

'Make ICC stronger'

SYDNEY, Feb 2: The retiring Australian Test captain Mark Taylor said Tuesday he feared for the future of international cricket, recommending a more powerful controlling body in the wake of Sri Lankan captain Arjuna Ranatunga's outburst, reports AP.

Taylor said Ranatunga's actions and his legally-powered code of conduct hearing may have changed the face of cricket forever and the game needed a ruling body with more strength.

He said he was disappointed in Ranatunga's suspended six-match ban after he threatened to take his team from the field and engaged in an aggressive, finger-pointing clash with umpire Ross Emerson.

Emerson had no-balled off-spinner Muralitharan for throwing in a one-day match against England in Adelaide on Jan 23.

It was an unfortunate moment in the game, the game may change forever because of that moment," Taylor said Tuesday when he announced his retirement.

"I've always been a great believer that the umpire makes the decision and you accept the umpire's decision. That's unfortunately not what happened last week in Adelaide.

The fact that lawyers are now coming into referees' meetings is a disappointing part of the game because it means that the game may now change forever and I don't want to see that.

Taylor said cricket needed a much tougher and more effective ruling body, criticizing the International Cricket Council's lack of authority.

Cricket has been weighed down with controversy in the last six months, with the ICC unable to resolve the furor surrounding Muralitharan's bowling action and the Pakistan bribery and match-fixing scandal also involving Australian Shane Warne and Mark Waugh.

"I still think the only way we're going to get full control of the game is by the governing body having full control and full disciplinary action and no longer making recommendations, because recommendations don't work," he said.

"Someone has to put their hand up and say we make the final decision on a person or an incident. We're unbiased, we're global and whatever we say goes. I'm not so sure that's going to be possible with what's happened last week in terms of lawyers and so on.

"It's up to every country to give that power over. Unless it happens we're always going to have controversy in the game."

Ranatunga brought a team of lawyers into his ICC code of conduct hearing in Perth last week and forced the regular one-day series referee Peter D'Olive to Merwe to back down and issue a hefty fine and suspended sentence when much of the cricketing world called for a lengthy ban.

Taylor supported the concept of an international players' association but said it needed a coordinated worldwide approach with every player willing to join for it to be successful and called for crowded schedules to be regularly and carefully monitored to avoid burnout.

Sylhet, Jessore & Dinajpur group champions

Three teams — Sylhet, Jessore and Dinajpur — emerged group champions winning their respective matches of the qualifying round in the Keya Cosmetics Suhrawardi Cup National Youth football tournament on Tuesday, reports APB.

Sylhet subdued Sunamganj 2-0 to record their third consecutive win and go atop Group A in Sylhet zone.

Nasir and Nannu found the net for the winners who will play zonal championship deciding match against the Group-B winners on February 4.

Jessore zone, the hosts became Group-A champions with a 3-0 demolition of Satkhira. Hafiz, Ashraf and Khurshid scored one goal apiece. They will face Group-B winners on February 4.

Mithel struck twice as Dinajpur defeated Lalmonirhat 4-2 to emerge Group-A champions of Kurigram zone. Dinajpur will take on the Group-B winners on February 4.

In the other matches of the day, Sirajganj overwhelmed Sherpur 9-1 in a one-sided affair and Bogra posted a 2-1 goal win over Jamalpur in Sirajganj zone. Dhaka trounced Narsingdi 5-1 in a Dhaka-B zonal match.

Kurigram blanked Panchagarh 8-0 in a lopsided affair in the Kurigram zone. In Sylhet zone, Feni beat Khagrachhari 2-0 and Narail beat Gopalganj also by same margin in Jessore zone. In a Chapainawabganj zonal match, the hosts notched up a 2-0 goal win against Rajbari.

BKSP settled for a goalless draw with Kishoreganj, Natore drew with Jhenaidah 1-1 and Barisal held Barguna 1-1.

M'singh cricket

MYMENSINGH, Feb 2: Golden Future Club defeated Siraj Memorial Club by six wickets in the First Division Cricket League at the Circuit House ground today, reports UNB.

Batting first, Siraj Memorial were bundled out for 68 runs in 22.4 overs.

Roni captured four wickets for 20 runs.

In reply, Golden Future reached the winning target of 69 losing four wickets in 22.2 overs.

Shamim scored highest 23. Tapon and Mitul claimed two wickets each.



2, 1, 3: France and Juventus midfielder Zinedine Zidane (C), who was named FIFA player-of-the-year, poses with second placed Brazilian super-striker Ronaldo (L) and Davor Suker who came third. — AFP photo

'Zi-zou' awarded the ultimate accolade

BARCELONA, Feb 2 (AP/Reuters): Stomping past his closest challengers, French World Cup hero Zinedine Zidane topped a year of awards Monday when he was voted FIFA's world Player of the Year for 1998.

With 93 first-preference votes among the 132 national coaches who voted, Zidane garnered a 518 points against 164 for Ronaldo, who won the trophy in 1996 and 1997.

Croatian ace Davor Suker, the top scorer in last year's World Cup, finished third with 108 points.

The top award for Zidane came as no surprise given the momentum of the 26-year-old Juventus star had. Just over two months ago he won France Football magazine's prestigious European Player of the Year award, in which he also outvoted Suker and Ronaldo.

With his trademark, close-cropped black hair, the timid Zidane accepted the award from Liberian star and 1995 winner George Weah, speaking briefly only to express his gratitude.

The first French footballer to take the award since it was created in 1991, Zidane tied with Dutch player Dennis Bergkamp for third place in the contest in 1997.

But his name flashed across the world last summer when he stunned soccer giants Brazil by heading in two goals in the World Cup final to launch France to glory.

Earlier in 1998, he won his second consecutive Italian Serie A championship with Juventus, who he joined in 1996, and was finalist for a second year in a row with the side in the European Champions Cup.

Standing a dominating 1.85 metres (6 feet), Zidane is a former midfielder for Cannes and Bordeaux. He commands in the

midfield and is well noted for his impressive technique with both feet and — as he showed at Saint-Denis Stadium in the World Cup final on July 12 — with his sharpness in the air.

The World Cup triumph easily erased bitter memories of the earlier stages of the tournament when he was suspended for two matches after being expelled from France's game against Saudi Arabia.

The son of an Algerian immigrant born and raised in a tough suburb of Marseille, 'Zi-zou,' as he is popularly known in France, now enjoys cult status among both French and Italian youth.

"Winning individual awards means a lot, but soccer is a team game, Zidane said prior to receiving the prize. "And although being here today is important, it's also important to remember the team from which it all came."

He admitted that he had sometimes struggled to come to terms with the celebrity status he had acquired after the World Cup.

"Sometimes it is difficult but it feels good," he said. But he did not offer the accolades to excuse his often indifferent performances with the Italian champions this season.

"This has been a difficult season for everybody at Juventus. Many players are not always playing up to their potential," Zidane said.

The prizes were announced at a gala presentation in Barcelona's National Theater of Catalonia that was reminiscent of the Oscars. The ceremony saw a vast array of soccer greats such as Bobby Charlton, Johan Cruyff and Franz Beckenbauer attending alongside FIFA chief Sepp Blatter and former President Joao Havelange.

Inter Milan wonderboy Ronaldo, 22, for his part, was happy to take second place. "I'm very proud and hon-

oured to be the winner two years in a row. But this time there are other players who deserve it more than me," he said, in his usual humble way.

Earlier this year, Ronaldo was voted best player of the World Cup in France over Zidane, but over the past year he has been seriously troubled by injury.

"I still have trouble with my knee," he said. "I am undergoing serious treatment and hopefully I'll be back playing in a week or two."

In FIFA's other awards, Brazil was voted Best Team of the Year for the fifth year while Suker's Croatia, which finished third in their first ever World Cup, was designated Best Mover of the Year.

Iran, the United States and Northern Ireland shared the Fair Play Award.

Ronaldo, Suker and French defender Lilian Thuram took the top three places in the Adidas Golden Ball award while Suker clinched the Golden Shoe for his six goals in the World Cup.

Suker seemed the most delighted and surprised of the three men invited on to the stage.

"That was the most important moment in the World Cup and in my whole life," Suker said. "Playing for Croatia in their first World Cup and then to score to get third place... for me, we are champions of the world."

The awards also saw additions to the year-old honorary FIFA Hall of Champions with the late Bobby Moore, Italy's Dino Zoff, Frenchman Just Fontaine, Germany's Gerd Muller, and Brazilian Garrincha being elected as players.

The late Bill Shankly went into the hall for his managerial achievements at Liverpool. Germany was chosen as top national team and Ajax of Amsterdam as the star club.

Matthaeus at the helm again

BOONN, Feb 2 (Reuters/Internet): Lothar Matthaeus will captain Germany in two friendly matches in the United States this week.

Coach Erich Ribbeck said the veteran was a perfect interim solution as team captain Oliver Bierhoff cannot join the tour because of playing commitments at AC Milan.

Germany play the United States on February 6 and Colombia on February 9.

Matthaeus, who has captained Germany 68 times in 130 appearances, said he had no plans to retire from the national team and was tired of critics doubting his ability because of his age, 37.

The Bayern libero said he was not interested in setting records by playing in a fifth World Cup and said he wanted to keep playing as long as he was fit.

"I'm not looking for any record. I simply enjoy playing for Germany," Matthaeus told Bild. Germany's largest selling

daily. Asked about doubts raised about his age, he said, "That really gets to my nerves. What's the big deal? People at 37 can be just as fit as younger players. You just have to take care of yourself as you age."

Matthaeus said he would like to play his football in the United States some day. "New York would be fantastic," he said.

Another German international, Thomas Haessler, also said he has no plans to retire from the national team.

"That's not something I'm thinking about," he said when asked if he planned to retire.

Haessler, a midfielder for Borussia Dortmund, said he hopes to play in at least 100 matches for Germany. He has 97 caps.

Meanwhile, Ribbeck on Tuesday was philosophical about a series of mishaps that have dogged his team's current tour of the United States.

"You just have to do your best to get by when upsets happen that are beyond your control," Ribbeck said.

The litany of upsets started at the airport when a mysterious suitcase from Egypt went unclaimed and caused a security alert, delaying departure.

Then a snow plough damaged the runway, further delaying take-off for another two and a half hours.

On arrival in Jacksonville, the stairs of the aircraft didn't work, and the team was stuck on the tarmac again.

Heavy rainfall meant that floodlights at Fernandina Beach High School, where the team were due to train, didn't work, forcing them to play kick-tennis in the dark.

Ribbeck said the training ground was fine now and the fact that the corners of the pitch are narrower than the centre was "not so terrible."

Matthaeus said: "The main thing is that we have had some fun and that the lights don't go out during our games."

The squad will also miss the services of some key players through club commitments. They are Christian Ziege and Joerg Heinrich of Fiorentina, while Bayern Munich's Mario Basler has been dropped.

They're the best

BARCELONA, Feb 2 (AP): The leading finishers of FIFA's Player of the Year award as voted by 132 national soccer coaches and total points (first place votes in parentheses):

- 1. Zinedine Zidane, France, 518 (93)
2. Ronaldo, Brazil, 164 (15)
3. Davor Suker, Croatia, 108 (6)
4. Michael Owen, England, 43 (0)
5. Gabriel Batistuta, Argentina, 40 (3)
6. Rivaldo, Brazil, 37 (1)
7. Dennis Bergkamp, Netherlands, 33 (1)
8. Edgar Davids, Netherlands, 26 (2)
9. Marcel Desailly, French, 23 (0)
10. Lilian Thuram, French, 14 (0)
11. Marcel Salas, Chile 13 (2)
12. Roberto Carlos, Brazil, 13 (0)
13. Pedrag Mijatovic, Yugoslavia, 12 (1)
14. Fabien Barthez, France, 9 (0)
15. Jose Chilavert, Paraguay, 9 (0)

The following are past winners of the FIFA player of the year honours since the award was created in 1991.

- 1991 — Lothar Matthaus, Germany
1992 — Marco Van Basten, Netherlands
1993 — Roberto Baggio, Italy
1994 — Romario, Brazil
1995 — George Weah, Liberia
1996 — Ronaldo, Brazil
1997 — Ronaldo, Brazil
1998 — Zinedine Zidane

The legatees

BARCELONA, Feb 2 (Reuters): Recipients of the 1998 FIFA awards presented on Monday:

- World player-of-the-year: Zinedine Zidane (Juventus/France)
Team of the year: Brazil
Best mover of the year: Croatia
Fair play prize: US Soccer, Iran Football Federation, Football Association of Ireland (joint award)
Adidas golden ball France '98: Ronaldo (Brazil)
Adidas silver ball France '98: Davor Suker (Croatia)
Adidas bronze ball France '98: Lilian Thuram (France)
Adidas golden shoe France '98: Davor Suker (Croatia)
Adidas silver shoe France '98: Gabriel Batistuta (Argentina) and Christian Vieri (Italy) (joint award)
Lev Yashin award for best goalkeeper of France '98: Fabien Barthez (France)
France '98 most entertaining team award: France
France '98 fastest goal award: Celso Ayala (Paraguay)
FIFA France '98 fair play award: England and France (joint award)

1999 inductees into the International Football Hall of Fame

Players: Just Fontaine (France), Garrincha (Brazil), Bobby Moore (England), Gerd Muller (Germany), Dino Zoff (Italy)
Manager: Bill Shankley (Liverpool)
Referee: Jack Taylor (England)
Club team: Ajax Amsterdam
National team: Germany
Player: Joao Havelange (Brazil)
Media: Jacques Ferran (L'Equipe, France)
Food of the game: Fernand Saestre (France)

Tofazzal Hossain passes away

Tofazzal Hossain Chowdhury, general secretary of Mymensingh District Sports Association (MDSA) and member of National Sports Council, died of cardiac arrest in his home town yesterday afternoon. He was 58, reports UNB.

An awarded sports organizer of the NSC, former Upazila chairman of Mymensingh Sadar and also a BNP leader, Tofazzal served as the general secretary of MDSA for the last 20 years.

He was the captain of Dhaka University football team in 1963 and the same year he joined 'Blue' of the university. He was awarded the best sports organizer by Sports Writers' Association in 1982 and was given the NSC award in 1991.

NSC president, vice president, secretary, directors and all officials and employees have condoled his sudden death and prayed for salvation of the departed soul. They also expressed sympathy to the members of the bereaved family.

Klinsmann set to bid Germany bye

BOONN, Feb 2 (Reuters/Internet): Jurgen Klinsmann said on Tuesday he planned to settle in the United States to give his child a normal life.

Klinsmann said he was organizing a match on May 31 to mark his retirement from football as an ex-player from VfB Stuttgart and an international team made up of former teammates from Inter Milan, Tottenham Hotspur, AS Monaco and Bayern Munich.

"There won't be a return to Germany," Klinsmann was quoted as saying in Bild, Germany's largest newspaper.

"Germany will be just a holiday destination for us. I want to stay in the United States. "I want my son to go to school here and grow up as a normal child, not the son of a prominent soccer player," Klinsmann said.

The German Soccer Federation (DFB) angered the former striker and national captain by refusing Klinsmann's bid for an official farewell match.

Instead he has organized a match involving the 1989 Stuttgart team which reached the UEFA Cup final. It will include Guido Buchwald, Karlheinz and Bernd Foerster.

'Tubby' the perfect timer

SYDNEY, Feb 2 (Reuters/Internet): Timing has always played an important part in Mark Taylor's life.

Whether it came to timing the ball or knowing the time to quit, Taylor always seemed to know the right moment to act.

So it came as no real surprise when Taylor announced on Tuesday that he had decided to pack his bag and stand down as captain of Australia's cricket team.

"I know I've made the right decision," Taylor told a packed news conference in Sydney.

"I feel that my heart is not quite in it and if it is not in it I won't do well."

Taylor chose to retire at a time when he was at the top of his game. A respected player and captain, Taylor could have continued but said he wanted to leave because he had lost his heart for the game.

His decision, like most of the tough choices that marked his captaincy, was dignified and perfectly timed.

A reliable left-handed opening batsman and brilliant slips fielder, Taylor made his Test debut against the West Indies in Sydney in 1989 and went on to play 104 Tests.

He finished his career against England in the fifth and final Ashes Test in Sydney last month, leading Australia to a record sixth series win over their oldest rivals.

Taylor scored a total of 7,525 test runs — the second most by any Australian — at an average of 43.50, scoring 19 centuries and taking a world record 157 catches.

He replaced Allan Border as Australian captain in May 1994 and went on to lead his country in 50 Tests, for 26 wins, 11 draws and 13 losses.

His statistics rank him as one of the greats of Australian cricket but it was the way that Taylor fought his way out of a career-threatening slump that endeared to him fans around the world.

After a brilliant start to his Test career, which led him to the country's highest honour in sport, Taylor's career was on the rocks when he suffered an 18-month loss of batting form that started in late December 1995 and went on until early June 1997.

It led to widespread calls for his sacking and Taylor himself even admitted he was so worried about his form that he wanted to retire.

He was chosen to lead Australia on the 1997 Ashes tour of England against a murmur of protest from past players but still looked certain to be dropped from the team after his form slump continued.

Just when it looked as though his Test-playing days might be over, Taylor ended his crisis with a courageous innings of 129 in the second innings of the first Ashes Test at Edgbaston, Birmingham.

It saved his career and marked the start of a dramatic return to form as Taylor scored centuries in each of Australia's next four test series, against New Zealand, South Africa, India and Pakistan.

But his crowning moment came in October last year when he equalled Don Bradman's 334 for the highest score by an Australian in Test cricket.

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Taylor, known affectionately as "Tubby" because of bulging waistline, gave up the chance to pass Bradman and go for Brian Lara's world record 375 in one of the most unselfish gestures in cricket history.

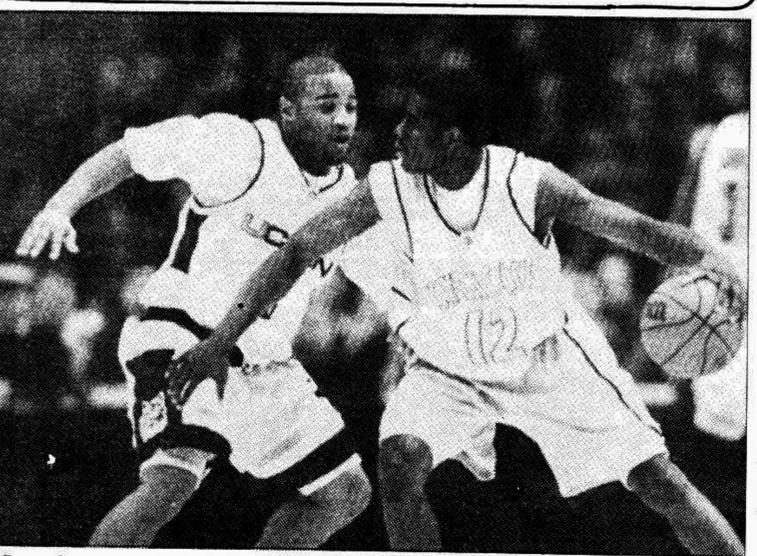
It proved to be his last Test hundred and the defining moment of a distinguished career but Taylor, typically, played down his achievements.

He gave the first real hint that he planned to retire when he wore his baggy green cap on the final day of the fifth Ashes Test last month instead of the wide brimmed white cap he usually wears.

But rather than announce his retirement moments after leading Australia to victory, Taylor, who was named last week as Australian Of the Year, decided to wait because he did not want to appear to be 'grandstanding'.

"I have achieved more in this game than I thought I would," Taylor said on Tuesday. "I have gained more from cricket than I have given cricket."

"I am not leaving sad, I am leaving it happy and I am looking forward to the next few years."



Scene from the Syracuse-Connecticut clash in the big East Conference basketball tourney in Hartford on February 1. Syracuse recorded an upset 59-42 win. — AP/UNB photo

Row over TV rights decree

ROME, Feb 2 (Reuters/Internet): Italy's new law setting a ceiling on soccer rights has triggered a row over TV rights of the game.

sure competition in digital pay-TV needs clarification and could end up making top clubs richer and bottom ones poorer, analysts said on Tuesday.

The draft decree sets a 60 percent limit on the amount of encrypted soccer rights a digital satellite television operator can have in a bid to share out the key programming between Telepiu, a unit of France's Canal Plus and Stream, a rival in which Rupert Murdoch is expected to take 80 per cent.

The decree was effective from Friday after a cabinet decision but lapses if parliament does not ratify it in 60 days.

Media mogul Murdoch, who has made clear all along that soccer is crucial to his Italian plans, had hoped to make a soccer bid this month and it is not yet clear whether the decree has stopped him in his tracks.

Letizia Moratti, the chairman of News Corp Europe, part of Murdoch's News Corp empire, flew to the United States at the weekend to discuss the decree but no details were available.

The draft law leaves vague how the 60 percent ceiling of Serie A soccer will be calculated. Communications Minister Salvatore Cardinale said it would be a mixture of maths

and rulings from the anti-trust watchdogs.

As things stand, the reference we can have is the number of clubs. And, in any case, we have left it up to the Telecommunications Regulator, once it has consulted the Competition Watchdog, to redetermine the position of each competitor each time to see if there is a dominant position and even to modify the ceiling," he told Reuters Television Italia.

Officials said the decree had been left "elastic," leaving the final say with the competition authorities. But some analysts said the result was confusing and complicated.

"It's so Italian, so bureaucratic," said one Italian analyst who asked not to be named. "Why not set down some concrete rules. This could go on for donkey's years."

Telepiu has stolen a march on Stream by signing what it says are unbreakable contracts with six of the 18 Serie A clubs — champions Juventus, AC Milan, Inter Milan, Bologna, Empoli and Cagliari, and with Napoli who are now in Serie B.

"We will try to have 60 percent, to have all that we're allowed," a Telepiu spokesman said, but admitted the company was not clear on all the details of how the decree would be applied.

In purely numerical terms, if each club were given equal

weighting, Telepiu's six clubs would add up to 33 per cent of Serie A.

But the decree also says that if the market situation leaves only one buyer, the 60 per cent ceiling could be exceeded but contracts would then have a maximum life of three years.

That means that, if Murdoch walks away, Telepiu could have the rights to show soccer for three years.

On Wednesday, Telepiu will meet officials from the Football League, which until now has sold the television rights for all 38 Serie A and Serie B clubs collectively. The clubs meet to discuss the issue on Thursday.

The uncertainty has already helped jack up the value of the rights for some clubs — Lazio, for example, lying second in the league, turned over a 35 billion lire a year offer from Telepiu and is negotiating with Stream for double that, a source said.

Lazio currently earns some 18 billion lire from television rights, added the source, who is familiar with Lazio's finances.

Although the prospect of rival digital television operators might increase revenues in Italian soccer, where the popularity of the game has not yet been exploited in marketing and merchandising as in Britain, smaller clubs might still find themselves lagging the big boys in purchasing power.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

- ACROSS: 1 Play portion, 4 When the cock crows, 8 Gumbo base, 12 Cheerleader's call, 13 'Types' sequel, 14 One, on a one, 15 Sub zero, 17 Bivouac shelter, 18 Ran in the wash, 19 Escapes, 20 Dickinson output, 22 Bewildered chapters, 25 Tepid, 28 Double curve, 30 —, 31 Attraction, 32 Indifferent, 34 Forehead, 35 Galley array, 36 Gratings, 37 Insignificant, 40 Line of
DOWN: 3 Beauty's love, 4 Catches some Zs, 5 Surrounded by, 6 Triumphed, 7 Yule quaff, 8 Bandit, 9 Handing local, 10 Mysterious character, 11 Clys., 16 'Desire Under the —', 19 Sense, 20 Hammerhead part, 21 Roughly, 22 Ford and Lincoln, 23 Three-handed game, 25 Lion portrayer, 26 Bitterness, 27 Crucifix, 28 Does some work, 30 Child of a stable environment?, 33 Grave, 34 Bric-a-brac, 36 Reach, 37 Venetian-blind part, 38 Marquand sleuth, 39 Acknowledge, 40 Lady Macbeth's problem, 42 White wine aperitif, 43 Conceit, 44 Man-mouse link, 45 Felon's flight

Cryptogram puzzle grid with numbers 1-45 and letters G J V E U M E C Y Y J M C Q F Y V A, J V P P U Q C R F R P N G M E, R N F E C A V.

Yesterday's Cryptogram: I'VE HEARD THE GRACIOUS GARDENER KINDLY REMARK, "THANK YOU SO VERY MULCH."

Today's Cryptogram clue: E equals N. The Cryptogram is a substitution cipher in which one letter stands for another. If you think that X equals O, it will equal O words using an apostrophe give you clues to locating vowels. Solution is by trial and error.



Dutch football great Johan Cruyff (R) hands over the award for best national team to German legend Franz Beckenbauer in Barcelona on February 1. — AP/UNB photo