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# Sachin will play for his dad

BRISTOL, England, May 22: Jet-lagged Indian World Cup star Sachin Tendulkar was back in the nets on Saturday just hours after returning to England, saying his deceased father would have wanted him back at the crease, reports AFP.

A composed Tendulkar, who returned earlier than expected after attending his father's funeral, said: "My father would have wanted me to go back."

"My mother told me the same thing - go back and play for India."

"She said my father would have wanted me to do that. I got a lot of support from my family. I must now get used to it that he is no more."

His father Ramesh, a university professor and poet, died of a heart attack on Wednesday.

The 26-year-old Tendulkar, regarded as one of the best batsmen in the world, had initially been expected to return next week, missing two matches rather than one.

But on Wednesday India, without Tendulkar, crashed to a shock three-run defeat against Zimbabwe, seriously threatening India's chances of reaching the second round of the tournament.

Tendulkar, however, will now be available for the crucial group A match against Kenya on Sunday, a game India must win.

Tendulkar added: "My father will be up there somewhere whenever I go to bat."

"It's going to be difficult to play but I just have to keep my mind on my father being there watching me all the time and go out and play."

"My immediate aim is to see India win their three remaining matches and qualify for the Super Six."

"All the country wants me to play, so I finished all the formalities back home and got the next available plane here. My

wife is absolutely behind me too. But it is certainly not going to be easy."

Indian officials, meanwhile, praised the player for his devotion to the cause.

Coach Anshuman Gaekwad said: "It's amazing. We did not expect him back so early."

Indian cricket board president Raj Singh Dungarpur said: "It is not only a gesture of a great cricketer but of a great patriot."

"We are very pleased to see him back. You will see a smile on everyone's faces. He flew in this morning and came straight to the hotel."

"He had a short rest before coming on for practice. He is looking forward to the game, and sure we need a guy like him - any country would. He will definitely make a difference."

Commenting on India's weak start to the tournament, Gaekwad conceded that his team had work to do.

"If you look at it, all our games are tough for us. We will have to really pull ourselves up for all of them. It is not just winning, but winning comfortably."

Chairman of selectors Ajit Wadekar said last night that Tendulkar had called him up and told him he was ready to return.

Gaekwad however reacted angrily to Indian media calls for captain Mohammad Azharuddin to resign, saying they did not help the team's attempts to qualify for the next stage of the World Cup.

India have been accused of being badly prepared for the tournament.

But Gaekwad countered by saying: "We have been holding team meetings twice a day and separate meetings for batsmen and bowlers, having nets regularly and watching videos of the nets. What else can we do?"

# Indians harshly treated?

BRISTOL, England, May 22: World Cup organisers said on Friday that India had lodged a complaint about the deduction of four overs from their innings during their Group A defeat by Zimbabwe, reports Reuters.

India failed to complete their over in the required time and were penalised by having their innings reduced to 46 overs and eventually lost by three runs.

A World Cup spokeswoman said: "The World Cup technical committee will be meeting Indian team management to discuss the appeal." She declined to give any further details.

Indian team manager and former Test batsman Brijesh Patel said the meeting would take place on Monday but he refused to comment on exactly why India were protesting.

Team sources said that the protest may have nothing to do with India being limited to 46 overs in the match but with the fact that fielding restrictions for Zimbabwe were lifted after 13 overs as part of the penalty rather than the usual 15.

On Wednesday in Leicester, India set down 21 wides and 16



CAN HE SAVE INDIA? Sachin Tendulkar arriving at Bombay airport on May 21 prior to his departure for England.

— AFP photo

# Now or never for India

BRISTOL, England, May 22: India's much-abused captain Mohammad Azharuddin received the best World Cup news possible on Saturday when a grieving Sachin Tendulkar returned early to play against Kenya, reports AFP.

Tendulkar, who returned to India on Wednesday after the death of his father and was badly missed in his side's three-run defeat by Zimbabwe, chose



AZHARUDDIN

to fly back two days early in an attempt to rescue the side's floundering Cup campaign.

India, who have also lost to South Africa, must win their three remaining matches against Kenya on Sunday, Sri Lanka on May 26 and England on May 29 to stay in contention for the second round.

Tendulkar, rated as the world's best batsman, was originally scheduled to miss the Kenya game and return for Sri Lanka at Taunton.

Their top batsmen Sachin Tendulkar was reported from India to be hoping to return in time for the match after having to fly home last Wednesday for the funeral of his father who died suddenly.

Without Tendulkar, India can often appear vulnerable.

Last year they lost a one-dayer at home to Kenya, a fledgling cricketing nation still to gain Test match status. In the next game, however, Tendulkar exacted his revenge by hitting a match-winning century against them.

Kenya go into Sunday's

match after heavy defeats against England and Zimbabwe, but the Indians - especially Azharuddin - are not taking them lightly.

"We can't afford to let our guard down against any team," Azharuddin said.

Coach Anshuman Gaekwad, welcoming Tendulkar's return, said the problem lay in being unable to finish off opponents.

"Technically, the batsmen

and no-balls our bowlers bowled. When it starts happening, I would expect the bowler to start thinking. They did not."

The performance against Zimbabwe was terrible. You lose some, but then the manner in which you lose counts a lot.

The Zimbabweans did not have to earn their wickets, and that is a pity," Gaekwad said.

Azharuddin, meanwhile, received unexpected advice from

## HEAD-TO-HEAD

Kenya are still seeking Test status. They gave India a one-day shock last year, however, beating them during a triangular tournament. Sachin Tendulkar then returned for the final and scored an undefeated century to give India their revenge over the Africans.

### World Cup:

The sides have played just once, in Cuttack in 1996. Sachin Tendulkar scored 127 not out and Ajay Jadeja a half-century as the Indian won by seven wickets.

### Players to watch:

**Kenya:** Steve Tikolo showed against England why Kenya are regarded as a one-man team. The 27-year-old's 71 against the World Cup hosts was top-class and even suggested an upset as the Africans reached 107 for one.

**India:** Mohammad Azharuddin. The Indian captain says he is not worried over his side's two opening defeats but the knives are being sharpened for him at home. A big innings from him - he has made 31 runs in his first two outings - would counter the criticism - for a few days at least.

### Venue:

Bristol, the home ground of county side Gloucestershire. The bearded Gloucester doctor, W.G. Grace, once played here. For the last 14 years, West Indian Courtney Walsh has been the darling of the local crowd. Capacity 8,500. (AFP)

and the bowlers have performed well," he said. "I have no complaints on matters of technique, but is the repeated failure to finish the job that is worrying."

"I am sorry to say, our players are not applying themselves as they should be."

"I was amazed at the wides

former Pakistani captain Imran Khan, who said the Indian skipper was too tense on the field.

"Whether it's the pressure of expecting to lose his captaincy or if he's just desperate to do well, it's translating into a very

negative body language on the field," Imran said.

But Imran, who led Pakistan's 1992 World Cup triumph, added: "Azharuddin was experienced enough to come back fighting."

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**INDIA (probable):** Saurav Ganguly, Sachin Tendulkar, Rahul Dravid, Mohammad Azharuddin (capt), Ajay Jadeja,

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