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Monir acting BFF chief

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) yesterday wrested the responsibility of running the federation on its senior vice-president Monir Ahmed.

After president SA Sultan, whose resignation has been rejected by FIFA, informed the BFF in a letter on December 27 that he would not be able to continue his duties due to personal reasons, the executive committee in its meeting last night took the decision according to the constitution.

Under the FIFA directive, the BFF must hold the election by April 30 after forming the district and divisional football associations (FAs) according to the new statutes.

The BFF also extended the time for holding the FA elections of the districts and divisions to January 15 and 25 respectively. The FAs failing to meet the deadline would not be able to have any councillors at the federation.

"I will try my best to solve the crisis," said Monir Ahmed, who is expected to talk with Sports Adviser Tapan Chowdhury and National Sports Council chairman and Army Chief General Momen Ahmed soon.

"We want to shape the federation as best as we can to make way for a new committee to run it smoothly," he added.



Did U Know?

Badminton was included for the first time in the XII Pan American Games over March 11-26, 1995 in Buenos Aires, Argentina.



PHOTO: TIGERCRICKET.COM, Queenstown

Arjuna becomes SLC chief

SPORTS REPORTER

Sri Lanka's World Cup-winning captain Arjuna Ranatunga is to be formally appointed as head of the cricket administration next week, officials said Sunday.

"His appointment is confirmed and he should take over next week as chairman of the cricket interim committee," a senior presidential official, who did not want to be named, told AFP.

The 44-year-old, currently a government legislator, became a legendary figure after leading Sri Lanka to their lone Cup triumph in 1996. He quit international cricket in 2000 after playing 93 Tests and 269 one-dayers.

Political sources said the former captain got the new job as a reward for voting in favour of the government's 2008 budget this month, despite reports that he had threatened to defect to the opposition.

Ranatunga is also tipped to

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V-Day soccer draw held

MSC unsure of getting BNS

SPORTS REPORTER

Mohammedan Sporting Club officially launched their activities yesterday to organise the Protiti Pharma Victory day football tournament despite any assurance of getting the Bangabandhu National Stadium for the eight-team invitation event.

Although the organisers, with a view to stage the meet at the national number one stadium, unveiled the logo of the tournament as well as holding the draw at their club premises yesterday, the National Sports Council (NSC) has yet to give its permission to all the ground.

The NSC has already refused the Metropolis Football League Committee to use the venue for the

Senior Division Football League, which will be held at the Kamalapur Stadium.

"Mohammedan officials have called me but the NSC has not given them the green signal," told NSC director Abdur Rahman last night.

"We have to go for renovation to provide facilities according to FIFA requirements. Also, we must prepare the ground before February's Indo-Bangla Games. We have to complete the works by February 10.

"We have already said no to the MFLC, who were scheduled to inaugurate the Senior Division League tomorrow at the BNS. All are equal to us. So, if we give permission for another football tournament now, our works would be

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Sr Div football starts today at Kamalapur

SPORTS REPORTER

The Senior Division Football League kicks off today after a two-year gap with all major names like Abahani, Mohammedan, Muktiyoddha and Brothers Union missing the now second-rate competition of the capital.

Arambagh Krira Sangha, the only team to play in the inaugural professional football league earlier this year, will start as favourites when they face newcomers Sunrise Krira Chakr on the New Year's Eve.

The match which starts at 3pm, however, will be played at the Bishreshtha Shaheed Mostafa Kamal Stadium in Kamalapur after the Metropolis Football League Committee (MFLC) failed to secure the Bangabandhu National Stadium.

The premier venue of the country will go under renovation from the New Year to fulfil FIFA requirements and prepare for the second edition of the Indo-Bangla Games.

It was learnt that yesterday morning, the MFLC were given the green signal by the National Sports Council to use the venue till February but in the afternoon, the directive was changed.

All matches of the 13-team league will now be played at Kamalapur.

The teams: Arambagh, Badda Jagrani, Victoria, Wanderers, Youngmen's, Dipali, Mohakhali, Wari, Agrani Bank, Purbachal, City Club, Jatrabari and Sunrise.

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The team on its way to the hotel was given the chance to marvel at its blue waters and beauty from a vantage point by the bus driver who also proved himself as a vastly knowledgeable and eloquent tour guide. High in the green mountains the sight of cable cars going up and down the steep climb was evidence why more and more filmmakers in Hollywood and more recently in the Indian film industry is picking this place for their potential blockbusters. And just in case anyone needed reminding Queenstown also has Middle-Earth, the biggest natural movie set in history, made famous by the smash hit Lord of the Rings. For Harry Potter fans the places where the movie was shot are an irresistible attraction.

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In Lord of the Ring city

Cricket

TIGERCRICKET.COM, Queenstown

ing the Tigers from Auckland descended from the clouds and swirled through curling rugged mountains with the snowy peaks of the Southern Alps glistening in sunshine at a distance. At the end of a two-hour flight it was time to take in the fascinating scenery.

Queenstown is encircled by the magical and mystifying Lake Wakatipu. The lake is a living entity apparently because it "breathes". It has two highly contrasting versions about its formation, one orchestrated by geologists who say that an Ice Age glacier was responsible for the lakebed while wind and atmospheric pressure causes the lake's water level to rise and fall by around 12 centimeters every five minutes.

The Maoris meanwhile speak of a brave warrior who rescued the daughter of a Maori chief from the clutches of a giant and then killed it by setting fire to it. The fire burnt a deep hole on the ground in the

shape of the giant's body and water filled the hole to form the lake. They believe that the giant's heart still beats and that's the reason for the breathing sensation.

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PHOTO: STAR

Triumphant Dhaka players are in party mood after they won the Meril first-ever Women's Divisional Cricket Tournament beating Chittagong in the final at the Dhanmondi Cricket Stadium yesterday.

Ash wants happy ending

Cricket

TIGERCRICKET.COM, Queenstown

The Bangladesh team trained at the picturesque Queenstown Events Centre today (Sunday) ahead of tomorrow's third and final ODI against New Zealand. The Tigers may have conceded the series but a good all-round performance and preferably a win would do wonders to their level of confidence in the coming two-match Test series.

"All our batsmen have looked comfortable against that (New Zealand) attack which means we have adapted well to the conditions here. It is just that we have got out," said Ashraful.

"It is very important that we keep improving and implement the plans thoroughly in this last one-day. We know we can play much better cricket and we want to end the year on a high because we have done some pretty remarkable things in two World Cups this year," said captain Mohammad Ashraful after the squad practised for two and a half hours at the Events Centre in the afternoon.

"The important thing for us in batting would be to not lose wickets rapidly after a big partnership. The set batsman must go on and there must be one batsman from the top-order who will be there in the last 10 overs of the innings. In bowling we just have to find ways to

get early wickets. We have not managed these things so far in this series," Ashraful added.

The pitch looked similar to the ones Bangladesh have found in the other venues and run-scoring should not be a problem here also if the batsmen can apply themselves.

"All our batsmen have looked comfortable against that (New Zealand) attack which means we have adapted well to the conditions here. It is just that we have got out," said Ashraful.

Beautifully trimmed grassy mounds dominate the Events Centre's spectator areas with the mountain chain in silhouette in the background. A 5000 plus crowd, which is a reasonably big number in the context of Queensland's population, is expected tomorrow if rain, that fell steadily throughout the afternoon and evening, stays away. The Centre houses a fully equipped basketball and soft ball arena with an artificial rock climbing facility at corner. The outdoor cricket nets are almost a six hit away from the airport with a golf course acting as the buffer zone.

After practice the Tigers spent a fascinating afternoon which started with a jet boat adventure

through the rugged rocks and narrow waterways of Shotover River. The team then went atop the Bob's Peak mountain on cable cars (gondolas) to the famous Skyline Gondola Complex to enjoy the amazing views of Queenstown, Lake Wakatipu and the mountain range in the distance.

Meanwhile, Bangladesh's top run-scorer in Tests Habibul Bashar, Shahriar Nafees Ahmed and spinner Enamul Haque Jr. arrived in Auckland today to join the Test squad. They stayed the night in Auckland and are expected to reach Queenstown tomorrow morning.

TEAMS

BANGLADESH: Mohammad Ashraful (captain), Zunaed Siddique, Tamim Iqbal, Aftab Ahmed, Tushar Imran, Shakib Al Hasan, Farhad Reza, Mushfiqur Rahim (wicketkeeper), Mashrafe Bin Mortaza, Abdur Razzak, Shahadat Hossain.

NEW ZEALAND (FROM): Daniel Vettori (captain), Brendon McCullum (wicketkeeper), Jamie How, Peter Fulton, Scott Styris, Ross Taylor, Mathew Sinclair, Jacob Oram, Kyle Mills, Mark Gillespie, Chris Martin, Jeetan Patel



PHOTO: STAR
Rajshahi players come off the field after defeating Khulna on the fourth and final day of their National Cricket League match at the Rajshahi Divisional Stadium yesterday.

Revenge for Rajshahi

SPORTS REPORTER

Rajshahi made sure the 9th National Cricket League would

go down to the wire with their thrilling 29-run victory over Khulna in their crucial ninth round encounter at the Rajshahi Divisional Stadium yesterday.

The tenth round matches that begin on January 4 will decide this season's champions as Rajshahi's victory got them a point away from Khulna's top spot. It meant that there's all to play for when Rajshahi take on Dhaka while Khulna face Barisal in the final round.

To their credit, Khulna manfully chased the 322 target but only reached 292 before being bowled out in the 100th over of the second innings.

Rajshahi also took sweet revenge as the reverse match back

hours and hit eight boundaries while Masud added a quickfire 41.

But when Saglai bowled Babu at 234, two more wickets fell and Rajshahi were sure winners.

But last man Aslam Khan and Masud inched towards an unbelievable ending but they were stopped when Aslam fell leg-before to Mushtaq Rahaman for 27.

Saglai ended with six wickets for 101 while Farhad Hossain picked up two.

In the end though, Khulna's running declaration in the first innings that deprived Rajshahi of one bowling bonus point was the difference as Khulna are still on top of the points table.

BARISAL-SYLHET

It was only a matter of time for Barisal to wrap up a big victory over Sylhet. The home team for the match at the Shaheed Chandu Stadium had a massive first innings lead of 200 runs.

From 4 for two, Sylhet must have wanted a quick end to their troubles.

Paceman Arafat Salahuddin ramped his way through the innings, picking up five wickets. Three wickets from Monir Hossain aided him.

For Sylhet, only Golam Mabud reached 57 off 112 balls, slamming

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| TEAM | M | W | L | D | BAT | BOWL | TOTAL |
|------------|---|---|---|---|-----|------|-------|
| Khulna | 9 | 2 | 1 | 6 | 22 | 36 | 96 |
| Rajshahi | 9 | 5 | 2 | 2 | 14 | 33 | 95 |
| Dhaka | 9 | 3 | 1 | 5 | 12 | 34 | 87 |
| Chittagong | 9 | 3 | 2 | 4 | 13 | 36 | 83 |
| Bansal | 9 | 3 | 5 | 1 | 14 | 33 | 75 |
| Sylhet | 9 | 0 | 5 | 4 | 11 | 32 | 53 |

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