

Monday 8th December, 2008

Standard Chartered Singapore Marathon

# Sri Lankan forces fight against odds in Singapore

Reemus Fernando reporting from Singapore

Sri Lanka Air Force runner Ruvina Deepani stunned her dominant opponents as she finished first in the South Asian Region which also include Indonesia, Thailand, Vietnam, Philippines, Brunei and Malaysia in the second leg of the Standard Chartered Greatest Race on Earth (GROE) marathon series here in Singapore yesterday. Finishing the grueling race under high humid conditions to a time of three hours six minutes and 53 seconds, the girl from Induruwa beat the athletes of Indonesian and Thailand teams, who led the first leg of the relay in Nairobi by considerable margins.

Although she ran below her personal best, Ruwina's performance helped the Sri Lankan women's team advance from the third place to the second place in the relay event which will have its remaining two legs within the next two months. Her performance has eased the burden on the other two athletes running in the Mumbai and Hong Kong legs to try and retain the regional championship they won last year.

However, Ruwina's determined run seemed to have exhausted her to the full as she collapsed just after crossing the finish line. She was rushed to the medical tent and first aid was administered on her.

Meanwhile, her male counterpart, Jeevakumaran Sivaperumal, representing the country's GROE men's team fought against a severe chest ache and dehydration to finish fifth in the South Asian region before crashing to the ground at the end of the run.

He was immediately admitted to the Emergency Care Unit at the Alexander Private Hospital, which is a 20 minute drive from Padang, the finishing point of the race.

It is learnt that he had stopped twice after the 15 kilometer point and had been advised by the medical officers stationed at different points not to continue the race.

Jeevakumaran's determined run against Medical advice, has placed the country's men's team third in the South Asian region of the GROE marathon series.

Jeevakumaran, from Sri Lanka Army, clocked two hours and 54.48 seconds to finish the event. The athlete risking his life ran to conclude the second leg and helped his team remain in contention for a place



Ruwina Deepani, who collapsed after finishing the Standard Chartered GROE Marathon, is being taken to a medical tent near the finishing point in Singapore yesterday. Deepani finished first in the GROE South Asian Region to keep alive her team's attempts to retain the regional championship they won last year.

(Pic by Reemus Fernando)

in the South Asian region. The Indian team is leading the men's series in the South Asian region with Thailand placed second.

Meanwhile the Kenyan team won the overall men's and women's races of the GROE second leg comprehensively. The official results of the GROE marathon was not available at the point of writing.

#### Army debutant to the limelight

Sri Lanka Army's Ajith Ratnayake, who was on his debut overseas marathon, finished below two hours and 34 minutes to be among the first 25 athletes to cross the finish line in the Standard Chartered Singapore Marathon. The Full Marathon of the Singapore Marathon was taken part by over 15,000 athletes.

Speaking after the race, Ratnayake said that he felt a severe pain below the chest but endured the pain to finish. "I got a severe pain, but I didn't want to return home without accomplishing my task,"



said the athlete who got the best use of his foreign exposure.

"Although it doesn't look a difficult route the heat was such that at times I thought I would not be able to make it to the end," he said.

Meanwhile, his coach Major Lal Jayasekara said that the athlete has shown a lot of promise by completing the marathon. "He has shown a lot of promise by finishing among the elite athletes. I think he will be a good prospect for the future," said Jayasekara, who was otherwise a disappointed man after seeing Harshamali Gunaratne the fourth Sri Lankan to take part in the marathon failing to make amends for her last year's disappointments.

Harshamali Gunaratne, running without shoes along a largely concrete route, took more than four and half hours to finish the event. She said that she had to stop twice to get relieved of a stomach ache. "I had to stop twice because of a stomach ache and due to that I lost on time," said the athlete after the finish.

## Rain spoils Mercantile Tennis at SLTA

by Revata S. Silva

Not a single match of the second day's schedule, of this year's Mercantile Tennis Tournament, could be worked out on Sun. (7) due to rain at the Sri Lanka Tennis Association courts.

The Tournament Referee K. Subramaniam said he would have a rearranged schedule when the matches commence this afternoon.

194 entries from 23 private sector firms are engaged in 13 different categories in this year's Mercantile Tournament sponsored by NDB Bank and goes on till Dec. 19.

## Sivaperumal's condition improving- doctors

Reemus Fernando reporting from Singapore

Jeevakumaran Sivaperumal, who ran to the finish line against the advice of the first aid medical staff, collapsed after completing the second leg of the Standard Chartered GROE marathon and is out of danger, the doctors at Alexander Hospital here in Singapore told 'The Island'.

Jeevakumaran, who struggled to reach the finishing line, collapsed soon after finishing the race and the medical staff rushed him to the Alexander Hospital.

Doctors at the hospital said that the athlete was suffering from dehydration and severe chest pain.

Covered with thick blankets and pulse sensors fixed to his body with bottles of saline and other medication administered, Jeevakumaran hardly looked the determined athlete who was running along Singapore's high rising buildings in the morning.

"He is suffering from severe dehydration," said Michel Fung, the doctor who treated the athlete.

"He is shivering and it's uncontrollable, but we have administered the necessary drugs and have taken blood samples for tests," the doctor said.

"We are trying to make sure that this state doesn't lead to a heat stroke," the doctor added.

Asked whether the athlete is out of danger, the doctor said 'The reports indicate that he had made some progress from the time he was treated at the tent at the race finishing point up to now.'

Over half a dozen athletes, who suffered other minor injuries during the Marathon, were rushed to the hospital. Meanwhile, Ruwina Deepani, who also suffered from dehydration and was treated at the medical tent close to the finishing point was discharged after receiving medical assistance.



Jeevakumaran Sivaperumal remains under supervision at the Alexander Hospital in Singapore. (Pic by Reemus Fernando)

## Rousing welcome for Maradona

**KOLKATA:** A sleepy township, Maheshtala, hogged the limelight holding on to the football legend, Diego Armando Maradona. It pipped Kolkata for a place on the international map bringing home the most popular idol of world football.

The soccer legend laid the foundation stone for the proposed Indian Football School. Maradona also lent his touch on the plaque that he unveiled signalling the beginning of the football academy.

The morning programme was short but sweet with the football wizard responding to the welcome note in Spanish — *Beinvenido dios del futbol* (welcome to the prince of football) which were planted along the way that brought the hero home. This appeared to strike the emotive chords of the temperamental star, who immediately responded to the surging crowd, stroking his heart and clasping his hands a definite sign of showing solidarity.

The estimated 15,000 people who had packed into the makeshift enclosures around the proposed site of the academy for a glimpse of Maradona were treated generously by their valued guest.

"I have never imagined that football is followed so passionately here and I have so many fans," he



Argentina's soccer coach Diego Maradona, center, waves to the crowd as his girlfriend Veronica, left, sisters of Missionaries of Charity, right in white sarees, and security guards look on in Calcutta, India, Sunday, Dec. 7, 2008. Maradona was greeted by thousands of fans Saturday as he helped inaugurate a football school on the first day of his visit to promote the sport in India. (AP Photo/Bikas Das)

said in Spanish, which was later translated.

He made the most part of the journey from the city on a helicopter and was brought on a specially designed bus from the helipad constructed near the venue.

The highlight of the function was when he was presented with a portrait of Che Guevara drawn by a local schoolboy.

Maradona was so moved by seeing the picture that he hugged the little artist and kissed him on his forehead. "I come from a country which worships Che and Fidel (Castro). I am overwhelmed to see my heroes are equally honoured here," he said, while adding in the same breath, "viva India, viva Kalkuta (long live India, long live Kolkata)."

## Entries called for Colombo Super League cager tournament

Colombo District Basketball Association (CDBA), affiliated to the Sri Lanka Basketball Federation (SLBF) has called for entries for the Colombo Super League Tournament - 2008. Entries close on the 9th of December and the tournament draw will be held on the 11th of December.

Basketball clubs that are interested in taking part in the tournament are requested to contact Ajith Kuruppu, the Vice-President of the Colombo District Basketball Association on 077-307 17 94. The draw meeting will be held on the 11th of December at St. Joseph's Girls' School at 6pm.

## Doubts over Flintoff and Harmison

England coach Peter Moores on Sunday admitted he is uncertain if star players Andrew Flintoff and Steve Harmison will return to India, cricket365.com reported on its web site.

A final decision on whether the tour will resume was to be made later Sunday night after Hugh Morris, managing director England cricket, and Sean Morris, chief executive of the Professional Cricketers' Association, return to Abu

Dhabi with fresh security information.

Although Moores is hopeful that the full side will fly to Chennai today, if the green light is given, he concedes not everyone may commit and all players' decisions should be respected.

England will already have to replace the injured Ryan Sidebottom in the 15-man party and have further deputies at hand due to the presence of 10 members of the performance squad.