

BCCI men off to Australia to settle tax issue

PTI, Mumbai

A Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) team, including tax consultant PB Srinivasan, is flying to Australia to resolve the Indian players' tax problem on the current tour.

The other members of the team include the board treasurer N Srinivasan and secretary Niranjan Shah.

"I am leaving for Australia tonight (Monday night) and will be joined there by Srinivasan and our tax consultant PB Srinivasan. We will discuss the issue of tax asked to be paid by our players with Cricket Australia officials and we are confident the matter will be sorted out, BCCI secretary Niranjan Shah told PTI on Monday.

The problem has arisen due to the recent change in tax laws in Australia which make it mandatory for the visiting sports persons to pay tax on money earned in the country.

The Indian players would be earning match fees for playing Tests and ODIs during the ongoing tour and according to media reports the tax burden collectively would be around USD 1.5 million.

The officials have been asked to deal with the problem by BCCI chief Sharad Pawar, who has also asked them to utilise the visit to honour Sourav Ganguly who is set to join the short list of 100-Test Indian club members when he turns out in the opening Test against Australia starting at the MCG on December 26.

Ganguly will be presented with a silver salver by the board, Shah said, adding he would also take the opportunity to discuss the Australians tour to India for a full-Test return series for the Border-Gavaskar Trophy with the CA officials.

SL has been a lesson for Panesar

AFP, London

England spinner Monty Panesar is convinced his miserable tour of Sri Lanka can help him become a world-class bowler.

Panesar, 25, took only eight wickets as England lost their recent three-Test series in Sri Lanka 1-0.

The Northamptonshire star's lacklustre displays were interpreted as a sign that he is stagnating after an impressive start to his international career.

But Panesar believes it is inevitable he will suffer at times against the world's best players and he expects to bounce back against New Zealand in the New Year.

"There has been a lot of focus on my bowling in this series but let me tell you straight away that I am looking at the whole experience in a very positive way as I head home to reflect and rest before we go to New Zealand at the end of January," Panesar told the Daily Mail.

"I want to experience tough conditions and I want to bowl a lot of overs at high-class players of spin in their own country, to test myself against them and see where I am at in my career. That is what has happened to me here.

"I may not have taken as many wickets as I would have liked but I see this tour as a crucial part of my learning curve, I needed the examination of my progress that this tour has brought.

"There have been times here in Sri Lanka when I have beaten the bat, taken a few edges which have not quite gone to hand and caused problems by bowling into the rough from over the wicket. So it has not been all bad."

Sultan right

FROM PAGE 17 to support the fact and no date has been set for a meeting yet," he added.

The BFF has not announced when its adjourned meeting of December 15, cancelled due to Sultan's so-called 'illness', would resume.

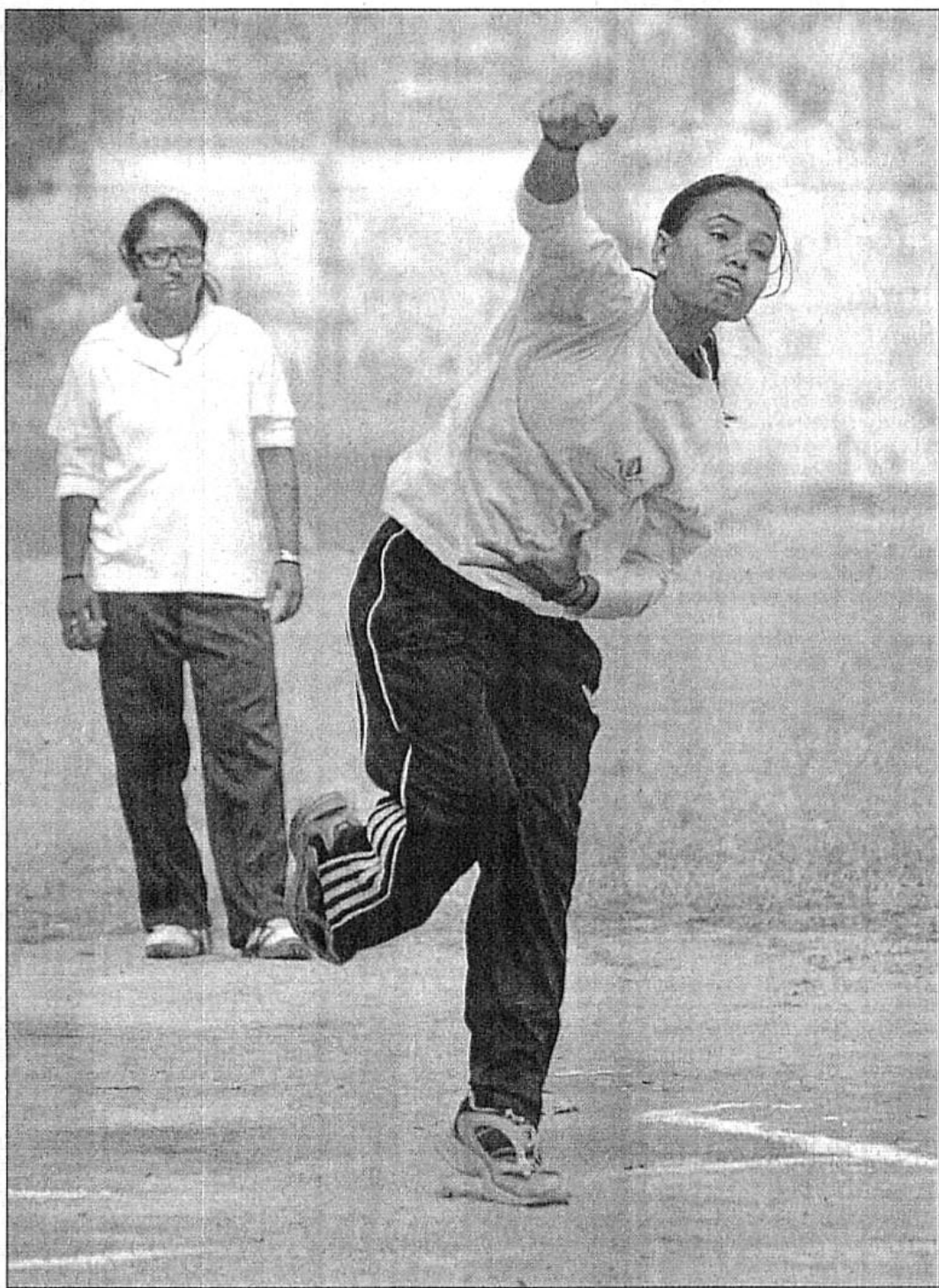
The saga, meanwhile, is expected to continue. The post-Eid speculations are that a few more BFF members would step down soon.

A press report yesterday claimed that 'FIFA has rejected Sultan's resignation as it has no jurisdiction over this'. The report added that a faxed message has already arrived at the BFF regarding this.

A BOA (Bangladesh Olympic Association) high up confirmed that the BFF has indeed received a FIFA letter which has clearly said that the president must tender his resignation to the executive body of the federation.

If the FIFA's refusal is confirmed, Sultan must come out of hibernation and if he really meant to resign, he should do the 'job' properly.

The controversies surrounding the issue could well be settled before the New Year with BFF expected to call the meeting by December 30.



Spinner Rupa bowls at the nets at the Dhanmondi Cricket Stadium yesterday as Dhaka prepare for the Divisional Women's cricket tournament which starts tomorrow.

Who? Tait or Johnson?

Cricket

AFP, Melbourne

Australia have given no indication of the make-up of their bowling attack for the Boxing Day cricket Test against India with pacemen Mitchell Johnson and Shaun Tait waging a mini selection battle at training here Monday.

Tait and Johnson bowled flat out to captain Ricky Ponting in the nets, as selector and former Test fast bowler Merv Hughes looked on.

The two young firebrands are likely to be vying for the one spot if, as expected, selectors stick with tradition and play three quicks and one spinner.

"I had a look at they way they both bowled, they were fantastic. Brett Lee was in good form and (Stuart) Clark was good, too," Hughes told reporters Monday.

"As a selector it's good to have options and quite often the toughest part of being a selector is trying to decide who to leave out."

Hughes said the selectors will

assess the weather conditions and pitch before deciding whether to play wrist spinner Brad Hogg and three quicks, or a four-pronged pace attack.

Batsman Michael Clarke said he did not envy the selectors making the final judgment.

"Thank God I wasn't facing either of them," Clarke said of Johnson and Tait.

"They were both bowling pretty quick today."

"I really have no idea what they (the selectors) are going to do. Either way one of them is getting a chance. It's going to be unfortunate for the one that is left out, both are bowling well."

The MCG wicket is expected to favour pace early on Boxing Day, but forecast hot weather over the remainder of the Test should flatten the pitch and produce some turn over the last two days.

Curator Tony Ware said the wicket would be quicker than those used in domestic matches this season.

"It will start to wear a little bit towards the end and a spinner is useful because you really can't take

advantage of that unless you have a spinner," Ware said.

"But if the boys see a little bit of grass on it, they might think the four quicks are a chance to do some damage to India in the first session."

Despite the firepower Tait brings, Australia have not chosen an all-pace attack since 1992 and selectors will remember Hogg's Sheffield Shield performance at the MCG in October, when his 8-83 for the game delivered Western Australia victory over Victoria.

Clarke said Hogg's consistency throughout his one-day career and his perplexing wrong'un made him a dangerous prospect, despite India's liking for spinners.

"If he continues to bowl the way he's bowled since I've been playing one-day cricket, that will hold him in great stead whatever form of the game," he said.

Melbourne Cricket Club officials expect a first-day crowd of about 75,000, which would better the start of the 2005 Test against South Africa, although would not match last year's 89,155 Ashes sell-out against England.

Clarke will go after Kumble

PTI, Melbourne

Fast approaching 600 Test wickets, skipper Anil Kumble will be the lynchpin of the Indian bowling in the upcoming Test series, but middle-order batsman Michael Clarke is looking to attack the veteran leg-spinner at the first opportunity.

The New South Wales youngster said he would use his quick footwork to negate Kumble's accuracy.

"Kumble has been a great one for a long time. His line of attack implies that you have to be patient against him."

"But I will try to put the pressure back on him. I'll have to move my feet and play my natural game," Clarke said ahead of the four-Test series starting on Wednesday at the MCG.

Much has been said about India's inexperienced bowling but Clarke felt that left-arm paceman Zaheer Khan, along with Kumble, were part of a potent attack which could capitalise on the conditions.

"I wouldn't say it's an inexperienced attack. Zaheer certainly has some experience and if they bowl well, they'll get the opportunity to take wickets. The conditions will suit India here, with it being a little bit slower," he said.

But the right-hander had no doubt that the batsmen from both sides will hold the key to the series.

Bond available for NZ: Mills

CRICINFO, undated

Rumours that Shane Bond is set to retire from international cricket have been floating around ever since he recently said that it was "frustrating" to keep getting injured.

But Heath Mills, the New Zealand Cricket Players' Association chief, tried to quash such rumours, insisting Bond was available for New Zealand.

"At this stage Shane Bond is certainly available to play Test and one-day cricket, but I'm not in position to make any other comment at this stage," Mills told the Dominion Post.

Bond was unavailable for the Chappell-Hadlee Series and will also miss the entire series against Bangladesh due to an abdominal tear he suffered during New Zealand's tour to South Africa. He hopes to recover in time for England's visit in February.

Reports hinting at his retirement were also fuelled by offers that Bond had received from the Indian Cricket League, which he decided not to join, and the Indian Premier League, which he expressed an interest in. Leanne McGoldrick, Bond's agent, said he was in regular contact with Justin Vaughan, New Zealand Cricket's chief executive. "When he (Shane) is ready to let everyone know what he is doing, then he will," she said.

Gilly for clean

FROM PAGE 17 pace attack after Pankaj Singh and 19-year-old Ishant Sharma were preferred to Shanthakumaran Sreesanth and Munaf Patel.

Batsman Virender Sehwag is back in the squad but the tourists experimented with Rahul Dravid as opening partner for Wasim Jaffer during the rain-affected draw with state side Victoria this week.

But Sourav Ganguly is confident his team will be able to match Australia.

"The last time we came to Australia in 2003 we had a weaker bowling attack and a few injuries," Ganguly said.

"We have a better bowling attack this time and with (Mahendra) Dhoni coming in at number seven we have a deeper batting line-up."

"Last time we came as underdogs and performed really well. It is the same this time but what happened in 2003 will have no bearing, it is what we do in these Test matches."

Meanwhile, fans have been told they could be banned from the MCG for life if they are found to be involved in racial taunting of players and other fans.

Australia all-rounder Andrew Symonds was the subject of racial abuse on the October tour of India.

'The Beast'

FROM PAGE 17 listen to a debate about his future.

The likes of Marco van Basten and Jose Mourinho have been regularly mentioned as potential replacements for Rijkaard if Barca fail to win a trophy for the second year in succession.

Second half goals from Raul Tamud and Luis Garcia gave Espanyol a 2-1 win at Atletico Madrid earlier on Sunday and the Barcelona-based side move up to third place in La Liga. Just one point behind their illustrious neighbours.

Atletico scored first through a Simao Sabrosa free kick but ended the night with nine men.

Vettori warns mates

Cricket

AFP, Auckland

New Zealand's cricketers have been told to shape up or face the axe in the one-day series against Bangladesh which starts on Wednesday as they look to recover from a torrid past nine weeks.

New Zealand have never lost a one-day international to Bangladesh in eight encounters.

But such has been their wretched form in New Zealand's recent back-to-back tours to South Africa and Australia that they cannot look towards this three-match series against the reputed easy beats with confidence.

With the batsmen out of sorts and the bowlers unable to find a line, captain Daniel Vettori has called for a complete form turnaround against Bangladesh before England arrive early next year.

"The pressure's on us to win now," said Vettori, reflecting on the 1-2 ODI loss and 0-2 Test drubbing in South Africa followed by the 0-2 defeat in Australia.

"We have to win comfortably leading into a tough England series. There's not more pressure than playing Australia but there's a lot of pressure on guys to actually step up and perform."

Former New Zealand great and

now national selector Sir Richard Hadlee told a Sunday newspaper there was a clear need for all-round improvement.

"Clearly, we've been disappointed by a number of the performances in the one-dayers and a number of those guys are a part of the Test set-up, so we need to see some improvement in both the batting and bowling," Hadlee said.

"They've got a couple of games to really impress."

But when given a chance to impress when playing under the guise of a New Zealand XI against Bangladesh in a Twenty20 match on Sunday, the Kiwis again capitulated.

With their confidence gone, the batsmen struggled to 133 for seven which Bangladesh easily overhauled with three overs and four wickets in hand.

Discarded international James Marshall top-scored with an unbeaten 33, while the best of the incumbent internationals was Scott Styris who made 29.

All of the New Zealand wickets fell to bowlers, with Bangladesh paceman Shahadat Hossain taking an impressive three for 15 off four overs.

In contrast, when Bangladesh launched their energetic run chase three of their dismissals were run outs.

Stephen Fleming, who cap-

tained the composite New Zealand side, pinpointed Bangladesh's fearless approach to run gathering as a potential danger.

"They've got good stroke-makers. There's not a lot of fear in some of their players and on their day they can come off -- we've seen that in some of the upsets they've caused at World Cups," Fleming said.

Bangladesh beat India and South Africa at the World Cup in the West Indies earlier this year before losing by nine wickets to New Zealand.

"Their batting is probably almost the opposite of where our batting units," Fleming said.

"They seem full of confidence, and they don't really have a lot of fear. The consequence of them playing a bad shot and getting out doesn't seem to be there."

The reverse applies for New Zealand's current top order.

Jamie How (10) and Ross Taylor (15) never fired on Sunday while Peter Fulton, returning from knee surgery, made a ponderous three.

"It feels very tentative with the (New Zealand) batting unit," said Fleming who has now retired from the shortened form of the game.

"There's been a lot of focus on it, the performances haven't been great and with that comes a certain amount of tension."

Collier calls for calm

Cricket

BBC ONLINE, undated

England cricket boss David Collier has warned fans not to jump into criticising coach Peter Moores after the Test series defeat in Sri Lanka.

The 1-0 reverse saw England drop from second in the Test rankings -- where they have been for three years under Duncan Fletcher -- to fifth.

"We can't expect instant results," Collier told BBC Radio 5 Live.

"I think he has made the impact. A lot of people have noticed subtle changes, but significant changes."

Since taking over after the World Cup in April, Moores has restructured the coaching team by bring-

ing in new fast-bowling coaches in Allan Donald and Ottis Gibson as well as batting coach Andy Flower.

With Moores at the helm, England won the home Test series against West Indies but lost at home to India before the Sri Lanka tour.

"One of the pluses of the year was Peter pulling together a strong coaching team," said Collier, who is chief executive of the England and Wales Cricket Board.

"This is his first tour. He will learn a lot, better to know the players a lot, getting."

Collier was keen to point to the improvement in one-day form following a fourth successive disappointing World Cup, when they failed to reach the knockout stage.

They beat India in a seven-

match home one-day series in August and September.

And their subsequent 3-2 victory in Sri Lanka was the first time in 20 years they have won a head-to-head one-day series against a major side on the Asian subcontinent.

"It's been a very disappointing year in terms of some of the Test match results but we have started to make some progress with one-day cricket," he added.

"Peter's just appointed a new fielding coach who will start with us in March, Richard Halsall."

"Those sorts of innovations are how we need to move forward if we are to become one of the top two or three nations in the world, and regain those Ashes and win a major tournament."

Ballack eyes successes

Football

AFP, Berlin

After the longest injury break in his 12-year career, Germany captain Michael Ballack wants to compensate by lifting the Champions League trophy with Chelsea and the Euro 2008 title with his country.

In an interview set to appear here on Monday in German magazine Kicker, the 31-year-old says he wants to make amends for his eight-month break, after an ankle injury, with plenty of silverware.

"I hope 2008 will be a year of titles for me: the Champions League and the European Championships," the midfielder told Kicker.

Chelsea face Greek champions Olympiakos in the Champions League's first knock-out round tie in February while Germany have drawn Poland, Croatia and hosts Austria for next June's Euro 2008 tournament.

And having damaged ankle ligaments on April 22 in the Premier League game against Newcastle, Ballack made his first appearance of the season in Chelsea's 2-0 League Cup win over Liverpool last week.

His long injury lay-off came

after two ankle operations and a frustrating period of rehabilitation, but he says there is more work ahead of him to recover his full fitness.

"At the moment, I can see the light at the end of the tunnel, but there is still a considerable amount of work needed to be done."

"You lose so much after a long lay-off, not just the footballing skills, but also the physical condition: strength, speed and you are not so dynamic."

"I just need lots of match practice now."

After coming off the bench against Liverpool in midweek, Ballack's presence on the pitch was very pleasing for Germany head coach Joachim Loew who will also welcome back injury-victims Torsten Frings and Bernd Schneider.

"We are hoping our important players like Ballack, Frings and Schneider will get plenty of practice in 2008 and hopefully there are no more injuries," said Loew.

Under new coach Avram Grant, Chelsea have changed to a 4-3-3 system and Ballack is confident the Blues will do well in the Premier League and Premiership.

"I am sure that we will have some success," said Ballack.

Having been consistent in their

Euro 2008 qualification campaign, Germany have developed into a strong side and Ballack says the national team should approach next June's tournament with confidence.

"At the 2002 World Cup (where Germany came second) and last year's event (where the Mannschaft finished third), we played within ourselves, next year we should attack Euro 2008 with real confidence."

"Our objective must be to reach the final."

And a lot of the team's development is down to Jurgen Klinsmann's successor Loew, according to Ballack.

"No question, he has taken the side forward and given the side a style of his own," said Ballack.

And Ballack says he has been impressed with Bayern Munich's young stars Lukas Podolski, voted the best young player at last year's World Cup, and Bastian Schweinsteiger.

"They are playing for a team where there is a fine line between good players, international ones and world-class players," said former Bayern star Ballack.

"They will have set-backs, but they will have to learn to cope with that and if they succeed they will become top-class players."

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

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Today's Cryptquip Clue: C equals T