

Modi, first foreign visitor to Lanka after attacks, to fire many messages

Agency
Colombo June 8,

On Sunday, PM Narendra Modi will become the first foreign dignitary to visit Sri Lanka since the bloody carnage by Islamist terrorists on Easter Sunday in April, in which more than 250 persons were killed.

India's foreign secretary and the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) have outlined the basics of what they earlier this week called a 'short but packed visit'. The PM will meet with President Maithripala Sirisena, PM Ranil Wickremesinghe, Leader of the Opposition Mahinda Rajapaksa and Tamil National Alliance (TNA) leader R.Sambandan. Foreign Secretary Vijay Gokhale described the visit as a "clear message of solidarity" and an expression of India's 'confidence in the government of Sri Lanka in overcoming this national tragedy.'

A senior Sri Lankan official who does not wish to be named but is familiar with Mr Modi's itinerary, pointed out some interesting and significant details of the visit. The minister-in-attendance who will accompany PM Modi throughout the visit will be none other than 52-year-old Sri Lankan Housing minister, Sajith Premadasa, a man who may well be the President of Sri Lanka by the end of the year. Current president Sirisena, who will not contest the presidential polls himself, is reported to have said he will back PM Ranil Wickremesinghe's UNP again only if its presidential candidate is Premadasa, and not Wickremesinghe, with whom Sirisena has been at

loggerheads for most of their tenure as a coalition in power since 2015.

The official who wished to remain unnamed, said that Premadasa will sit out PM Modi's one-day visit only twice.

He will not be in the car when PM Ranil Wickremesinghe receives PM Modi and enjoys exclusive face-time with the visitor from New Delhi on the long car ride from the airport to the presidential secretariat in downtown Colombo.

Mr Premadasa will also be absent from the PM's interaction with former President and current LOP, Mahinda Rajapaksa, likely to be held at either the Indian High Commission or cultural center India House.

Finally, the official said Mr Modi is likely to head straight for St Anthony's church, which came under terrorist attack on Easter Sunday, en route from the airport to his first meeting with the President in downtown Colombo.

"There is a fear of the BJP's Hindutva agenda in Sri Lanka," the official conceded. "Therefore, Mr Modi visiting the church will not only be a photo-op for him, but will also be lauded for taking the edge off that perception here."

The deftly interspersed individual interactions planned for Mr Modi with the four Sri Lankan politicians is a clear indication that the PM is also here to test the waters of the turbulent Sri Lankan political scene, six months before presidential elections in a country which has often accused India's Research and Analysis Wing (RAW) of "influencing" the outcome of polls in Sri Lanka.

FS Vijay Gokhale touched

upon various aspects of India's involvement in Sri Lanka such as its investment in railways, housing for tea plantation Tamils and the container terminal at Colombo port along with Japan. However, no fresh bilateral agreements are expected to be signed on Sunday.

The infighting and chaos on the Sri Lankan political firmament is one reason.

"How can any agreements be signed when you have a doer and fast mover like the Indian PM on the one hand, and a squabbling PM and President in Colombo who have been unable to take forward even earlier MoUs, on the other?" the official asked.

Even though the MEA downplayed the anti-terrorism element to the visit - given that India's history of cooperation over anti-terrorism against the LTTE in the past was not a resounding success and earned it scathing criticism in Sri Lanka, there are high expectations from PM Modi on this side of the Palk Straits.

"This visit is very significant in light of the Easter massacre because it is a signal from India to say that we are with you and you can look to us for help," said Iqbal Athas, political editor of Sri Lanka's largest weekend broadsheet, 'Sunday Times'.

"Further, Mr Modi's visit comes at a time when the United States is trying to make inroads into Sri Lanka by pushing a controversial agreement to post a large military establishment here."

Athas says it would be simplistic to assume that India, as the US' regional security partner in the Indo-Pacific region, would support such an agreement. "Sri Lanka has become a battleground for the Chinese and the Americans.

So Mr Modi is also delivering a message to Colombo: we are your friends, turn to us."

PM Modi will arrive in a heavily-overcast Colombo that eerily resembles the fortress that it was for nearly thirty years of the civil war against the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). Sandbags, armored cars, sniffer dogs, armed commandos, road blocks and - long overdue - baggage screening machines at the entrance of the hundreds of hotels in this popular tourism destination all indicate the resurgence of fear after a decade of peace.

The official in the know pointed out that the "Tamil issue" itself, has been long on the backburner in Sri Lanka and that PM Modi would do well to emphasize to his Sri Lankan hosts on Sunday, how much better off Sri Lanka is that "Mr Rahul Gandhi and along with him, supporting Tamil Nadu parties did not come to power in India".

Even more than the majority Sinhalese, it is Sri Lanka's second-largest Muslim minority that is currently in the throes of the deepest fear of all. The recent weeks saw anti-Muslim riots surge in central Sri Lanka, a Buddhist monk go on a fast unto death demanding the resignation of certain Muslim governors and a mass resignation on Monday by all Muslim ministers of the Sri Lankan government, which failed to prevent the Easter attacks despite warnings not only from India but even from moderate Sri Lankan Muslim leaders themselves.

Sport News

Ian Bishop surprises by picking 4 Indians and only 1 Australian in his all-time ODI XI

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As the ICC World Cup 2019 picks up pace in England, former West Indies fast bowler Ian Bishop decided to pick his all-time ODI XI. Bishop's all-time ODI XI is a delight for Indian fans as four cricketers from India have made it to his XI but at the same time it may force a few Australian fans to raise their eyebrows as only one from their country made the cut. Bishop picked two Indians to open the batting in his all-time ODI XI. One of them was obviously none other than Sachin Tendulkar but he made a bold choice in picking Rohit Sharma as Tendulkar's partner, ignoring the likes of Sourav Ganguly and Adam Gilchrist. Bishop said Rohit has the qualities to become a modern-day great and he can forge a good opening partnership with Tendulkar at the top.

"I have an opening pair from the same country. Rohit Sharma and Sachin Tendulkar. Rohit can become a modern day great. He can forge a real great partnership with Sachin," Bishop said in a video for ICC. The tall fast bowler picked Viv Richards as his no. 3 batsman. "Richards was way ahead of his time. If you look at his strike rate then you would realize, he

can fit into any team even today."

There was no doubt in Bishop's mind as to who his No. 4 would be. Teming India captain Virat Kohli a modern-day great, Bishop said Kohli's ability to win matches sets him apart.

"I cannot go past Virat Kohli, the way he has scored runs, won games, his record in chases, he's already a modern great," Bishop added.

Bishop's no. 5 was former South Africa batsman AB de Villiers. "There shouldn't be any debate on AB's position. I cannot

remember any other player who has a 50-plus average at that strike rate despite playing so many games," Bishop said.

Bishop surprised many with his choice of all-rounder at no. 6. Ian Botham, Jacques Kallis, and Imran Khan, he went in with former South Africa all-rounder Lance Klusener. Bishop picked MS Dhoni as his wicket-keeper. "Average of 50, wicket keeper, great finisher and along with Klusener, Dhoni can give nightmares to bowlers," Bishop said.

Bangladesh to take on England; Afghan & NZ to face off in Taunton

Agency
New Delhi June 8,

In the ICC Men's Cricket World Cup, Bangladesh will take on England in Cardiff today. The match will begin at 3 p.m. Indian Standard Time.

Another match will be played today between Afghanistan and New Zealand at Taunton beginning at 6 p.m. Afghanistan have already lost their first two matches

and have little chance of making the semi-finals of the 10-team tournament after losing to holders Australia and Sri Lanka.

Yesterday, Pakistan and Sri Lanka were forced to split the two points after their match was called off due to heavy rain in Bristol. After a couple of inspections, umpires Nigel Long and Ian Gould decided to call off the game. Both Pakistan and Sri Lanka have won one and lost one match each.

ICC stands firm, denies Dhoni permission to wear gloves with Army insignia

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Sticking to its stand that a personal message on the cricket gear was in breach of rules, the International Cricket Council declined the Indian Board's request on Friday to allow Mahendra Singh Dhoni to continue sporting the insignia of the Territorial Army's parachute regiment on his wicket-keeping gloves.

With India building up for their high-profile clash with holders Australia in Trent Bridge on Sunday, the focus was on whether the world body will allow the skipper of the 2011 World Cup triumph to sport the 'balidaan' (sacrifice) emblem. A senior ICC official was quoted as requiring Dhoni to remove the emblem after he sported it during the June 5 win over South Africa. The BCCI backed Dhoni and requested the world body for permission. However, it was declined.

"The ICC has responded to the BCCI to confirm the logo displayed by MS Dhoni in the previous match is not permitted to be worn on his wicket-keeping gloves at the ICC Men's Cricket World Cup 2019," an ICC statement said.

"The regulations for ICC events do not permit any individual message or logo to be displayed on any items of clothing or equipment. In addition to this, the logo also breaches the regulations in relation to what is permitted on wicketkeeper gloves."

ICC rules state, "Players and team officials shall not be permitted to wear, display or otherwise convey messages through arm bands or other items affixed to clothing or equipment (personal messages) unless approved by both the player or team official's Board and the ICC

Cricket Operations Department." It is learnt, BCCI, governed by the Committee of Administrators, won't look to escalate the matter. CoA head Vinod Rai had earlier on Friday denied there was any confrontation with ICC. "We will follow the ICC norms 100 per cent," he said after attending a CoA meeting in Mumbai.

CoA member, Lt Gen (Retd) Ravi Thodde, had also said Dhoni will abide by any ICC decision. "Every armyman wears his badge with pride. Dhoni must have done it too. It is not that big an issue. We've written to ICC. If they allow, he'll wear. If they don't, he won't."

The BCCI has argued that Dhoni didn't violate ICC rules on personal message as he is an honorary Lieutenant Colonel in the parachute regiment of the Territorial Army, whose emblem he displayed.

The Indian Board equated the gesture with the team wearing camouflage caps in an ODI against Australia in Ranchi in March. While BCCI had received prior approval from ICC then, Dhoni had not informed the Board this time.

Dhoni though received overwhelming support at home. Union sports minister Kiren Rijju had also urged BCCI to resolve it. "When the issue concerns the sentiments of the country, the interest of the nation has to be kept in mind. Urge the

BCCI to take an appropriate step in the Mahendra Singh Dhoni issue," he tweeted.

Through the day, a deluge of reaction poured in on Twitter with the hashtag 'DhoniKeepTheGlove'. Dhoni's India and Chennai Super Kings' teammate Suresh Raina tweeted: "While we are on the field, we devote ourselves to our country & we give all we can to make India proud. We all love our country & that's exactly @msdhoni has done, saluting the sacrifices of our heroes & honouring them. It should be taken as an act of patriotism & not nationalism."

The BCCI old guard, sidelined as the governance reforms directed by the Supreme Court is being implemented, criticised what it saw as a climbdown by the Board. "It is a lack of experience in dealing with ICC. They may be good in other walks of life but have come across as weak in cricket administration. We have diluted our powers in ICC," said a veteran administrator.

Former BCCI secretary Niranjan Shah had an ingenious solution: "What if Dhoni had a tattoo of the badge on his hand?"

As per ICC rules, only commercial or manufacturer's logos are not allowed when it comes to 'visible tattoos'. Many cricketers, including Virat Kohli and Shikhar Dhawan, sport tattoos of religious figures.

Jagan Mohan Reddy's 5 Deputy CMs move a 1st in India

Agency
Hyderabad June 8,

Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy, popularly called as 'Jagananna', will have a 'jumbo' deputy CMs' council. Accordingly, one each from Scheduled Caste, Scheduled Tribe, backward, minority and Kapu communities would be made a Deputy Chief Minister. The new Council of Ministers, including the five Deputy CMs, P Rajanna Dora, M. Sucharitha, A Nani, Amjad Basha, and K Parthasarathy, will take oath at a public function in Amaravati on Saturday.

The Chief Minister held a meeting of the YSR Congress Legislature Party at his residence in the morning where he announced the decision to appoint five deputy chief ministers.

After securing a thumping victory over TDP, YSR was sworn in as the chief minister on May 30 during a grand ceremony at the Indira Gandhi Stadium in Vijayawada, which was attended by Telangana CM K Chandrashekar Rao and DMK president MK Stalin.

A total of 25 members will get a berth in his cabinet in the expansion. YSR's first cabinet meeting is scheduled at 11:49

am afterwards. He will also assume office at the secretariat at 8:39 am before the cabinet expansion is slated for 9:15 am. Sources say the appointed ministers' performance will be monitored by the CM and then shuffled accordingly, after completing 30 months.

The Andhra CM has decided to bring a social equilibrium in his cabinet with sources confirming that out of 25 ministers, eight will be from backward classes, five from the scheduled caste, and one from the scheduled tribe.

These ministers will consist of 60 per cent strength of his cabinet. YSR has also given prominence to Kapu

community by appointing four ministries in the cabinet. He has appointed four from the Reddys, one from Kamma, one from Kshatriya, and one from the Vysya community, apart from giving a Deputy CM post to a minority community.

Senior leaders, who have been part of YSR's father's cabinet, like Darmana Krishna Prasad and Botsa Satyanarayana, will also get a berth in his cabinet.

Sources said that the party has chosen T Sitaram to be the speaker candidate from YSRCP (unopposed election expected) of Andhra Pradesh Legislative Assembly.

Pak preps for FATF review with some action against Masood Azhar, Hafiz Saeed

Agency
New Delhi June 8,

The Pakistani government appears to have taken some action over the last month against Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) chief Hafiz Saeed and his brother-in-law Abdul Rahman Makki, and restrained the activities of Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM) chief Masood Azhar, in an apparent bid to placate the international community ahead of a crucial Financial Action Task Force (FATF) meeting this month.

FATF, a multilateral watchdog that monitors terror funding,

will meet in Orlando, Florida on June 20-21, when Pakistan's progress on a 27-point action plan is likely to be discussed - though a decision on whether it remains in the "grey list" or is downgraded into a "black list" is expected only by October when a 15-month deadline for Islamabad ends and the FATF meets for its plenary in Paris.

Makki was arrested by Pakistani authorities on May 15 and LeT chief Saeed was prevented from addressing a gathering at Gaddafi stadium in Lahore on Eid-ul-Fitr on Wednesday. This was clearly

an ostensible move to project Pakistan's "commitment" to act against terror groups before the FATF meeting, a person aware of the developments told HT.

Hafiz Saeed carries a \$10 million reward on his head and Makki \$2 million.

The Pakistani authorities have also asked Azhar and his brothers, Azhar Ibrahim and Rauf Asghar, to lie low with the former moving in and around Bhawalpur, the person quoted above added.

Rauf Asghar, who was put under preventive custody after the February 14 Pulwama suicide bombing, has been set free.

Apart from FATF, the US in March pressured Pakistan to take "tangible and irreversible action" against terrorist groups on its soil and deny safe haven to them to launch cross-border attacks. The development came as Washington reiterated its firm support to New Delhi in the fight against terrorism.

Pakistan's new placatory moves also come against the backdrop of its attempts to secure a multi-billion dollar loan from the International Monetary Fund as it grapples with a staggering fiscal deficit.

Name changed

I, the undersigned, Manmeet Singh Arora, do hereby declare that I have abandoned, relinquished and renounced the use of my old name Manmeet Singh, S/o Late Hazoor Singh, residing at Simran Hardware and Electrical, Thangal Bazar Imphal West, Manipur, as I have assumed my new name Simran Jeet Singh Arora.

Sd/-
Simran Jeet Singh Arora