

WI suffer  
twin blow

AFP, New Delhi

With a day to go before India kick-off the World Cup against Bangladesh, former champions West Indies on Friday became the latest side to be struck by the injury curse affecting the marathon tournament.

Exciting opener Adrian Barath and wicketkeeper Carlton Baugh were ruled out, bringing to 10 the number of players forced to withdraw ahead of the 49-match sporting showpiece -- tipped to be the most open for years.

But two-times winners the West Indies have been forced to rethink their plans with less than a week to go before their opening match against South Africa in New Delhi.

"Medical specialists have determined that in both cases the players will not be able to resume training for two to three weeks," the West Indies Cricket Board said in a press release, referring to Barath and Baugh.

Kirk Edwards, an uncapped batsman from Barbados, and Antigua wicketkeeper Devon Thomas were named as replacements, subject to approval by the International Cricket Council (ICC).

So far the ICC has approved eight replacement players for teams in the World Cup.

Middle

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inconclusive, aside from the fact that more work remains on the drawing boards. Hopefully, the team had not been too distracted by the Mashrafe saga and has its battle plans ready. In Tamim, the Bangladeshi line up has a more than competent counterpoint to the aggression of Sehwag. It is of importance that the rest of the order stands up to be counted.

Yesterday, as the World Cup warm-up match between England and Pakistan started, hundreds lined that narrow road waiting to get into the Khan Shaheb Osman Ali Stadium. The going was slow because of the security checks, but the people did not seem to mind, happily chatting away among themselves as the line inched forward.

"The Khan Shaheb Osman Ali Stadium has always been peaceful," said Shagor, an employee of Minar Group of Industries. "I had a voucher, and I picked up my ticket from the Jubo Shangha, and it was all very disciplined. The only disappointment was that we were not allowed to bring in bottle caps, which is very inconvenient," added Shagor who was walking with a full, two-litre water bottle without a cap.

Tickets were also available for sale at the Jubo Shangha. Shohagh and Sohail, two local businessmen, bought the tickets and were happy with the arrangements. "We had no problems, everything went



PHOTO: AFP

England batsman Paul Collingwood cuts the ball during their World Cup warm-up match against Pakistan at the Khan Saheb Osmani Stadium in Fatullah yesterday.

## Charming Fatullah

SAKEB SUBHAN

After the rigours and hectic pace of Mirpur's Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium, Fatullah is a sigh of relief. The ground is reached through a narrow road that trails off from the Dhaka-Narayanganj highway, lending the approach an almost rustic feel.

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smooth. The queue was long, but we expected that," said Sohail.

Although the tickets started selling from nine in the morning, by the time the game started, the ground was at best half-full. As England's innings wore on, the gallery continued to fill up, and by the twenty-fifth over of their innings it had reached near-capacity, which reflected the people's passion for the game. It was also the first time that a match was played under lights at Fatullah.

The ground has a quaint setting, including the surrounding landscape through its low galleries instead of excluding it, as most modern venues do. The low galleries allow the surrounding areas to be seen, forming a very intimate atmosphere. Fatullah has real character, and presents a simpler picture of Bangladesh's passion for cricket.

When asked whether he would like to see international cricket back at Fatullah, Mustafizur Rahman, a local student of under-graduate level said, "I am very happy that the World Cup is being hosted in Bangladesh. But of course, I would like to see international cricket back at Fatullah because it is my home." Judging by the passion and love for the game coupled with the ground's intimate atmosphere, international cricket will be richer for it. It certainly is a far cry from Dhaka's madness.

## Nonchalant

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While both camps have mostly stayed quiet about the encounter, Virender Sehwag has hardly seen the match as just another game of cricket, calling it a 'revenge' game a few weeks ago.

"Frankly, I have never thought about it, but we obviously don't want a repeat," said Dhoni, who played that game in the 2007 World Cup. In India's 15-man squad, seven players could feature in team today, four of whom will make up the top-order.

After the 2007 win, Bangladesh have lost all seven games between the two sides but the Tigers' recent form has also caught Dhoni's eye. "Bangladesh are a good side with three very good left-arm spinners," he said. "They rely a lot on spinners, especially in the sub-continent where slow bowlers get a lot of help."

But when asked about Mashrafe Bin Mortaza's absence, given the amount of attention the paceman has received, Dhoni's response was funny, but only for a few.

"At least I know that he won't be the man-of-the-match tomorrow (Saturday)," he remarked, referring to the two man-of-the-match awards Mashrafe received in both of Bangladesh's wins over India in 2004 and 2007.

## 'Tough to axe veteran duo'

AFP, New Delhi

Sri Lanka's chief selector Aravinda de Silva has spoken of his tough decision in omitting fellow 1996 World Cup winners Sanath Jayasuriya and Chaminda Vaas from the squad.

All three players were in the team that beat Australia to lift the trophy for the first time in Pakistan 15 years ago but de Silva said he could not justify including the two veterans in the 15-man squad for the 2011 tournament.

"It was a very difficult decision and a very emotional moment for me when it was decided that Sanath Jayasuriya and Chaminda Vaas have to be left out from the World Cup squad," he wrote in the Times of India.

"They've been my team-mates for such a long (time) and they are such fabulous players with great records."

"But at the end of the day, as a selector, I have to do the right thing. I have to pick 15 of the best available players on current form. Taking that into account, I don't think it would have been possible to include them."

Hard-hitting batsman Jayasuriya, 41, has notched 13,428 runs and taken 322 wickets in 444 one-day internationals but last played in an ODI in 2009.

Left-arm paceman Vaas, 37, has taken 400 wickets in 322 one-day internationals, last appearing in 2008.

Both players were included in Sri Lanka's preliminary 30-man squad for the World Cup in India, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka, which starts on Saturday.

De Silva said the tournament was evenly poised with all the top teams in with a chance to lift the trophy, adding that Sri Lanka, among the favourites, had a good chance.

De Silva scored 107 not out and took 3-42 as Sri Lanka beat Australia by seven wickets in the 1996 final in Lahore.

## The Broad and Colly show

SAKEB SUBHAN



Stuart Broad with the ball, and Paul Collingwood with both bat and ball put in dominant displays as England beat Pakistan at a hopeless 187 for 8. Bresnan then got rid of Akhtar, and Broad picked up his second five wicket haul when he took the last wicket of Wahab Riaz.

Set 274 to chase, Pakistan got off to a disastrous start as Stuart Broad ripped out the heart of their batting, getting Kamran Akmal (18) caught at slip, trapping Mohammad Hafeez (0) leg-before, and bowling Umar Akmal (2) by the time the score reached 34. The required run rate had swelled to above six by the time the fourth wicket, Asad Shafiq (12) fell to Collingwood with the score on 74.

Younis Khan (80) then strung together two forty-plus partnerships with Ahmed Shehzad (26) and Misbahul Haq (25), but Andrew Strauss never let them run away with the momentum, using Collingwood's slow cutters cleverly on a slow pitch.

Younis Khan (80) then

allowing James Anderson to pick up Shehzad, while Collingwood accounted for Misbah.

Broad then picked up his fourth wicket, snaring the all-important scalp of Younis, caught behind by Prior to leave Pakistan at a hopeless 187 for 8. Bresnan then got rid of Akhtar, and Broad picked up his second

five wicket haul when he took the last wicket of Wahab Riaz.

Earlier, England's innings hinged on key contributions from two men whom they have often depended on in the past. Kevin Pietersen, promoted to open, steadied the innings after losing captain Andrew Strauss (5) and in-form Jonathan Trott (9) with the score reaching 37.

Pietersen played an assured innings, with neither the pace of Shoaib Akhtar nor the spin of Saeed Ajmal bothering him much.

A faultless innings was cut short when substitute Abdur Rehman had him stumped for 61 when the England batsman charged him. That ended a partnership of 80 between Bell and

Collingwood with the score on 74.

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