Aus focus on cricket

AFP/REUTERS, Colombo

The Australian cricket team arrived here Saturday for a six-week tour despite fears that campaigning for the island's snap parliamentary elections in April could be violent.

Australian manager Steve Bernard said they were not worried about security as hosts Sri Lanka Cricket had assured maximum protection for the players and the

"We have requested no extra security and are satisfied with the arrangements made by the Sri Lankan board," Bernard told AFP. "We have been kept very well informed of the political developments here

"Before any tour we consult with the Department of Foreign Affairs and their advice this time was that there were no safety or security

"As far as we are concerned it is business as normal and we are confident that the tour will pass without incident

"No one in the team is perturbed and we are looking forward to the

Australia will play five one-day

Australian leg-spinner Shane

Warne took a wicket with his second

ball on Saturday in his long-awaited

comeback to top-level cricket fol-

Warne, who trapped Daniel

Marsh Ibw for five, claimed one for

48 off 10 overs for Victoria in an

interstate one-day match against

Tasmania at the Melbourne Cricket

218 in 49.2 overs and completed a

three-wicket victory with 18 balls to

highest wicket-taker, ended his

suspension on February 10 and

played in a four-day second XI

game for Victoria against

Queensland earlier this week,

picking up match figures of five for

The 34-year-old spinner will play in a four-day match for Victoria

Nearly 20,000 athletes led by world

record holders. Indian celebrities.

Mumbai

Tasmania bowled Victoria out for

Warne, Test cricket's second

lowing a 12-month doping ban.

Cricket

REUTERS, Melbourne

Ground (MCG).

internationals and two Tests and the team will leave at the end of March, just four days before the April 2

The arrangements for the tour were made before Sri Lanka's political crisis came to a head with President Chandrika Kumaratunga dissolving parliament last week, and calling snap polls nearly four years ahead of schedule.

Run up to elections in Sri Lanka have been bloody, with at least 41 people killed and over 700 injured during the last parliamentary election campaign in 2001.

Bernard said he did not expect any trouble for his team, which was expected to travel to the provinces several matches

Instead of worrying about security, he said the team would concentrate on beating the hosts to retain

their place as the world's best team. "I think we have a very serious challenge here," Bernard said. "We have good talent and good strategy. I think we will play flat out."

Skipper Ricky Ponting said in Melbourne Friday the Australians were coming to terms with the physical and psychological barriers of playing on the Indian sub-

The interstate match will be

Warne's only first-class outing

before Australia name their squad

on Friday for next month's Test tour

Trevor Hohns, who was at the MCG

on Saturday, told reporters he was

Australia chairman of selectors

Immediately on target

of Sri Lanka

starting on Monday.

"I think it's a huge challenge for us anywhere in the sub-continent has always been a huge challenge for Australia," Ponting said before the team's departure for Sri Lanka, where they lost a Test series 1-0 in

"There are conditions over there that looking back through the records, probably Australian teams haven't performed that well in.

"But saying that, a lot of the guys in the side now have played a lot of cricket in those conditions."

West Indies toured Sri Lanka without incident during the last parliamentary elections, in December 2002, but there are fears that the close contest between the United National Party and People's Alliance could spark poll-related

Australia's one-day squad will start training on Sunday and play a warm-up match against a Sri Lanka Board President's XI on Tuesday.

The team will travel north to Dambulla, a four-hour drive into the central drylands, before playing the first one-dayer on February 20

'He was quite encouraging

"All we can go on is what's

in the second XI game where

he got a few overs under his

belt and today...was very

presented to us and that is this

game and the Pura Cup game

(starting Monday), so we'll

have to make a judgment on

captain Cameron White, a fellow leg spinner, said: "He

landed them pretty well. There wasn't too many bad balls out

"The field was up most of the

time and they took him on and

they got away with a few, but I

February last year after testing

positive for a diuretic, which can be used to mask other

ers of the 20th century, Warne

is Australia's leading wicket-

become a sea of athletes on

off the roads and have people

everywhere on the roads," said race

the race, hopes the marathon will

"The idea is to put vehicle traffic

Jones, himself a participant in

"I have been here just a few days

ago and every day in the morning I

see more and more people training

for the race. It is a good trend," he

the Bombay race has many

unknown factors that can emerge at

the last minute. But the race is all

about setting goals, then working

towards them and finally achieving

also generate funds for charities

210,000 dollars, making the run the

(0145 GMT) from the city's

Chatrapati Shivaji Terminus railway

station and end at the nearby Azad

Maidan (Freedom Ground), organ-

promoting health and well-being.

richest in Asia, Goveas said.

isers said.

Organisers hope the race will

The total prize money at stake is

The race will start at 7:15 am

"Marathon is a movement and

taker with 491 victims

Warne was banned in

One of Wisden's five cricket-

thought he bowled pretty well."

Victoria's one-day team

encouraging," Hohns said.

last four

AFP, Paris

Friday

Safina, world-ranked 40, beat the Italian after two hours on court and looked to have had the match wrapped up quickly after leading 2-0 in the second set having won the first.

Safina however will have a tough test in the semifinal against Belgian top seed Kim Clijsters, who laboured to a 3-6. 7-5. 6-3 victory in 1hr 53min against Italy's Silvia Farina Elia.

Spain's Maria Sanchez Lorenzo 6-1, 6-0 the day before, looked much worse in this next match. She made 34 unforced errors and lost eight games to love before Elia served for the match at 5-3 in the second set.

and Clijsters managed to hold on to fight another day.

Cliisters said afterwards: "Yes-

France's Mary Pierce had an easier time reaching the semifinals after beating Russia's Elena Bovina 6-3. 6-4 in 1hr 19min. She raced to a 4-0 lead in the first set and never

Roddick. Agassi enter semis

AFP, San Jose

Defending champion Andre Agassi moved a step closer to a record sixth San Jose ATP title on Friday, subduing fellow American Jan-Michael Gambill 7-6, 7-5 to reach the semifi-

Agassi, 33 and seeded second reached the semifinals has now won 11 of 13 matches against Gambill.

Winning start

FROM PAGE 13

BKSP guys are very talented. That match helped us to correct our mistakes. We have totally adapted to the conditions here and are more confident after winning the second practice match.'

atmosphere at the BNS.

Bangladesh will be keeping their fingers crossed about paceman Talha who will have a fitness test in the morning to assess whether his hamstring injury had healed sufficiently for playing

FROM PAGE 13

Indian captain Saurav Ganguly had earlier this week expressed concern about security in Pakistan.

Pakistan tour, but we are worried about the security," Ganguly told reporters on his return from a tour of But Dalmiya said he was confi-

dent the tour would go off well. "Not only do I envisage an excel-

view but I am also confident that it will help strengthen the bond between the people of the two countries," he said. "We have to ensure the comfort

produce their best," he said.

FROM PAGE 13 bv 110 runs Razib 43, Dulal 2/17).

overs (Pappu 58 not out, Rakib 22, Selim 3/18). Result: Tejkunipara High School



Russian qualifier Dinara Safina, the sister of recent Australian Open runner-up Marat Safin, reached the semifinals of the WTA Paris Indoor Open with a 6-2, 4-6, 6-4 victory over Francesca Schiavone on

Cliisters, who had beaten

The Italian missed her chance

terday (Thursday) I played the perfect match but today it was harder. Every match is different and that's why I don't get bored playing

looked back.

Reigning US Open champion

and top seed Andy Roddick also advanced, reaching his first semifi-nal of 2004 with a 6-3, 7-6 victory

real challenge for our talented players. The match is important and critical for both sides to keep alive hopes for the Super League" said Hadlee who is the elder brother of legendary fast bowler Richard

While Bangladesh completed their warm-ups with five consecutive wins, the New Zealanders were stunned in their first match by the trainees of the country's premier sports institute BKSP. Hadlee believes that loss has made the side

"I must tell you that the young

The coach's only worry was with his spinners but he expected his pacers and quality fielding to make a mark.

New Zealand skipper Daniel Flynn was looking forward to experience firsthand the charged-up

"I am actually excited about the prospect of playing infront of a huge crowd tomorrow because I know that people in this country are very passionate about the game," said Flynn.

Dalmiya expects

Dalmiya.

"We are not worried about the

lent tour from the cricketing point of

of players so that they are able to

Rayer Bazar

won by 3 wickets.



Manchester City's German defender Michael Tarnat at Manchester yesterday.

FA Cup

One down United still good enough touch football had opened up the

Football

Manchester United saw off archrivals Manchester City 4-2 to book themselves an FA Cup quarter-final place despite playing most of Saturday's match here at Old Trafford with just 10 men.

United were 1-0 up thanks to Paul Scholes when the midfielder's fellow England regular Gary Neville was sent-off in the 39th minute for headbutting Steve McManaman.

However the hosts responded with three goals in nine minutes late in the second half, Ruud van Nistelrooy scoring twice and Cristiano Ronaldo also netting. City's Michael Tarnat pulled

one back to make it 3-1 before Robbie Fowler's quick free-kick made it 4-2 with four minutes left. However, City - who overturned a 3-0 deficit to beat

Tottenham 4-3 with 10 men in the previous round - could not comeback this time and give their manager Kevin Keegan a 53rd birthday present. United started the match with

four changes to the side beaten 3-2 by Middlesbrough in midweek with Roy Keane, Gary Neville, Phil Neville and Ronaldo all recalled.

City, beaten by Liverpool in

Trunisia 2004

Nigeria captain Jay Jay Okocha put

himself in line for a share of the

golden boot at the African Nations

Cup as he scored one of the goals

which helped defeat Mali 2-1 in the

The Bolton Wanderers star

struck early in the first half to join

Cameroon's Patrick Mboma and

Mali's Frederic Kanoute as joint top-

scorer at the tournament with four

the tournament's best player award,

scored after 17 minutes while

Osaze Odemwingie hit the second

Okocha, already poised to win

third place play-off here on Friday.

AFP, Monastir

goals.

Jay Jay action

Super Eagles finish third

midweek, were also forced to make changes with Arni Arason in for cup-tied goalkeeper David James while Joey Barton and Antoine Sibierski were back into the team that lost at Anfield.

United took the lead in the 34th minute when Scholes, in his 400th game for the club, put them ahead with a well-worked goal. Van Nistelrooy passed the ball

out wide to the left to Ryan Giggs and the Wales winger's low cross found Scholes, who got in between the City defence before slotting home. But five minutes late Neville

was dismissed. He was initially booked for diving by referee Jeff Winter after going to ground in the City box

following a challenge by Tarnat. Neville reacted furiously to the decision and in the melee that followed he headbutted McManaman leaving Winter with little option but to issue a straight

After the break, United were indebted to United States goalkeeper Tim Howard for threetimes preserving their lead.

In the 51st minute he blocked Shaun Wright Phillips's shot and seven minutes later he produced an even better save, somehow blocking Barton's close-range volley with his right arm.

And the visitors should have been level when, after neat one-

just after the break early in the

second half to set Nigeria on their

their fifth third-place finish in the

history of the event to add to their

two titles and four runners-up spots.

corresponding match in Bamako

take something from the tourna-

ment. The Nigerian people have

started to once again believe in the

team," said Nigerian coach

The Super Eagles boss brought

Ikpe Ekong and Joseph Enakhire

for the suspended Isaac Okoronkwo

and Seyi Olofinjana while Arsenal

star Nwankwo Kanu, who has been

two years ago

Christian Chukwu.

The win gave the Super Eagles

They had also beaten Mali in the

"We wanted to win the match to

United defence, former Liverpool and Real Madrid favourite McManaman weakly side-footed a volley straight at Howard with the goal at his mercy. City were made to pay for their

wastefulness 20 minutes from time when van Nistelrooy scored United's second. While their defence appealed

challenged Fowler, the ball was played out to Ronaldo. His cross evaded the City defence and van Nistelrooy slid in

against Keane for a foot-up as he

at the far post to make it 2-0. Minutes later the 10-men of United were 3-0 up. Arason produced a fine save to turn away Giggs's strike but as the ball looped up, Ronaldo was first to react as he shot into an

unguarded net. However, in the 78th minute City pulled one back when the unmarked Tarnat lashed the ball home at the back post.

But barely 60 seconds later United, killed off any hopes of a City revival, when they scored again after Ronaldo's free-kick, headed back across goal by Keane, was turned in by van

Fowler then caught United napping with his 86th minute curling free-kick from the edge of the box but it was too little too late.

carrying a thigh injury, was left out in

Morocco in their semi-final, gave

ning for the African Footballer of the

Year award, was in supreme form

on Friday as Nigeria looked to erase

the disappointment of their penalty

shoot-out defeat in the semi-finals to

kick which clipped a Mali defender

on its way past Mahamadou Sidibe

half, young striker Osaze

Odemwingie headed the second

Odemwingie overcome his misery

at being the Nigerian player who

missed his crucial spotkick in

It was also his third of the tourna-

As Nigeria kept up the pressure

in the second period. Okocha toved

with a dispirited Mali defence, at one

stage even trying to get past

Fousseiny Diawara by placing the

ball between his heels and flicking it

until the hour mark when Djibril

Sidibe curled a right-foot free-kick

around the Nigerian wall which

Victor Enyeama did well to push

his chance to become the tourna-

ment's outright top scorer when he

was replaced in the 64th minute by

limelight five minutes later when he

marked his debut by getting in

behind two defenders to hit a smart

running volley past Enyeama to

But it was Abouta who stole the

Gillingham's Mamady Sidibe.

Mali striker Frederic Kanoute lost

Mali's best chance didn't arrive

over his opponent's head.

away for a corner

Wednesday's semi-final shootout.

from Okocha's pinpoint cross.

His goal came off a 30-yard free-

Just two minutes into the second

The goal would have helped

Janvier Abouta his first start.

Mali, who were trounced 4-0 by

Okocha, who is also in the run-

favour of Pius Ikedia

in the Mali goal.

Ranieri's Henry miss

Chelsea boss Claudio Ranieri said he had been close to signing Arsenal striker Thierry Henry when he was manager of Fiorentina and described the player as the Muhammad Ali of football, the London Evening Standard reported

Ranieri, who watched Henry play in Arsenal's 2-0 victory over Southampton at Highbury on Tuesday, added he had been greatly impressed when he saw Henry play for the French under-21

Ranieri added: "I said to my chairman. 'Please buy him because he is one of the best.' but it did not happen for some reason. "I told my chairman, 'Henry is the

Muhammad Ali of the football pitch because he has such elegance, such speed.' He does everything with such style and grace." Arsenal host Chelsea in the fifth round of the FA Cup on Sunday and when Ranieri was asked how to stop

seriously, I have my players and we will do our best to stop him on Sunday "All players have a price and that includes Thierry Henry. I wouldn't like to put a price on him, though

Henry, he said: "With a gun. But

Own ripped off?

Only Arsenal can do that.

AFP, London

England star Michael Owen is embroiled in a court case with a builder whom he accuses of making hundreds of thousands of pounds (euros. dollars) in false claims for work on his manor house, reports said Saturday. The Liverpool striker claims

money to buy himself a house in Portugal, a series of newspapers said. According to evidence put before Manchester County Court,

builder Michael Flynn used the

Owen says his mother was forced into handing over money either when no work was done on the imposing house near Chester, northwest England, or when costs had been over-estimated.

Flynn has denied the allegations. "I have not done anything wrong and I am convinced I will be totally cleared," The Daily Telegraph quoted him as saying.

FIFA to formally thank Britain

AFP, Zurich

FIFA said they would be honouring the British football family for bringing the sport to the world at a meeting of the International Football this month.

World football's governing body said in a statement on Friday they would also be discussing artificial surfaces, a limit of five substitutes in friendlies, and how to end a match the IFAB which deals with the sport's

Zidane gets one-game ban

AFP, Madrid

France and Real Madrid playmaker Zinedine Zidane has been handed a one-match ban by the Spanish federation's disciplinary body after being sent off for violent behaviour in midweek.



The former world player of the year was red-carded suring the semi-final second leg of the Spanish Cup in Seville, which Sevilla won 1-0 but failed to qualify for the final on aggregate.

Zidane was sanctioned for "violent

behaviour". The Frenchman was adjudged to have slapped or used his hand to hit Sevilla defender Pablo Alfaro and was immediately sent off by the Real Madrid, who will meet Real

Zaragoza in the March 17 Cup final. appealed the decision but it was rejected by the Spanish football federa-The Spanish league leaders then

made a second appeal to a higher administrative body - the Spanish Committee for Sports Discipline (CEDS) - in a bid to have Zidane available for Sunday's crunch league encounter against second-placed Valencia, but that was also rejected.

Star-filled Mumbai Marathon

dream run.

marathon.

Shivdan Singh

symbol Pooja Bedi.

SHANE WARNE

"Already 18,000 people have

While the top runners will be

competing in the full marathon,

hundreds of less ambitious runners

including leading Indian industrialist

Anil Ambani, vice-chairman of

Reliance group, will set off in the half

hockey star Dhanrai Pillai, former

cricket great Kapil Dev and athlete

the dream run, among them

Bollywood stars such as Jackie

Shroff, Rahul Bose, Mandira Bedi,

latest Bollywood hunk John

Abraham, Tara Sharma, director

Farhan Akhtar and former sex

to keep fit. I hope to complete in the

dream run on Sunday," actor

"I run four to five kilometers daily

Indian athletes participating are

The bulk of the runners will enter

registered and the counting is still

impressed with what he saw of

Bollywood stars and top industrialon. We expect 20,000 athletes to ists will pound the streets of Bombay run in the event." race spokesman on Sunday in an international mara-Around 3,000 athletes will run The Standard Chartered the full and half marathons, while International Marathon.

biggest marathon, has generated tremendous interest across India, as well as with marathon runners Top athletes entered include marathon record holder Paul Tergat of Kenya, the legendary Michael Johnson and Mike Powell of the United States, Zola Budd of South

aiming to stake a claim as Asia's

Zimbabwe, Esther Kiplagat of Kenya and Violeletta Urgya of Poland Tergat holds the world marathon record of 2:04:55, set recently in

Africa, Johannes Kekana of

Berlin, while Kekana is tipped as favourite to win the Bombay race. "I am training for it," said Kekana "I am still getting used to the Bombay climate. A marathon run is very different as many surprises can

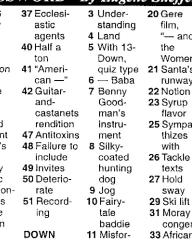
Organisers have broken the race into three categories -- a full mara-

Sharma said in a local television thon of 42.2 km (26 miles), a half Organisers said the streets of CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer **ACROSS** 37 Eccles 3 Understanding film, astic trees agents 4 Land "--- and 40 Half a the 5 With 13-Women' ton Down. 41 "Amer 21 Santa's can -6 — Baba runway

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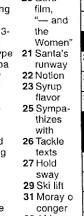
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34 Anger 35 Harvard' rival 36 Asian peppe



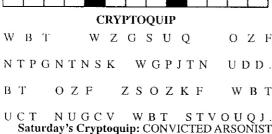
13 See 5-Down 19 Back in Parseghoffers 38 Midmonth 40 Wield

tunes



33 African antelope 34 Meal 36 Auction 37 Passpor

39 Stoppe BEGINS ŠOMBĚR ĈONFESSION: "BLESS ME needles 43 Latin 10 44 Actress Vardalo: 45 Bush



FATHER, FOR I HAVE SINGED. Today's Cryptoquip Clue: N equals D The Cryptoquip 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.

SUNRISE PUBLIC SCHOOL: 164/10 in 31 overs (Rawfun 45, TEJKUNIPARA HIGH: 167/7 in 34



Nigerian superstar Jay-Jay Okocha leaves the field after helping his side secure third place in Monastir on February 13.