

Aslam, Helal under scrutiny

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) election commission last night received complaints on the councilorships of former national footballer Sheikh Mohammad Aslam and former secretary Anwarul Haq Helal.

The Gulistan Club sent Helal as their councillor and Khulna Divisional Football Association sent of Aslam.

In total, the EC received eight complaints, against councilors from Football Associations of Narail, Gopalganj, Thakurgaon, Jhenidah, Gazipur and Rajshahi. The hearing on the objections was scheduled for Tuesday.

The chief election commissioner Mezbahuddin said that they might revise the schedule keeping the election date, April 28, unchanged if they failed to complete the hearing on time.

An unnamed official from Jhenidah asked Aslam's councilorship to be cancelled due to his involvement in government service but allegations against Helal remain unconfirmed.

The election commissioner on Sunday revealed a draft 111-councilor list out of 115 councilors.

Big guns on track

SPORTS REPORTER

All three promotion-seeking sides registered wins in the crucial Super League stage of First Division League yesterday.

A six-wicket defeat at the hands of Cricket Coaching School (CCS) confirmed Brothers Union would miss the cut this season while Orient Sporting Club and Gazi Tank also won on the day.

Sent into bat first at the Fatullah Cricket Stadium, CCS restricted Brothers to 178-8 in 50 overs with Jony and Himesh two wickets each. For Brothers, Tayeb scored 80.

CCS reached their target in 40.5 overs, with Amit contributing 66 and Suvagoto making 50.

Orient beat Azad Sporting Club by four wickets after bowling out Azad for 187 in 49.1 overs in BKSP. Iqbal Hossain's three-wicket haul in his 3.1 overs clinched the game for Orient.

In a low-scoring at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur, favourites Gazi Tank (179-9) beat Rupali Bank (156-9) by 23 runs.

Morma clinches Boli Khela title

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Khagrachhari

Boli Khela, a traditional game of indigenous people has formally begun yesterday at Khagrachhari Stadium to mark the Bengali New Year.

Morma Singh Tripura clinched the title, in which a total of six Boli (strong men) have contested the first tournament held after a long break which was organised by Khagrachhari Hill District Council (KHDC).

Khagrachhari Region Commander Beg Kamruzzaman was present as chief guest and handed over the trophy and cash money to Moma Singh.

Khagrachhari Hill District Council chairman Monindra Lal Tripura, Sadar zone commander Ihtemus Samad Chowdhury, chief executive of KHDC MA Hashim, Maj Aowlad Hossain, KHDC member Animesh Dewan Nandith, Sanu Mong Marma, Abu Bakar Siddik, Ruhity Karbary, Khagrachhari Municipality Chairman Joynal Abedin were present while some thousand spectators from various walks enjoyed the programme.

Gary doubted own loyalty

PTI, Durban

Gary Kirsten's first official assignment as India's cricket coach happened to be against the team he was once part of, and the former South African opener admitted that there were moments before the drawn Test series when he was uncertain about his loyalties.

"Whatever I may have said previously, I'd be lying if I said I never had any doubts about my loyalties if the result of the series was delicately balanced," Kirsten was quoted as saying by the Beeld newspaper here.

The Indians managed to draw the series 1-1 after winning the third and final Test in Kanpur inside three days on a turning track.

Dhoni's reward

FROM PAGE 17 Kumar said regular Test skipper Anil Kumble, who missed the decider due to a groin injury, also came down to meet and thank him for preparing a "spinner-friendly" pitch.

Off-spinner Harbhajan Singh also met Kumar to praise and thank him. Kumar said that the Green Park wicket was a sporting one.



An Abahani player takes the ball away from a Bangladesh Sporting Club marker during the Brac Bank Club Cup hockey tournament at the Maulana Bhasani National Stadium yesterday.

Akram no IPL fan

Cricket

AFP, Lahore

Former Pakistan bowling great Wasim Akram warned Monday that the Indian Premier League could seriously damage international cricket if the game's governing body fails to intervene.

The lucrative IPL, which starts from Thursday, has already stirred controversy with high profile players willing to retire to feature in the multi-million dollar bonanza.

"I fear the IPL can be a serious distraction and destruction if the International Cricket Council (ICC) doesn't intervene because it involves huge money and players are ready to abandon international cricket," Akram told AFP.

The Twenty20 competition, promoted by the Indian cricket board and featuring stars from around the world, lines up eight teams bought by franchises which selected their players via auction

last month.

The tournament marks the first time that international cricketers will put aside national allegiances to play for privately-owned and city-based teams.

"The ICC should have foreseen the danger 10 years ago because the ICC and cricket boards of countries earn billions of dollars with players getting a small percentage, so such a thing was bound to happen," Akram said.

"Had players been paid properly by the ICC and the boards they would not have joined such leagues. Now there has come a stage where players are willing to opt out of international cricket, which is dangerous."

Akram, who played 104 Tests and 356 one-day matches during an illustrious career for Pakistan, said he hoped new ICC chief Haroon Lorgat, who will replace Malcolm Speed in June, would tackle the problem.

"The new ICC chief executive seems a level-headed man and I

hope he finds a solution," he said.

Akram also said that huge interest in Twenty20 was a potential danger for 50-over one-day cricket.

"Test cricket will stay on as it is but I think the ICC will have to find some ways to keep the 50-over interest alive," said Akram who has the world record of most one-day wickets with 502.

"Overs 20 to 40 are starting to prove boring for fans -- even I would not watch the middle overs if players like Adam Gilchrist, Sanath Jayasuriya and Shahid Afridi aren't batting," he said.

Akram further criticised the IPL authorities for their strict media guidelines, which have forced international agencies to boycott the event.

"In a culture like ours no event can get off without media coverage," Akram said. "I see these restrictions as odd, unwise and hope they relent because people want to see pictures and coverage in print."

'Don't forget me'

Cricket

AFP, Chester-Le-Street

England -- I can't stress that enough that I still want to play international cricket," Harmison, the world's leading pace bowler four years ago, said.

"This is definitely not the end of my England career -- sometimes you have to take a step back before moving forward."

"And if that means me taking a step back and not playing Test cricket for the first part of this summer then OK," Harmison, who has taken 212 wickets in 57 Tests, added.

Former England opening batsman Geoff Boycott has said England should "forget" Harmison.

Meanwhile Harmison's fellow seamer Andrew Caddick, still playing for Somerset several years after being discarded by England, has questioned whether the Durham man still wants to be a Test player.

But Harmison, who will have to take wickets for his native Durham in the County Championship if he is to force his way into the England side for the home series with New Zealand and South Africa, made it clear he wanted to return to the international arena.

"I wouldn't play for Durham if I didn't think I would play for

Durham's Riverside headquarters on Monday, said he took heart from the recent performances of two other north-east sporting heroes in Newcastle Falcons rugby star Jonny Wilkinson and Newcastle United striker Michael Owen.

"We have a culture of kicking people when we're down and there are a couple of north-east sportsmen not far from here in different sports who have had a horrendous time lately."

"Seeing them come back spurs you on. They have spurred me and said to me 'keep knocking and I'll have my chance'."

And he insisted his delayed departure to New Zealand to witness the birth of his son had not been the reason behind his poor form on tour.

"I'll never apologise for staying behind for the birth of my son. It has not cost me my Test place -- I did not bowl very well, that is why I did not play the last two Test matches in New Zealand."

"I don't think it'll ever happen again -- I've got four children now -- but if ever happens again there is no doubt in my mind that I would stay again."

"Some things are more important than cricket and seeing your son come into the world is definitely one of them."

Harmison, speaking at

Chelsea blow title

FROM PAGE 17

Kirkland had the better of Anelka six minutes later, racing out of his penalty box to kick a through-ball.

Wigan's Ecuador midfielder Antonio Valencia blasted a fierce low shot from the corner of the box 17 minutes in but Cech passed his first test by pushing it wide.

Kirkland somehow pulled off an exceptional save seven minutes later, scrambling backwards to claw a looping Anelka header away for a corner.

Chelsea kept up the pressure and in the 35th minute, Latics defender Paul Scharner accidentally headed a Julian Belletti corner towards his own goal. However, Ryan Taylor managed to clear it off the goalline.

Grant replaced Florent Malouda with Joe Cole for the second half and the creative England midfielder wasted no time upping the tempo by firing in a shot, which Scharner blocked.

Blues captain John Terry hit the crossbar with a volley from a corner in the 54th minute.

Then Kirkland somehow kept out a close-range Kalou effort but he could do nothing about Essien's strike.

Anelka, inside the penalty box, laid the ball off for Essien, who blasted his shot from the edge of the

area across the goal and past the once-capped England goalkeeper, to the relief of the home supporters.

After the re-start, Joe Cole turned and blasted a powerful shot which Kirkland held.

Blues midfielder Michael Ballack fired a 67th-minute free kick over the crossbar.

A minute later, Joe Cole broke free and sent a swerving shot just wide from the edge of the penalty box as Chelsea hunted a second goal.

Heskey served notice of his intentions with three minutes left, forcing Cech into a low diving save.

Kirkland, inspirational throughout, blocked an injury-time Essien shot before Heskey shook off his marker at the far post to volley in a left-wing cross from substitute Jason Koumas and stun the Stamford Bridge faithful.

Asif back

FROM PAGE 17

SQUAD

Shoaib Malik (captain), Salman Butt, Mohammad Yousuf, Misbahul Haq, Shahid Afridi, Kamran Akmal, Mohammad Asif, Umar Gul, Sohail Tanveer, Rao Iftikhar, Sohail Khan, Wahab Riaz, Fawad Alam, Bazid Khan, Naumanullah, Sarfraz Ahmed.

Prince's six tops

Manik's seven

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Manikganj

Dashara Palli Mangal Samity (DPMS) beat Sutla Uday Sena (SUS) by 71 runs in the Col Malke Smriti First Division Cricket League at the Shaheed Miraj-Tapan Stadium here yesterday.

Mank's seven-wicket haul withstanding, DPMS reached 107 in 30.1 overs. But SUS sunk at the hands of Prince, who took six, as they were bundled out for 36 in 12.5 overs.

Obaidur took three wickets for DPMs.

Prince's six tops

Manik's seven

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Manikganj

Prantik Krira Chakra made a sound start to their Second Division campaign, thumping Kalindi Krira Chakra by 68 runs in the opening group B match at the Jagannath Hall ground yesterday.

Opting to bat first, Prantik scored 213-9 in their stipulated 50 overs. Later, Kalindi were all out for 145 in 34.5 overs.

National cricket trainer Osman Khan formally inaugurated the league as chief guest.

In the day's other match, Kalar

Boys Club (133-7) defeated Farashganj (132-10) by three wickets at the City Club ground.

Senate stands

FROM PAGE 17

being "victimized".

On one news channel he alleged

that the ban was punishment in

return for refusing to give the PCB

chairman, Nasim Ashraf, a share of

his salary from the Indian Premier

League. This claim prompted

Ashraf to issue a legal notice seek-

ing damages worth US\$1.6 million

for defamation. Shoaib also said he

had been approached by individu-

als to underperform during the

team's tour to India and South

Africa, offers which he refused.

"For this match (Boys v Azad),

we have got a report from the

match referee where allegations of

match-fixing were found. As there

is concrete proof, we referred the

report to the disciplinary committee," informed the former national

captain.

"For this match (Boys v Azad),

we have got a report from the

match referee where allegations of

match-fixing were found. As there

is concrete proof, we referred the

report to the disciplinary committee," informed the former national

captain.

"For this match (Boys v Azad),

we have got a report from the

match referee where allegations of

match-fixing were found. As there

is concrete proof, we referred the