



PHOTO: AFP

Suspended Pakistani paceman Shoaib Akhtar arrives to record his statements in doping cases in Lahore on Saturday.

Murali reaches Trophy apex

PTI, Mumbai

Sri Lankan off spinning ace Muttiah Muralidaran, who took four wickets in the New Zealand innings on Friday in their Group B Champions Trophy league tie, set a new benchmark for the number of wickets taken overall by a bowler in the tournament. Muralidaran, who had 14 wickets off 9 matches before the current edition of the event, secured three wickets in three matches of the qualifying stage and then took four in the two matches in the group stage so far. He now tallied 22 in 14 ties, three more than the West Indian pace bowler Mervyn Dillon's previous mark of 19 from seven matches. The 34-year-old, world's second highest Test wicket taker behind Australian record-holder Shane Warne, spun a web around the New Zealand batsmen and accounted for the wickets of Nathan Astle, Jacob Oram, Brendon McCullum and Kyle Mills as the kiwis folded up for 165 in 49.2 overs.

Ponting praises Pup

CRICINFO, undated

Ricky Ponting, the Australian captain, has praised Michael Clarke for the restraint he showed throughout the incident with Chris Gayle during Wednesday's match between Australia and West Indies in Mumbai. Gayle was later fined 30% of his match fee for a code one breach for failing to "conduct play within the spirit of the game", a decision which Ponting welcomed. "I think it was handled in the right way," Ponting was quoted as saying by Sydney Morning Herald. "If you look at the incidents, Pup (Clarke) nearly needs to be congratulated on the way he handled the whole thing. There's no doubt he had a few words to say but Gayle was the one who was in his personal space and dragging the whole thing out the way he did. Pup handled it brilliantly, and I think it was a pretty fair result to come out of it." The incident happened during Australia's run-chase when Clarke and Adam Gilchrist were involved in a significant partnership. Gayle continually made comments directed at Clarke, and at one stage even conceded four overthrows off his own bowling when a throw at the batsman's end went over the wicketkeeper's head. It was later suggested that Clarke had sparked off the incident when he called Gayle a "second-class citizen", a claim which Clarke denied. "If anyone is second-class it's me, I'm from Liverpool," Clarke, who grew up in the working-class Sydney suburb, said. "I didn't say that -- I wouldn't say that -- and neither did any of my teammates."

Tomas silences

FROM PAGE 20 Five times as a loser," said the Swiss. "That's a great record for me." "I'm really proud of those last two years now. The 80 is not more special than 70 or 90, but it's a great number to reach." Berdych exited the court to a deafening chorus of jeers, with Nadal without a title since lifting his fifth at Roland Garros more than four months ago.

Flemo dreams of WC glory

Cricket REUTERS, Mumbai

Stephen Fleming will surpass Arjuna Ranatunga's captaincy record for most one-day internationals next week and the New Zealand skipper hopes to emulate the former Sri Lankan leader by winning a World Cup. The 33-year-old Fleming, regarded as one of the most astute minds in limited overs cricket, will be leading in his 194th one-day international when he walks out for the toss with Pakistan's Younis Khan in a Champions Trophy Group B match in Mohali on Wednesday. "Certainly as captain you dream of lifting the World Cup. I've been on the job long enough to have a burning ambition," Fleming said. "I am enjoying my captaincy now more than ever. It has been a long time. I can look over a lot of different games, a lot of different captaincy styles I have used. "I can honestly say that I am learning more now within the side, developing myself more. It's an exciting prospect looking forward." Ranatunga inspired dark horses Sri Lanka to glory in the 1996 World Cup in the sub-continent with his innovative leadership and his ability to bat under pressure. Fleming said he would have to do the same if New Zealand were to succeed in the World Cup in the Caribbean in March. "To do that (win the World Cup) I have got to play well. I just have to do my job, that's getting runs. If I do that, my captaincy is better, my decision-making is better and that younger players tend to follow that lead." Free-spirited New Zealand are

David won't back down

Tennis AFP, Madrid

Argentine David Nalbandian defended his controversial outburst at "gentleman" Tim Henman as he set up a semifinal showdown with world No. 1 Roger Federer at the Madrid Masters here on Friday. The fourth seed, who was involved in an ugly slanging match with Henman in their stormy third round encounter, was roundly jeered by the Spanish crowd in a 6-4, 6-7, 7-6 defeat of charismatic Russian Marat Safin in the quarterfinals on Friday. The regal Federer rose above the petty rows, turning in a steady performance to dismiss American Robby Ginepri 6-3, 7-6. But the world number one's progress to the last four was overshadowed by the fall-out from Thursday's clash between Nalbandian and the veteran Briton. The fourth seeded Argentine's 6-2, 2-6, 7-5 win was marred by a war of words over controversial service calls. The muscular Nalbandian characterised the Briton's gentleman image as "rubbish" after Henman refused to give him another first serve on a disputed point. Henman responded: "He questioned my sportsmanship, but if we go down that road there is only going to be one winner." Nalbandian made no apologies Friday for his remarks. "So he's not the sportsman that he looks like or he wants to sell that image," he said.

considered dangerous oppositions because of the exciting approach to the game. They qualified for the semifinals in four World Cups, the last being in 1999 in England. Fleming, who has scored 7,273 runs in one-day cricket and 6,545 runs in tests, said his team has come a long way from being just the dark horses in competitions. "(But) the biggest worry for us is that we have been inconsistent in big tournaments," said the elegant left-hander who led the side to the Champions Trophy title in 2000. "I think we are a side that gets a bit comfortable once it has won a game. Our ambitions have never been dogged by frequent injuries or realistically think we can win tournaments, whereas this team does. "And that places more pressure on us. But it will also bring out a more consistent side. We can only back that up by winning games." New Zealand have been dogged by frequent injuries to premier players, more recently to that of strike bowler Shane Bond and all-rounder Scott Styris. "It has been frustrating because our resources are such that if we lose a major player it is very hard to replace. "Other countries like Australia, India, England have a number of players they can call on. We don't have that luxury, but we are starting to develop it. "We still hurt when we lose a Shane Bonds or a Scott Styris because they have their varied experience and not often do we carry a side that is full of experience as well as it is now. "We are trying very hard to keep them on the field, and looking at the World Cup that's what we need to do." Meanwhile, Fleming hailed

Nalbandian overhauled Federer with a fifth-set comeback to lift the Masters Cup title in Shanghai last November, but the Swiss has beaten the South American twice on clay this season by way of payback. Federer calmly won his 80th match of the season against just five defeats to move into the Nalbandian clash, where the pair are level 6-6 in career meetings. "It's always interesting when we play, we've always had good matches," said the Swiss. "I'm excited to play him again. I hope I can keep the winning record against him." Later Friday, world number two defending champion Rafael Nadal was facing a dangerous quarterfinal against Czech Tomas Berdych, winner of the pair's last two meetings. Chile's Fernando Gonzalez was taking on Serb teenager Novak Djokovic in the last quarterfinal match-up. Against Nalbandian, Safin was denied a match point by the slimmest of margins in the 12th game of the final set as what looked like a screaming pass down the line was shown by the Hawk-eye computer to have been wide by a thread. The setback set off a chorus of jeers from fans, which Nalbandian ignored, winning the game for 6-all to force a tiebreaker against the Spanish-speaking Safin. In the second decider of a long afternoon, the Argentine took the lead in the decider, 4-0. A tiring Safin netted to yield four match points, with Nalbandian converting on the first. Safin ran hot and cold on the day,

ENG-AUSSIE SCOREBOARD

FROM PAGE 17 AUSTRALIA

Australia	10			
Gilchrist b Mahmood	21			
Watson b Anderson	21			
Ponting c Strauss b Mahmood	1			
Martyn c Read b Harmison	78			
Symonds not out	32			
Hussey not out	8			
Extras: (b-4, lb-5, w-6, nb-5)	20			
Total: (For 4 wickets in 36.5 overs)	170			
Did not bat: Clarke, Johnson, Lee, Bracken, McGrath.				
Fall of wickets: 1-30, 2-34, 3-34, 4-152.				
Bowler	O	M	R	W
Anderson	9	2	31	1
Mahmood	10	0	57	2
Harmison	4.5	0	45	1
Yardy	10	1	18	0
Dalrymple	3	0	10	0

Result: Australia won by six wickets.
Man-of-the-match: Damien Martyn
Toss: Australia

ICC shortlists the awardees

CRICINFO, undated

Malcolm Speed, the International Cricket Council (ICC) chief executive, will announce the shortlists for this year's ICC Awards in Mumbai this Sunday. The shortlists for the awards have been compiled by the 56-member voting academy, who were asked to vote for players nominated by a selection panel chaired by Sunil Gavaskar, the former India captain. In addition to the individual awards and the Spirit of Cricket Award, this year's ceremony will also feature the awarding of Test and ODI Teams of the Year. And for the first time, there is an award for Women's Cricketer of the Year. The ceremony -- in its third year -- will take place at the Taj Land's End in Mumbai on November 3. It has previously been held in London (2004) and, last year, in Sydney.

WC warm-up ties changed

AFP, Kingston

Organisers of the 2007 World Cup have altered the warm-up schedule ahead of next year's tournament in the Caribbean. The four teams competing in Group C of warm-up matches have agreed to a change in fixtures to rectify an anomaly in the format. Ireland and Pakistan, who are both drawn in Group D of the tournament's group stage here, will now no longer play each other in a warm-up fixture on March 6 in Trinidad. They will, however, meet in their Group Stage clash at Sabina Park here on March 17, St. Patrick's Day for Irish supporters. "To ensure that these two teams do not therefore meet at the Warm-up stage, two Group C fixtures have been switched," said a spokesman. South Africa will now face Ireland on March 5 while Pakistan plays Canada on March 6 at the Sir Frank Worrell Ground in Trinidad.

Taylor in for Styris

PTI, Mumbai

Hit by injuries to a few of its key players, the New Zealand cricket team has asked rookie all-rounder Ross Taylor to join the squad for its remaining ICC Champions Trophy matches. Taylor will link up with the squad in India ahead of the crunch game against Pakistan at Mohali on October 25 as cover should Styris not shake off a back strain which has flared up once again, the official website of New Zealand Cricket said. Styris missed the team's Group B lung opener against South Africa at the Brabourne Stadium here but played against Sri Lanka in the second match yesterday which the Black Caps lost by seven wickets. However, he made only three runs and did not bowl in the match. Another key component of the team, fast bowler Shane Bond also skipped the opener because of a stiff back, but like Styris, played against the Lankans. Seamer Mark Gillespie is also recovering from an upset stomach. New Zealand team's General Manager, Lindsay Crocker, said tournament rules meant Taylor would only be added to the squad if and when Styris was sent home.

Tension sky

FROM PAGE 20 way. We want to do our normal job and take nothing for granted. We will race hard and react accordingly should the circumstances of the race demand it." As far as Schumacher is concerned, there is no doubt that he will be giving his all from the start of qualifying tomorrow afternoon. He may be the oldest competitor on the starting grid, but he is still the most focused and continues to attract unqualified respect from even his fiercest competitors. "Make no mistake, Michael will be racing flat out as usual," said Bell. "His hallmark trait is that he never gives up, and that is why he has been testing at Jerez since Japan. And he has an extra reason to be going flat out at Interlagos. This will be the last race of his career and I am sure he is determined to go out on a high." Alonso believes his victory in last year's championship has helped him cope with the pressure of repeating the success this season. "I know how to find the right effort, the right motivation," he said. "I remember how I enjoyed last year, the feeling of winning and how to repeat that, how to defend the No1 on my car, to do the best for the sport and the team. The experience you have in one important year, like you have with your first championship, you never forget it and you are able to use it for the rest of your career."

Captains hail gluepot



AFP, Mumbai

Rivals Sri Lanka and New Zealand noded their approval of the artificial methods used to bind the dusty wicket for their Champions Trophy clash here on Friday. The International Cricket Council's pitch consultant Andy Atkinson sprayed the pitch at the Brabourne stadium with a glue, Polyvinyl Acetate, before the start of the match to keep it firm for 100 overs. The pitch, that turned from brown to white after the spray, had been criticised over the last week for breaking up in the second innings, causing a string of low scores. The sequence of bowler-dominated matches continued despite Atkinson's unusual methods as Sri Lanka bowled out the Black Caps for 165 and then won by seven wickets, but both captains were pleased with the wicket. "There was a bit of sideways movement early on with the glue in the pitch, but certainly not enough to suggest that we should've been bowled out for 165," said New Zealand skipper Stephen Fleming. "It settled down pretty quickly

and held together well till the end. So I guess in terms of the experiment with the glue it worked." Sri Lankan skipper Mahela Jayawardene added: "It held up pretty well." "Early on it skidded through a bit more," he said. "Towards the end it did spin, but it wasn't nasty turn. The ball wasn't jumping and it wasn't dangerous." "As long as you can play spin properly it was much easier to bat on." With no more matches to be played at the Brabourne stadium till the final on November 5, Atkinson and his team have 16 days to prepare a good wicket for the title clash. "The pitch for the final will be much better than now," said the portly Englishman. "Maybe, I won't need to use the glue any more." The win on Friday kept Sri Lanka alive in the eight-nation tournament after their opening loss to Pakistan in Jaipur on Tuesday. Both Sri Lanka and New Zealand have one win each from two matches. Pakistan have played one game while South Africa lost their opening match to New Zealand. World champions Australia, West Indies, England and hosts India are in group A. Prolific off-spinner Muttiah Muralidaran starred in Sri Lanka's impressive win, finishing with 4-23 on a helpful track.

Young opener Upul Tharanga (56) and captain Jayawardene (48) built on the advantage with a 89-run stand for the second wicket. Both batsmen fell in four deliveries from spinner Jeetan Patel, but Kumar Sangakkara and former skipper Marvan Atapattu guided Sri Lanka home in the 36th over. "We perhaps three to four overs more than we should have to reach the target," said Jayawardene. "But in the end our net run rate should be in a decent situation." "But if we can play well and beat South Africa we won't have to think about net run rates that much." Sri Lanka take on South Africa in their last league match in Ahmedabad on Tuesday. New Zealand clash with Pakistan a day later in Mohali. "Every match is big," said Fleming. "Teams are beating each other so the groups are very even. It's going to come down to a must-win situation and that's okay because that's the nature of the tournament anyway."

Russians oust Swiss

Tennis AFP, Zurich

Svetlana Kuznetsova earned a 6-1, 1-6, 6-3 victory over Switzerland's Martina Hingis to reach the semifinals of the Zurich Open on Friday. The Russian joined compatriot and US Open champion Maria Sharapova, who ended the run of Swiss qualifier Timea Bacsinszky 6-4, 6-3, in the last four. Sharapova will now face unseeded Katarina Srebotnik after the Slovenian defeated Maria Kirilenko of Russia 6-3, 6-2 while third-seeded Kuznetsova will play Daniela Hantuchova of Slovakia, who received a walkover when top seed Amelia Mauresmo pulled out with a shoulder strain. Kuznetsova, who has won more matches than any other player this season, was in unstoppable form in the opening set. Her powerful baseline play offered Hingis little chance to settle, and breaks at 2-1 and 4-1 gave her

the set. But things went into reverse in the second, as she lost some of her momentum and Hingis hit the lines and offered up a brace of aces. In the final set, a single break for 2-0 was enough to settle the outcome. "I was helpless a little bit after the first set. It was just too good," said Hingis. "She was hitting corners and there wasn't much I could do. I played such a great second set, and in the third it's a pity that I didn't hold serve in the second game. "I had so many opportunities on her serve, like 30-15 here and there, but I haven't played such a good match in a long time. It was good to have one like that." After taking over two hours to overcome Sahar Peer on Thursday, second-seeded Sharapova looked far more comfortable against an enthusiastic opponent who rallied well with the Russian but had no real weapons to trouble her. Sharapova made an ideal start

by breaking for 1-0, and Bacsinszky had to fight off another break point in the third game before holding with an ace. Bacsinszky continued to serve well, eventually earning five aces, but she lacked consistency and also produced five double-faults. Sharapova was unable to convert three set points on Bacsinszky's serve at 5-3, but easily served out the first set before breaking again to start the second. But the Russian received more of a challenge from then on, as her opponent held two break points to level at 1-1 before Sharapova raised her level and held with a pair of aces. Sharapova then broke again to lead 4-1, but gave up her own serve



PHOTO: AFP

Russian starlet Maria Sharapova pumps her fists after winning a point during her quarterfinal match against Timea Bacsinszky of Switzerland in the Zurich Open in Zurich on Friday.

Both plead innocence

FROM PAGE 17 will give fair chance to both the players and then submit our report to the PCB," Hamid said earlier. Hamid said both players were briefed about the procedure of the case. "Both Akhtar and Asif have been told about the procedure of the doping matters and have also been advised that if they want they can also bring their lawyers in the next hearing," said Hamid. Under International Cricket Council doping rules, the penalty for a first doping offence is a two-year ban. However, the PCB said it would take its own decision since the tests were conducted internally. Both Akhtar and Asif have pleaded their innocence, saying they have not deliberately taken any banned substance. The PCB said that if both the players demand tests on their B samples, they would be given the opportunity once the tribunal work is

over. Nasim Ashraf, the PCB chairman, told reporters that the board would implement the recommendations of the tribunal and would make the outcome public. "We will not be taking any popular decision under pressure from anyone. We will take a correct decision. The World Cup is important for us but more important is the image of the country. We will act impartially and fairly," Ashraf said. He, however, made it clear that the players would be given a fair chance to defend themselves. "A thorough independent investigation is being carried out. They have been accused of testing positive but we don't know if they took it inadvertently or intentionally." The PCB chief said the board had fulfilled its first responsibility by immediately calling back the players and making public the A sample reports.

Inzi not

FROM PAGE 17 Younis Khan to take back the captaincy for the Champions Trophy in India just a day after he had relinquished it, Ashraf said he kept the team's interest in mind. "Younis is a naturally gifted leader and he can lift the team on the field. We were already missing Inzamam, who is a pillar of strength in our batting and I didn't want the team in disarray in the tournament. "I consider Inzamam as a batsman in the same class or perhaps better than Sachin Tendulkar and Brian Lara but he has not got the same attention in the media as them," Ashraf said.

Carlos predicts

FROM PAGE 20 Finally, as to the mooted arrival of 18 year-old Marcelo, recently called up to supplant the veteran in Dunga's new model selecao, Roberto Carlos was diplomatic. "He's a great young player, but if I talk about him then it'd be a lack of respect towards Raul Bravo and I don't want to do that," he concluded.

Adriano sent

FROM PAGE 20 back to full fitness, it's believed the time has come to let Adriano leave and recuperate without the extra pressure of a match situation every three days. Others consider this a prelude to a January transfer, as L'Imperatore is visibly unhappy at the San Siro and could no longer be considered indispensable for the side.

Fergie sets

FROM PAGE 20 "But this is our second really big game of the season and we have to do better than we did in the last one against Arsenal. It is far too early to say we are going to win certain competitions, but at the moment things are looking very positive and we must continue that by beating Liverpool."

'There shouldn't

FROM PAGE 17 prayers regularly but he had told Inzamam that Islam does not allow the imposition of views on others. "I have told him clearly that there should be no pressure on players who don't pray regularly or any compulsion on them to do it under pressure," he said. "I have told him there should be no perception among players that if they don't pray they will not be in the team." "He has assured me there is no pressure on anyone to do anything they don't want to do. I have also told him players should get proper rest for their cricket," Ashraf added.