

Doesn't make sense

Cricket

BISHWAJIT ROY AND RABEED IMAM

The reluctance of the Indian cricket authorities to host Bangladesh for a full Test tour has come as a bitter disappointment for the country's cricket fraternity.

Having already denied the Tigers a scheduled tour last April, the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) is now set to put back the October trip as well. During the first postponement, the BCCI managed to convince the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) that a chance to host Pakistan during that period was more important in the context of sub-continental cricket diplomacy. This time they have found new reasons -- the ICC Super Series clashes with the Tigers' schedule and then there will be two major religious festivals in the month -- the Dasarah and Diwali -- when they supposedly can't play cricket!

How's the second one for an excuse?

Only last year on Diwali day, India played Pakistan in a one day international in Kolkata to celebrate the BCCI's Platinum Jubilee. Then again, Bangladesh are not Pakistan and are unlikely to attract the same commercial interest. Isn't that the bottom line? By the attitude shown by the cricket authorities across the border, it certainly appears so.

India remains the only Test playing nation the Tigers haven't toured in their five years in the elite league. If the October trip is cancelled, where is the certainty that rescheduled visit will take place any time soon given the international commitments of both countries?

When it comes to hosting Bangladesh, through some rather mysterious power the BCCI is able to compromise the demands put forward by the International Cricket Council's (ICC) 10-year cycle where every country is supposed to play each other both home and away. The spirit of the game, which the governing body of cricket tries so hard to champion, suddenly takes a back seat here. But the BCB's subdued role in reacting to the postponements also raises unpleasant questions, even within the establishment, about the Board's ability stand up for a just cause.

"The way India called off the tour for the second time is unacceptable. But do our concerned people uphold our rights when they talk to their Indian counterparts? Do they ask why we can't tour India when we have visited every other Test country?" said a BCB official on condition of anonymity.

"I understand that there are reasons to be thankful to India for supporting our Test appeal and for their gesture of playing the inaugural Test in Dhaka. But following that, they have always shown their

disinterest in playing Bangladesh and made a lot of drama before touring last December. It seems business and commercial value of a team has become more important to them.

"I am worried that the latest postponement could set a trend and other countries may follow suit. That could be catastrophic for our cricket," the official added.

The BCB is counting on its president Ali Asghar's visit to India on July 16 for a positive outcome regarding a tour in near future. But Asghar himself is reportedly sceptical about that prospect.

Tigers' chief selector Faruque Ahmed meanwhile expressed his frustration about the whole episode. "There were no strong reasons behind the cancellation. The Super Series schedule was made months ago and cricket never stops because of any festival. We have been playing Test series during the Ramadan and Eid for the last couple of seasons," said the former national captain.

"We need to go to India to complete our cycle. I am still hopeful that the two boards will come up with a suitable time frame to hold the series. It will be a shame if they don't."

In this business-dominated era of sports, mutual respect often gets abused and the Bangladesh cricket team has experienced that first hand in no uncertain terms over the years. Will the BCCI usher a new dawn or will it be the same old story written all over again?



Mohammad Fahim, a five-and-half-year old student of Sarulia MA Sattar High School, makes a move against Barua Panna during their final round board in the University of Greenwich FIDE Rating Chess Tournament (Section B) at NSC yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

Abahani fined Tk 10,000

SPORTS REPORTER

The disciplinary committee of Metropolitan Football League Committee yesterday imposed a one-match ban on Abahani winger Abdullah Parvez for misbehaving with referee Tayab Hassan during their Monday's Premier League match against Farashganj Sporting Club.

Abahani goalkeeper Anwarul, defender Pradeep Poddar and substitute Rakibul Islam Ruku have been cautioned for the same reason.

Apart from these, Abahani have been fined Tk 10,000 for their ball-boy's actions against the match official.

It was learned that referee Hassan, who was blasted by the press for his dubious match-conducting, has been show-caused and asked to submit his report within three days.

Meanwhile, protesting the 'biased refereeing' against the club throughout the league, Abahani have officially appealed to the league committee to bring foreign referees immediately.

Abahani, who shared points with Farashganj in a goalless draw in their last match of the first leg, saw their skipper Arif Khan Joy receive two yellow cards inside one minute to be sent off in the dying moments of the match and will miss the national midfielder for two games.

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BFF to speed up youth dev programme

Football

SPORTS REPORTER

The Asian Football Confederation (AFC) has urged the Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) to speed up its youth development programme as soon as possible.

"The AFC officials has told us to give emphasis on developing the game at youth level, which is also a part of the VisionBangladesh programme," said Monir Hossain, chairman of BFF's youth development programme, yesterday after his return from an AFC meeting in Kuala Lumpur.

"We have already asked the district sports associations to pick young footballers for training purpose. They have started the selection process and 50 to 100 players will be brought under our training programme in each district. We will teach them the basics of the game in the first stage," said Monir who is also the BFF's senior vice-president.

"We will run the camps with local coaches from September to October and expect to organise a youth football tournament at national level by the start of next year," he explained.

He added that the tournament will be played on weekends only, probably Thursdays and Fridays, as

the BFF aims to keep the players busy for at least seven to eight months round the year.

"We are determined to fulfil this goal as part of the VisionBangladesh project and I am looking forward to lure sponsors for the programme."

Under VisionBangladesh, the BFF has already started coaching programmes at grassroots level and if handled properly, the two programmes would help the youngsters prepare to enter the big stage.

"This is the first time the federation is going to take such a step nationwide and it will certainly improve the condition of the game."

Monir Ahmed, who is also a member of the National Team Management Committee (NTMC), uttered his frustration over the delay in bringing foreign coach for the national team, which has no coach for the past two and a half years.

"We have failed to bring the Argentine coaches due to lack of fund. I expected the government to assist us in this because it is a national issue. Anyway, we (NTMC) have arranged to pay the coaching staff for at least one year and now it is in BFF's hands to bring them here soon."

The NTMC could not bring sponsors for meeting the demands of the foreign coach but the members of the NTMC will personally provide the fund.

Reefat fails to reach target

SPORTS REPORTER

Grand Master Ziaur Rahman finished the University of Greenwich FIDE Rating Chess tournament with unbeaten note when he won the ninth and last round board against Mohammad Javed at the National Sports Council (NSC) conference room yesterday.

Zia, who confirmed the title with one round in hand, bagged 8.5 points.

International Master (IM) Abdullah Al-Rakib beat IM Reefat bin Sattar in the final round to become runner-up while another IM Enamul Hossain Rajib finished third beating Mohammad Ali.

The tournament was arranged to create an opportunity for Reefat, who is short of eight rating points to notch the Grand Master norm, but he was far away from his desire finishing fifth.

In the B section, Jamal Ahmed became champion and Siddiqui Rahman finished runners-up.

New WI faces doing well

Cricket

AFP, Colombo

Teenager Denesh Ramdin and fellow-debutant Runako Morton combined with veteran Shivnarine Chanderpaul to prop up a weakened West Indies side in the first cricket Test against Sri Lanka here on Wednesday.

Ramdin, a 19-year-old wicket-keeper from Trinidad, hit 56 and Morton contributed 43 as the West Indies closed the opening day at a creditable 271-6 at the Sinhalese Sports Club.

Chanderpaul, leading a badly depleted team that is missing 10 top stars, including the world's leading batsman Brian Lara, made an unbeaten 69 before bad light ended play eight overs early.

Number eight Omari Banks stood his ground for two hours for 30

not out, helping Chanderpaul add 79 priceless runs for the unbroken seventh wicket.

Lara was among the 10 who refused to sign tour contracts amid a protracted sponsorship row with the West Indies Cricket Board.

The 87-Test veteran Chanderpaul was left to lead a motley collection of players of whom none had played more than 10 Tests before the series began. Six were absolute rookies.

Sri Lanka, celebrating their 150th Test match, were stung by the rivals' fightback after watching the tourists being shut out for 110 in a practice game over the weekend.

"It was great to see the batsmen put their heads down," said the West Indies' Australian coach Benett King.

"I think others were more surprised by the performance. I was not surprised at all. There is lot of talent out there."

Sri Lanka's new Australian coach

Tom Moody was equally impressed by the West Indian display.

"They showed a lot of character out there, especially young Ramdin," said Moody.

"Test cricket can change very quickly. This was the first day of five. We just need to hang in there and fight hard. I look forward to day two."

The West Indies went to lunch at 105-3 as Morton and opener Sylvester Joseph put on 58 for the second wicket after Chaminda Vaas claimed Xavier Marshall leg-before 10 in the third over.

The tourists slipped to 113-5 soon after lunch when Lasith Malinga, working up hostile pace with an unusual round-arm slinging action, dismissed Narsingh Deonarine and Dwayne Smith in the space of three deliveries.

Ramdin showed no signs of nerves in his maiden international appearance by smashing the first

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Warne saddened by TV contract cancellation

Cricket

AFP, London

Shane Warne spoke of his sadness Wednesday at the decision of Australia's Channel Nine to cancel his 225,000 dollars (300,000 Australian) a year television commentary contract because of incidents in his private life.

But the legendary leg-spinner insisted his friendship with station owner Kerry Packer would remain unimpaired by the decision.

Warne, 35, separated from his wife Simone last month after a series of sex scandals, allowing Channel Nine to trigger a clause in his latest contract for dismissal due to unsatisfactory off-field behaviour.

"It's disappointing. I've been 12 years with Channel Nine and I've enjoyed the TV side of things," Warne told reporters at Australia's London hotel on Wednesday.

"It was something I was looking forward to getting into when I finished cricket whenever that may be. I wanted it to be with the Nine network because they've been very good to me and I've enjoyed my time with them."

"They taught me a lot of stuff about television, how it works. Twelve years is a long time to be associated with someone. They were my first sponsor for want of a better word."

News Limited newspapers reported that Warne had been personally informed of the decision to drop him by Packer, Australia's richest man.

And Warne added: "I've become personal friends with the Packers, both Kerry and James (Kerry's son). They've both been very good to me and I'm sure my friendship with them won't change at all."

"I'm disappointed but I understand their decision. I accept that and move on. I maybe have to look

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PHOTO: AFP

India cricket captain Sourav Ganguly arrives at his hotel in Bangalore on Wednesday. Ganguly came to India from England to participate in the concluding part of the conditioning camp for Indians for the upcoming tri-series in Sri Lanka later this month.

What to WATCH

TEN Sports

West Indies vs Sri Lanka
First Test, Day Two
Live at 10:15 am

ESPN

Sportscentre
Live at 8:30 pm

STAR Sports

Sportslive
Live at 8:00 pm

DAY'S EVENT

Premier Football League
Muktijoddha v YMC F'pool (5:00 pm)
Venue: Bangabandhu National Stadium



PHOTO: AFP

West Indies captain Shivnarine Chanderpaul, who was unbeaten on 69, is about to play a shot on the opening day of the first Test against Sri Lanka in Colombo on Wednesday.

Football League matches postponed

SPORTS REPORTER

The Premier and First Division Football League matches yesterday were postponed due to heavy rain in the city.

Weather permitting, the Premier League clash between Muktijoddha Sangsad and Youngmen's Club Fakirerpool will be held today at 5 pm at the Bangabandhu National Stadium.

In first division, Agrani Bank will take on Wari Club at 4.15 pm at the Kamalapur Stadium.

All the fixtures will be bodily shifted.

BKSP CUP SOCCER BKSP-Dhaka final tomorrow

SPORTS REPORTER

Hosts BKSP set a final clash against Dhaka Division in the third BKSP Cup Under-16 football tournament when they handed a 3-1 defeat to Chittagong in the first semifinal yesterday at the BKSP ground.

The final will be played tomorrow at the same venue.

Rana struck twice and Tutul added one for the winners while Towhid pulled back one for Chittagong.

In the second semifinal, Dhaka edged visiting Chandigarh FA 1-0 with Mobarak slotting the match-decider.

Vaughan out of Trophy match

AFP, London

England captain Michael Vaughan was withdrawn Wednesday from Yorkshire's Cheltenham and Gloucester Trophy quarterfinal against Northamptonshire this weekend.

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