

NAT'L CYCLING ENDS
BJMC clinch
11 golds

SPORTS REPORTER

The 30th National Cycling Championships concluded in Patuakhali yesterday with BJMC the runaway leaders capturing 11 gold medals.

Over 100 sportsmen and women from 12 districts and 4 sports organisations took part in the competition in a total of 23 events. Eleven events were reserved solely for female competitors.

The competition was held on the 30 Km long Patuakhali-Amtali Road and at the Patuakhali Stadium. The Bangladesh Cycling Federation organised the competition with the help of the Patuakhali District Sports Association (PDSA).

Federer wins
yet another
Masters

REUTERS, Miami

Top seed Roger Federer maintained his stranglehold over Croatia's Ivan Ljubicic with a 7-6 7-6 7-6 win to lift his second straight Nasdaq-100 Open title on Sunday.

Victory in two hours, 56 minutes for the Swiss world number one earned him an American tournament double for the second year in a row after back-to-back wins in Indian Wells and Miami.

"I'm extremely happy," Federer told reporters. "To win back-to-back like this is unbelievable. I never thought I'd do it again. It really feels great."

The Swiss, who has now won 28 of his last 30 finals, is unbeaten in Masters Series tournaments since he lost to Richard Gasquet in the Monte Carlo quarterfinals last April.

He has now beaten Ljubicic in their last seven ATP meetings and took his 2006 win-loss record to 28-1 - a run that includes four titles.

Favourite Federer had to overcome more than 20 unforced errors in a 59-minute opening set that ended when he fired down a sixth ace in the tiebreak.

The Swiss went up a break for 4-3 in the second set but Ljubicic broke straight back but after two hours he had a two-set lead after another tiebreak.

Federer then recovered from a break down in the third set before closing out the match in another tiebreak to claim his 10th career title at a Masters Series event including the last four in a row including Hamburg, Cincinnati and Indian Wells.

Tait not coming

FROM PAGE 12
Langer's fitness for the rest of the Test and the Bangladesh leg of the tour was subject to ongoing assessment, said the spokesman.

Kasprovic only bowled two overs in South Africa's second innings because of a back injury. His fitness is also subject to further assessment but he will be able to bat if necessary.

Palestine power

FROM PAGE 12
edge of the area went wide and 10 minutes later midfielder Lalmalsawma Hamar's shot hit the crossbar.

Philippines dominated the second half but failed to find the winner. Valeroso's solo effort in the 55th minute saw his shot sail over the bar while Indian custodian Paul Shilton made a diving save on an Alexander Borromeo shot in the 75th minute. James Gunn's header on substitute Ian Araneta pass went wide three minutes before the final whistle.

"Not particularly. I expect them to fire in this series. But it has been a long season," the Indian captain said.

"There is going to be one or two batsmen out of form and it is the quality of the team to respond to that.

"We have to take up responsibility as a team and that is what we have been doing," Dravid did not agree that the win, seventh in a row, meant India had a psychological hold on England.

"The last 15 overs set the game for us. But each match starts from zero. We have to keep our concentration and continue to play good cricket."

Akhmedov said he missed Xavier Vijay Kumar and the player is doubtful for the third match also.

Philippines coach Aris Casib said: "Our FIFA ranking is much lower than India but we managed to hold them. It is a positive result for us."

AFGHANISTAN-
CHINESE TAIPEI

Chinese Taipei came from a two-goal deficit to snatch a valuable point from Afghanistan.

Hafzullah Qadami scored in the 19 and 23 minutes to give rank-outsiders Afghanistan a surprise 2-0 lead at the break but Chuang Wei-Lun reduced the arrears in the 47th minute to keep Taipei in contention.

The equaliser came from Liang Chien-Wei in the 73rd minute as Taipei shared the lead with India on four points after two games.

Tricky night for Milan giants



AFP, Paris

The prospect of an unprecedented Champions League final between bitter rivals AC Milan and Inter Milan is at stake as the Serie A giants attempt to negotiate awkward quarterfinal ties Tuesday.

The Italian giants have regularly crossed swords in Europe's premier club competition, with last season's controversial quarterfinal which ended in defeat for Inter being the most recent encounter.

But wins for Milan and Inter over Lyon and Villarreal respectively will leave the two teams from northern Italy only a semifinal away from a dangerous liaison in the May 17 final in Paris.

Both teams are narrow favourites to progress to the last four going into Tuesday's second legs, but neither will be taking anything for granted.

Milan coach Carlo Ancelotti shrugged off his team's shock 1-0 defeat to lowly Lecce in last weekend's league fixtures, a result that has effectively killed off their faint hopes of catching leaders Juventus.

Ancelotti said he was not bothered by his side's display, and is confident they will bounce back against Lyon, who held the Italians to a goalless draw in the first leg.

"It's just a bump in the road," Ancelotti said of the Lecce loss.

"However, in the Champions

League, we will be different. I am optimistic, but we must play a great game to get through."

Milan are desperate to win the Champions League after their heartbreaking defeat to Liverpool in last season's final in Istanbul.

The six-time European champions threw away a 3-0 lead to draw 3-3, before losing on penalties.

Andriy Shevchenko, Kaka and Gennaro Gattuso were rested against Lecce, but all are expected to start on Tuesday.

Dutch defender Jaap Stam has recovered from a calf strain and is likely to return to the right-hand side of Milan's defence.

Lyon, who beat Troyes on Saturday to extend their lead at the top of the French first division to 12 points, welcome back Juninho from a suspension, but Portuguese midfielder Tiago will serve a one-match ban.

Lyon keeper Gregory Coupet believes the return of Brazilian playmaker Juninho could be the key to winning the tie.

"At 0-0 we have hope, although the hardest part is ahead of us," he said.

"Juninho will give an edge to our attack that we didn't have in the first leg. Milan will have to avoid giving away free-kicks because he is an expert in dead-ball situations."

The winner of Tuesday's match will face a semifinal with either Barcelona or Benfica, who play Wednesday.

Inter defend a 2-1 first leg lead when they travel to Spain to play

Villarreal, arguably the surprise package of this season's tournament.

While Inter's famous teams of the 1960s wrote the book on defensive football, Serbian midfielder Dejan Stankovic has warned his teammates not to fall into the trap of sitting on their first leg cushion.

"There's so much at stake, it would be foolish to go there and try and protect our lead," Stankovic said. "A 1-0 win would be a good enough result for Villarreal, so it would be a risky game for us to play."

"But if we can score, then that will leave them needing three goals to go through. So we have to go there with a positive attitude."

Villarreal, nicknamed the 'Yellow Submarines', hail from a small industrial town of around 50,000 people and have spent most of their existence toiling away in Spain's regional leagues.

But since elevation to the Primera Liga, Villarreal have enjoyed phenomenal success given their limited resources and are within touching distance of a place in the Champions League last four.

They have already claimed the

scalps of Manchester United and Rangers during this campaign, and warmed up for Tuesday's Inter tie by beating Real Zaragoza 1-0 away on Saturday, their first win in five matches.

Messi misses
Benfica clash

AFP, Barcelona

Barcelona midfielder Lionel Messi has been ruled out of the Catalans' Champions League quarterfinal, second leg against Benfica, according to reports here Monday.

Argentine teenager Messi was ruled out for up to a month when he tore a right leg muscle in the first half of Barca's return with Chelsea in the last round of Europe's premier club competition on March 7.

According to El Mundo Deportivo newspaper's website on Monday, doctors have effectively scratched Messi's name from Frank Rijkaard's squad for Wednesday's match at the Nou Camp.

The news will come as a blow to Barcelona's fans, who watched agonisingly as the Catalans failed to hit the net despite having around 10 goalscoring chances against the Portuguese champions.

Blanco out of
Mexico squad

REUTERS, Mexico City

Mexico's gifted but volatile forward Cuauhtemoc Blanco will miss this summer's World Cup finals after being omitted from coach Ricardo La Volpe's provisional 26-man squad on Sunday.

But 37-year-old defender Claudio Suarez, who has won 174 caps, and veteran midfielder Jesus Arellano were surprise inclusions in the list from which La Volpe will choose his final 23 players.

Blanco, as famous for his scintillating skill as his unpredictable temperament, is widely viewed as one of Mexico's most creative players ever and speculation about his exclusion had been a long-running saga.

Perhaps best remembered for the outrageous "bunny-hopping" between defencings with the ball lodged between his ankles, Blanco played in the 1998 and 2002 World Cups.

BCB to set up

FROM PAGE 12
Joint secretary Reazuddin Al Mamun and CEO Mahmudur Rahman were present at the briefing.

The board has decided to extend the contract of six national players - Shahriar Nafees, Syed Rassel, Shahadat Hossain, Abdur Razzak, Mshafiqur Rahim and Alok Kapali - for the next six months till September 30. Their contract expired on March 31.

Mahbub informed that the board decided to submit its bid to the ICC for hosting the 2011 World Cup, 2012 Champions Trophy and 2014 Under-19 World Cup.

"A trainer for the national team will be appointed within two weeks as current trainer Stuart Karpinnen is leaving his job this May," he told the reporters.

The BCCB general secretary said that Twenty20 cricket is likely to be introduced in the country in next year's domestic calendar. The board will also upgrade the indoor facilities outside the capital within three months.

Replying to a question, Mahbub said the construction work at the Mirpur Sher-e-Bangla Stadium would be completed by mid-June, enabling the BCCB to host matches of Zimbabwe's tour to Bangladesh at the end of this year.

The BCCB is expected to advertise this week for appointing a manager for the national team. Former national cricketer Shaiful Haque Heera will be the manager of the Tigers during Australia's tour of Bangladesh.

The budget of the tour has been estimated at Tk 2.5 crore.

Asif restricts

FROM PAGE 12
paceman Rao Iftikhar made his debut.

Sri Lanka brought in Kulasekara for paceman Dilhara Fernando. The hosts are bidding farewell to Sanath Jayasuriya who has said that he will retire from Test cricket after this match.

SCOREBOARD
Scoreboard at stumps on the first day of the second Test between Sri Lanka and Pakistan at the Asgiriya International Cricket Stadium on Monday:

SRI LANKA: First innings
Tharanga c Younis b Asif 10
Jayasuriya b Asif 14
Sangakkara c Faisal b Kaneria 79
Jayawardene c Farhat b Asif 4
Samaraweera b Asif 65
Dilshan c Akmal b Kaneria 22
Maharoor c Younis b Kaneria 7
Bandara c Akmal b Asif 43
Kulasekara not out 11
Malinga not out 0

Extras: (lb-4, nb-2, w-1, pen-5) 12
Total: (For 8 wts in 88 overs) 267
Fall of wts: 1-18, 2-27, 3-61, 4-142, 5-142, 6-178, 7-238, 8-256.

Bowler O M R W
Asif 21 7 41 5
Gul 23 3 83 0
Rao 11 1 54 0
Kaneria 22 6 44 3
Razaq 11 1 36 0
Toss: Pakistan
Umpires: Steve Davis (AUS) Darrel Harper (AUS)



Fiorentina marksman Luca Toni (C) celebrates with teammates after scoring against AS Roma during their Serie A match at the Artemio Franchi Stadium on Sunday.

SERIE A
Fiorentina hold Roma

REUTERS, Milan

Fiorentina held on to fourth place in Serie A after drawing 1-1 at home with their closest challengers AS Roma on Sunday.

Serie A's top scorer Luca Toni put Fiorentina ahead in the second minute with his 26th goal of the season but fifth-placed Roma fought back after the break with an equaliser from Argentine defender Leandro Cufré.

Fiorentina remain a point ahead of Roma in the fourth place that means a place in the qualifying round of next season's Champions League.

With six games remaining, Juventus lead on 79 points with Milan on 70, Inter on 68 and Fiorentina seven points behind Roberto Mancini's side.

Toni's strike, a fine shot from the edge of the area, put him in the history books as 26 goals in a

campaign equals his club's record for a season set by Swede Kurt Hamrin and Argentine Gabriel Batistuta.

The Florence side had their keeper Bogdan Lobont thank for maintaining their lead until the break as the Romanian produced a great save to keep out a header from Simone Perrotta and then from the resulting corner foiled compatriot Cristian Chivu.

Roma deserved at least a point out of the game though and they got on level terms when Lobont parried a header from Cufré and the Argentine reacted well to slot in the loose ball.

An injury-time own goal from Lazio defender Massimo Oddo gave Empoli a 3-3 draw at the Olympic stadium after Lazio had been 2-0 up within eight minutes.

The Rome side looked to have grabbed the points in style when substitute Paolo Di Canio made it 3-2 with a superb solo goal in the 80th minute, dribbling past three defenders before driving into the

far corner. But with almost the final kick of the game Oddo miskicked a cross and the ball flew past Angelo Peruzzi to gift Empoli a point.

The result allowed Chievo to move above Lazio into sixth place after they beat Livorno 2-1.

At the foot of the table Udinese picked up their first win in over three months as headers from Antonio Di Natale and Brazilian defender Felipe gave them a 2-0 victory over Parma.

Parma's Brazilian midfielder Fabio Simplicio had a 59th minute penalty saved by Morgan De Sanctis.

TOP SIX

Team	P	W	D	L	GF/GA	Pts
Juventus	32	24	7	1	61	20 79
AC Milan	32	22	4	6	70	26 70
Inter Milan	32	21	5	6	59	24 68
Fiorentina	32	18	7	7	53	35 61
Roma	32	17	9	6	58	32 60
Chievo	32	12	12	8	46	38 48

Yuvi, Irfan seal India win

FROM PAGE 12
131-4 before the left-handed pair put the England attack to the sword with a wide range of shots.

Raina, 19, cracked one six and five fours in his 67-ball knock for his second successive half-century following his match-winning 81 not out in the previous game at Faridabad.

The fireworks came from both ends as India plundered 98 in the closing 10 overs to set England a stiff target.

India had lost Virender Sehwag (15) early before Dravid and Pathan put on 78 for the second wicket.

England then bounced back with three wickets in the space of six overs. Collingwood dismissed Dravid, who inside-edged a delivery on to his stumps after making a neat 46.

Pathan (36), a lower-order batsman sent in at number three, failed to capitalise on a good start. He was caught by Collingwood at backward point while driving Flintoff.

Mohammad Kaif's poor run with the bat continued as he fell for a second successive duck, caught behind off Liam Plunkett. He has not reached double figures in his seven innings.

England had a chance to put more pressure on India but Raina survived a stumping chance off left-arm spinner Blackwell. The batsman was on 13 when wicket-keeper Jones failed to gather the ball which kept slightly low.

Raina soon settled down and went on to give Yuvi valuable support.

SCOREBOARD
Scoreboard of the third one-day international between India and England on Monday:

INDIA
Sehwag b Anderson 15
Dravid b Collingwood 46
Pathan c Collingwood b Flintoff 36
Yuvi c Collingwood b Flintoff 103
Kaif c Jones b Plunkett 0
Raina b Flintoff 61
Dhoni not out 13
Powar not out 1
Extras: (lb-3, nb-2, w-14) 19
Total: (For 6 wts in 50 overs) 294
Fall of wts: 1-8, 2-27, 3-47, 4-78, 5-273, 6-288.

Bowler O M R W
Anderson 9 1 40 1
Mahmood 8 0 66 0
Flintoff 9 0 56 3
Plunkett 6 0 39 1
Blackwell 10 1 42 0
Collingwood 5 0 31 1
Solanki 3 0 17 0

ENGLAND
Strauss c Dhoni b Pathan 7
Priour not out 37
Blackwell b Pathan 9
Shah c Yuvi b Pathan 7
Flintoff c Sehwag b Powar 15
Collingwood c Raina b Harbhajan 93
Solanki c Yuvi b Harbhajan 10
Jones c Sehwag b Pathan 32
Plunkett b Agarkar 8
Mahmood b Agarkar 8
Anderson not out 2
Extras: (lb-2, nb-2, w-3) 7
Total: (All out in 48.5 overs) 245
Fall of wts: 1-8, 2-27, 3-47, 4-78, 5-83, 6-100, 7-205, 8-223, 9-242.

Bowler O M R W
Pathan 10 0 51 4
Patel 8 0 47 0
Agarkar 7.5 0 34 2
Harbhajan 10 1 47 2
Powar 10 0 45 1
Yuvi 3 0 19 0
Result: India won by 49 runs to lead

seven-match series 3-0.
Man-of-the-match: Yuvi Singh.
Umpires: Asad Rauf (PAK) and Krishna Harharan (IND)
Fourth one-dayer: April 6 (Kochi)

WICB chief
resigns

BBC ONLINE, undated

West Indies Cricket Board chief executive Roger Brathwaite has resigned with the board 20.6 million pounds in debt.

Brathwaite pre-empted a board review of his position by announcing he would step down on April 28, a year away from the World Cup in the Caribbean.

Brathwaite argued the board had stemmed financial losses during his tenure, saying in a statement: "The past four years have been quite challenging."

"I leave having done the best I could within the organisation's framework."

The WICB generated a 1.1-million-pound profit in 2003, and 3 millions in 2004 before it was hit last year by a row between rival sponsors, provoking a player strike.

It has recently secured multi-million dollar loan facility to allow it to operate day-to-day at least until the start of the World Cup.

PRIMERA LIGA

Valencia win 8-goal thriller



REUTERS, Madrid

Valencia reignited their challenge for a Champions League place by claiming their first win in seven matches with a thrilling 5-3 victory at home to relegation-threatened Cadiz in the Primera Liga on Sunday.

Leading striker David Villa and midfielder Miguel Angel Angulo scored classy doubles in a win that saw Quique Sanchez Flores's side leapfrog Osasuna to take third place.

Fellow high-flyers Osasuna lost ground after a 4-0 hiding by Bernd Schuster's Getafe in front of their own fans at the Reyno de Navarra with Serbian striker Veljko Pavonic scoring twice.

Sevilla missed a chance to close the gap on Osasuna when they lost 2-1 at Real Betis in the Seville derby and remain fifth, level on points with Celta Vigo who enjoyed a flattering 3-0 win at Atletico Madrid.

Valencia striker Villa broke his recent goal drought when he netted for the first time in eight games to put the home side into the lead with less than two minutes on the clock.

Cadiz midfielder Enrique levelled 10 minutes later, sliding in at the far post after Santiago Canizares had made a great save low to his right to keep out a free-kick.

But it was Valencia who continued to dominate and Angulo restored their lead with a cool dinked finish after a gleaming first-time pass from Pablo Alar shortly after the half-hour.

Two minutes later defender David Navarro made it 3-1 when he headed in at the far post after Angulo had looped a free kick across the area.

Angulo struck the fourth early in the second half when he picked his spot after fellow midfielder Ruben Baraja had burst into the area, but there was still more to come.

Midfielder Jonathan Sesma pulled one back with a great diving header on 64 minutes only to see Villa score his 18th goal of the

season straight from the restart.

Valencia fans were given further cause for celebration when Brazilian midfielder Edu, formerly with Arsenal, came on for the final half hour to make his league debut seven months after tearing the cruciate ligament in his left knee.

Sesma ended the scoring with his second goal thanks to a wonderful free-kick to make it 5-3 11 minutes from time but he had little to celebrate as the defeat left his side four points behind Real Sociedad in 19th place in the 20-team standings.

TOP SIX

Team	P	W	D	L	GF	GA	Pts
Barcelona	31	21	6	4	70	27	69
Real Madrid	31	17	7	7	56	28	58
Valencia	31	15	11	5	44	28	56
Osasuna	31	17	4	10	41	37	55
Sevilla	31	15	6	10	39	32	51
Celta Vigo	31	16	3	12	34	29	51

Carlos' Real
career over?



INTERNET, undated

Roberto Carlos' illustrious Real Madrid career appears to be drawing to a close after his red card in Saturday's clasico. The Brazilian left-back was sent off after just 25 minutes for allegedly abusing referee Luis Medina Cantalejo and one of his assistants in the 1-1 draw at the Nou Camp.

Medina Cantalejo indicated after the game that when Carlos pointed extravagantly to him and his assistant, he said, "You and you are a pair of shits."

But Carlos said the words used were, "You and your assistant do not understand shit about us."

The ex-Inter fullback believes that this does not constitute an insult and certainly did not merit a direct red card. He also claimed that he had asked the referee to take action over alleged racist chanting by Barca supporters, but was ignored.

Either way, he now seems certain to leave Real Madrid in the summer. He has not seen eye to eye with caretaker coach Juan Ramon Lopez Caro in recent months and

now faces a severe punishment from Real, who intend to make an example of the player to show indiscipline will not be tolerated.

He has another year on his current Real contract and has