



## How many ducks will Donald get?

Breaking Boundaries.



MORE THAN YOU THOUGHT POSSIBLE



The England team celebrate the fall of Lankan batsman Marvan Atapattu.

— AFP photo

## SA v India: Stop Sachin Mission

HOVE, England, May 14: World Cup favourites South Africa will target master batsman Sachin Tendulkar when they take on India in their first match here on Saturday, reports AFP.

Hansie Cronje's men have closely analysed Tendulkar's batting, knowing how much India rely on the 26-year-old to launch their innings.

"In the first game of the World Cup everyone is nervous," South Africa coach Bob Woolmer said. "Hopefully Sachin will be nervous facing Shaun Pollock, Jacques Kallis or whoever else opens the bowling."

Cronje would not reveal whether strike bowler Allan

Donald would open the bowling to try to get Tendulkar early or come on as first change, as he

who can take it away from you," he said.

The Indians, meanwhile,



Seize the moment, AKTEL it.

has done in recent seasons.

But he said people should not forget that group A rivals India were more than a one-man team.

"People focus a lot on Sachin because he is a very fine player, but India have a lot of players

confirmed that Tendulkar would open the innings but with orders to try and play through the 50 overs instead of attacking in the first 15 overs.

"He will look at batting out the overs," coach Anshuman Gaekwad said. "If he plays 50

overs, we are bound to get a big score."

Gaekwad indicated that the tactic of reining in Tendulkar was devised specifically for the South African match but that it could, if successful, be used again.

Tendulkar, already considered one of cricket's all-time greats, has scored more one-day centuries (21) than any other player in history. His tally of 523 runs in the last World Cup at an average of 87.16 has never been bettered.

Cronje, whose team enjoys a 80 per cent success rate in limited-over games this season, dismissed the idea that his team were over-confident. See page 14

## Unceremonious kick-off

From Dr. Nizamuddin at Lord's

If the world was waiting for a Jayasuriya blast at the Lords on Friday, it never happened. The crackers of the short and simple opening ceremony provided the only bang. Barring the giant flags and the controlled detonation, there was no fanfare at this world event. Conspicuous by their absence was the ten other teams that were not playing on the opening day. For many, the lackluster ceremony was over before they could find their seats.

Not all Bangladeshi journalists were lucky to get a place in the new spaceship of a press box. Most were accommodated at the Old Press Box opposite the big bubble.

Other unorthodox tools at the Lords included the pitch-cover designed in lines of the hovercraft. But a cricket match in England will always remain under threat of delay, postponement or washout unless some whiz kid comes up with an

invention to stop the rain during playing hours.

The match began on a somber note with the weather threatening all the while. It was difficult to determine whether the gloomy start was due to the unpredictability of the infamous English weather or the anxiety of the local supporters as they braced themselves to face the champions.

Although rain had its way after only 22 minutes of play, the English had a lot to smile about and who knows, perhaps the other Group B teams too, when the islanders were struggling soon after resumption of play. The English lion roared each time a wicket fell and that was the only noise that the match induced. The crowd at the Lords is almost clinical.

There are no band parties here, nor the hullabaloo of the ecstatic spectators that can lift even the most boring of matches in the subcontinent.

## Indifferent media

From Dr Nizamuddin Ahmed

LONDON, May 14: Not a single major daily in the English capital were enthusiastic enough to carry the World Cup story on its front page the day the last cricket carnival of the century got underway at the game's elysium — Lord's. The day began just as another for most commuters who stuck their head into more relevant matters such as Ginola's record signing and Graham's challenge to United. Yup! In spite of the cricket World Cup, cricket could only take over half the sport stories in most dailies.

Already England's game against not other than tournament favourites South Africa on May 22 is threatened by the FA Cup final.

The apathy of the game's founders to the game could be summed up from the comment of the ticket master at Woodford underground station, Northeast of London. On failing to tell this journalist which tube station would be nearest to Lord's — Marylebone or Baker Street — he excused himself by saying, "I am not that much interested in cricket." And, would you believe it — they were hosting the cricket World Cup. His deficiency is as grave as would be of a shopkeeper in Badda who would not know where Dhaka Stadium was.

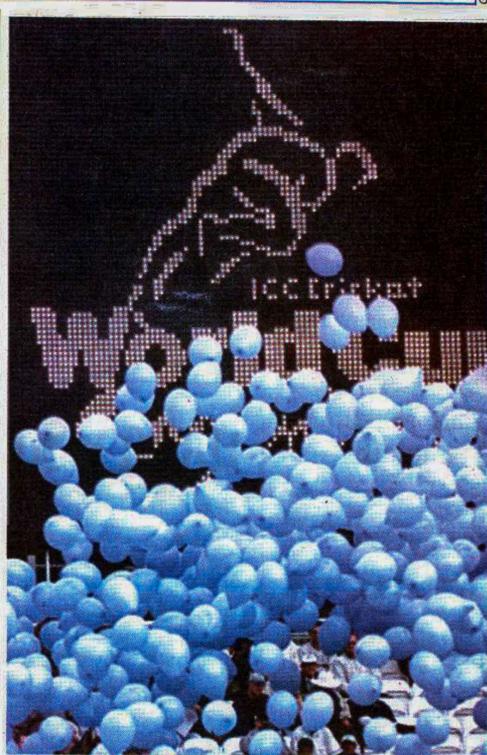
Unlike Hair, however, you have got to give the guy the benefit of doubt. For truly, history has been reversed. The game of

the Lords lives today only because of the fanaticism generated by the game's true believers in the subcontinent.

Magazine racks in bookshops are still dominated by football, golf, rugby and what not? There in the nasty competitive market of the mass media, cricket survives in England because of the loyalty of The Wisden and The Cricketer — a case of survival one could say. They colourful specials of the two loyalists would be the only contestants against the ebullience of the press in Bangladesh.

On the morning of the England-Sri Lanka match, dubbed by some as Muralitharan's Test of patience should any hostile English supporter emulate the poor taste of the Australian crowd, the sky was overcast from early morning. But to keep Sri Lankan supporters interested, the sun did appear as the early birds gathered at the gate of Lord's. There was a bit of drizzle later, but as the officials hustled and bustled in time for the opening ceremony, the weather looked as English as it could get — overcast with the sun trying its utmost to smile on the few that have braved the Friday morning chill.

The indoor wicket at the Lord's has been converted into the working area for journalists when they are not sitting atop the Press Box, as we call it back See page 14



THE CARNIVAL HAS BEGUN: Coloured balloons take to the sky during the opening ceremony of the seventh cricket World Cup at the Lord's yesterday. — AFP photo

## Azzu's date with destiny

LONDON, May 14 (AFP): Mohammad Azharuddin's roller-coaster career is set to take another sharp turn when he leads India out against World Cup favourites South Africa at Hove on Saturday.

With growing rumblings back home that India should have a more attacking and extrovert captain, nothing short of a victory will satisfy the fanatical fans — and the selectors.

If Azharuddin is unable to match his predecessor Kapil Dev's 1983 title triumph, India will almost certainly have a new captain after the World Cup.

It could even be the end of his

international playing career for the gifted 36-year-old if he fails to get among the runs.

For someone who has played more one-day internationals (315) and scored more runs (8,949) than any player in history, Azharuddin is remarkably unpopular in his own country.

He is India's most successful captain, yet few regard him as a shrewd strategist. He is fit and athletic and still the critics cite his age as a reason to get him out.

"You can never make everyone happy," Azharuddin said as he prepared for the biggest assignment of his life. See page 14

### BITS & PIECES



NEW DELHI, May 14 (AFP): The cricket World Cup will give India a well-earned respite from the trials and tribulations of political turmoil, volatile stock markets and stifling heat, the media said Friday.

"Stock quotations, snakes and ladders politics, the relentless heat wave will cease to be the stuff of passionate parleys," the Indian Express said in its editorial "Bowled over."

For the next six weeks the sole topic of daily conversation will be the cup, the players and the unpredictable British weather.

"It will be Sachin Tendulkar's magic bat and his aching back, the grey clouds and the mystifying Duckworth and Lewis rain formula, Shoaib Akhtar's dubious action and Share Warne's lean patch, South Africa's uncanny choke trick and the super-six wannabes," the Indian Express said.

### Bollywood earnings at stake

BOMBAY, May 14 (AFP): India's film industry is bracing for a plunge in box-office taking over the next month, as people forsake their regular diet of See page 14



ROMESH ON RAMPAGE: Romesh Kaluwitharana, the free-stroking Sri Lankan batsman, mis-hitting during his fine half century yesterday. — AFP photo

## Rhodes ready to roll

LONDON, May 14 (AFP): World Cup favourites South Africa were relieved hearing Jonty Rhodes confirmed that he was back at his best — or at least "99.9 per cent" of the way there.

Rhodes, the world's best fielder and the team's talisman, has been struggling with a wrist tendon injury but took the field for the team's final practice match on Tuesday, coming through unscathed.

"I had no problems. I am 99.9 per cent right," he said.

South African captain Hansie Cronje said the warm-up to the tournament, which opens on Friday with England's match against defending champions Sri Lanka, had gone to plan.

"Its gone pretty well," he said as the team set off for a round of golf on their way to Hove, where they will play their opening group A match against India on Saturday.

Cronje said South Africa were not frightened of being cast as tournament favourites but warned: "We are not even

thinking of winning the World Cup at this stage.

"We are concentrating on our matches against India, Sri



Lanka and England. Our first priority is to make sure we qualify for the Super Six second round.



### SL-ENG SCOREBOARD

Scorecard of the Sri Lankan innings against England in the inaugural match of the World Cup '99 at Lord's on Friday:

SRI LANKA:	R	B	4	6
St Jayasuriya c Hick b Mullally	29	52	4	0
RS Mahanama c Hick b Mullally	16	30	2	0
MS Atapattu c Thorpe b Austin	3	9	0	0
HP Tillakaratne c Stewart b Ealham	0	12	0	0
PA de Silva c Thorpe b Mullally	0	6	0	0
A Ranatunga c Hussain b Ealham	32	42	1	1
RS Kaluwitharana c Stewart b Mullally	57	66	7	0
WPUJC Vaas not out	12	27	1	0
KEA Upashantha c Thorpe b Holloake	11	25	1	0
GP Wickramasinghe c Stewart b Austin	11	18	1	0
M Muralitharan b Gough	12	8	2	0
Extras: (lb-9, w-9, nb-3)	21			
Total: (All out in 48.4 overs)	204			

Fall of wkts: 1-42 (Mahanama, 10.6 ov); 2-50 (Atapattu, 13.2 ov); 3-63 (Jayasuriya, 16.5 ov); 4-63 (Tillakaratne, 17.1 ov); 5-65 (de Silva, 18.5 ov); 6-149 (Ranatunga, 33.6 ov); 7-155 (Kaluwitharana, 36.5 ov); 8-174 (Upashantha, 43.5 ov); 9-190 (Wickramasinghe, 47.2 ov).

Bowler	O	M	R	W
Gough	8.4	-	50	1 (1 nb, 1b)
Austin	9	1	25	2 (5w)
Mullally	10	1	37	4 (1 nb, 1w)
Ealham	10	0	31	2
Flintoff	2	0	12	0
Hick	3	0	19	0 (1 w)
Holloake	6	0	21	1

ENGLAND TEAM  
+ AJ Stewart, N Hussain, GA Hick, GP Thorpe, NH Fairbrother, A Flintoff, AJ Holloake, MA Ealham, ID Austin, D Gough, AD Mullally.  
Umpires: RE Koertzen (SA) and S Venkataraghavan (Ind)  
TV Umpire: DL Orchard (SA)  
Match Referee: CW Smith (WI)