



PHOTO: AFP

WANNA HEAR A JOKE? Indian superstar Sachin Tendulkar (L) pokes his tongue out at teammate Javagal Srinath (R) during training at Supersport Park in Centurion yesterday.

## No threat to Tendulkar

AFP, Centurion

New Zealand's pace bowling sensation Shane Bond will not pose any problems for Sachin Tendulkar, India's Kiwi coach John Wright said on Wednesday.

"Sachin can take care of anything," Wright said as his wards prepared to take on his countrymen in the World Cup Super Six match here on Friday.

India, with seven wins from eight matches, have already qualified for the semifinals along with reigning champions Australia, while New Zealand need a win on Friday to move up.

Tendulkar, one-day cricket's leading batsman, has aggregated a record 571 runs in this tournament, while Bond scared the living daylights out of the Australians on Tuesday with a fiery burst of 6-23 at Port Elizabeth.

India came to the World Cup after a disastrous tour of New

Zealand where they were blanked 2-0 in the Test series before losing the one-dayers 5-2.

But Wright, a former New Zealand captain who took over as Indian coach two years ago, denied Friday's game at SuperSport Park was a grudge game.

"There is no grudge, we just have to play as well as we have been doing in the tournament and get through this game," he said.

"From 14 teams, we have made it to the top four because we have played very good cricket.

"But we need to concentrate hard because no win is easy."

Wright stressed the Indians were not weighed down by the enormous expectations from millions of cricket lovers at home.

"It's a good position to be in since we have made the semifinals. We have won seven of our eight games."

SEE PAGE 15



PHOTO: STAR FILE

Stephen Fleming

## Open up India's wounds

REUTERS, Centurion

New Zealand head for their final World Cup Super Six match against India dreaming of the green, green grass of home.

Stephen Fleming would probably give every dollar he owns to replace Friday's Centurion strip with a Christchurch or Auckland greentop.

Fleming may not be able to fly in one of those seaming, drop-in pitches the Indians, in contrast, have felt wonderfully at home on South Africa's surprisingly flat wickets but he will at least try to invoke the memories of beating India 5-2 in their World Cup warm-

up series.

"We just have to exploit some of their baggage or open up wounds as we did in New Zealand," said Fleming.

"It is a big challenge. India are very confident in the way they are playing, but it is their weakness as well."

India were bowled out for under 130 four times in that one-day series, and also lost both tests, failing to reach 200 in any of their four innings. In Hamilton, they were dismissed for 99 in the first innings.

New Zealand strike bowler Stephen Fleming

SEE PAGE 15

### Quips&Quotes

AFP, Johannesburg

Who's saying what at the World Cup:

"They'll be confident but sometimes that can be a weakness. Hopefully we can open up some of the wounds we opened in New Zealand."

**Kiwi skipper Stephen Fleming looking to continue his team's domination of India when the two sides meet at Centurion on Friday.**

"It was a bit damp at the start, then it played a little bit better but still I don't think it's a great one-day wicket."

**Australia captain Ricky Ponting complaining of the state of the pitch at St George's Park in Port Elizabeth where his team play their semifinal next Tuesday.**

"I would like to think that we are unbeatable. We just have to keep playing well. Even when we are struggling, the effort is always there."

**Brett Lee on Australia's team spirit.**

"I have no choice. I don't want them to say this old man can't bowl."

**India paceman Javagal Srinath thriving on the competition provided by young colleagues Ashish Nehra and Zaheer Khan.**

"I have no regrets about what I

SEE PAGE 15

## Saurav being smart

AFP, Johannesburg

Indian captain Saurav Ganguly on Wednesday downplayed his team's advance to the semifinals of the World Cup, saying it did not mean the title was in the bag.

"I'm not getting carried away. None of the boys are either," Ganguly said ahead of the last Super Sixes match against New Zealand at Centurion on Friday.

"It's great to have come so far, but we've only made the semifinals. We haven't won the World Cup and life hasn't changed."

India, with seven wins from their eight matches, and unbeaten reigning champions Australia are the only teams to have booked a place in the last four.

The remaining two berths will be decided after the last round of Super Sixes matches are played on Saturday.

India will play their semifinal under the Kingsmead lights at Durban next Thursday, two days after the first semifinal featuring Australia at Port Elizabeth on Tuesday.

It will be India's first semifinal away from home since Kapil Dev's team won the title in England in 1983.

"There's no pressure, not yet at least," said Ganguly, who was not part of the Indian team when India

last played a semifinal at home in Calcutta in 1996.

That match was awarded to rivals Sri Lanka by match referee Clive Lloyd after crowd trouble broke out at the Eden Gardens when India were on the verge of defeat.

Ganguly said it was foolish to take a place in the final for granted as some critics have predicted.

"Others may think like that, but we can't afford to think on those lines," the Indian captain said.

"We have to take it one match at a time. For that matter so have Australia. Even they have not qualified for the final yet."

For the moment, the Indians were concentrating on their last Super Sixes match against New Zealand on Friday.

"We can't take it lightly, it's a World Cup game after all," Ganguly said.

"Moreover it would be great to go into the semifinals with eight wins in nine games."

The Indian captain, however, refused to see Friday's match as an opportunity to avenge the defeat in both the Test and one-day series on the tour of New Zealand prior to the World Cup.

SEE PAGE 15



PHOTO: STAR FILE

Saurav Ganguly

### Pycroft quits!

AFP, Bloemfontein

Zimbabwe selector Andy Pycroft said Wednesday he had quit his post as a selector after he had not been consulted about the make-up of the team to play New Zealand in the country's opening Super Six match.

"I wasn't even consulted or contacted prior to the New Zealand match," said Pycroft who was commenting on television during Zimbabwe's Super Six clash against Kenya here Wednesday.

"The only explanation I was given was that the other selectors could not contact me. That's ridiculous. Everybody knows where I am. I'm not staying in the same hotel as the other selector here but I'm only 100 yards away."

And Pycroft added that ahead of this match, the team that he, as well as selector Stephen Mangongo, coach Geoff Marsh and captain Heath Streak had chosen, was rejected by the four other members of the panel back in Zimbabwe.

"The side we picked was not accepted back home. The side was basically being picked from 3,000km away. If that's the case, then what's the point of continuing," said Pycroft, himself a former Zimbabwe captain and convenor of selectors.

"I was asked to come back on the panel because the players thought they needed that cricketing credibility (convenor Ali Shah is the only other member of the six strong committee to have played senior

SEE PAGE 15

## Race on the fast lane



PHOTO: STAR FILE

Brett Lee

INTERNET, Johannesburg

Pakistan's Shoaib Akhtar and Australia's Brett Lee, the world's fastest bowlers, confirmed their status by topping the league table of quickest deliveries recorded during the group stage of the World Cup.

According to statistics from host broadcaster Octagon CSI, they stand out as the only two bowlers to have broken the 160 kmph mark.

Akhtar's fastest delivery took the speed gun up to 161.3 kmph in Pakistan's match against England, while Lee came close to matching his pace rival, also against England, where his top speed was clocked at 160.7 kmph.

Third fastest bowler in the tournament to date is New Zealand's Shane Bond whose quickest delivery of 153.4 kmph was unleashed against Canada. Only 0.2 kmph slower than Bond was West Indies youngster Jermaine Lawson, who surprised the Kenyan batsmen with his pace during his one appearance of the ICC Cricket World Cup 2003 against Kenya.

The fastest recorded deliveries by bowlers from each participating country are:

#### AUSTRALIA

Brett Lee 160.7 kmph v England, Jason Gillespie 148.3 kmph v Zimbabwe and Andy Bichel 146.1 kmph v England

#### BANGLADESH

Mashrafe-bin-Mortuza 139.5 kmph v Canada, Tapash Baisya

138.9 kmph v Kenya and Talha Jubair 135.9 kmph v West Indies

#### CANADA

Davis Joseph 140.5 kmph v Bangladesh, Sanjayan Thuraiasingham 135.5 kmph v Bangladesh and Austin Codrington 135.3 kmph v New Zealand

#### ENGLAND

James Anderson 144 kmph v Australia, Andrew Flintoff 143.9 kmph v India and Andrew Caddick 143.3 kmph v Namibia

#### HOLLAND

Edger Schiferli 138.4 kmph v Namibia, Roland Lefebvre 126.1 kmph v India and Tim de Leede 124.8 kmph v Namibia

#### INDIA

Ashish Nehra 149.7 kmph v Zimbabwe, Zaheer Khan 147.4 kmph v Holland and Javagal Srinath 143.0 kmph v England

#### KENYA

Thomas Odoyo 135.1 kmph v Bangladesh and Martin Suji 131.2 kmph v West Indies

#### NAMIBIA

Gerrie Snyman 138.2 kmph v Pakistan and Burton van Rooi 134.7 kmph v Australia

#### NEW ZEALAND

Shane Bond 153.4 kmph v Canada, Andre Adams 143.8 kmph v West

SEE PAGE 15



PHOTO: STAR FILE

Shoaib Akhtar

Ali Bacher

PHOTO: STAR FILE

## St George's Park to be looked into

REUTERS, Port Elizabeth

World Cup executive director Ali Bacher has ordered an examination of the Port Elizabeth pitch in an effort to improve it ahead of next Tuesday's semifinal.

Bacher instructed the inspection by a group of experts after Australia and New Zealand fought out a low-scoring match in difficult batting conditions on Tuesday.

Bacher said in a statement: "This is not a criticism of the Eastern Province Cricket Board or the ground staff."

"However, we are determined to produce a pitch for the cricket World Cup semifinal at St George's Park that is conducive to great one-day cricket."

The inspection will be carried out by Hilbert Smit, chairman of the South African groundsman's association, and the United Cricket Board of South Africa's director of cricket operations Brian Basson.

They will work with Adrian Carter, the groundsman at the

venue, and World Cup pitches consultant professor Neil Tainton to try and ensure a better batting surface.

The inspection will take start on Wednesday.

Tuesday's pitch started damp and the early moisture was exploited by New Zealand's pace bowler Shane Bond, who took six for 23 to reduce Australia to 84 for seven.

It later dried out and, after Australia had reached 208, New Zealand were dismissed for 112.

The inspection is not the first of the tournament at St George's Park.

Bacher asked Smit to examine the surface and work with the ground staff to improve it after a thrilling but relatively low-scoring match between England and Australia on March 2.

England made 204 for eight and Australia replied with 208 for eight, winning in the final over.

SEE PAGE 15