



■ Jacob hands over the sponsorship cheque to Pillai in the presence of other BKS officials

# Mirza lifts 80-km endurance title

**BAHRAIN**  
Royal  
Endurance  
Team rider  
Jaffar Mirza yesterday won the 80-kilometre qualifying ride that kick-started the kingdom's endurance racing season at the Bahrain International Endurance Village in Sakhir.

Mirza led the race from start to the finish, and won with a new Bahraini record time for such an event of two hours 57 minutes and five seconds. Riding Razorback, Mirza registered an average speed of 26kph.

Royal Endurance Team captain, Supreme Council for Youth and Sports chairman and Bahrain Olympic Committee (BOC) president Shaikh Nasser bin Hamad Al Khalifa yesterday honoured the top three finishers.

Rahman Zayed claimed second place with a finishing time of 3:21:00, while Mohan Singh was third overall just a second behind Zayed.

Shaikh Nasser said that Mirza's dominant victory, which came with more-than-20-minute gap, proved that



■ Shaikh Nasser and Shaikh Khalid follow up on the results. Right, Mirza nears the finish as he is followed by Shaikh Nasser in an SUV

Bahrain's Royal Endurance Team members continue to develop their skills, which helped in his achievement yesterday.

## Happiness

Speaking of his win, Mirza expressed his happiness with his high-level performance and for setting the new record in the event. He added that it gave him a strong start to the new season, which officially got underway with yesterday's ride.

Meanwhile, Bahrain Royal and

Equestrian Federation president Shaikh Khalid bin Hamad Al Khalifa expressed his delight with Mirza's victory.

Shaikh Khalid also praised the role of Shaikh Nasser for his guidance towards the team's other riders, and also thanked him for the continued support of the Supreme Council for Youth and Sports and the BOC.

Fifty riders turned up for the qualifying race, which was divided into three stages of 30km, 30km and 20km.

The new endurance riding season will be full of unique rides, highlighted

by His Majesty King Hamad's Ride on February 4 of next year and the 120km HRH Prince Salman Senior and Junior Championships on April 6.

Other top events will be the 100km Shaikh Khalid bin Hamad Championship on December 3, the 120km National Day Senior Ride on December 24, the 120km Breef Championship on January 7 of next year, the 100km Shaikh Nasser bin Hamad Senior Championship on February 18 and the 120km Season-Ending Night Ride on May 4.



## BKS gears up for Bahrain badminton challenge

PREPARATIONS are at the final stage for the Travelex Western Union Bahrain International Challenge Badminton Tournament 2011, which will be held at the Bahrain Keraleeya Samajam (BKS) Diamond Jubilee Hall from Tuesday to Saturday.

Travelex Western Union are the title sponsors of the event. Remittance Manager Biju Jacob handed over a cheque to BKS president P V Radhakrishna Pillai in the presence of BKS officials and the tournament committee.

Seventy-five players from 24 countries, including several players ranked in the world's top 100, are participating in the event.

Matches will be held in five categories, namely men's singles, men's doubles, women's singles, women's doubles and mixed doubles.

The tournament carries a total prize money of \$15,000 and world ranking points.

## Seeded

The draw for the event was held at the Badminton Asia headquarters in Kuala Lumpur last Tuesday.

Top seeded players include Pedro Martins of Portugal in the men's singles, Agnese Allegrini of Italy in the women's singles, K T Rupesh Kumar and Sanave Thomas of India in the men's doubles, Nicole Grether and Charmaine Reid of Canada in the women's doubles, and Anthony Dumartherya and Sabrina Jaquet of Switzerland in the mixed doubles.

The centre of attraction at this year's event will be the participation of highly successful Indian doubles pair of Kumar and Thomas, who are currently ranked 28th in the world.

They have significant achievements over the last decade including winning the doubles title at last year's tournament held in Bahrain, while also claiming the Indian national doubles for many years. They were also quarter-finalists in the Commonwealth Games in 2010.

Matches at BKS will be taking place between 4pm and 10pm on all days. Entry for the event will be free and all badminton lovers in the country are welcome to witness high-quality matches. More details about the tournament can be obtained from the BKS website [bahrainkeraleeyasamajam.com](http://bahrainkeraleeyasamajam.com).

## Qatar's Al Sadd bag Champions crown

**JEONBUK**, South Korea: Al Sadd won their first Asian Champions League title by stunning Jeonbuk Motors 4-2 on penalties following an enthralling 2-2 extra-time draw yesterday.

Al Sadd goalkeeper Mohamed Saqr saved two penalties in the shootout with Nadir Belhadj scoring the winning kick to seal the \$1.5-million first prize and a place at the Fifa Club World Cup in Japan next month.

Qatar's Al Sadd were under pressure throughout the final at Jeonbuk's World Cup stadium but defended bravely and

took two of their few chances to seal an unlikely triumph at the end of a campaign that began in the qualifiers in February.

Heavy favourites Jeonbuk, roared on by a passionate 41,805 home crowd, looked stronger at the start and deservedly took the lead through their Brazilian playmaker Eninho in the 19th minute.

The Brazilian was brought down on the edge of the area by Wesam Rizik but picked himself up to fire a sharp, curling, right-foot free kick into the corner of the net past a motionless Saqr.

The Koreans failed to build



■ Qatar's Al Sadd players celebrate with the trophy

on their early lead and the Qataris went level 10 minutes later thanks to an own goal by defender Sim Woo-yeon.

The skillful Kader Keita clipped a right-footed cross towards goal and the ball flicked off the head of Sim and past Kim Min-sik who stayed

on his line when he should probably have moved to clear it.

Jeonbuk took control of the game as Al Sadd sank back, happy to defend as the Koreans wasted a number of chances. They were punished when Keita scored a brilliant

counter-attack goal for the visitors in the 61st minute.

Belhadj broke down the left and fed Ibrahim Khalfan whose cross was brilliantly controlled by Ivorian Keita who then managed to fire the bouncing ball low into the corner of Kim's goal.