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Pakistan fans enjoying themselves at Durham yesterday.

—AFP photo

BCB plans big

From Nizamuddin Ahmed in London

May 20: The Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) has drawn up a long-term scheme as part of its development programme for the game countrywide.

Its five-year master plan includes recruitment of a foreign coach—most probably a new one—for the under-19 level and a permanent physiotherapist, initiation of a longer version domestic circuit and building up of six regional indoor practice centres.

This was disclosed by the BCB president, Saber Hossain Chowdhury, in an exclusive interview here with The Daily Star Sport.

With the looming prospect of the present coach Gordon Greenidge not returning to Dhaka after the World Cup, BCB would be looking to employ a foreign coach, "not for the national team, but for younger players", said the BCB boss, who is flying to Dublin today to see Bangladesh play the West Indies tomorrow.

He lodged with the team at their Essex hide-out, the Brentwood Forte Posthouse, on the eve of the New Zealand match, "but I did not get any room in the team's Dublin hotel; I have booked one next to theirs," he said.

Appreciating the competence and the impact of the Bangladesh physio Allan Hunt, who was likely to join the full Australian side soon, the BCB president said, "Our experience has convinced us that we need a proficient physio on a full-time basis."

Elaborating the regional scheme that is programmed along divisional lines, the president said, "We have already appointed five Regional Development Officers for cricket and we have received applications for the sixth, who will be appointed soon. The six regional cricket associations will each have an indoor facility for training round the year."

The BKSP (at Savar) will be

the centre of excellence for the best boys from the whole country," Chowdhury spelt out.

Responding to the query, after the World Cup what?, the head of the 32-member cricket board said, "We have to take a hard look at the whole thing. There should be no assumptions. It has to be a whole new exercise."

"New players will have to come through. In all probability this would be the last World Cup for several of our players, four to five of them, who are around their thirties. At this level of competition, one cannot expect to last that long."

He continued on a positive note, "We have some good young players. They are good material for the future. Some of them are already in the team. There is already a nucleus of young players around which the team can develop."

About its bid for the Test status, the president confided that he was yet to see the ICC technical committee's report on Bangladesh, but his "gut feeling" was that the international body will insist on continuing the three-day and longer version matches, which have already been introduced this season, for (at least) another year in the domestic tournaments.

Agreeing that a few good results by the national side would help Bangladesh's Test cause, he explained that, "It is not that we have to only win matches. If we can give some of them a good run for their money, that would also go down positively."

The BCB president expects that one or two changes are likely in the team to meet the West Indies tomorrow at Dublin. One specialist batsman may be included.

"At this level of competition, we do not expect to bowl out a side. So we will be trying to score as many runs as possible," he said with the faculty of a cricket pundit.

Hail Henry

LEICESTER, England, May 20 (Reuters/AP): Zimbabwe paceman Henry Olonga is a singing, dancing cricketer who prays to God that he will knock over his opponents' stumps.

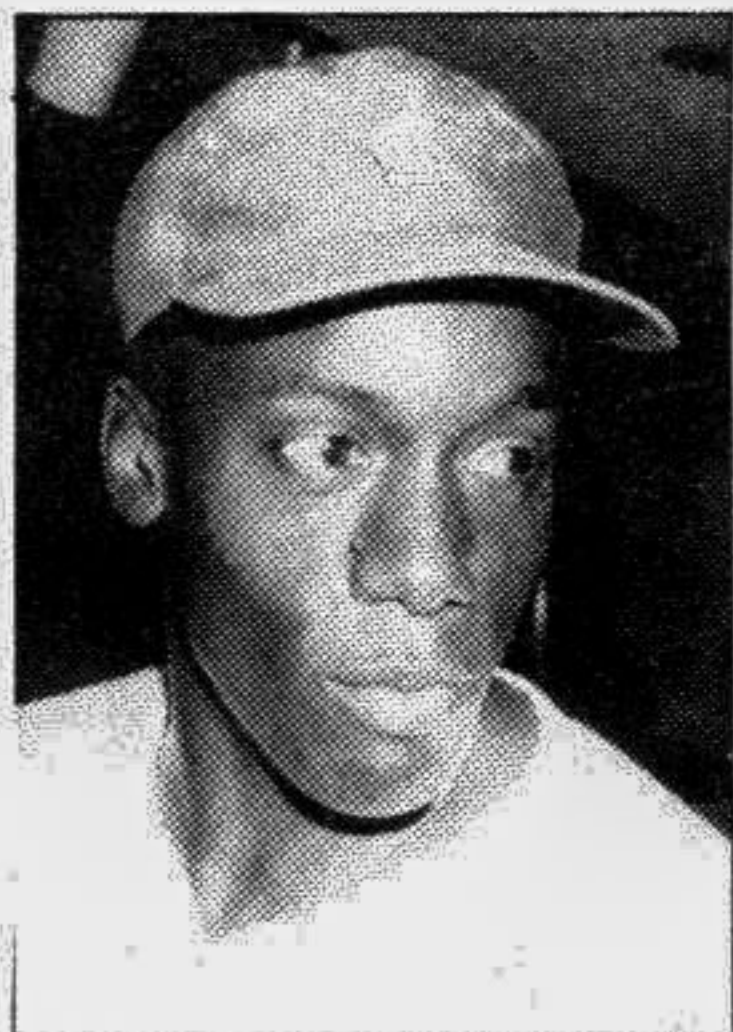
Olonga was responsible for the most thrilling climax of the World Cup so far when he skittled out the Indian tail in one over on Wednesday.

"I believe in God and I prayed to God yesterday. It was all feeling just right," said Olonga whose three-wicket burst in five balls sealed Zimbabwe's surprise three-run win.

Commenting on his performance, he mused: "I thought had a date with destiny. This was my chance to make history."

"I don't build any pressure on myself and this helps me in situations other find tense," said Olonga.

Zimbabwe's first black cricket international, Olonga has come a long way from the chucking allegations that marred his Test debut four years ago to become his nation's



latest cricketing star.

The 22-year-old right arm fast bowler, the first of Zimbabwe's four black cricketers to make the international grade, knows his performances could attract more black youngsters to the game.

"Oh yeah, there sure is a lot

of focus on us (the black players)," said Olonga who had to totally change his action after being called for throwing in a 1995 test against Pakistan.

"Zimbabwe's got a small pool of players... I wish the World Cup will evoke more interest among young boys," he said.

The Zambia-born Olonga was tipped for stardom as a sprinter but preferred cricket. Being a model for young boys has taken Olonga a long way away from his aspiration of becoming an actor and a singer.

He recently turned down a career on the stage but says he might yet tread the boards professionally.

"I had an option to go to London to attend an acting and singing academy but I'm sticking with cricket for the moment," said the bowler whose clearly enunciated English contrasts with the monosyllabic utterances of many sportsmen.

For decades, Zimbabwe had an all-white team and the black-majority nation showed

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Ireland hopes for a booster

DUBLIN, May 20: Irish cricketers are hoping the historic World Cup match between the West Indies and Bangladesh here on Friday will boost the popularity of the game in the country, reports AFP.

All 3,500 tickets for the first major cricket international to be played on Irish soil, at the Clontarf club on the north side of the Republic's capital, have been sold out for weeks.

"There is incredible interest in the match. Cricket is still very much a minority sport but there are huge efforts to change that," said Clontarf club official John Behan.

There are about a dozen clubs in the Dublin area and it is a nice community. The local cricket match on a Saturday afternoon would get about 50 spectators.

"It is a pleasant day out for them and very much a social thing. They sit on the deckchairs and chat and then have a few jars in the bar afterwards."

The national cricket team just missed out on the tournament, finishing just behind Scotland in the qualifying tournament.

In recent years, the likes of South Africa's Hansie Cronje and Steve Waugh of Australia have played there in an attempt to boost the game.

Like the rugby union side, the cricket team is selected on an all-Ireland basis, from clubs on either side of the border which separates the Republic from the British province of Northern Ireland.

"It is going really well. Membership is definitely on the way up with a lot more people involved. The old image is changing and there is a rapidly growing interest now."

"In Leinster we have 14 senior clubs and 16 junior clubs and six categories of very strong leagues for girls and boys in the schools from under-9 upwards."

"The international team has improved a lot and would play eight to twelve fixtures a year, with about half here and half in England."

O'Rourke said there was very little cricket played in the west of Ireland province of Connacht but there are at least six clubs in Munster province in the south of the Republic.

His son immediately flew home to Bombay, missing India's match against Zimbabwe. Three runs, leaving their World Cup hopes seriously jeopardised.

Tendulkar is expected to rejoin India's World Cup team after their Group A match against Kenya on Sunday an official said.

"If I am not wrong he may miss the next match against Kenya and go after that. He would like to go. His father would have liked him to go," said Ajit Wadekar, chairman of India's board of selectors.

A team official in England said they had received no news

of the British introduced cricket to Ireland in the nineteenth century and most clubs are in Northern Ireland or in the Leinster province in the east of the Republic.

In the past, cricket outside Dublin has been associated with former British army barracks towns. Most of the schools that played it would have been fee-paying and Protestant and it had an exclusive image.

The Leinster Cricket Union appointed Brian O'Rourke as full-time development officer last year.

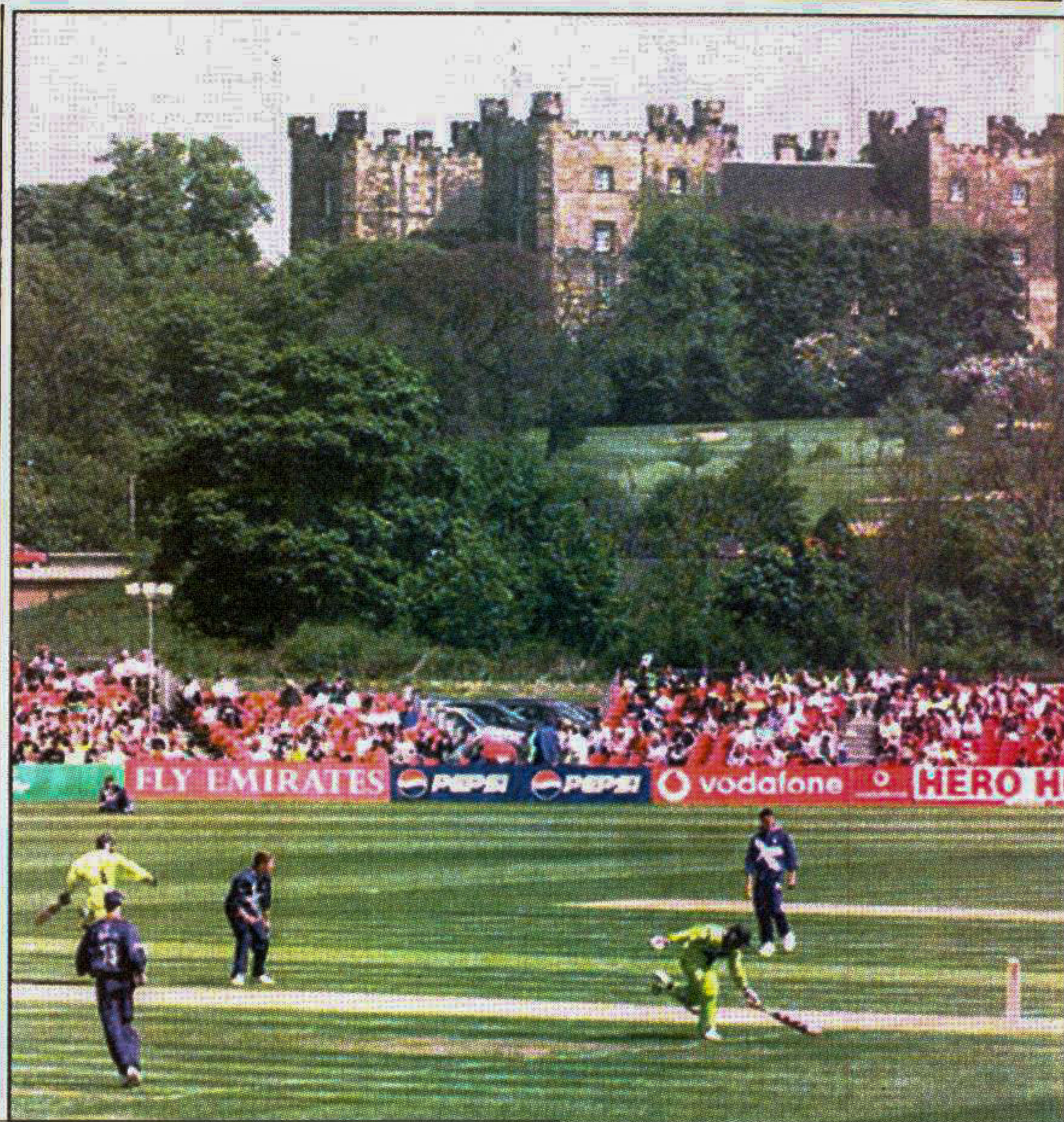
To widen interest in the sport he has been concentrating on young children in primary schools and the largely Roman Catholic schools that had exclusively played Gaelic football and hurling, Ireland's national sports.

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The Pakistan-Scotland match in progress at the beautiful setting of Durham. —AFP photo

Indians face media music

NEW DELHI, May 20: The Indian press on Thursday severely condemned the national cricket team after it slumped to a three-run defeat to Zimbabwe at the World Cup in Britain, reports AFP.

"Appalling display by India," shrieked The Hindu newspaper, which berated the team for bringing "heaps of humiliation upon themselves" by throwing away a match they could easily have won.

While admitting that the absence of star batsman Sachin Tendulkar -- home in Bombay following the death of his father -- was a heavy blow, commentators gave no mercy in their verdict of the Indian team.

"India made a hash of things the way only they can," said The Indian Express.

"In every aspect of the game -- batting, bowling, fielding, captaincy -- they were outplayed by a team with seemingly nothing other than the will to win."

Mohammad Azharuddin's

side, chasing Zimbabwe's 252 for nine, were dismissed for 249 with six balls to go.

It was their second consecutive defeat.

They must now win their last three games, against Kenya, Sri Lanka and England, to have any chance of reaching the second round.

Wicket-keeper Nayan Mongia seemed to have saved his team with 28 off 24 balls but when he was bowled by Guy Whittall, to make the score 217 for seven with five overs remaining, India suddenly caved in. Their last three wickets fell for three runs.

"Spineless India snatch defeat from the jaws of victory," ran the headline in The Hindustan Times, which highlighted the 51 extras given away by the India bowlers.

Indian spin-bowling legend Bishan Bedi described the extras total as "diabolically criminal."

The Times of India rued what it called a "truly ap-

palling" performance, describing the team's work in the field as "unacceptable, unbelievable and unprofessional."

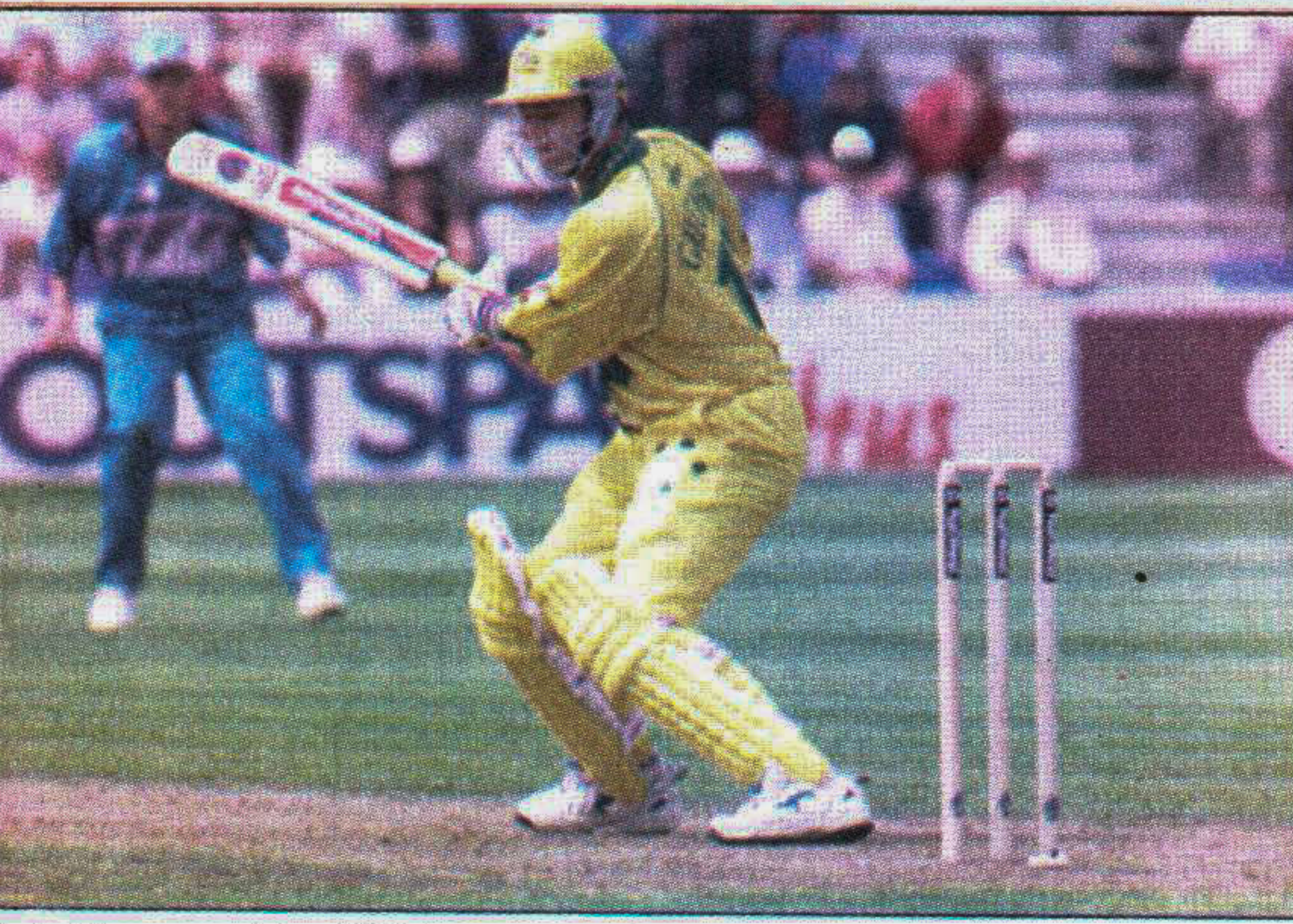
India's dismal start to the tournament in Britain has cast a pall of gloom over this cricket-crazed country of more than 975 million people.

Expectations for the 1999 World Cup campaign were almost impossibly high, partly as a result of the relentless media build up to the finals, which had excitement levels running at fever pitch a good month before the tournament even began.

There were heartfelt condolences in the press for Sachin Tendulkar over the loss of his father, but the underlying message was clear.

"There's high hope in the Indian camp that Sachin will return for the final league matches," said the Indian Express.

"He should. His colleagues can't find their way without him!"



Australian opener Adam Gilchrist square cuts against New Zealand yesterday. —AFP photo

Cronje plays controversy cool

NORTHAMPTON, England, May 20: South African captain Hansie Cronje refused to be drawn into controversial umpiring Wednesday that marred his team's 89-run win over Sri Lanka, saying the television evidence was enough to ascertain the truth, reports AP.

Two contentious umpiring decisions rocked South Africa's batting before outstanding bowling enabled them to rout Sri Lanka in their second game of the World Cup Group A.

All-rounder Shaun Pollock was adjudged caught by television umpire Ken Palmer, who also judged on an uncertain catch on the boundary that dismissed Daryll Cullinan just when South Africa looked like recovering from a batting slump.

Pollock drove Muttiah Muralitharan and the ball deflected to the spinner off the ankle of Ranatunga, fielding at silly point.

Steve Dunne referred to Palmer as the Sri Lankans claimed the catch.

After at least seven minutes and a dozen replays showing the ball hitting the turf before bouncing off Ranatunga, Palmer gave Pollock out.

"It isn't as though those two decisions effected our batting," skipper Hansie Cronje later told reporters. "We got ourselves into trouble. We are not going to use those as excuses."

"The evidence is there on television. I'll leave it up to you guys to make a decision. We can't get involved in that and we'd rather not," he said.

Cronje said the most important thing was to keep calm and stay focused on the job at hand rather than being upset about it.

"It is very important that we remain calm. That's the way you win games. What's happened in the past is history. We have to stay focussed and try and win," he said.

South Africa, unbeaten after two matches, take the other unbeaten team, England, on Saturday at the Oval.

"Both teams will be vying for psychological points in that match," said coach Bob Woolmer. "It is an important



game for both teams and every point will count.

Cronje complimented his bowlers for reducing the much vaunted Sri Lankan batting lineup to 31 for five while defending a meagre 199 runs and dismissed them for 110 runs.

"A captain always looks good when his bowlers bowl the way they did today," Cronje said.

South Africa also fought back against India at Hove to defeat it.

"Ever since I can remember, it has always been 'never say die' in the South African camp. It is not only in cricket. It goes to all walks of life," Cronje said.

Smith sees England as champs

LONDON, May 18 (Internet report): Robin Smith has backed England to win the World Cup after their stunning start to the competition.

The former England star believes Alec Stewart's team has the qualities to lift the trophy for the first time.

"England are on home territory and are in the dominant position," he said. "You need some luck to win the World Cup and England have never seemed to have it at important times before, so maybe it is our year." Smith believes that despite South Africa being rated

Sachin's father cremated

BOMBAY, May 20 (AFP/Reuters): Indian cricket star Sachin Tendulkar today attended the funeral here of his father, whose death forced the batsman to return home from the World Cup in Britain.

Remesh Tendulkar, 66, who died of heart attack on Tuesday, was cremated today in a private ceremony.

His son immediately flew home to Bombay, missing India's match against Zimbabwe. Three runs, leaving their World Cup hopes seriously jeopardised.

Tendulkar is expected to rejoin India's World Cup team after their Group A match against Kenya on Sunday an official said.

"If I am not wrong he may miss the next match against Kenya and go after that. He would like to go. His father would have liked him to go," said Ajit Wadekar, chairman of India's board of selectors.

A team official in England said they had received no news

about Tendulkar's return but hoped he would be available for the match against Sri Lanka on May 26. Wadekar said he had not spoken to Tendulkar yet about his return as "nobody could have spoken to him about this today."

Sachin's father, Ramesh, an academic and literary figure, was cremated at dawn on Thursday before the city had woken up to avoid the expected crowds India's most charismatic cricketer would have drawn. Wadekar said Sachin looked composed at the funeral but appeared to be in a state of shock as his father's death "came most unexpectedly."

Many fans stood outside the gates of Tendulkar's residence on Thursday morning. A board put up at the gate said the family was in mourning and would meet friends and supporters in the evenings for the next three days.

President K R Narayanan on Wednesday expressed grief over the demise of Ramesh Tendulkar.



Scotland fielders gather to celebrate the Shahid Afridi's dismissal at Durham yesterday. —AFP photo