

Relegation decision on Friday

SPORTS REPORTER

Decision on the relegation play-off of Premier Cricket League has been delayed till June 8 after Saturday's Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) meeting was adjourned.

Due to time constraint the decision, along with others, had to be deferred till Friday. Among the other agendas that could not be decided upon were the large number of unnecessary committees that are present in the board, a thought that was raised during the course of the meeting.

The meeting, held at a local hotel on Saturday, appointed a new captain, new vice-captain, an interim coach and decided on the new payroll details of the national, A-team and under-19 players.

Re-laid track for Afro-Asia Cup opener

PTI, New Delhi

The Afro-Asia Cup might have lost its sheen due to the pull out of several stars and the accompanying negative publicity, but hosts Karnataka State Cricket Association are confident of a strong response for the tournament.

"The excitement is picking up slowly. We still have star players lined up. Sourav Ganguly, Sanath Jayasuriya, Mahela Jayawardene, they are all stars," KSCA Secretary Brijesh Patel told PTI from Bangalore.

The former India batsman believed that although the first of three one-dayers in the series, to be played under lights at the MA Chinnaswamy Stadium, was scheduled on a weekday (June 6), there would be a good crowd turn out.

"The ticket sales is picking up," he said.

The day-night tie would be played on a re-laid track.

The KSCA had few weeks ago initiated a comprehensive

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Did U Know?

In the 1938 FIFA World Cup semifinal, Italian legend Giuseppe Meazza's shorts fell down as he was taking a penalty shot. He held his shorts up and calmly scored past Brazilian goalkeeper Valtter.



Tom Moody

(Former Sri Lankan cricket coach) "As an Australian when I have been with the Sri Lankan team in Australia, or playing against them in the World Cup, it's the only situation we find in the whole of the cricketing world where we have this disgraceful slant on a cricketer."

On the Australian crowds' taunts towards Sri Lanka spinner Muttiah Muralidaran.



ESPN

Sportscentre India
Live from 8:30 pm

STAR Sports

French Open
Fourth Round
Live from 3:00 pm



PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

New captain of Bangladesh Mohammad Ashraful receives a guard of honour from students of his old cricket school Pallima Sangsad in Khilgaon where he went to meet his mentor and former national player Wahidul Gani yesterday. Ashraful, who is one of the first students of Pallima Sangsad, became the youngest captain of Bangladesh.

Dav in line for India



PTI, Bangalore

The dice seems to be loaded in favour of Dav Whatmore to succeed fellow-Australian Greg Chappell as the new cricket coach of the Indian team ahead of their tour to England and Ireland later this month.

The Sri Lanka-born former batsman, who toured India with the team led by Kim Hughes in 1979, looks all set to get the nod from the seven-member Coach Selection Committee of the Cricket Board headed by BCCI Chief Sharad Pawar when it meets here on Monday night, according to BCCI sources.

"Whatmore can be said to be the front-runner to take up the job. But let's see what other names the members of the committee come up with," the sources told PTI on Sunday.

The sources were especially referring to former India skipper Sunil Gavaskar, among the three former captains forming the special committee, who is reportedly not in favour of the Australian to take up the mantle.

Gavaskar has been severe in his indirect criticism of the Australian in his syndicated column, referring to the way in which Bangladesh did not make an effort to chase the target set by India in the opening Test at Chittagong and for opting to field after winning the toss in the second

and final Test at Mirpur.

Bangladesh slid to a humiliating innings defeat in the second Test and lost the series 0-1 after succumbing 0-2 in the best-of-three ODI series held earlier.

Whatmore, who quit as the coach of Bangladesh at the end of the tour to their eastern neighbours by the Rahul Dravid-led Indian team, however has good credentials as coach to support his claims.

Meanwhile, a strong advocate of having an Indian coach for the national team, former captain Kapil Dev has lambasted senior cricketers for reportedly lobbying for a foreigner.

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England stay unchanged



AFP, London

England named an unchanged squad Sunday for the third Test against West Indies as they aim to win the series at Old Trafford.

The hosts had few options but to retain the same eleven that triumphed by an innings and 283 runs at Headingley, West Indies' largest Test innings defeat, where they went 1-0 up in the four-match series

after the drawn Lord's opener.

All-rounder Andrew Flintoff, seamer Matthew Hoggard and the likes of pace bowlers Sajid Mahmood and Stuart Broad have all been ruled out through injury.

But batsman Ian Bell appears to have recovered from the back spasms which prevented him fielding for much of the time at Headingley, although he will test his fitness in a one-day match for Warwickshire later Sunday.

Meanwhile James Anderson will join up Wednesday, on the eve of

the Test, at his Old Trafford home ground with the eleven announced by chairman of selectors David Graveney from Lancashire's Championship match away to Durham to provide pace bowling cover for late injury or illness.

However, left-arm quick Ryan Sidebottom is set to retain his place after taking eight for 86 in his first Test for six years at Headingley

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PHOTOS: AFP

(L) Flamboyant Spaniard Rafael Nadal on follow-through of a forehand slash against Albert Montañas while dogged Australian Lleyton Hewitt (R) clenches his fist after his victory over Jarkko Nieminen in their respective third round matches of the French Open at Roland Garros on Saturday. The two powerhouses meet tonight.

Team for SL to be named today



SPORTS REPORTER

A few changes are expected when the national selectors announce the Sri Lanka-bound team today.

Under a new leader in batsman Mohammad Ashraful, Bangladesh will play three Tests and as many one-day internationals in the island during a 39-day trip in June-July.

The Faruque Ahmed-led selection panel will name a 15-member Test squad and four or five additional players for the one-day series.

"We will announce the Test team as well as few additional names to join the squad after completion of the Test series. Who will return home will be decided after the Test series," informed Faruque yesterday.

It has been all but confirmed that immediate past Bangladesh skipper Habibul Bashar will retain his place in the Test side but there is remote chance for him to continue as a one-day player.

However, it would not be an easy

task for the selectors as there are strong contenders for Bashar's place in in-form Tushar Imran and Aftab Ahmed. Many believe that 23-year old right-hander Tushar has been deprived for long but it is time now to give him adequate chance in both versions of the game.

Tushar, who has maintained form not only in domestic circuit but also with the A-team, was included in the Test squad against India but unfortunately failed to play due to attack of seasonal fever.

The selectors are seriously considering an off-spinning all-rounder to add to the left-arm spin quartet and the performance of Mahmudullah Riyad for the last six months, especially with the A team, has given them food for thought.

Also, Bangladesh desperately missed a genuine third seamer during the two-match Test series against India, which was also the case during Tigers' last visit to Sri Lanka in 2005, and that is the reason the selectors are looking for a quick.

Mohammad Sharif had to be recalled after five years in emergency situation for the second Test

against India to replace an ill Shahadat Hossain but he also failed to deliver the goods. Forhad Reza or uncapped Dollar Mahmud look like the candidates to fill the gap.

It would also be interesting to see whether the selectors show their courage to put an end to the career of Javed Omar as one-day opener. Javed has been a temporary solution in the shorter-version of the game but things look difficult with Shahriar Nafees completely out of form.

The left-handed opener missed all the one-dayers against India at home following his brittle batting in the World Cup. He added more woes to his wounds with figures of 32, 1, 2 and 4 in the Test series.

"We think it is too early to think about the players who will return home after the Test series because you should understand that there are three Tests and many things can happen there. True it's good to make up minds with a future vision but current circumstances are also equally important to me," explained Faruque.

The former national skipper also

welcomed the board decision of naming one captain for the tour.

"It was almost obvious that Ashraful would be the next one-day captain but I am little bit surprised by the decision of giving him the job for Test team as well. But I must welcome the board decision because he can be a good choice in the long run. Ashraful is now more matured and a sensible guy but we have to wait to see how he handles the job. I think we have to give him time to settle in this position," said Faruque.

On the other hand, new selector Akram Khan said that Ashraful is lucky enough to be named captain at the age of 22.

"As a former captain I think it's a bold decision by the board to name Ashraful as captain because we have to prepare someone for the future. It is a trend in our country that a player gets the job at the fag end of his career and I think this time, the board has changed the trend," observed Akram.

LOCAL SNIPPETS

SPORTS REPORTER

Comilla were crowned champions in the Chittagong leg of Samsung 2nd Divisional Karate Championship in Cox's Bazar on May 19.

They won five gold medals and one silver and bronze each. Sohail Rana, Nazmul Hasan, Mohammad Lokman and Hasan Khan won the gold medals while Saleha Lovely won silver and bronze in the women's event.

Chittagong and hosts Cox's Bazar won three gold medals each.

UNDER-13 CRICKET

Metro Cricket Academy beat Indira Road by 49 runs to move into the semifinal of Boost Power Cup under-13 cricket tournament at the Kalabagan Cricket Ground.

Batting first, Metro reached 224 for 7 in 30 overs with Sajib smashing 43 off 29 balls. Sadik

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Williams, Henin to do battle

AFP, Paris

Top seed and title-holder Justine Henin and top challenger Serena Williams set up a French Open quarter-finals showdown when both easily won their fourth round ties on Sunday.

Henin, apart from a brief second set blip, was in total command as she brushed aside Sybille Bammer of Austria 6-2, 6-4 for her 18th straight win at Roland Garros.

Williams, seeking a second Paris title five years after her first, underlined her threat by blasting past Russia's Dinara Safina 6-2, 6-3.

The two last played here in the 2003 semi-finals when Henin won a superb three-setter that saw Williams leave the court in tears as the Paris crowd backed the underdog Belgian.

"Justine is really good here. Usually I don't have to peak too soon but this will be different," Williams said. "But I am playing the clay court game really good."

"I don't want to reflect on what happened in 2003 any more. This is a new year and we are both different people. I have matured and if the crowd gets involved I can just zone out."

All 16 remaining women were scheduled to play during the day with the quarter-final line-up set to be decided.

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SPORTS REPORTER

Mohammedan gave up solo lead but the Dhaka giants had the share of the B. League top spot with Muktiyoddha after 11 rounds following a goalless draw against Sheikh Russel yesterday.

Mohammedan and Russel shared points after a 1-1 draw in the first leg and the result of both sides' second-leg opener at the Bangabandhu National Stadium put an end to the black and whites' six-match winning streak.

Mohammedan, on 21 points, had a frustrating afternoon although conditions were soothing after last week's extremely sultry weather.

They hardly looked the danger-

Russel halt MSC run

ous team of the two and Russel, who are one point below the joint leaders, should consider them unfortunate not to return with maximum points.

While Shafiqul Islam Manik reasonably had faith on the eleven that pulled them to pole position from relegation zone, Russel gave debut to Moroccan newcomer Rida Saadane, who excelled in the holding midfielder's role. Pairing

POINTS TABLE

Teams	M	W	D	L	GF	GA	Pts
Mohammedan	11	6	3	2	22	7	21
Muktiyoddha	11	6	3	2	18	8	21
Russel	11	5	5	1	12	4	20
Abahani	10	5	4	1	10	3	19
Ctg MSC	11	5	2	4	9	17	17
Brothers	11	4	4	3	16	11	16
Arambagh	11	4	1	6	10	12	13
Khulna Abahani	11	3	2	6	12	20	11
Farashganj	11	2	5	4	9	13	11
Ctg Abahani	11	3	1	7	8	20	10
Rahmatganj	11	1	2	8	7	27	5

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PHOTO: STAR

Sheikh Russel goalkeeper Shakil (2nd R) gets to the ball ahead of Mohammedan striker Emeka (2nd L) during a corner in their B.League clash at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

NADAL-HEWITT SHOWDOWN TONIGHT

When grit meets panache

AFP, Paris



Nadal when the two fiery stars clash in a mouth-watering French Open fourth round duel on Monday.

The gutsy Australian has lost both his career claycourt meetings with the Spaniard, but insists he could be the man to shatter Nadal's Roland Garros record of 17 wins in 17 matches at the second Grand Slam of the season.

His confidence stems from the

realisation that he sees a lot of himself in the swashbuckling, fearless Mallorcan left-hander who is being tipped to emulate Bjorn Borg and pull off three wins in a row at the gruelling event.

"I like the guy," admitted Hewitt. "I think he's got a great attitude. He has that never-say-die attitude in his game."

"He's not afraid of anyone which I think is great."

Hewitt, a former world number one and Wimbledon and US Open winner, has already had to grind his way into the fourth round in Paris.

In the second round, he came back from a two-set deficit to beat 2004 champion Gaston Gaudio.

In Saturday's third round, he was totally outplayed by Finn Jarkko Nieminen in the first set before he

launched one of his trademark comebacks to reach the last 16 for the second successive year.

Twelve months ago, his hopes of making a second career French Open quarter-final were thwarted at the same stage by Nadal.

But he took a set off the Spaniard then just as he did last month when he won the opening set of their Hamburg Masters semifinal before Nadal prevailed.

"I feel like I have played two pretty good matches against him," added Hewitt.

"There's no doubt though that as good as he is on other surfaces, he's a lot better on clay. Movement-wise, he can get to a lot of balls. It gives him a little more time to get something on it."

Nadal turned 21 on Sunday and

is still regarded as the overwhelming favourite to win a third French Open and prevent, for another year at least, world number one Roger Federer from completing the famed Grand Slam.

The two are seeded to meet for a second successive year in next Sunday's final, but it's the battling Hewitt, five years his senior, who currently occupies his thoughts, not the elegant Swiss master.

"Hamburg was a very tough match," recalled Nadal of his most recent dirtball clash with Hewitt.

"He likes to win. He fights a lot. I respect him. In Germany, I didn't play very well because he didn't let me play."