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ROAD TO GLORY

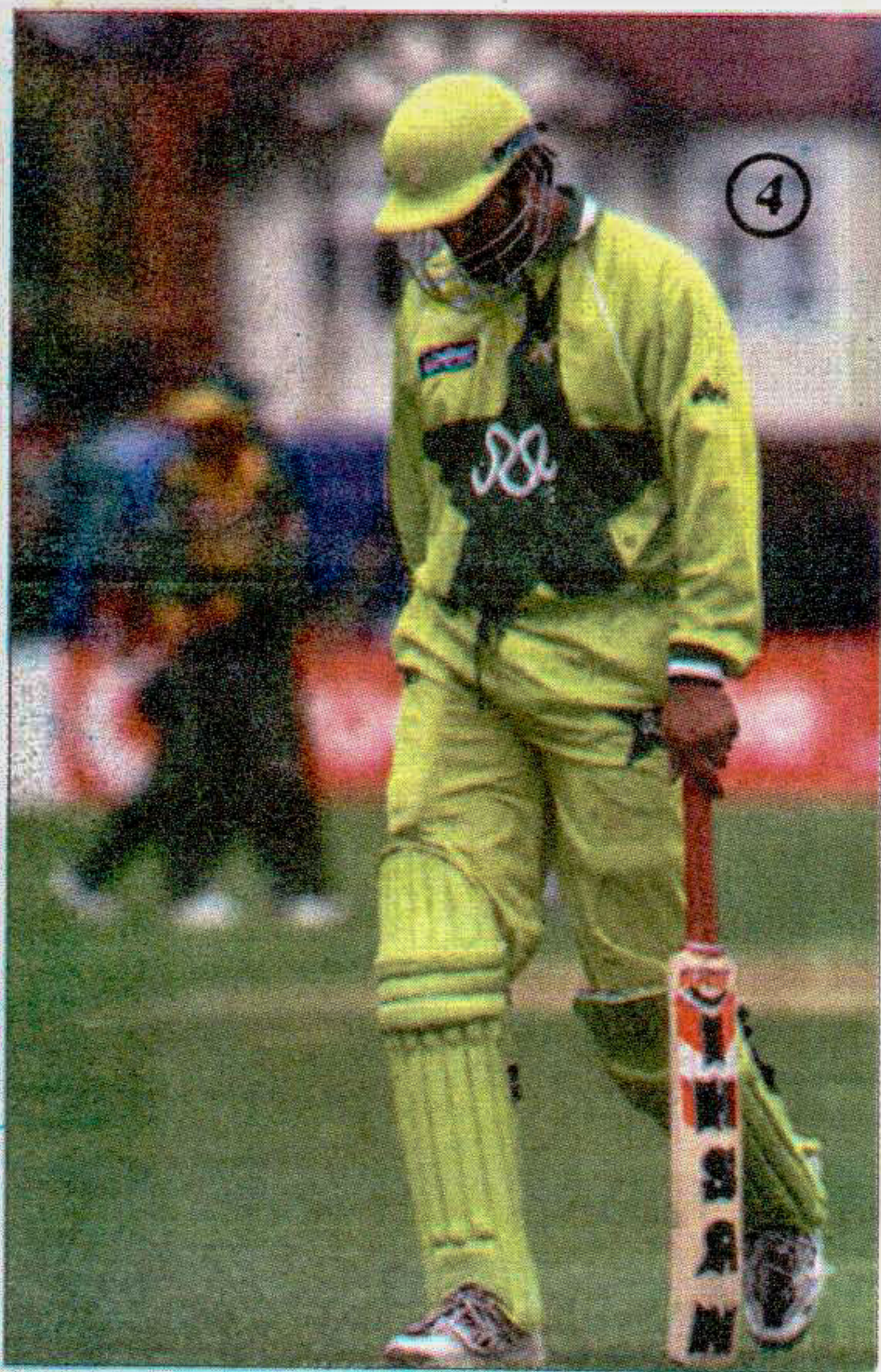
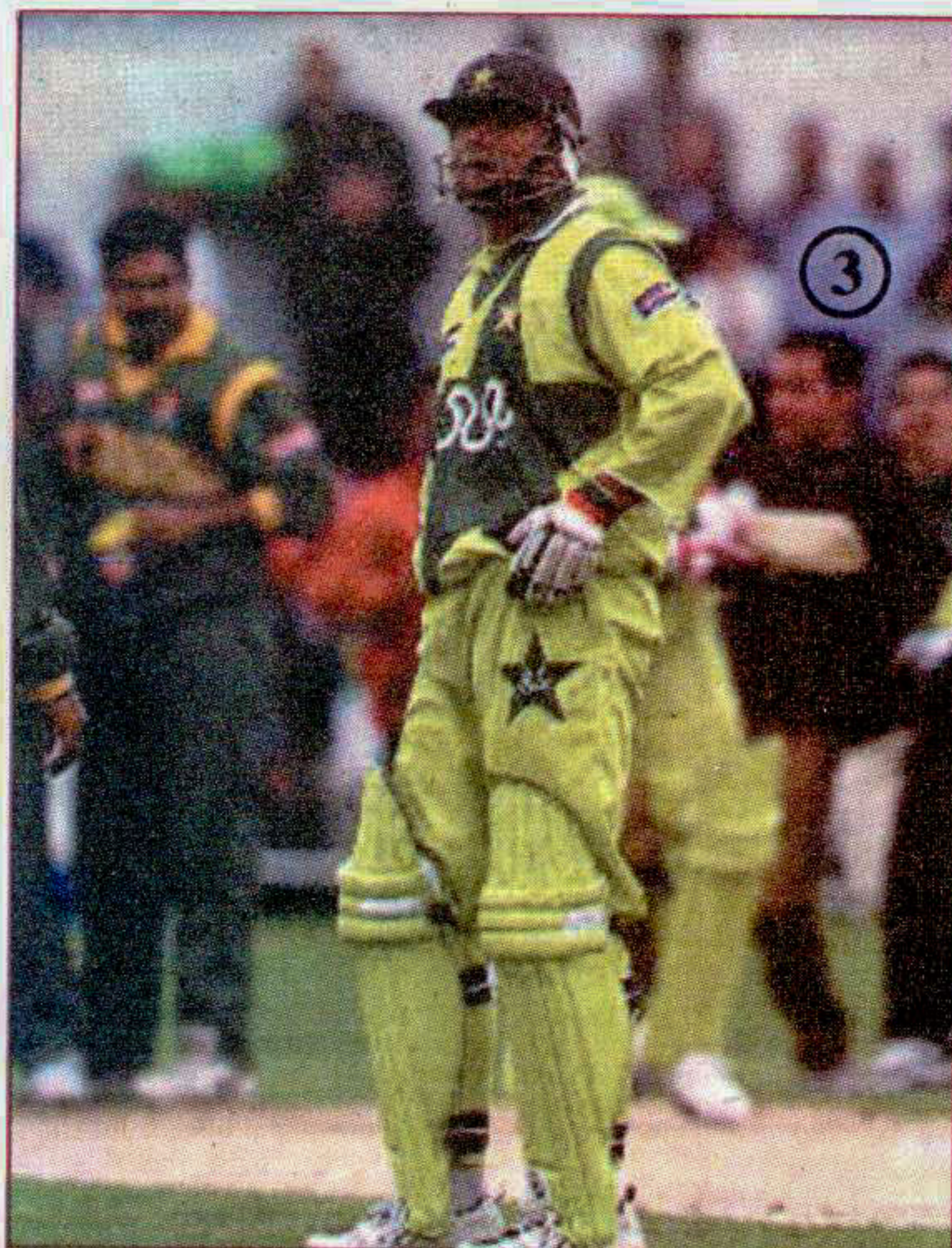
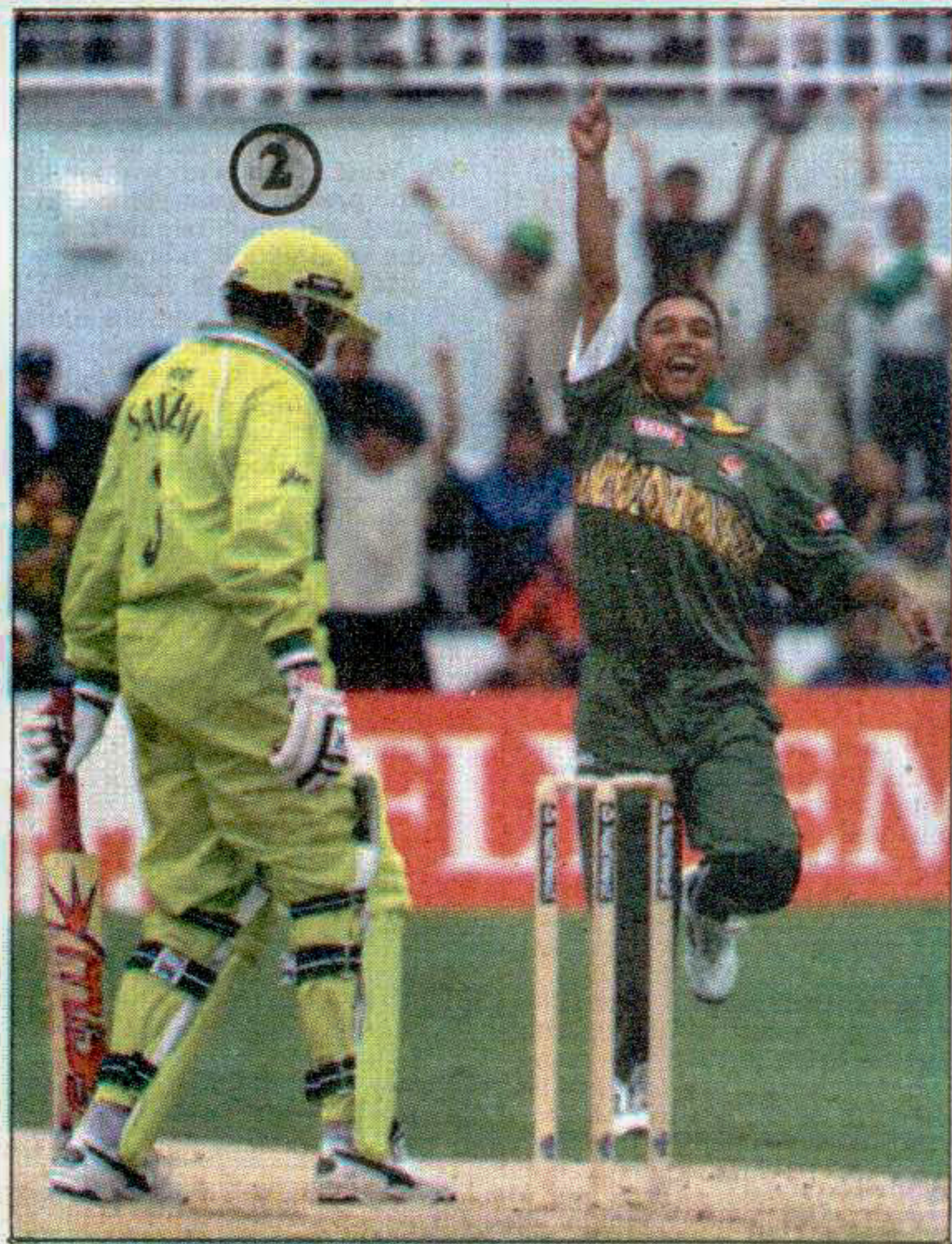
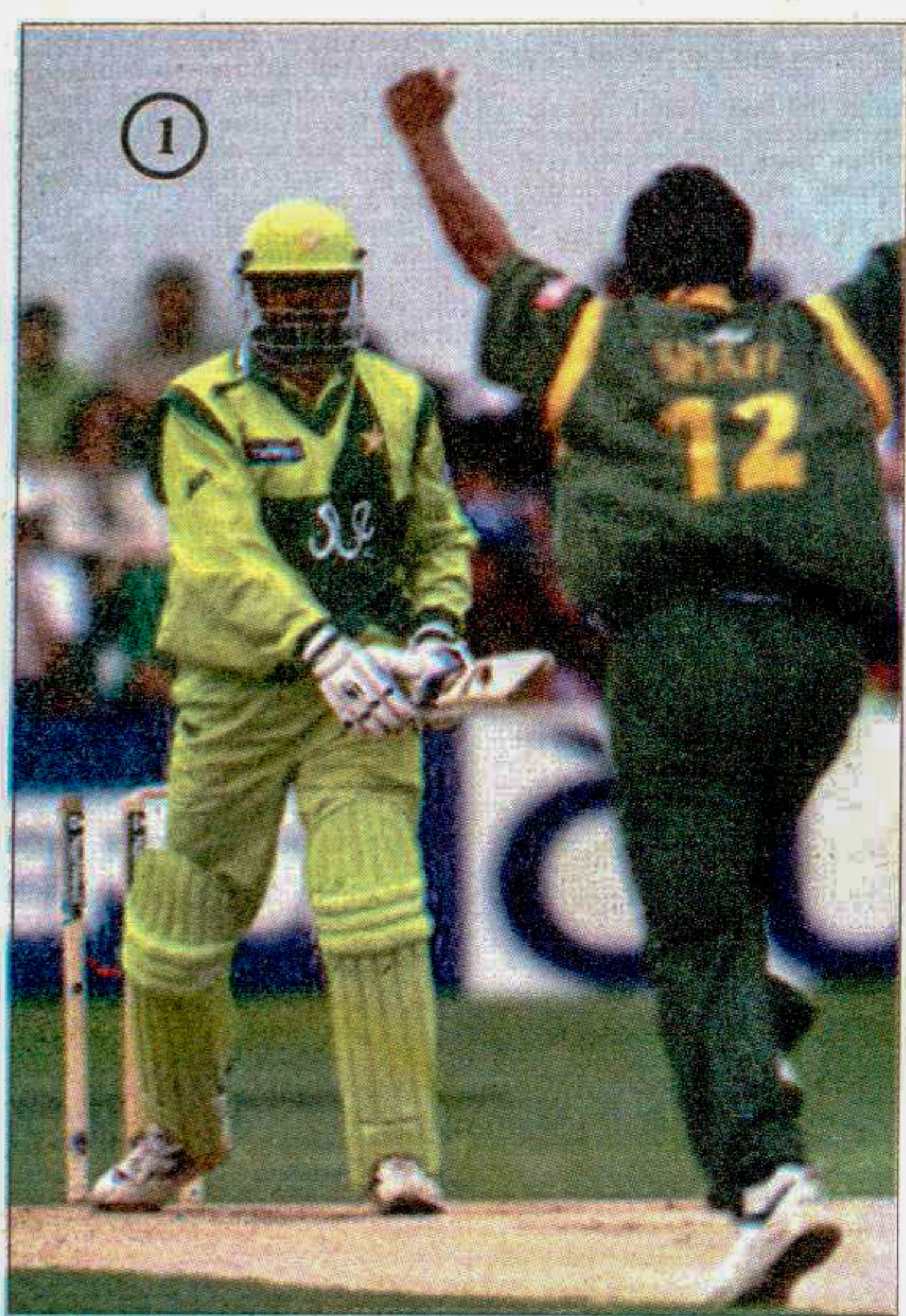
Equal amongst unequals

Shakil Kasem

Some weeks ago, this country sent fifteen of its finest sons across the seven seas to do battle for honour and the flag. There is no shame in admitting that, deep in our collective hearts, we did not harbour much hope for their survival in the battles that lay ahead. The nation stands corrected today. We await a triumphant return of those brave survivors, who have achieved what we dreamt but never dared. A grateful nation opens its arms to these fantastic fifteen, whose names, for certain, will now be emblazoned in letters of fire across the skies of Bangladesh. It is easy to be emotional about our cricket heroes, but also so necessary. They have transported this country of teeming millions, who are perennially engaged in an unequal battle for mere survival, a nation that founders at times in the depths of despair, because of a multitude of reasons, for a glimpse of what lies beyond the realms of our everyday life. They have given us a moment of the finest glory that the world had on offer, a place in the sun. At this moment, at this point in time, it is so very pertinent.

They have seized the day, and given it to the rest of their countrymen to savour. Never has so many been grateful to so few. By the time this World Cup is over, the results of the last few weeks would be swamped under a mound of petty statistics. Included in that pile of facts, figures and numbers would be the result of the match in which one time World Champions and tournament hot favourites, were seen by the rest of the world, to surrender tamely to the most committed of debutants. This match would be a part of history, yet lost to it. We have CREATED history. No matter what statistics may indicate, posterity will be told in no uncertain manner, never to forget. The vanquished will remember, forever. On our part, we must not compound irony by demeaning this achievement. This was our finest hour, let no one even harbour a thought otherwise. The present band of cricketers have done us proud; they have displayed incredible levels of tenacity under immense pressure, and performed heroically over and beyond the call.

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MILESTONES ON THE ROAD TO GLORY: (Clockwise L-R)

1. Ijaz Ahmed - bowled Shafiuddin Ahmed (Second wicket).
2. Selim Malik - lbw bowled Khaled Mahmud (Fourth wicket).
3. Saqlain Mushtaq - run out (Last wicket).
4. Wasim Akram - caught Shahriar Hossain bowled Minhazul Abedin (Seventh wicket).
5. Saeed Anwar - run out (Third wicket).
6. Waqar Younis - bowled Mohammed Rafique (Ninth wicket).
7. Azhar Mahmood - run out (sixth wicket).

Photos: AFP/Internet

Dreaming of Test status

Lenin Gani

Cricket is a strange game. Form and pedigree count for little after a defeat. Bangladesh's upset 62-run victory of Pakistan on May 31 underlined the fact. Pakistan, unbeatable in four straight matches, were up against one of the lightweights of the cricketing fraternity. Yet as events unfolded at Northampton it was the debutants who pulled the rug from under the 1992 champions after Wasim Akram won the toss. After superb opening stand of 68 between Bangladesh's Mehrab Hossain and Shahriar Hossain and useful contributions from the middle-order, especially from Akram Khan (42), the total reached 223 for nine in 50 overs. The bowlers found the batsmen very unobliging. In fact, speed merchant Shoaib Akhtar, who had managed to frighten most of the batsmen in the ongoing carnival, had a torrid time conceding 12 runs in a single over before being replaced. Only off-spinner Saqlain Mushtaq gained some measure of respect by taking 5-35 in overs - the best figures by a Pakistan bowler in World Cups. The Pakistan reply was a disaster with the top-order perishing with only 42 on the board inside the mandatory 15 overs. Then Akram and Azhar Mahmood steadied the rocking boat, putting on 55 runs for the sixth wicket. But, Aminul and Co kept a cool head in the face of the brief resilience. Once the dependable Moin Khan was gone the situation became hopeless for the Pakistanis and nothing could stop the irresistible Bangladeshis from recording their first victory after seven successive defeats. Bangladesh, who were the first team to reach England, quickly acclimatised themselves to the unpredictable British weather, and gave an indication of what they were capable of with creditable performances against county sides Essex and Middlesex before going down fighting to Northampton.

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It's not cricket

From Nizamuddin Ahmed

LONDON, June 3: Yesterday's reception to the Bangladesh World Cup cricket team by the 'Bangladesh community' in London's East End ended in pandemonium. Scheduled to start at 5.00 PM at a local school gymnasium, the celebration never took off as the Bangladesh team did not make it to the venue till 7.30 PM and the function was eventually called off. Police had to be called in to get it in order after few people in the audience termed it as 'politicising of cricket' and threatened the organisers. At least one unidentified person, reportedly a BNP activist, was severely injured. UK Awami League executives countered the protest from the dais saying, 'We also reside in East London. Everyone has the right to organise a meeting. The UK Awami League organises its meeting with everyone. Do not threaten us.' The programme was organised almost overnight to express the gratitude of the expatriates here in Britain to the cricket team for its wonderful performance, particularly the historic victory over the tournament favourites Pakistan. Hundreds of Bangladeshis had been gathering at the venue long before the programme. The Bangladesh team has generated intense enthusiasm in England over the past couple of weeks. Chief Guest Councillor Denise Jones, Mayor of the London Borough of Tower Hamlets, left the premises a few minutes before disruption as she had another engagement. Prior to her departure she was able to make a brief speech on how Bangladesh's success would encourage the local youths, for whom she said more cricket pitches would be made available. Also present were Bangladesh Cricket Board president Saber Hossain Chowdhury, the Bangladesh High Commissioner to the UK and Ireland A H Mahmud Ali, BCB officials and other dignitaries. As the situation was about to get out of hand, the BCB president, also a minister in the government, made a fervent appeal over the PA system to uphold

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