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Ajay Jadeja and Javagal Srinath rush towards the dressing room after the victory against Pakistan at Old Trafford on June 8.

Asian lesson to Barmy Army

LONDON, June 9 (AFP) — England's Barmy Army did not so much go AWOL at the cricket World Cup as fail to turn up for the party altogether.

Perhaps they feared being overrun by the Hindi Hordes, or Pakistan's Potato Men.

The Barmy Army — England's infamous, unofficial cricket supporters' club — has become so well-established that it has a registered trademark, an internet site and a World Cup song in the English pop charts which has outsold the official tournament anthem.

When the tournament organisers sold the event as a "carnival of cricket", they must have hoped for England's touring fans to make a home appearance.

The army was born during the away Ashes series of 1994/95.

The Australians thought anybody who could support

Michael Atherton's struggling side, let alone travel halfway round the world to watch them, had to be mad.

The English fans — there were 1,000-strong at the Sydney Test in January 1995 — rather liked the description and the name stuck.

Their aim, their website proclaims, is "to make watching cricket more fun and much more popular."

Outsiders confirm they also like drinking while turning lobster-red in the sun.

And they enjoy the gentle — and not so gentle — taunting of opposition players while praising — often ironically — their own team to the skies.

Their song on Shane Warne goes: "He's fat, he's round, he bounces on the ground, Shane Warne, Shane Warne."

Mark Waugh is given an even tougher time: "Mark Waugh is



Umpire Steve Bucknor obliging Venkatesh Prasad following an appeal for lbw against Salim Malik.

Waiting to be swamped or a genuine threat?

LONDON, June 9: The impact that Bangladesh made on world cricket, thanks to their targeted Cup victory against Scotland and cream-topping at the expense of the galloping Pakistanis, seemed ill-defined till Simon Wilde's one-liner in The Sunday Times (June 6).

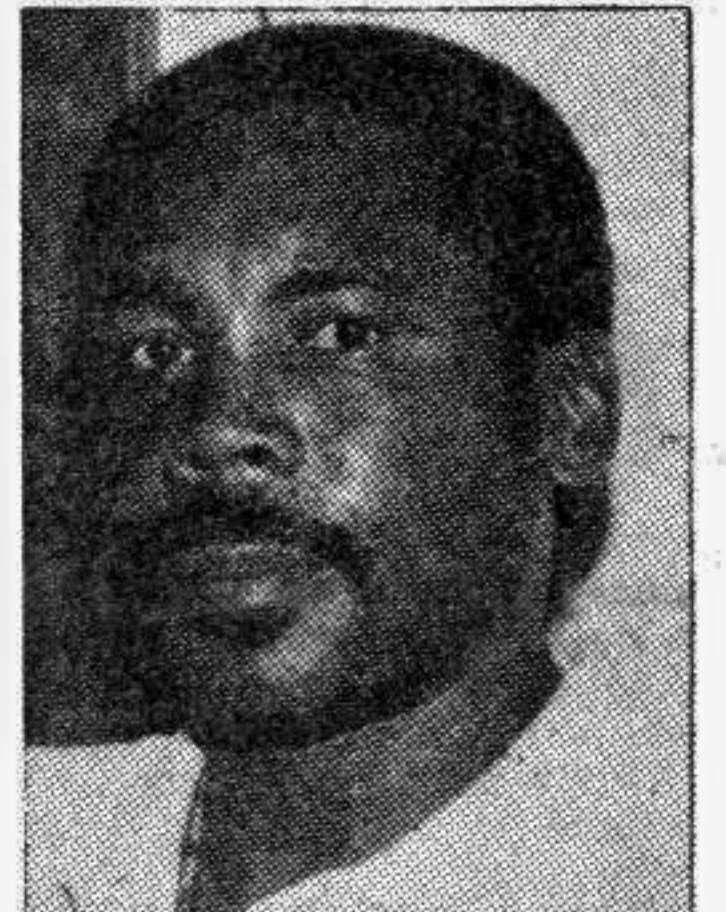
He warns crestfallen England thus: "... the competition from other nations is only going to stiffen. The likes of Bangladesh and Kenya will soon join Zimbabwe as genuine threats in future tournaments."

This is obviously not the understanding of Gordon Greenidge, Bangladesh Cricket Board's Director of Coaching. Talking to Ivo Tennant of the same weekly Greenidge "bares his soul" about Bangladesh's non-readiness to play Test cricket. Says the West Indian batting legend, "It would be damaging for them to tour the leading Test nations, because they would be swamped."

Goes on GG, perhaps in reference to his statement that Bangladesh were not ready for Test status: "There was a big outcry that I had snubbed Bangladeshis, but there were no lines of communication open

From Nizamuddin Ahmed with the cricket establishment.

Greenidge could shoulder some responsibility for cutting off that line. He knows only too



GORDON GREENIDGE

well that it is often more effective to speak through the press. After Bangladesh's disastrous tour of England, Ireland and Scotland last year, Greenidge invited two reporters from The Daily Star one evening and talked freely on tape for hours.

Greenidge's reflection on the Board, the team's performance, and the future of Bangladesh cricket was carried by the newspaper in a three-part serial. "Gordon bares his soul. Thereafter, however, Greenidge shunned even representatives of that newspaper with the platitudinous terse snub, 'No comment'."

The lines of communication with the Dhaka press was opened by Greenidge when he needed to put BCB on the defensive and, once his 'purpose' was accomplished, the media in Bangladesh to him was yesterday's newspaper. Who wants it anyway?

For some unknown reason, Greenidge shut himself off from the press in the country of his employment. It is not the failing of the Bangladeshi media that Greenidge does not respond to it. They have always tried to speak to him. But, once in England, he freely talked to English journalists. This is a snub, 'Sir' Greenidge, which no employee of Bangladesh can afford.

Think of it! David Lloyd is not talking to the English press or Bob Woolmer high-nosing a

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Reid smells tampering

LONDON, June 9: Pakistan found themselves at the centre of fresh ball tampering allegations at the cricket World Cup on Wednesday, reports AFP.

Wasim Akram's side have been reported for interfering with the ball by match referee John Reid of New Zealand after the second round match against South Africa last Saturday, a Pakistani source told AFP.

The source said: "Match referee John Reid had an argument with our manager Zafar Altaf about the ball after the match."

"Reid felt it may have been tampered with."

Altaf confirmed speaking to Reid, but said the team was not unduly concerned by the allegations.

"What's said is that we are singled out every time," Altaf said. "It's made to sound as if we are cheats, which we definitely

are not."

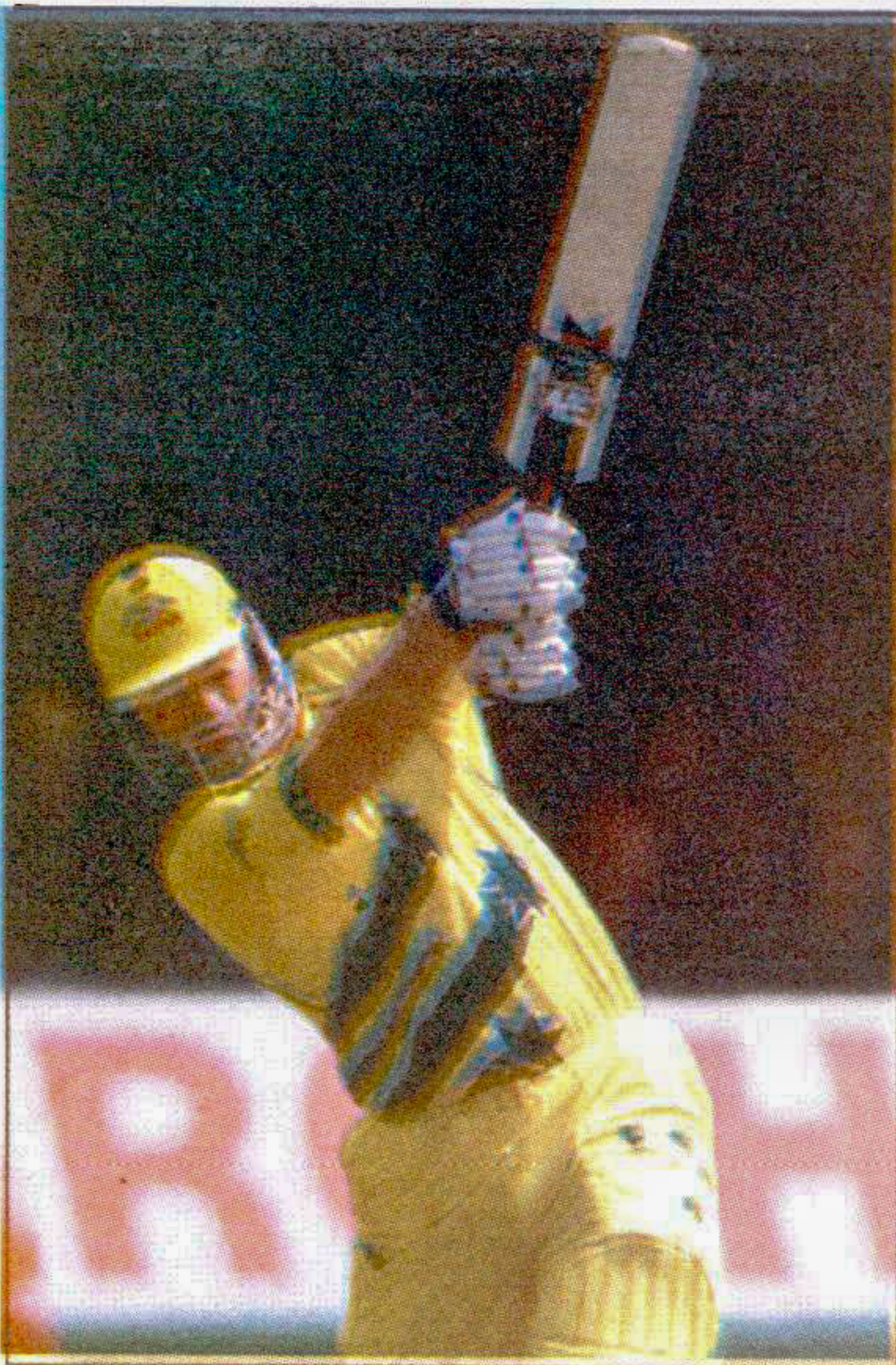
South Africa and Australia have both asked for the ball to be changed late in the innings to prevent Wasim Akram and his fellow seam bowlers from getting the reverse swing they are famous for.

The excuse is that the dirty ball can't be sighted," the source said. "I believe Shoaib Akhtar is being watched very closely."

The allegations come amidst a dramatic change in fortunes for the Pakistanis, who have lost their last three matches after winning the first four.

They were stunned by minnows Bangladesh in the last match of the first round and then lost to South Africa and India in the Super Six second round.

They must now beat table-topping Zimbabwe on Friday to qualify for the semi-finals.



STURDY STEVE: Australian skipper Steve Waugh driving towards the on side against Zimbabwe.

Phones, spouses did the damage?

COLOMBO, June 9: Cell phones and wives may have brought about the humiliating early exit of Sri Lanka from the World Cup, cricket board chief Thilanga Sumathipala said Wednesday, reports AFP.

A key factor for the poor defence of the world crown won in 1996 was the players' unprofessional behaviour, he said.

"I heard that even during practices, the players were using their mobile phones. They behaved as if they could not function without cellular phones," Sumathipala told the Sinhalese-language Lankadeepa daily.

The phones, donated by a private telephone company, became a trade mark of the Sri Lankan players who were seen constantly chattering into them while making public appearances.

"We had complained to the management from time to time but these are not small children. If they negotiate their contracts like professionals then they must also behave like

professionals."

Sumathipala said the practice of players having their wives and children with them tour may also have affected on-field performances.

"It is a fundamental right of a player to have anyone he wants to be with him but they must also know how to divide their time," he said.

"They have a short time to play at international level. They must learn to be professional."

Sumathipala said he was waiting for a report from team manager Duleep Mendis before beginning an inquiry into the disastrous performance in England.

Sri Lankan officials have already said there might be a probe into incomes of cricket super stars and the entire team will face scrutiny.

"Instructions have been given to check on the tax returns of some of the superstars, just to make sure that the state has not been cheated of its due revenues," the Sunday Times

newspaper said.

The cricket board itself is embroiled in a controversy.

Sri Lanka President Chandrika Kumaratunga's uncle, Clifford Ratwatte unsuccessfully contested against Sumathipala to head the cricket board in March and later filed a court case challenging his appointment.

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Bookies back S Africa

LONDON, June 9 (Reuters): South Africa remain favourites to win the World Cup but Pakistan's odds lengthened after their defeat by India yesterday. South Africa were quoted at 6-4 by bookmakers William Hill with Pakistan drifting to 9-4 from 2-1.

LATEST ODDS

- 6-4 South Africa
- 9-4 Pakistan
- 3-1 Australia
- 11-1 New Zealand
- 14-1 India
- 16-1 Zimbabwe

India in raptures

NEW DELHI, June 9: India exploded in joy as its team beat rival Pakistan to keep alive their World Cup hopes Tuesday, with Indian soldiers battling Islamic rebels in Kashmir firing their weapons in celebration, reports AFP.

"These are the moments when a bit of indiscipline is OK," an army colonel said as soldiers opened fire after the cricket results reached them on transistor radios.

India restricted Pakistan to 227 for six off 50 overs, dismissing the traditional rivals for 180 in the second-round cricket match in Old Trafford.

It had to win to remain in the race for a semi-final place in the World Cup series.

"We just did not expect a result as awesome as this," the infantry colonel commanding an unit of battle-hardened troops told AFP by telephone from Kashmir.

India has poured in almost 20,000 soldiers to the divided region, with jets and artillery backing its largest military offensive since a war with Pakistan in 1971.

It has vowed to eliminate hordes of heavily-armed Islamic fighters in the strategic heights of Kargil, which it says have infiltrated the Indian side of Kashmir with Pakistan's help.

"This is a fantastic win and it will keep us going in Kargil," the colonel said, adding that the fighting around Kargil had intensified before the crucial cricket match.

The rest of India was jubilant, with reports from Calcutta, Bangalore and Bombay saying people had taken to the streets, dancing and setting off fire crackers in scenes that eclipsed previous celebrations.

"The sound of fire-crackers here is deafening ... Have we beaten Pakistan in Kashmir or have we defeated them in England?" asked Ritika Singh, an 18-year-old schoolgirl from Calcutta.

"We have done it," said a jubilant resident from the southern Indian city of Bangalore of the nail-biting match.

In New Delhi, people danced on the streets and hugged each

other. "This is our World Cup," one resident said. "Have a drink on me."

For Pakistan, favourites for the title earlier in the tournament, it was their third defeat in a row after losing to minnows Bangladesh, and Australia.

Pakistan began their chase well, with 34 runs coming off the five overs.

But they then collapsed inexplicably, five wickets falling for 80 runs to make it 124 for six.

Inzamam-ul Haq, one of the most effective pinch-hitters in the World Cup tournament, saw his form desert him. He top-scored with 41 but made his runs so slowly, off 93 balls, that the innings lost all momentum.

Wicket-keeper Moin Khan showed the only defiance, with 33 off 37 balls.

If Pakistan win their final Super Six game against Zimbabwe on Thursday they will still reach the semi-finals. India must beat New Zealand on Saturday.

Rahul Dravid, the tournament

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Outrage across Pakistan

KARACHI, June 9: Pakistan cricket fans expressed anger and dismay Wednesday over their team's "shameful" defeat by arch rival India in the World Cup, which came as military forces from the countries were locked in fierce artillery clashes in the disputed region of Kashmir, reports AFP.

Wasim Akram's team was bowled out for 180 runs and India inflicted a 47-run defeat in a key contest in the second round match in England Tuesday. The defeat was Pakistan's third consecutive loss at the hands of Indians during last three World Cups.

"Unbelievable. They are making fool out of us, there has to be a probe for their defeat," supporter Ahsan Chaudhary said.

Fans and families were glued to televisions in Pakistan, while huge screens were installed at luxury hotels and roadside cafes to show the match.

But as last man Wasim fell to Anil Kumble they started cursing the team, witnesses said.

"It is shameful," said an elderly man at a roadside restaurant as some viewers held their heads in disbelief.

Pakistan defeated Australia, the West Indies, Scotland and New Zealand before losing to Bangladesh in the group matches. In the Super Six, Pakistan lost to South Africa and India.

"The match against South Africa was close and it could be anybody's game," said fan Abdul Kaseed.

"But this match! How can they do it to us?"

"Now I am not going to watch the World Cup until they reach the finals. It seems a ghost of defeat is shadowing them."

Cricketers fans in the subcontinent follow the game fanatically, with clashes between longstanding enemies and neighbours India and Pakistan taken particularly seriously.

"Wasim should throw out all these batsmen who are there for nothing. For me the World Cup was the match against India, and it is over now," fan Abdul Qudos said of the defeat, as his teenage daughter Maria, with tears in her eyes, postponed celebrations for the "expected" victory.

Many fans said Pakistan's defeat was a case of "bad" timing, referring to the recent military tensions between the two countries over Kashmir.

"It is better to support Kashmiri mujahideen who are giving a tough time to Indians rather than cricket players who brought shame to the country," another supporter said.

"Every time there is a bad news from the cricket field, and not from the battlefield."

But some still had hope for the national side.

"It is disappointing but not yet over now as Pakistan just have to face Zimbabwe before

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Fans are foes

MANCHESTER, June 9: The rivalry between India and Pakistan may be fierce on the cricket ground. But the players from the two teams are good friends outside the stadium, former Indian captain Dilip Vengsarkar said Tuesday, reports AP.

Vengsarkar, who played 22 Tests and 25 one-day internationals against Pakistan, said the high expectations from the people turn their matches into mental games where you have to have nerves of steel.

"But you meet them outside socially, for a drink or something, and they are absolutely nice and friendly," he told The Associated Press while watching India's Super Six World Cup confrontation with Pakistan here.

Indians and Pakistanis share a love-hate relationship, like two estranged branches of a divided family. Since colonial British India was partitioned into a Muslim Pakistan and predominantly Hindu India, the two peoples have lost touch with each other, fed largely by unfavourable government propaganda.

"So when you meet Pakistani one-to-one, you want to know about each other. There is so much curiosity," said Vengsarkar who played for India between 1976 and 1992, scoring 1,284 test runs. He was captain from 1987 to 1989.

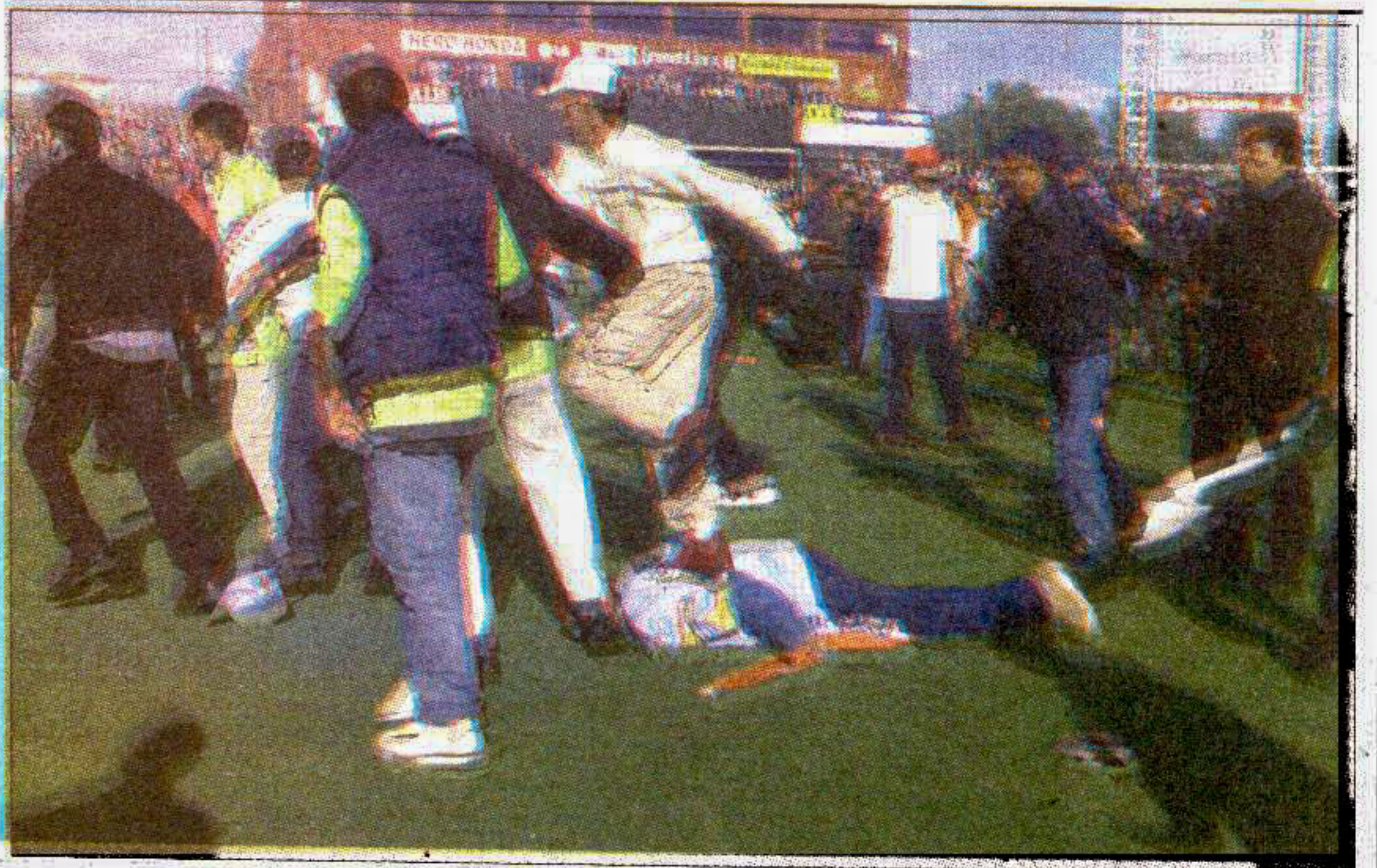
Former Pakistan captain Imran Khan also said the players of the two teams get along well.

"Cricketers are too single-minded to think about the political situation. They will be wrapped up in what they are doing, but the pressure ... by supporters and press is immense," he said.

Vengsarkar said he personally had many friends among Pakistani cricketers and found most of them "very nice and friendly." When he toured Pakistan, he would be invited for dinner at home by Pakistani players, he said. He would do the same when Pakistan toured India, he said.

"We would talk about everything. Mostly cricket, but other things also. Sometimes politics but not much," he said, adding that it is easier to relate to Pakistanis because they speak virtually the same language —

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SHAMEFUL: An Indian fan being kicked and trampled on by rival Pakistani fans after the Super Six clash at Manchester on June 8.



Adam Gilchrist, the Australian opener letting go a shortish delivery yesterday.