

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.

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

continent.
"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 1999.

Safina in last four

AFP, Paris
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 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.



Manchester United's Portuguese international Cristiano Ronaldo (L) gets the better of Manchester City's German defender Michael Tarnat at Manchester yesterday.

Ranieri's Henry miss

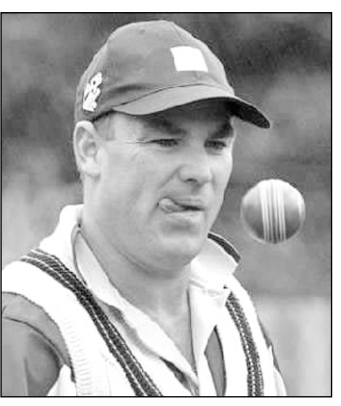
AFP, London
Chelsea boss Claudio Ranieri said he had been close to signing Arsenal striker Thierry Henry when he was manager of Fiorentina and described the player as the Muhammad Ali of football, the London Evening Standard reported on Friday.
Ranieri, who watched Henry play in Arsenal's 2-0 victory over Southampton at Highbury on Tuesday, added he had been greatly impressed when he saw Henry play for the French under-21 side.

Immediately on target

Cricket
REUTERS, Melbourne
Australian leg-spinner Shane Warne took a wicket with his second ball on Saturday in his long-awaited comeback to top-level cricket following a 12-month doping ban.

starting on Monday.
The interstate match will be Warne's only first-class outing before Australia name their squad on Friday for next month's Test tour of Sri Lanka.

"He was quite encouraging in the second XI game where he got a few overs under his belt and today...was very encouraging," Hohns said.
"All we can go on is what's presented to us and that is this game and the Pura Cup game (starting Monday), so we'll have to make a judgment on that."



SHANE WARNE impressed with what he saw of Warne's bowling.

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 semifinals.

FA Cup One down United still good enough

Football
AFP, Manchester
Manchester United saw off arch-rivals 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.

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.

touch football had opened up the 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.

Star-filled Mumbai Marathon

AFP, Mumbai
Nearly 20,000 athletes led by world record holders, Indian celebrities, Bollywood stars and top industrialists will pound the streets of Bombay on Sunday in an international marathon.

marathon of 21.1 km and a 7 km dream run.
"Already 18,000 people have registered and the counting is still on. We expect 20,000 athletes to run in the event," race spokesman Bruno Goveas said.

south and central Bombay would become a sea of athletes on Sunday.
"The idea is to put vehicle traffic off the roads and have people everywhere on the roads," said race director Hugh Jones.

Jay Jay action Super Eagles finish third

AFP, Monastir
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 third place play-off here on Friday.
The Bolton Wanderers star struck early in the first half to join Cameroon's Patrick Mboma and Mali's Frederic Kanoute as joint top-scorers at the tournament with four goals.

just after the break early in the second half to set Nigeria on their way.
The win gave the Super Eagles their fifth third-place finish in the history of the event to add to their two titles and four runners-up spots.
They had also beaten Mali in the corresponding match in Bamako two years ago.

carrying a thigh injury, was left out in favour of Pius Ikedia.
Mali, who were trounced 4-0 by Morocco in their semi-final, gave Janvier Abouta his first start.
Okocha, who is also in the running 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 Tunisia.



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

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.
Zidane was sent off for a 30-yard free-kick which clipped a Mali defender on its way past Mahamadou Sidibe in the Mali goal.



The former world player of the year was red-carded during the semi-final second leg of the Spanish Cup in Sevilla, 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 referee.
Real Madrid, who will meet Real Zaragoza in the March 17 Cup final, appealed the decision but it was rejected by the Spanish football federation.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS
1 Mightily trees agents
5 Campaign donation org.
8 Fill the hold
12 Pre-ripcord descent
14 Jason's ship
15 Disney classic
16 Traditional tales
17 "the season"
18 Courses
20 Practice
23 Furry critter
24 Took the bus
25 Enthusiast
28 Pivouette
29 Conical home
30 Payable
32 Car motor part
34 Anger
35 Harvard's rival
36 Asian pepper plant

Cryptquip puzzle grid with clues and solution: UCT NUGCV WBT STVOUQJ. Saturday's Cryptquip: CONVICTED ARSONIST BEGINS SOMBER CONFESSION: "BLESS ME FATHER, FOR I HAVE SINGED."

Dalmiya expects

FROM PAGE 13
Dalmiya.
Indian captain Saurav Ganguly had earlier this week expressed concern about security in Pakistan.
"We are not worried about the Pakistan tour, but we are worried about the security," Ganguly told reporters on his return from a tour of Australia.

Rayer Bazar

FROM PAGE 13
SUNRISE PUBLIC SCHOOL: 164/10 in 31 overs (Rawfun 45, Razib 43, Dulal 2/17).
TEJKUNIPARA HIGH: 167/7 in 34 overs (Pappu 58 not out, Rakib 22, Selim 3/18).
Result: Tejkunipara High School won by 3 wickets.