

Selector back on sticky wicket

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) finally cleared their position yesterday about the allegations against a national selector regarding players' sponsorship deal with Reebok and said that they officially reprimanded the selectors after investigating the matter.

BCB general secretary Mahbubul Anam only informed the reporters about the matter after outgoing president Ali Asghar requested him to make it clear to the press.

"We investigated the allegation against the national selectors but there was no definitive proof that they had received commissions from the players. But we are convinced that one of selectors (Athar Ali Khan) was well aware of the contract and made the initial introduction," said Mahbub.

Meanwhile, the selectors led by Faruque Ahmed had previously denied that they didn't even know about the deal.

"We verbally warned them for their hasty declaration. There is no doubt that it is unethical for the selectors to be involved with such affairs because they are in a judges' position."

"We have advised them to refrain from these activities or else they will face consequences in future," said the bearded organiser.

It was disclosed last July that a selector 'brokered the deal' between Bangladesh captain

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Outgoing Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) president Ali Asghar speaks during a press conference confirming his resignation at the BCB headquarters yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

Dhaka-Barisal tie abandoned

Revised games Nov 16

SPORTS REPORTER

Dhaka had to be content with four points rather than having a crack at the Barisal lower-order after the match was declared as abandoned due to the ongoing blockade that prevented the completion of the four-day match at the Fatullah Stadium over the last few days.

As per the tournament by-laws, Dhaka bagged four first innings points while Barisal gained two after the first round match of the 8th Ispahani Mirzapore Tea National Cricket League failed to go on after the third day's play on Saturday. The hosts were ahead in the match, as they had Barisal reeling at 78 for 5 in the second innings, chasing 247.

Dhaka fought their way in setting this target after they were bowled out for 173 and 227 in their batting stints. Barisal were trailing by 19 runs (154 all out) in their first innings.

Meanwhile, the second round's fixture has gone through a complete change due to the ongoing political situation. All the reverse fixtures will now be played, replacing the original schedule for the second round matches. Barisal's will play their 'home' match against Dhaka at the Dhanmondi Cricket Stadium on November 16.

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India vow to turn round

Cricket

AFP, Johannesburg

India coach Greg Chappell backed his team to banish the demons of their recent poor form Tuesday by using the tour of South Africa as a launchpad for its challenge in next year's World Cup.

India's traditionally poor away form has spread to its own shores and skipper Raul Dravid's men were embarrassingly eliminated in the league phase of the recent Champions Trophy despite enjoying home advantage.

Former Australia star Chappell said the South Africa tour, which will feature five one-day internationals and three Tests, was an ideal opportunity to tune up for the World Cup in the West Indies early next year.

"They (the Tests and ODIs) are equally important to us, and we want to do well in both, but at the moment we are focusing on the ODIs," Chappell told reporters after the team arrived at Johannesburg airport.

"Like all other countries, we have next year's World Cup in mind, and the team we are fielding

here is very close to our World Cup squad."

Dravid also backed India to turn around their dismal recent form which has seen them lose eight of their last 12 one-day internationals.

Their record in South Africa is equally unimpressive, having won just three of their 16 one-dayers since 1992.

"We've had successes in South Africa before. We reached the final of the World Cup here in 2003, and a number of our batsmen have scored some very good centuries here," he was quoted as saying by the Sapa news agency.

"Quite a few of the senior players have been here before, and we have discussed the conditions here with the younger players."

"We enjoy batting on these pitches -- the ball coming onto the bat and giving you the ability to play shots."

"You have to take into account that certain shots should be avoided, but you do have a wider range of strokes available to you."

Dravid said the team would enjoy being out of the intense spotlight that it is subjected to back home.

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PRO LEAGUE Transfer delayed again

SPORTS REPORTER

As expected, the transfer of the inaugural Professional Football League will not begin today due to the ongoing political unrest.

The Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF), after evaluating the situation, has decided to postpone the transfer for an indefinite period.

The decision was taken at a meeting after yesterday afternoon's meeting of the executive committee and the tournament committee. Representatives of three clubs were also present.

This is the fourth time the transfer schedule has been postponed.

"As soon as the countrywide blockade is lifted, we will announce a fresh date for the transfer," told BFF general secretary Anwarul Hoque Helal yesterday.

"It is difficult to predict when we can start the process but if the situation worsens, there would be further delay," feared Helal.

"We had already called the meeting to evaluate the situation and the eight clubs also appealed jointly to defer the procedures. The clubs outside from the capital would have suffered most because it would be difficult for them to join the transfer at this moment."

Representatives from Mohammedan Sporting Club, Brothers Union and Muktijoddha Sangsad

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BHF boss takes the hard line

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh Hockey Federation (BHF) will resume the Premier Hockey League as soon as protection is available, said federation's acting general secretary Khwaja Rahmatullah yesterday.

The Super Five stage of the Premiership has been halted due to the countrywide blockade and the refusal of Mohammedan and Mariners in demand of punishment of Abahani and Usha players who were involved in a scuffle during their match earlier this match.

Mohammedan refused to play in their match Usha and it is being treated as a walkover according to the laws, in which the punishment for forfeiting a match is relegation.

Both Mariners and Mohammedan threatened to take legal action against the federation after its judgement and league has been postponed since.

"We want every team to play but cannot start the league due to lack

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With regret Lobi leaves

TV deal gets government's go-ahead

Cricket

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) finally got the government approval to strike the TV deal with Nimbus Sports International but not before its president Ali Asghar Lobi had stepped down from the hot seat on Tuesday.

The lucrative TV deal worth 56.88 million dollars with the Singapore-based company was stalled following a circular of the caretaker government, which was under pressure from different forums to eject all the politically appointed chiefs of the sports federations made during the BNP-led 4-party alliance's rule.

Although Asghar had a wish to bow out only after signing the agreement, the BNP lawmaker wisely decided not to be the stumbling block.

His decision to quit meant a prompt solution that saw the country's most well-off sports body receiving two letters yesterday afternoon -- one about the go-ahead approval of the deal and other the appointment of agriculture secretary Mohammad Abdul Aziz as its new president -- from the Sports Ministry.

"It's a huge relief for us because now we can complete the formal-

ties with Nimbus. We will sign the informal memorandum of understanding within forty-eight hours but it would take some time to make the formal deal. We will meet our new president as early as possible," said BCB general secretary Mahbubul Anam.

However, the over-the-top issue on an eventful Tuesday was the resignation of Asghar.

Although it was a tough decision to make for the mild-mannered man from Khulna, who was at the helm for five years, Asghar however was not ready to consider his late move as an eyewash rather he told reporters that he had taken the decision in greater interest of the game.

"Honestly speaking I wanted to sign the historic deal as I was involved in the whole procedure, so you can say I left the board with a mission unaccomplished though I had a successful five years in the board," said Asghar, who came to the office to hand over the charge to vice-president Aziz Al Kaiser Tito after submitting his resignation letter to Sports Adviser CM Shafi Sami in the morning.

"I took the decision because I felt that there was no point in staying here when many thought my presence would slow down the TV deal procedures. I talked with my party chairperson (Begum Khaleda Zia) before taking the decision," explained Asghar when he was

asked why he had taken the decision when there were speculations that the caretaker government was going to remove all political appointees in different federations.

Asghar pointed out his success and failure during his five-year tenure in the country's most prestigious sports body.

"When I took the job the coffers had almost been empty but I can proudly say that now the organisation is solvent and there is enough money in the account to run the show properly. On the other hand I think not touring India, lack of improvement of domestic cricket and not being able to complete the Mirpur Stadium were my failures."

"But I am highly satisfied that I could make an international venue at my hometown Khulna, which was also my dream," he added.

Asghar also reiterated that he was innocent in the 'infamous' deal with the little known Aston Moore, which had created a widespread criticism.

"Everybody knew about the deal because it was discussed in the meeting. There was nothing wrong," he said.

Asghar remembered former chief executive officer Macky

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Pakistan take lead

Lara's 33rd ton goes in vain

Cricket

AFP, Lahore

Pakistan overcame Brian Lara's defiant 33rd century to record an easy nine-wicket victory over the West Indies in the first Test at the Gaddafi Stadium here Tuesday.

The home side faced tough resistance from the West Indian captain, who hit a stubborn 122, and Shvinnarine Chandernaul (81) before they dismissed the tourists for 291 runs in their second innings on the fourth day.

Pakistan lost Mohammad

Hafeez (one) before Imran Farhat, who remained unbeaten on eight, took them to the target. Younis Khan had not scored.

Lara proved to be the main obstacle between the home team and victory, defying the Pakistan attack admirably in the first session and leading a fighting 137-run stand for the fifth wicket with Chandernaul.

Lara batted with resolve as he cut and drove beautifully on a weary pitch.

The 37-year-old left-handed batsman let loose after lunch, hitting leg-spinner Danish Kaneria for two successive fours and then reaching his century by cutting fast bowler

Umar Gul for his 16th boundary.

Pakistan captain Inzamam-ul-Haq rang desperate changes to dislodge the pair and brought in Hafeez, who had Lara leg before off a miscued sweep and it allowed Pakistan to take the last six wickets in the space of just 53 runs.

Lara hit 19 boundaries during his 215-ball knock.

Lara is now third behind Indian maestros Sachin Tendulkar (35) and Sunil Gavaskar (34) in the all-time Test century list. This is his third successive hundred against

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PHOTO: AFP

West Indies captain Brian Lara (R) plays a sweep shot as Pakistan wicketkeeper Kamran Akmal looks on during the fourth day of the first Test between the sides at the Gaddafi Cricket Stadium in Lahore on Tuesday.

Eng falter on the field

Cricket

AFP, Sydney

England's fielding horrors returned Tuesday as their three-day practice match with New South Wales petered out to a tame draw at the Sydney Cricket Ground.

NSW batted out their second innings from lunch to an agreed stumps on the final day, yet England blotted their Ashes preparations in that time with a couple of fumbles, recalling memories of their shoddy fielding in last year's 2-1 Ashes series triumph.

When stumps were drawn, NSW were 194 for six in their second innings after dismissing England for 349 to hold a six-run innings lead.

Michael Clarke, looking to return to the Australian team, topscored with 68 before he was bowled by Ashley Giles and skipper Simon

Katich retired on his tea score of 55. England put down 25 catches to Australia's 17 in last year's Ashes series victory with wicketkeeper Geraint Jones and Kevin Pietersen the worst offenders -- Jones missed seven chances while Pietersen dropped six.

Jones, preferred by team selec-

tors to be the Test wicketkeeper ahead of Chris Read, was at it again on Tuesday, missing a stumping when Michael Clarke was 47 in the over after lunch, while Andrew Strauss fumbled a chance at slip before Aaron O'Brien had scored.

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Did U Know?

Wally Hammond of England became the first batsman to score a triple century in Test.



Fabio Capello

(Real Madrid coach)
"Ruud van Nistelrooy has already proved he is a top class striker with a scent for goal that few very players in football have."



TEN Sports

Brazil v Switzerland

Friendly

Live at 1:15 am (Thursday)

ESPN

Sportscenter India

Live at 8:30 pm

STAR Sports

Tennis Masters Cup

Live at 5:00 pm

Rajshahi in zonal final

SPORTS REPORTER

Rajshahi moved to the zonal finals after sneaking past hosts Natore by two wickets in the National Cricket Championship at the Natore Stadium yesterday.

Natore batted first after winning the toss but failed to post a considerable total as they were bowled out for 163 runs in 48.5 overs. Shahin (40), Taijul (38) and Rony (34) contributed to their score. Rajshahi's Sajib and Liton took two wickets each.

In reply, local boy Monju, who had figures of 4-37, threatened Rajshahi till the end but his efforts

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PHOTO: AFP

India star Sachin Tendulkar pushes a trolley on his arrival with the Indian team at the OR Tambo Airport in Johannesburg on Tuesday.

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