

BUILDING A MORE COMPETITIVE TEAM

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"When we decided on directorship during the Cox's Bazar AGM in 2001, it was aimed at creating professionalism. The present board president has created a constitution committee, which has again recommended for an executive body. Doesn't this step contradict with Mahbub Anam's statement?"

--Mahmud Ul Haq Manu

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efficient and effective administration and development of cricket now and into the future. I would like to elaborate a little bit. There may be a misconception of management. The misconception is who is Board and who is management?

So far, this organisation has been on honorary or volunteer basis. Everybody is a volunteer. We give time only after doing our own businesses or jobs. Except the Chief Executive Officer everyone is a volunteer. So, what I'm saying is we have to find the concept what is management. Is it the Board? The Board is an honorary



and finance. The Board did have some employees in different fields like in accounts.

But the reporting structure was not there. Each of them would report to twenty Board directors or 31 Board directors. So, there was no hierarchy, there was no structure that would really take our cricket forward.

Plans are not being implemented because we are all offering voluntary service. I can only give time when I have time.

However, a professional set how up is in the process of implementation. In the next six months, we expect the entire organogram to come into effect with paid staff. Six months

Saber Hossain: I don't have any doubts about the importance of a professional set-up. But it's not a new concept. The system of having salaried persons started in the past. We had Shafiquel Haque Hira. So we have had this system of individuals being paid so that there's a greater degree of accountability.

The basic challenge with Bangladesh cricket today is taking it out of the micro context and take it to a macro level. How do we see ourselves as a cricketing nation? Where do we want to be in ten years time? How do we compete with other sports in terms of attracting



informal centres of power within the Board?

These are questions you have to address and they apply to past, current and future Boards. Now that makes it all the more important as to why there should be a sound and independent management.

We don't need politicians to decide policies. It should only be a question of execution and implementation.

Now we are talking about the CEO. This decision we took five years ago. It was my failure that I wasn't able to find a competent person.

We have all the right plans, words and presentations but we lack implementation. Even if we implement, we can't ensure continuity.

There has to be a consensus on how we want to take the game forward. But we don't have that mentality. Whatever success we have we try to be a part of it and we all try and claim that we are responsible for that success.

Mahmud Ul Haq Manu: When we decided on directorship during the Cox's Bazar AGM in 2001, it was aimed at creating professionalism. The present board president has created a constitution committee, which has again recommended for an executive body. Doesn't this step contradict with Mahbub Anam's statement that you are trying for an efficient professional management while on other hand policymakers are pushing for an executive committee of secretaries and joint secretaries?

Mahbub Anam: I am not contradicting. I have said that the constitution is in the process. What Manu has pointed out has not been finalised.

Mahmud Ul Haq Manu: There's a legal complication. The High Court has suspended the activities of the present Board as the petitioner claimed that it was run by an executive body and then shifted to a form of board of directors which was against the NSC constitution. You are again moving in that same direction. Doesn't that contradict with the High Court's ruling?

Mahbub Anam: I think matters that lie with the court should not be discussed here. I have given my opinion as an individual.

Mahfuz Anam: But what's the issue here?

Mahbub Anam: There have been certain drawbacks in the constitution, which have been challenged in the court of law.

Mahfuz Anam: So for you to set up an independent management set-up you have to have a new law?

Mahbub Anam: Employing people is not the question. It's the structure of the Board. Whether to call the policy makers directors, advisors or general secretaries. The structure has been challenged in the court. We are talking about of the NSC Act 1974.

Mahfuz Anam: So to make some changes you need to

change the act. That law does not permit you to have some things, which you want. These are now in the process of being recommended to the government. So some sort of legal framework amendment is necessary for you to go into the direction you want.

Mahbub Anam: That's right. **Faruque Ahmed:** The Board needs to find the priorities under the management.

Especially, the venues have to be looked after by a group of professionals. They will be accountable to the Board. I believe the Board is seriously short of curators.

We have maybe 64 stadiums in 64 districts but matches can be played in only ten of them. This is because the local district sports associations who are responsible for the maintenance of those venues in most cases are not in a position to look after the grounds properly, as they don't have the necessary knowledge.

Sometimes, we have gone to a district to play and I found the BCB curator arriving just the day before the match. What can he do to the wicket in a day's time?

Regarding professionalism, we have started the process but as our resources are less, we have to prioritise the fields that need most attention. We have to employ professional people in key posts so that they are accountable.

Mahfuz Anam: The CEO is a nice concept but does he have the authority? For example, I am the CEO of the Daily Star. There is a board of directors who give the policy but once the meeting is over I am the captain of the ship. Does he have that executive power or does he have to run all the time to the chairman, president whoever? Does he have that legal and structural authority because ultimately what authority means is can I blame him for not getting things done?

KZ Islam: Worldwide companies, institutions, organisations are run by CEOs. To the best of my knowledge so does all the other cricket boards excepting India.

In my opinion, Dudhia should be the all in all. But unfortunately three very, very powerful and influential persons chairman of cricket committee, chairman of tournament committee and chairman of grounds committee who I think in society and by and large are more powerful people than the chief executive. Now how is the chief executive going to control, overrule and advice other committees? The heads of all these committees should be paid people and under the CEO who should be accountable to the Board.

The Board should lay down the policy for the CEO to carry it out. This is the normal principle of management. You cannot have two bosses in the same house.

Maqbul Hussein Dudhia: On the point of support, to date I can only say that I have had full one hundred per cent support.

There's no question about it. From the president down to the Board they have given me basically a free hand to run and they have been very, very supportive. I must say that categorically.

Jalal Ahmed Chowdhury: The cricket fraternity wants the CEO to be our round the clock spokesman for the Board. We also want him as our helping hand. At the moment that's not happening.

Khandokar Jamil Uddin: I

fully agree with Saber Hossain Choudhury that there should be continuity. This Board has appointed the CEO and has brought in a number of high profile foreign coaches. A lot of money has been invested. Now, say there's a change in government and the new Board says that the CEO is being paid too much and we should start looking at local resources etc. What will happen then? So we have to reach a consensus that this is good for the game and should be continued for the next three to five years irrespective of who ever is running the Board.

Mahbub Anam: Where we are at the moment and the direction we are going, is a continuity of what has happened. I worked closely with Saber in the last Board and we had developed a draft development programme and there was also a very interesting agreement with Cricket Australia, which would have given us a wide range of support. Somehow or rather we haven't take much advantage of that agreement which was reached in 2001 and was a five-year deal.

The strategic plan and an operational plan. At this moment we expect next month to make it public and continued whoever comes in future. That could be the book that can take our cricket to the future. (Mahfuz Anam asks Saber Hossain Chowdhury to say something)

Saber Hossain: First of all I would like to congratulate the Bangladesh Cricket Board on appointing a CEO. I think it was something that was long overdue. We took the decision but were not able to do it. Continuity if you ask me I think there was a huge hiccup when the new Board took over. Because the Board did try to go back on some of the old things we did previously. And on domestic structure that was certainly a reversal of the earlier policy.

We had a programme of A teams touring and there was no activity there. The way we were doing it was a year before the Test team visits a certain country the A team will go.



"I fully agree with Saber Hossain Choudhury that there should be continuity. This Board has appointed the CEO and has brought in a number of high profile foreign coaches. Now, say there's a change in government and the new board says that the CEO is being paid too much. What will happen then?"

--Khandokar Jamil Uddin

Both KZ Islam and I were Board presidents and I think we exercised authority and were given the leverage and independence to work.

So I appeal to the present

Board don't make your president a lame duck president. Give him the authority and power to decide. There are whisperings, which are now turning into a loud chorus that he cannot decide because there are other influences within the Board. I don't think this is healthy because if we are talking about the CEO who is the CEO going to report to. Let him report to the president because he is the person that is ultimately accountable. If the president is not really in charge of his ship then it's unfair to hold him accountable and blame him.

The second point is the CEO must have a management team. Without that management team he cannot function. So merely by appointing a single individual it would be unfair to expect anything substantial from Dudhia in two years time.

Mahfuz Anam: Are you talking about an executive president who must exercise a lot of power.

Saber Hossain: No, I'm coming to that. The recommendations we had out of the 2001 AGM was that even the president should be elected. What we are talking about now is does the president himself have total control, total authority? I think this should be a lesson for the future also because a CEO just can't work.

KZ Islam talked about three individuals being chairmen of various tournament committees. Personally don't see any problem as long as the CEO is allowed to call the shots.

Unfortunately, what we have had in the past is that individuals who are in that position often feel that I'm honorary member and he's a paid employee so my word is going to prevail over him.

Every time we've appointed someone the thing has been he's a paid person so he's a servant. I'm superior to him and he is subservient to me. We have to come out of that mindset.

So unless you do this basic thing no matter how many individuals or competent individuals you have, the system is not going to work.

Mahfuz Anam: We are now entering the last phase of our roundtable which is a set of recommendations.

Mainul Haq: On the management issue I think the present Board is setting up a Board with a president, general secretary then directors. Then when the next government comes in and it changes. So the first priority must be to restructure the Board.

Mahfuz Anam: So how to restructure the Board? Is that something we deal with here? What about the recommendations of the inquiry committee? Have they been taken up?

"The standard of teamwork and coaching has to be improved."

--Sarwar Imran



KZ Islam: We did not pay enough attention here to our national team and how they are treated. The Board had suggested that a squad of 15-20 best players be selected, trained and allowed to play with the assurance that except with repeat poor performers, they would be retained in the team. The Bangladesh team and especially Saber Hossain Chowdhury have done more for the image of the country than the Foreign Office has done in the last 33 years. My main message would be giving our national cricketers special treatment, good allowance and if possible they should be sent abroad when not playing cricket.

Faruque Ahmed: I'm sorry to say we are not getting enough practice facilities especially on turf wickets. Even the national players don't practice on turf wickets when they are not playing. The blame should not always fall on the players the management should also share it.

Mahfuz Anam: But what are your recommendations?

Faruque Ahmed: Although Mahbub bhai said that they are building indoor facilities. But before that we will have to ensure better outdoor facilities, restart the home and away structure in domestic cricket and make the pitches more competitive.

Mahfuz Anam: It's very easy saying we need more facilities and coaches. Let me give an example a boy who got the highest mark worldwide in the O'Level English examination came from a school in Bangladesh. Of course he's an

exception but what I'm saying is that; are we making the best use of our resources? People said that we have lots of grounds in all the

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Ali Asghar's interview

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appointment of a chief executive officer (CEO) is the first step towards that. The CEO is now all in all in the Board. He is working liberally. He only talks to me when he finds it difficult to make a decision. Also we are recruiting some more professionals in the Board and some of them have already been interviewed. We hope, by March the whole process will be done.

DSS: Former Board president Saber Hossain attended the roundtable. He made a very serious observation about your functioning as president.

Let us quote Saber, "Both KZ

Islam and I were Board presidents and I think we exercised authority and were given the leverage and independence to work. So I appeal to the present Board, 'Don't make your president a lame duck president. Give him the authority and power to decide. There are whisperings which are now turning into a loud chorus that he cannot decide because there are other influences within the Board'."

What do you say about this?

AA: If it is like that then where are the decisions coming from? I am taking all the decisions and without my signature no decision is made. If someone has said

something different then I will only say that this is absolutely gossip because the president is the sole authority in the Board. I am running the Board.

Of course I have my advisors because I cannot run the Board alone. I take advice from my advisors and that's all. That doesn't mean that I don't have the power.

DSS: Saber also mentioned, "We don't want politicians to decide the policies for the game. Rather there should be a policy that will be made on consensus and that has to be kept going, no matter which government is in power." Are you of the same

opinion?

AA: Of course, I'm of the same opinion. I told you that the day I took over as the president of BCB, I said that it would not be politicised. We want to build Bangladesh cricket team, we want to build a good image of Bangladesh cricket, and we want to take this game ahead. So we have no room to do politics here.

I want to tell you one thing about this that the government and the state minister for youth and sports have never interfered in any activities of the Board.

DSS: You have a good point that the appointment of the CEO was unanimously appreciated.

While saying that KZ Islam suggested that the CEO should be the all in all in the Board. He will be accountable only to the president. But presently he is surrounded by very, very powerful chiefs of different committees who are calling all the shots. Do you agree with Islam?

AA: You should ask this question to the CEO. I think he is in a better position to say whether he has the power or not.

DSS: To give the CEO his full authority you need an amendment in the constitution. Have you taken any initiative in this regard?

AA: You see, for the time being we have given him full authority.

But the question of amendment will be faced when it comes. We are going to have a new constitution from NSC very soon and it is expected that the constitution will validate his position.

Besides, we are also going to change the name of the Board to 'Cricket Bangladesh'.

DSS: You have appointed a CEO at the same time when you have got a recommendation by the constitution committee to get back to the old form of executive committee. Isn't it tricky situation for you?

AA: You see, CEO is an appointment. It has got nothing to do with the Board. He is working

as an employee, right. He is getting salary. Now, you only need to amend the constitution when the question of the form of the Board arises. But, to set up the area of work for the CEO we need to amend the constitution and that we will do.

DSS: You have rewarded a councillor who actually pioneered the move of suspending an elected body of the Board. Many say that it was a political decision. Does politics really play a role in cricket?

AA: No, it's not true. I have already said that we don't want to do anything politically in the Board. Neither anybody was

promoted nor rewarded. We have appointed people according to their merit.

This is not the final thing. The Board will have an election including its president just after the Under-19 World Cup. We want the Board president also to be elected and not selected.

DSS: Do you think that political influence should be kept out of the functioning of sports in general and cricket in particular?

AA: I think political influence should not be there in any sort of sport and cricket is no exception.