

Kevin going after WC?

PTI, London

Top England batsman Kevin Pietersen has decided to quit one-day cricket after the World Cup starting in the subcontinent next week to prolong his Test and Twenty20 career, a report said on Saturday.

Pietersen also wants to spend more time with his family and intends to step down from what he sees as the least important form of the game, a report in the 'Daily Mail' tabloid said.

If he gives up the 50-over game, Pietersen may lose his central England contract but will be able to play more often for his new county Surrey and in the Indian Premier League also, the newspapers said.

Pietersen's appetite for 50-over cricket has been on the wane since he was sacked as England captain in 2009 and then suffered a serious achilles injury, as demonstrated by his dismal record in ODIs over the last two years.

Safety first for PCA

PTI, Mohali

Foolproof security arrangements would be in place for a smooth conduct of two league matches and a semi-final tie of the World Cup to be played at Punjab Cricket Association (PCA) stadium here next month.

"As ICC is holding the World Cup, they have hired a retired DGP rank officer to draw up overall security plan for all the eight centres in India including the PCA. Our Association is also extending all cooperation to the ICC and local police in ensuring foolproof security for the three matches," PCA Secretary, M P Pandove told reporters here.

He said the ICC consulted with the Union Home Ministry to ensure foolproof security at the venues.

"The retired DGP who has also handled the Commonwealth Games security-related issues also had a meeting with top police brass of Chandigarh and Punjab," he informed.



BATTLE PLAN

AN ARMY HELICOPTER IS ABOUT TO LAND IN THE ACADEMY GROUND ADJOINING THE SHER-E-BANGLA NATIONAL STADIUM AS PART OF THE SAFETY DRILLS AHEAD OF THE CRICKET WORLD CUP BEGINNING HERE ON FEBRUARY 19.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

Siddons, so far so good

MOHAMMAD ISAM



When the Tigers run on to the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium's pristine outfield next Saturday to take on India in the World Cup's opening game, expect a well-organised effort.

There will be more focus to basics and little to their opponents. It will be a team effort, the sort that has been the Bangladesh cricket team's trusted ally over the last few years.

They have major strengths, and areas of concern too, like all the fourteen others in the World Cup but it has been evident that the Tigers have taken the step up in terms of discipline and bringing about a method as they advance into the 25th year of one-day international cricket.

Much of this newfound discipline, especially in the batting, has been accredited to Jamie Siddons, the head coach who took over the job late in 2007. Regarded as a peer-

less performer in Australia's Sheffield Shield cricket, Siddons was unfortunate to miss out on (except a single game) international exposure. But his contribution to the development of Bangladesh cricket will probably go unchallenged because in his tenure Bangladesh have won an away Test and ODI series (albeit against a weakened West Indies side) as well as the 4-0 drubbing of New Zealand.

Over the years, Bangladesh have had several foreign coaches with varied levels of success and development. Mudassar Nazar, the former Pakistan all-rounder, was the first, and Siddons is the ninth (counting Shaun Williams's stint after Dav Whatmore's departure). Their arrivals and subsequent exits have made headlines but their impact, in one way or the other, has been felt quite directly among the players of that particular generation.

If Indian great Mohinder Amarnath introduced fitness to the national team, one could easily say that Gordon Greenidge, the West

Indian legend, brought about a sense of belief, producing the ground-breaking 1997 ICC Trophy win and the subsequent 1999 World Cup sensations. Eddie Barlow was perhaps the most diligent and the first to produce a blueprint of a Test-playing nation but sadly, the country had to let go of the magnificent South African. Two stints -- of Mohsin Kamal and Trevor Chappell -- that the Tigers would rather forget followed and then came the already successful Dav Whatmore. A master motivator and tactician, Whatmore fit in perfectly as the team's father figure given the amount of changes taking place during his time. But the 1996 World Cup-winning coach built a solid team that had experience and a group of youngsters, culminating in Bangladesh's best showing of the 2007 World Cup.

Siddons has always been a big fan of consistency and development among the batsman to fine tune themselves and bring home the runs. His concept, Australian to

and his reputation. Siddons has built his own side, some say that he has done it from scratch after the Indian Cricket League fall-out but the Australian has been perceived in certain quarters as lacking in management skills. Fortright in nature, Siddons has often repeated his demand for more batsmen to perform, possibly alienating Mohammad Ashraf. His latest fall-out with Mashrafe Bin Mortaza is another example that at times, some players, particularly seniors and those out of form, need an encouraging voice.

But whatever the shortcomings, Siddons would be judged by the team's World Cup performance. This is a modern trait of the cricketing bosses who pick a coach keeping the mega event as an expiry date or a day to renew the contract. It is however a strong belief that Siddons must stay after the World Cup to smoothen the transition of the team into Test cricket, an area where Bangladesh still haven't found a 20-wicket bowling attack.

Amarnath's stand-off with one of the senior players is part of cricket's legends in this country but the relationship between the players and coaches like Greenidge and Barlow was a strength of the team. After the junior-most Chappell and Kamal had nondescript turns, Whatmore faced the blowtorch of the world media due to the transition period

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Painting a pretty picture

REAZUR RAHMAN ROHAN



When winter comes about, Dhaka is a bounding with wedding ceremonies.

Parents of the bride and groom do everything possible for their son and daughter's ceremonies to look gorgeous, memorable and one where the guests leave happy and satisfied. Weddings usually reflect the families' taste, culture and limit of hospitality and it is an often enough sentiment that the best ceremony is the one that is organised from the heart and not always the pocket.

Apart from deep pockets, a big heart, a fine taste,

organisational ability and creativity are some of the basic requirements for large events and when it comes down to something like the World Cup, it requires an all-out effort.

Though the organisers delayed in tightening their shoelaces, the capital is slowly gripping the World Cup fever with beautiful new adornments being installed in the prominent parts of Dhaka.

Starting from the Hazrat Shahjalal Airport, the city has taken the garb of beautification, though some of the important zones, like the approach road to the team hotel, are conspicuously bare.

If you are atop the Mohakhali flyover, there are

decorative lights and flowers to see, the round lights mounted specially for the World Cup. These lights also go right down till Sonargaon roundabout and the VIP road looks greener than before. Almost all important medians and road islands stretching from Bangabhaban to the Airport have been brought under fresh plantation too. Trees are being planted and the addition of more flowers adds to the lively atmosphere.

But the biggest surprise is awaiting you as you are near the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium. The area has taken a new look, mostly around the Mirpur-10 roundabout and the approach road to the cricket ground. The roads have been widened with

none of the illegal roadside shops around (but probably for the time being). The residential buildings are all newly painted, the roads freshly carpeted.

The premises of the stadium also have some new additions including the giant 'disturbed' stumps but the sculpture of the wrong-footed bowler has been shifted to the eastern gate. But the ugly part of the Mirpur venue is the numerous shops that are part of the stadium, run-down furniture, leather and repair shops give the place the clumsiest look.

The venue of the February 17 opening ceremony, the Bangabandhu National Stadium, is being groomed to a completely different level. Anyone who saw that legendary stadium a few months ago will be very surprised by its makeover of the newly-painted, colourful chairs as well as the refurbished stands. Buildings around both stadiums are freshly painted by their owners; everyone wants their houses to look prim and proper for the mega event.

Across the metropolis, there are big billboards with encouraging messages and wishes for the national team. Private firms are using the chance for their advertisements, putting figures of the likes of Tamim Iqbal and Shakib Al Hasan on the board. The official sponsor of the national team for the World Cup, Beximco, launched a huge cricket bat where you can put your best wishes for the cricket team while Clemon had already launched another huge

SEE PAGE 17 COL 5



A cardboard cutout of a bowler in action has been put up outside Mirpur's Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium as part of the beautification measures in and around the venue.

Don't win WC, please!

AFP, Colombo

While the media of every country usually backs its team, a Sri Lankan newspaper columnist has urged the national squad not to win the World Cup -- for the greater good of the nation.

"Call me a traitor, a quisling... anything, I don't want Sri Lanka to be the champions of cricket World Cup 2011," the sports writer of the privately run The Island daily said.

"Want to hang me, come catch me," Russell Palipane wrote Saturday.

"Just imagine what will take place if Sri Lanka emerges champs. DS de Silva (president of Sri Lanka Cricket) and his cronies will say it was because of their organisation skills."

Sri Lanka Cricket (SLC) was recently described as "one of the most corrupt organisations in the country" by former sports minister CB Ratnayake. SLC is also the country's richest sports governing body.

The newspaper, which usually supports the government of President Mahinda Rajapakse, also raised fears that ruling-party politicians will exploit a Cup victory to bolster their own image.

The scathing report comes despite a government appeal to the local media not to hurt the morale of the national squad ahead of the World Cup, of which Sri Lanka is a host, along with India and Bangladesh.

The columnist goes on to beg Sri Lankan captain Kumar Sangakkara not to win the tournament, which runs from February 19 to April 2.

"Kumar dear, please spare the country. Don't win it for the majority of this country are nothing but a pack of jokers, like the former chairman of selectors [Asantha de Mel], about whom [former skipper] Marvan Atapattu had a few things to say, before he retired," the paper said.

Atapattu retired in 2008 after serious differences with the cricket administration.

Cricket South Africa boss ousted

AFP, Johannesburg

Cricket South Africa president Mtuzeli Nyoka was ousted by the federation's members in a vote of no-confidence Saturday morning, the organisation said on its website.

"With immediate effect, the position of Dr M Nyoka as president of Cricket South Africa is terminated," the federation said.

Nyoka, who did not attend the meeting, was voted out by an "overwhelming majority" of Cricket South Africa's 11 affiliate presidents.

Nyoka had locked horns with the federation's chief executive, Gerald Majola, over more than one million rand (138,000 dollars) in bonus money paid out when South Africa hosted the Indian Premier League in 2009.

The federation's board cleared Majola in November of financial impropriety, accepting a review committee's finding that he had not deliberately failed to disclose bonus payments to federation staff.

Sports Minister Fikile Mbalula had last month stepped in to urge Majola and Nyoka not to let their dispute disrupt the Proteas' preparations for the cricket World Cup.

Cricket South Africa said vice-president AK Khan would act as president until a new election at the federation's annual general meeting in August.



PHOTO: AFP

SIXTH TIME LUCKY?: Indian maestro Sachin Tendulkar is in a relaxed mood during yesterday's practice session at Bangalore. India play their first warm-up match against Australia today.