Country first for Kaneria

REUTERS, *Karachi*

Pakistan leg spinner Danish Kaneria will limit his appearances for English county Essex after being ordered to remain as fresh as possible for his country's tours to Sri Lanka and England.

Pakistan play three one-day internationals and two test matches in Sri Lanka from March 17 before heading to England in July for a four-test, five ODI series.

"I will make a decision on how many matches I should play for Essex after the Sri Lanka tour," Kaneria told Reuters on Tuesday.

"I will probably only be able to appear for them for a month this season."

The 25-year-old has taken 148 wickets in 34 tests and is regarded by Pakistan captain Inzamamul Haq as a key bowler for this year's overseas tours.

Inzamam has already made it clear he wanted Kaneria to stay fit and motivated for the England tour and not get worn out by playing too much county cricket.

"I will speak to my captain because Essex has played a big role in my development as a bowler," added Kaneria, who joined last season's National League one-day title winners in 2004.

"I will definitely play for them for a limited time frame. It will help me get accustomed to English conditions."

The leg-spinner said he was keen to do well in Sri Lanka, where he felt conditions assisted the spinners.

Thakurgaon cricket

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Dinajpur*

Agomony Sporting Club outplayed Development Squad by ten wickets in the opening match of the Thakurgaon Cricket League at the Thakurgaon Cricket ground yesterday.

Batting first Development Squad managed only 58 runs after being all out. In reply, Agomony reached the target of 62 runs without loss.

Twenty eight teams, splitting into six groups, are taking part in the league.

Rahim under

FROM PAGE 12

"He (Alok) is not discarded at all. It was difficult to pick him and drop again. But for this game, we don't think it is a big issue. As a back-up bowler, Alok bowled only a few overs and Ashraful can do it too," he added.

India want

FROM PAGE 12

their newcomers' remarkable show.

Left-handed opener Alastair Cook, one of the three debutants after Panesar and Ian Blackwell, scored a gutsy 60 and 104 not out just a few days after arriving from the West Indies as one of the replacements.

"It does affect the morale sometimes when you lose key players before an important series, but the new boys have adjusted pretty well. Things have settled down for us," said England coach Duncan Fletcher.

"The three debutants were impressive. They contributed enough for the team. I am happy with the way the players applied themselves in the first Test and we expect a similar kind of performance here."

Will it be lucky

FROM PAGE 12

Sangakkara (vice-captain), Upul Tharanga, Michael Vandort, Tillakaratne Dilshan, Chamara Kapugedera, Prasanna Jayawardene, Muttiah Muralidaran, Malinga Bandara, Farveez Maharoof, Dammika Prasad, Lasith Malinga, Dilhara Fernando, Thilan Samaraweera and Sajeewa Weerakoon.

PHOTO: AFP

Manchester United striker Louis Saha (L) and captain Gary Neville celebrate the winning goal against Premiership rivals Wigan Athletic at the JJB Stadium on Monday.

PREMIERSHIP

United edge past Wigan

Football

AFP, *Wigan*

Pascal Chimbonda's freak injury-time own goal gifted Manchester United a 2-1 victory at Wigan as Paul Jewell's team were left to rue a host of missed chances at the JJB Stadium here on Monday.

Chimbonda had been impressive in defence for the home team until he deflected Louis Saha's strike into his own net two minutes into stoppage time.

Wigan, still stinging from their 4-0 League Cup Final defeat against United in Cardiff last month, looked on course for victory when Paul Scharner gave them the lead in the 60th minute.

But a Cristiano Ronaldo goal levelled for United and the visitors then stole victory seconds before the end of the game following Chimbonda's desperate intervention deep into stoppage time.

With Liverpool failing to stretch away from United in the race for second spot in recent weeks, this game was the perfect opportunity for Sir Alex Ferguson's team to leapfrog their rivals and strengthen their claims for the runners-up spot.

But United were awful in the first-half and Wigan created enough chances to leave the visitors trailing by a hefty margin at the interval.

Complacency may have been a factor on United's part having beaten Wigan by four goals on two occasions already this season.

However, Wigan were clearly stung by the manner of their Millennium Stadium defeat last month and they took their frustrations out on United with a dominant first-half display.

With Ruud van Nistelrooy starting on the bench again for United following his failure to make Cup Final starting line-up, Wigan had little to worry about defensively as they peppered Edwin van der Sar's goal in the opening period.

And the home side carved out at least six clear goalscoring chances, with United's midfield and defence in disarray, simply unable to cope with the pace and power of strike duo Henri Camara and Jason Roberts and the energy of midfielders Jimmy Bullard and Graham Kavanagh.

Irishman Kavanagh twice saw long-range efforts flash narrowly wide, while Bullard volleyed a Leighton Baines cross over the crossbar from 12 yards.

Roberts and Camara were the main threat, though, and the pair both saw good chances saved by van der Sar as United struggled to get a foothold in the game.

The worry for Wigan was that their missed chances would return to haunt them after the break and Wayne Rooney should have punished them within four minutes of the restart.

Gary Neville's cross teed up Rooney on the edge of the six yard box, but the England striker wastefully aimed a diving header high over the crossbar.

Wigan finally claimed the opener they deserved, however, when Scharner put them ahead on 59 minutes following a goalmouth scramble caused by Bullard's corner.

Arjan de Zeeuw's header had been cleared off the line by Ryan Giggs, but Roberts fired the rebound back towards goal, only for van der Sar to save and push the ball into Scharner's path, leaving the Austrian with a close range strike to score.

Ronaldo levelled in the 74th minute when he sidefooted van Nistelrooy's cross past Australian keeper John Filan.

That was barely deserved, but United still snatched the points when Chimbonda's attempt at a clearance from Saha's strike flew into his own net.

TOP SIX

Team	P	W	D	L	G/F	G/A	Pts
Chelsea	28	23	3	2	56	17	72
Man Utd	27	17	6	4	54	28	57
Liverpool	28	16	7	5	33	17	55
Tottenham	28	13	10	5	40	26	49
Arsenal	28	13	5	10	43	22	44
Blackburn	28	13	4	11	36	34	43

No Thorpe in C'wealth Games

REUTERS, *Sydney*

The Commonwealth Games was robbed of two of its biggest drawcards on Tuesday when Australian swimmer Ian Thorpe and English marathon world champion Paula Radcliffe both pulled out.

Thorpe told a news conference in Sydney that he had succumbed to a mystery illness that had plagued him for almost a month before Radcliffe's husband released a statement in Britain saying she was withdrawing because of a bruised foot.

The absence of the duo is certain to have come as a massive blow to the competition organisers with Queen Elizabeth II due to the open the March 15-26 Games in Melbourne in a little over a week.

A host of big-name athletes had already withdrew, including Australia's long-distance swimmer Grant Hackett and England's dual Olympic-champion Kelly Holmes, who announced her retirement last year after previously saying she planned to compete.

Debbie Ferguson of the Bahamas and Kim Collins of St Kitts and Nevis, winners of the blue-riband sprints at Manchester in 2002, are also expected to announce their withdrawals in the coming days.

IAN THORPE

Canada's former Olympic triathlon champion Simon Whitfield is also out, as is New Zealand rugby winger Doug Howlett, while Kirsty Coventry, the outstanding swimmer at last year's world championships in Montreal, is unable to compete because of Zimbabwe's withdrawal from the Commonwealth.

The high-profile withdrawals followed an announcement by organisers earlier in the week that they still had almost 400,000 tickets to sell despite the cost of the Games blowing out to 1.1 billion Australian dollars (476 million pounds) from the original budget of 697 million.

Thorpe's withdrawal was the biggest shock.

The five-time Olympic gold medallist is a sporting superstar in Australia and news of his announcement was broadcast live on national television.

Radcliffe won the 5,000m gold medal at the last Commonwealth Games in Manchester and was entered for the 10,000m in Melbourne but injured her foot when she hit a rock in training.

All but Gillespie recalled

Cricket

AFP, *Sydney*

Australia on Tuesday recalled three Ashes casualties in Damien Martyn, Michael Clarke and Michael Kasprowicz but snubbed fellow discard Jason Gillespie's push for a Test return in South Africa.

Selectors instead named two-Test novice Shaun Tait and uncapped seamer Stuart Clark in a 14-man squad that had no room for batsman Brad Hodge and New South Wales quick Nathan Bracken.

In a team missing pace spearhead Glenn McGrath, who is staying in Australia as his wife undergoes cancer treatment, the selection panel opted for a mixture of Tait's promise and Kasprowicz's experience in attack.

"The decision on the make-up of the fast bowling quartet was not an easy one, given that we are without Glenn McGrath for this series," selection chairman Trevor Hohns said.

"We wanted a blend of pace, youth, experience and line and length, and believe we have all of these covered with our selection."

Tait, like Gillespie, failed to impress in the Ashes series but Hohns was full of praise for the 23-year-old who is returning from a shoulder injury.

"He's back bowling at full pace so we're happy that the injury isn't hampering his bowling," Hohns said. "We believe he has a bright future at Test level."

Gillespie's omission will be a bitter blow for the 30-year-old paceman, who has taken 34 first class wickets at 21.85 for this year as he fights to prove he retains the zip that earned him 69 Test caps.

But the South Australian was unable to win over selectors, unlike fellow Ashes discards Martyn, Kasprowicz and Clarke, who was dropped soon after returning from England.

Hohns admitted it was a close call between Gillespie and Kasprowicz, the leading wicket taker in the Australian domestic competition.

"It's considered that Michael's probably bowling fractionally better at this stage of the season," he said.

Kasprowicz, 34, who has earned eight Test recalls in a roller-coaster career, put his latest revival down to a back-to-basics approach he adopted after the Ashes failure.

"I adapted myself to hit the wicket a bit more, which got me back into the Australian side," he told reporters.

Former golden boy Clarke has hit six half-centuries in 17 one-day internationals since being axed and Hohns said he had worked hard for his recall.

"We're very comfortable with the progress he's made," he said, describing Hodge as "unlucky" to be dropped after failing to impress with the bat at domestic level.

The Australian 14-man squad named Tuesday to face South Africa in the three-Test series beginning in Cape Town on March 16.

SQUAD

Ricky Ponting (captain), Adam Gilchrist (vice-captain), Stuart Clark, Michael Clarke, Matthew Hayden, Michael Hussey, Michael Kasprowicz, Justin Langer, Brett Lee, Stuart MacGill, Damien Martyn, Andrew Symonds, Shaun Tait, Shane Warne.

War at Real

AFP, *Barcelona*

Real Madrid's stars are at "war" with each other as they head for a third straight season without a trophy, with Brazilian forward Ronaldo and Spanish midfielder Guti having come to blows, Barcelona-based sports media reported on Tuesday.

"Civil war in Madrid," said Sport daily in a front-page headline, adding the reason Guti pulled out of last week's friendly international with Ivory Coast with a leg injury was down to Ronaldo having kicked out at him following the 1-0 Champions League home leg loss to Arsenal two weeks ago.

Sport quoted a radio journalist from Onda Cero, Jose Manuel Estrada, as saying the usually close friends had had an angry exchange which turned into fisticuffs following the Arsenal match which left the club on the brink of elimination ahead of Wednesday's return at Highbury.

Ronaldo, who last month claimed the fans at the Bernabeu have never loved him, is set to feature on Wednesday. But while he is Real's top scorer in the league with ten goals suspension and injury have restricted him to just one Champions League game this season

-- when he flopped against the Gunners.

Reports suggest the Brazilian World Cup winner is heading back to Italy at the end of the season, either to former club Inter Milan or AC Milan.

He was dropped for Saturday's league derby win over Atletico in which replacement Antonio Cassano scored, but is widely predicted to be given another chance at Highbury.

"We have to win, with or without Ronaldo," goalkeeper Iker Casillas said curtly when asked if a Brazilian or an Italian might lead the line.

Figueroa's WC dream over

INTERNET, *undated*

Argentine striker Luciano Figueroa has been ruled out of this summer's World Cup finals after sustaining a serious knee injury.

The 24-year-old River Plate hitman has torn the cruciate ligament in his left knee and is expected to be sidelined for a minimum of six months.

It means he will be forced to sit out the remainder of the Argentine Torneo Clausura, the closing stages of Copa Libertadores and also the World Cup.

Figueroa, who had an unsuccessful spell at Birmingham earlier in his career, has an impressive record for his country having bagged nine goals in 15 appearances.

He looked a certainty for Jose Pekerman's squad for the summer's showpiece, but has now seen that dream dashed.

Waqar named

FROM PAGE 12

starting from March 13.

Besides, they have decided to appoint former cricketer Zaheer Abbas as manager of the team.

"All the indications are that Chairman Shaharyar Khan and Director Cricket Operations Saleem Altaf had reached a consensus on appointing Abbas as manager and Younis as the bowling coach," a source was quoted as saying by 'The News' today.

Younis is believed to have the support of Pakistan captain Inzamamul Haq.

"Younis' appointment is also being backed by Inzamam who feels that with young bowlers coming into the national side, the former pacer can play a big role in their development at the top level," it said.

However, the bowling coach issue may come up before the ad-hoc committee later this month.

"Some discussion is still on Younis, particularly about his tenure. The bowling coach issue might be put before PCB's ad-hoc committee at its meeting on March 28," the source added.

Ganguly hit

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The selectors have said there is no place for Ganguly, 33, because they were looking at building a team for the future.

Ganguly, however, nurses hopes of playing in the 2007 World Cup in the West Indies and wants to prove his form in domestic cricket.

He remains India's most successful Test captain with 21 wins and has scored 5,221 runs from 88 Tests with 12 centuries.

He also has 10,123 runs from 279 one-dayers with 22 hundreds.

Fletcher has

FROM PAGE 12

players in the first Test as debutants Alastair Cook and Monty Panesar both gave a good account of themselves in testing conditions.

Left-handed opener Cook scored 60 and 104 not out, while left-arm spinner Panesar finished with three major wickets.

"What is so pleasing is that these guys (newcomers) look as though they have really got a desire not just to play for England, but to do well for England," Fletcher said.

Arsenal have the edge

UEFA CHAMPS LEAGUE

REUTERS, *London*

Arsenal need to banish the inconsistency that has dogged their season if they are to earn at least a draw with Real Madrid and reach the Champions League quarterfinals on Wednesday.

A famous triumph over the most successful club in European football beckons for Arsene Wenger's side after their hugely impressive 1-0 victory at the Bernabeu two weeks ago.

Talismanic skipper Thierry Henry scored the away goal that could yet see Arsenal through to only their third appearance in the last eight and there was more for their fans to cheer on Saturday.

Fulham are a world away from the Galacticos of Real Madrid but the stylish way Arsenal tore them to shreds in a 4-0 drubbing, courtesy of two well-taken goals by Henry, was a sign of real confidence.

However, Arsenal's season has been very much a stop-start affair and their Premiership finish is destined to fall well short of the club's high standards after 10 defeats has left them fifth in the table.

Five points adrift of neighbours Tottenham Hotspur in a race to finish fourth raises the very real prospect of UEFA Cup football for their first season at the new Emirates Stadium.

Defensive lapses and a failure to impose themselves in midfield, due in large part to the pre-season departure of Patrick Vieira to Juventus, have robbed Wenger's side of all chance of domestic silverware.

The Champions League can yet salvage Arsenal's season, though the same is largely true for Real, 10 points behind Primera Liga leaders Barcelona and out of the King's Cup.

Real put a week of turmoil behind them following Florentino Perez's shock resignation with a gutsy and determined 2-1 win over city rivals Atletico Madrid on Saturday.

New president Fernando Martin's decision to crack the whip and make it clear that he required more commitment from the players appeared to pay dividends with a morale-boosting win.

Even better for coach Juan Ramon Lopez Caro was the performance of Antonio Cassano, making his first league start after Ronaldo was dropped.

The Italy striker scored Real's opener and his first league goal with a great header and was a constant menace with his darting runs off the ball and his fighting spirit up front.

With Ronaldo back in the squad to face Arsenal, Lopez Caro must choose whether to use Cassano or the Brazilian, though he could opt to play both as they seek to turn around the tie.

Julio Baptista, Robinho and Raul are also available, while combative midfielder Thomas Gravesen should get the nod over the more creative Guti to shackle Arsenal's quick-breaking forwards.

Zinedine Zidane looks to have recovered from a bruised thigh and should line up on the left, with David Beckham on the right.

Brazilian forward Baptista, who Arsenal wanted to sign in the close season, said the victory over Atletico would give Real renewed confidence.

"We needed the win to calm everyone's nerves," he said. "Although we know it will be difficult we are now going to win in London. We are heading there with our spirits high."

Real lost their last game on English soil 4-3 to Manchester United in 2003, but won the tie 6-5 on aggregate.

Ronaldo hit a hat-trick and was given a standing ovation by the Old Trafford crowd. Beckham, who scored twice for United in his last European game before moving to the Bernabeu, makes his first return to England in Real Madrid colours.

Rijkaard calls for peace

UEFA CHAMPS LEAGUE

AFP, *Barcelona*

Barcelona coach Frank Rijkaard called for a truce Monday ahead of his sides Champions League showdown with Chelsea after opposite number Jose Mourinho met a barrage of insults on arrival.

"I saw people on television insulting Mourinho," said Rijkaard, saying he hoped Barca supporters would react in "exemplary sporting fashion" when the teams step out for a match which Chelsea embark upon 2-1 down from the home leg.

"We've got to improve this aspect of football. When one of our players is insulted we get behind him," he added, referring to Mourinho's allegations of diving against Barca star Leo Messi, whose tangling with Blues' defender Asier del Horno in the first match saw the latter red-carded.

"It's up to us to show an example of sporting behaviour," said Rijkaard, saying Messi was unfazed by the whole fuss.

"Mourinho has achieved a lot as a coach and you've got to respect that.

"He also had a spell here (as assistant to former Barca coach Bobby Robson in the mid-1990s). He lived here, he has many friends here.

"I hope the fans will respect him, not insult him."

"I truly hope we can leave these things behind and see a wonderful game of football between two very strong teams.

The Del Horno affair followed last year's sending off of Chelsea's Ivorian forward Didier Drogba in a first leg meeting at the Nou Camp which Barca won 2-1 after initially going a goal down.

FRANK RIJKAARD

Chelsea ultimately advanced after a 4-2 win in the return but ill-feeling lingered amid an allegation by Mourinho that Rijkaard had gone to chat to Swedish referee Anders Frisk in the interval of the first game.

Frisk quit the game thereafter on receiving death threats from some Chelsea fans and Mourinho has hardly been flavour of the month in the Catalan metropolis since.

"I would like to separate two things - one sporting and the other humanity. We want to demonstrate to the world that we think differently, we respect opponents and we can applaud them," insisted Rijkaard, twice a European Champion with AC Milan.

With Mourinho having lambasted first-leg referee Terje Hauge for sending off Del Horno, whose initial three-match ban by UEFA has since been cut to a single game, Rijkaard refused to get into a debate on whether Chelsea's coach was trying to put pressure on second leg man in the middle Markus Merk.

"You'll have to ask him that. I think we'll have a good referee," said the Dutchman, groomed as a player at Ajax by Johan Cruyff, whom he hopes to emulate by leading Barca to the European Cup, Cruyff having delivered the trophy to the Catalan club for the only time in 1992.

Rijkaard said he was confident his team would build on their first-leg showing and advance to the quarterfinals, without counting his chickens.

"We still have to play against a very strong team. We have the advantage but we have to play one more game.

"We have the confidence we can do the job.

Klinsmann has a plan!

FIFA WORLD CUP GERMANY 2006

REUTERS, *Berlin*

Problems are piling up on Juergen Klinsmann with less than 100 days to go before the World Cup but the Germany coach is not losing his cool.

"I've got my plan with everything necessary for the World Cup preparations," the former Germany striker said after Franz Beckenbauer scolded him for returning home to California instead of attending a World Cup workshop.

"I was in Germany for three of the last five weeks after the Bundesliga started up after the winter break," the 41-year-old told Tuesday's issue of Bild newspaper.

Beckenbauer, Germany's World Cup organising committee president, said on Monday he was angry and disappointed that Klinsmann was not in Duesseldorf for the two-day meetings to discuss technical issues.

It is not the first time Klinsmann has faced criticism for his decision to keep living in the United States. Since taking the top job in August 2004, he has been commuting between his native Germany and his home in southern California.

However, Klinsmann is under fire for more than just being a long-distance commuter. After Germany's shock 4-1 friendly defeat by Italy last week, several deputies said he should be summoned before a parliamentary committee to explain his training methods.

The three-times world champions have not beaten top class international opposition in a 17-match winless streak since a 1-0 win over England in October 2000 and the local media are now predicting a debacle for the host nation at the World Cup starting on June 9.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS

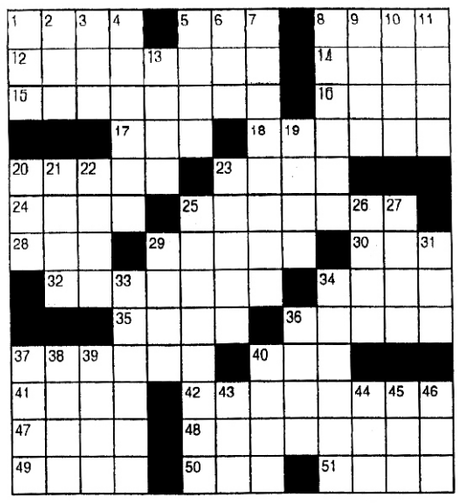
1 Arizona city
5 Emerald, e.g.
8 Campus area
12 Ersatz stain remover
14 Pakistani tongue
15 Labyrinth beast
16 On in years
17 Have a bug
18 "Monopoly" pieces
20 Beatle drummer
23 Use a sponge
24 Hang in the balance
25 Goddess of wisdom
28 Still
29 Expert
30 "— say!"
32 Mosque tower
34 Fence entrance
35 B.P.O.E.
36 Lover of Daphnis
37 Three-card monte decoys
40 Seek restitution
41 Scoundrels
42 Troubadour
47 Hydrox rival
48 Like some parents
49 Reduce a dependence
50 Apprehend
51 Portent

DOWN

1 Roman 1900
2 Yale student
3 Baltimore newspaper
4 Entrained
5 Objective
6 School's URL suffix
7 Strict disciplinarian
8 Friend
9 Incite
10 Mideast gulf
11 Clothing
13 Commotion
19 Admitting clients
20 James Bond, for one
21 Abound
22 Con
23 Henry VIII had six
25 Sharpshooter
26 Test tube
27 Saxophone range
29 Shoppers' mecca
31 Shelter
33 Ozzie or Harriet
34 Isolated area of a city
36 Point
37 Garbage barge
38 Tortoise's opponent
39 Notion
40 Nose-in-the-air sort
43 Mrs. McKinley
44 Edge
45 Prior night
46 Author Deighton

Solution time: 24 mins.

C	H	E	F		S	I	L	O		Y	A	K
L	E	V	I		H	O	A	R		U	R	N
A	M	E	N		A	N	N	E		L	E	I
W	I	N	G		B	A	D		T	E	S	T
			E	B	B		I	C	H			
C	A	R	R	E	Y		S	H	U	T	U	P
A	L	O	N	E			A	M	A	Z	E	
R	E	W	A	R	D		H	O	B	B	I	T
			I	S	O		A	S	S			
C	A	R	L		T	A	M		C	H	A	P
O	V	A		M	A	U	L		R	O	L	E
R	O	T		O	G	R	E		E	P	I	C
E	W	E		B	E	A	T		W	E	E	K



CRYPTOQUIP

J B S W O X U Q J A C I J A T J A Q Z B L U I M U Y U I Z V S U Z I M , P W O V C S W O X U L Z T J A Q Z V U Z Y U W B Z X M L J A U A P U ?

Saturday's Cryptoquip: WHEN A COUPLE HAD LUNCH AT THE AMSTERDAM EATERY, PEOPLE SHOULD ASSUME THEY WENT DUTCH.

Today's Cryptoquip Clue: U equals E

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.