

Pressure mounts on Butt

CRICINFO, undated

Members of Pakistan's parliamentary committee on sports panel have asked for a meeting with Pakistan President Asif Zardari, who is also patron of the PCB, as pressure mounts on Ijaz Butt's board administration after two days of development in Islamabad.

First, the National Assembly's Standing committee on sports, headed by the increasingly vocal Jamshed Dasti, met in the capital on Wednesday and again grilled Butt over a range of issues. Then on Thursday the upper house of parliament, the senate, called its own committee meeting though Butt didn't turn up for this one.

Dasti has repeatedly called for Butt's sacking, criticised the PCB's handling of the aftermath of the Lahore attack on the Sri Lankan team bus last year, as well as levelling match-fixing allegations after Pakistan lost a close league game to Australia in the ICC Champions Trophy last year. "We want to brief the president, who is also the patron of the Board, regarding all prevailing ills in the PCB," Dasti said. "We have already forwarded recommendations to the president."

Butt was scheduled to attend the senate meeting but didn't, and PCB chief operating officer Wasim Bari explained that Butt had been summoned to the president's office. That sparked speculation that Butt was going to be sacked, and reports did emerge that he had been asked to resign, though they were officially denied. Confusion still prevails over whether Butt actually went to the presidency and which official he met there.

When Butt didn't turn up, the committee hit out at his attitude towards parliament, and later urged the Sports Minister Aijaz Jakhani to get its recommendations approved. "I have already taken up the matter with the president during my meeting last Thursday and hopefully something positive would come up in a few days time," Jakhani said. "It is entirely up to the president to decide on the issue and I cannot give any deadline for changes."

Ump Benson

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and family are concerned. Vince van der Bijl, the ICC's umpires' and referees' manager said: "Mark's immense love for and enjoyment of cricket shines through his umpiring. His on-field calm demeanour will be missed, as will his friendly and easygoing disposition."

"We fully understand and support his decision, which was brought on by a desire to spend more time in England with his family and some concerns about health issues. He will add richly to the county circuit as he is a talented and hugely experienced umpire and we wish him great success."

In total, Benson umpired 27 Tests, 72 ODIs and 19 T20Is, including the final of the inaugural ICC World Twenty20 final in Johannesburg in September 2007. He had been on the elite panel since 2006.

Bhatti no

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was the man responsible for bringing out the magazine every month.

He became Sports Editor of the News in 1990 and was one of the key founding members of the newspaper, the English voice of the influential Jang media group. At one point, in the mid-90s, he even became editor of the paper, but returned soon after to his first love of sports, and was Group sports editor, until his illness.



South Africa players stretch during a practice session in Nagpur yesterday. The first of the two-match Test series against India begins today.

Laxman doubtful India-S Africa 1st Test starts today

Cricket

AFP, Nagpur

Injury-ravaged India were sweating over the fitness of key middle-order batsman Venkatesai Laxman ahead of the first Test against South Africa starting Saturday.

Laxman, a Test veteran with 6,993 runs, has yet to recover fully from a finger injury which forced him to sit out of India's second Test against Bangladesh at Dhaka.

"There is uncertainty over Laxman at the moment," Indian captain Mahendra Singh Dhoni told a press conference in Nagpur.

"He batted in the nets but we are still waiting on the final word on him. He will share his thoughts with the physio and based on that we will take a decision on his availability."

The hosts have already lost Rahul Dravid, a vital cog in the middle order, and the flamboyant Yuvraj Singh to injuries picked during their 2-0 away win against Bangladesh.

Their absence has opened the doors to the likes of Subramaniam Badrinath, Murali Vijay and Rohit Sharma, who was drafted in the squad as a cover for Laxman on Thursday.

Badrinath and Rohit Sharma have yet to play in the longest version of the game while Vijay has appeared in three Test matches.

"Injuries are beyond our control," said Dhoni. "We are going to miss our experienced players but at the same time their absence provides an opportunity for the youngsters to step in and score runs."

"It will be a challenge but we have openers who have done well against various opposition and there is no reason why they cannot do that again. There will be pressure but we are now used to playing under pressure."

South African skipper Graeme Smith, who is eyeing to topple India from the top in the Test rankings, said the injuries were bound to hurt the hosts.

"Guys like Laxman and Dravid come with a lot of experience. They bring a kind of calmness to the team."

"We have a lot of respect for the new players coming in but it does put more pressure on their openers (Gautam Gambhir and (Virender) Sehwag."

Smith also tried to downplay the hype around this two-Test series, which is being billed as a battle for the Test world championship crown.

India go into the series with 124 points, four ahead of South Africa, whom they displaced at the top in December with a 2-0 win over Sri Lanka at home.

South Africa need to win 1-0, which will take them to 123 points and see India drop to 122. If South Africa sweep the series they will go up to 125 points and India will fall to 120.

The Proteas have won two of their previous eight Tests, four of which were against Australia, but their inability to register a series victory over England at home recently kept them in the second place.

"In the last two years we have had intense series against Australia, England and India. We are battle-hardened now," said Smith.

"This time we want to play better cricket than India. Hopefully, we will adapt our style of play to these conditions. The opportunity to beat India excites us and if we do that we get the ranking."

"I think at the moment we have everything to gain on this tour and India has got everything to lose. It is the opportunity to win in India that excites us."

The second and final Test begins in Kolkata on February 14.

Aussies win a thriller

Cricket

CRICINFO, undated

Shaun Tait proved he can still be a force at international level as he helped Australia to a tense two-run win that completed a clean-sweep across all three formats against Pakistan this summer. Tait bowled the fastest ball ever recorded in Australia and grabbed 3 for 13 including the key wicket of Kamran Akmal, who had threatened to end Australia's streak with his highest Twenty20 score.

Pakistan's trip has been notable for terrible fielding and the inability to capitalise whenever they got on top of Australia. This time their fielding was sharper than it had been at any stage over the past couple of months but their failure to keep Australia down remained a major issue. Despite dismissing Australia for 127 and being on track at 4 for 98 in the 15th over, they found a way to lose.

The problems began when Kamran chipped to mid-on for 64 from 33 balls to hand Tait his third wicket. Steven Smith then delivered two important breakthroughs on debut when he had Fawad Alam caught at slip and Rana Navedul Hasan stumped, and the wickets kept tumbling. In the end, Pakistan needed 10 from the final Shane Watson over. Umar Akmal was on strike, having been the key after the loss of his brother, but when he holed out from the first ball the result was all but sealed.

It was a shame that Kamran's teammates

couldn't reward him after he led an impressive fightback when the visitors had stumbled to 2 for 10. Kamran was a one-man resistance movement and raced to a 25-ball half-century, the quickest ever by a Pakistan batsman in a Twenty20 international.

His fifty came up with a typically muscular pull for six off Dirk Nannes and at the time Pakistan were 4 for 81 and no other batsman in their lineup had reached double figures. It was an incredible turnaround for a man who was dropped from both the Test and ODI sides during the tour and had a best international score of 34 in any format on the trip.

In a match where Tait broke the 160kph barrier and his new-ball partner Nannes was fast and accurate, the first-change Mitchell Johnson was a welcome relief and Kamran helped blast 20 off Johnson's first over. Despite the support of his brother Umar (21), there wasn't enough of a spread in the runs from the rest of the Pakistanis.

The trouble began with the quick loss of both the openers. Nannes' first over was a maiden that included the run-out of Imran Nazir as the pressure built, and Tait didn't drop below 150kph in his opening spell. He hit 160.7kph, which was the fastest ball recorded in Australia, and from a 152kph offering had Imran Farhat caught at slip for 8.

BRIEF SCORES

AUSTRALIA: 127 (Hussey 40 not out; Gul 3-20) PAKISTAN: 125 for 9 (K Akmal 64; Tait 3-13) Result: Australia won by 2 runs.

Booters pass India test

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and Sabuz. The velocity of attack went up a few notches. The Indians were pressed inside their own half.

Bangladesh came mighty close to scoring the opener in the 67th minute when Mithun Chowdhury floated in a dangerous cross after getting the ball from Wali Faisal for a darting Yousuf inside the box. Yousuf put a firm header on it and with the goalkeeper beaten, Yousuf was only denied by the upright.

Djordjevic made another change when he brought on Abdul Baten Mojumder for Ameli. And that change seemed to work wonders. The two substitutes Mojumder and Sabuz combined to give Bangladesh their precious goal. Being on the field for

deserved lap round the athletic track to the cheers of the 20,000-strong crowd.

TEAMS

BANGLADESH: Aminul Haque, Nasirul Islam, Zaul Faisal, Mintu Sheikh, Rezaul Karim, Atiqur Rahman Meshu, Mohammad Yousuf, Enamul Haque (Mithun Chowdhury), Zahid Hasan Ameli (Abdul Baten Mojumder), Shakil Ahmed (Tawhidul Alam Sabuz), Mamunul Islam. INDIA: Gurpreet Singh Sandhu, Vishal Kumar Ravindra,INDERPREET SINGH, Raju Eknath Gaikwad, Lalrozama Panai, Subodh Kumar, Milan Singh Ongham, Jewel Raja Sheikh, Lalrindika Ralte, Jeje Lalpekhlua, Manan Deep.

Yellow card: Rezaul Karim.

Nazimuddin slams double hundred

Cricket

SPORTS REPORTER

Chittagong batsman Nazimuddin scored the first double hundred of the season in a dour draw against Dhaka but Khulna's Taposh Ghosh's Herculean effort of 150 not out went in vain as they conceded an innings and 28 runs defeat at the hands of pacesetters Rajshahi in the National Cricket League in the first phase fourth round match yesterday.

At the Khulna Divisional Stadium, Chittagong started the day on 197 for five with Nazimuddin batting on 53. He took that score to 205 before being dismissed by Arafat Sunny who took five wickets for 87. Nazimuddin's 289-ball knock contained 30 boundaries and a six. Arman Hossain scored 97 runs. Chittagong declared their second innings on 442 for nine. In reply, Dhaka reached 93 for three before stumps were drawn on the fourth day.

At the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium, a brilliant unbeaten knock of 150 from opener Taposh Ghosh was not enough as the two Rajshahi spinners Sohrawardi Shuvo and Saqlain Shajib wreaked havoc on the other

batsmen. Khulna had started the day on 104 for one with opener Taposh batting on 57. He found good support in Aslam Ali who scored 46. But after Aslam was dismissed, none could give him able support as Shuvo took six and Sajib claimed three wickets to book Khulna for 295 in their second knock. Taposh was left stranded on 150 runs off 296 deliveries with 14 boundaries.

BRIEF SCORES:

RAJSHAHI V KHULNA KHULNA FIRST INNINGS: 184 (Majumdar 57; Shajib 6-53) RAJSHAHI FIRST INNINGS: 507 for 6 declared (Forhad 135, Anisur 151 not out; Ziaur 4-77) Khulna Second Innings: 295 all out (Taposh 150 not out, Aslam 46; Sohrawardi Shuvo 6-93 and Saqlain Shajib 3-112) Result: Rajshahi won by an innings and 28 runs Dhaka v Chittagong CHITTAGONG FIRST INNINGS: 350 (Faisal 154; Sharif 5-102) DHAKA FIRST INNINGS: 351 (Shubhagato 166 not out; Elius Sunny 4-64) CHITTAGONG SECOND INNINGS: 442 for 9 (Nazimuddin 205, Arman 97; Arafat Sunny 5-87) DHAKA SECOND INNINGS: 93 for three (Shamsur 28; Mubashir 2-17) Result: Match drawn

Cricketers

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match but we had belief in ourselves. I must give our bowlers special credit," said Bangladesh captain Mohammad Mithun.

Back to the first game, Priyanjan hammered an unbeaten 92 off 50 balls that featured ten fours and two sixes as Sri Lanka piled up 220 for three in 20 overs.

In reply, minnows Maldives managed only 73 runs at the loss of five wickets in their share of 20 overs.

Pakistan will play the winners of today's fixture between winless Nepal and Maldives for in the third place.

Meanwhile, the organisers have taken some initiative to make the final occasion more befitting as a live concert by prominent band artists will precede the match. The concert will commence at 3:30pm. Besides, the DJ stand at the stadium will be in motion throughout the match and cheerleaders will be dancing to the beat in true T20 spirit. Spectators will have free entry to the gallery and special enclosure in the final.

BRIEF SCORES

BANGLADESH V PAKISTAN BANGLADESH: 156-6 in 20 overs (Sabbir 46, Nasir 45, Mithun 32, Junaid 3-20) PAKISTAN: 104 all out in 17.3 overs (Abbas 37, Junaid 18, Asad 17, Shuvashish 2-10, Sanjamul 2-28, Nasir 2-20) Result: Bangladesh won by 52 runs.

SRI LANKA V MALDIVES

SRI LANKA: 220-3 in 20 overs (Priyanjan 92 not out, Perera 44 not out, Pathirana 29, Rasheed 2-27) MALDIVES: 73-5 in 20 overs (Ibrahim 15, Hassan 17 not out, Angelo Perera 2-6) Result: Sri Lanka won by 147 runs.

A near miss

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-- the previous best was 52:71 -- to secure the gold in the event while Mahfizur followed him with 52:85sec, which was better than his national record of 54:22.

"I had the expectation of winning silver and I achieved it. I'm happy because we finally won something in this event for the first time," said Mahfizur, a BKSP student.

Sri Lankan Heshan Bandara Unamboowe bagged the bronze with a timing of 52:23sec.

Indian swimmer Sandeep Sejwal was outstanding in the men's 200m breaststroke, where he set a new Games record on way to winning the gold. Sandeep clocked 2:21:03sec to shatter the previous best of 2:21:12sec by a distance while Bangladeshi Kamal Hossain improved his national timing with 2:27:54sec to fulfil his expectation by winning the silver.

India also got the bronze as Anoop Augustine finished third with a timing of 2:29:99sec.

In the day's first event, the men's 200m individual medley, Rehan Jehangir Poncha won the gold for India clocking 2:12:65sec while Sri Lanka's Unamboowe bagged silver (2:13:68) and Bangladesh's Rubel Rama claimed the bronze with a timing of 2:19:03sec.

Another new Games record was set when Indian Shubha Chittaranjan won the gold in the women's 50m butterfly with a timing of 29:44sec -- the old record was 29:71sec -- while Sri Lanka's Miniruvani Shahiprabha Samrakoon took the silver (32:12sec) and Kiran Khan won the bronze, ensuring the lone medal for Pakistan on the day.

Pathetic Tigers

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who chipped in with a well-paced 71 after being dropped by Mushfiqur Rahim on 26, Oram dispatched even the slightest errors in length to the boundary with domineering ferocity. Scoring heavily over long off and midwicket, Oram and Broom added 123 for the seventh wicket, a New Zealand record, off just 67 balls. The pressure told on the Bangladesh bowlers, who resorted to bowling wide outside the off stump in an effort to minimise the number of boundaries. But Oram continued his onslaught before finally being cleaned up by Shafiqul Islam in the last over of the innings.

Earlier in the New Zealand innings, Peter Ingram, in his first ODI, and Ross Taylor combined for a confident 98 after losing Brendon McCullum and Martin Guptill to some excellent new ball pressure by the Bangladesh new-ball pair. Both batsmen made tidy half centuries, playing the ball into gaps and picking up boundaries, but failed to convert their starts, holding out to men in the deep in quick succession. Ingram ended on 69 and Taylor was dismissed just after he reached his half-century, for 51. Daniel Vettori also batted well for his 32 but was stumped off Shakib Al Hasan, leaving the hosts wobbling at 187 for 6 before Broom and Oram came together for their explosive stand.

Tamim and Imrul began the Bangladesh reply confidently, scoring at over a run a ball during the mandatory Powerplay period. Tamim was especially impressive through the covers, threading drives through a packed infield while Kayes preferred to pull, twice depositing each New Zealand opening bowler over square leg for six. A clever piece of bowling from debutant Andy McKay, however, proved Kayes' undoing, lamely bunting a slower bouncer through to the keeper with the score at 71.

Ashrafal and Rokibul both failed to reach double figures but Tamim continued playing exquisitely, relying on skill and timing rather than power to pick up boundaries at regular intervals. He too, however, failed to turn his knock into a match-winning one, allowing the New Zealanders affect him mentally by getting caught up in a pointless psychological tug-of-war with the opposition captain. Vettori came out on top, by having Tamim nick one to McCullum, ending his innings for a well made, but

insufficient 62. Shakib and Mushfiqur were both dismissed trying to up the ante, and Mahmudullah Riyad's run-a-ball resistance for 23 was simply delaying an inevitable New Zealand victory. Guptill came into the attack to clean up the tail, but the hosts are likely to be fairly content with their bowling effort which was led yet again by Vettori, who was typically influential in the middle overs. Worryingly for the Bangladesh batsmen, their inability to handle Vettori effectively was reiterated, and it is something they will look to work on ahead of the second ODI in Dunedin on Monday.

SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard of the first one-day international between New Zealand and Bangladesh at McLean Park in Napier on Friday:

NEW ZEALAND

B McCullum run out	0
Ingram c Ashrafal b Shafiqul	69
Guptill c Rokibul b Shahadat	2
Taylor c Mahmudullah b Nayeem	51
Franklin c Mushfiqur b Shafiqul	2
Broom run out	71
Vettori st Mushfiqur b Shakib	32
Oram b Shafiqul	83
Southee b Shafiqul	0
Tuffey not out	10
McKay not out	3
Extras: (b-1, lb-2, w-10)	13
Total: (For 9 wkts in 50	

overs) 336

Ball of wickets: 1-1, 2-19, 3-117, 4-120, 5-135, 6-187, 7-310, 8-310, 9-328.
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Bowler	O	M	R	W
Shahadat	9	2	56	1
Nazmul	9	1	78	0
Shafiqul	10	0	68	4
Shakib	9	0	62	1
Nayeem	10	0	51	1
Mahmudullah	3	0	18	0

BANGLADESH

Iqbal c McCullum b Vettori	62
Kayes c McCullum b McKay	33
Ashrafal c McCullum b McKay	5
Rokibul lbw b Vettori	9
Shakib c Southee b Vettori	8
Mushfiqur c McCullum b Tuffey	8
Mahmudullah c McKay b Oram	23
Nayeem c McCullum b Guptill	15
Shahadat c Franklin b Oram	1
Shafiqul c Taylor b Guptill	11
Nazmul not out	0
Extras: (b-2, lb-2, w-9, nb-2)	15
Total: (All out in 43.5 overs)	190

Fall of wickets: 1-71, 2-84, 3-118, 4-119, 5-133, 6-144, 7-167, 8-173, 9-190.

Bowler	O	M	R	W
Tuffey	7	1	39	1
Southee	7	0	34	0
McKay	8	0	40	2
Oram	9	0	33	2
Vettori	10	0	33	3
Guptill	2.5	0	7	2

Result: New Zealand won by 146 runs.

Man-of-the-match: Jacob Oram.

Toss: New Zealand.



New Zealand all-rounder Jacob Oram raises his bat after blasting a 40-ball 83 in the first one-day international against Bangladesh at McLean Park in Napier yesterday.

Hosts held by India

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attack. It started with a penalty corner by India that was saved by the Bangladesh keeper and the defence then pushed the ball up. Mohammad Nannu made a surging run past one defender and passed the ball in front of the post for Kamruzzaman who just had to slot home the opener.

Bangladesh tried to untangle the Indian defence on counterattacks and most of their threatening attacks came down the left flank through Rasel Mahmud Jimmy. And in that vein, they got their second ten minutes later.

This time, Rasel Mahmud took the ball down the left flank and passed it on to Mostafa who sent it in the goalmouth for Pushkor. Pushkor, who wasted a golden opportunity earlier, made no mistake this time as he pushed the ball in the back of the net to make it 2-0.

Bangladesh should have killed off the game early in the

second half, but Kamruzzaman this time chose the wrong option. He and Pushkor had combined in some delightful passing to move into the Indian box before the former rounded a defender and instead of hitting it himself, he tried to pass it to Pushkor, but the ball was intercepted by keeper Harjit Singh to deny Bangladesh a 3-0 advantage.

And they had to pay dearly for that missed chance. India grew stronger and started to create attacks, one after another, taking liberty of some sloppy defending and weary legs. And they were rewarded not once or twice but three times.

India got their first in the 52nd minute through last match's best player Raghunath Singh, they got their second five minutes later through Bikash Ranjan Roy and their lead came in the 68th minute through Mohammad. India could have

got even more had Bangladesh keeper Kiron Mehrab not made some wonderful saves throughout the match.

As it seemed that India were heading for a win, Mostafa produced a wonderful solo goal in the last minute. He took the ball from 30 yards out and made his way past three defenders into the box before releasing the shot into the net.

In the earlier match of the day, Pakistan beat Sri Lanka 2-0 to make sure they would make it to the final, unless Bangladesh managed to beat India.

After a goalless first half, Mohsin Bilal broke the deadlock with a hefty flick to put Pakistan in front just three minutes into the second half. Pakistan skipper Sabtain Raza scored the second ten minutes later to make the result safe.

Bangladesh will now play for the bronze against Sri Lanka while India take on Pakistan in the final tomorrow.

DAY'S EVENT

SOUTH ASIAN GAMES (WOMEN'S FOOTBALL)

Pakistan v Nepal Time: 5:45pm

Bangladesh v India Time: 8:30pm

Venue: Bangabandhu National Stadium CRICKET

Maldives v Nepal Time: 10:00am

Venue: Sher-e-Bangla Cricket Stadium, Mirpur

SHOOTING Time: 10:00am

Venue: National Shooting Complex

SWIMMING Time: 10:00am

Venue: National Swimming Complex

HANDBALL (FINAL) Pakistan v India Time: 3:00pm

Venue: Handball Stadium