

Pan-Arab Games end

BEIRUT, July 17: Moubarak Sultan Al-Moubri of Qatar pulled off the biggest surprise on the last day of athletics at the Pan-Arab Games on Wednesday when he became the first Arab to break the 49 sec barrier for the 400m hurdles, reports AFP.

The 19-year-old, who ran an Arabic best 49.07 sec at last year's World Junior Championship in Sydney, powered home in 48.95.

Algerian Moustapha Asdad took silver in 49.14 with Asian champion Zeid Abou Hamed of Syria was relegated to third in 49.68.

Algeria won six gold medals on Wednesday to go top of the medals table with 14 golds, one more than Egypt.

But Qatar, with eight golds or a third of the men's total, was the biggest winner in athletics.

However, they bungled the 4x400m relay to let Oman in for their first ever gold medal at these Games.

Syria, who topped the medals table with 48 golds when they organised the last Games five years ago, won their first gold medal through Firas Mahamid in the women's javelin.

However, Syria's football team were the first to qualify for the semifinals when they beat Kuwait 2-1 in Group B and their basketball team beat Libya 86-67.

Saudi Arabia scored a runaway 88-59 win over Jordan in their Group B basketball game.

Baggio's fate still on the balance

MILAN, July 17: Roberto Baggio will remain an AC Milan player for a while longer after club officials said on Wednesday that they had failed to finalise a widely-forecast transfer deal with Serie A rivals Bologna, reports Reuter.

Milan had been expected to confirm Baggio's departure during an afternoon news conference at which they presented their squad for the coming season.

But club vice-president Adriano Galliani said nothing had been concluded and suggested the deal still hung in the balance.

"Nothing's changed since yesterday, we're still waiting for a reply from (Baggio's) agent," he said.

"It's true that it's a situation a little bit like that," he said, making a see-saw gesture with his hands.

"I think he needs to find a team where he can be the playmaker and I fear that in this Milan side he would find himself sacrificed."

"He's a player who should be in a first team but here it's more difficult. I hope he finds a team where he can be the director of the orchestra but, if he can't, then we're happy to have him with us."

Galliani said on Tuesday that Milan had received several offers for Baggio, the most attractive of which was from Bologna.

Spartak on top

MOSCOW, July 17: Defending champions Spartak Moscow secured the undisputed top spot in the Russian league after their 2-0 win at home over mid-table Chempuchina Sochi on Wednesday, reports Reuter.

Playmaker Andrei Tikhonov and second-half substitute Miroslav Romashchenko scored late in the game for the Muscovites, who now have 37 points after 18 matches, two points ahead of city rival Dynamo.

In the Moscow derby between CSKA and Dynamo Andrei Kovaliev opened the score with a free kick for Dynamo in the 76th minute but Dmitry Khomukha equalised just three minutes later for a 1-1 draw.

Rotor Volgograd, who were leading the league only a week ago, suffered a shock 2-1 loss to Chernomorets in Novorossiisk despite a goal by the league's top scorer Oleg Veretennikov — his 11th of the season.

In two other surprise results, Zenit lost 1-0 at home in St Petersburg to last-placed Fakel Voronezh, while in Moscow fourth-placed Torpedo Lm were defeated by Shinnik Yaroslavl 2-1.

Mixed day for Morceli

NICE, France, July 17: Nouredine Morceli of Algeria was left with mixed feelings after seeing two of his world records survive at the Nikai Grand Prix on Wednesday — especially since he wanted to break one of them, reports Reuter.

Morceli watched with satisfaction as Moroccan Hicham El Guerrouj clocked three minutes 30.32 seconds and failed to break the world 1,500 metres record of 3:27.37 seconds Morceli set on this track on a memorable night two years ago.

But the Algerian Olympic 1,500 metres champion then failed to derive much pleasure from his own attempt to beat his own world mile record of 3:44.39.

Morceli ran 3:48.64 — only the fifth fastest time in the world this year — and well outside the record he set in Rieti nearly four years ago.

Morceli, however, could gain some measure of satisfaction in the final grand Prix meeting before next month's World Championships in Athens with the emphatic style of his victory, finishing well clear of Kenyan Noah Ngony (3:50.41) with France's Said Chebili a distant third in 3:52.21.

Morceli has looked out of sorts for most of the summer and, while not in the devastating form of recent years, he will still be in contention for gold in Athens. So, of course will El Guerrouj.

The Moroccan, who twice this month has gone close to breaking Morecelli's world marks in both the 1,500 metres and mile, made it a hat-trick of near misses after being let down by some over-ambitious pacemaking by Kenyan Reuben Chesang and Vincent Malakwen.

But he still clocked the second fastest time of the year and only he has run quicker.

El Guerrouj was left to cover the last lap in around 53 seconds after going through the bell at 2:34 and could manage only 56 seconds. He actually went closer to the record in Stockholm last week when he ran 3:29.30, the fastest in the world this year.

However, he was pushed all the way to the line by Kenyan John Kibowen, who finished second in 3:30.44 with Kenyan William Tanui, the 1992 800 metres Olympic champion.

Very soon.

Maksim Tarasov of Russia, the 1992 Olympic champion, had a night to remember when he became only the fifth man in history to clear 6.00 metres in the pole vault.

He won a high-calibre competition which included French Olympic champion Jean Galfione, with a clearance of 6.00 metres to join Sergel Bubka (6.15), South African Okkert Britz (6.03), Radion Gataulov (6.02) and Igor Trandenkov (6.01) in that event's role of honour.

Portuguese women Fernanda Ribeiro and Carla Sacramento both ran the fastest times of the

week.

Wednesday night.

Torrence made no public comment, unlike in the past when her outspoken views about rivals have landed her in trouble with authority.

In her absence, Ottey, now 37 but running as well as ever, won the race in 22.47 seconds, the third fastest time of the year, and said she was looking forward to defending her 200 crown in Athens.

She was crowned world champion in Gothenburg two years ago after Torrence, who actually won the race, was disqualified for stepping outside her lane.

Torrence was not the only big name to withdraw from the meeting, the last grand Prix before for the World Championships.

Missing were Sergel Bubka (pole vault), Ivan Pedroso (long jump), Kelly Holmes (800m) and Frenchman Stephane Diagana, the European record holder over the 400 hurdles. Diagana said he damaged his sciatic nerve competing in Stuttgart at the weekend, but after missing the Olympics last year through injury, was determined to be fit for Athens.

While the meeting failed to live up to much of its pre-publicity which focused on two world record attempts and "200 champions," it still produced some high quality athletics and there were year's best performances in four events.

Bulgarians miss the bus

GENEVA, July 17: Bulgaria will miss the forthcoming World Gymnastics Championship because it failed to register its entry on time, the International Gymnastics Federation (FIG) said on Wednesday, reports Xinhua.

Torrence, scheduled to defend her world 100 metres title in Athens next month, was due to meet her old rival Merlene Ottey of Jamaica in the race on

Wednesday night.

She is one of the stars of the sport, but she does not have the attitude of a responsible professional. She would not say why she did not want to run, just that she had decided to go back to the United States.

Torrence, scheduled to defend her world 100 metres title in Athens next month, was due to meet her old rival Merlene

Ottey of Jamaica in the race on

Wednesday night.

Torrence made no public comment, unlike in the past when her outspoken views about rivals have landed her in trouble with authority.

In her absence, Ottey, now 37 but running as well as ever, won the race in 22.47 seconds, the third fastest time of the year, and said she was looking forward to defending her 200 crown in Athens.

She was crowned world champion in Gothenburg two years ago after Torrence, who actually won the race, was disqualified for stepping outside her lane.

Torrence was not the only big name to withdraw from the meeting, the last grand Prix before for the World Championships.

Missing were Sergel Bubka (pole vault), Ivan Pedroso (long jump), Kelly Holmes (800m) and Frenchman Stephane Diagana, the European record holder over the 400 hurdles. Diagana said he damaged his sciatic nerve competing in Stuttgart at the weekend, but after missing the Olympics last year through injury, was determined to be fit for Athens.

While the meeting failed to live up to much of its pre-publicity which focused on two world record attempts and "200 champions," it still produced some high quality athletics and there were year's best performances in four events.

She is one of the stars of the sport, but she does not have the attitude of a responsible professional. She would not say why she did not want to run, just that she had decided to go back to the United States.

Torrence, scheduled to defend her world 100 metres title in Athens next month, was due to meet her old rival Merlene

Ottey of Jamaica in the race on

Wednesday night.

Torrence made no public comment, unlike in the past when her outspoken views about rivals have landed her in trouble with authority.

In her absence, Ottey, now 37 but running as well as ever, won the race in 22.47 seconds, the third fastest time of the year, and said she was looking forward to defending her 200 crown in Athens.

She was crowned world champion in Gothenburg two years ago after Torrence, who actually won the race, was disqualified for stepping outside her lane.

Torrence was not the only big name to withdraw from the meeting, the last grand Prix before for the World Championships.

Missing were Sergel Bubka (pole vault), Ivan Pedroso (long jump), Kelly Holmes (800m) and Frenchman Stephane Diagana, the European record holder over the 400 hurdles. Diagana said he damaged his sciatic nerve competing in Stuttgart at the weekend, but after missing the Olympics last year through injury, was determined to be fit for Athens.

While the meeting failed to live up to much of its pre-publicity which focused on two world record attempts and "200 champions," it still produced some high quality athletics and there were year's best performances in four events.

She is one of the stars of the sport, but she does not have the attitude of a responsible professional. She would not say why she did not want to run, just that she had decided to go back to the United States.

Torrence, scheduled to defend her world 100 metres title in Athens next month, was due to meet her old rival Merlene

Ottey of Jamaica in the race on

Wednesday night.

Torrence made no public comment, unlike in the past when her outspoken views about rivals have landed her in trouble with authority.

In her absence, Ottey, now 37 but running as well as ever, won the race in 22.47 seconds, the third fastest time of the year, and said she was looking forward to defending her 200 crown in Athens.

She was crowned world champion in Gothenburg two years ago after Torrence, who actually won the race, was disqualified for stepping outside her lane.

Torrence was not the only big name to withdraw from the meeting, the last grand Prix before for the World Championships.

Missing were Sergel Bubka (pole vault), Ivan Pedroso (long jump), Kelly Holmes (800m) and Frenchman Stephane Diagana, the European record holder over the 400 hurdles. Diagana said he damaged his sciatic nerve competing in Stuttgart at the weekend, but after missing the Olympics last year through injury, was determined to be fit for Athens.

While the meeting failed to live up to much of its pre-publicity which focused on two world record attempts and "200 champions," it still produced some high quality athletics and there were year's best performances in four events.

She is one of the stars of the sport, but she does not have the attitude of a responsible professional. She would not say why she did not want to run, just that she had decided to go back to the United States.

Torrence, scheduled to defend her world 100 metres title in Athens next month, was due to meet her old rival Merlene

Ottey of Jamaica in the race on

Wednesday night.

Torrence made no public comment, unlike in the past when her outspoken views about rivals have landed her in trouble with authority.

In her absence, Ottey, now 37 but running as well as ever, won the race in 22.47 seconds, the third fastest time of the year, and said she was looking forward to defending her 200 crown in Athens.

She was crowned world champion in Gothenburg two years ago after Torrence, who actually won the race, was disqualified for stepping outside her lane.

Torrence was not the only big name to withdraw from the meeting, the last grand Prix before for the World Championships.

Missing were Sergel Bubka (pole vault), Ivan Pedroso (long jump), Kelly Holmes (800m) and Frenchman Stephane Diagana, the European record holder over the 400 hurdles. Diagana said he damaged his sciatic nerve competing in Stuttgart at the weekend, but after missing the Olympics last year through injury, was determined to be fit for Athens.

While the meeting failed to live up to much of its pre-publicity which focused on two world record attempts and "200 champions," it still produced some high quality athletics and there were year's best performances in four events.

She is one of the stars of the sport, but she does not have the attitude of a responsible professional. She would not say why she did not want to run, just that she had decided to go back to the United States.

Torrence, scheduled to defend her world 100 metres title in Athens next month, was due to meet her old rival Merlene

Ottey of Jamaica in the race on

Wednesday night.

Torrence made no public comment, unlike in the past when her outspoken views about rivals have landed her in trouble with authority.

In her absence, Ottey, now 37 but running as well as ever, won the race in 22.47 seconds, the third fastest time of the year, and said she was looking forward to defending her 200 crown in Athens.

She was crowned world champion in Gothenburg two years ago after Torrence, who actually won the race, was disqualified for stepping outside her lane.

Torrence was not the only big name to withdraw from the meeting, the last grand Prix before for the World Championships.

Missing were Sergel Bubka (pole vault), Ivan Pedroso (long jump), Kelly Holmes (800m) and Frenchman Stephane Diagana, the European record holder over the 400 hurdles. Diagana said he damaged his sciatic nerve competing in Stuttgart at the weekend, but after missing the Olympics last year through injury, was determined to be fit for Athens.

While the meeting failed to live up to much of its pre-publicity which focused on two world record attempts and "200 champions," it still produced some high quality athletics and there were year's best performances in four events.

She is one of the stars of the sport, but she does not have the attitude of a responsible professional. She would not say why she did not want to run, just that she had decided to go back to the United States.

Torrence, scheduled to defend her world 100 metres title in Athens next month, was due to meet her old rival Merlene

Ottey of Jamaica in the race on

Wednesday night.

Torrence made no public comment, unlike in the past when her outspoken views about rivals have landed her in trouble with authority.

In her absence, Ottey, now 37 but running as well as ever, won the race in 22.47 seconds, the third fastest time of the year, and said she was looking forward to defending her 200 crown in Athens.

She was crowned world champion in Gothenburg two years ago after Torrence, who actually won the race, was disqualified for stepping outside her lane.

Torrence was not the only big name to withdraw from the meeting, the last grand Prix before for the World Championships.

Missing were Sergel Bubka (pole vault), Ivan Pedroso (long jump), Kelly Holmes (800m) and Frenchman Stephane Diagana, the European record holder over the 400 hurdles. Diagana said he damaged his sciatic nerve competing in Stuttgart at the weekend, but after missing the Olympics last year through injury, was determined to be fit for Athens.