

Jayasinghe lets 'em down

BANGKOK, Dec 15: Sprinter Santika Jayasinghe abruptly withdrew from the Asian Games men's 100-metre race on Monday, leaving fans from Sri Lanka, who were counting on her for medals, at least in relay races, reports AP.

"No one in our camp is sure if she really sustained injuries, or she was scared to run and not win in her personal events," said a Sri Lankan sports official, speaking on condition of anonymity.

Jayasinghe, 23, the world 200-metre silver medalist, did not show up for the 100-metre gold medal race Monday. After her semifinal the previous day, she pleaded a headache and a sore leg, possibly a pulled hamstring.

Her departure for home Monday was the latest chapter in a troubled year in which she accused unnamed Sri Lankan officials of sexual harassment and tested positive for a steroid. Her own nation's track federation cleared her after she said she used the drug to control her menstrual cycle, but she now is awaiting an international arbitration hearing. Meanwhile, she remains eligible to compete.

"We don't know what really happened in Bangkok. We only this much — that if she was there and running, we could have won some medals at the relays," said Sujatha de Silva, a Colombo resident reached by the telephone from Bangkok.

After her semifinal Sunday, Jayasinghe said she had been down with flu and could not practice.

"She told us she is injured and we got her examined by doctors," said Daya Gunasekera, chief of the Sri Lankan team. "I am unable to comment on how serious were her injuries, but then if an athlete does not want to run you cannot make him or her run."

A leg injury was not apparent in her semifinal race. Even without her, Sri Lanka won its first two Asian Games gold medals in 24 years Monday with victories in the women's and men's 400-metre races by Damayanthi Darsha and Sugath Tilakaratne.

That had led to high hopes for the 4x400 women's relay. Jayasinghe originally had been counting on these games to help rise above the controversies swirling around her.

She had won silver at the 1997 World Track Championships in Athens, finishing ahead of Jamaican runner Merlene Ottey, making her war-scarred nation proud.

Her rewards included money and a three-bedroom flat in Colombo, capital of the island nation off India's southern coast.

But the good times did not last long.

Asian Games roundup

BANGKOK, Dec 15 (AP): Taiwan defeated Japan 6-15, 15-12, 13-15, 15-5, 15-8 Tuesday for the Asian Games men's volleyball bronze medal.

Lin Hsien-chen and Lin Yu-yi replaced two starters at the end of the third set, helping Taiwan rebound for the bronze in only their second volleyball entry in the Games.

Japan won bronze in the women's competition, however, beating Thailand 15-6, 15-5, 15-4.

Japan's Miya Tachibana won her second gold medal of the Games when she teamed with Miho Takeda to claim the synchronized swimming duet title Tuesday.

Tachibana won the individual event Monday. She joined with Takeda in a dominant display, scoring 98.190 points.

The South Korea duo of Yoo Na-Mi and Jang Yoon-Kyeong finished second at 96.504 with China's Li Min and Long Yan in third on 95.943.

Kang Ji-Sook and Lee Mi-Young gained South Korea's third gold medal in Asian Games soft tennis event Tuesday by defeating Taiwan's Lin Li-jung and Cheng Shu-chen in the women's doubles final, 5-3, 4-1, 4-2, 2-4, 4-2, 4-2.

South Korea previously had won the women's and men's team events in the sport, an Asian variant of tennis that uses soft rubber balls, smaller rackets and a different scoring system.

It was the second gold for Kang and Lee in the Games. They were also part of the championship team.

In doubles, they lost once in qualifying play but beat pre-

viously unbeaten Chang Shun-Chuan and Hsu I-chia of Taiwan in the opening round of the final competition. Kang and Lee went on to beat Japan's Naoko Higashi and Yuko Miyaji in the semifinals.

Higashi and Miyaji won the bronze over China's Lu Ya and Bai Xia 4-0, 4-2, 4-2, 4-1, 2-4, 4-2.



Defending champion and former drug offender Kim Jin-il of South Korea made a strong return to Games track Tuesday, qualifying comfortably in the men's 800-metre semifinals.

Kim set the Asian record at 1 minute, 44.14 seconds in June 1994, a few months before he won the Hiroshima Games title, also in a record time.

South Korea's Kim Byung-

hyun struck out the first eight batters he faced and 12 in all in a demonstration Tuesday that Asian sports power China still lags in baseball.

The South Koreans didn't need their ace from the Los Angeles Dodgers, Park Chan-ho, as Kim didn't allow a man on base in six relief innings in 9-2 victory over the Chinese.

That put the Koreans in baseball's gold medal team, against the winner of a later semifinal between Japan and Taiwan.

MEDALS TABLE				
BANGKOK, Dec 15: (AP): Medals standings after Monday's events at the 13th Asian Games:				
Nation	G	S	B	T
China	84	58	41	183
S Korea	43	25	35	103
Japan	34	38	47	119
Taiwan	15	10	23	48
Kazakhstan	14	19	21	54
Thailand	13	19	24	56
N Korea	5	11	6	22
Iran	4	4	8	16
Malaysia	3	8	5	16
Kuwait	3	3	2	8
Hong Kong	3	2	6	11
Singapore	2	3	8	13
Pakistan	2	2	3	7
Indonesia	2	1	6	9
Mongolia	2	0	5	7
Sri Lanka	2	0	1	3
Uzbekistan	1	12	9	22
Uzbekistan	1	4	10	15
Vietnam	1	2	4	7
Qatar	1	2	0	3
Turkmenistan	1	0	0	1
Myanmar	0	4	3	7
Philippines	0	3	7	10
Kyrgyzstan	0	3	2	5
Jordan	0	3	1	4
Nepal	0	1	2	3
Syria	0	1	1	2
UAE	0	0	1	1



China's Li Xuemei, in front, takes the baton from teammate Li Yali (R) during the women's 4x100-metre relay at the Asian Games yesterday. China clinched gold. — AP/UNB photo

Asiad basketball China, Philippines stay on course

BANGKOK, Dec 15: China and the Philippines stayed on course to battle out the Asian Games men's basketball gold medal after both scored convincing victories to start quarterfinal play Monday, reports AP.

Wang Zhizhi nailed 23 points and was one of five Chinese players to score double figures in a 106-86 win over Iran.

China have won the past three Asian Games titles and are trying to match the Philippines, who won a record four in a row and brought a fully professional side to this tournament to preserve their record.

Zandro Limpot had 19 points as the Philippines beat United Arab Emirates 93-57. The team had a 22-day tour of the United States before arriving for the Games.

"Most of our confidence level was improved and the camaraderie improved, and it helps when you get to play against top teams like Arkansas and Iowa State University," Limpot said.

In previous years, the Philippines has sent young amateur players to the Asian Games but this time players were taken out of the national pro league.

China's height advantage proved decisive in their match against an Iran team missing center and captain, A Al Zaabi.

"We weren't able to run our tactics because two of our tallest players had travel sickness and one had a bad eye," said Iran player Shamsi Hashili.

The Philippines were pooled with UAE, South Korea and Thailand in Group B of the quarterfinal round. China have Iran, Kazakhstan and Taiwan in Group A.

South Korea jumped to a 20-point lead after five minutes of their match against hosts Thailand and ran away with a 98-71 victory. Moon Kyung-Euen and Hyun Joo-Yup scored 28 points apiece for the Koreans.

SOCOG welcomes new swim schedule

SYDNEY, Dec 15: Australia have welcomed the new eight-day swimming schedule for the 2000 Sydney Olympics following the International Olympic Committee's confirmation of the expanded programme, reports AP.

The schedule, including semifinals for events up to 200 metres and with at least four finals each night, will be replicated in next year's major swimming meet here, the Pan-Pacific Championships in August.

Australian multi-event star Michael Klim appears favoured by the programme if he chooses to contest the seven races in which he won medals at last January's World Championships in Perth.



A scramble between cagers of South Korea and United Arab Emirates during their Asiad fixture at Bangkok on December 15. The Koreans won 59-26. — AFP photo

BANGKOK NOTEBOOK

BANGKOK, Dec 15 (AP): Four countries — Bhutan, Maldives, Palestine and Yemen — are hoping to depart Thailand with all Asian Games past — a medal.

And 13 of the 41 participating nations have yet to appear on the medal's chart at the current Games, which end December 20.

There's also gloom in Indian camp, which has only managed to pick up 13 medals. The nation of 980 million people won 22 medals, including four golds, at the last Asiad in Hiroshima four years ago.

Other teams are confident of breaking their medal records.

Malaysia has only two medals to win before equaling its best haul of 19, while Kuwait, with eight medals, has just one to go to tie its best showing.

Myanmar, also known as Burma, has come through with its best performance since the 6th Asian Games in Bangkok, 28 years ago. It has reaped four silvers and two bronzes so far.

CURE FOR ECONOMIC CRISIS FOUND

Thailand, where Asia's economic crisis first erupted, has found a cure for its symptoms — the Asian Games.

The Games are helping to ease relieve stress felt by Thais facing loss of income, a depressed stock market and unemployment, according to Mental Health Department official Yaowarat Janchorn.

"Whatever we do that makes us happy, such as cheering at sports, will let people forget things for awhile," says Ms Yaowarat.

A games' press release noted that national stress levels may have come down because there have been fewer reports of suicides after competition began December 6.

Suicides were a daily news staple in recent months, with many attributed to financial problems.

"The economic benefits from the Asian Games have not been clarified," the release said. "But one thing is for sure, the 13th Asian Games have helped Thais take a rest from many problems and prepare them to face the IMF era."

The bottom fell out of the Thai economy mid-1997, forcing the International Monetary Fund to bail out the country with large cash infusions.

HEAVY MEDAL

Not only is winning an Asian Games medal hard, keeping it on can be tough too. At least three athletes have had medals put around their necks, only to have them drop off their ribbons moments later.

One was a member of China's winning women's badminton team, whose coach screwed the gold medal back onto its attachment after it fell off.

Another was an Indian runner whose medal dropped off shortly after an award ceremony Monday.

Risa Sugawara, a Japanese gymnast, also had her bronze medal fall off its ribbon during an award ceremony. She laughed as an official helpfully screwed it back on for her.

The problem appears to be with the screw that goes into the top of the medals and attaches them to the ribbon. Despite the mishaps, organisers said Monday they had no complaints from teams about the medals.

UPWARDLY MOBILE

When you're racking up medals as quickly as China, you need high-technology to keep track. Leaders and managers of the Chinese delegation have been using mobile phones to send in results to their headquarters at the Asian Games, allowing them to keep track of their mounting pile of gold.

After another Chinese woman weightlifter got gold Sunday, Wei Di, the team manager was on the phone within minutes to report in the good news.

Li Furong, the delegation's deputy head, was watching a badminton match Friday when he heard over his mobile phone that Taiwan had beaten China for gold in women's team tennis.

What? They lost? How did that happen? Li said. "That's a shame. It was a very good opportunity." As of Monday, China had 84 golds, way ahead of second-placed South Korea with 43.

Salinas joins Alaves

VITORIA, Spain, Dec 15: Spanish First Division side Alaves on Monday completed the signing of veteran striker Julio Salinas from Yokohama Marinos of Japan, reports Reuters.

Salinas, who played in the 1986, 1990 and 1994 World Cups for Spain, winning a total of 65 caps, will join up with his new team mates in January 1999 when his contract in Japan runs out.

The Daily Star Entertainment Guide

Wednesday 16th December

(All programmes are in local time. The Daily Star will not be responsible for any change in the programme.)

BTV

Morning session

9:00 Opening announcement, 9:10 The 9:10 Pictorial, 9:20 Children programme 9:25 Musical programme 9:30 March Past 9:35 Musical ballad: Anek Dinar Fare 11:30 Poetry reading session 12:00 Close down

Evening session

3:00 Opening announcement, Al Quran 9:12 Recitation from the Gita 3:15 Patriotic song 3:20 Full-length feature film: Aganur Parash Mani 4:00 Khabar 6:00 Special programme for children 6:30 Khabar 6:40 Poetry reading session 7:00 The World Today: poets of the country 7:20 Saangeetanjali 8:00 News in Bengali 8:40 Package Drama: Galper Shesh Achary 10:00 News at Ten 10:30 TV evening of Victory Day events 10:40 Dance drama 11:30 Khabar: The News 11:45 Close down

BBC

6:00am BBC World News

Followed by Weather 6:30 World Living: Future Fantastic: Immortals: Gillian Anderson looks at the possibility of a world where death and ageing are things of the past. 7:00 BBC World News: The World Today: Stephen Cole and Nisha Pillai present news, opinion, analysis and features from the BBC correspondents who live and work in the region. 8:45 World Business Report: The latest business news with informed analysis from the world's financial centres. 9:00 BBC News: The latest news, analysis and features from the BBC correspondents who live and work in the region. 9:45 World Business Report: The latest business news with informed analysis from the world's financial centres. 10:00 BBC News: The latest news, analysis and features from the BBC correspondents who live and work in the region. 10:45 World Business Report: The latest business news with informed analysis from the world's financial centres. 11:00 BBC News: The latest news, analysis and features from the BBC correspondents who 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