



Adios Akram

AGENCIES, London

Pakistan legend Wasim Akram announced on Sunday that he was retiring from international cricket with immediate effect.

Wasim said he would not play for Pakistan again after a career spanning 19 years.

He said that it was time to look to life after cricket: "My future is somewhere else after September (when he finishes his contract with Hampshire)," he told Sky Sports.

"Maybe I will be working in television or coaching. There are a lot of options."

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SARS outbreak almost over, says WHO

AP, Singapore

The majority of the SARS outbreaks around the world are coming to an end, the World Health Organisation said Saturday, as Singapore announced fears of a SARS outbreak at a mental hospital were unfounded, leaving it on track to declare its epidemic under control.

But Taiwan on Saturday announced its biggest one-day jump in those infected.

Taiwan's new health minister, Chen Chien-jen, said the outbreak had worsened because "sick people have been hiding their symptoms and starting outbreaks at hospitals." He did not elaborate.

The previous health chief resigned Friday to take responsibility for the island's outbreak.

Saturday's increase brought the total number of SARS cases on the island to 308, but the death toll stayed at 37, health officials said.

SARS has sickened more than 7,800 people worldwide and killed at least 625. The number of new cases has been declining in most areas, except Taiwan.

Officials reported Saturday that 12 more people died from SARS - five in Hong Kong and seven in mainland China.

But the WHO said Saturday the majority of the SARS outbreaks around the world are coming to an end.

Indeed, Singapore was gearing up to announce that its outbreak is under control. The health ministry said it tested 54 patients at the Institute of Mental Health and results showed none had traces of the coronavirus that causes severe acute respiratory syndrome. The statement said the patients were instead sick with influenza.

Singapore last reported a confirmed new SARS case on April 27. If no new cases are reported by Sunday, the city-state will have completed the 20-day period needed for the WHO

to declare its epidemic under control.

And officials at the University of California, Berkeley, announced in Hong Kong Saturday that they would lift a ban on students from SARS-affected areas of Asia who have signed up to attend summer school.

Since initially announcing the ban on all students from SARS-affected areas earlier this month, school officials have been accused of overreacting.

Despite the WHO's overall optimism, Mike Ryan, the agency's coordinator of the global effort to stop SARS, said in Geneva that difficult struggles remain in mainland China.

But he added the epidemic there, although very large, is no more complex than it is in other countries and the government is making great strides.

Still, the WHO on Saturday warned against nonessential travel to the northern Chinese

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DANGLING DANGER: Passers-by yesterday negotiate a maze of 440-volt power cables and telephone lines hanging just overhead on the North South Road in front of the Saritola school in the old part of the city.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN



Twin-murders DB's handling of probe breeds scepticism

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Scepticism grew about the Detective Branch's (DB) handling of the sensational twin-murders of law-enforcers as efforts to unpack leads to the killing made a little headway.

"The investigators will keep the slain detectives' deeds under wraps as they stem from the same stable," a police officer said, requesting anonymity.

None of the operatives of the Jishan group, an alleged gangland outfit, could be caught four days after the incident as the DB is carrying out the probe, he alleged.

If the case had been handed over to any other department, the mystery might have been unraveled, he said in a view shared by his colleagues.

They have a history of bungling probes into crimes that involved

their own people, he said. Some DB officials, however, dismissed the charge.

Meanwhile, the DB and the Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) refrained from making any comment on the progress in the probe.

The detective pair, Nurul Alam Shikder and sub-inspector Alamgir Hossain, were gunned down at Hotel Sun Rise International at Malibagh Chowdhurypara on Wednesday.

Some alleged that the law-enforcers were killed by the gang in a dispute over sharing of booty.

Meanwhile, detectives continued grilling their informant Babul and cleared him of the suspicion that he had played a dual role with the DB in the killing. He was in the hotel room in his wife's burqa when the pair were shot pointblank.

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55,000 new rickshaw licences demanded

SOHEL ISLAM

Organisations of rickshaw-pullers and owners associations have demanded removal of illegal rickshaws from the streets and sought 55,000 new licences from the Dhaka City Corporation (DCC).

The demand was put forward at a meeting with the DCC and the authorities of the Dhaka Metropolitan Traffic Police recently.

"We are also against all illegal rickshaws but the authorities should give us licences so that we can pull rickshaws and survive," said, Insur Ali, a member of one of rickshaw-pullers' organisations.

"I don't know why the DCC won't give us licences. An agreement was already signed between the organisations and the DCC on November 6, 2001, stating that the DCC would give us 40,000 new licences," Insur Ali, added.

At present, there are about 87,000 licensed rickshaws on the city roads. But the authorities do not have an estimate of the exact number of illegal rickshaws. Different agencies have varying numbers. For instance, the traffic department thinks the

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4 al-Qaeda members nabbed in Riyadh

AFP, Riyadh

Saudi authorities have arrested four members of the al-Qaeda terror network in connection with the May 12 triple suicide bombings in Riyadh, Interior Minister Prince Nayef bin Abdul Aziz said Sunday.

The four "are members of al-Qaeda. All evidence points to this," he told a news conference.

"They are linked to the operation... but it has not been proven that they took part in it," Prince Nayef said of the attacks on expatriate residential compounds that killed 34 people.

Another report from Washington, quoting a prominent US senator said Sunday, said

the White House overstated the inroads it has made in its efforts to wipe out the al-Qaeda terrorism network in Afghanistan.

"Al-Qaeda never went out of business," Massachusetts Senator John Kerry told CBS television's "Face the Nation" program, adding that an al-Qaeda operative who survived the war in Afghanistan was likely responsible for last week's car bombing attack in Saudi Arabia.

"There is evidence that one of those people who escaped from Tora Bora was one of those who planned the Riyadh attack," Kerry said.

"I think that the triumphalism of this administration, the president's comments and others'

about al-Qaeda on the run has really exceeded reality," he said.

"What's happened is we broke the beehive, but we didn't kill the bees and we certainly haven't killed the queen bee," Kerry added.

In counter-terrorism efforts, "we need to be stronger and smarter and tougher, and particularly we've got to have a more effective outreach in our foreign policy to build the cooperation necessary to truly wage a war on terror," he said.

Kerry is one of nine Democrats vying for his party's nomination for the 2004 presidential candidacy.

Sharon mulls Arafat's removal

AFP, Jerusalem

A spokesman for Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon yesterday mulled the possibility of removing Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat, whom Sharon's office accused of being responsible for a double attack which killed seven people plus the two bombers.

"Let me just refer you to an experiment that took place in Iraq a month ago -- what happened when a when a reign of terror by one leader was taken off, how the people reacted," Raanan Gissin told reporters.

"... When people say 'he's the leader and he's doing this' well, they haven't had the opportunity really to see what it means to live, or to behave or to act without Yasser Arafat calling the shots, literally," Gissin said.

Gissin stressed any hope for

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Sitakunda journos demand rescue of Khosrus

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Agitated Journalists of Sitakunda yesterday announced a fresh 5-day programme from today demanding immediate rescue of local press club President Atahar Siddique Khosru.

As a part of the programme a token hunger strike would be held on the Chittagong Press Club premises today.

The Chittagong Journalists Forum would jointly organise the hunger strike.

The programme was announced at an urgent meeting at the Sitakunda Press Club yesterday afternoon.

The meeting expressed resentment over the slow progress of the abduction case and criticised the role of the Sitakunda police.

They said the journalists of Sitakunda feel insecure as none of the suspects could be arrested.

Border talks with Myanmar from today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The director general level meeting of Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) and the Immigration Headquarters of Myanmar opens to discuss border issues at the BDR headquarters in Dhaka today.

A seven-member Myanmar delegation led by Director General of Immigration U Maung Htay arrived yesterday to attend the meeting. The team also brings together officials from immigration, migration, social welfare and relief ministries.

Major General Mohammad Jahangir Alam Chowdhury will lead a 12-member Bangladesh side at the meeting. His team will also include officials from the BDR headquarters and representatives from home, foreign, disaster management and relief ministries and survey directorate, joint river commission and immigration and passport directorate.

	Sun Rises	Sun Sets
May 19		6-36 pm
May 20	5-14 am	

Prayer Timings		
May 19		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	4-15	4-50
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	5-00	5-15
Maghrib	6-40	6-45
Esha	8-00	8-30

Source: Islamic Foundation

A wholesaler unpacks Indian mangoes from baskets at Badamtali in Dhaka yesterday. The mangoes imported from India are flooding the Dhaka market well before local mangoes are up for sale.

PHOTO: AKM MOHSIN



Morocco 'identifies' bombers

BBC ONLINE

The Moroccan government says it has identified eight of the suicide bombers who carried out Friday night's attacks in Casablanca.

Justice Minister Mohammed Bouzoubaa told Moroccan television that the authorities had obtained their "names, families and affiliations" from an accomplice who did not die in the bombings.

But he conceded: "We still do not know the names of the others." Police have been rounding up militant Islamists in Casablanca in connection the attacks.

At least 30 people were arrested in a major security operation across the city.



Country reeling under misrule Hasina tells expats in France

UNB, Dhaka

Leader of the Opposition in Parliament and Awami League President Sheikh Hasina has called for freeing the people from what she said the misrule of the BNP-Jamaat government.

"The country is now in a deep crisis due to inefficient and corrupt rule of the government," she told a reception hosted by expatriate Bangladeshis at AGCE Hall in Paris on Saturday, according to a message received here yesterday.

"People's life and property are no longer safe in the hands of this government," the Awami League chief said, alleging that an average of 10 people are being killed every

day. "Unabated price-hike of essentials has further made people's life unbearable," she added.

Hasina, who was in France to attend the French Socialist Party Congress, accused the BNP-Jamaat government of naked politicization of the Judiciary. "This government has no respect for rule of law, nor do they abide by any rules or laws, not even the verdict of the High Court," she said.

The opposition leader called upon the expatriate Bangladeshis to project the true image of Bangladesh and praised their role in times of natural disasters the

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