

BCB talks

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He also hoped that the proposed academy will be built beside the Mirpur Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium be completed in the near future.

Earlier, BCB general secretary Mahbul Anam put forward the details of the annual general meeting at the briefing that took place just after it.

"This second AGM -- something that we pledged to be consistent with last year -- has been our chance to portray the overall picture to the councilors," said Anam.

"On the whole, the primary successes have been the performance of the national and under-19 teams as well as earning the right to host the opening match of the 2011 World Cup."

The richest sports body in the country expected revenue to be on the rise over the next fiscal years. It was observed that the increase in local and ICC revenue has caused the upturn in the surplus, which significantly increased than it was expected.

Mahabub also announced a revenue budget of Taka 47.18 crores against an inflated expenditure budget of Taka 67.41 crores for the 2006-07 Annual Global Budget. There is an existing reserve of 40 crores, half of which is expected to be spent over the fiscal period.

"We actually term the budget as conservative as we have taken only the minimum amount in every category," said the BCB general secretary.

One of the encouraging signs of the budget is the provision given for player bonus which is based on winning performances. Last year, it was Taka one crore, but now the allotment has been heavily increased to Taka four crores.

The much-talked about television rights revenue has brought the board four million dollars, much of which came from India's tour to Bangladesh in December 2004. The board expects the same when India is here to play next year.

There were administrative changes as well. Except the grounds, tournament and Cricket Committee of Dhaka Metropolitan (CCDM), all the other committees must now have a minimum of eleven members.

The women's wing, as advised by the ICC, has also been approved during the meeting as Bangladesh was the only nation not to have such a committee for women.

The governing body of cricket maintained its standard in all aspects, especially the financial side as the budget that has been proposed is bigger than any other sporting body. Clearly, the Asghar-led board has left the board in a much healthier financial and infrastructural base than ever before.

German

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chances of seeing action rose with Jansen's injury.

Germany are top of Euro 2008 qualifying Group D after beating Ireland and San Marino in their two games so far.

Loew also called up Robert Enke, the 29-year-old Hanover 96 goalkeeper, for the first of the two games. Enke was in the squad for the Confederations Cup in 1999 in Mexico but has yet to play for Germany.

Missing from the squad are Gerald Asamoah, who suffered a compound leg fracture in Schalke 04's UEFA Cup defeat by Nancy, and Werder Bremen pair Tim Borowski and Mertesacker.

Midfielder Borowski injured his left leg in Werder's 1-1 draw with Barcelona on Wednesday. Mertesacker made his comeback from a heel injury in that match but club coach Thomas Schaaf asked that he be given more time to complete his recovery.

Midfielders Sebastian Kehl and Sebastian Deisler were also ruled out because of long standing injury problems.

Moratti

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Reggina were forced to begin the season with points penalties for their roles in the scandal.

Inter was awarded the 2005-6 Serie A title as the highest-ranked team not implicated in the scandal.

Coach plays

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from their first two Group B matches against Lithuania and France and are in danger of missing out on the tournament that will be co-hosted by Switzerland and Austria.

Stars inspire

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take for his side to take the three points for granted.

"In the first match it will take all our energy and concentration to get the win. I'm expecting a lot of support from the Roman public," he said.

Italy are without a win in three matches under Donadoni, who said he had considered resigning after the 3-1 defeat by France in Paris last month.

"There was a moment when I put my job in (Italian Olympic Committee president Gianni) Petrucci's hands, but he explained that I was part of his future plans."



Germany's Natascha Keller (R) races past the challenge of England's Crista Kullen (L) during their Women's World Cup field hockey match in Madrid on Tuesday.

Dutch demolition of China



AFP, Madrid

The Netherlands confirmed their status as favourites by thrashing China 6-1 to power into the finals at the top of Pool A in the Women's World Cup field hockey tournament here on Tuesday.

Strikers Sylvia Karres and Kim Lammers both scored hattricks each as the Dutch with 12 points remain undefeated after four games.

England are second five points behind after a second half goal from Helen Richardson sealed a solid 1-0 victory over Olympic champions Germany earlier Tuesday.

Germany and Spain both have six points with the hosts playing India later in the day.

The normally sharp Chinese seemed jaded, but they kept trying and forced two corners before their pressing paid off with MA Yi Bo finding the back board from a strong corner shot after 58 minutes.

Dutch coach Marc Lammers said: "This was a game I predicted, China had to attack and this left a lot of space for us which we used well."

He added: "Spain cannot play their

counter tactics against India, they have to go forward as they have to win."

England, meanwhile, were so effective in their tactics earlier that German star forward Natasha Keller was rarely in the match.

The hard running of Katharina Scholz was the main feature of German play as the England midfield placed pressure on the German distribution.

England should have led at half time when Christa Cullen had a corner saved by Yvonne Frank in goal.

After the break, Germany suddenly went one down after 38 minutes when Richardson flicked home a penalty stroke after an England corner.

With a major upset looming, England controlled the match and Germany were forced to change their traditional structured play and move their emphasis to full attack.

As England continued to lead, the Spanish fans suddenly realized that an England win might assist their quest.

With Spain playing India later Tuesday, and England on Wednesday, they liked their chances.

Germany play favourites Netherlands Wednesday hence this match's importance grew as the seconds ticked by.

England forward Jo Ellis had a great match penetrating deep down the right causing Germany all sorts of problems and Cullen was superb in defence.

German coach Markus Weise was furious with his team and the umpiring.

"We only created half chances and didn't stick to the game plan," he lamented. "We didn't score against Spain or England, there is a big problem."

He added: "The umpiring here is very inconsistent and constructive play is punished. Ball possession is supposed to be an advantage so skilled teams can play, this is not happening."

England coach Danny Kerry said: "We expected to win, I was calmer today than the controversial India game."

"Our direct game unsettled the Germans and the team stuck to the plan of defence moving the ball wide. It is the first time we have beaten Germany since 2003, so we're happy."

Tough ties for Brits

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final in 2002. "They will probably be favourites to win the group. Besiktas are not the strongest team in Turkey at the moment but what you are guaranteed over there is a passionate crowd."

Another Premiership club involved in the competition is Blackburn, and it is the Rovers who have made an early claim for a place in the last 32.

Blackburn chief executive John Williams said his team had a good chance of qualifying from Group E, which includes Feyenoord, Basel, Wisla Krakow and French side

Nancy.

"We have to be optimistic and the group gives us a chance," said Williams.

"This competition is important for us, we have not had a good record and it is time to put that right."

Group A sees old rivals Auxerre and Rangers putting their respective wits against Serbian side Partizan Belgrade, Livorno of Italy and Israeli outfit Maccabi Haifa.

The tie should be spiced up by the fact that Auxerre twice beat Rangers in their Champions League fixtures during 1996-97.

Other French clubs involved are northern side Lens, who could be

facing a tricky time against Dutch side Heerenveen, Spanish outfit Osasuna, Odense of Denmark and Italian former winners Parma.

Paris St Germain should be feeling confident after being drawn in a group G which also includes Panathinaikos, Rapid Bucharest, Hapoel Tel-Aviv and Mlada Boleslav of the Czech Republic.

Dutch giants Ajax meanwhile will be favourites to top Group F, which includes Sparta Prague, Spanish outfit Espanyol, Austria Vienna and Belgian side Zulte-Waregem.

Inquiry focuses on eight clubs

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"This, as you know, is not an easy inquiry but we will do everything in our powers to ensure that it is a successful one."

"There is no doubt from what I have seen from the Premier League is an absolute willingness to sort this out now. I don't think anyone can doubt that, bearing in mind some of the media coverage in the past month or two. It's in the public interest to be sorted out now."

The inquiry was instigated by the Premier League after high-profile claims that illicit payments to managers, known as 'bungs', were a common feature of transfer deals.

Former England manager Sven-Goran Eriksson had told a Sunday newspaper that three unnamed Premier League clubs were involved in such payments. Two

managers not in the top flight, Luton Town's Mike Newell and former Queens Park Rangers coach Ian Holloway said they had been offered inducements.

The news conference comes two weeks after a claim by the BBC's Panorama programme that bungs and rule-breaking are widespread in English football. Since the programme the Football Association has said it will strengthen its compliance unit to tackle corruption "head-on".

Stevens said "good co-operation" had been received from football agents who had been "voluntarily" asked to assist the inquiry.

Sixty-five of 150 agents sent letters, and questionnaires had been answered fully covering "roughly 50 percent of transfers",

while some had independently requested meetings. The Football Agents Association Board has urged its members to open their bank accounts to Stevens's team if requested.

Earlier, Stevens had presented his findings to Premier League chairmen. His final report will include recommendations on the administration and monitoring of the transfer market.

Despite such widespread and frequent claims, the only 'bung' case to have led to censure was that of former Arsenal manager George Graham, who was banned for a year in 1995 after accepting 425,000 pounds (\$800,000) from an agent involving two transfers.

Blasters behind stumps

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The South African went on to make an unbeaten 147 off just 68 balls with 10 sixes and eight fours.

"I've been striking the ball a lot better than in the past and it's a matter of just getting runs behind your name. Hopefully, I can build on this," Boucher said after his maiden century in one-day internationals.

India's search for an attacking wicketkeeper-batsman has ended with Dhoni, known for his flocking locks, motorbikes and ability to smash the ball out of the park.

Dhoni, 25, may not be as steady behind the stumps as his Australian counterpart but has an uncanny knack of judging line and length which wins vital matches.

He shot to fame last year belting an unbeaten 183 against Sri Lanka at Jaipur, the highest score by a wicket-keeper in one-day internationals and ahead of Gilchrist's 172.

"At international level, it's all about confidence," Dhoni said.

"When I started playing, I never thought of playing for any team. It was just for enjoyment. Cricket was more an entertainment for me."

And destroying the bowling is Dhoni's aim.

"It's (now) my biggest high on a cricket field -- hitting the ball out of the ground."

Sangakkara has made rapid strides in both forms of the game since his international debut in 2000. He is a solid top-order bats-

man with a sharp eye for the gaps.

The Sri Lankan left-hander differs from Gilchrist and Dhoni in that he does not always believe in taking the aerial route to bolster the run-rate, but has the shots to dominate any attack.

Kamran may lack consistency but has played a few crucial top order knocks, including two successive centuries against England at home last year. However, he has been without a half-century since then.

The opposition underestimate McCullum at their own peril. The New Zealander can upset any opposition with hard and clean hitting lower down the order.

Record prize money for Aussie Open

AFP, Melbourne

A record prize money pool of 20 million dollars (15 million US) will be on offer for next year's Australian Open, Tennis Australia said here Tuesday.

The winners of the men's and women's singles will collect 1.28 million dollars (960,000 US) each, the organisers said.

The first tennis Grand Slam of 2007, which takes place from January 15-28 at Melbourne Park, is expected to attract more than 500 of the world's top players.

The last Australian Open drew a record 550,550 fans -- the seventh successive year it broke the half-million spectators' mark, Tournament Director Craig Tiley said at the event's launch Tuesday.

Ambassadors

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persons to injure and humiliate an internationally acclaimed shooter and his colleagues.

It was not the first time that sports persons have suffered wrath of authority and police. Four national footballers including legendary striker Kazi Salahuddin were jailed in the early 80s while the police launched an assault on celebrity footballer late Monem Munna during a club match, injuring players and officials, a few years back. Earlier this year, the police got nasty when they severely beat up journalists during the Chittagong Test match between Bangladesh and Australia, a dark episode that was aired on TV worldwide.

Tigers' practice

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match at Mohali. It will help the pacers as the pitch will be sporting," said Mashrafe, who has experience of playing in India as he was here back in 2001 with the A team.

"Wickets in India do not have much for fast bowlers but places like Mohali are different," he added.

"I am really happy with my performance against Kenya and it has made me mentally strong. But here I will confine to the basics and concentrate on bowling the right line and length," said Mashrafe.

The bowler said he was prone to injuries in his legs due to very tender ligaments for which he takes precautions.

"I am under constant scrutiny from my team trainer. But he is now going and we will have a new trainer," he said.

TEAM

Habibul Bashar (captain), Shahriar Nafees, Mehrab Hossain, Aftab Ahmed, Forhad Reza, Khaled Mashud, Mashrafe Bin Mortaza, Mohammad Ashraf, Mohammad Rafique, Sakib Al Hasan, Abdur Razzak, Syed Rasel.

Tursunov wins Mumbai Open

AFP, Mumbai

Russia's Davis Cup hero Dmitry Tursunov completed a remarkable fortnight by winning his maiden ATP title at the inaugural Mumbai Open here on Monday.

Tursunov, ranked 22 in the world, outlasted world number 13 Tomas Berdych of the Czech Republic 6-3, 4-6, 7-6 in a rain-hit final at the Cricket Club of India courts here.

Last week, the 23-year-old had led Russia to a brilliant Davis Cup win over the United States in Moscow by beating the fancied Andy Roddick 17-15 in the fifth set of the deciding fourth rubber.

The Mumbai final, that was put off on Sunday due to heavy rain, was twice interrupted by rain, the first time at 1-1 in the second set and then again at 5-5 in the third set.

When play resumed the second time, Tursunov broke Berdych to lead 6-5 but the third-seeded Czech broke back immediately to force the match into the tie-breaker.

Tursunov avenged his defeat at Berdych's hands in the third round of the US Open last month and took away 52,000 dollars with his maiden career title.

Berdych, still looking for his first title this year after five appearances in the final, had won 15 of his last 19 matches but failed to deliver when it mattered most.

"I had my chances, but Dmitry played the crucial points better," said the 21-year-old. "But I reached the final and I am happy."

Tursunov, seeded fourth here, said he was "excited" about winning his first title but unhappy at serving 11 double faults in the final.

"I am excited but I could have served and played better," said the Russian. "It's been non-stop tennis for me and I am tired."

Meanwhile, the makeshift doubles pair of Mario Ancic of Croatia and India's Mahesh Bhupathi won their second consecutive doubles title.

Ancic and Bhupathi, who won the China Open two weeks ago, beat the Indian pair of Rohan Bopanna and Mustafa Ghouse 6-4, 6-7, 10-8 in the final.

Spinners are lurking



AFP, New Delhi

The world's best spinners, led by Muttiah Muralidaran, lie in wait for the star stroke-makers hoping to feast on placid Indian tracks in the Champions Trophy.

Quality spin bowling performs a vital role on low, slow sub-continental pitches where many free-hitting batsmen struggle to adjust to the conditions.

Ask Ricky Ponting's Australians, who were caught in a spin-trap against Sri Lanka in the 2002 Champions Trophy semifinal in Colombo. They managed just 162 before losing by seven wickets.

No prize for guessing the identity of the Aussie destroyer.

Muralidaran (3-26 off 9.4 overs) led a pack of disciplined spinners in the match in which Sri Lankan skipper Sanath Jayasuriya used his pacemen for just nine overs.

Life will be no easier for batsmen this time as New Zealander Daniel Vettori, Indian Harbhajan Singh, West Indies' Chris Gayle, Pakistani Shahid Afridi and Australian Brad Hogg line up alongside Muralidaran.

The Sri Lankan off-spinner asks more questions than batsmen can answer with his turn, bounce and subtle variations. He also has an

uncanny skill of turning the ball on any surface.

A proven match-winner, although always controversial, he is the only bowler to have grabbed more than 1,000 wickets in international cricket (657 in Tests and 416 in one-dayers).

Sri Lankan wicketkeeper Kumar Sangakkara has said it is impossible to read Muralidaran.

"I have been fortunate because as a wicket-keeper I have had the best view in the world of his artistry, the extent of which never ceases to amaze me," said Sangakkara.

"He has so many different deliveries, tricks and subtle variations over which he has complete mastery. Even the very best batsmen, those with the keenest eye, are deceived."

Off-spinner Harbhajan has yet to match Muralidaran, but is effective on helpful pitches. He was the lone Indian bowler to keep his reputation intact in the recent triangular one-day series in Kuala Lumpur.

India need Harbhajan to be at his best. They are already without ace leg-spinner Anil Kumble who is recovering from injury. Their bowling options are further restricted by their seamers' inconsistency.

This means India will rely on part-time spinners Virender Sehwag, Yuvraj Singh and Dinesh Mongia.

Harbhajan says it is a myth that a spinner's role is only to restrict runs.

"The second-highest wicket-taker in one-day internationals is

Muralidaran and who knows he might be the highest wicket-taker soon," Harbhajan said.

"People like Murali and Pakistan's Saqlain Mushtaq have given a new dimension to spin bowling in limited-overs cricket. Your role depends on conditions and situations."

"In India and Sri Lanka, it is the spinners who play a huge role. The middle-overs are extremely important in one-dayers and it is largely the spinners who operate around that time."

Left-arm spinner Vettori may be playing his first one-day international in seven months, but batsmen cannot afford to take liberties against the accurate New Zealander.

He was always difficult to get away when he toured India in 2003, tying the batsmen down with variations. He is again expected to play a leading role on pitches which will suit him.

Vettori, the youngest player to represent New Zealand in Tests at the age of 18, has so far taken 167 wickets in one-day internationals.

Off-spinner Gayle, leg-spinner Afridi and left-arm chinaman bowler Hogg will also fancy their chances in Indian conditions.

England rely on Freddie



AFP, New Delhi

Andrew Flintoff is expected to bat, bowl, field, lead and win matches for England whose key players have been in and out of hospital doors since winning the Ashes last year.

No all-rounder in the Champions Trophy carries the same burden as Flintoff, a major inspiration in a struggling side that has won just two of their last 10 one-day internationals.

South African Jacques Kallis and Shaun Pollock, Australians Shane Watson and Andrew Symonds, West Indians Chris Gayle and Dwayne Bravo, Pakistan's Abdul Razaq and Shahid Afridi, as well as New Zealander Scott Styris can ply their all-round trade in much less demanding conditions.

England turn to Flintoff in a crisis and it is a tribute to his extraordinary skill that he has rarely let them

down, at home or away.

England were in a shambles when they visited India early this year, losing captain Michael Vaughan and paceman Simon Jones to injuries and then Marcus Trescothick (personal reasons) even before the action had begun.

Captaincy was thrust upon Flintoff, who eventually proved he was made of stern stuff by securing a creditable 1-1 draw in the Test series, scoring 264 runs and taking 11 wickets.

Ace Australian paceman Glenn McGrath has said Flintoff may find it difficult playing so many roles.

"It's a massive ask, there's no doubt about it. He (Flintoff) is such a key player, not only with his bowling, but in the field and in the batting," said McGrath.

"So if you throw the captaincy on top of it, maybe it will take the focus off his bowling and batting a little bit more and onto the captaincy and have an effect on his game."

"But he's a class player, and if anyone can handle it, he can."

The Champions Trophy is more of a fitness-testing tournament for

England whose top priority is to defend the Ashes in Australia.

Flintoff is coming off an ankle injury which forced him to skip the recent home Test series against Pakistan. He may fail to carry England into the semifinals, but will get opportunities to assess his form and fitness.

England are in a tough Pool A with world champions Australia, India and a qualifier (probably either Sri Lanka or the West Indies). Their recent one-day record in India is also unimpressive -- five defeats and one win in April.

Old foes

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made the save of the day when the Mohammedan back cleared Mostafiz Dinar's low drag from the goalline.

Usha almost conceded a second goal for being too attacking in the dying moments but Maksud Alam Habul's solo effort went down the drains as he rattled the sidebar from a difficult angle.

Usha will take on Mariners in the third-place play-off also scheduled for tomorrow.

Van Basten

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squad in perfection.

"Was it by chance? In the opinion polls two days before (their statements) two-thirds of those polled supported the two players," commented the paper.

Bayern Munich midfielder van Bommel said Monday he no longer wants to play for the Dutch while van Basten is in charge.

Real Madrid striker van Nistelrooy was also called up, as a replacement for the injured Klaas Jan Huntelaar, however he too has turned down the Dutch Football Association (KNVB).

Van Basten made a surprise phone call to van Nistelrooy over the weekend, but failed in his bid to lure the ex-Manchester United forward, who had recently criticised the national coaching staff, back to the squad.

Van Basten said that no players would be called up to replace van Bommel and Huntelaar.

Netherlands top the seven-strong group G, in which they are the only team to have won their two games so