



British Grand Master Nigel Short (R) pondering his next move against Bangladeshi Grand Master Niaz Murshed yesterday. —Star photo

Asprilla warned by federation

BOGOTA, Feb 27 (Reuters/Internet): Volatile Colombian striker Faustino Asprilla was told to stop criticising his national soccer federation on Friday.

Last week, he complained that he had to fly economy class after representing his country. The Colombian Football Federation (FCF) said it had written to Asprilla telling him not to grumble in public.

Asprilla, kicked out of Colombia's World Cup squad in France for his criticism of then coach Hernan Dario Gomez, could be disciplined for a repeat outburst, the FCF said.

The Parma player scored twice in a 3-3 draw with Germany in Miami earlier this month after being recalled by new coach Javier Alvarez.

But he celebrated by launching a blistering attack on the Colombian federation and its directors.

"To belong to the national team is to suffer," he said.

He later exempted FCF president Alvaro Fina from his criticism, saying the problem was "those who surround him."

Asprilla complained that he returned to Italy in economy class and received a bonus of only 200 dollars from the federation.

Niaz shakes Short hands

Sports Reporter

Grand Master Jaan Ehvest of Estonia joined Belarus Grand Master Yuri Shulman atop the 4th United Insurance Grand Masters Chess Tournament when he drew with Polish Grand Master Alexander Wojtkiewicz in the ninth round held at the NSC conference room yesterday.

Yesterday was a day-off for Shulman, the leader of the 13-player meet.

Ehvest, playing with black pieces against the Rui Lopez opening of Wojtkiewicz, offered a draw to his Polish counterpart after only 12 moves.

Meanwhile, bad luck continued for former World runner-up, English Grand Master Nigel Short, who was compelled by his fourth draw by local Grand Master, an out-of-touch Niaz Murshed.

Playing with whites, Niaz made an English opening against his illustrious counterpart and played brilliantly before they shook hands after 31 moves.

With the draw, Short, who was beaten by Indian International Master Neelotpal Das in the eighth round, remained second in the table with six points.

On the other hand, Niaz, who lost four matches against two wins and two draws, raised his tally to three points.

International Master Ziaur Rahman was beaten by Kunte in

tional Master Abdullah Al-Rakib while Indian International Master Neelotpal Das drew with Hungarian Grand Master Peter Szkeley.

The other match between Uzbekistan Grand Master Sergei Zagrebny and FIDE master Enamul Hossain Rajib was going on till the writing of this report.

The tenth round will start at the same venue today at 2 pm. Grand Master Jaan Ehvest of Estonia will have a rest day today.

Standings: (All have played 8 matches except where otherwise mentioned) 6.5 points--Shulman and Ehvest (9 matches), 6 points--Wojtkiewicz and Short (9 matches), 4 points--Zagrebny (7 matches), Zia and Neelotpal (3.5 points--Rakib (9 matches), 3 points--Niaz, 2.5 points--Neelotpal, Szkeley, 2 points--Rajib and Refaat.

TODAY'S MATCHES

Short v Wojtkiewicz
Szkeley v Niaz
Zia v Neelotpal
Zagrebny v Kunte
Refaat v Rajib
Shulman v Rakib



the ninth round. Playing with black pieces, Zia was checkmated by the Pune-based Kunte after 44 moves.

In the day's other matches, International Master Refaat-bin-Sattar defeated Interna-

Cruyff hails Ginola as a world great

LONDON, Feb 27 (Reuters/Internet): Dutch great Johan Cruyff hailed Tottenham Hotspur's French winger David Ginola on Saturday as "probably the most exciting player in the world."

"On his day, he is as good as anybody. At the moment he is having more of those days than anyone else," the former World Cup star told the Mirror newspaper.

"He is a tremendous talent and it is easy to see why England has taken him to their hearts."

Ginola, 31, was named player of the month in England in January and is having his best spell in the premier league since he arrived in English soccer in 1995. Tottenham have reached the League Cup final and F.A. Cup quarter-finals.

Cruyff has invited the Frenchman and seven other premiership players to take part in a 24-strong squad for his testimonial in Barcelona on March 10.

Tyson's confinement ends

ROCKVILLE, Maryland, Feb 27: Former heavy-weight champion Mike Tyson got out of solitary confinement Friday, just two days after being ordered to spend nearly a month there for throwing a television set at guards, his lawyer said, reports Reuters.

Tyson, in jail for assaulting two motorists last August, appealed the ruling of a disciplinary panel at Montgomery County Detention Centre and had his initial penalty of 25 days in solitary confinement reduced to time served.

"They modified it so that his disciplinary status ended today," said Tyson attorney Paul Kemp.

The 32-year-old fighter had been in an isolation cell since late last Friday, when he became enraged after talking on the phone and threw a prison day room television set at guards from behind a set of bars. At least one guard said he had been injured by flying shards of plastic.

He was cited for assaulting corrections officers, disorderly conduct and destroying county property. The disciplinary panel that met on Wednesday not only had ordered him to remain in isolation but also removed his phone, visitation and television privileges.

In a press release, prison spokesman Eric Seleznow said that warden WL Smith reviewed Tyson's sentence to solitary confinement, reducing it to put it "into line with what other people would get under similar circumstances."

Tyson also was placed on 30-day probation in the jail and any further violations will send him back to solitary confinement.

Tyson's attorney said authorities also agreed to allow Tyson therapist Dr Richard Goldberg, who heads the department of psychiatry at Georgetown University Medical Centre, to prescribe additional doses of the antidepressant drug, zoloft.

Tyson's wife, Monica, and

his lawyers complained that last Friday's incident had occurred two days after a prison doctor had decided to take the boxer off the medication when Tyson refused to undergo psychiatric tests in jail.

The fighter arrived at the county lock-up on February 5 after being sentenced to 12 months for punching a 62-year-old driver in the jaw and kicking another 50-year-old man in the groin after a minor traffic accident last August in Gaithersburg, Maryland, a suburb of Washington.

He pleaded no-contest to two misdemeanor assault charges in December. His lawyers have until March 8 to appeal the sentence.

Wednesday's disciplinary panel could have penalised Tyson by denying him the good-behaviour time he needs to gain an early release to resume training. By earning the maximum time off, he could enter a halfway facility and begin training in three to four months.

Because of the Maryland traffic assault, Tyson faces the possibility of going back to jail in Indiana for up to four years for violating probation following his early release on a 1992 rape conviction.

Tyson was suspended from boxing for more than a year for biting the ears of world champion Evander Holyfield in a June 1997 title bout.

Bridge on the Net!

NEW YORK, Feb 27: Some 1,000 people from 31 countries on Monday will start punching on their computer key boards to take a shot at becoming the first world online bridge champion, reports Reuters.

The online tournament, organised by Internet bridge site Okbridge (<http://okbridge.com>), brings together some 175 teams.

The team, consisting of four to six players, will compete under the auspices and rules of the World Bridge Federation and the American Contract Bridge League.

Bridge — often seen as a staid card game played by pensioners — has taken quite a flight on the Internet. The medium makes it easy for individual players to quickly find or dump a partner as well as two opponents.

"If you want to play, you need to find three other people, and you'll always find them on the Internet," said Matthew Clegg, the founder of San Diego-based Okbridge.

The teams will first compete for country or US state titles and then for regional titles. Eight regional winners will play each other in knockout rounds in the summer. The winning teams, which will both receive 5,000 dollars will square off in Boston in November, during the North American Bridge Championships.

Bridge traces its roots to 16th century predecessors of the English card game of Whisk. Its modern version-called Contract Bridge was developed in the 1920s by Harold Vanderbilt on a Caribbean cruise.

The game gained popularity in the 1940s and 1950s in the US when an estimated one in five American adults played the game. Currently, however, the game is played regularly in only a few per cent of US households, over the last year, the American Contract Bridge League membership dropped two per cent to around 166,000.

The Internet, however, has proven an effective tool of bringing together players. Internet company Yahoo Inc, for example, regularly draws 1,000 people to its free <http://games.yahoo.com> site, which is less than a year old.

Okbridge which set up the first online bridge site in 1994, has grown to 15,000 members in five years. Members, who pay 99 dollars a year, include legendary billionaire investor Warren Buffett and securities executive James Cayne of Bear Stearns Cos, Clegg said, adding neither of them will compete in the tournament.

Meanwhile the English Football Association must confirm to FIFA by July of this year complete details of the new stadium which is at the heart of England's World Cup bid.

If that cannot be done, then the bid could effectively be over. It would also damage Britain's hopes of hosting the 2003 World Athletics Championships at Wembley.

Adams leads Linares chess

LINARES, Feb 27: Grand Master Viswanathan Anand and Garri Kasparov drew their respective fourth round games allowing British GM Michael Adams to move into the sole lead at the Linares chess tournament here, yesterday, reports PTI.

Adams was a beneficiary of a lucky win over Vassily Ivanchuk of Ukraine who faltered despite being in an advantageous position with a rook for a knight. Ivanchuk lost the game on time as he failed to make his 40th move within the stipulated two hours.

It seemed as if Ivanchuk had for a brief period just failed to realise that he was in trouble with the clock. The win gave Adams three points from four rounds.

The second place is shared by Peter Svidler, winner over Peter Keko and Kasparov, who drew with Vladimir Kramnik (Russia) both with 2.5 points.

India's Anand, Vasselin Topalov (Bulgaria), and Kramnik have two points each from all drawn games so far. Ivanchuk and Leko (Hungary) have one point each.

The Anand-Topalov game was a long drawn out affair which lasted 65 moves.

Svidler was two pawns up when Leko decided to throw in the towel near the first time control after 40 moves.

The loss against Adams was the second for Ivanchuk who had been stunned by Kasparov's novelty in the third round. Kasparov and Kramnik played out yet another draw, their game lasting just 20 moves.

Maric's England dream realised

NEWCASTLE, England, Feb 27 (Reuters/Internet): Silvio Maric has finally achieved his ambition of a move to the English Premier League following the collapse of a transfer to Manchester United last summer.

Maric trained with Newcastle United for the first time on Friday since joining them from Croatia Zagreb in a 3.5 million pound deal.

Then the 23-year-old midfielder revealed how close he came to going to Old Trafford six months ago.

"I spoke to Alex Ferguson, but didn't sign because there was a problem with my club. They stopped me going," he said.

Maric's despair over the breakdown of the deal fuelled his desire to play in England — and he refused to back down again when Newcastle moved in for him.

He said: "This was my second chance to join a big club and I told Zagreb that I must go."

"They are upset because I am a local guy and the fans love me, but I had to leave. I'm just glad I'm here. Some of the best players in the world are in the Premier League and I will learn a lot playing here. It will make me a better player."

Rund Gullit's presence at Newcastle was a major factor in Maric's decision to join them, along with his memories of Zagreb's Champions' League qualifier at St James's Park 18 months ago. "Great fans, a great stadium, great players... the Croatia team looked at them as Gods. They were so different," he said.

Maric left Tyneside with David Batty's number four shirt which he has been wearing while training in Zagreb.

However it seems unlikely he will wear his own number 10 in tomorrow's home game against Arsenal.

Gullit said: "The most important thing for us is to get him match fit as quickly as possible."

"Everybody needs time to adapt. Look at Nicolas Anelka at Arsenal — he's a special talent, but people were wondering who he was last season. Silvio will give us more quality. He has a very big heart and understands the game well."

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Top seed Andrew MacDade of South Africa makes a forehand return against Wang Yen Tzuoo of Chinese Taipei during the boys' singles final at the Ramna Tennis Complex yesterday. —Star photo

Prasert picks girls'

MacDade's double delight



South African stylish tennis player Andrew MacDade earned double crown in the 13th Bangladesh International Junior Championships at the National Tennis Complex yesterday, report agencies.

MacDade clinched the boys' singles title trouncing Wang Yen Tzuoo of Chinese Taipei 6-1, 6-2 in the one-sided final. His victory took just 40 minutes.

MacDade, world 36th junior ranking player, paired with compatriot Brandon Weir Smith to outplay top-seed Mark Weaver of Great Britain and Ahmed Wahala of Pakistan 6-0, 6-3 in the final and earned the doubles.

MacDade collected 60 singles points and 50 doubles points.

For MacDade this was the third singles title after he won the Group-3 title in Malaysia and Group-4 title in Brunei last year.

MacDade said he plays football, cricket, hockey and rugby with equal interest, but took tennis as his "first choice" because of the inspiration of his mother, a tennis coach in South Africa.

The South African schoolboy highly appreciated the local hospitality and the local fans.

Second seed Virat Prasert of Thailand secured the girls' singles title beating top seed Rencken Nicole of South Africa 7-6 (7-5), 6-4 in the keenly contested final. Virat, who also earned 60 singles points, left in the afternoon for Bangkok.

Li Ying and Lu Yen Hua of Chinese Taipei won the girls' doubles title defeating Radhika Tulpule of India and Yang Peili of Chinese Taipei 6-4, 6-0 in the final.

Bangladesh's national junior number one Nadim Kamran Khan Rohan earned 40 international junior ranking points by reaching the second round of the championships.

It was the highest-ever ranking points earned by a local player.

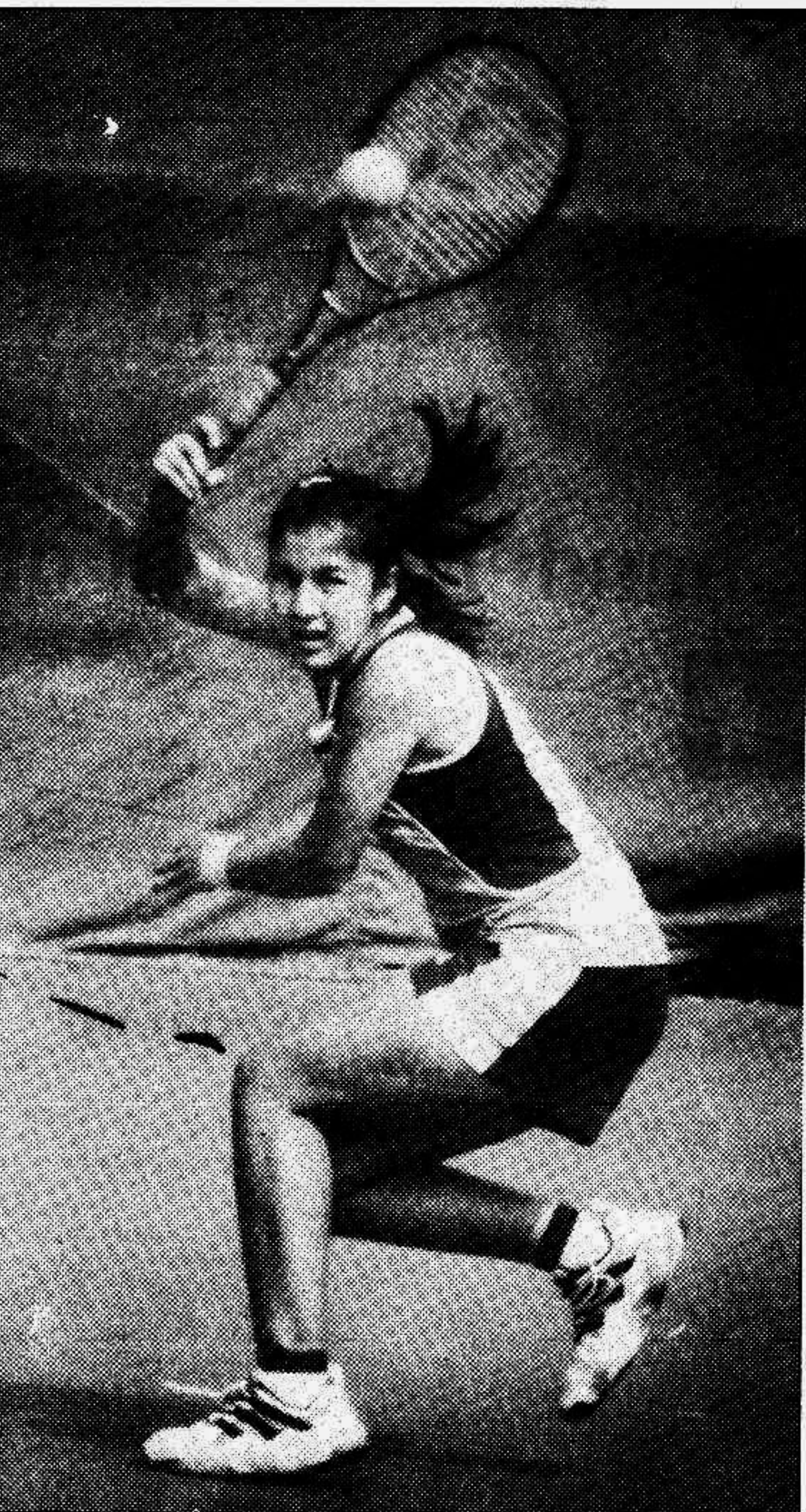
Bangladesh's promising junior girl Sheefat Nusrat Baishakhi also earned 15 junior ranking points by reaching the pre-quarters.

Her points stood at 20-higher so far by a Bangladeshi girl as she earned five points in the Rajshahi International Junior Championships last week.

A record number of 91 boys and girls from 13 countries took part in the week-long International Tennis Federation (ITF) ranking tournament.

The participating countries were Pakistan, Kazakhstan, Chinese Taipei, India, Japan, England, UAE, Canada, Sri Lanka, Malaysia, South Africa, Thailand and Bangladesh.

President of Bangladesh Tennis Federation (BTF) and Commerce Secretary Sayed Alamgir Farouk Chowdhury was the chief guest and distributed the prizes.



Thailand's Virat Prasert playing against South African Rencken Nicole in the girls' singles final yesterday. The Thai lifted the title. —Star photo

Ferguson relaxed over 'Ron' factor

LONDON, Feb 27 (Reuters/Internet): Manchester United boss Alex Ferguson said on Saturday he was unconcerned about the Ronaldo factor, ahead of his side's

European Cup quarterfinal against Inter Milan next Wednesday and predicted a difficult game for the Brazilian even if he does play.

Inter's president Massimo Moratti earlier this week cast doubt on Ronaldo's chances of playing in the first leg at Old Trafford and suggested he might not even make the San Siro return on March 17.

But Ferguson insisted on Saturday he was relaxed about the mind games being played by the Italian club — and doubtful that United would be coming up against the Brazilian at his best.

"All this doesn't concern me," Ferguson said on BBC television.

"But the boy has obviously got an injury and you can't just all of a sudden turn the gas on whenever you want."

"His two knees have been giving him problems and he has had an operation on one of them."

"You can't just dismiss it. You can't expect to just walk on the pitch and immediately be at 100 per cent."

"I think it's a case of half and half. He does have an injury but obviously Inter Milan want him to play. Whether he can or not, though, I don't know."

"But I'm not worrying too much about that. I'm just concentrating on making sure we play at the highest level possible."

Ronaldo, who has played only six full matches for the UEFA Cup holders this season, returned to training this week after missing Inter's last seven games.

He was expected to be absent from Saturday's crunch Italian league clash with Juventus.

Iglesias fancies Deportivo's chances

MADRID, Feb 27 (Reuters/Internet): Arsenal's manager, who led Deportivo Coruna to triumph in the Spanish Cup in 1995, said his old club could win the trophy again after the semifinal draw pitted them against Atletico Madrid on Friday.

That Spanish Cup and the Spanish Super Cup from the start of the following season are the sole major trophies to have graced the cabinet of Deportivo's manager.

But Iglesias feels the collection could grow after a draw which left the way open for a repeat of the 1995 final between Deportivo and Valencia.

"I can see us winning the Cup," he said.

"The side is on the road to returning to the style of my era when we were always challengers for titles. The current coach Javier Irureta has put together a talented squad which is working well together."

The other semifinal pits Valencia against Real Madrid, with whom Iglesias had a brief spell as coach in 1996.

Valencia, who last won the Cup in 1979, defeated holders Barcelona in the last round.

In the 1995 final Deportivo beat Valencia 2-1, one of only two finals in the last two decades which did not feature teams from either Madrid or Barcelona.

This year's semifinals will be held on June 9 and 16, with the final in the new Seville Olympic stadium on June 26.

The stadium, currently under construction, is due to be inaugurated with a friendly between Spain and Croatia on May 5.

It will also stage the world athletics championships in August.



Auxerre's Thomas Deniund (L) and Jose Pierre-Fanfan of Lens fight for the ball during their French First Division encounter at Auxerre on February 26. —AFP photo

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS
1 Herring's cousin
5 Buddy
8 Key — pie
12 Brass member
13 Casso- wary's kin
14 Seed coat
15 Grad
16 Swelling relief
18 Sinatra & Co.
20 Lab vessels
21 Cenozoic, e.g.
22 Long March leader
23 Abbot's headress
26 Beauty treatment
30 Fuss
31 Intention
32 Coloration
33 Fill till full
36 Coronet
38 Exhibited edacity
39 Vagrant
40 Major Joppolo's bailiwick
43 Pop purchase
47 U-boat troop
49 Stratford's river
50 Arab bigwig
51 Female antelope
52 Preler
53 Challenge
54 Hole
55 Zip- making tool
56 Doo-Dah
1 Source of dust? wiggles?
3 Have tangency
4 It's
5 Pilgrim's destination
6 Beyond control
7 — de-sac
8 Portable computer
9 Erstwhile shadown
10 Layered mineral
11 BPOE members
17 Garcia's band, familiarly
19 Exist
22 Silent
23 Rank above capt.
24 McKinley's
25 The Piper's son
26 "Ferd"- nard
27 "Eureka!"
28 Mongrel
29 One of the Maunas
31 Blackjack part
34 Saute
35 On
36 "Monkey suit"
37 Lyre- horned antelope
39 Broad- way's original Baron von Trapp
40 Dumb- struck
41 Cupola
42 First
43 Arabic letter
44 Garbage barge
45 Kera
46 Coal
47 byproduct
48 Dangling site
49 Insulin

CRYPTOQUIP

C L F A J H E A D U N D E B J D

U C Z V - D A G U R N O A F J N F A

O A A V B V H J C V Z G F H E R L H D A F J

Yesterday's Cryptquip: THE NURSE OFTEN POINTS OUT THAT A VACCINATION IS AN OUCH OF PREVENTION.

Today's Cryptquip clue: L equals P

The Cryptquip is a substitution cipher in which one letter stands for another. If you think that X equals O, it will equal O throughout the puzzle. Single letters, short words and words using an apostrophe give you clues to users' org, locating vowels. Solution is by trial and error.