

BFF's football-only structure mission

 **Football**

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh's football bosses admitted yesterday that they are passing through a difficult transition period and will need government assistance to overcome it.

However, the government help will only lead to make football free of the government control in a bid to build a football-only pyramid, the ultimate goal of Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) according to FIFA's latest prescription.

Talking at a press conference at the BFF Bhaban, BFF president SA Sultan said that the incumbent executive committee's history is not all failure.

"We have many achievements and perhaps, that is why the FIFA and AFC had the confidence in us to continue and conduct fundamental changes in our constitution for a professional and modern management of football," the BFF chief said.

The FIFA has recently decided to extend the tenure of BFF's controversial and expired executive committee, asking it to take necessary steps to make the federation a fully democratic institution based on statutes in line with FIFA principles and form a structure whose roots would be planted in local football in divisions and districts.

The deadline to hold the next election is April 30, 2008 according to the FIFA approved constitution.

"We have decided in our yesterday's meeting that we will try our best to follow the FIFA and AFC road-map for the development of

the game and bring back its lost popularity because it is our duty and responsibility.

"The FIFA had approved our previous constitution and gave us time till 2011 to implement the requirements. But things have changed for reasons I cannot explain," said Sultan.

Sultan and BFF general secretary Anwarul Hoque Helal, however, both blamed different quarters for sending letters (some anonymous) to the FIFA and AFC with complaints against the EC members.

In order to implement the vision of democratisation, the football governing bodies of the world and Asia decided that the mandate given to the BFF will include the following steps:

A) To draft a 'standard statutes' for the divisional and district football association (FA) along the lines of FIFA standard statutes and to present this draft to FIFA and AFC for approval.

B) To form divisional and district FAs through constitutive general meetings at local level, to approve the statutes of these local FAs and to hold elections according to these statutes.

C) To call an extraordinary general meeting of the BFF at national level to amend the BFF statutes accordingly under FIFA and AFC supervision.

D) To organise elections at national level FIFA and AFC supervision.

The BFF has formed a five-member committee headed by Helal to look after the matters.

"With government help, it would be possible to hold an election within six to eight months. We will

soon sit with the government and the National Sports Council because we are a part of it," said Sultan.

In reply to a question, the BFF boss told that the BFF will assist the FAs in case it does not get financial help from the NSC or the government.

"It is not possible to develop football without the contribution of the establishment. So we hope that the government will see this new step positively," he added.

Many believe that it would not be possible to avoid clash between NSC-controlled district sports associations and FAs and the concept of FA also does not fit in a country where football league is not played regularly in 64 districts.

Also, it was not clear whether any amendments in the NSC constitution would be needed or not.

"The FAs will be under direct control of the federation and the system can work with government help," said Helal.

"In fact, the FIFA has learned that a major portion of BFF councilors belong to district and divisional sports organisations that are controlled by the government. It wants the game to be free of government control. The officials of the FIFA and AFC have also told us it would be the right time to go for the change with a neutral government in power," he added.

To find the way out of a possible mess, the BFF must now convince the higher authority that the football chiefs are sincere to work this time, having failed to guide properly during its four-year tenure.



Bangladesh all-rounder Mashrafe Bin Mortaza slashes at the ball during the first one-day international of the Afro-Asia Cup between Asia Eleven and Africa Eleven at the Chinnaswamy Stadium in Bangalore on Wednesday.

PHOTO: AFP



Did U Know?

The baseball home plate is about 17 inches wide.



Maria Sharapova

(Russian tennis superstar)

"It's pretty hard being a tennis player and Mother Teresa at the same time."

What to WATCH

ESPN

England v West Indies
Third Test, Day One
Live from 3:58 pm
Star Sports

French Open

Women's singles semifinals
& mixed doubles final
Live from 6:00 pm

DAY'S EVENT

B. League

Mohammedan v Muktiyoddha

Venue: Bangabandhu National Stadium
Time: 4:30 pm

Asia survive Pollock scare

 **Cricket**

STAR SPORT MONITOR

Shaun Pollock's maiden century went in vain as Asia XI beat Africa XI by runs in the first one-day international of the Afro-Asia Cup series in Bangalore on Wednesday.

Pollock hit a magnificent 130 before he was the last man out in the 48th over when Bangladesh pace-man Mashrafe Bin Mortaza had him caught in the deep to bring an end to the valiant African chase at 283.

The South Africa all-rounder hit 19 fours and a massive six in his 109-ball knock to bring the match to the wire after the Africans lost their first seven batsmen for a mere 87 in the 21st over.

He added 67 runs with Zimbabwe's Elton Chigumbura, 40, for the eighth wicket and then 103 with Kenyan Thomas Odoyo, 39, for the ninth.

Although Mashrafe, bowling as an unlikely position of first change, was expensive in his 6.5 overs that yielded 57 runs, he still had the last laugh by dismissing the potential

match-winner.

Earlier, Mohammad Asif and Zaheer Khan delivered swift blows to a weary Africa XI after Mahela Jayawardene and Mohammad Yousuf hit half-centuries to help Asia XI post a challenging 317.

The Africans however never looked like they could launch a comeback after those early losses, and succumbed to the pressure of some tight fielding and spin bowling to limp to 116 for seven by the 25-over mark.

Asif needed just two deliveries to get stuck into the Africans. After giving up a four first ball, he got one to nip back in off a length and AB de Villier's decision to shoulder arms ended in disaster. Asif should have had a second right after but Steve Tikolo was let off by Upul Tharanga at third slip, though it must be said he had no reaction time as the ball fairly shot at him. Still, he got his man when Tikolo tread back onto his stumps after he defended another immaculate delivery.

Zaheer too showed just how much juice there was in this virgin pitch when he castled Boeta Dippenaar with an inswinger and welcomed Tikolo with some superb

lifters marginally outside off stump.

A second wicket came Zaheer's way after he set up Loots Bosman with a bouncer and followed up with a fuller delivery which the batsman nicked to first slip.

Justin Kemp, the African captain, opened his account with a straight drive off Zaheer but his tendency to thrust forward proved his undoing when Asif snuck one through his defence. Mashrafe Bin Mortaza, the only Bangladeshi to make the final cut, came on first change and was taken off after his two overs went for 15. Sanath Jayasuriya may have failed with the bat, but he bowled Boucher with a skidder to make it 77 for 6. That would become 87 for 7 when Jayasuriya got one to spin and kick up for Albie Morkal to edge to the keeper.

Rendered hors de combat with the ball, Shaun Pollock's role as a batsman -- he was definitely the second best after Mark Boucher -- was always going to be paramount

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Tigers train from today

SPORTS REPORTER

The national cricketers return to business today at the Mirpur Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium to begin preparation for the Sri Lanka tour.

Vice-captain Mashrafe Bin Mortaza and ace left-arm spinner Mohammad Rafique will not be available at the camp for a few days due to their commitment to the Asia XI in the ongoing Afro-Asia Cup one-day competition in India.

Newly appointed captain Mohammad Ashraful, left-arm spinner Abdur Razzak and dashing opener Tamim Iqbal, who played a blazing knock of 30 in the Afro-Asia

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Tamim, Mashrafe guide Asia home

AFP, Bangalore

Sri Lankan Tillakaratne Dilshan hit an unbeaten 47 to guide Asia XI to a six-wicket victory over Africa XI in the one-off Twenty20 cricket match here on Tuesday.

The Asian team were struggling at 34-3 before surpassing their opponents' modest total of 109-8 with more than four overs to spare in the day-night game on a seamer-friendly pitch.

Bangladeshi teenager Tamim Iqbal smashed a 22-ball 30 before middle-order batsman Dilshan steered his team home with a 49-run stand for the fifth wicket with skipper Shoaib Malik (14 not out).

Left-handed opener Iqbal, 18, hit one six and three fours, while Dilshan struck one six and six fours in his 36-ball knock.

Kenyan seamer Nehemiah Ochiombo had jolted the Asian

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Arambagh win, MSC, Mukti clash today

SPORTS REPORTER

Chittagong Mohammedan crashed to a 3-0 home defeat to Arambagh in the second leg of the B. League at the MAAziz Stadium yesterday.

The visitors dominated the show during their fifth win, shaped by a goal each from three foreign recruits.

Arambagh, who had won the first leg match in Dhaka 2-0 with both goals coming from Nicodemus, went ahead when the Kenyan forward found the net after 14 minutes.

It was the sixth league goal for Nicodemus, which gave the Dhaka outfit a 1-0 first half lead, doubled

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Flintoff row in forefront

Third England-Windies begins today

 **Cricket**

AFP, Manchester

England coach Peter Moores is facing the first major test of his management skills just days before due to their commitment to the third Test against the West Indies here at Old Trafford.

Despite him scoring a century during England's record-breaking innings and 283 run win last time out, the hosts' camp is reeling following captain Michael Vaughan's public criticism of popular all-rounder Andrew Flintoff.

Vaughan, who has recently made a triumphant return to Test cricket after 18 months out injured, reignited the row regarding Flintoff's late night drinking exploits during the World Cup in a newspaper report Tuesday.

Flintoff was stripped of the vice-captaincy and dropped for one game after staying out late drinking and ending up in a pedalo in the early hours of the following morning after England's opening game defeat against New Zealand in St Lucia in March, which set them on the road to elimination before the semifinals.

"I like to see players enjoy themselves but no one would dare go out after that incident -- and you can't create any spirit then," Vaughan -- who will set a new record for an England captain of 21 Test victories if his team win in Manchester, told Tuesday's Guardian newspaper.

Vaughan's latest remarks are unlikely to be different to anything he has already told Flintoff, managed by the same agent, face-to-face. Still, this is something England could have done without.

Flintoff last week had a third operation on his troublesome left ankle in as many years, and -- as has been the case throughout this series -- will again be sidelined.

It goes without saying that any risk to team morale should be reduced. And this match is taking place in front of Flintoff's adoring Lancashire public, which could be interesting for Vaughan.

Victory for England would see them go an unbeatable 2-0 up in the four-match series with one to play and they are set to field an unchanged side.

Last year at Old Trafford, Stephen Harmison and spinner Monty Panesar were both in the wickets during England's innings victory over Pakistan, Harmison taking 11 for 76 in the match.

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'I didn't say the word'

 **Cricket**

AFP, Manchester

England captain Michael Vaughan said Wednesday his remarks about Andrew Flintoff's drinking exploits at the World Cup had been blown out of all proportion.

Vaughan insisted that he, rather than all-rounder Flintoff, had played a major role in the team's failure to reach the semifinals in the Caribbean.

Vaughan, in an interview with Tuesday's edition of Britain's Guardian newspaper, said Flintoff's now notorious escapade, which culminated in him being found on a pedalo at 4am in the morning after their opening group match defeat against New Zealand in St Lucia, had damaged the side.

He was quoted as saying: "You have to be honest: the 'Fredalo' incident did affect the team. It did affect morale."

"I like to see players enjoy themselves but no one would dare go out after that incident -- and you can't create any spirit then."

However, Vaughan said he had never used the word "Fredalo" as he wouldn't want to single out an individual for an incident which saw six players in all disciplined for late-night drinking.

Vaughan, speaking at Old Trafford where the third Test against West Indies starts on Thursday, said he still had a good relationship with Flintoff.

"I'll be having dinner (lunch) with him in an hour's time. It (the article)

has been blown out of all proportion. One word changed the whole context of the article, a word which I didn't say."

"Incredibly in the piece, it didn't mention I openly admitted that I didn't captain as well as I can, I didn't

manage the situation as well as I could and I didn't play as well as I could. So if I was blaming anyone for a World Cup fiasco, I was blaming Michael Vaughan."

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England captain Michael Vaughan practises catching during a training session at Old Trafford in Manchester on Wednesday.

PHOTO: AFP