

Iran appoint Queiroz

Carlos Queiroz of Portugal has signed a contract to coach Iran through to the end of the 2014 World Cup, the ISNA news agency reported on Monday.

"Carlos Queiroz has signed a contract with the Iranian football federation to coach 'Team Melli' up to the end of the 2014 World Cup in Brazil," ISNA said, without giving any financial details of the deal.

Queiroz takes over from Tehran-born US national Afshin Ghotbi, whose contract was not renewed after Iran were knocked out of the 2011 Asian Cup by South Korea.



Next two WCs to have 10 teams

CRICINFO

The ICC has confirmed that the next two World Cups will be 10-team events. The 2015 edition of the premier 50-over tournament will be co-hosted by Australia and New Zealand, and the 2019 World Cup will be played in England. Haroon Lorgat, the ICC's chief-executive, hinted that the 1992 format could be brought back, wherein all teams play each other in a round-robin league, and the top four make it to the semifinals.

"We haven't quite started on designing the format," Lorgat said. "I seem to recall that in 1992 it was a 10-team event [nine, in fact], so there is a chance that we might replicate that. That is work that will commence perhaps not long from today [Monday]."

The recently concluded World Cup, which has been universally hailed as a success, featured 14 teams, and the league stage was played in two groups of seven each, with the top eight playing the quarter-finals. The trimming of the event basically means that a

team such as Ireland, which brought a lot of value to the two previous World Cups, will not be a part of the next World Cup. To compensate, the World Twenty20 has been expanded to 16 teams, giving six Associate or Affiliate members a chance to play in a premier world event every two years, but no matter how well they perform there, they will not be part of the next 50-over World Cup.

For 2019, though, there will be a qualification competition, the nature of which is yet to be determined. It is likely that the last two places will be up for grabs in that competition. After the 2019 event, a relegation and promotion system will be introduced to the newly conceptualised ODI league. That then will take care of the qualification.

The ratification of this proposal, which has been criticised by all Associates, has drawn strong reaction from Ireland. Cricket Ireland's chief, Warren Deutrom, told ESPNcricinfo: "It's nothing short of outrageous." Lorgat, though, said that the

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PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

Australia cricketers Brett Lee (C) and Shane Watson (R) arrive at Dhaka's Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport yesterday.

Afridi slams Indian media

AFP, Islamabad

Pakistan captain Shahid Afridi, whose team lost to India in the cricket World Cup, has delivered an astonishing tirade against Indian media for worsening political ties between the two great rivals.

In a Pakistani TV show aired Sunday by private channel Samaa, a bitter Afridi was repeatedly applauded by the studio audience and praised Pakistan's media for being "a hundred times better".

"As far as Indian media is concerned, their approach is very negative. I believe their role has also been very dirty especially in terms of worsening ties between our two countries," he said.

"If I have to tell the truth, Indians cannot have the kind of hearts that Pakistani Muslims have. They cannot have the big and clean hearts that Allah has given to Pakistanis."

His remarks cut across praise from the United States for so-called cricket diplomacy between India and Pakistan, whose leaders met for the semi-final that Afridi's side lost by a mere 29 runs.

Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh invited Pakistani counterpart Yousuf Raza Gilani to watch the World Cup match between the two nations last Wednesday -- the first time a top Pakistani leader visited since 2001.

Relations between the nuclear powers seriously deteriorated after the 2008 Mumbai attacks killed 166 people, which New Delhi blamed on Pakistan-based Islamist extremists.

But while analysts said the cricket had given the nuclear-armed rivals a fresh impetus to continue a sustained dialogue, Afridi seemed less optimistic.

"It is very difficult for us to live with them or have a long-term

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MSC forms election body

SPORTS REPORTER

An 11-member election committee has been formed to hold the much-awaited polls of Mohammedan Sporting Club, which has recently turned into a limited company.

The board of directors had a meeting yesterday at the club premises in Motijheel with president Kutubuddin Ahmed in the chair and the meeting appointed former secretary of National Sports Council Akter Hossain Khan as chief election commissioner.

"As per new constitution the club will have to hold election within 90 days from the date of registration with joint stock companies and that means we have to hold the election by June 24," said director Lokman Hossain Bhuiyan yesterday.

He also informed that the club would also hold a get-together of its 213 members on May 12 where they would also invite their former foreign recruits.

Why is birthday blast on media?

Cricket

AFP, Sydney

New Australia captain Michael Clarke expressed surprise Monday at the media attention on his 30th birthday celebrations over the weekend.

Clarke, who left for Bangladesh Monday in charge of the Australian team for the first time since replacing Ricky Ponting last week, was splashed across weekend newspapers and on television enjoying his big night out.

Clarke told a press conference at Sydney Airport he was perplexed as to why his birthday would be in the public interest.

"I probably laughed a bit like everyone else to be honest. I certainly didn't expect something like that to make the paper, but it did and that's the way it is I guess," Clarke said.

"For me it was about enjoying my 30th birthday with my father and some close friends and relatives.

"I hadn't been home for [my birthday] for I think it was five years because I've been on tour a fair bit.

"I had a great day, it was really enjoyable and for me it's just about getting on with it."

Clarke, who has been questioned over his ability to manage relationships within the Australian team and his variable batting form, said his focus now was on the team's success on the brief tour of Bangladesh this month.

"My focus is here, my focus is on getting to Bangladesh and playing some good cricket and I think the public's focus is pretty similar," he said.

"I don't think they want to read about what I do on my birthday."

Clarke said it will take time for him to stamp his own brand of captaincy on the Australian team and his initial goal

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India batsman Sachin Tendulkar talks to the media during a photo call at the Taj Mahal Hotel in Mumbai yesterday, two days after achieving his long-cherished dream of being a World Cup winner.

PHOTO: AFP

Sachin not retiring

Cricket

AFP, New Delhi

India batting superstar Sachin Tendulkar said Monday he had no plans to retire after his World Cup triumph, but said the team would miss outgoing coach Gary Kirsten.

India regained the World Cup after 28 years with a six-wicket victory over Sri Lanka in the final in Mumbai on Saturday under former South African batsman Kirsten.

"Personally, I would say Gary [Kirsten] should continue but he has family commitments," Tendulkar told the NDTV.

"I respect his decision. We will miss him a lot. It's been a pleasure to work with him. He's probably worked harder than anyone else."

India not only secured the number-one ranking in Tests and number two in one-day internationals under Kirsten, but also became a formidable force both at home and away.

Tendulkar, the world's leading run-scorer in both Tests (14,692) and one-day internationals (18,111), became a World Cup winner for the first time on his sixth and probably last appearance in the tournament.

He said winning the World Cup was his biggest cricketing moment and wished he

could have shared it with his father.

"I miss my father. He would be proud. My kids being there for the victory lap made it even more special," said Tendulkar, whose father died during the 1999 World Cup, adding that he had no plans to retire.

"I can't believe we're the world champions. I am enjoying cricket too much to retire from any form of the game," said Tendulkar, who will turn 38 this month.

The master batsman rated Mahendra Singh Dhoni as the "best captain" for leading the team shrewdly in the high-pressure tournament.

"He [Dhoni] reads the situation well, is open to ideas and above all he stays calm and doesn't show frustration," Tendulkar said.

It was the second major title India had won under Dhoni after the World Twenty20 Championships in South Africa in 2007.

Tendulkar said India had peaked at the right time.

"In the knockout stage, we peaked at the right time. We batted, fielded and bowled well. You see effort from all players. Performance no one can guarantee, but effort you can guarantee," said Tendulkar.

India beat defending champions Australia in the quarterfinals and Pakistan in the semifinal before prevailing over Sri Lanka.

Futsal turning Gold Cup

SPORTS REPORTER

The Independence Day Futsal tournament was initially put on the Bangladesh Football Federation's (BFF) calendar this year, but it is all set to become the Independence Day Gold Cup as the Liberation War Affairs Ministry has come forward to hold the tournament on regular basis.

The tournament will get underway from March 10 at the Bangabandhu National Stadium and all clubs of Bangladesh League have been asked to be part of it which the BFF failed to organise in the previous two occasions though they drafted it on its calendars.

The clubs of the Bangladesh League had initially opposed to playing

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PHOTO: CRICINFO

New Australia captain Michael Clarke speaks at a press conference at the Sydney airport yesterday, before boarding the plane for Dhaka, where Australia will play a three-match ODI series starting on April 9.