



Newly appointed Pakistan captain Shoaib Malik (L) stretches alongside batsman Mohammed Yousuf (R) as manager Talat Ali looks on during a practice session at The Gaddafi Stadium in Lahore on Sunday.

Colombo sealed off

AFP, Colombo

Police and security forces sealed off Sri Lanka's capital on Saturday, searching every vehicle entering and leaving the city amid fears of a Tamil Tiger attack, officials said.

There were huge traffic jams at every entry point to Colombo with motorists spending several hours before they could be allowed in. Doctors and others essential services were also stuck at roadblocks.

"This is part of the operations to prevent Tigers getting into the city," a police official said, adding no arrests were made during the three-hour operation.

The extraordinary security measure came as Sri Lankans prepared to watch their team play Australia in the finals of cricket World Cup in Barbados later on Saturday.

The latest moves followed heightened security in the capital after defence ministry reports that Tamil Tiger guerrillas had entered the air space of the island's only international airport overnight on Thursday.

The sky over the Kaunakakai international airport near Colombo -- where government warplanes share a runway with civilian jets -- was lit up with anti-aircraft gunfire in response to the incursion by a "suspicious aircraft."

Electricity to the capital was switched off so potential targets would not be illuminated.

The rebel Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), who have been fighting the government for 35 years and run a mini-state in the north of the island, bombed the Kaunakakai air base a month ago in their first ever air strike.

The separatists staged a second air raid on the Palaly military complex in the north early on Tuesday.

The following day the Tigers held their fire while Sri Lanka beat New Zealand to qualify for Saturday's finals.

Tigers may

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us that they can complete the work by tomorrow. There is only a lack of an elevator in the grandstand but we are trying hard to set it up before the first one-day match. There will be no electronic scoreboard as National Sports Council (NSC) failed to install it but there will be a giant screen," said Shaheen, also head of the venue's supervision committee.

The progress of the renovation work only got into pace after Sports Adviser Tapan Chowdhury expressed his dissatisfaction during a surprise visit two weeks back.

Fergie over

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At Stamford Bridge, Bolton grabbed the lead after the Chelsea back four made a hash of dealing with a 19th-minute corner, the ball falling to Lubomir Michalik, who lashed it home from close range.

The champions were level inside three minutes, Salomon Kalou heading in a Wayne Bridge cross, and went ahead when Kalou's header ricocheted off the bar, a Bolton defender and finally keeper Jussi Jaaskelainen before ending up in the back of the net.

Bolton refused to give up the fight however and, nine minutes after the interval, Kevin Davies grabbed an equaliser with a close-range header and Sam Allardyce's side held out for a draw under the inevitable late barrage from Jose Mourinho's men.

A job well done

ADAM PARORE



I suspect the door is about to close on John Bracewell's career as the Black Caps coach. Bracewell, whose contract is up, has done a reasonably good job.

But the trend in sport is to operate on four-year cycles, based around World Cups. There would need to be a compelling reason to break with that and Bracewell just hasn't achieved enough to warrant a second term.

I've always hoped that John Wright would get his chance at some stage and from conversations with him many years ago: he has had his eye on the Black Caps job.

Whether the time is right for him is another matter, but he is a popular bloke who would be a players' coach. And he has shown with India that he has the ability, and can

handle the pressure.

Don't expect an appointment out of left field because New Zealand are sure to rely on a tried and trusted candidate from the professional coaching ranks.

Justin Vaughan, the incoming New Zealand Cricket chief executive, will set clear ground rules around the coaching issue.

New Zealand cricket is so lucky to have someone of Vaughan's calibre prepared to take over. He is very intelligent and considered.

He has also operated in sophisticated environments. He will have bigger fish to fry down the line so I just hope NZC can make full use of his talents in whatever time he is there.

* I can't see Sri Lanka upsetting Australia in the World Cup final.

Australia have probably been the best side at this long tournament, and their players are in such good form.

Their batters will sit on Muttiah Muralidaran and Lasith Malinga, and attack the others, believing this will

provide them with enough runs. If any side has the goods to beat Australia then it is the Sri Lankans, but they don't look to have enough overall batting firepower.

Shaun Tait looks Sri Lanka's best bet as an Aussie bowler to attack. The wheels could come off with Tait if he is attacked in the right places.

This match will be the farewell for the great Glenn McGrath, who was someone I always enjoyed locking horns with. He never made it fun for opponents out there, which is what makes the game fun.

He seems to have been around forever -- he was playing before I was. I don't think you will see careers as long as his any more because the schedules are so hectic. There are only so many games you can play before bits of the body start falling off.

He was so competitive. (The author is the former New Zealand wicketkeeper and wrote this one for the New Zealand Herald)

McGrath leaving happy

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Barbados as well. This is where I took my first five-for (five wickets in an innings) in international cricket.

"To me a perfect way to finish would be with another five-for, a win, walk off and happy days."

McGrath, who grew up on his family's farm in rural New South Wales before moving to Sydney, said there was no secret to his remorseless accuracy.

"The less complicated you make things, the less things can go wrong. If you can bowl 99 balls out of 100, hitting the deck and the top of off-stump, you'll take wickets."

"When I've given that advice, I'm sure people have walked away disappointed. But it's worked well for me over the last 12 or 14 years."

And Sri Lanka captain Mahela Jayawardene vouched for its effectiveness.

"It's always a challenge facing him because he's always asking questions, not just me, probably any other batsman in the world would say this," said Jayawardene.

Asked about the batsmen he most admired, McGrath singled out Brian Lara, the former West Indies captain who also retired at the World Cup, and India's Sachin Tendulkar.

"The two standouts are Brian and Sachin. I feel Brian was probably in front of Sachin when they were both at their peak."

As for fast bowlers, McGrath nominated West Indies' Curtly Ambrose and Pakistan left-arm great Wasim Akram.

"They were two guys I really looked up to. Ambrose, the way he hit the deck when he really wanted to crank it up and Akram, what he could do with the ball

both new and old and the way he just powered through the crease, both those guys were amazing bowlers."

However, Australia captain Ricky Ponting said McGrath's class was undeniable as well.

"There's no doubt we are going to miss him. He's one of the all-time greats and what he's been able to do for Australian cricket over such a long period of time is unbelievable. I don't mind saying I shed a tear at the SCG after he'd played his last Test."

And with the final also marking John Buchanan's last match as Australia coach before his retirement, Ponting added: "There are lots of good memories."

"Hopefully, there's another great memory we can take from this game and give both Glenn and John the appropriate send-off."



Chief of Army Staff, Lt. Gen. Moeen U Ahmed (2nd from R first row) and founder of Gemcon, Kazi Shahid Ahmed (3rd from R first row), pose with the winners at the prize giving ceremony of the 1st Gemcon Golf Tournament at the Kurmitola Golf Club in the city on Friday.

Malik assured of player backing

PTI, Karachi

Desperate to move on after a horrendous World Cup campaign, Pakistan's new cricket captain Shoaib Malik said the players are ready to adjust with a new coach although they would miss Bob Woolmer.

"Obviously, Bob was with us for more than three years and he has left a void. But we have to move on and the players can adjust with any new coach that the Pakistan board appoints for the team," Malik told reporters after Pakistan's week-long camp for the three-match series against Sri Lanka got underway in Lahore.

Woolmer died on March 18 in Kingston, Jamaica, a day after Pakistan were beaten by Ireland and bundled out of the World Cup in the first round.

Woolmer's death remains a mystery and police in Jamaica are still trying to unravel the causes and circumstances surrounding his murder.

The former England player and South African coach was attached with the Pakistan team from mid-2004 till his death.

The Pakistan board has advertised the post for a national team coach and set May 15 as the deadline for submission of applications.

Malik said the players would extend full cooperation with the new coach whenever he was appointed.

"We are also looking forward to working with the baseball coach the board is planning to appoint to work on our fielding," he said.

Malik also rubbish reports that senior batsman Younis Khan and fast bowler Shoaib Akhtar had declined to join the camp as a part of their non-cooperation with him.

LOCAL SNIPS

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The tournament will end on May 5.

DIV 2 CRICKET

Dhamondi Progoti rode on Palash's whirlwind 100 off 85 balls to beat Kakrail Boys by 83 runs in the Kai-Altech Second Division Cricket League at the City Club ground yesterday.

Progoti made 254 in 45.4 overs and then bowled out Kakrail in 42.5 overs.

In the other matches, Mirpur Cricket Club (148 all out in 41.1 overs) beat Khelaghara SC (149-6 in 32.2 overs) by four wickets while Green Leaf (134-6 in 34.1 overs) beat Young Cricketers (132 all out in 28.2 overs) by four wickets as well.

GEMCON CUP GOLF

Shahriar Nasir Khan and Luna Sarkar won at the Gemcon Cup golf tournament at the Kurmitola Golf Club on Friday.

CR Kim won the senior's title while Soad Mahfuz won that of the juniors.

Major General Jahangir Alam Chowdhury was present during the presentation ceremony at the end of the two-day long meet.

Dhaka giants

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Paul then produced a left-footed side volley in the 56th minute on a throw-in from his compatriot Peter Odafe. It was his tenth goal in the tournament.

Forhad sealed the margin for the winners in the 80th minute by a left-footed angular shot from top of the D-box utilizing a Mithu through pass.

Yellow cards: Mamun Khan (Farashganj).

TEAMS

MOHAMMEDAN: James, Zahid, Arif (Ripon), Peter, Biplob, Divine, Mithu, Sharif (Santu), Kamal, Paul (Rony) and Forhad.

Farashganj: Mamun (Uzzal), Faisal, Riyad (Rajib), Mamun, Khaled, Rony, Kabir, Ali (Liton), Arup, Robin and Khokon.

Referee: Ram Krishna Ghosh.

Thank God

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four wickets in four balls which almost added another dent to South Africa's brittle confidence.

Matthew Hayden, meanwhile, crowned his comeback from the one-day wilderness by smashing virtually every attack to the four corners of the Caribbean, a performance which brought him the world record for the fastest ever century.

And then there was Ireland and their sensational win over Pakistan which proved, if only temporarily, that minnows, at least some of them, did belong in the World Cup.

But their good work was undone by the embarrassing mauvings handed out to Bermuda, Scotland and the Netherlands.

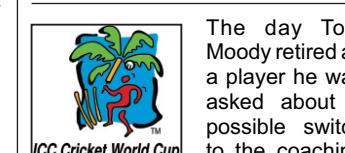
Bangladesh's young team made India look like... well, Bangladesh...with a win that sent Rahul Dravid's men home after the first round.

Many of that Bangladesh team will only be in their mid-20s by the time the next World Cup rolls around.

So what about a world title for the Tigers on home turf? Now that would be worth turning up for.

The reluctant coach

INTERNET, undated



The day Tom Moody retired as a player he was asked about a possible switch to the coaching ranks. It was the easiest question he got all day. "No," he replied without equivocation. "That is a task I won't be taking."

Moody, the former West Australian all-rounder who played eight Tests and 41 one-dayers, moved into a property development job at Multiplex after his retirement six years ago and was happy to let cricket life fade into the sunset. Suggesting to him then he would one day coach Sri Lanka in a World Cup final against Australia would have been as absurd as predicting he would be the first cricketer to land on Pluto.

"When you retire as a player you have had enough," Moody said on Friday. "I had mentally switched off from the game. The thought of coaching was the last thing on my mind."

The former England player and South African coach was attached with the Pakistan team from mid-2004 till his death.

"It was time for me to move on and be challenged somewhere else. A year later got a call from Middlesex and the adrenaline got going. Worcester rang me soon after and I agreed to join them and haven't looked back. I had my hunger and passion back."

Tonight Moody could become a cricketing oddity, the first man to win World Cups for two nations, as a player for Australia in 1987 and '99 and as coach of Sri Lanka.

Although he will not confirm it, Moody is expected to announce soon after the cup he will return to his native Perth and coach the Western Warriors in next season's Pura Cup, for the whisper is he is tiring of life on the road.

While Moody did not initially see himself as a coach, others did because of his shrewd, sensible and inquisitive nature. He is a natural leader. Australian players who played in the 1999 World Cup still believe he made one of pivotal calls of the tournament by quietly persuading captain Steve Waugh to drop an alcohol ban that caused deep divisions within the team.

What initially sounded like a good idea to make players focus on their cricket after a faltering start soon turned sour. While other players were whispering in protest behind cupped hands, Moody, hearing the

dissent, subtly approached Waugh and suggested he let players have a few social drinks, particularly over dinner.

The captain relented and almost from that point the campaign turned around.

Coaching Sri Lanka has flushed out all sorts of emotions in Moody; patience to cope with a complex political environment, the loneliness of long periods away from wife Helen and two children who go to school in England, and admiration for players who have risen from humble, uncoached environments to stare down some of the game's toughest rivals.

"Australians are quite unique in that they are forever the optimists. They go for it and, if they fall over, they will then think about it and say maybe they should not have gone too hard. The Sri Lankans are more of a thinking group. They will think about it, analyse it and then go for it," Moody said.

"Australians like the go-for-broke philosophy but you would fall over yourself if you tried that with Sri Lanka because it is not the way they do it."