sayeema T Hassan

I tried hard through my blurring excitement and nervousness to concentrate on the four famous faces in front of me. I was surprised at my own unsure, speechless self. I ought to have readily recognised Shahbaz Ahmed by his somewhat never looks, courtesy the news dailies and TV. But probably I expected somebody with an air of importance, somebody more business-like and, maybe, just a little bit aware of his stardom. No, he was everything but the famous figure he was supposed to behave like. It was a matter of a few breathless seconds, before my own bubbly, cheerful self mixed freely with his warm, friendly and "not-the-least-bit-stuck-up" or "reserved" character. Each word he uttered endorsed the very fact that he was extremely happy to be a part of Bangladesh for a few days at least and play for Mohammedans. Shahbaz began hockey at an early age of thirteen to fourteen years for his school team. Influenced by his uncle, a celebrated figure himself, Shahbaz had always wanted to scale the pinnacle of success. His sincere efforts, as we all know, did not go in vain. Incidentally, enough, in accordance with his name which means 'Royal Eagle' he has been able to capture a position as strong, powerful and respectful. I tried my best to scrutinize him as we chatted and every now and then there would be peals of hysteric laughter at something Shahbaz's jolly teammate Irfan was doing or saying. Shahbaz had been accompanied by his international and PIA teammates Irfan, Tahir Zaman and goalkeeper Mam — all of them equally nice the way it is, you see," he said. "We learn from each other. Before becoming a star, even I learnt hockey from a superior player, my coach." Shahbaz felt that the use of synthetic turf will be of huge help to enhance the standard of hockey here. I could see from his glowing face that he had been moved and impressed by the way the spectators rally for the teams they support. He said he admires Imran Khan because of his truthful character. Another one of Shahbaz's favourite seemed to be Gabriela Sabatini. He laughed while recalling the time he first met her. Chuckling he added: "Trust me, the whole time I was there with her, I could not speak a single word!" I pointed out that he was a famous man himself and it is only predictable that some of his innumerable fans must feel the same when they come to take his autograph. He signed and said: "Well, you are right and the Almighty has let me achieve ultimate success in my career, true, I have become a very good player but right now my aim is to become a good person. That's all that matters."



Shahbaz Ahmed and the interviewer Sayeema T Hassan. — Star photo

He has fans all over the world, he has gained fame in the hockey world and has also become an unmatched talent in the history of this game. A mixture of an excellent player and a wonderful person is Shahbaz. Even a commentator could not resist declaring him as her all-time favourite. One of his memorable events goes back to the time when a woman came running to him and in her excitement urged Shahbaz to look into her eyes for some moments because she said she believed, if he did so then her son would also rise to stardom. It is his experience of life that helped him to adopt the golden qualities he has both as a player and a person. No one can ever change his identity as world's most celebrated hockey idol but I guess it was his simplicity that made me forget this obvious fact during the hours I spent with him. I know now when and why one can be called the world's beloved and favourite — a good heart. As I came back my eyes fell on the autographed page on my lap. Shahbaz's words seemed to sparkle as brightly as his brilliant eyes do — "Sweet words cost nothing but they can buy everything". Yes, I thought, whatever Shahbaz said will mean everything to me for a long time to come.

Aussies off to West Indies

SYDNEY, Feb 28: The Australian cricket team flew out for the Caribbean on Tuesday, quietly confident of becoming the first for 15 years to win a series against the West Indies, reports AP. "It is the toughest assignment in world cricket," said batsman Greg Blewett. "But we have a chance if we play to our potential." The West Indies have been the dominant force in international cricket for the past two decades, largely because of their powerful pace battery. Captain Mark Taylor, however, believes the inexperienced Australians have the ability to defuse the West Indies' attack. "It is very much a mental thing," Taylor said at Sydney Airport. "We faced bowlers just as fast in Pakistan last year." Vice-captain Ian Healy said the Australians will need to pace themselves as they bid to become the first visiting squad for 22 years to win a Test series in the Caribbean. "Maybe we've been a bit impatient in the past, trying to blast out the Windies," Healy said. "That's what their bowlers thrive on — batsmen flashing at them and playing shots that get them out." "We have to play good solid cricket and take a win when it presents itself, not give them a win." "It's not going to be easy, it's going to be tough, intense cricket for five days each time." Young batting star Ricky Ponting said he had been advised by former Australian captain Allan Border about what to expect during the 11-week tour, which features four Tests. "I have got no expectations really, it's probably going to be more an experience thing for me rather than anything else," Ponting said. "It would be great to get a Test match here or there if things go well. But if not, I am sure I am still going to learn a heck of a lot from being there and just being around the other 14 guys." Australia lost the 1991 series in the West Indies 2-1 and suffered another 2-1 defeat to the world champions in 1992-93, losing the decisive Test in Adelaide by just one run. The Australians will open their tour with a limited-overs game against Barbados on Sunday. The schedule includes five one-day internationals and Test matches which will be played in Barbados, Antigua, Trinidad and Jamaica.

Bribery Scandal won't get in Pakistan's WC prep

ISLAMABAD, Feb 28: Pakistan's cricket authorities said today they were determined to help stage the World Cup early next year despite allegations of bribe offers involving Pakistani players, reports Reuter. Salman Taseer, vice-chairman of the local organising committee, said the controversy about the bribe offers had nothing to do with the holding of the World Cup, to be hosted by Pakistan, India and Sri Lanka in February and March. "Basically we are here to ensure that we hold a successful cricket tournament in Pakistan," Taseer said after a meeting of the organising executive committee. Committee joint vice-chairman Omar Kureshi said its work to prepare for the event was unhampered by the recent allegations. "We are not taking any notice of that. There have always been scandals related to sports but that does not mean that it would have effect on the main event," he said. He said the London-based International Cricket Council had not asked Pakistan to change the venue. "We are sure that the two are not connected," Kureshi said. Australia's players Shane Warne and Tim May were quoted by newspaper reports there earlier this month as accusing Pakistani captain Salim Malik of offering them 50,000 dollars each to lose the first Test at Karachi last year. Malik denied the charges. The head of an ad-hoc committee running Pakistan's cricket control board said last week the board would conduct its own inquiry into the charges.

Lankan cricket looks into future

COLOMBO, Feb 28: Sri Lanka currently one of the whipping boys of world cricket, aim to be the sport's leading Test team within five years, reports Reuter. Ana Punchilewa, the new president of the Sri Lanka cricket board, said on Sunday, "Our goal is by the year 2000 to be the best Test playing country." Sri Lankan cricket is going through one of its worst periods. The country has yet to win a Test match overseas and the game has been tainted by politics, players' indiscipline, poor and weak administration and a host of other problems seen as the cause of a steady decline in standards. Punchilewa said that cricket had been run unprofessionally. "We don't even have a budget. It has been like a ship without a rudder just drifting along." He said a group of professionals possibly including former Test cricketers would be formed next week to work out a five-year plan on the structure of local tournaments, professionalism, employment to cricketers coaching and foreign tours. He said the cricket board should have a full time chief executive officer. "Otherwise very soon we would be overtaken by Zimbabwe and even Bangladesh," he said. The Sri Lanka Test side are currently touring New Zealand.

Jarvis calls it quits

HARARE, Feb 28: Zimbabwe's left-arm pacesman Malcolm Jarvis announced his retirement from international cricket on Sunday after his side drew the one-day series against Pakistan with a 74-run victory in the third and final match, reports Reuter. The 39-year-old physical fitness instructor played in five Test matches, taking 11 wickets at 35.72, and 12 one-day internationals.

Friendly cricket

A friendly cricket match between the Jatiya Press Club and Bangladesh Cricket Control Board (BCCB) will be held at the Dhaka Stadium here today, reports BSS. Players of both the teams have been requested to report at the stadium at 9 am.

McClellan: food for thought

LONDON, Feb 28: British boxing officials say the brain injuries suffered by American fighter Gerald McClellan should provide the impetus for creation of a world body to supervise safety in the sport. John Morris, head of the British Boxing Board of Control, called for the formation of a world boxing commission to standardize medical regulations and procedures. "Boxing needs a FIFA," Morris said, referring to soccer's world governing body. "I think the need is now highlighted for one world boxing commission to control the basic elements of regulations, particularly medical ones." Morris spoke Monday as McClellan remained on a life support machine at Royal London Hospital. McClellan had a blood clot removed from his brain after collapsing at the end of Saturday night's WBC super-middleweight title bout against Nigel Benn, reports AP. While McClellan was listed in critical but stable condition, doctors said his chances of survival were improving all the time. "We think he will now survive," neurosurgeon John Sutcliffe said. "Hopefully we will get him through it — and at the end of the day get him through it in good condition." Members of McClellan's family — mother Stacey McClellan, girlfriend Angela Brown, aunt Linda Shorter and sister Stacey Calen — visited the boxer's bedside after flying in from the United States. "He is in very capable hands and I am cautiously optimistic he will be all right," said American promoter Don King, who spent an hour with the family at the hospital. Morris said he would travel to Las Vegas to discuss the idea of a world council with US boxing officials. However, he acknowledged his proposal may not sit well with the numerous bodies that govern the sport, including the World Boxing Council, the World Boxing Association and the International Boxing Federation. "I've suggested this before but have been a lone voice in the wilderness because obviously a lot of the world organizations don't want it," Morris said. "But I believe the commissions of the world should get together and issue the same safety regulations." King said he favoured the idea after witnessing the emergency medical treatment McClellan received in the ring. "I'm going to be the driving force to make certain it does happen," he said. "I'm going to emphasize what I saw here." McClellan, 27, of Illinois, collapsed in his corner after being counted out in the 10th round of what was widely described as the most brutal fight ever seen in the country. The tragedy triggered fresh demands for boxing to be banned, a campaign that has been led for years by the British Medical Association. But the British boxing community called a news conference Monday to defend the sport and its safety procedures. "You'll never silence the critics," Morris said. "I think the sport has to go on the front foot. I just want boxing to be treated as another risk sport." Fight promoter Frank Warren said, "The bottom line is boxing is a dangerous sport. You're not going to get away from that. The fighters are aware of the dangers of boxing. They are aware of the risk." Morris and Warren said the sport has improved its medical safeguards, noting that an anesthetist, four doctors, two sets of paramedics and two ambulances were on site for Saturday's fight at the London Arena. The immediate treatment McClellan received was credited with saving his life. What happened Saturday night and the measures we had at ringside is probably the best you could get other than having an operating theater at ringside," Warren said. As medical experts debated what measures could be adopted to make boxing safer — including shortening the length of bouts — attention focused on whether fighters are weakened by dehydration when they struggle to make the weight. McClellan, who moved up from middleweight to challenge Benn, weighed in at 165 pounds (75 kg), a surprising 3 pounds (1.4 kg) under the limit. "I don't know how he prepared," Morris said. "He passed all the medicals and was fit as far as we were concerned. I thought he would be 1-2 pounds (680 grams) heavier. But he didn't look dehydrated to me." Meanwhile, Warren criticized the selection of French referee Alfred Azaro for the fight. "It would help to have an English speaking referee when you have two English speaking boxers," Warren said. "I don't think the referee could speak English. And I don't think he could understand it either." Warren said he was concerned that McClellan may have tried to communicate his distress to Azaro in the ninth round after an accidental head butt, but the referee didn't understand him.

Dublin may stage Lewis-Butler bout on May 13

LONDON, Feb 28: Dublin is being considered as a possible venue for former WBC champion Lennox Lewis' fight against Lionel Butler on May 13, reports AP. Lewis manager, Frank Maloney, said Tuesday that negotiations were underway to stage the fight at the Point, a 6,500-seat indoor arena in the Irish capital. If Dublin is selected, the bout would start at 3 am in order to accommodate US television, Maloney said. Other possible sites are Las Vegas and Reno in Nevada, and Sacramento, Calif. A final decision is expected within 15 days. "We'll go wherever we get the biggest offer," Maloney said. It will be Lewis' first fight since losing the WBC title, when he was stopped by Oliver McCull in two rounds on Sept. 24 in London. Maloney said the fight would be a final eliminator for the WBC crown, with the winner set to face the victor of the Larry Holmes-McCall fight on April 8 in Las Vegas. However, Maloney acknowledged that, due to the vagaries of WBC politics, there was no guarantee that Lewis would get the first shot at the title and could have to wait until next year.



World Cup-star Romario joins in the fun as Estacio de Sa samba school presents their performance during carnival festivities at the Sambodrome in Rio de Janeiro on Feb 27. — AFP photo

Christie upstaged again

STOCKHOLM, Feb 28: Olympic and world 100 metres champion Linford Christie was beaten for the second time in three days on Monday when Canada's Donovan Bailey won the 60 metres at an international indoor meeting, reports Reuter. Bailey clocked 6.57 seconds to wipe out American Dennis Mitchell's stadium record of 6.61 from 1992, while Britain's Christie finished second in 6.58. British Darren Braithwaite, who beat Christie over 60 metres in Birmingham, England, on Saturday with a time of 6.54, was third in 6.65. Russian Irina Privalova, world 60 metres record holder, won the women's 60 metres in 7.07 seconds, well ahead of Ukrainian Zhanna Atarnopolskaya, who clocked 7.24. Kenyan Moses Kiptanui won the 3,000 metres in seven minutes 39.36 seconds. Cheered by 10,238 people, Kiptanui tired at the end of finish well outside his own world record of 7:35.15 he had pledged to break. Dutch 800 metres specialist Ellen van Langen won in two minutes 00.44 seconds, more than one second ahead of Surinam's Letitia Vriesde. Van Langen said after the race she was ending her indoor season to prepare for the World Championships in Gothenberg, Sweden, in August. Britain's John Regis fell just before the finishing line of the men's 200 metres and was treated for a pulled thigh muscle. A preliminary statement by a doctor treating Regis said he would be out of action for three to six weeks, excluding him from the World Indoor Championships in Barcelona in two weeks time.

Mc Callum keeps WBC crown

LONDON, Feb 28: Mike McCallum delivered a boxing lesson to American challenger Carl Jones Saturday to hold on to his World Boxing Council, light-heavyweight title on a seventh round TKO, reports AP. The 38-year-old Jamaican, who had held world titles at three weights since 1986.

BSJA hosts iftar party

Bangladesh Sports Journalists Association (BSJA) hosted an iftar party at the conference room of the National Sports Council in the city yesterday, reports BSS.