

SPORT

Shakib should have let us know

SPORTS REPORTER



Ace all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan's assertion during an interview with The Daily Star this week that he would have been better off playing only the limited overs series in Zimbabwe brings into question some recent selection calls made by the board.

Shakib, who went under the knife in late February and was recovering from an injury on his right leg, was initially selected only as a batsman for Bangladesh's Test series against Zimbabwe. He however ended up bowling in both the matches and scored two half-centuries in the second Test.

In the interview, the left-hander stated that while he may have been 'fit to play', he was not 'fit to perform' and that he would have preferred playing a few T20s to get 'back into rhythm' rather than playing the Tests in Zimbabwe.

Replying to Shakib's statement, chief selector Akram Khan said, "The tour of Zimbabwe was obviously a very important one for us and we wanted to field the best possible team. We

needed a strong team to play the Tests and that's why we chose him."

"We took the decision according to what the team's physio said and I personally think Shakib played well. He scored an 80-odd in one of the innings. He should have expressed his views beforehand," he added.

When asked as to why the all-rounder had not stated his views, Shakib, during the interview had said, "I know how the Bangladesh Cricket Board works and I don't think that would have worked, which is why I didn't say anything...even in the news there were lots of reports saying that for someone money is bigger than the national team. My point is if money was everything then I have foregone IPL's 3 crores this year."

Many described the selection of 'half-fit' players before the Zimbabwe tour as desperate measures. Other than Shakib's selection, the selection of Tamim Iqbal who was recovering from a thumb fracture and narrowly won a race against time to play in the second Test raised eyebrows. The decision to ask Mashrafe Bin Mortaza to return to the Test fold after a gap of four years despite the fact that he was recovering from a heel injury was the other instance of desperation from the selectors.

Ump Rauf denies all

AFP, Lahore

Pakistan umpire Asad Rauf Wednesday denied spot-fixing allegations levelled against him during the Indian Premier League Twenty20 competition, saying he was ready to face any inquiry.

Rauf, a serving elite-level international umpire, was withdrawn by the International Cricket Council (ICC) from next month's Champions Trophy in England after media reports that he was under police investigation.

"I vehemently deny allegations of match-fixing, spot-fixing, taking gifts (from bookmakers) and any illegal money," Rauf, 57, said in his first public statement since returning from India.

"I am ready to face any inquiry if the ICC's anti-corruption unit wants to conduct any."

The investigations started on May 16 when Delhi police arrested three cricketers including Test fast bowler Shanthakumaran Sreesanth, accusing them of deliberately bowling badly in exchange for tens of thousands of dollars during the lucrative IPL.

Indian media alleged Rauf was in contact with Bollywood actor Vinod Dara Singh, arrested on charges of acting as middleman between bookies, players and officials.

The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) distanced itself from the controversy, saying Rauf was under ICC control and the event was held in India, but assured action would be taken against Rauf if the governing body ordered it.

'Rahmatullah must go'

SPORTS REPORTER

The prevailing unrest in hockey has seemingly turned into a personal vendetta after some 15 national players, in a press conference at the Maulana Bhasani Hockey Stadium yesterday, demanded resignation of the Bangladesh Hockey Federation general secretary Khaza Rahmatullah, saying that the general secretary is the main obstruction towards fulfilling their demands.

"The general secretary termed our three-point demands irrational but he supported us in such a movement a year ago. Besides we have been telling him about the players' transfer for the last four months but he did not pay heed to our demands."

"He told the media that they would call an open trial for the national team, which will be formed with students from BSKP only. It is clear to us that he doesn't want to meet our demands and we want his resignation," said national striker Rasel Mahmud Jimmy at a press conference at the Maulana Bhasani Hockey Stadium.

Asked what the BHF met their initial demands, Jimmy said that they would not participate in any type of tournaments under the existing general secretary, even if he is elected in the upcoming BHF polls.

However, some of the players, attended the briefing, seemed to be in a hesitation about the new demand. Seeking anonymity some of them said that they were actually looking for an appointment with the BHF president through the media, but things have got out of their hands.

Sports ministry wants Srinivasan's exit

AFP, New Delhi

India's sports ministry on Wednesday piled pressure on the chief of the country's cricket board to quit on "moral grounds" over a widening betting and spot-fixing scandal that has rocked the sport.

N Srinivasan, head of the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI), has been under fire after his son-in-law Gurunath Meiyappan was arrested for allegedly betting on Indian Premier League (IPL) matches.

The BCCI on Tuesday set up a three-member inquiry commission to look into complaints against Meiyappan, an executive at the Chennai Super Kings IPL team which is owned by Srinivasan's group India Cements.

"The ministry of youth affairs and sports has observed with considerable disquiet, the reports about match- and spot-fixing in cricket," said a statement from the sports ministry headed by Jitendra Singh.

"As there is a conflict of interest in this inquiry, therefore BCCI President should tender his resignation on moral grounds,

said the outcome of the inquiry," it added.

Earlier Wednesday IPL chairman Rajeev Shukla said "it would be good" if Srinivasan -- who is managing director of India Cements -- stayed away from the inquiry into the spot-fixing allegations.

Srinivasan, a 68-year-old businessman from the south of India, said he would not interfere with the probe committee, comprising two former high court judges and BCCI secretary Sanjay Jagdale.

"I have already made it very clear that I will have nothing to do with the investigating commission. The probe commission is independent. It has the power to impose sanctions and hand out punishment," he told reporters in Mumbai.

Srinivasan, who was elected as the BCCI president in 2011, has been resisting political pressure for him to step down and can only be sacked if two thirds of the board's members vote against him.

Also on Wednesday, a court in Mumbai extended the police custody of Meiyappan until Friday to enable investigators to interrogate him further.

Shirin becomes WFM

SPORTS REPORTER

National woman's champion Sharmin Sultana Shirin has been granted the Women's FIDE Master title for her outstanding performance in the Asian Zonal Women's Chess Championship held in Sri Lanka in February this year where she became fourth.

Shirin is the 6th female chess player to become WFM from Bangladesh.

Confirming the news, general secretary of Bangladesh Chess Federation Gazi Saiful Tareque said that the World Chess Federation yesterday announced Sharmin Sultana Shirin's name as Women FIDE Master for her recent performance.

Brendon backs Eng for Ashes

AFP, Leeds

New Zealand captain Brendon McCullum said England were "red hot favourites" to retain the Ashes after the Black Caps had their "hearts ripped out" by Alastair Cook's men.

England completed a 2-0 series whitewash with a commanding 247-run victory over New Zealand in the second Test at Headington on Tuesday.

This was England's last Test before the Ashes opener at Nottingham's Trent Bridge ground in July.

McCullum added the defining moment of his team's Test campaign against England had been the fourth day of the first Test at Lord's.



Switzerland's Roger Federer hits a forehand return against Somdev Devvarman of India during their second round match of the French Open at Roland Garros in Paris yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

Baridhara, Ctg Abahani split points

SPORTS REPORTER

Kleague leaders Uttar Baridhara drew 2-2 with second-placed Chittagong Abahani in their match of the Premier Bank Bangladesh Championship League at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

"Since Asif and Asha have good track record, we have decided to give them another chance," said Ishfaq.

The training committee however did not consider Tripti Datta, who skipped the SA Games for her HSC examinations, for the camp.

Ishfaq said that they were going to start the training camp with 55 shooters at three venues -- the Bangladesh Krira Shikkha Protisthan, Bangladesh Army Shooting Club and the National Shooting Complex and that they would hold evaluation competition in every 15 days under local coaches.

Uttar Baridhara took lead through forward Jibon Khan in the 34th minute and Dalim doubled the lead in the 38th minute.

But Ctg Abahani hit back in the 88th minute before Javed Khan levelled the margin in the stoppage time.

With this draw, Uttar Baridhara remained on top with 22 points from 11 matches while Ctg Abahani were in second position with 21 points from same number of encounters.

No Ashes return for Ricky

AFP, London

Former Australia captain Ricky Ponting has backed out of his own suggestion he'd return to Test cricket as an emergency Ashes call-up by ruling himself out of the upcoming series against England.

The 38-year-old, one of the best batsmen of his generation, retired from Test cricket in December with 13,378 runs, including 41 hundreds, in 168 matches at an average of 51.85 to his name.

Ponting is in England, where Australia will hope to regain the Ashes in a series starting in July, to play county cricket for London-based side Surrey.

He told Wednesday's Daily Mail the possibility of an Ashes recall was "extremely unlikely", but that "you wouldn't say no, would you, if that call came and I would never say never," seemingly leaving the door ever so slightly ajar to a dramatic return to Test cricket.

However, Ponting insisted Wednesday he was a "happily retired international cricketer", telling satellite broadcaster Sky Sports: "I did an interview with the Mail yesterday (Tuesday) and probably didn't answer this question exactly the way I would have liked."

"I'm a happily retired international cricketer. There'll be a squad of 17, 18 players and there'll be reserve batsmen on standby, ready to go if anyone in the starting XI loses a bit of form."



Sachin eyes 200th Test

MAIL TODAY, New Delhi



For months now, cricket fans have been resigned to the inevitability of Sachin Tendulkar's retirement from the game that he has graced internationally for the last 24 years. Despite falling form and slowing reflexes, Tendulkar, now 40, has not made it clear when exactly he will walk into the sunset.

But, in an exclusive interview to Mail Today here on Tuesday, Tendulkar did confirm that he was looking forward to playing his 200th Test in South Africa at the end of this year, making it clear that his white flannels would still be in use till January 2014 at the very least.

"The South African tour still has some time to go [in December], but it would be interesting to play the 200th Test. It's a big number and it will be a special feeling when I reach there," said Tendulkar, who has played 198 Tests for a mind-boggling 15,837 runs since making his debut in 1989. He retired from One-Day-Internationals in December last year, while his Indian Premier League farewell came on Sunday after Mumbai Indians won the title.

No man in the 136-year history of Test cricket has managed to play more matches than the Mumbai maestro, and asked how he felt about the impending landmark, Tendulkar said: "I am not aware of that feeling right now. When it comes, I would probably be able to answer that better." However, the first man with 100 international centuries, including 51 in Tests, clarified that more than the 200-Test mark, what would serve as incentive for him would be to help India's cause on the tough tour.

"Whenever we go [as Team India], we go to win. We always focus on doing well and play to win. That's the way I look at it. If anything [record] comes along, it's a coincidence, which is fine," he said.