

BFF aims to improve DFAs

Football

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) on Monday offered an olive branch to its struggling District Football Associations (DFA) which are struggling due to financial constraints and lack of infrastructure for the last two years.

"For more or less the last one year, we have been able to roll football into Dhaka which has drawn the attention of the sponsors. Now we are looking forward to developing district football," said BFF president Kazi Salahuddin after handing over Tk 50,000 to each of the 57 DFAs at the BFF Bhaban yesterday.

It is part of BFF's plan to get the DFAs out of the financial constraints as well as resurrect football at grassroots level. The fund is being allocated from BFF's three-year-long district football development program sponsored by the Bashundhara Group and worth Tk 4.5 crore.

"If you come forward two steps then I will come forward three steps to help you. BFF is ready to provide you complete financial assistance, but you must come forward and submit your annual programmes in the next two months," said the BFF boss at a gathering of the general secretaries of different DFAs.

The BFF formed 57 DFAs before the 2008 elections to comply with the FIFA statute in a bid to stave off the influence of government officials in the election process.

But ever since the introduction of DFAs, which have very little coordination with the govt-approved District Sports Associations (DSA), they could

hardly roll football on the ground. Even many DFAs have been functioning without a proper office.

The situation is a cause for concern for the BFF high-ups who pointed out personal interests as part of the reason for the weak status of DFAs.

However, the officials of different DFAs dismissed the notion while articulating the obstacles they have been facing and urged the high-ups of the game's governing body to hold Annual General Meeting (AGM) each year if they really wanted to take country's football forward.

"DFA is a new-born baby, which has no relation with the government and you should make a bridge between the government and DFA," Narail DFA general secretary Abdur Rashid said.

"Nowadays, boys from the rich or even middle class families are not coming to football and you should come up with a proper plan to get us out of this situation if you want to develop football," he added.

Rajshahi DFA general secretary Nurul Haq demanded DFA's stake in power and urged on holding AGM each year in a bid to approving all things related to football.

"Two years have gone by, and the DFA is still a weak organisation. Everyone should come forward to strengthen it," Chapainawabganj DFA general secretary Toufiqul Islam Tofa said.

"The attraction of the district league has been going down due to the absence of star footballers who are allowed to play only in the Bangladesh League."

Rajshahi DFA general secretary Manzurul Alam Dulal urged the BFF high-ups to take initiatives to get some allocation from the National Sports Council.

He also said that the game's governing body should make it clear



PHOTO: STAR
Bangladesh Football Federation president Kazi Salahuddin (L) delivers his speech during a reunion of the presidents and general secretaries of district football associations in front of the BFF House yesterday.

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BANGLADESH LEAGUE Rahmatganj win Old Town battle

SPORTS REPORTER

A first-half strike from Ugandan Idris Kasirye helped Rahmatganj MFS defeat Farashganj SC 1-0 in the Bangladesh League encounter at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

Idris separated both the sides in the 18th minute to give Rahmatganj their fourth win in 13 matches as well as exact sweet revenge against Farashganj, who beat them 2-0 in their first meeting at the same venue.

Rahmatganj with 14 points now leapfrog to sixth place along with Arambagh KS, Brothers Union and Mukhtajiddha Sangsad while Farashganj with seven defeats in 14 matches stuck to seventh place along with Beanibazar SC and Chittagong Mohammedan.

IHF handball from today

SPORTS REPORTER

The IHF Handball (U-21) Challenge Trophy gets underway today at the Shaheed Shurawardi National Indoor Stadium with six nations including hosts Bangladesh taking part.

Pakistan, Nepal, India, Bangladesh, Afghanistan and Yemen, split into two groups, will play a round-robin league and the top two teams from each side will qualify for the semifinals, scheduled for April 9.

Bangladesh will take on Afghanistan and Pakistan will play against Nepal on the opening day. Except India all the participants have already reached Dhaka.

BHF president Nurul Fazole Bulbul disclosed this at a press conference at the National Sports Council Tower yesterday.

"The tournament is a part of the International Handball Federation's programme as the IHF has decided to hold some regional tournaments across the world and then stage another tournament with the participation of all regional champions and Bangladesh have been chosen to hold the first tournament of that programme," said BHF general secretary Asaduzzaman Kohinor.

He said that the IHF is giving them Tk 10 million in assistance, providing air tickets to all teams, accommodations and organising courses for coaches and referees.

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DB to monitor match-fixing?

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Football Federation has sought help from the detective branch of police (DB) in a bid to stop 'match-fixing' in the ongoing Bangladesh League.

In a letter sent to DB, BFF has asked for all the from the support to identify and foil any match-fixing attempts. The letter provided detailed match schedule, venues, time and date of the league.

"The matches of the second leg are of utmost importance towards deciding the title. At this stage, we are apprehending that the clubs may mutually engage in match-fixing which is totally unethical and illegal and against the spirit of the game. There is also the involvement of black money with the match-fixing," read the letter.

A total of 13 teams, eight from Dhaka, five from Chittagong, once each from Feni, Narayanganj and Sylhet, are taking part in the second-phase of the league, which is crucial to deciding the title.

The letter also urged the concerned authority to take proper steps to stop match-fixing at the greater interest of football.

The game's governing body
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PHOTO: STAR
Six female booters from the district level pose for photos following their interview at the American Embassy yesterday. The six along with six other male booters are scheduled to leave for the United States on April 12 for a two-week training tour on the invitation of the American State Department.

Rajasthan win a thriller

SPORTS REPORTER

Rajasthan Royals skipper Shane Warne led his team right from the front to eke out a dramatic 2-run win over defending champions Deccan Chargers in their clash of the IPL T20 at the Vidarbha Cricket Stadium in Nagpur last night. Warne took four wickets for 21 runs and marshalled his troops with guile to restrict Chargers to 157 defending a modest total of 159.

While it was all glory for the wily leg-spinner, it was heartbreak for prodigious Indian batsman Rohit Sharma who had almost single-handedly took Chargers to the much-needed win with a magnificent knock of 73 from 44 balls, but fell at the last hurdle to hand Chargers a 2-run win. Rajasthan's medium pacer S Trivedi also played a significant role in the win as he took three wickets for sixteen runs.

Earlier Rudra Pratap Singh took three wickets for just 17 runs to bowl out Rajasthan for 159 in 19.5 overs. Singh took care of the openers cheaply and then accounted for the topscorer Shane Watson to keep the Royals to within a manageable score. Watson smashed three boundaries and same number of sixes to score 58 off just 36 balls. His partner at number three Faiz Fazal also got 36 from 29 deliveries to give them hope of a big score. The third wicket partnership between the two batsmen added 77 runs in 51 balls. But since their departure, the Rajasthan innings lost momentum and limped to 159 all out in 19.5 overs.

SCORES IN BRIEF

RAJASTHAN ROYALS: 159 all out in 19.5 overs (Watson 58, Fazal 36; RP Singh 4-17, Harmeet 2-25)

DECCAN CHARGERS: 157 all out in 19.5 overs (Sharma 73, Gilchrist; Warne 4-21, Trivedi 3-16)
Man-of-the-match: Shane Warne



Max & SuperSport2

Indian Premier League
Chennai v Mumbai
Live from 8:30pm

SuperSport3

UEFA Champions League
CSKA Moscow v Inter Milan
Live from 10:00pm
Barcelona v Arsenal
Live from 12:30am (Wednesday)

ESPN

Sportscentre India
Sports News
Live at 8:30pm



Bangladesh League
Ctg Mohammedan v Ctg Abahani
Time: 3:30pm
Venue: MA Aziz Stadium, Chittagong

Brothers Union v Arambagh
Time: 5:00pm
Venue: Bangabandhu National Stadium

Club Cup Hockey
Mohammedan v Mariners
Time: 2:30pm
Abahani v Ajax
Time: 4:00pm
Venue: Maulan Bhasani Hockey Stadium



PHOTO: AFP
I'M WITH SHOAB: Indian tennis star Sania Mirza, standing next to her would-be husband Pakistani cricketer Shoaib Malik, makes a point to media outside her residence at Banjara Hills in Hyderabad yesterday.

Sania beside Shoaib Cops quiz cricketer, seize passport

STAR SPORT DESK

Holding a joint press conference in Hyderabad on Monday, Sania Mirza and Shoaib Malik called upon Ayesha Siddiqui to clear the air on the alleged marital dispute between both of them and not to indulge in cheap publicity.

Sania backed her would-be husband former Pakistan captain Shoaib Malik: "No reason for the marriage to be postponed. The marriage will take place on April 15, if there is any change we will inform you."

"I am standing here by my future husband to clear his name. All our well-wishers are shocked by this. The entire drama has left a very bad taste in our mouths. Shoaib never misled me or any members of my family. There was never a marriage so there is no question of divorce. We are well aware of what the truth is."

Shoaib, whose passport was taken away by police earlier in the day, said he will not leave India till he clears his name and that he was being emotionally blackmailed by Ayesha who claims to have married him in 2002.

Shoaib was questioned at Sania's house this morning by a team of police officials who took his passport and his mobile phone and alerted immigration authorities after asking him not to leave India.

"I'm here for the marriage and to clear my name. I'm not leaving the country. Inshallah, I'll clear my name. I have no objections [to police taking the passport] and I'm cooperating with the police and Indian government. I have got respect for the authorities and I will do everything to clear my name," Shoaib said.

SHOAB WAS TRICKED INTO MARRIAGE

Though police did not disclose much about their investigations in the case registered on the basis of the complaint filed by Ayesha's father MA Siddiqui, officials said Shoaib told them during questioning that he was tricked into the marriage.

Asked about the allegations by Ayesha, who claims she was pregnant through Shoaib, he said, "I just want to ask something. I don't know her exactly why she is making these allegations behind the camera. Where is she? Ten years back I was 18 years old. Find out her age."

He said first she has to prove (the marriage) in a court of law but maintained that the 'nikahnama' was invalid. Better leave the issue to courts, he said.

AYESHA HAD A MISCARRIAGE?

Ayesha on Sunday claimed she was pregnant at one point of their marriage. The pregnancy ended in a miscarriage, she said in a telephonic interview.

She however refused to give details of when she had become pregnant and when and where she had the miscarriage, only saying that her gynaecologist was a certain Dr Fatima in Hyderabad. The doctor could not be traced, there being over a dozen of them in the city by that name.

Both he and Sania said they were from respectable families with the tennis star adding that "to see my future husband like this [answering questions about marriage] is painful for both the families".

Shoaib also cleared his stand in front of

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Online poll urges Sania not to hurry

ONEINDIA, Bangalore

An Internet community has come together to gather enough support to stop the country's tennis ace Sania Mirza from marrying Pakistani cricketer Shoaib Malik until the controversy around his alleged 2002 marriage to Ayesha Siddiqui is resolved.

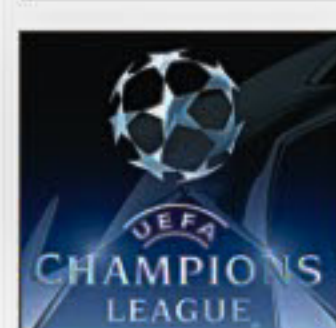
As many as hundred youngsters along with actresses Neelakshi Singh and Anaya Das have joined hands in this new campaign on Wordpress.

Ghotala, which is network of freelance writers, bloggers, journalists and media persons and is part of the Futuristic Media Network Group, is behind the signature crusade.

To inform Sania Mirza on the number of people who would like her to consider this plea, the group has also urged the people to sign an online petition in support of the initiative besides making provisions for people to post comments and share their thoughts on the issue.

Gunners plot Barca demise

AFP, Barcelona



Injury-hit Arsenal believe Barcelona's loss of suspended centre-backs Carlos Puyol and Gerard Pique will be key to unlocking the door to the Champions League semifinals.

Arsene Wenger's Arsenal side, who came back from two goals down to draw 2-2 in the first leg of their quarterfinal at the Emirates last week, have been rocked by season-ending injuries to skipper Cesc Fabregas and French defender William Gallas.

But the Gunners believe that the suspensions of Puyol and Pique, who have spent over 4,000 minutes on the pitch in La Liga this season, could prove the downfall of the defending champions at their Nou Camp stronghold on Tuesday.

Puyol was sent off after conceding a late penalty for a foul on Fabregas at the Emirates and Pique was also booked in Arsenal's late onslaught.

"For any team to be without their two central defenders, the two players who play week-in, week-out, you know they are people they build the team around and it is not good for them - it is good for us,"

said striker Nicklas Bendtner.

"People are expecting it to be a difficult game for both teams. It is going to be a hard game. But we think we can do it. This is a trophy we want to win and to win the Champions League you have to beat the best teams."

Meanwhile, Barcelona defender Eric Abidal would rather victory over Arsenal than success on Saturday in the 'El Clasico' against bitter

rivals, and Spanish League leaders, Real Madrid.

While the intense rivalry between Barcelona and Real Madrid means that their league meetings are key dates in the La Liga calendar, on this occasion it comes second to the deciding leg of the tie with the North London club.

"The game against Arsenal is more important than that against Madrid. Our season depends though on this week

and it would be much better if we could arrive at the Bernabeu already in the semifinals of the Champions League," said Abidal.

Barcelona's comprehensive 4-1 victory over Athletic Bilbao on Saturday means that they are still level on points with Real Madrid at the top of the table.

"I feel that even if we do lose against Madrid there are still games remaining in which we can battle for the title and so the most important is the Arsenal match," Abidal explained.

"Theo Walcott had a big impact when he came on (in the first leg) but we are not concerned about him. Football is a game in which you play with the ball, he can run the 100m in little over ten seconds but the key is to score goals."

"We will be waiting for him and see whether he can do it with the ball against four defenders."

At the Emirates, Barcelona bossed the midfield with Xavi Hernandez imperious and it meant even a player with the talent of Andres Iniesta, out through injury, was not missed.

Barca coach Pep Guardiola will need a new centre-half partnership and it will likely be Gabi Milito alongside the erratic Dmytro Chygrynskiy

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