

BUILDING A MORE COMPETITIVE TEAM



"I believe that without good pitches we can't improve our cricket. Pitch is the heart of cricket. Being the chairman of the grounds committee I want to say that we are working relentlessly to fulfil the standard ICC requirement in all the grounds."

--Shafiqur Rahman Munna

FROM PAGE 1
where your national team cannot go to practice at their will.

Look at any other country, each of them has a cricket home. Like Lord's, which identifies the game in England. We don't have that. You cannot grow without an identity.

So, I think the move to allocate the Mirpur Sher-e-Bangla Stadium exclusively to cricket is a positive one. And you will be glad to know that the BCB, with the help of Cricket Australia, has had a deal with an Australian consultancy firm. They are coming up with a master plan in this regard.

But again implementing a master plan involves a huge amount of money. So I encourage the leading business bodies to come forward and make contribution in such a large project which will make the job a lot easier.

Mahfuz Anam: Just to clarify one point, you mentioned that you prepare pitches and grounds for cricket and then it goes to waste. So, has a decision been taken now to protect those pitches all year round?

Mahbub Anam: I'm afraid, no. We have laid seven wickets at the Dhaka Stadium and each cost us Tk 1,50,000. But every year we need to repair three wickets after the football season was over, which cost us Tk 15,000 to make them into shape. It's a waste of time and money for no good reason in a poverty-

day National Cricket League but it is in an infancy stage. Besides, it has so far failed to create the necessary rivalry, excitement and sense of belonging among the participating six divisions. So, what I mean by saying true decentralisation of cricket is that the game should be played as much in all the divisions as in Dhaka. For example, a lot of current national players are coming from Sylhet. But if we look into the cricketing activities in Sylhet, it is not as much active as in Dhaka.

Mahbub Anam: I want to add something to Lipu's query about the authority of the ground. At the moment the NSC is given an official letter to the Board stating that these grounds are in the custody of BCB. But unfortunately I don't know what will happen in the future whether the notice will be reverted with the change of the government.

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of an effective drainage system in those newly build stadiums so that we do not get embarrassed in front of the international community like the time the whole day's play was washed out for just one short bout of rain at the Bangabandhu National Stadium during England's tour of Bangladesh.

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one way of taking it out of Dhaka was the school cricket tournament. Although there were hundred entries from Dhaka and only ten to twelve from different zones, I was startled to see sixty per cent of the time the national schools tournament was won by teams from outside Dhaka.

Let me take the opportunity to tell a story of how six members of the Nirman school team became members of the victorious Bangladesh ACC Trophy team.

When we started the school tournament it created enormous enthusiasm and about twenty to thirty thousand boys were involved in the competition. Our scouts used to go round the country and pick up the talented boys and I used to house them in Dhaka for six months and provide them with proper diet, exercise and practice. Then they started playing in the domestic

same players are playing for several years. But if you look at our team, in three years we have had an experiment with sixty players. Why this? I mean if a player fails once or twice, persist with him, give him more chance.

So, coming to another micro level problem, which was raised by the inquiry committee, was the use of bowling machine. In international cricket bowling is done at a speed of 140-plus per hour. And our bowlers do not bowl more than 130kph. So, there is a need for tremendous practice with bowling machines. And I believe we have a bowling machine, which is out of order. We should have a dozen bowling machines.

The other problem with our players is their fragile physique. If you compare the average age and the average weight with the other Test playing nations Bangladesh will perhaps become the lowest. Why our players are light because they are under-nourished. I would say when the national players are not playing cricket they should not stay in Bangladesh. They should be sent either to Australia or to England. For nothing else but for food because when they go home after the national duties they eat all our adulterated food, rubbish food.

So, my suggestion is send them off to play in the Lancashire League in the summer when there is rainy here. I'm sure they will find a place in Lancashire League even if it is free and they do not get paid. Let the Board pay for it. It will not only allow them to have proper food but also allow them to play in good pitches.

I don't know why they are talking about money. The BCB is not short of money. If anything they have got too much is money. As Saber Hossain Chowdhury said when he left the Board he left a balance of over 20 crore taka and he wants to know what happened to it.

Life is all about opportunity. So, it's the job of the Board or in a broader perspective a job of the government to provide the opportunities for the talents from Tetulia to Teknaf to flower.

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