

DHAKA MONDAY, MAY 31, 1999

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WORLD CUP '99 Special

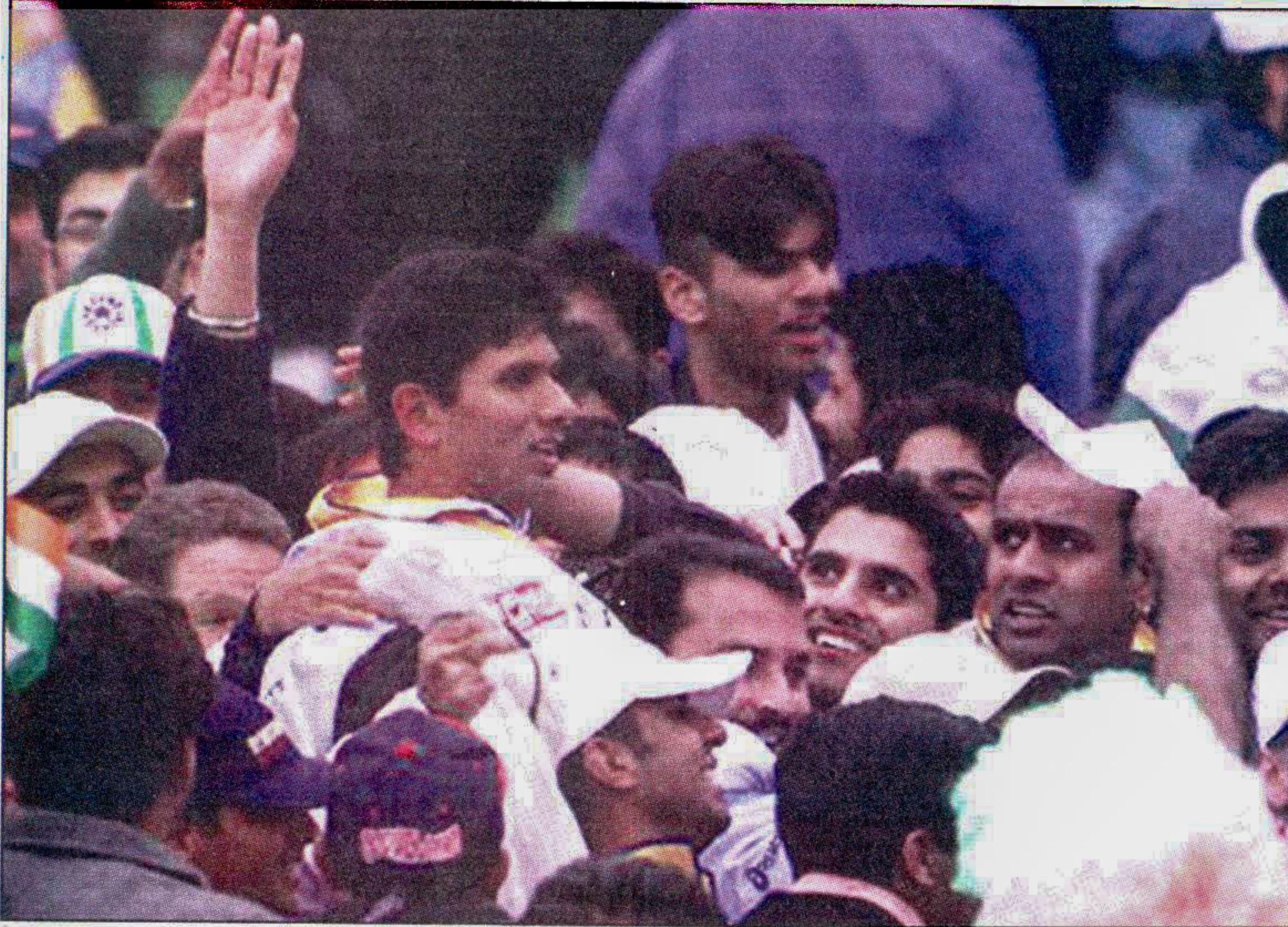


A small step for cricket, a giant leap for Bangladesh.

Breaking Boundaries.



MORE THAN YOU THOUGHT POSSIBLE



India paceman Venkatesh Prasad has become the toast of the fans after their famous victory over hosts England at Edgbaston yesterday. — Internet photo

Akram not at all amused

NORTHAMPTON, England, May 30 (Reuters/Internet report): Pakistan captain Wasim Akram accused corporate sponsors of taking precedence over cricketers after his team were unable to find any suitable practice venues on Sunday.

Pakistan, who meet Bangladesh in their final World Cup group B match on Monday, turned up to the Northampton county ground on Sunday morning but were unable to practise outdoors because heavy rain on Saturday had soaked the outfield.

They then discovered to their anger that the indoor nets were unavailable because they had been converted to a hospitality area for Monday's match.

After rejecting an alternative offer to practise on outdoor artificial pitches because of the cold and damp, the Pakistan team returned to their hotel for a gymnasium workout.

We came here prepared to do some fielding drills and some batting and bowling drills but

unfortunately the best indoor school is given to sponsors," Akram said. "Now the sponsors are more important than the teams."

"Imagine England and Australia coming to Pakistan and not having a practice facility. It would be total chaos all over the country. Over here nobody's bothered."

Akram, who is captaining the only unbeaten side in the competition, also dismissed attempts by a British Sunday newspaper to resurrect a ball-tampering controversy.

"Allegations of altering the balls' surface marred Pakistan's successful 1992 tour of England.

Pakistan's strength has been their team cohesion and the form shown by the younger players such as fast bowler Shoaib Akhtar and teenage all-rounder Abdul Razzaq.

"We have got hungry for success and the young boys are very strong mentally," Akram said.

The skipper however claims his side have enough room for

improvement to win every game of the World Cup and be crowned champions on June 20 at Lord's.

Earlier in the week, West Indies legend Viv Richards, among others, claimed that as the competition enters its final stages, any side will find it nearly impossible to win every game.

But Wasim is adamant his side can only get better after charging into the Super Six stage as winners of Group B having taken a maximum eight points.

"Quite a few critics have said we have peaked too early," Wasim said.

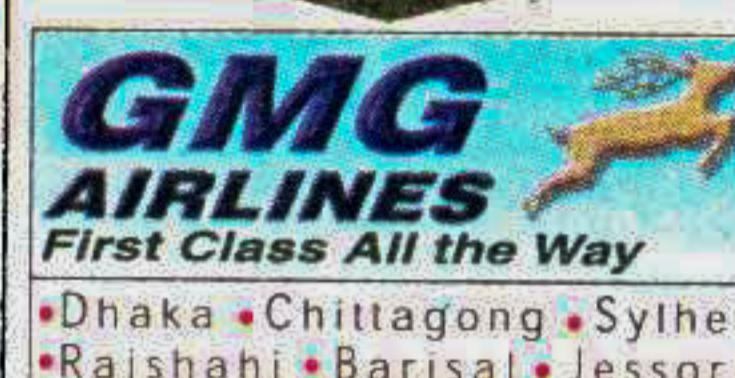
"But we are doing well. The confidence is there, and a couple of our batsmen haven't got runs, so we know there's more to come."

Wasim even claimed he was quite pleased explosive batsmen like Saeed Anwar haven't yet imposed themselves on the World Cup stage.

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WASIM AKRAM

AMINUL ISLAM

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Fallen stars ready to rise

NORTHAMPTON, England, May 30 : Unbeaten Pakistan look certain to give 'forgotten men' Waqar Younis and Mushtaq Ahmed their first cricket World Cup run-out here on Monday, reports AFP.

With Wasim Akram's side already qualified for the second phase of the tournament, the game against minnows Bangladesh is of little significance - except to Waqar and Mushtaq.

The pair are the most high-profile 'drinks carriers' in the tournament, having missed Pakistan's opening four wins.

Monday's group B game will give them the chance to show they can still contribute on the pitch.

Strike bowler Waqar was once Akram's pace partner, the two becoming the world's most feared bowlers of the 1990s.

Mushtaq, meanwhile, vied with Australian Shane Warne for the title of the best leg spinner in the game.

But both have since been relegated to the reserves. Waqar by a combination of injuries and the emergence of Shoaib Akhtar, and Mushtaq by the excellence of spinner Saqlain Mushtaq.

"Waqar Younis and Mushtaq Ahmed have been amazing,"

said Akram. "It is very difficult for me as a captain to leave these two great players out but I would like to thank Waqar and Mushtaq for

backing the team up."

The key to Pakistan's success

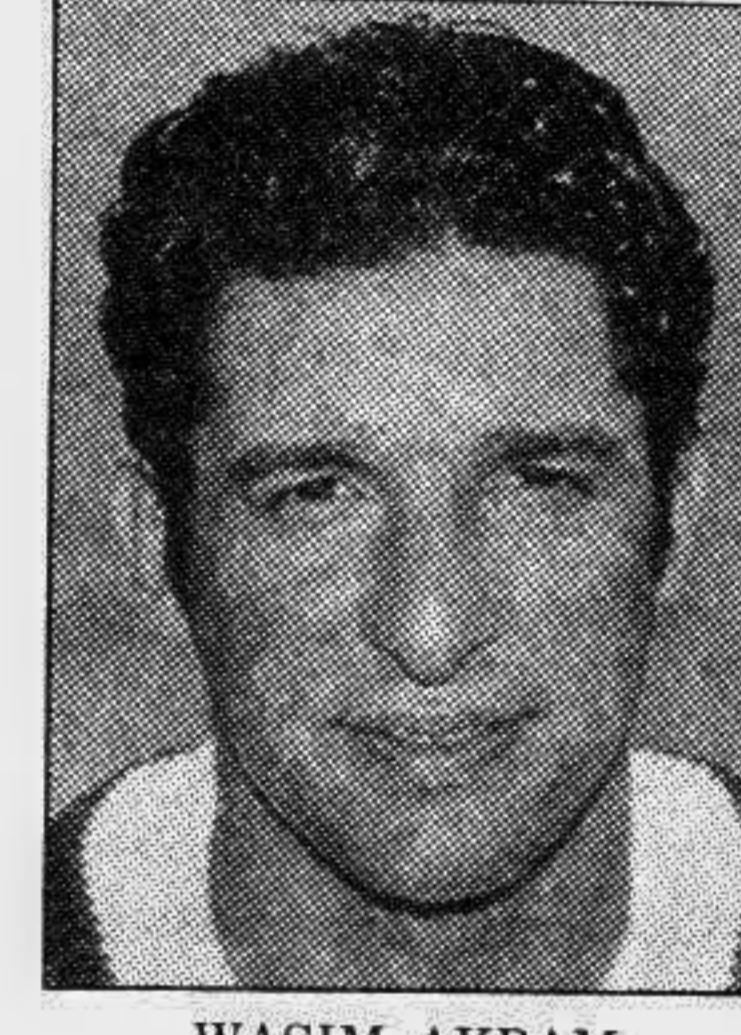
at the World Cup has been their

team spirit, rebuilt by Akram

after months of feuding between



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WASIM AKRAM



AMINUL ISLAM

players from different regions and allegations that some have helped bookmakers fix match results.

Akram said: "Everyone is pulling together now - we are back again."

Waqar, 27, missed six months of last year with an elbow injury. He has also been plagued with back problems.

A star with Surrey and Glamorgan, he became famous for his ability to reverse-swing the ball late in an innings.

But his mantle of the world's fastest bowler has been usurped by Shoaib, who bowls at close to 100 miles per hour.

Waqar had 277 Test and 283 one-day wickets. Mushtaq has 169 and 144.

He was described this year as the "best bowler in the world" by Aamir Sohail, Akram's predecessor as captain.

But Sohail's axing also led to Mushtaq being dropped. He is regarded as mercurial but more wayward than the highly-rated Saqlain.

SQUADS
BANGLADESH (probable):
Mehrabi Hossain, Khaled Mashud, Faruque Ahmed, Aminul Islam (capt), Akram Khan, Naimur Rahman, Khaled

HSBC

Wishes

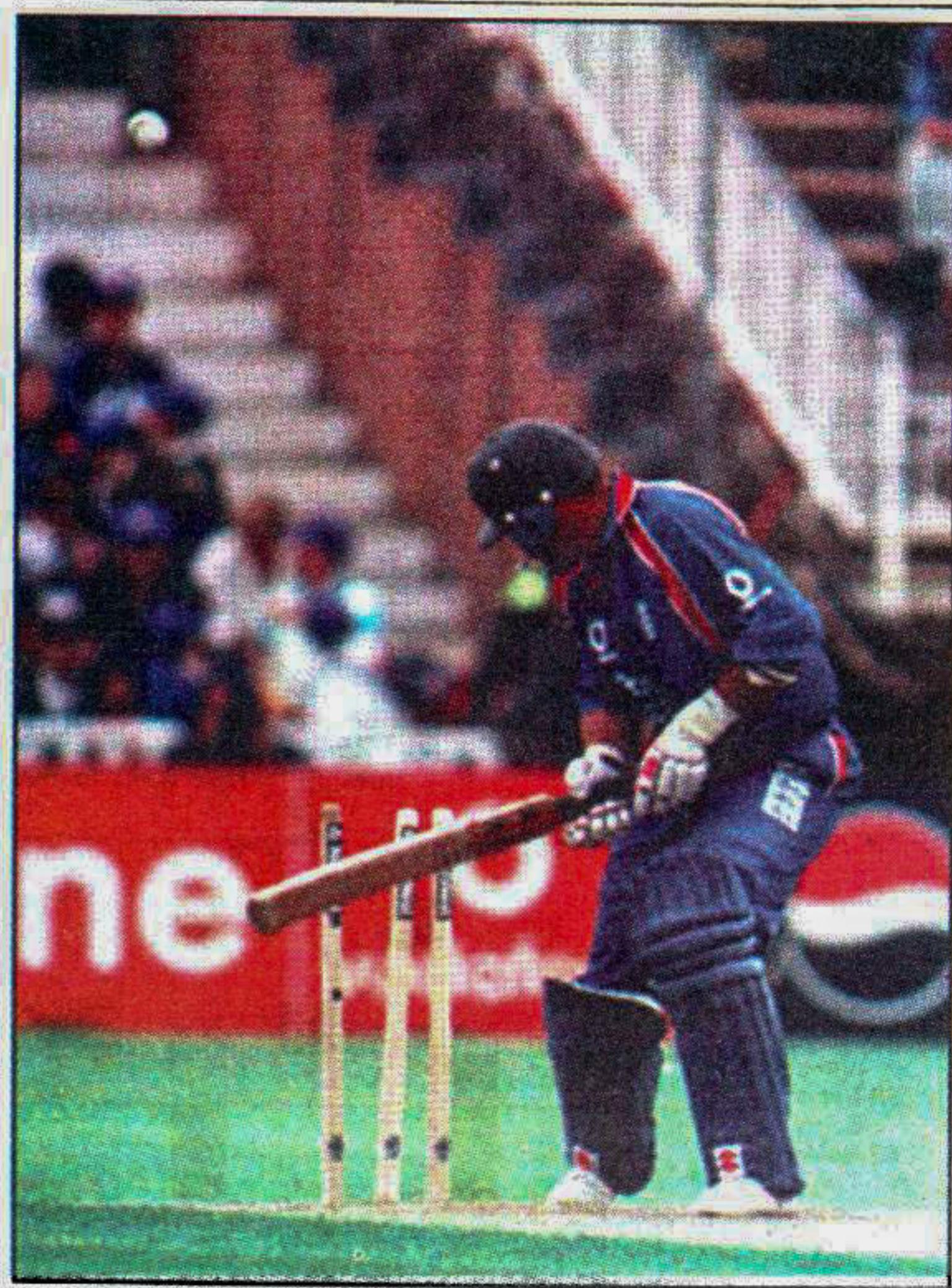
Good Luck to the
Bangladesh Cricket team

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HIS WORLD CUP IS OVER: England's Nasser Hussain looks back at the shattered stumps after being bowled out by Saurav Ganguly at Edgbaston on May 29. — AFP photo



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