

## Salahuddin BFF boss

### Football

AL MUSABBIR SADI

He was the king of the country's football. He has returned to his loved domain as the king again, scoring perhaps the most memorable goal for even a legendary striker like him in a different ball game though.

Having served the country as a footballer, Kazi Salahuddin was elected president of the Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) last night after the most exciting voting battle Bangladesh's sports have ever experienced.

Salahuddin, arguably the best footballer the country has ever produced and also the only man to have played in a professional league from the country, defeated his rival Maj Gen (ret) Amin Ahmed Chowdhury by 62-49 votes in the BFF elections to become the head of an executive committee that can be best described as "people's choice".

Salahuddin was not only out of words but also spoke with a broken voice.

"This is the happiest day in my life because my 30 years' dream has come true. I want to serve the federation in the best possible way. We will not disappoint you," said the former national captain who

also congratulated his opposition and thanked the councillors.

"My first task is to bring football back to the ground. Wait and see for what happens. I have men like Badal and Salam and an excellent team with me. I don't want to dwell in the past and it is time to look forward."

When asked where does he want to see football four years later, he said: "There is no limit."

Amin Ahmed, wishing the new president good luck, termed the election as impartial and added that it was a wonderful experience for him.

Neither panel had a clear-cut domination but everyone seemed happy after the results that saw the exit of the 'bad' and 'ugly'.

Although Amin Ahmed's panel lost the battle for the top post, it virtually won the war by capturing the senior vice-president and three out of four vice-president posts.

Salahuddin's men won eight out of 15 members.

The most significant aspect of the daylong event closely followed by the AFC delegation inside the BFF Bhaban and hundreds of football fans outside was that eight out of nine ex-footballers contested in the polls won convincingly.

The only casualty was former winger Ashrafuddin Ahmed Chunnun who contested for a vice-president

post.

Other prominent losers were senior vice-president candidate Monir Ahmed, who got 37 votes to Salam Mureshed's 74, vice-president candidates Abdur Rahim, Golam Rasool Mollah and Nurul Alam Chowdhury.

Apart from Salahuddin, the footballers to make their mark were Salam Mureshed (senior vice-president), Badal Roy (vice-president), Sheikh Mohammed Aslam, Hasanuzzaman Khan Babloo, Golam Rabbani Helal, Khurshid Babul and Satyajit Das Rupu (members).

A former national striker and goal-machine Aslam won highest 79 votes.

The youngest to be elected as vice-president was Kazi Nabil Ahmed.

The result also proved that although the candidates had divided loyalties, the councillors were united in their endeavour to vote for the fittest candidates no matter in which panel they belonged.

That is the reason why seasoned organisers like Harunur Rashid, Sirajul Islam Bachchu, Anwarul Haque Helal, Fazlur Rahman Babul, Shawkat Ali Jahangir and Manzoor Hossain Malu came out with flying colours.

The triumph of a 'mixed-panel' also meant a defeat for the 'black

shadow' of Forum as the lesser-known organisers failed to win by banking on just stock votes.

The voting began at 2pm and since then, it had been anxious nine hours for candidates, councillors and football lovers till Chief Election Commissioner Mesbah Uddin announced the official results in a crowded press conference.

AFC vice-president and FIFA development officer Monilal Fernando, who was present as observer, said it was a good contest.

"I thank the Election Commission for a wonderful job and the councillors for having this election in a sporting manner," commented Monilal.

Outgoing president SA Sultan mentioned the election as a historical event.

"It is the first fair, neutral and democratic election in our football history. The winners are worthy and I appeal to them to take the game to the highest standard and make our dream a success."

In the end, month-long rumours of influence from the upper level and other foul plays proved to be just gossips as possibly the best workable committee has been formed.

It would be a test for Salahuddin and Co now to salvage the sinking ship and manoeuvre it at full throttle towards its desired course.



POPULARITY PREVAILS: President-elect Kazi Salahuddin (2nd from L) is surrounded by the other winners in the elections of the Bangladesh Football Federation at the BFF Bhaban late last night.

## NCA crushed within 3 days

SPORTS REPORTER

Pakistan Cricket Academy (PCA) continued their supremacy over GP-BCB National Cricket Academy (NCA) when they crushed the hosts by eight wickets on the third day of the first four-day at the Shaheed Chandu Stadium in Bogra yesterday.

The easy win was all but confirmed for the visitors, who secured comfortable victories in all three one-day matches earlier, when the home team lost their remaining five wickets for 32 runs on the third morning to set a paltry target of 128.

PCA raced to the target, making 133 for the loss of two wickets in 32.5 overs to take a 1-0 lead, thanks to an unbeaten 65 by Khurram Manzoor who smashed nine boundaries and two over boundaries in his 105-ball stay.

Captain and left-arm spinner Mehraab Hossain and Raihanuddin Arafat took one wicket each for NCA.

It was PCA's new ball bowler Wahab Riaz who did the damage by taking five wickets for 35 runs as NCA were bundled out for 176

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## Say no to 'positives'

### Cricket

SPORTS REPORTER

If you were a face-reader you could have easily understood what distress Mohammad Ashraful had just been through. When the Bangladesh skipper emerged from the meeting with top board members at the BCB's Gulshan office yesterday, the 24-year-old wore a look he never before did, even after his team hit lower from lows.

And as he started to talk with the waiting reporters it seemed that the long discussion with three board members -- Gazi Ashraf Hossain, Shaifur Rahman Munna and Ahmed Sajjadul Alam -- suddenly changed his philosophy, which is obviously looking for positives even when there is none, regarding their recent wretched performance.

"The board arranged the meeting after this Pakistan series as they are very much worried about our recent poor performances. And undoubtedly our performance was not good in the last couple of series," explained Ashraful, who was trying hard to check his emotion.

The Tigers skipper took time when asked whether he still believed that they had played competitive cricket in Pakistan to gain some positives even in a 5-0 white-wash.

"We may have some individual achievements in the series but no doubt as a team our performance was not up to any mark. But we have to play cricket with a positive frame of mind," Ashraful contradicted with his earlier comments when he, upon arrival at the Zia International Airport from Pakistan, said, "We played competitive cricket."

Ashraful however was quick to come up with an excuse when he said that lack of experience was the reason behind the dismal performance.

"I played more than hundred one-day internationals and good number of Test matches, but you have to consider the age while talking about experience. I believe we can reach a standard if the current crop of players play together for a period of time," he said.

The explanation of Ashraf, chairman of the cricket operations committee of the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB), however made it clear

why the Bangladesh captain stopped beating the drum of 'positives'.

"We watched the performance on TV screen that's why we have had the idea about their approach on the field. We made one thing clear that we totally disagreed with their explanation and observations about their poor showing," said Ashraf.

The former national skipper also explained why they sat with the national players. The cricket operations committee met individually with the captain and vice-captain Mashrafe Bin Mortaza and then had a meeting with the rest of the players as a group.

"This kind of meeting was first since we have taken the responsibility. What we felt is that there was a need for interactions between players and the officials to find a way. We just cannot sit over a disaster after another, rather we have to motivate them by taking necessary actions," said Ashraf.

"I don't believe we can take comfort after putting on only 200 runs on the board. We are not in a stage to think like that," he said

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## Bhajji slapped with ban



AGENCIES, New Delhi

Harbhajan Singh on Monday has been handed an 11-match ban for slapping Shanthakumaran Sreesanth at the end of Mumbai Indians' Indian Premier League match against Kings XI Punjab on Friday.

The ban, which includes Sunday's match, means he is all but out of the first edition of the IPL -- unless Mumbai reach the semi-finals of the tournament, which looks highly unlikely at this point.

25-year-old Sreesanth was let off with a warning after video evidence showed Harbhajan slapped him without any provocation. The duo embraced at the end of the hearing after Harbhajan offered an apology in front of the cameras. Harbhajan will not be appealing against the ban. The two appeared to have made up by calling each other "brothers."

But match referee Farokh Engineer held a hearing on Monday after the Punjab team management lodged a formal complaint against Harbhajan to tournament officials.

"The referee studied video tapes of the incident and found the assault by Harbhajan was totally unprovoked. The footage exactly showed that Harbhajan, 27, went down the line, wishing all the players, shaking hands with a few players," said Lalit Modi, the commissioner of the IPL who is also a vice-president of the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI).

"Sreesanth was the third player

that he met. Instead of shaking his hand he actually slapped him and continued down the line, shaking hands with the other players."

Engineer, the former Indian wicketkeeper who was the match referee, fined Harbhajan 100 per cent of his match fee for Friday's

game. He will now be paid only for the first two matches of the IPL.

Lalchand Rajput, the coach of the Mumbai side, has also been found guilty of a level 2 offence and fined 50 per cent of his match fee.

"Rajput was right behind

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Mumbai Indians' Harbhajan Singh (in the foreground) and Kings XI Punjab's Shanthakumaran Sreesanth during the Indian Premier League's hearing in New Delhi yesterday.

### THE WINNERS

President

Kazi Salahuddin (62 votes)

Sr. Vice-President

Abdus Salam Mureshed (74)

Vice-Presidents

Manzoor Hossain Malu (67)

Shawkat Ali Khan Jahangir (62)

Badal Roy (62)

Kazi Nabil Ahmed (58)

Members

Sheikh Mohammad Aslam (79)

Harunur Rashid (72)

Amirul Islam Babu (72)

Anwarul Haque Helal (71)

Khurshid Babul (68)

Golam Rabbani Helal (65)

Satyajit Das Rupu (64)

Sirajul Islam Bachchu (63)

Azfaruzzaman Sohrab (61)

Hasanuzzaman Bablu (60)

Fazlur Rahman Babul (59)

Shamsul Haque Chowdhury (59)

Mahbubur Rahman Shaheen (58)

Shafiquzzaman (57)

Mokbul Hossain (56)

## Under-15s rout Kenya

SPORTS REPORTER

Asif Hasan claimed five wickets as Bangladesh Under-15s trounced Kenya Under-15s by 187 runs in the second round league match of the Cllico International World Championships at the National Cricket Centre (NCC) at Couva in West Indies on Sunday.

Bangladesh, who suffered huge defeats against Pakistan and West Indies in their previous two games, meet Ireland in the third round match today at the same venue.

Bangladesh scored 257 for 8 in the stipulated 50 overs. Rakin Ahmed contributed 75 and Liton Kumar Das added 64.

Emmanuel Bundi grabbed two wickets for 53 runs.

In reply, Kenya were bundled out for 70 runs in 40.5 overs with Irfan Karim scoring highest 28 runs.

Asif claimed five wickets for 11 runs while Shahriar Islam also took four wickets for 10 runs.

## Zia atop alone

SPORTS REPORTER

Grand Master Ziaur Rahman maintained his solo lead in the 34th National Chess Championship when he won his eighth round board against FM Sheikh Nasir Ahmed at the federation hall-room yesterday.

Zia improved his tally to 7.5 points while defending champion Grand Master Abdullah Al Rakib followed him with six points after winning his eighth round game against Grand Master Reefat Bin Sattar.

International Master Enamul Hossain Rajib secured 5.5 points to maintain the third spot. Rajib beat Debaraj Chatterjee.

## A vibrant election

### Football

SPORTS REPORTER

There was no short of excitement and angst in yesterday's Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) elections held at its headquarters.

Supporters of both Kazi Salahuddin and Maj Gen (ret) Amin Ahmed Chowdhury's panels were seen cheering as soon as any candidate waved from the BFF office windows after they cast their votes during the elections for the 21 posts that began at 2 o'clock in the afternoon.

Although there was no clear favourite between the panels led by legendary footballer Kazi Salahuddin and Amin Ahmed, word was out that popular former footballers and experienced organisers were leading, which eventually proved true.

The scenes were unprecedented, as hundreds gathered outside in the lawn of the BFF Bhaban after the offices of the game's custodians in the country

were made off-limits to everyone barring the candidates and councillors. Outside, officials from other federations, current national players, several former national players and the entire media contingent were waiting with baited breath in the searing April heat. But all the talk around the BFF headquarters was of the elections taking place inside the glass doors.

This was the fifth election in the federation's history after the polls of 1974, 1997, 2001 and 2003 but none of the previous ones had such enthusiasm towards it. One senior official was compelled to claim it as the "much desired contest".

"The environment inside is quite friendly and it is a real contest," said a councillor. "The Asian Football Confederation (AFC) delegates are keeping a keen eye over the workings of the elections as well," said the official, who preferred anonymity.

Another, however, complained that he felt like imprisoned inside the "confines of the office" and also said that the fact that the executive

committee members could not vote made it even worse.

There have also been rumours of money being exchanged before the polls. There was also unconfirmed reports of influence from high-ups over the councillors of which way they would vote.

Earlier at 11am, the BFF's annual general meeting was held with the general secretary's report being agreed upon without much discussion.

However, the audit report had no signatures of the president or the general secretary but still it was approved. The budget for the next fiscal year was rejected as the members felt that the new committee should decide on the budget and also, there was no mention of the much talked-about DFAs in the BFF financial statement. Interestingly, there was no treasurer's report since the treasurer was not present at the AGM.

But the events that occurred after the AGM ended at 1pm will be remembered in the footballing circle for a long time.

## PREMIER DIV STARTS TODAY

## Abahani-Wari opener

### Hockey

SPORTS REPORTER

The Green Delta Insurance Premier Division Hockey League gets underway today at the Maulana Bhasani National Stadium.

Club Cup champions Abahani take on Wari Club in the inaugural and the day's only match at 4:00pm.

On the second day another giants Usha Krira Chakra, who became joint champions in the last season, will launch their campaign against Bangladesh Sporting Club

at 2:30pm while in the other match of the day runners-up Dhaka Mariner Young's Club will play against Sadharan Bima at 4:00pm.

Another traditional giants Mohammedan will kick off their campaign on May 1, taking on Azad Sporting Club.

Ten teams -- Abahani, Usha, Dhaka Mariner, Mohammedan, Sonali Bank, Ajax, Azad, Sadharan Bima, Bangladesh SC and Wari Club -- will compete in the first round and after that top five will play the Super League.

Most of the participating clubs are demanding foreign umpires to conduct the matches as there were

ugly scenes in an ill-tempered game due to poor umpiring between country's two traditional rivals -- Abahani and Mohammedan -- in the Club Cup semifinal.

"We had a meeting with the eight club representatives Sunday where they demanded foreign umpires and we are trying to bring some foreign umpires. Two Indian umpires will arrive in Dhaka in the first week of May," Ehtesham Sultan, general secretary of the league committee, told at a press conference yesterday.

"We have a lack of professional

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Grand Master Abdullah Al Rakib (R) makes a move during his 34th National Chess Championship match against fellow Grand Master Reefat Bin Sattar at the National Sports Council yesterday.



### Greg Chappell

(Former India cricket coach)

"When you've been abused as many times as I have, mate, you are bound to understand some Hindi and Urdu."

He has a hilarious explanation for his language skills.



### SET Max

Indian Premier League  
Kolkata Knight Riders v Mumbai Indians  
Live from 7:30pm

### TEN Sports

UEFA Champions League  
Man United v Barcelona  
Live from 12:00am (Wednesday)

### ESPN

Sportscentre India  
Sports News  
Live at 8:30pm