

Maradona in Serbia for documentar y

AFP, Belgrade

Argentinian football legend Diego Maradona arrived here Tuesday for a brief visit to be filmed for a documentary about his colourful life by celebrated Balkan director Emir Kusturica.

"I have not been in Belgrade for so long, but do not think that I was not aware of what has been going on here," Maradona told reporters after a ceremonial meeting with Serbia's Prime Minister Vojislav Kostunica.

"For all these years, I have been observing what is going on and I want to say that I was with you all the time," Maradona said.

Kostunica said he was honoured to meet "two great artists: Maradona, who has turned football into art, and Kusturica, one of the most respected directors nowadays."

Maradona was last in Belgrade in 1982, when he played for Spanish side Barcelona, beating Serbia's Red Star Belgrade 4-2 in the second round of the now defunct European Cup Winners' Cup.

Kusturica said that several scenes in the documentary would be filmed at Red Star Belgrade's stadium, "where Maradona scored one of his unforgettable goals."

The Bosnian-born director began filming a documentary on Maradona this spring, describing it as a "film which will be quite complicated in conception."

"My intention is to find and recreate over the next five months the real personality of Maradona," said Kusturica, who has won two Golden Palm awards at the Cannes film festival for "Underground" (1995) and "When Father Was Away on Business" (1985).

His latest full-length movie, "Life is a Miracle", was filmed in Serbia and released last year.



STILL GOT THE SAME CONTROL: Argentine idol Diego Maradona (L) balances a ball at the Red Star stadium in Belgrade on Tuesday while he is filmed. Maradona is in the Serbian capital working on a documentary about his life.

PHOTO: AFP

No question about who are the favourites

AFP, Bergisch-gladbach

Brazil coach Carlos Alberto Parreira said on Tuesday his team should start the 2006 World Cup as favourites to defend their title.

"For many years, Brazil has gone into World Cups as favourites and it will be the same for the 2006 World Cup," Parreira said.

"I think that Brazil have to assume their role as favourites. That is the best way," he added, as his team prepare for their opening match in the Confederations Cup in Germany against Greece in Leipzig on Thursday.

Brazil suffered a setback to their campaign to qualify for the 2006 finals in Germany when they were beaten 3-1 by their arch rivals Argentina last week.

However they only need three points from their last three matches to reach the finals.

Parreira brushed off criticism of his team, saying expectations of Brazil were always high.

"I recall that the 1970 team was highly criticised," he said of Pele's team which dazzled in the finals in Mexico.

"It was the same in 1994 (when he was coach), nobody believed in the team and we became world champions. It happened again in 2002, when the team was discredited until the final qualifying matches. Yet we were the best team at that World Cup."

Pele said this week that he believed the 2006 World Cup final would feature Brazil against Germany, the same as in 2002 in Yokohama when Brazil won.

Cristiano Ronaldo staying?

REUTERS, London

Manchester United winger Cristiano Ronaldo looks certain to continue his career at Old Trafford.

Europe's big guns are casting envious eyes over the 20-year-old Portugal international after a string of superb displays in the Barclays Premiership and for his country.

However it is understood that he has agreed a lucrative new five-year deal at United and is due to sign when he returns from holiday.

Should he, as expected, put pen to paper it would be a massive boost for manager Sir Alex Ferguson in his bid to regain the high ground from Chelsea.

Ferguson believes Ronaldo and England striker Wayne Rooney are two of the most exciting young players in the world.

Ronaldo has scored 15 goals in 90 games for United after moving to England from Sporting Lisbon for £12.5million as an 18-year-old.

He continued his progress last season despite the club failing to win a trophy, lighting up a number of games with his dribbling skills and pace.

Ronaldo signed an initial five-year deal on the lowest wage band and his value now to United is amplified at national level.

He has scored seven goals for Portugal in their World Cup qualifying matches and is second in Europe's goalscorer ranks, ahead of Andriy Shevchenko and Ruud van Nistelrooy.

Confederations Cup champs to get 2.275m euros

AFP, Frankfurt

The Confederations Cup champions will receive 2.275m euros for lifting the championship, it was announced on Tuesday.

The runners-up will take home 1.94m euros with 1.7m euros to the third place team and 1.42m euros to the fourth best side.

All the others will receive 853,000 euros each.

007 to the rescue!

AFP, Glasgow

Secret agent 007 turned football agent for a day to help Rangers win the race to sign former Marseille captain Brahim Hemdani.

Sean Connery, the actor most closely identified with the role of James Bond, stepped in when Hemdani was having difficulty making up his mind between a move to Scotland or to Germany with Bayer Leverkusen.

Rangers chairman David Murray organised a meeting between Connery and the 27-year-old and the world's most famous Scotsman obviously did a good job of selling his native country to the Algerian-born defender, who signed for the Scottish champions on Tuesday.

"It's true I enlisted Sean's help to sell Scotland to Brahim," Murray told the Daily Record. "Bayer Leverkusen were chasing him as well and I arranged for Sean to meet the player at Cannes Airport to help sell Scotland to him."

"Brahim then flew over and had a good look around. I am delighted to say, that after returning home to France, he then agreed to sign for the club."

Hemdani was available on a free transfer after the expiry of his contract at Marseille. He will earn a reported four million pounds if he sees out the four-year contract he has signed with Rangers.

JAPAN V MEXICO LIVE ON STAR SPORTS 9:55PM BST

Evenly matched foes

AFP, Hannover



Japan, who meet Mexico in the Confederations Cup on Thursday, must raise their game if they are to

repeat or surpass their exploits at the 2002 World Cup on home soil, captain Tsubone Yasu Miyamoto believes.

Japan, who made it through to the second round in Asia, became the first country to qualify for Germany 2006 when they beat North Korea last week, but Miyamoto reckons there is still plenty of work left to be done.

"The team must improve. This is just the start for this side. Compared to 2002 we have to improve the defensive aspect."

"We will have to play more foreign teams and we must make progress before the World Cup."

The Confed Cup could not come at a better time than for the Asian champions, with Mexico followed by Group B ties against Greece and Brazil.

And Miyamoto is hungry for success.

"Japan qualified for the World Cup thanks to everyone in the squad and in this tournament we want to reach the semi-finals," he said.

For defender Teruyuki Moniwa the competition represents an international lifeline as he has returned after a year in the international wilderness after being shunned by Zico for breaking a curfew and visiting a hostess bar in February last year.

The FC Tokyo star, called up to replace injured Yuji Nakazawa, said: "It's been a big regret that I've not been able to wear the Japan shirt."

"It feels like this is my last chance so I have to make sure I take it."

Also injured are Feyenoord midfielder Shinji Ono and SV Hamburg striker Naohiro Takahara but Zico can count on the return of Fiorentina's Hidetoshi Nakata and Shunsuke Nakamura, both sus-

pected for the North Korean qualifier.

Reggina's Nakamura, who has scored 12 goals in 50 games for Japan, will be keen to impress alongside Nakata as he is on the look out for a new club.

Zico reckons his men are capable of holding their own in this mini World Cup.

"Considering the quality of my players, I'm quite sure that we can cope with other top teams on an equal level."

"We can make a great achievement when each player improves his individual level in the following year."

Mexico, who famously beat Brazil to win the 1999 edition, suf-

fered a major blow with the defection of their emblematic Barcelona defender Ricardo Marquez who picked up an injury in training on Tuesday.

Mexico still have some unfinished business to attend to before securing automatic qualification for the World Cup, but Ricardo Lavolpe's team are sitting pretty on top of their CONCACAF group after last week's 2-0 win over Trinidad and Tobago.

Lavolpe, like Zico, regards the next fortnight as a World Cup dress rehearsal.

"The competition will give us an idea of what we will find in 2006 and allow us to compare ourselves against teams of high potential."



SHOW ME SOME OF YOUR OLD SPARK! Japan coach Zico (R) watches veteran midfielder Hidetoshi Nakata during a training session at the SportsPark in Hanover on Tuesday.

PHOTO: AFP

Socceroos' skipper delighted

AFP, Berlin

Australia international captain Craig Moore is delighted his country have finally been given the go-ahead to join the Asian World Cup qualifying zone for the 2010 World Cup in South Africa.

FIFA president Sepp Blatter admitted football's governing body had no objection to Australia leaving the Oceania qualifying system, which does not have a direct qualifying spot for the World Cup.

"It will be good for us and bad for the Asian teams," Moore said.

"In the Oceania qualifying zone we were never really tested and that is never good preparation for an all or nothing play-off."

Australia have reached just one World Cup back in 1974 with the two-legged play-offs against South America's fifth best team proving too big an obstacle.

By joining Asia, Australia will have to fight it out with 44 other countries for a maximum of five World Cup spots but Socceros skipper Moore prefers a longer campaign.

"A group system is better than a play-off," declared Moore. "It means an off-day, a refereeing decision or an enthusiastic fan cannot spoil two years of hard work."

Australia lost to Uruguay in the play-off for the 2002 World Cup but it is the 1998 play-off defeat by Iran that still bothers Moore.

"When we played Iran for a spot in the 1998 World Cup we led 2-0 with 15 minutes to go," explained Moore.

"Then a crazy fan climbed on the goal causing the game to be delayed by ten minutes. We lost our rhythm and missed out on qualification."

Iran came back to score twice in the final 14 minutes to snatch a 2-2 draw and secure a spot in France 98.

Australia have to beat the Solomon Islands home and away and then a yet-to-be determined fifth-placed team from South America to reach the 2006 finals.

Frank Farina's side are preparing for Wednesday's Confederations Cup match with Germany in Frankfurt.

A Roman wedding

AFP, Rome

AS Roma captain Francesco Totti's wedding on Sunday is set to bring central Rome to a standstill with all the scheduled masses at his chosen church cancelled to avoid unwanted guests.

The wedding is due to take place in Capitol Square, home to the Town Hall, but will be blocked to cars from early morning onwards with the wedding service between Totti and TV star Hilary Blasi set for 1500GMT.

The service is being held in the church of Santa Maria dell'Aracoeli, which also looks onto the Piazza Venezia, and the priest Father Leopold took the decision to cancel all other services.

While Totti has garnered some unsavory headlines for his behaviour on the pitch - he spat at a Danish player in Euro 2004 - he is an iconic personality to the AS Roma fans.

'Take Ashes initiative'

Cricket

AFP, London

West Indies star Brian Lara has told England they must forget about trying to play a containing game if they want to wrest the Ashes back from Australia.

England have lost their last eight Test series against their oldest foes but are now second behind Ricky Ponting's men in the world Test rankings.

And home hopes of a first Ashes triumph since Mike Gatting's side won in Australia in 1986-87 have been stirred by the sides' last two, albeit one-day, matches.

Arch rivals' exciting

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There was no respite for the Abahani shotstopper who had to deal with two long range efforts by Donald and Alfaz before Farhad squandered the easiest chance in injury time. Taking a pass from Ibrahim, Farhad fired an angular shot through two defenders but Biplab's made a reflex save.

Abahani, however, brought the score level just 15 seconds after breather. Joy's centre from the right byline caught Biplab in two minds allowing Ibrahim to sneak in and race past the keeper before whacking the ball into an open net for his second league goal.

Both sides played cautiously after that but Mohammedan were the better of the two sides in the remaining time. Donald, who looked lethargic for most of the game, was very quick with the ball and forced

another save by Nizam before chipping the ball onto the crossbar from 25 yards ten minutes from the final whistle.

Abahani's long-ball strategy gave chances to substitutes Wali and Tipu in the stoppage time but both failed to test Biplab. Yellow cards: Hassan, Rony, Khokon (Mohammedan) and Joy, Ujjal (Abahani)

TEAMS
MOHAMMEDAN: Biplab, Kamal, Nazrul, Hassan, Rony, Arman Aziz, Asad, Munna (Khokon, 23rd minute), Faisal (Mintu, 78th), Alfaz (Zahid, 74th) and Donald.
ABAHANI: Nizam, Obaidur, Shawkat, Pradeep, Lajuk, Zahid (Wali, 89th), Joy, Ndem (Parvez, 66th), Ujjal, Farhad (Tipu, 82nd) and Ibrahim.
Referee: Mansoor Azad.

Powell sets 100m new

FROM PAGE 12

this year, you will just have to wait until the end of this season to see," Powell added.

Second in the race was Ghana's Aziz Zakari in 9.99 with Jamaica's Michael Frater placing third with a 10.03 clocking, both personal bests. In the men's 110 metres hurdles, American Arend Watkins despite a slow start and hitting some of the hurdles, came through to win with a season best clocking of 13.23 seconds, beating his closest opponent Ukraine's Sergey Demidyuk by a stride.

"I am very satisfied that I won in a very fast race. Last night I was so anxious I couldn't sleep," Watkins said.

Athens Olympics silver medal winner Hasna Benhassi of Morocco won the 800 metres women's competition as she sprinted at the end to win the event in 1 minute, 59.60 seconds edging out Greece's Maria Papadopoulou who set a national record with a 1:59.79 clocking.

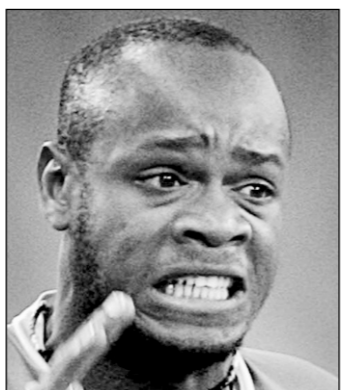
"It was a very good rehearsal for the World Championships in Helsinki. It was an easy race for me as it turned out. Everything went well," Benhassi said after the race.

In the women's 400 metres hurdles Australian Jana Pittman easily won the race with a season's best of 53.44 seconds with Poland's Anna Jesien a distance second at 54.27.

"It was a very good training for the World Championships in Helsinki. I am very satisfied that I

won this race, I am in very good shape," Pittman said.

In the men's 400 metres hurdles Louis van Zyl of South Africa with a great sprint at the end took the event



ASAFA POWELL

in 48.16 seconds beating out Greece's Pericles Iakovakis who was second in 48.24.

Jamaica's Sherone Simpson edged out Zhanna Block of Ukraine in the women's 100 metres on the line to win the race in 11:16 seconds.

Bulgaria's star 100m runner Iveta Lalova was unable to take part after suffering a knee injury during the warm-up and was taken to hospital.

The grand prize was the first major athletics competition at the Athens Olympic Stadium since the Games held there last summer.

Rahmatganj on top after first leg

SPORTS REPORTER

Rahmatganj Muslim Friends Society registered their sixth victory beating Dhanmondi Club 1-0 to finish on top of the table at the end of the first-leg of the First Division Football League yesterday.

Jumratul Islam Mithu struck the match winner in the 78th minute at the Birshreshtha Shaheed Mostafa Kamal Stadium in Kamalapur.

With the outcome, Rahmatganj bagged 19 points from seven matches while Dhanmondi share the bottom-place along with BRTC, both on three points.

The second leg will begin from June 20 and the mid-season players' transfer will be held from June 17-19.

POINTS TABLE (After first-leg)

Teams	M	W	D	L	GF	GA	Pts
RMFS	7	6	1	0	13	4	19
Mohakhali	7	5	1	1	14	3	16
Badda	7	4	2	1	9	4	14
Victoria	7	3	2	2	6	4	11
Agrani	7	1	3	3	9	8	6
Wari	7	1	2	4	6	14	5
BRTC	7	0	3	4	2	10	3
D'mondi	7	1	0	6	3	15	3

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS	35 Polish	DOWN	23 Bound along
1 Diet soda name	36 Thorax	1 Lovers' quarrel	24 Wading bird
4 Assist-ance	37 Tender-loin, e.g.	2 Budget rival	25 A couple of cups
8 Hitcher's hope	39 "Caught ya!"	3 Region	26 Seles' competitor
12 "— Got a Secret"	40 Honest politician	4 Impede	27 Hindu princess
13 Cupid's Cup	41 Maternity-data	5 "It's— Unusual Day"	28 Artist Nolde
14 Valhalla VIP	45 Radar spot	6 Neither partner	29 Predicament
15 13th president	48 Gas-station request	7 Whom Zola supported	32 Odious sovereign
17 Sweet potatoes	50 Philbin's cohort	8 Belittling	33 Don't be greedy
18 Lens settings	51 Second-hand	9 McKinley's first lady	35 Symbol of intrigue
19 Verily	52 Whitney or Wallach	10 Lower the lights	36 Harold's Pilgrimage
21 11/11	53 The gamut	11 Navy rank (abbr.)	38 Bolivian city
22 Embellishment	54 Traditional tales	15 Is enamored of	39 More skilled
26 Actress Garson	55 Nosh	20 German article	42 Genealogy chart
29 Enjoyment			43 Polynesian entertainment
30 Kimono closer			44 Skewer
31 Edward Jones Dome			45 Shape shifter?
32 Teat designation			46 Reading course, for short
33 "Wheel of Fortune" option			47 Biz-ness abbr.
34 Singer DiFranco			49 Equip-

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12										
15										
18										
26	27	28								
31										
34										
37										
45	46	47								
50										
53										

CRYPTOQUIP

H ' D E L O R N G I H W H ' U I

D I O O B H R E I H C B Z L G T M

P U L E T P S M Z I W L G I , Z N O

R B I S L I R G H E C P Z I T T .

Yesterday's Cryptoquip: THAT NEW RADIOLOGIST IS TOO GOOD-NATURED. I DON'T UNDERSTAND WHAT HE SEES IN PEOPLE.

Today's Cryptoquip Clue: U equals V

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.