

SPORT

DHAKA TUESDAY AUGUST 31, 2010, E-MAIL: sports@thedailystar.net

Wilshere lands in jail after fracas

Arsenal and England midfielder Jack Wilshere was arrested in the early hours of Sunday following a high-street row, according to a spokesman for the player. Wilshere was released on bail following the incident in Kensington High Street in London. Officers and paramedics called to the scene found a man with minor facial injuries and a woman with a broken arm. Both were taken to a west London hospital for treatment. A statement, issued by the Wasserman Media Group on behalf of the 18-year-old, insisted Wilshere was only acting as a peacemaker in



'To world we are cheats'

Cricket

AFP, Karachi

Pakistan's press Monday said a match-fixing scandal involving top cricketers was an act of shameful betrayal for a flooded, terror-hit nation that worships the game.

National captain Salman Butt and two of the country's star bowlers should be sacked, said English-language daily The News, after they were quizzed by British detectives over the alleged gambling scam in a match against England.

"Our cricketers should have been ambassadors for us at this time, instead they have stabbed us in the back," the newspaper said in an editorial.

"The evidence appears conclusive and we are exposed to the world as cheats and frauds once again," it said, adding that the national sport faced "a very uncertain future".

"Perhaps the only way forward now is to literally start from scratch. Sack the lot, top to bottom. Anything less and the stink generated by these allegations will stick to us forever."

The News of the World said it paid 150,000 pounds

(230,000 dollars) and that bowlers Mohammad Aamer and Mohammad Asif delivered no-balls at the exact points in the fourth Test that the middleman had indicated.

The allegations have caused uproar in Pakistan -- already in crisis-mode as

floods lay waste to large parts of the militant-riddled country -- and shaken a sport that considers itself synonymous with fair play.

Prime Minister Yousuf Raza Gilani, announcing the government investigation, said the claims "have bowed

our heads in shame" while President Asif Ali Zardari has expressed his disappointment.

Pakistan's best-selling newspaper, Daily Jang, said: "The whole nation is ashamed.

"Corruption has marred the country... and this is going on and on unabated. This latest cricket corruption case shows again the need for revising the whole system," it said in an editorial.

But the country's second most popular newspaper, Daily Express, blamed an anti-Pakistan lobby in neighbouring India for the scandal.

"The match-fixing scandal is an Indian conspiracy against the Pakistan team," it said.

"The Indian bookmakers' lobby used Azhar and Mazhar Majeed (the alleged bookmakers at the centre of the scandal) to tarnish Pakistan's image and to derail the careers of (bowlers) Mohammad Aamer and Mohammad Asif," it said.

Federal sports minister Ijaz Jakhrani promised that any players found guilty would be severely punished, while the Pakistan Cricket Board said it had had requested access to the ongoing investigation.



Pakistani fans, who referred national cricket players to donkeys, here hold one as they shout slogans during a protest against match-fixing in Lahore yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP
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Treason charge against fixers

AFP, Lahore

A Pakistani lawyer Monday filed treason charges against national cricket team players facing an investigation into claims they fixed matches for money in England.

Lawyer Ishfaq Ahmed said his case will be heard in Lahore High court on Tuesday.

"In my petition to the court I've said that this spot-fixing amounts to dishonesty to the nation and falls under the law of treason," said Ahmed.

"The suspected players have let the whole nation down and abrogated the constitution of the country and if they are proven guilty they should be banned for life and their assets confiscated," Ahmed told AFP.

Seven Pakistan national team players face a police investigation over the spot-fixing scandal which surfaced on Sunday in a British newspaper -- News of the World.

Police have arrested and released on bail a man on allegations of conspiracy to defraud bookmakers.

Mazhar Majeed allegedly paid money to Pakistani players to under-perform during fourth and final Test against Lord's, which Pakistan lost by an innings on Sunday.

Treason in Pakistan carries the death penalty.

Football goes grassroots from October 9

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The first-ever inter-primary school football tournament is set for an auspicious start on October 9.

It was disclosed during a press briefing at the conference room of the Primary and Mass Education Ministry yesterday, where speakers hoped that the event titled "Bangabandhu Gold Cup Inter-Primary School Football Tournament" would involve around 62,000 schools across the country.

It was also disclosed that the semifinals and the grand final would be held in December 28 and December 30 respectively.

Abu Alam Mohammad Shahid Khan, secretary of the Ministry of Primary and Mass Education, while elaborating on the fixtures and the financial aspects said that the tournament will be held in five levels.

The union or pourashava level matches will be held from October 9 to October 19; the thana under upazila or city corporation level would be held from October 23 to October 31; the district level competition will be played from November 2 to November 7; the divisional level would be held from December 10 to December 27 and the national level competition will start on December 21.

He however said that the schedule might be changed if required.

Shahid Khan also said that they have invited Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina to grace the final of an event that she had earlier approved as part of the government's effort to revive country's football at the grassroots level.

Primary and Mass Education Minister Afsarul

Ameen said that they were excited to organise such a football tournament that the country had never staged before.

"We will be able to create future national football stars from this tournament," he said, adding that a budget of TK. 2.65 crore has already been allocated from the social motivation sector under Second Primary Education Development Programme (PEDP-II) for the successful holding of the mega event.

Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) President Kazi Salahuddin who was present at the meeting termed the initiative as one of the best things that has happened in the country's football.

"It will help bring discipline in the kids' life. Besides, during the course of the tournament we will keep an eye on games at divisional level so that we can scout players for the selection trail of under 13 teams," said Salahuddin.

Many believe the government's initiative to launch this first-of-its-kind soccer tournament involving hundreds of thousands of kids would inject fresh enthusiasm in a sport that has been on the wane for the last two decades.

Meanwhile, the age limit for the players will be 12 years and the height limit has been set at a maximum of 5 feet.

Each game will be played for 50 minutes and there will be a 10-minute break for halftime.

The champions and runners-up of national level will be given replica gold and silver cups respectively along with prize money. The winners or the runner up for three consecutive terms will be given gold and silver cups respectively.

ICC awaits cop report

AFP, New Delhi

International Cricket Council (ICC) president Sharad Pawar on Monday ruled out any action against Pakistani players over a match-fixing scandal until investigations are completed.

"We have discussed it within the ICC and have decided to wait for the police investigation report," Pawar, a senior Indian cabinet minister, told reporters.

"After that we have to take a viewpoint of the two boards, in this case the Pakistan Cricket Board and the England and Wales Cricket Board.

"If anything is established, it will be viewed very seriously by the two boards and the ICC.

"I am absolutely confident that both boards will never encourage protecting anybody who has done a wrong thing," he said, calling the allegations themselves "quite serious".

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Shakib knock lifts Worcs

SPORTS REPORTER

Former Tigers skipper Shakib Al Hasan played a rousing knock of 91 runs off just 69 deliveries to help his side Worcestershire post a formidable total of 255 for nine in their Clydesdale Bank 40 clash against Somerset at New Road yesterday.

Worcestershire made a good start with Moeen Ali (50) scoring and Vikram Solanki (28) taking the score to 62 in 9 overs before being separated. After Alexei Kervezee's (10)

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'Throw culprits out'

Cricket

AFP, London

Britain's newspapers said cricket's reputation was on the line in the alleged betting scam scandal, as they called for anyone found guilty to be thrown out of the game.

In their editorials, some also said the allegations were a bitter blow to Pakistanis, who looked up to their beloved cricket team for inspiration in a troubled country, something that should not be extinguished by the fall-out.

The Sun said cricket's survival depended on the untarnished integrity of its players.

"There can be zero tolerance for cheats, even if their dishonesty is genuinely limited to bowling a no-ball to order," it said, calling for life bans if the evidence from the newspaper sting is accepted.

"Pakistan must be suspended from cricket, which sadly means scrapping the forthcoming one-day series.

"The shadow of corruption has hung over Pakistani cricket for 15 years. This scandal must be the last."

The Daily Mail said the allegations could be the worst in cricket's history -- "institutionalised corruption".

It called on the International Cricket Council to banish anyone found guilty, "however senior and however many".

"Such a purge would be tremendously painful in the short term but it is the only way integrity and belief can be restored."

The Guardian said the affair showed that the sport itself needed fixing -- as in put right.

"Cricket cheating thrives in many forms: charges of match-fixing and betting coups

coexist with a culture of ball-tampering, sledging, time-wasting and refusal to accept umpires' decisions," it said.

"Cricket must put its house in order fast. Nothing undermines the credibility of any sport more than the suspicion that what you are watching is in fact a fix."

The Daily Mirror said it was not just cricket lovers who would be dismayed to see the sport mired in controversy.

"Money in one form or another sometimes seems to be taking over every aspect of sport.

"More must be done to help players and athletes, who are often very young, resist temptation and stand up to blackmail or intimidation.

"We also need to recapture the spirit of fair play that seems to have been driven out by soaring profits."

The Times pleaded for the cricketing world not to ostracise "a troubled nation".

"These are dark days for cricket, for professional sport, and for Pakistan," it said.

"In a time when Pakistan is balanced on an existential knife-edge, cricket represents liberalism rather than extremism; international engagement rather than isolation; the celebration of graceful civilisation rather than the cold nihilism of tribal and religious strife.

"Sport may only be sport, but in Pakistan cricket provides a vital bridge of engagement and mutual respect with the wider world.

"The worst thing that could happen now would be for the rest of the world to give up on Pakistan, in cricket, or in anything else."

The Independent said the allegations were a blow to the spirit of the game.

"This is more than the age-old tale of youth corrupted and disoriented by bright lights and luxury," it said.

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Pak tour of shame to go on

AFP, London

Pakistan set off on Monday for the next leg of their tour of England despite increasing pressure to call it off amid damaging allegations that top players were caught up in a match-fixing scandal.

The cricket world has reacted with shock and dismay to claims that hundreds of thousands of pounds had changed hands in match-fixing schemes at Test level linked to betting rings dating back months.

Ex-England captain Michael Vaughan said any further matches against the tourists would have "no credibility" in the light of the damaging allegations.

Pakistan left their team hotel near Lord's on Monday, with Sky Sports reporting angry fans had chanted "thief" in Urdu as the players boarded the team coach.

They were travelling to Taunton in southwest England where they are due to play county side Somerset in a warm-up match on Thursday ahead of the start of Twenty20 and One-Day International

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FIXING SCAM

Tigers shocked too

Cricket

SPORTS REPORTER

The allegations of spot-fixing surrounding several Pakistani players has rocked the cricket fraternity throughout the world and the Tigers were no exception.

There was a common sentiment among the Bangladeshi cricketers that authorities must find out the truth and take stern action against the culprits for the greater interest of the game.

They have also made the suggestion that cricket authorities in Bangladesh should take special care regarding this issue especially ahead of the 2011 World Cup where Bangladesh is one of the co-hosts along with India and Sri Lanka.

"It's really shocking specially when allegations come against a very promising young bowler like Mohammad Aamer. My opinion is that truth must be uncovered first and then the authorities must take stern action against those who are found guilty," responded Bangladesh skipper Mashrafe Bin Mortaza during a break in the practice session at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium yesterday.

"But the sad thing is cricket will be the ultimate loser from this kind of an incident. Even a genuine achievement might be tainted if fans lost their faith on the players. Spot-fixing is a very dangerous thing. Nobody can say that we are safe from that because there is huge involvement of money. We must be careful so that we can avoid this kind of incident," he added.

Wicketkeeper batsman Mushfiqur Rahim

echoed his captain's sentiment though he was not too surprised with the incident involving Pakistani players.

"I'm upset but not too surprised. Everybody must be careful after this incident. I personally believe that everything depends on the individual because it is a question of personal dignity and integrity," said Mushfiqur.

"You have to have certain values whatever profession you are in. You know some players had accepted offer from ICL (unauthorized Indian Cricket League) while some declined, so everything depends on the individual," he added.

"I play the game out of passion. As a professional cricketer I definitely think about money but that doesn't mean money will make me corrupt. You know I had been offered twice and without any hesitation I informed it to ICC (International Cricket Council). Everything actually depends on individual," informed opener Tamim Iqbal, who was resting due to fever.

"I don't think the game will suffer for few culprits. However, the culprits must be taken to boot for greater interest of the game," added the dashing left-hander.

Opener Zunaed Siddiqui believes that this kind of incident tarnishes the image of a country. "For few culprits the image of the country has been tarnished. I think only punitive action can stop this kind of incident from being repeated and save the game," said the left-handed opener.

"It's really a shame. People now might even raise their fingers at a genuine achievement," said middle-order batsman Rokibul Hasan.

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Youth forms MSC backbone

Football

SPORTS REPORTER

Mohammedan Sporting Club began their preparation for the upcoming season yesterday with the club unveiling their new mantra of 'the future stars of Bangladesh.'

Although it might sound curious at first, the catchphrase makes sense when you look closely at the Mohammedan team. Barring veteran defender Hasan al Mamun, the twenty new faces that the Black and Whites have confirmed this season are all relative unknowns in the football arena. The massive restructure of the playing staff was necessary after most of their established stars left to join newcomers Sheikh Jamal Dhanmondi Club and rejuvenated Mukhtijoddha Sangsad.

On the first day of training, the high-ups of the Mohammedan ad-hoc committee defied the mud to enter the rain-soaked playground and were introduced to the new players.

And the motivational message from the club high ups was simple: you (the players) are the future stars of Bangladesh, so play for Mohammedan from your heart, the players were told.

Last season, Mohammedan stunned all to rope in stars like Zahid Hasan Emily, Wali Faisal and Mamunul Islam from their rivals Abahani

to put together a star-studded team.

But they had to settle for the bitter pill of the runners-up trophy of the Bangladesh League for the third successive season amid reports of 'chaos' in the Mohammedan ad-hoc committee. This time, a much-improved environment prevails all over of the Mohammedan club with the instatement of new convener Kutubuddin Ahmed.

Coach Shafiqul Islam Manik stressed that playing for Mohammedan is like a dream come true for a footballer. He urged the newcomers to be disciplined and capitalise on the opportunity to showcase their talents.

"As the club is going through a transition period, they may not fulfill all your demands, but you will always get moral support," said Manik asking the players not to pull similar acts to what the players did last season due to unpaid wages.

Senior player Hasan Al Mamun urged his new colleagues to think of themselves as champions as he believed that positive thinking would give them extra edge before starting the real battle on the field.

"It is time to set your target and I think it will help the club and you personally. We are now Team Mohammedan and will always be united," said the veteran defender.

"We know the current star players and they

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Mohammedan's newly appointed coach Shafiqul Islam Manik (L) briefs his charges during his first training session at the club ground in Motijheel yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

What to WATCH

TEN Sports
US Open Tennis
Men's & Women's 1st Round
Live from 9:00pm

ESPN
Sportscentre India
Sports News
Live at 8:30pm

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