

Vieira regretful

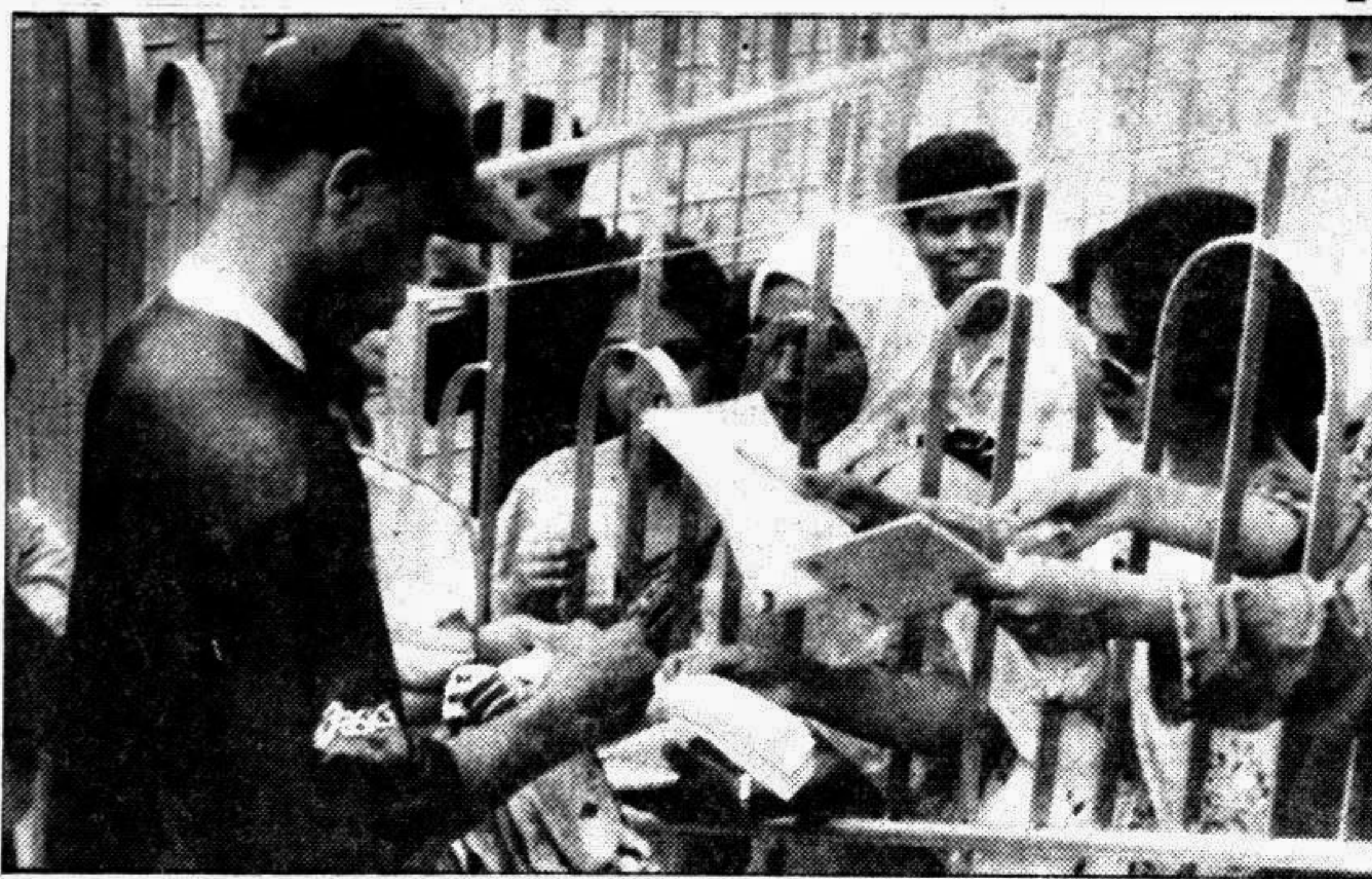
LONDON, Oct 9: France's World Cup winning midfielder Patrick Vieira said Saturday that he fears his reputation is the main casualty of his latest run-in with English football authorities, reports AFP.

Toshack banned

MADRID, Oct 9: Real Madrid coach John Toshack will have to watch next Wednesday clash with Barcelona from the Nou Camp stands after receiving a one-match ban from the Spanish Football Federation, reports Reuters.

Philippoussis doesn't bother

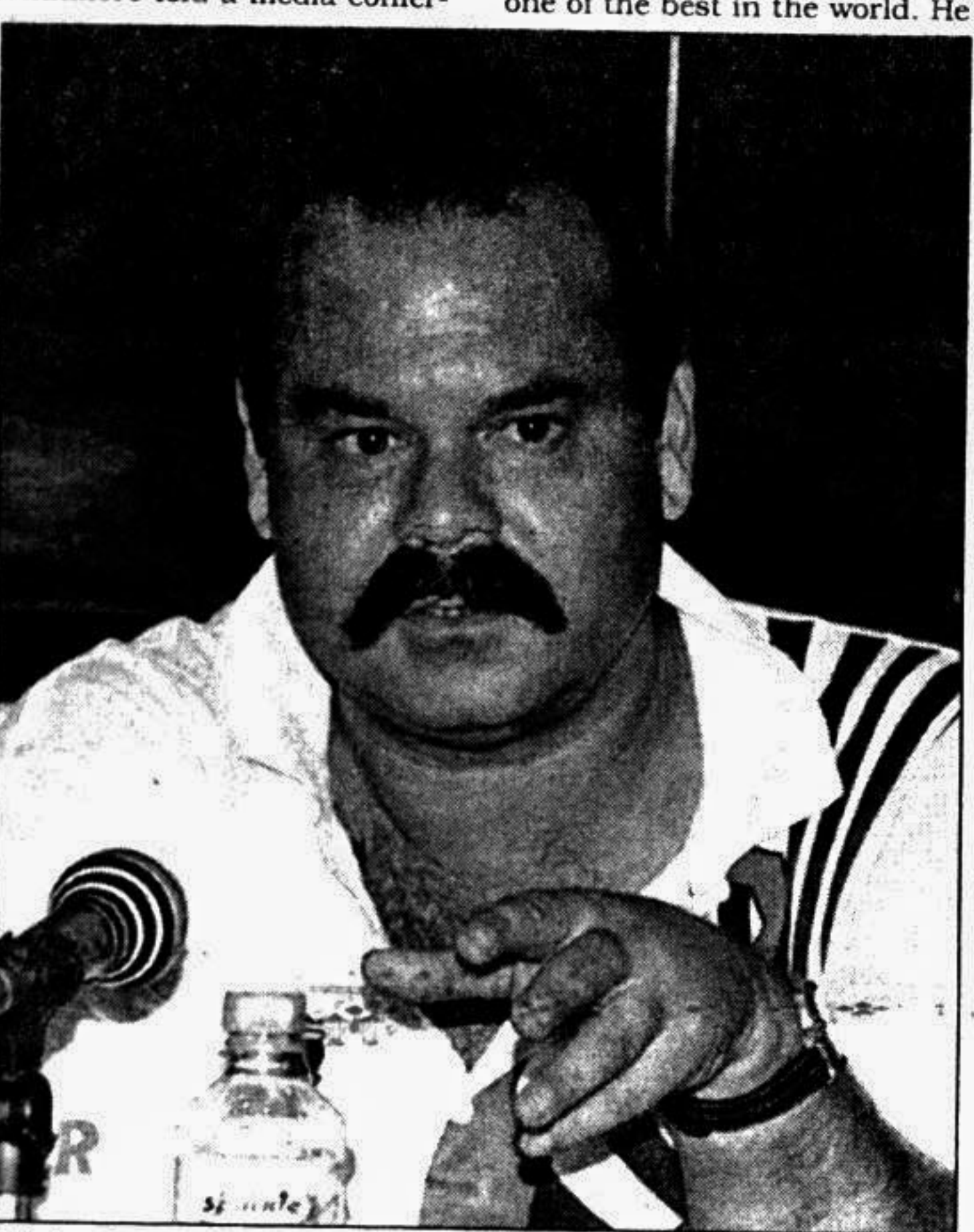
SINGAPORE, Oct 9 (AP): If the pressure is on Mark Philippoussis, he's not showing it. In fact, the towering Australian with the deadly serve says he couldn't care less what people think about his game.



West Indies batting sensation Ricardo Powell obliging his admirers yesterday. — Star photo by Anisur Rahman

Lankans riding high

COLOMBO, Oct 9 (Reuters/Internet report): Sri Lanka, buoyed by recent wins in Test series against Australia and a tri-nation one-day tournament, are confident they can win the forthcoming Sharjah cricket tournament, coach Dav Whatmore said on Friday.



Sri Lanka cricket coach Dav Whatmore speaks to reporters in Colombo on Friday before his team's departure for Sharjah to play against Pakistan and the West Indies. — AFP photo

Arjuna Ranatunga was not included but Whatmore said he could still play for the team in the future. "In the last 19 innings Ranatunga has been the main run scorer for Sri Lanka. If the selectors feel his experience against the opposition is required, then he will play," Whatmore said.

"Saniath had a difficult job to perform and I thought he handled the side pretty well. He hadn't captained the team for some time and to take on the leadership of the national team is never easy.

"To Saniath's credit he performed very well indeed and I think he will get better. One of the reasons why he did well was the support he got from every other player in the squad not just the team. When you have that sort of backing, it makes your job that much easier.

- FIXTURE
Oct. 13: Sri Lanka v West Indies
Oct. 14: Pakistan v West Indies
Oct. 15: Sri Lanka v Pakistan
Oct. 17: Sri Lanka v West Indies
Oct. 18: Sri Lanka v Pakistan
Oct. 19: Pakistan v West Indies
Oct. 22: Final

Sweden coach hopes for best

LONDON, Oct 9: Sweden coach Tommy Soderberg said Friday he was determined not to disappoint England supporters when his side take on Poland in their final European Championship qualifier on Saturday, reports AFP.

"We try never to draw in terms of winning or drawing but we go out and play as well as we can every time," said Soderberg.

"I was in a better situation than the current Poland goalkeepers because I played with the defence all the time. I understood them and they understood me," he said.

"The Poles will face an in-form Niclas Alexandersson after his two goals in two games ensured Sweden topped Group Five.

"England have been in many of the big tournaments over the years and have a lot of experience, so it would be good if they were involved again.

"I reckon that come next summer, under Kevin Keegan, they would be a very strong side because they have so many good players.



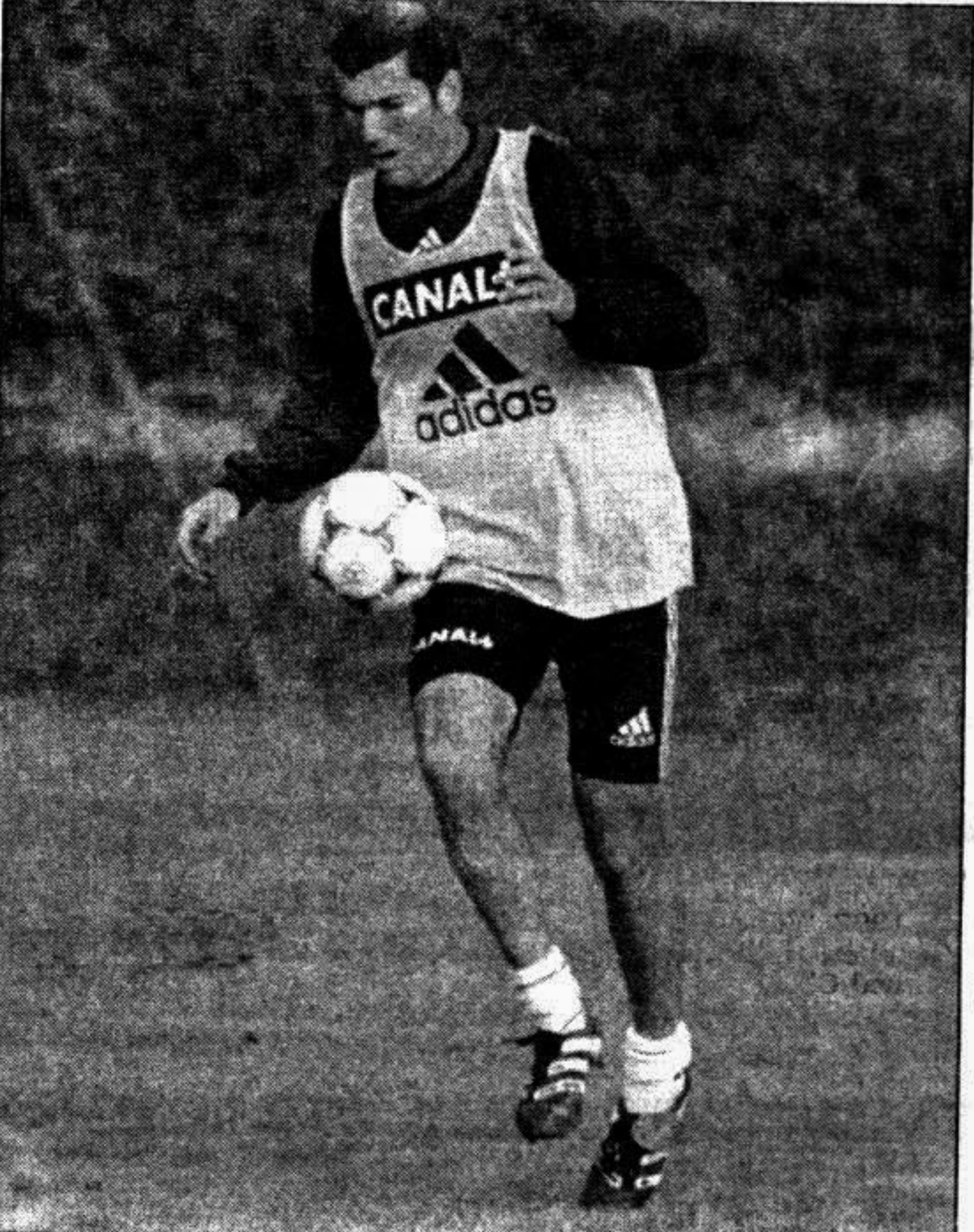
Bangladesh football team manager Abdul Gaffar treating the outgoing captain Jewel Rana with a piece of cake during a reception, arranged by Dhaka Sheraton Hotel, accorded to the SAF Games gold winners recently. General manager of the hotel San Amalan (3rd from R) was present during the function.

Lemerre will stay no matter what

PARIS, Oct 9: French Football Federation (FFF) president Claude Simonet said Friday that Roger Lemerre would remain in charge of the national team until next summer even if the world champions fail to qualify for the 2000 European Championships, reports AFP.

France are lying a precarious third in Group Four behind Ukraine and Russia, whose match in Moscow kicks off at the same time.

Simonet said: "If we are eliminated my wish is that Roger Lemerre finishes his contract which runs out on July 31, 2000 and sorts out outstanding business by leading the French team in our two remaining friendly matches.



French midfield star Zinedine Zidane practises at the team's Clairefontaine base on October 8. — AFP photo

But all is not lost for Lemerre. Should Russia and Ukraine draw then victory against Iceland would be sufficient for France to top the group and qualify automatically.

Simonet, anticipating the what if questions, has made it clear that Lemerre, Jacques' right-hand man during the World Cup, will not be required to clear his desk the morning after elimination, if that is the outcome on Saturday.

French midfield star Zinedine Zidane practises at the team's Clairefontaine base on October 8. — AFP photo

And he ended: "The problem will not arise, if France qualify."

The three-nation Sharjah tournament runs from October 11 to 23. Sri Lanka beat Australia 1-0

A cool customer

DSS: Why do you think the West Indies failed in the last World Cup?
RJ: I think the batting let us down. Our bowlers did a fantastic job, but we didn't have enough runs to play with.

Nigerians get ready

LAGOS, Oct 9: Nigeria's sports ministry has set up a committee to mobilise "financial and moral support" for its national soccer team in a bid to win the 2000 African Cup of Nations, reports Reuters.

Romanian eyes begin in style

TIANJIN, China, Oct 9: A dazzling performance from teenage prodigy Andreea Raducan helped Romania's women kick off the defence of their team title in imperious fashion at the World Artistic Gymnastics Championships here Saturday, reports AFP.

Rios in Heineken final

SHANGHAI, Oct 9: Top seed Marcelo Rios reached his first final in nearly five months Saturday, overcoming a rain delay and threatening conditions to defeat Jonas Bjorkman 6-4, 6-1 at the 350,000-dollar Shanghai Heineken Open, reports AFP.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer and CRYPTOQUIP. Includes crossword puzzle grid and clues, and a cryptogram puzzle.

DSS: How do you rate your skipper Brian Lara?
RJ: He is a fine captain. You see everybody needs some time to settle in and people should understand that.

DSS: What do you do in your leisure time? Do you relax or go to parties?
RJ: I am not a partygoer. I prefer to relax. I do some meditating, read the Holy Bible and other spiritual books.

DSS: How long do you think you will carry on playing?
RJ: It all depends on the Almighty. If he wants, I may carry on for four or five more years. If he decides otherwise, I will step down earlier.

The Cryptogram 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 locating vowels. Solution is by trial and error.