

ICC clears Baisya to leave

AFP, Georgetown

Bangladesh have been given the go-ahead to replace injured pace-man Tapash Baisya with all-rounder Forhad Reza at the World Cup, the International Cricket Council announced on Saturday.

Baisya suffered an ankle injury during Bangladesh's Super Eights defeat against Australia in Antigua last week.

"The reports indicated Baisya will require six to eight weeks of rehabilitation before he regains full fitness so the (World Cup) technical committee has approved Reza as replacement," said an International Cricket Council statement.

The 20-year-old Reza, who has played 12 one-day internationals, is the eighth replacement player to be called up for the tournament so far.

Pakistan replaced Abdul Razzaq, Shoaib Akhtar and Mohammad Asif, while New Zealand brought in replacements for Daryl Tuffey and Lou Vincent --

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Arambagh ease past Khulna Abahani

UNB, Dhaka

Arambagh Krira Sangha registered their third victory in the B.League with a 3-1 win over Khulna Abahani at the Khulna Stadium yesterday.

With the day's outcome, the mediocre Dhaka metropolis club secured 10 points in six matches to join Muktioddha Sangsad in the second spot while Khulna Abahani remained on six points having played five matches.

Nicodemus struck twice in the sixth and 55th minutes while Nurul Islam scored the other goal in the 83rd minute for Arambagh.

Prasanta Dey netted the face-saving goal for the hosts in the 75th minute.

Dhaka Abahani and Sheikh Russell share the top slot with 11 points, both playing five matches.



Bangladesh opener Tamim Iqbal plays the ball towards fine-leg during the World Cup Super Eights match against South Africa at the Guyana National Stadium in Georgetown on Saturday.

England on the edge

AFP, St John's



England head into Sunday's Super Eights clash with defending champions Australia knowing defeat will deal a huge blow to their hopes of reaching the World Cup semifinals.

They could lose to their oldest foes at the Sir Vivian Richards Stadium and still make it through to the last four.

But they would need to win their remaining matches against Bangladesh, South Africa and hosts West Indies while hoping other results elsewhere went their way.

Australia have been in dominating form at this World Cup, winning all five of their matches and are still to be dismissed for under 300 as they pursue an unprecedented third straight title.

Yet for all their lacklustre displays in the Caribbean so far, there is evidence that there is no side England would rather be playing in their current position than Australia.

After their recent 5-0 Ashes trouncing, their tour of Australia appeared in a far more desperate state than their campaign does now.

England, thanks to the batting of Paul Collingwood, rallied with one-day wins over New Zealand and Australia that saw them achieve a stunning 2-0 triumph over Ricky Ponting's men to win the CB series.

That England respond well to the challenge of playing classy opponents when in trouble was evident in Wednesday's dramatic two-run defeat by Sri Lanka where their bowling attack restricted the 1996 champions to 235 all out.

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"Every game for them (England) is a knockout game and that puts them on the razor's edge," said Australia coach John Buchanan, who believes a victory for his side will "virtually eliminate" England.

"Any side that's playing for its life, understands fairly well what it has to do."

Yet the plain fact is that, despite Ravi Bopara's gutsy 52 against Sri Lanka, England lost when the all-rounder was bowled off the last ball by Dilhara Fernando.

Sri Lanka had found a match-winner just when they needed one -

- England, who lost a warm-up match against Australia, hadn't quite.

England's top order have failed to give the team a solid platform at this World Cup and that could see opener Andrew Strauss recalled in place of Middlesex teammate Ed Joyce this weekend even though he hasn't played a match since the Australia tour.

Opener Vaughan said he and all-rounder Andrew Flintoff, who've each yet to make a telling contribution with the bat, were desperate for runs.

"He's like me, he wants a score for the team," said the skipper.

And Vaughan said it was vital new-ball duo James Anderson and Sajid Mahmood repeated their effective display against Sri Lanka.

"They are going to have to be at their best again because Matthew Hayden, Adam Gilchrist and Ricky Ponting are playing very well."

The only dilemma facing Australia appears to be who replaces injured paceman Shane Watson, who has a calf problem.

But with fellow Queensland all-rounder Andrew Symonds -- who

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Bashar plays it down

AFP, Georgetown



Bangladesh fans who before last week were celebrating their team's rise.

Bashar, whose team face South Africa on Saturday, said Whatmore has kept his thoughts on his future plans to himself.

"He (Whatmore) has been working very hard with us, and has given no indication that he's not enjoying himself here," said Bashar of the coach whose contract expires next month.

"I don't want to talk too much about his thoughts. It's purely for him to decide. But our performance shows what kind of hard work he has put in," said Bashar whose team defeated India by five wickets to progress to the Super Eights.

In the second round, however, Bangladesh have been thrashed by Australia by ten wickets and were handed a nine-wicket mauling by New Zealand.

The defeats have sparked an extreme reaction among

Bangladesh fans who before last week were celebrating their team's rise.

Bashar shrugged off the public reaction.

"It's not so much pressure, it's more expectation. We expected to do a lot better in the last two games because we have been playing good cricket. The pressure should not be used as an excuse," said Bashar whose effigies have been burnt by fans in Dhaka.

"If you don't do well, criticism will be there," added Bashar, who has so far managed just 105 runs with one half-century in the tournament.

Also out of form is vice-captain Shahriar Nafees who is likely to be rested for the South Africa match. He was dropped for the defeat to New Zealand and replaced by Javed Omar

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Australia batsman Michael Clarke (2nd from R) avoids a challenge from teammate Mitchell Johnson as they enjoy a game of touch rugby during a training session in St John's on Friday.

Greg's parting shots

Cricket

AFP, Mumbai

India were stunned by Bangladesh and also lost to Sri Lanka in the preliminary stage.

"We could have done with a few young legs, but I believe that we still had the ammunition to at least reach the semis."

Chappell said he had enjoyed coaching India despite a contro

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Dravid stays captain

Shastri new manager; Tendulkar, Yuvraj show-caused

Cricket

CRICINFO, undated

The Board of Control for Cricket in India's (BCCI) reaction to India's early exit from the World Cup, and its bitter fallout with senior players voicing their displeasure over the team leadership, has been swift and strong.

The working committee, meeting in Mumbai Saturday, took several key decisions aimed at bringing senior players into line, including replacing the graded system of contracts with a standard fee for all and imposing stringent curbs on player endorsements.

It also appointed Rahul Dravid team captain for the next three

tours, to Bangladesh, Ireland and England and asked the selectors to pick a "young side" for the first of those tours. Dravid's retention of the captaincy had been under question, with senior players airing their opposition to him.

"All of us are very disappointed that the team was knocked out in the first round and the captain and coach admitted that the whole team was responsible for the loss", N Srinivasan, the BCCI treasurer, said.

"But it is not the end of the world. We have to move forward and I am sure we will do well in future. By retaining Dravid as captain, we want to send out a signal that there is no cause for panic."

The board has gone further in backing Dravid by acting on his

Pak academy side arrives

SPORTS REPORTER

The Pakistan Cricket Academy squad arrived here yesterday to play two four-day matches against their Bangladesh counterparts and then take part in a triangular limited-overs tournament.

Coached by former international fast bowler Aaqib Javed, they came on a three-week tour to reciprocate the BCB cricket academy's visit last year.

On completion of the four-day matches, the tourists play in the triangular series also involving Sri Lanka Cricket Academy team, which is scheduled to arrive in Dhaka on April 20.

The Sri Lankan side will also play two four-dayers against the home team after the one-day tournament.

SQUAD

Fawad Alam (captain), Anwar Ali, Junaid Zia, Khalid Latif, Sarfaraz Ahmed (wk), Khurram Manzoor, Atif Maqbool, Afaq Rahim, Babar Naeem, Adnan Raza, Shahid Younis, Abdul Rauf, Najaf Shah, Sohail Tanvir, Zohaib Khan.

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The former Australian captain, who quit as India coach after the team's first round exit in the World Cup, said long-term planning was needed to take India to the next level in international cricket.

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Woolmer coached South Africa during the 1990s, working closely with captain Hansie Cronje, who admission in 2000 that he received money from bookmakers shocked the cricket world and led to him being banned for life.

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