

## Greece celebrates Panathinaikos' triumph

ATHENS, Apr 12: Thousands of Greek fans took to the streets in Athens on Thursday to party all night after Panathinaikos were crowned European basketball champions in Paris, reports Reuter.

The Greeks beat Spain's Barcelona 67-66 and minutes after the televised match ended the city came alive with blaring horns red and green flares and dancing.

Mayor Dimitris Avramopoulos lit up the city's streets and ancient monuments to honour the winners. Television and radio stations broke into their programmes to bring the good news.

The party soon spread around the country in cities, towns and villages with thousands of people pouring out on to the streets waving Greek and club flags and singing the Greek National anthem.

Panathinaikos, the most expensive club in Europe, won the title after two failed attempts where they were beaten in the semifinals by Greek rivals Olympiakos.

Greek pharmaceuticals tycoon Pavlosyannakopoulos has spent more than 40 million dollars the past four years to sign a team of stars, including former NBA all-star Dominique Wilkins. Panathinaikos top scorer in their European campaign.

It was the first European clubs' championship ever won by Greek team in a country where basketball is the most popular sport with an avid following.

In contrast to the Panathinaikos joy, a few dozen frustrated Olympiakos fans went on to the streets of nearby Piraeus smashing windows and setting fire to rubbish bins.

## Armenian boxers seek asylum

COPENHAGEN, Denmark Apr 12: Two Armenian boxers who took part in last week's European Amateur Boxing Championships in Denmark, have stayed on and asked for asylum, police said Wednesday, reports AP.

The two men, who were not identified, defected from the Russian team on Tuesday and asked for asylum at the local police station in Vejle, western Denmark, where the championships had been held.

Police declined to say on what grounds the man, aged 24 and 26, sought asylum. The alien Board refused to comment on specific cases.

## Pre-Olympic tournament India stun Asian champs



ATLANTA, Apr 12: India provided the surprise result Thursday on the first day of the six-nation pre-Olympic tournament, which started on a makeshift warm-up pitch because the artificial surface at the Olympic venue of Clark Atlanta University was still in the process of being laid, reports Reuter.

India beat South Korea, the Asian champions, 3-0. It was India's first win in five matches with the Koreans, who beat them in the Asian Games final of 1994. But the Koreans did not play anywhere near their best on a slow pitch with unsafe surroundings.

India's match-winner was one of their substitutes, Balaji Sing Dhillion, who scored with flick shots from two of India's first three corners, which came in the 25th and 44th minutes.

The match was marred by an incident in the 50th minute in which the Korean Yang-Kyun Jong Swung his stick violently across the legs of the Indian player Sanjeev Kumar, apparently in retaliation for a blow on the head with an elbow.

Jong was shown a red card for a permanent suspension and was later banned for the next three games of the tournament by the tournament director, Eric Donegan of Canada.

It is one of the severest sentences for a red card offence in an international tournament and means Jong can play only in the final game of the tournament next Wednesday.

Sanjeev Kumar, the Indian player involved in the incident, was shown a yellow card (temporary suspension) but bobbled off and took no further part in the game.

While both teams were down to ten men, two minutes later, the Indian right-winger Mukesh Kumar hit a brilliant third goal for the Indians to seal the game.

Indian coach Sedic de Suza would not comment on the red card incident, saying he did not see it.

But he added: "I am delighted that we capitalised on our scoring chances today. We don't always do so against the Koreans and it is certainly too long since we last beat them."

Pakistan were comfortable winners over Argentina after a goalless first half. They cruised into a 4-0 lead before the Pan-American champions picked up a late consolation goal at a corner through Santiago Ca-

purro.

Tahir Zaman, the Pakistan inside right, gave his side the lead three minutes into the second half from an Asif Bajwa free hit.

Pakistan's second goal also followed a free hit and was scored by Kamran Ashraf, who also added a third with a simple tap-in from Mohammad Shahbaz's pass. Shahbaz added the fourth himself after Mohammad Sarwar cut in from the back line.

Russell Garsia, the new Pakistan team coach, said afterwards: "I am happy with the result of the game played on a bumpy pitch. The surface was not good for the skill of my players but they settled better in the second half."

Mansoor also complained



Syeda Afsana Parveen Nira pondering her next move against former champion Tania Parveen (not in the picture) in their 17th national women's chess championship third round encounter yesterday. Nira lost the board to Tania who recorded her third successive win.

— Star photo

points behind Milan with a 4-0 rout at Lazio of Rome on Wednesday. Their title aspirations snuffed, the Florentines are likely to let up in league play and point to defeating Atalanta of Bergamo in the Italian Cup final. The first leg is April 24.

Roy Hodgson's Inter Milan, who face bottom club Padova, will need to recover from their midweek defeat if they are to snatch a UEFA Cup place.

In Spain, league leaders Atletico Madrid's hopes of clinching their first ever dou-

ble zoomed upwards following the side's 1-0 win over Barcelona for the Spanish King's Cup.

In a hard fought match, Atletico defeated Barcelona in overtime Wednesday to win the Cup.

But with seven rounds to go in league play and with only three points separating them from second placed Barcelona, Atletico knows a league triumph remains an uphill battle.

If it succeeds, Manchester United likely will have an eight or nine point lead in the title race and that should all but wrap up the championship.

On Sunday Atletico host Betis, a side lying in fifth and pushing hard to reach next season's UEFA cup. Atletico will be facing a Betis side that has lost only three games away from home.

Atletico's march to the title, though, will face their greatest challenge when they travel next weekend to the non's den, Barcelona, for a game many believe could decide the championship.

Third place Liverpool who are eight points behind and have little chance of catching United, are not in action until Tuesday when are involved in a Merseyside derby with Everton and fifth place Arsenal face London derby with sixth place Tottenham on Monday.

In the Bundesliga, leaders Bayern Munich and champions Borussia Dortmund face tough encounters Saturday away to fourth placed Stuttgart and home to fifth placed Schalke respectively.

In France, the championship race has turned into an exciting three-horse race between leaders Auxerre, who have never won the title, Paris Saint Germain and unfancied Metz, who last week secured a UEFA Cup spot by winning the League Cup.

Real Madrid, meanwhile, travel to relegation-threatened Seville hoping for a drastic change in their fortunes after a series of poor results which has left them in mid-table and with little chance of qualifying for Europe.

In Paul McGrath's seven seasons at Manchester United, the club never won a league title. On Sunday, the veteran Irish centerback can play a

major part in helping the Reds win the English Premier for the third time in four years.

Provided a septic toe doesn't rule him out, McGrath lines up in an Aston Villa defence which will be trying to keep out Newcastle's talented forwards, including Colombian Faustino Asprilla, Frenchman David Ginola and England's Lee Ferdinand and Peter Beardsley.

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Barcelona, for their part, while likely to be distracted by next Wednesday's UEFA Cup semifinal return game against Atletico Madrid, faces a midweek challenge when they travel to relegation-threatened

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