



REALITY BITES: Bangladesh cricketer Alok Kapali waits alone for someone to pick him up at the Zia International Airport on arrival from South Africa yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

Saber's ten-point solution

SPORTS REPORTER

Former Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) president Saber Hossain Chowdhury has called for an impartial inquiry into Bangladesh's disastrous World Cup campaign.

Appearing in a rare cricket related event, Saber bared his soul, lamenting the sharp decline of the country's cricketing image since he was forced out of the office and strongly refuting the suggestions that Bangladesh were granted Test status through some dubious dealings during his reign as the game's supremo.

Saber also put forward a ten-point suggestion hoping that the government would implement them to put cricket back on the right track but added that there was no chance of that happening without a good leadership.

"I think that at present the BCB is rudderless and without a future or a present vision. They only know how to criticise about the past," said Saber while taking an indirect swipe at his successor BNP MP Ali Asghar Lobi.

Speaking at a crowded media briefing at the National Press Club yesterday, Saber, the organising secretary of the main opposition party Awami League, said that he did not arrange the meeting to create a political issue out of the World Cup debacle rather his

undying affection for the game prompted his action.

The pioneer organiser noted that the recent remarks of BCB president Asghar regarding formation of a probe body consisting of a retired army officer and a former bureaucrat gave the wrong signals regarding proper investigation of the World Cup mishap.

"The probe committee can not be formed with retired military officers and bureaucrats who have little understanding of the game. It should consist of former national captains, players, national coaches and the organisers.

"May I also ask why the inquiry will only cover the national squad? Why don't they take the whole BCB set up to the task?" said Saber adding that the people who have been entrusted with developing and managing the country's cricket should be made to answer.

Elaborating his ten-point proposal, the former BCB boss said that those were designed to stop further destruction of cricket.

His first point called for ridding the cricket administration of political influence and appoint people with proper cricketing background to run the game. "There's just too much party politics now in the BCB," Saber observed.

Saber's second suggestion

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PHOTO: STAR

CAN HE PLAY A ROLE AGAIN? Former Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) President Saber Hossain Chowdhury makes a point at a press conference in Dhaka yesterday.

No stopping for Ponting's men



PHOTO: STAR FILE

Sachin Tendulkar

AFP, Johannesburg

Reigning champions Australia have ploughed through World Cup rivals so ruthlessly so far that Ricky Ponting's men appear unstoppable.

Australia go into the next round with six straight wins in the preliminary league, the only scare coming when England ran them close at Port Elizabeth last Sunday to force a last-over finish.

Australia's dominance was the only constant factor in an otherwise topsy-turvy World Cup that saw South Africa being knocked out by one run, the West Indies by rain and made unfancied Kenya the second most successful team of the first round.

Pakistan faded away despite Wasim Akram reaching the 500-wicket mark and Shoaib Akhtar breaking the 100-mile an hour barrier.

England wanted their Zimbabwe game cancelled, then called for day-night matches at Durban to be done away with. Unfortunately, they could not get the draw changed to remove Australia from their pool.

The World Cup had its most controversial start ever when star spinner Shane Warne was banned for taking illegal drugs, Pakistan's

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BEST AND WORST

REUTERS, Johannesburg

The best and worst from the 2003 cricket World Cup first round:

THE BEST BALL

A three-way tie. Zimbabwe's Grant Flower, bowling left-arm spin wide of the crease against India in Harare (Feb 19), tempted Sachin Tendulkar half-forward, the turning ball beating his bat and clipping the off ball. "I got one to turn for a change," he said. Tendulkar's 81, though, won the Pool A match for India.

England quick James Anderson, exploiting Cape Town's evening conditions, produced a sharply swinging yorker from leg to off stump which bowled Pakistan's Yousuf Youhana first ball (February 22). The 20-year-old's previous delivery dismissed Inzamamul Haq. Anderson's

four for 29 set up a shock 112-run win.

When Sri Lanka's Chaminda Vaas had Bangladesh's Ehsanul Haque caught at second slip with a ball angled across the batsman at Pietermaritzburg (Feb 14), the left-arm seamer completed an unprecedented hat-trick with the first three balls of an international match.

THE BEST SHOT

Tendulkar cut Shoaib Akhtar's fourth ball for six as India began their reply to Pakistan's 273 for seven in Centurion (March 1). The next two deliveries disappeared for more classical boundaries, but that six set the tone for an extraordinary match-winning innings. Tendulkar, the world's best batsman, won his personal contest with Shoaib, the world's fastest bowler.

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Rain rules defended

REUTERS, Johannesburg

World Cup executive director Ali Bacher has defended the organisers' decision not to include reserve days for rain in the opening stages after Pakistan and England both made early exits on Tuesday.

Pakistan needed to thrash co-hosts Zimbabwe in Bulawayo to progress from the first round. But Waqar Younis's team had no chance as prolonged rain caused an abandonment and a share of the points to both teams, which also ensured England's departure.

Earlier in the tournament, West Indies failed to pick up four points as expected against Bangladesh because of a rain abandonment, a result which contributed to their first round exit.

"This is the biggest World Cup ever, with 54 scheduled matches involving 14 teams playing in three countries,"



ALI BACHER

Bacher said in a statement on Tuesday.

"Of the 43 days from the opening ceremony to the final, cricket is due to be played on 33 of those days.

Logistically, it would have been impossible from an organisational point of view to have included reserve days for matches in the group stage.

"As it has turned out, only two matches of the 40 played so far have been rained off. These were the fixtures between West Indies and Bangladesh and today's game between Zimbabwe and Pakistan."

Reserve days will be available for all Super Six matches and both semifinals while the final has been allocated two reserve days as a contingency against prolonged bad weather.

Injury scare for Sehwag

REUTERS, Cape Town

India suffered a World Cup scare on Wednesday when opening batsman Virender Sehwag was taken to hospital with a finger injury.

X-rays, however, showed there was no fracture.

Sehwag grimaced in pain after misjudging a high catch hit for him by coach John Wright. Captain Saurav Ganguly immediately shouted out for the team physio before Sehwag was led away.

Team media manager Amrit Mathur said: "There is no fracture. X-rays have shown there is no break. He should be fine but right now he is very stiff and sore.

"We will assess the injury on Thursday to see if he can play against Kenya."

India play Kenya in their first match of the World Cup Super Sixes on Friday at Cape Town. They go into the second round with eight points, four behind Australia and two behind the Kenyans.

The 24-year-old Sehwag is an explosive right-hander used by India to launch their one-day innings. He has modelled his game on world number one batsman and team mate Sachin Tendulkar to such an extent that the pair can be hard to tell apart.

Sehwag has yet to find his best

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PHOTO: STAR FILE

Virender Sehwag

Sad to say 'em goodbye

REUTERS, Johannesburg

Shane Warne did not bowl a single ball, Wasim Akram enjoyed one golden moment before packing his bags and Allan Donald was overlooked before his career almost certainly ended in the cruellest of circumstances.

Three of the greatest bowlers in the history of one-day international cricket, with 1,065 wickets between them, had World Cups to forget, their thunder stolen by unheralded names such as Andy Bichel, Ashish Nehra and James Anderson.

Bichel, the perennial reserve of Australian cricket, grabbed his limited chances with both hands.

He claimed 12 wickets in three matches at an average of 2.75, completing figures of seven for 20 in two inspired spells against England, the second best figures in World Cup history.

India's Nehra shook off the effects of a badly swollen ankle to

route England's middle order in a match-winning spell of six for 23.

Anderson's impact was even more unexpected.

The 20-year-old Englishman, playing club cricket last year, ripped out four prime Pakistan



WASIM AKRAM

wickets, including

Inzamamul Haq and Yousuf Youhana with successive balls, to set up an upset victory for his side.

Pace bowlers Glenn McGrath and Chaminda Vaas did produce performances to justify their lofty



SHANE WARNE

status in the world game, while Sachin Tendulkar, one-day cricket's leading run-scorer has been a model of consistency in India's campaign.

Australian McGrath completed World Cup best figures of seven for 15 against Namibia, and Vaas took a hat-trick with the first three balls of Sri Lanka's game against Bangladesh on the way to a tournament-high of 16 first-round wickets.

Wasim became the first bowler in history to reach the milestone of 500 one-day international victims when he bowled Dutchman Nick Statham, but the 36-year-old did not enjoy the swansong he wanted as Pakistan's talented but inconsistent side failed to make the second round.

The same could certainly be said for Warne and Donald. Warne was sent home before Australia's first match after failing a drugs test, and Donald was forced to watch

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