

Star SPORT

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'FIFA ban due to racism'

Disgraced Asian football chief Mohamed bin Hammam has claimed race was a factor in his lifetime ban from football over bribery charges, saying he would never have been punished if he was European. "Were I a European, or were the Caribbean part of Europe, neither Blatter nor Valcke will dare lay a finger on us; were we Europeans, you would have never been given the opportunity to chair this ethics committee panel and slaughter people left and right, as you have done," he stated in the letter.



I'm an ambitious mad man: Salahuddin

Football

ANISUR RAHMAN

It all happened here Dhaka. A full-strength Argentina came here to play a FIFA international friendly against Nigeria, which was also their best. Lionel Messi, the world's best football player, also came, and more importantly, played full ninety minutes and enthralled near-full crowd at the Bangabandhu National Stadium Tuesday night.

No doubt, bringing two-time FIFA world-player-of-the-year Messi to Bangladesh was a very ambitious project on part of Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF), but now after hosting the Argentina-Nigeria friendly successfully the game's governing body can dare to dream for more.

It was only possible because of the visionary BFF president, Kazi Salahuddin, who had earlier introduced the money-spinning Tk 1-crore Super Cup tournament in the country that was also a daydream to many before its inception.

Two things -- create enthusiasm among budding booters and show the world that Bangladesh is capable of hosting an international match involving two-time world champions -- were the driving force behind the BFF to host the Argentina-Nigeria match and Salahuddin believes the image of the country has been lifted and the next football generation will be inspired after watching the match.

"Though it is too early to comment but I believe hosting Argentina and Nigeria has lifted the image of Bangladesh in the world and it will definitely act as a huge inspiration among the next generation," said Salahuddin.

"Now the onus rests on our current footballers to improve their standard of play and I believe they will be more competitive in the upcoming season," he added.

"I want to capitalise on the Argentina-Nigeria match by taking the youth programme to district level as top-level competitions like the Professional League, Super Cup and Federation Cup are all settled issue," said the former national striker.

Salahuddin could hardly watch the game Tuesday as there was no seat reserved for him, but he had no regrets because he achieved what he wanted; making the people of the country see history with their own eyes.

"May be I am an ambitious mad man and that's why I can implement what I think, but I am happy to make the country's people witness history," said Salahuddin, adding that Messi probably came to Dhaka at his pick and showed everything on the pitch except a goal which he came so close to do.

Salahuddin doesn't want to say anything early regarding his next target, but one thing he learnt from the Nigeria-Argentina match for sure is take more time before finalising the contract instead of one or two days.

"I have learnt a lot of things by hosting this

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THERE GOES THE MAGIC: Argentina captain Lionel Messi boards the bus to the airport from Ruposhi Bangla hotel in the early hours of Wednesday, after mesmerising Dhaka with his sorcery on the football field just hours earlier.

PHOTO: STAR

Tigers start training for West Indies

Cricket

SPORTS REPORTER

The national cricketers will get back to business today at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur after a long break to prepare for the upcoming home series against West Indies.

It will be a big task for new head coach Stuart Law, who returned to Dhaka yesterday after his vacation, to rebuild confidence within the team after a disastrous tour to Zimbabwe where the Tigers lost both the one-off Test and five match one-day series and especially after the board removed Shakib Al Hasan and Tamim Iqbal from their posts as captain and vice-captain following the debacle.

West Indies is scheduled to arrive in Dhaka on October 4 to play a T20 International, two Tests and three one-day internationals.

As part of preparation, a limited-over competition named the BCB Cup will be contested by Bangladesh National Team, Bangladesh A team and GP-BCB National Cricket Academy. The competition will start from September 12.

The three-member selection committee led by Akram Khan named the three separate teams for the competition.

"We picked a 14-member national team for this competition but that is no indication of the team for the home series against West Indies because it will be a different one. We just tried to make sure that the players get enough opportunities

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A question of culpability

Cricket

BISHWAJIT ROY

The Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) took a major decision at a time when all the focus was on magical Lionel Messi and Co.

It was a bolt from the blue when the game's governing body on last Monday announced after the directors' meeting that they removed Shakib Al Hasan and Tamim Iqbal from their posts of captain and vice-captain. And thus they apparently finished their job of finding the facts behind the Tigers' debacle in the recently concluded tour of Zimbabwe where Shakib's men lost both the one-off Test and five-match series. As the highest forum of the board, it has every right to take such a decision but the question of whether they could identify the real reasons behind the debacle or whether they were willing enough to discover the same, remains.

And questions have also been raised about the manner of the decision. It is very easy to make someone a scape-

goat for a failure rather than to dig deep into the heart of the problem, and it seems that the board took the easiest option available to complete their duty, and in other words, to save their skins.

It was unexpected indeed when BCB president AHM Mustafa Kamal himself told the press during the tour that not the players but the board must take the responsibility for the debacle in Zimbabwe, but surprisingly he took a U-turn during the meeting to make sure a 'whimsical' decision had been taken in the absence of some important board directors.

Feelings of resentment against Shakib and Tamim had been building up in the board for some time and many were waiting for the day when they could be shown the door. Many believe the BCB boss could have played a major role in arriving at the root of the problem and take a wise decision after examining all the details, but he did exactly as the cynics say taking the most politically expedient path according to the situation faced.

Without any doubt lack of discipline was the major factor behind taking the

decision of sacking Shakib and Tamim, undoubtedly the two best performers in the team, from their posts. But was it a new issue for this board? Of course not. There have been a lot of similar allegations against the two players for some time now and the number of occasions they breached discipline, but every time the board kept mum, at times defending the duo with ridiculous explanations, and handling the matters unprofessionally.

Even before the Zimbabwe tour Shakib committed a serious crime when he skipped training without any notice, but the authorities failed to appreciate the gravity of his misdemeanour.

So, why should the concerned authority at the BCB not be held accountable for their failure in managing these two vital players properly? Did the cricket operations committee perform their duties properly? If not, then why have they not taken the responsibility for the failure?

If the question is of discipline then this board is first to be blamed for the way its run under the leadership of

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Messi, Mikel bid bye

Football

SPORTS REPORTER

Nazia of Banani could not believe her own eyes as she met Lionel Messi in person on Tuesday night at the Ruposhi Bangla hotel's lobby. The Argentina captain, who is usually very shy, was in jovial and friendly mood after he guided his side to victory over Nigeria.

Some twenty to twenty-five fans, mostly young, waited at the lobby till late in the night for a glimpse of the magical Barcelona forward. And their prayers were answered as at around 1 am, Messi went wandering about in the lobby.

Nazia could not let this opportunity slip and as she took one of the No. 10 shirts of Messi and had the best player in the world sign an autograph on it.

After a cherishable win on the night, the Argentina players were in a jovial mood as they were seen going through the shops at the hotel to collect memorabilia of their Dhaka sojourn.

Later the team left Dhaka in a couple of instalments. Captain Lionel Messi, along with 26 players and officials, were the first to leave by a 4:40am Qatar Airways flight. The troupe flew for Doha from where they will be leaving for their respective clubs. The technical director and support staff of the Argentina team left Dhaka on a different flight.

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England captain Alastair Cook plays an uncharacteristic scoop shot while leading his team to a convincing win over India in the 2nd ODI against India at the Rose Bowl in Southampton on Tuesday.

PHOTO: AFP

Eng again in the lead

Cricket

AFP, Southampton

Captain Alastair Cook led from the front as England took a 1-0 lead in the one-day series with a seven wicket win over India here at the Rose Bowl on Tuesday.

After Saturday's no result in Durham, Cook made 80 not out as England overhauled India's total of 187-8 made in their 23 overs, with five balls to spare, after the match was shortened because of rain.

The skipper is not in England's Twenty20 team and there were suggestions that he could leave himself out when the match was truncated.

But he made nonsense of those opinions as he and Essex clubmate Ravi Bopara (24) milked the Indian bowling attack, missing some of its bigger names, after Cook and Kieswetter had got England off to a rapid start.

Cook, not considered a one-day player until he was made captain at the start of the season, got to his seventh one-day international 50 in 37 balls, controlled the run chase and even unveiled a reverse sweep.

With eight overs left the run rate was down to a run a ball and with wickets in hand England cruised home.

Kieswetter got the England reply off to a

flyer making 46 from 25 balls with three sixes, including two successive sixes from the spin of Ravichandran Ashwin.

Kieswetter has attracted some criticism for making good starts and not finishing the job off and was guilty of that again as he was trapped leg before in the seventh over.

Bell came in and immediately hit two fours off the back foot to help England race past the 100 mark in the tenth over and break the back of their target before he holed out at extra cover for 25.

India's total was built on 54 from Ajinkya Rahane -- in just his second one-day international -- and a whirlwind 40 from Suresh Raina, made from 19 balls.

With the match shortened Raina was in Twenty20 mode as he hit three fours and three sixes and accelerated the Indian run rate towards the end of the innings before he was well caught by Ben Stokes in the final over.

Tim Bresnan took two of his three wickets in that last over but the pick of the England bowlers was Graeme Swann who finished with 3-33 from five overs and gave his captain some control when India looked like getting away in the middle overs.

Rahul Dravid chipped in with 32 and opener Parthiv Patel made 28 of the first 30 runs before he was caught behind off James Anderson.

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Morgan out of series

AFP, London

England batsman Eoin Morgan was on Tuesday ruled out of the remainder of the one-day series with India because of a recurring shoulder problem.

The 24-year-old Irishman suffered a recurrence of the injury -- which he first experienced on the Ashes Tour of Australia last year -- in last month's Twenty20 match at Old Trafford.

"He will undertake further specialist assessment in the next week," England medical officer Dr Nick Peirce said.

"Then a decision on his forthcoming treatment will be determined."

Morgan made his ODI debut for England in 2009, having played for Ireland for three years prior to that.

Morgan, who captained England to a one day win over his former Irish teammates last month, is a vital component of the team, and averaging 40 from his 48 internationals for England with three centuries.