



PHOTO: AFP

India cricket superstar Sachin Tendulkar is being escorted off the Bombay Airport by police yesterday. The Indian team returned from West Indies after a two-month tour.

## Sourav's plea to Javagal

Cricket

INTERNET/AFP, New Delhi

Indian cricket captain Sourav Ganguly said Wednesday he would attempt to persuade pace spearhead Javagal Srinath to reconsider his retirement plans and make the upcoming tour of England.

The 32-year-old new ball spearhead had announced his retirement from the Test scene last week to concentrate his on fitness and availability for next year's World Cup in South Africa.

Srinath's exit will leave India's pace attack badly depleted, and that's why Ganguly wants the experienced fast-medium bowler back in the Test squad.

"Srinath is our best bowler who can guide the youngsters," the Indian captain said after returning home from the team's Caribbean tour.

"I will speak to him as early as I can and ask him to reconsider his

decision."

Srinath, with 232 wickets from 64 Tests, is India's second most successful fast bowler after Kapil Dev's tally of 434.

Srinath claimed just 13 wickets during the recent five-Test series in the West Indies, which India lost 2-1, and was then rested for the one-day internationals.

The Indian team for the one-day triangular series later this month against England and Sri Lanka will be named on Saturday.

The squad for the subsequent four Tests against England will be picked later.

Although India won the one-dayers, but still remain without a Test series win outside the sub-continent since 1986 when they beat England.

Ganguly, who was retained captain for the England tour, tried to play down the Test defeat by saying he was happy to win the one-dayers.

"It was disappointing to lose the Test series, but I think we did pretty well to win the one-dayers and I am happy the way the young bowlers

performed on the tour," he said.

"It is a young side and we have some very talented youngsters. I think it will take them a little time to form a winning unit."

Ganguly also allayed fears that star batsman Sachin Tendulkar, who developed a shoulder injury in the latter part of the West Indies tour, will not be fit for England.

"The injury is not serious and Sachin should be okay with a few days rest," he said.

Ganguly was adamant the experiment of asking frontline batsman Rahul Dravid to keep wickets in one-day matches will continue in England.

"I would like Dravid to keep wickets so that we have a strong batting order," he said.

"However we will see how things works out in England and then change accordingly."

With the two-month Caribbean tour behind them, the Indian cricketers have 12 days to rest before flying to London on June 18.

## Local pairs in semis

### JVC badminton

SPORTS REPORTER

Two Bangladesh pairs moved into the mixed doubles semifinals of the JVC Bangladesh Satellite Badminton Championship at the Suhrawardy Indoor Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

Mohammad Javed and Elina Begum booked their places with an easy 15-1, 15-3 win over Nepal's Anil Kumar and Bina Kumari while Russell Kabir Sumon and Konika Adhikari made it into the semifinals defeating compatriots Enayetullah Khan and Moonmoon Rahman Dola in the quarterfinals.

In the men's singles pre-quarterfinals, Bagheri Reza of Iran beat Ahsan Habib of Bangladesh 15-10, 15-4, JBS Bidyadhar of India beat Manjula Fernando of Sri Lanka

15-2, 15-6, Abdul Mohammadian Ars of Iran beat Russell Kabir Sumon of Bangladesh 15-5, 15-8, Niluka Karunaratne of Sri Lanka beat Indian B Nagraj 10-15, 15-9, 15-1, Iskandar Jalal of Iran beat Musa Nadis of Maldives 15-9, 15-3, Arvind Bhatt of India beat Sanam Jighme of Bhutan 15-0, 15-7, Aroop Baidya of India beat VV Ranasinghe of Sri Lanka 15-8, 15-4, Utsav Mishra of India beat Shah Hossain Ali of Iran 15-13, 15-10.

In men's doubles, Reza and Jalor of Iran moved into the quarterfinals after a 15-4, 15-12 win over Enayet and Palash of Bangladesh.

Also in the last eight are Arvind and Aroop of India, Ismail and Joyson of India, Ars and Hossaini of Iran and Nilufa and Ranasinghe of Sri Lanka.

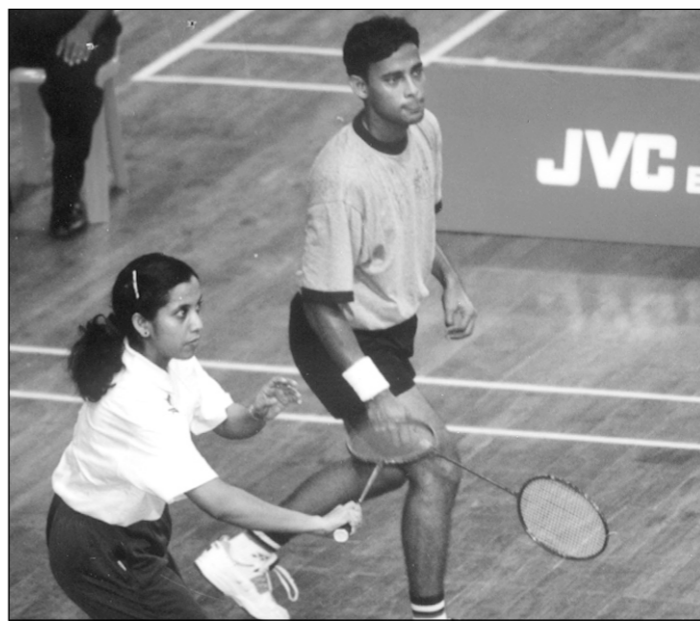


PHOTO: COURTESY

Bangladesh pair of Elina Begum and Mohammad Javed in action in the mixed doubles quarterfinals of the JVC Bangladesh Satellite Badminton Championship yesterday.

## Green Delta hockey 13 not unlucky for Mohammedan

SPORTS REPORTER

Holders Mohammedan Sporting Club registered their 13th win in the Green Delta Premier Division Hockey League with a 4-2 victory over Ajax Sporting Club at the Maulana Bhasani Stadium yesterday.

The winners led the first half 2-1. Pakistani striker Mohammad Asim struck twice in the ninth and 47th minute while Rafiqul Islam Kamal and Mohammad Shafiqat added one each.

On the other hand, Biaka Lusa reduced the margin for Ajax.

With that win, Mohammedan remained atop the table with highest 40 points from 14 matches while Ajax remained in sixth place with 13 points.

In the other match of the day, Sonali Bank outplayed Farashganj Sporting Club by five goals to nothing.

## Ponting won't stop sledging

AFP, Sydney

Australian One Day cricket captain Ricky Ponting admitted Wednesday Australians would continue trying to unsettle opponents with unrelenting sledging.

However, Ponting referred to the verbal assaults as "friendly banter".

"I don't mind a bit of the friendly banter going on but I've said right from the start that I don't like, and won't like, any personal barrages towards anyone," he said.

Australian cricketers were last week accused of being serial sledgers by South African players.

South African rookie Graeme Smith described their verbal assaults in the February-March Test series as "below the belt".

He singled out opener Matthew Hayden as the worst culprit, although he named Ponting, star spinner Shane Warne, Mark Waugh Justin Langer and wicket-keeper Adam Gilchrist as just as foul-mouthed.

Ponting rejected the allegations. "The umpires and the match referees in that series didn't think we stepped over the line so that is why it is so shocking to actually read about some of the things that were supposedly said," Ponting said.

"We did say a few things in the one-dayers but that was more light-hearted and playing on the fact that he wasn't hitting the ball that well."

## Mourning South Africans

Cricket

REUTERS, Bloemfontein

Sports-mad South Africa was in mourning as it prepared to bid farewell to disgraced former cricket captain Hansie Cronje, who was killed in a plane crash at the age of 32.

The South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) said it had been "inundated" with letters and e-mails of support for the family of the fallen sports icon, whose role in a match-fixing scandal two years ago shocked the tradition-steeped game.

The devout Christian stunned the cricket world two years ago after admitting he had accepted about 130,000 dollars from bookmakers to influence the course of matches. He was subsequently banned for life from the game he loved.

His funeral was due to begin at 1200 GMT at his former high school, Grey College, in his hometown of Bloemfontein, an Afrikaans stronghold in the mostly rural Free State province where cricket and rugby are revered.

"Hansie is still our hero. He achieved so many things. I felt terrible when I heard the news, I felt like I lost my own son," Johannes Steenkamp, a former teacher at the school whose son was a friend of Cronje's, told this news agency on Wednesday.

"He never got forgiveness before he died but in Bloemfontein the

feeling has definitely changed," said Steenkamp, who was one of hundreds of people gathered at Grey College before the funeral.

Bouquets of flowers lined the entrance to the 147-year-old school and school boys in blue blazers were lining up to form a guard of honour to escort the casket into the hall where the service will be held.

Local media reports said Cronje would be cremated after the funeral. Underscoring the outpouring of

including executive members of the United Cricket Board (UCB) of South Africa, who were initially told in a letter from the Cronje family they would not be welcome.

But his widow, Bertha, said all were welcome at the funeral, saying that was what her husband would have wanted, prompting a second letter to the UCB which said anyone could attend.

Current South African captain Shaun Pollock told Reuters on Tuesday he would attend the service and local media reports said he would be one of the speakers.

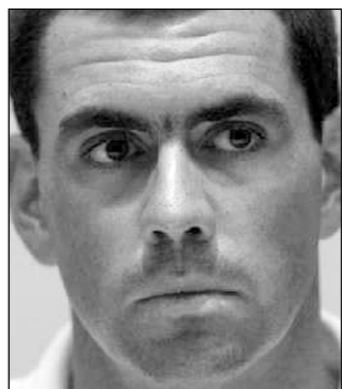
Cronje's father, Ewie, told SABC TV on Wednesday his son had been rebuilding his life at the time of his death. In February, Cronje was appointed as a financial manager by a company listed on the Johannesburg stock exchange.

"He enjoyed (his new work)...His mood was so much better," his father said.

Shattered by the fall from grace of a national sporting hero who displayed dazzling skills on the pitch, Cronje was given strongly attacked at the height of the match-fixing scandal.

But his tragic death at a young age has placed South Africa's notoriously fickle sports fans in a forgiving mood. Most media tributes to him have been gushing in their praise for the former sports hero.

Citizen newspaper's editorial on Monday said: "No matter what you say about Hansie Cronje, you can count us among his fans. He was a charismatic, natural leader and a great sportsman."



HANSIE CRONJE

public grief for a man who just two years ago was widely vilified in the media, the funeral service will be broadcast live on SABC television and satellite subscription channel SuperSport.

The charismatic Rhema Church in Johannesburg, to which Cronje belonged, will show the service on a big screen.

Thousands of people are expected to attend the funeral,

## A final before final

Tennis

AFP, Paris

Top seed and defending champion Jennifer Capriati set up an all-American showdown with Serena Williams for a place in the final at the French Open here on Tuesday.

The Australian Open champion held off the challenge of Yugoslav seventh seed Jelena Dokic, 6-4, 4-6, 6-1, in 84 minutes and will meet Serena, seeded three, who routed former champion Mary Pierce 6-1, 6-1 in 49 minutes.

Wimbledon and US Open champion Venus, the second seed, won her match against three-time champion Monica Seles 6-4, 6-3 in 73 minutes to set up a semi-final clash with the only unseeded player left in the women's singles -- Clarisa Fernandez of Argentina.

"In the second set I started to struggle," said Capriati of the match played under the fading light of Suzanne Lenglen Court.

"But I'm happy it was a tough match and I got to do some running." It is the furthest either of the Williams sisters have reached in the Paris tournament, with Venus' previous best two quarter-final finishes in 1998 and 2000, while Serena reached the final eight last year.

"I feel that I'm a clay court player, although I haven't always had the best results here," said Venus, who went out in the first round last year but hasn't dropped a set so far in the tournament.

"This is my personal best here. More than anything I think that I've had a little bit of bad luck," added Venus. "Now I'm a little older, a little wiser I hope and it's my experience more than anything that can get me through these matches."

Her feelings were echoed by younger sister Serena who overpowered Pierce with the Frenchwoman firing down just 10 winning shots.

"I'm definitely feeling a bit older, wiser, a bit more experienced. I've always felt very comfortable on clay. Now I feel like a clay courtier," said 20-year-old former US Open cham-

pion Serena.

Venus avenged her defeat to Seles from the last time the pair met, in the quarter-finals of the Australian Open, when Seles ended her 24-match winning streak.

But 21-year-old Venus proved the stronger in their first meeting on clay.

"Today I felt so confident running and moving. I was just having fun out there," said a radiant Venus after the match.

Seles, winner here between 1990-1992, was overpowered by a player seven years her junior and was already struggling at 3-1 down when torrential rain and thunder halted proceedings for 45 minutes.

"I just struggled with my game out there today," said Seles. "Things were just a touch off starting from the serve and the groundstrokes. Against a player like Venus, you can't do that."

Venus now meets the odd-man-out, French Open debutant Fernandez, who earlier beat compatriot Paola Suarez 2-6, 7-6 (7/5), 6-1 to become the first unseeded semi-finalist since Capriati in 1990.

However Fernandez was indebted to an act of sportsmanship from her close friend on the decisive point of the second set.

With Fernandez leading 6-5 in the tie-break, she hit a serve that was called out by the line judge but it was immediately over-ruled by Suarez herself handing the set to her compatriot.

And Suarez dismissed the suggestion that she lost out by her sporting gesture.

"One point doesn't really decide a match. In the tie-break I wasn't going to discuss this. We're friends and for me it was out."

It is a dream run for Fernandez, ranked 87 in the world and whose only previous Grand Slam experience was a first round loss at Wimbledon last year.

She ousted fourth-seed Kim Clijsters and Russian Elena Dementieva, seeded 13th, en route to the last eight.

"I got lucky and won the tie-break," said Fernandez after the 2hr 7min match. "But I think any player is just one more opponent whether she is my friend or not. I go out on court to win."

It was her first win against Suarez who knocked her out of the quarter-finals in Madrid two weeks ago, which was her previous best in a tournament.

Meanwhile Dokic was left wondering where it had all gone wrong after taking the first set of the tournament from Capriati.

The Yugoslav committed 65 unforced errors to the American's 48, and converted just four of her 12 break point opportunities.

"I think it was just concentration. I had so many chances in the first set and I think we were both really nervous," said Dokic who went down for the fourth time to the American on her 13th double fault.

Capriati meanwhile was left to ponder on yet another semi-final appearance.

"I mean, this is what really starts to fuel my fire. I really enjoy getting at this stage of a tournament," said Capriati, whose impressive career win-loss record at Roland Garros now stands at 31-7.

## Russia roar

FROM PAGE 13 had made a bright enough start despite the Russians enjoying the lion's share of the possession.

They almost took the lead when Yuri Nikiforov came close to putting through his own net in the 22nd minute attempting to prise the ball off two Tunisian strikers, the ball trickling just wide of Nigmatullin's right hand post.

At the other end Marat Izmailov forced Bounnijnel to make a smart save away to his left with a rising snapshot.

The match soon became bogged down in a midfield traffic jam and Igor Semshov went in the referee's book for chopping down Jaziri.

Nikiforov tried to raise the level above the soporific with a speculative drive from distance but was way off target in the 38th minute.

The Russians left playmaker Alexander Mostovoi and central defender Alexei Smertin on the bench as both had been doubtful beforehand with injury and coach Oleg Romantsev elected not to risk either of them.

Russian president Vladimir Putin had seen the team off to Japan calling on them to make the country proud by reaching the second round playing quality football - and some finally surfaced once they had taken

the lead.

The Tunisians, who crashed out in the opening phase at France 98, are playing in the event for only the third time, with the Russians making their ninth appearance - including those as the Soviet Union until 1990.

The Carthage Eagles, whose starting line-up contained just four home-based players, were forced to leave defender Emir Mkademi on the bench as he also recovers from injury while fellow defender Jose Clayton was also not starting owing to a knee ligament problem.

**TEAMS**  
**RUSSIA:** Ruslan Nigmatullin, Yuri Kovtun, Yuri Nikiforov, Andrei Solomatn, Igor Semshov (Dmitri Kokhlov 45), Viktor Onopko, Valery Karpin, Yegor Titov, Vladimir Beschastnykh (Dmitry Sychyov 55), Ruslan Pimenov, Marat Izmailov (Dmitri Alenichev 78).

**TUNISIA:** Ali Bounnijnel, Khaled Badra (Ali Zitouni 83), Mohamed Mkachar, Ziad Jaziri, Hatem Trabelsi, Hassene Gabsi (Zoubeir Beya 67), Adel Sellimi (Imed Mhadhebi 67), Raouf Bouzaiane, Riadh Bouazizi, Radhi Jaidi, Slim Ben Achour.

**Referee:** Peter Prendergast (Jamaica).

## NZ plan something new

Cricket

REUTERS, Kingston

New Zealand, looking for improvement after big losses in Pakistan, plan to reshuffle their side for the first one-day international against West Indies on Wednesday.

Captain Stephen Fleming said his players were keen to get over heavy defeats in their Pakistan tour of April and May which was cut short after a suicide bombing outside their hotel in Karachi which killed 14 people.

"Losing by a lot can affect your confidence and we picked up injuries," Fleming told a news conference on Tuesday.

"But the way the tour ended was the type of experience that can toughen up individuals. We are looking forward to the challenge

here."

Fleming said New Zealand would benefit from the return to fitness of pace bowler Shane Bond and batsmen Craig McMillan and Nathan Astle.

Bond has recovered from a stress fracture in his left foot, McMillan has overcome an ankle problem and Astle is over a knee injury incurred during the Pakistan tour.

Medium-pace bowler Paul Hitchcock is expected to get his first chance of international action and wicketkeeper Lou Vincent is also likely to play.

"Injuries give you a chance to introduce young players and this gives them a chance to show what they can do ahead of the World Cup," Fleming said.

New Zealand team manager Jeff Crowe said: "We've got a great blend of youth and experience and

players coming back from injury. Bond is showing real pace again and Fleming is a great leader."

Robbie Hart, Mark Richardson and Chris Martin are likely to join the New Zealand squad for the two Test matches in late June. The five-match limited-overs series ends on June 15.

West Indies have chosen continuity for Wednesday's match at Sabina Park.

West Indies named the same 13-man squad beaten 2-1 by India in a one-day series which ended last Sunday. They are hoping to build greater cohesiveness from some encouraging individual performances.

"We were chopping and changing, looking to find the right balance... but the present team has now been playing together for close to a year and this has helped players feel that the selectors have faith in them," West Indies captain Carl Hooper said.

But Hooper admitted that his team were tired after the India series and hinted at a possible rest for either Mervyn Dillon or Cameron Cuffy later in the series.

"Ideally we would like to bring on a couple of players but we haven't got much depth at the moment. We have a couple of tired fast bowlers and there may come a moment to give some younger players a chance," he said.

Hooper also hinted that Shivnarine Chanderpaul would be rewarded for his strong batting performances against India by moving up the order.

"He is on form and we are looking at this possibility, because he may be a bit wasted in the middle," Hooper said.

Hooper's own batting in the Indian Tests and that of Chris Gayle in the second one-dayer have raised West Indies hopes but Brian Lara is still struggling for form.

Hooper acknowledged that weak resistance in the lower order was also a cause for concern.

**SQUADS**

**WEST INDIES:** Carl Hooper (captain), Chris Gayle, Wavell Hinds, Ramnaresh Sarwan, Brian Lara, Shivnarine Chanderpaul, Ryan Hinds, Ridley Jacobs, Mervyn Dillon, Corey Collmore, Cameron Cuffy, Pedro Collins (12th man to be named).

**NEW ZEALAND:** Stephen Fleming (captain), Nathan Astle, Craig McMillan, Chris Nevin, Lou Vincent, Chris Harris, Scott Styris, Daniel Vettori, Paul Hitchcock, Daryl Tuffey, Shane Bond.

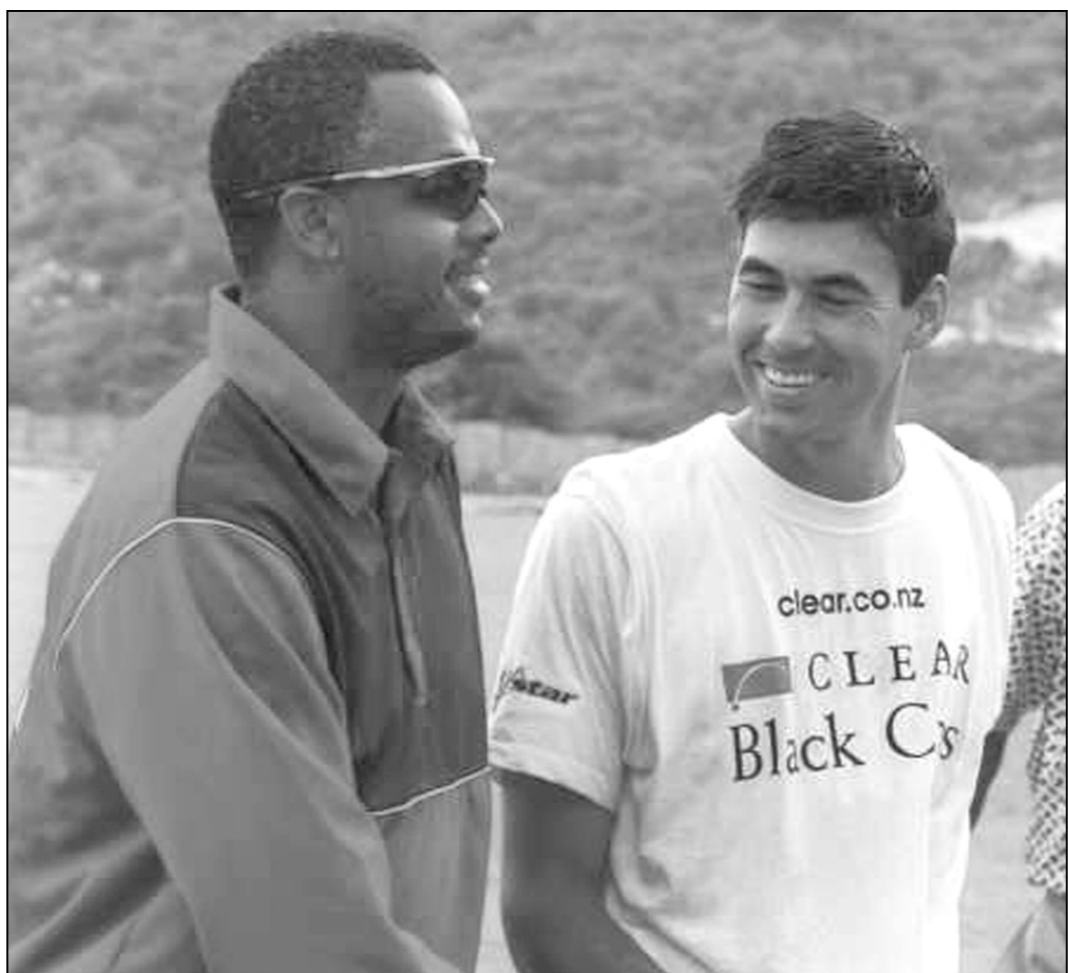


PHOTO: INTERNET

New Zealand captain Stephen Fleming (R) shares a laugh with former West Indies fast bowler Courtney Walsh in Kingston on June 3. The two were attending a function to open the Sir Frank Worrell cricket ground at the Mona Bowl.

## Ganguly leads India in Eng

REUTERS, New Delhi

Sourav Ganguly has been retained as captain for India's tour of England starting later this month, an Indian cricket board official said.

"The selectors decided (to retain Ganguly) following a teleconference," Niranjan Shah, secretary of the Board of Control for Cricket in India, told this news agency.

Ganguly's side were beaten by the West Indies 2-1 in a five-Test series last month but won the subsequent one-day series by the same margin.

India, who leave for England on June 18, will figure in a one-day tri-series, that also involves Sri Lanka, and then play four Tests.

## Murali afraid of Aussie umpires

AFP, Sydney

Sri Lankan spin wizard Muttiah Muralitharan may miss a one-day international series with England and Australia here in December-January because of fears local umpires will call him for chucking.

The Sydney Daily Telegraph reported Wednesday that the Sri Lankan believed Australian umpires are targeting him unfairly and it would not be worth coming here just a month before the World Cup in South Africa.

Muralitharan may well be right. Former policeman Ross Emerson, the last umpire to no-ball the Sri Lankan, said last week the 30-year-old was paving the way for a generation of chuckers.

Emerson, who no-balled the off-spinner amid dramatic scenes in Adelaide, South Australia, three years ago, said it was "an absolute joke" Muralitharan was on track to become Test cricket's top wicket-taker of all time, as he neared West Indian Courtney Walsh's record of 519.

Muralitharan's tally is 417 from 74 Tests after he captured 5-143 in a marathon 64-over stint against England in the second Test at Edgbaston, Birmingham, Saturday, when he snapped up five or more victims in an innings for the 34th time.

"They are talking about him as the best spin bowler ever, but how many people has he got out through illegal actions?" Emerson asked in an interview with the Perth Sunday Times.

Emerson's broadside came only days after Australian vice-captain Adam Gilchrist was reprimanded by the Australian Cricket Board for saying Muralitharan's action was illegal.

The International Cricket Council (ICC) has agreed with Sri Lankan officials that an "anatomical disorder" gives the illusion that Muralitharan's arm does not straighten.

## Let off

FROM PAGE 13 dent, he said: "No, no, no. I don't regret anything. This (faking) is something that will never end in football."

"It is the kind of thing that is going to happen a lot in this World Cup."

He added: "Probably they wanted to make an example of me to make sure it doesn't happen again. But we need to respect the fine and what they decided. "However I am not the kind of player that is normally fined or suspended."

The fine is less than half a day's wages for the Barcelona superstar, whose contract with Barcelona is worth six million dollars.

Teammate Roberto Carlos defended Rivaldo, saying he himself has used similar tactics many times.

"Many people think Rivaldo's attitude was incorrect. In my opinion, it wasn't. I myself have simulated many fouls and penalties that the referee called," he said. "It's moves like that that can make you world champion. You have to be intelligent. Brazilians have always managed to get other players ejected using their intelligence."

## Helping hand

FROM PAGE 13 come all this way and we've been planning this for a year and a half.

"It seems silly that you have to buy a ticket for a person who doesn't sit."