



**RIO DE JANEIRO:** Handout image supplied by OIS/IOC showing France's Marie-Amelie le Fur posing next to a screen showing her new world record set in the Women's Long Jump - T44 Final during the Rio 2016 Paralympic Games at the Olympic Stadium in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, yesterday. — AFP



**RIO DE JANEIRO:** Brazil's Alan Fonteles Cardoso Oliveira (L) and Germany's Johannes Floors compete during a heat of men's 100 m (T44) of the Rio 2016 Paralympic Games at Olympic Stadium in Rio de Janeiro on Thursday. — AFP



**RIO DE JANEIRO:** Brazil's Ricardo Costa de Oliveira competes in the final of the Men's long jump (T11) event during the Rio 2016 Paralympic Games at the Olympic Stadium in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, yesterday. — AFP

## BELARUSIAN BOOTED FROM PARALYMPICS GAMES FOR CARRYING RUSSIAN FLAG

**RIO DE JANEIRO:** The Paralympic Games already has its first political protest, right at the beginning with the opening ceremony.

A Belarusian sports ministry employee who marched in with a Russian flag on Wednesday has been booted out of the games.

The International Paralympic Committee banned Russia from the games because of the country's part in a state-sponsored doping system, and identified the flag-carrier as Andrei Fomachkin. The IPC said he was waving the Russian flag and marching as a guest of the Belarusian Paralympic committee.

"The fact he was a guest of the president rather than an athlete or coach makes it easier for us to take this action," IPC spokesman Craig Spence said.

Spence added the Belarusian delegation was being warned about staging political protests. As with the Olympics, Paralympic officials do not allow political protests in the games.

"If they continue to break the rules, we will look at some other form of action," Spence said. Natalya Eismont, a spokeswoman for Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko, said it was not a spontaneous gesture, and hinted there might be more to come. "It was the Belarusian delegation's idea to take the Russian flag to the opening ceremony," Eismont said. "I would like to stress that this is the stance of our government, of the president and the president of our Paralympic committee. We stand with Russian Paralympians."

The Belarusian foreign ministry said it was aware that there could be consequences for the stunt.

"If we have to bear responsibility for this, we will," Belarusian foreign ministry spokesman Dmitry Mironchik said.

Spence said the Belarus team was searched before entering the stadium. "We check all teams before they go out into the stadium, at every single games," he said. "That flag was pretty well hidden on the person last night because all of the Belarus team was searched before they went out, and the flag was somewhere on the person we didn't notice." — AP



**RIO DE JANEIRO:** United States' Jessica Long stands by the pool after competing in the women's 400-meter freestyle S8 final swimming event at the Paralympic Games in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, Thursday. — AP

## US SWIMMER JESSICA LONG OPENS WITH A SILVER AT PARALYMPICS

**RIO DE JANEIRO:** US swimmer Jessica Long hugged Australian Lakeisha Patterson when the women's 400 freestyle final was over and offered congratulations. Long had a medal in her fourth Paralympics, but Patterson took the gold and the world record.

"I wish it went a little differently," said Long, the highly decorated U.S. Paralympian who is competing in nine races at the Rio Games.

"I think the only hard part about that is adding time in one of my best races. But at the same time, I've overcome some really bad shoulder injuries. So I'm really proud that I finished, and even signed up for the race."

Patterson's time of 4 minutes, 40.33 seconds nipped Long's previous record of 4:40.44. "Jess is an amazing person and a really great, fierce competitor," Patterson said. "She's achieved so much. To be able to have my idol come up to

me and say she's proud of me - it was really quite bittersweet. And that's going to stick with me for a long time."

The 24-year-old Long now has 18 medals overall, a dozen of them gold. But Patterson, a 17-year-old swimmer from Caboolture, Australia, who has cerebral palsy, steadily took control of the race after the first 100 meters. Long finished far back, in 4:47.82.

Long was born in Siberia with fibular hemimelia, a birth defect that left her without her fibulas, ankles, heels and most of the other bones in her feet. Shortly after being adopted at 13 months old, Long went through multiple surgeries, eventually having each of her legs amputated below the knee. Growing up in Baltimore, she took up swimming at age 10 and joined her first team.

Two years later, she became the youngest member of the US Paralympic

team and went on to win three gold medals at the 2004 Paralympic Games in Athens.

Long is just the third American swimmer to appear in four Paralympics. She may be rivaled only by U.S. wheelchair racer Tatyana McFadden, competing in seven events from the 100 meters to the marathon in Rio, as the best-known and busiest American Paralympian.

"Oh my goodness," Long exclaimed when asked after her qualifying heat about how she's handling her nine-event schedule. "Day by day. Literally, I can't even think about tomorrow. Just thinking about today, and basically what I can control which is today and just enjoying it. It's a lot of fun to be back."

It might have been a little less fun on the medal stand, but when Patterson embraced her again, Long just smiled, accepted the hug and lifted Patterson off her feet. — AP



**RIO DE JANEIRO:** United States' Tatyana McFadden slows to a roll after competing in the first heat of the women's 100-meter T54 athletics event of the Paralympic games in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, Thursday. — AP