

Photo finishes Sumita

SPORTS REPORTER

It must have come as a surprise for Gayathry Gobindra Raj of India that she has won the women's 100m hurdles gold of the 11th South Asian (SA) Games. About 20 minutes have already passed after the race had ended and favourite Sumita Rani, draped in red and green colours, of Bangladesh is on victory lap round the track.

This is when the shock came for Sumita. A photo finish separated the two, by a hundredth of a second. And the gold went to Gayathry. This is how the women's 100m hurdles event went at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

Gayathry took 13.98 seconds to grab the gold while Sumita followed her by 0.01 second more. The bronze also went to a Bangladeshi, Jasmin Akhter who clocked 14.05 seconds.

The 22-year-old Sumita, who won bronze in the 2006 Colombo Games, made a promising start and initially it looked like that her fight would be against Sri Lankan Amali Harshani Wijesinghadon as they ran neck-and-neck until the half-way mark. Sumita then surged past the Lankan, raising hopes of becoming the first Bangladeshi woman athlete to win a gold medal at an international meet.

But Gayathry, an Indian junior hurdler, who is participating in the Games for the first time, recovered from her poor start and did extremely well in the last 10 metres to do what she finally did.

"After the race, first I was confused. But in the end I am really happy to win gold for India," said Gayathry.

The girl from Tamil Nadu said that she was confident of winning the gold as she had done her best to push down the last 10 metres to make up for her shaky start. Gayathry, however, said that it was not her best performance as she clocked better timing in the national meet.

SEE PAGE 18 COL 2



In this picture Bangladesh hurdler Sumita Rani (2nd from R) is seen a step ahead of India's Gayathry Gobindra Raj (L). But Sumita fell agonisingly short behind the Indian in a photo finish of the women's 100m hurdles in the 11th South Asian Games at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

Pakistan's revenge

SPORTS REPORTER

Pakistan defied the odds to beat powerful India 4-3 on penalties in the final to retain South Asian hockey supremacy. The match rolled into extra time after the regulation 70 minutes ended 1-1. Even the added fifteen minutes after that failed to break the deadlock.

Pakistan converted four of their five strokes as opposed to India's three to retain the gold medal they won from India in the Colombo Games in 2006. Besides, it was an immediate revenge for Pakistan as they lost to the same side 5-1 in the group match on February 3.

The first half was completely dominated by India and it looked like it was going to be another one-sided show as the group match. And the Indians took an early lead in the sixth minute through captain Ajitesh Rai who scored from a penalty corner. Dharmavir Singh pushed the ball on which there was a dummy before Ajitesh converted with a clever hit. India created couple

of more chances but could not capitalise as Pakistan defended deep.

India were unlucky when Roshan Minz's sliding effort came off the post. A scuffle broke out between the two sides from a foul as big-match tension got the better of their temperament. As a result, both captains received yellow cards for two minutes.

Pakistan regrouped in the second half and played with much more vigour and purpose than the first. They kept pressing for an equaliser and their hard work paid off as they came back in the game through a penalty corner 12 minutes into the second half. It was once again the tall Wasif Siddique, who has been phenomenal in the tournament as far as penalty corners are concerned, converted it after a push from skipper Sabtain Raza. Pakistan keeper Imran Butt made some good saves to deny India from taking the lead again. Minz missed an excellent opportunity from an unmarked position 10 yards from the post as he shot it wayward.

The match rolled into extra time but no team could break the deadlock either

so it was destined for a tiebreak.

Varinder Singh's feeble effort was saved by Butt to give Pakistan the edge, but then Zeeshan Ali hit the post that kept India in the tie. The next shot from Dharmavir was saved by Butt. Pakistan needed to put their last shot in and skipper Raza stepped up to convert that one to lead the team into wild celebrations.

Pakistan coach Shahbaz Ahmed Jr. was delighted with his team's performance. "I am very happy with the team's performance. We always believed that we could beat India and the 5-1 defeat in the group match was just a bad game for us. We were conscious of not making the same mistakes we made on that day. After a below par first half, we managed to lift our game and won it in the end," said the great.

India coach Clarence Lobo rued the missed chances that their strikers failed to take in the second half. "It was bad luck. We expected this sort of fight from Pakistan. But we should have won though had we not failed to capitalise on the chances we created."

Injured fan dies

AFP, London

A Blackburn Rovers football fan critically injured at this weekend's Premier League match at Stoke City has died in hospital, police said on Sunday.

The man, who was found unconscious in a stand during Saturday's game, was treated for a head injury and cardiac arrest, then rushed to the hospital.

A police spokesman said: "A 30-year-old man was pronounced dead at 1.55am this morning at University Hospital North Staffordshire."

"The circumstances are being fully investigated and a 25-year-old man remains in custody and is helping police with their inquiries."

The victim was found collapsed in the concourse area of the south stand just after half-time, where a group of Blackburn supporters were gathered.

Police caught up in Cabanas shooting

AFP, Mexico City

Mexican authorities have accused three policemen of being implicated in last month's shooting of Paraguay World Cup star Salvador Cabanas, the ministry of public affairs said late Saturday.

Cabanas was shot in the toilet of a trendy Mexico City and underwent emergency surgery.

Closed-circuit images from the bar allegedly show three police, escorting the main suspect inside the building.

The police gave their account to investigators Thursday and have been placed in temporary custody, the ministry said on its website.

Authorities are looking for the suspect, Jose Jorge Balderas Garza, nicknamed "El JJ", and a man known by the nickname "El Contador."

The 29-year-old Cabanas plays his club football with Club America of the Mexican league.

He has been able to be up and about in recent days but remains in hospital.

Hosts get back hockey bronze

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh came from behind to beat Sri Lanka 2-1 to regain the bronze medal in hockey of the 11th South Asian Games at Maulana Bhasani National Hockey Stadium yesterday.

It also was a sweet revenge for the hosts, who went down 2-0 to the then hosts to lose the medal in the Colombo Games four years ago. Ashiqur Rahman and Mamunur Rahman Chayan scored for the winners while Mulafer scored the lone goal for Sri Lanka.

After putting up a superb show against India for a 3-3 draw in the final group match on Friday, Bangladesh were expected to keep up the momentum against Sri Lanka, who they handed an emphatic 3-1 defeat in their group match, but it was not so easy a task for the hosts to beat the islanders for the second time.

Even the game saw the Lankan players refrain from playing for a couple of minutes in protest of Pakistani umpire Kamran Sharif's decision to award a penalty corner to the hosts in the closing moments from where Bangladesh struck the winning goal through a combination of Rasel Mahmud Jimmy, Moshirur Rahman Biplob and Mamunur Rahman Chayan, who converted the goal five minutes from time.

Bangladesh, however, could have taken a lead in the opening moments but Sri Lankan goalkeeper Rathnasiri made a superb save to foil an effort from Kamruzzaman Rana.

Sri Lanka adopted a counter-attack strategy to keep two players up front deploying six players in the backline and they went ahead from a counter-attack when Mulafer ran down from the right to dance past three Bangladeshi players including goalkeeper Kiron inside the 16-yard box to give his side a lead in the 18th minute.

Shrugging off the nervousness, Bangladesh reorganised to press hard in the second half for the equaliser. It came in the 50th minute when veteran Ashiqur pushed a Chayan slap home. Chayan then converted Bangladesh's sixth penalty corner to seal the match in the 65th minute.

But before that a scare came from Sri Lankan captain Abey Arathne Dammika who beat Bangladesh keeper Kiron only to see his push narrowly miss the board in the 41st minute.

Bangladesh captain Biplob admitted that they initially were under pressure, but overcame that to win the game.

"Not only today, whenever we play against Sri Lanka, we find ourselves under pressure and I don't know why this happens," said Biplob adding that they could not play according to their plan in the first half, but they finally rallied back to win the game.

SEE PAGE 18 COL 4



PHOTO: SHAWKAT JAMIL

Pakistan goalkeeper Imran Butt (2nd from R) is the toast of his teammates after he made two saves in the penalties against India in the men's hockey final of the 11th South Asian Games at the Maulana Bhasani Stadium yesterday.

Kaka ends a long wait

AFP, Madrid

Brazilian superstar Kaka scored his first league goal in three months as Real Madrid closed back to within five points of pacesetters Barcelona at the top of the Spanish top-flight with a comfortable 3-0 home win over Espanyol.

Barcelona had gone eight points clear with a 2-1 home win over Getafe earlier on Saturday, despite playing over an hour of the game with ten men, so the pressure was on Real and they responded with an 11th consecutive home victory.

Real were without Cristiano Ronaldo, completing his two-match ban, but didn't need the Portuguese star as goals from Sergio Ramos, Kaka and Gonzalo Higuain sealed an easy win.

Madrid got off to a great start when Ramos headed in Esteban Granero's cross after just five minutes.

Kaka netted a second on 29 minutes after captain Raul, back in the starting line-up, saw his initial effort saved.

Kaka was all smiles after ending a run of seven league games without a goal and

this was his first goal since he netted in the 3-2 derby win over Atletico Madrid back on November 7.

"It was nice for me to score after so many games," said Kaka. "I am coming back from injury and just finding my best form."

"Barcelona are doing well at the moment and not dropping points but we just have to continue winning our games."

Kaka almost scored again in the second half when he rattled the post.

Argentine Higuain made his Real first appearance following a three week lay-off and came off the bench to score in the final minute to make it 3-0.

Leaders Barcelona had to show the spirit of champions to beat Getafe 2-1 at Camp Nou despite the handicap of playing 65 minutes with ten men after Gerard Pique was sent off for a late lunge.

Barcelona had taken a fifth-minute lead with Lionel Messi curling in a brilliant effort for his 16th goal of the season but defender Gerard Pique got a straight red card on 25 minutes for a late lunge to complicate matters.

Barca rode out the storm for a fifth consecutive win with Messi setting up Xavi for the second goal on 66 minutes and it proved crucial as Roberto Soldado

scored a penalty in stoppage time.

The Getafe match was special for midfielder Andres Iniesta who made his 200th league appearance for Barca.

For Argentine centre-back Gaby Milito it was a first league start of the season as he continues his recovery following serious cruciate ligament injuries.

With just five minutes gone Barca took the lead with Messi wrapping his left foot around the ball and his bending shot flew in.

A second goal looked a matter of time but Pique then lost his cool on 25 minutes lunging at Rafa Gomez and the referee had no hesitation in reaching for the red card.

Despite being one man less Barca created chances and Seydou Keita missed a sitter on the hour mark putting his shot wide from close range.

Fortunately for Keita it didn't prove costly with Messi showing great balance and control to set up Xavi who made no mistake to score on 66 minutes.

Rafa Marquez was sent off in the closing stages for giving away a penalty which Roberto Soldado converted but Barca took the spoils.

Earlier Valencia triumphed 2-0 at home over Valladolid, moving them six points clear of fourth-placed Sevilla.



SuperSport6
New Zealand v Bangladesh
Second ODI
Live from 5:00am

Neo Cricket & SuperSport2
India v South Africa
First Test, Day Three
Live from 10:00am

BTV
SOUTH ASIAN GAMES
(WOMEN'S FOOTBALL)
India v Nepal
Gold Decider
Live from 3:00pm

(MEN'S FOOTBALL)
Bangladesh v Afghanistan
Gold Decider
Live from 6:15pm

Nepalese cyclists on a peace mission

RIZANUZZAMAN LASKAR

Two Nepalese cyclists on their odyssey to pedal around 99 countries in five years are now in the city with a message of peace for the world leaders and renowned personalities.

Rupak Khadka, 21, and Rajendra Sepakota, 22, from Kathmandu have pedalled over 2621 miles (4,218 kilometres) in 79 days to reach the city.

"We plan to get round the world and spread our message. This mission is not about material gain or international fame. It is simply about spreading the message that it would not be possible to save the world environment without gaining internal peace within one's individual self," said Rupak Khadka while on a brief break from his travels in Dhaka.

The two yogis [Hindu spiritualists who are advanced practitioners and has achieved a high level of spiritual insight] has cycled through India to reach Bangladesh.

They hope that by the time they return to their country in 2014, they would have met the leading world leaders including the president of the United States.

"We plan to meet the US president and show him the documents and mementoes of our travels," said Rajendra Sepakota. "We want to tell him that the whole world is looking towards him to take a decision".

In their one-week stay in Dhaka, the two cyclists will appear in programmes organised by the Rotary Club, Dhaka University's environmental science department, Nepalese organisations as well as various educational institutes to spread their message.

"We are also looking forward to meet with the Prime Minister and the President. We want to spread the message that they should look at the world with love in their eyes and then they can make a difference around them," said Rupak Khadka.

From their experience in the city, the two intrepid travellers said that the city needs more environment-free development.

"They should consider the environment more when developing the city," said Rajendra. "But we also want to laud the government for banning polythene as this happens to be the only city we have seen so far that does not allow the use of polythene".

They were inspired to take to the saddle by another Nepalese cyclist Pushkar Shah who had pedalled around 150 countries since 1998. They cycle 8 hours a day on average, drinks

five to six litres of water and covers about 100km (62 miles).

Furthermore they say that they have not been ill once during the journey - "Not even a headache".

They began their journey with 3,000 Nepalese rupees (\$121) handed to them by their family members. But as their story spread, cash donations came from various sources, from individuals to organisations, from city mayors to charity groups.

"Initially it seemed just like a dream," they told The Daily Star. "We trekked 8,500 kilometres in Nepal to spread our message and then we decided to go for a world tour."

After one and a half years of planning, the trip became a reality. Rupak and Rajendra set off in November 2009 on their \$68-bicycles.

They have been through some testing times in their journey. But the two ever-optimistic cyclists say that their bad times are offset by the people who offer them kindness and hospitality.

The duo will head to Bhutan after their one-week stay in Dhaka.



PHOTO: STAR

Nepali cyclists Rupak Khadka (L) and Rajendra Sepakota, who are on a peace mission, arrived in Dhaka recently.