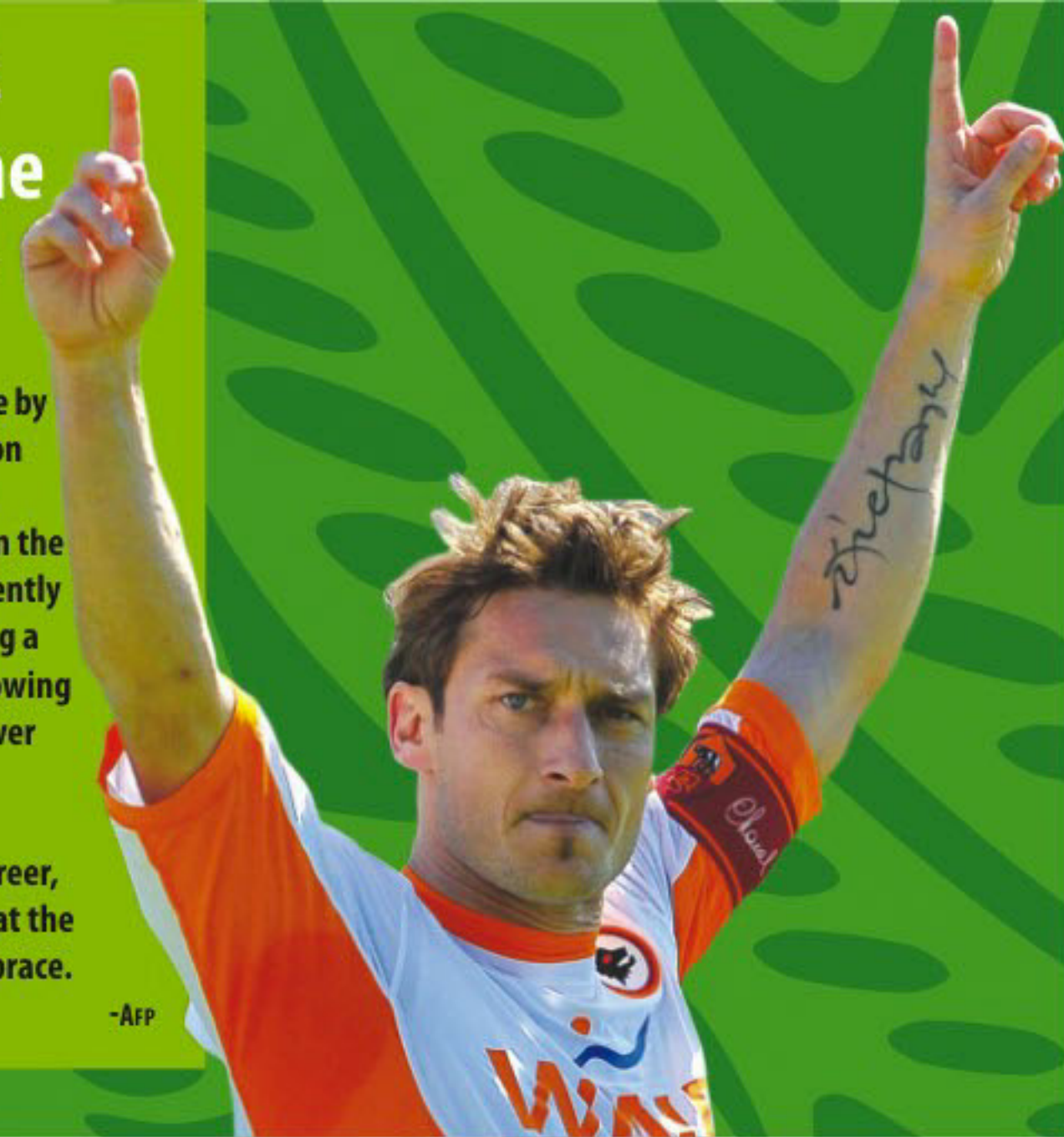


Star SPORT

DHAKA TUESDAY MARCH 22, 2011, E-MAIL: sports@thedailystar.net

Totti reaches 200 milestone

Francesco Totti scored a brace to earn Roma a 2-2 draw at Fiorentina and in doing so achieved a personal milestone by becoming only the sixth person to reach 200 goals in Serie A. Totti's 200th strike came from the penalty spot but he subsequently reached 201 when completing a second successive brace, following his two goals in the victory over bitter city rivals Lazio last weekend. It was the 37th time in his career, spent exclusively at Roma that the 34-year-old has banged in a brace.



-AFP



BATTLE OF THE MERCURIALS: Pakistan captain Shahid Afridi (L) and West Indies skipper Darren Sammy (R) alight their buses at Dhaka's Sheraton, after arriving in the city yesterday evening. The two teams take on each other in the first quarterfinal of the World Cup on Wednesday at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium.

PHOTOS: ANISUR RAHMAN

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State security for Windies

AFP, Dhaka



Bangladesh will ramp up security to 'state-level' for the West Indies team in an attempt to ensure their World Cup quarterfinal passes off trouble-free, a senior police officer said Monday.

The West Indies will take on Pakistan on Wednesday, with Bangladeshi officials keen to avoid a repeat of the embarrassing March 4 incident, when an angry mob pelted the West Indies team bus with stones.

Bangladesh fans attacked the bus as the visiting players were leaving Sher-e-Bangla Stadium after beating the home side in a one-sided match.

The Windies bowled the World Cup co-hosts out for a humiliating 58 -- Bangladesh's lowest ever one-day score.

Dhaka police commissioner Benazir Ahmed told AFP the West Indies team would be provided with the "highest security" possible when they arrive later Monday and police would make sure there was no "crowd trouble".

"The West Indies are our valued guests and we will ensure the highest state-level security to them. It's a state-level commitment. We shall make sure that there is no crowd along the key parts of the road to the stadium," he said.

"They can be assured of fool-proof security," he added.

He said the same security arrangement was provided to the South African team when they took on Bangladesh at the same stadium Saturday.

The home side lost the match and crashed out of the World Cup but this time there was no angry reaction from fans.

International Cricket Council chief executive Haroon Lorgat had downplayed the March 4 bus attack, insisting it was a minor incident, but West Indies coach Ottis Gibson said it was a serious breach of security.

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Pakistan riding on Aussie win

AFP, Colombo



Pakistan's World Cup victory over Australia has restored the team's battered image and boosted their credentials as champions-in-waiting, skipper Shahid Afridi told AFP on Monday.

Pakistan upstaged Australia by four wickets to end the defending champions' unbeaten 34-match streak in the World Cup stretching back to 1999.

It also meant Pakistan finished top of Group A and gave them a quarter-final clash against the West Indies in Dhaka on Wednesday while Australia tackle India in Ahmedabad on Thursday.

"We knew that beating Australia would be very important for us and this win has enhanced our image, sending a good signal to the cricket world that we can win despite our difficult situation," Afridi told AFP.

Pakistan entered the tournament on the back of a spot-fixing scandal which led to lengthy bans on former Test captain Salman Butt and pacemen Mohammad Asif and Mohammad Aamer.

The three men are also facing criminal proceedings in the United Kingdom.

Pakistan has also been a no-go area for international teams since the terrorist attacks on the Sri Lankan team bus in Lahore two years ago.

Those attacks, which killed eight people

and injured seven Sri Lankan players and their assistant coach, forced the International Cricket Council to strip Pakistan of its 2011 World Cup co-hosting rights.

Afridi said Pakistan still has a deep well of natural cricketing talent.

"Despite all the problems Pakistan is blessed with talent and it's because of this talent that we are a dangerous team and can win against anyone. We now hope to carry on the momentum," said Afridi.

The Pakistan captain disagreed that the West Indies, who squeezed into the last eight on run-rate, will be easier opponents.

"They have qualified for the quarter-finals after some good play, so we have to do well in all three departments because it's a knockout stage from here," said Afridi, the leading wicket-taker with 17 in six matches so far.

Afridi said he was not thinking of a potentially high-voltage semi-final clash against India if the two Asian rivals come through their last-eight tests.

"Our focus is on the quarter-final, we have to win that to reach the semifinal, so we are not thinking that far. First we have to win a must-win match against a dangerous opponent," said Afridi.

The winners of the first two quarter-finals meet in the second semi-final at Mohail on March 30.

South Africa play New Zealand on March 25

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'Board meeting to discuss Siddons future'

SPORTS REPORTER

The future of Jamie Siddons as the head coach of the Tigers will be discussed on Friday in the next directors' meeting of Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB).

BCB media committee chairman Jalal Yunus informed that the technical committee, in its meeting yesterday, recommended that the "highest forum" should discuss the issue of Siddons.

The 46-year-old Australian's contract runs till June 30 this year, so he would be in charge during next month's ODI series against Australia at home but beyond that, his coaching future with the Tigers will be decided by the board members.

"It will be discussed at the highest forum, at the board meeting," said Jalal after the technical committee met to discuss issues ranging from the national team's support staff to the selection of the A team.

"We think that the best place to discuss these serious issues in the board meeting and it will cover the concerns of all the coaches. They

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After all it's the last 8 big boys standing

AFP, New Delhi



After four gruelling weeks, thousands of air miles clocked up and 42 matches played, the World Cup quarterfinals will still feature the world's eight top-ranked teams.

The first round, as expected, saw Bangladesh, Ireland, Netherlands, Zimbabwe, Canada and Kenya fall by the wayside with some hitting the ground more painfully than others.

But, in general, it was business as usual for the sport's elite sides and fuel for the International Cricket Council who will slash the 2015 World Cup to 10 teams from the 14 who started out on the sub-continent.

Ireland were the only associate nation to defy the odds when they pulled off a huge upset against England in Bangalore on the back of Kevin O'Brien's fastest ever World Cup century.

It didn't matter that England went on to lose to lowly Bangladesh or India were beaten by South Africa who in turn lost to England, the big beasts of cricket still made the quarter-finals their own.

Most of the action centred around Group B thanks mainly to England

who unwittingly did the organisers a favour by infusing life into the tournament through their see-saw performances.

England were staring down the barrel after India whipped up a formidable 338 batting first but skipper Andrew Strauss struck a fine 158 as his team tied the game.

Ashes winners England then did the unthinkable by going down to Ireland despite making a huge 328.

Irish marauder O'Brien, with his hair dyed a shocking blend of pink and purple for a cancer charity, cracked the World Cup's fastest century off just 50 balls to achieve a memorable win.

"That's a long way the best innings I've ever played," said O'Brien, who smashed six sixes and 13 fours in his whirlwind 113 off 63 balls.

England regrouped from the Ireland disaster in time to stun South Africa in a low-scoring thriller before being dumped by Bangladesh in front of screaming home fans.

Faced with a must-win situation against the West Indies, England were heading for another defeat only for replacements James Tredwell and Luke Wright to save the day.

"None of us wanted to go home in the morning, and we were very moti-

vated to not let that happen," said Strauss.

"To bring Wright and Tredwell in for a massive game was a bit of a gamble. They stood up and delivered when it really counted."

India were plagued by inconsistent form and their dislike of the umpire review system.

"The adulteration of technology with human thinking," was skipper Mahendra Singh Dhoni's less than flattering appraisal of the system.

Injuries added to the woes of weary teams with many key players forced to cut back their participation.

West Indies lost Dwayne Bravo, Adrian Barath and Carlton Baugh while England packed Kevin Pietersen, Stuart Broad and Ajmal Shahzad off to the airport.

Champions Australia cruised quietly through the group stages before they lost their 34-match unbeaten World Cup run to Pakistan who played true to their unpredictable tag.

Maverick paceman Shoaib Akhtar hung up his boots, muddled by years of injury and controversies.

Fans turned out in huge numbers to cheer their home teams, but other venues were eerily empty as many first round matches failed to capture the imagination.

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