

# Ashrafu! suspended



PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

**Fallen Bangladesh cricketer Mohammad Ashrafu! faces the press to talk about his involvement in match-fixing at the ground floor of his Banashree home yesterday.**

## SPORTS REPORTER

An hour before Mohammad Ashrafu! sensationally confessed to spot-fixing in the second edition of the Bangladesh Premier League, the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) temporarily suspended the player from all cricketing activities until the board received the ICC Anti Corruption and Security Unit's (ACSU's) report.

The BCB also informed that ACSU would send its report in a week's time.

While announcing the decision in a press conference at the board's headquarters in Mirpur yesterday, BCB president Nazmul Hassan Papon also informed, "ACSU has to conduct just one more interview, which is to take place abroad. If they don't receive any new information from there, they will send us the report within five or six days."

He also said that the ACSU would launch a massive investigation on the fixing allegations against Bangladeshi players in international cricket. "In this report they will concentrate only on BPL. And regarding the international matches they will investigate that on their own based on what clues they received from here."

"In my meeting with the ACSU on Sunday, I had an option of getting hold of bits and pieces of information. But I preferred to see the entire report by the end of the week, based on which we will take a final decision," he added.

Starting from scratch, the president explained the reason behind ACSU's entry into the BPL this year.

"The BPL was one of the challenges that I had to face since I became president of the BCB. During the meetings at the ICC, I was frequently questioned regarding the fixing allegations in the first BPL. We weren't able to present any information regarding that. We had some limitations and that's why we brought ACSU for the second edition," said Papon.

"After the final game of the BPL, ACSU gave us a report and said they suspected certain players and officials and sought the board's permission to investigate. And I immediately allowed. That's



\* ACSU report within a week

\* ICC will investigate corruption in international matches

\* ACSU was allowed to investigate BPL 2

\* BPL is a pain

\* No action against anybody until we have enough evidence

how the investigation began. They interviewed many people in different countries," he added.

He further stated that while the BCB could have formed its own investigation panel, he feared that wouldn't be as 'effective'. "Let me say that the techniques, the facilities that they worked with in this investigation, we couldn't have done it ourselves."

"We will not point our fingers to a player right after an allegation is labelled against him. While we say that we have a zero-tolerance to corruption, we will not take action against a player or anybody until we have enough evidence."

Describing the BPL as a pain, the president said, "I had to spend most of my time on this competition. If we hadn't brought ACSU then the match-fixing scenario would have just continued."

He was, however, against closing down the competition. "BPL is not the problem. These [fixing] issues are the problems. But these issues take place even in international matches, and even probably in Bangladesh's national league. But that doesn't mean that we have to close down the entire game, does it?"

"We need to catch the corrupt players and punish them. We also need to develop a system similar to ACSU on our own, because ACSU is very expensive and we can't get them every time," he added.

He further informed that the board was trying to solve the BPL problems one after another. "First we solved the payment issues of the first season. And now we have sent suspension letters to the franchises because of their unpaid payments in the second edition. Gradually, we can eradicate the problems."



PHOTO: AFP FILE

**A 17-year-old Mohammad Ashrafu! raises his bat after scoring a century on debut against Sri Lanka in 2001.**

## ASHRAFU! timeline

**September 8, 2001:** In the second innings of his debut Test against Sri Lanka in Colombo Ashrafu! hit a 114 in Bangladesh's innings of 328 all out, thus becoming the youngest, at 17 years 63 days, Test centurion in the game's history. He also top-scored in Bangladesh's first innings, hitting 26 out of a paltry total of 90.

**June 18, 2005:** Bangladesh's greatest victory till date, a five-wicket humiliation of Australia in Cardiff, was engineered by Ashrafu!'s first ODI century -- a 101-ball 100. It was a full-strength Australia side, and chasing 250, Ashrafu! brushed aside the threat posed by the likes of Glenn McGrath, Jason Gillespie and Mark Kasprowicz to take Bangladesh within touching distance when he fell with the team 23 short of the target.

**June 21, 2005:** Perhaps the only time in his career that could have been described as a purple patch, Ashrafu! played an even more astonishing innings against England in the match immediately after his demolition of Australia. At Trent Bridge, chasing an impossible 392, he hit a 52-ball 94 that provided brief hope in a bleak situation. The attack which he played to all parts would, later in the summer, wrest back the Ashes from Australia.

**April 7, 2007:** Ashrafu! enhanced his reputation as a single-handed giant-slayer by inspiring Bangladesh to victory in the Super Eights match against South Africa in Guyana. This time, Ashrafu!'s contribution was an 83-ball 87 after coming in at 69 for three. The innings was marked by innovative scoop shots over fine-leg late in the innings, which briefly caused the shot to be named 'The Ashrafu!'.

**June 2, 2007:** Ashrafu! is named captain of Bangladesh for the tour of Sri Lanka and the World Twenty20.

**September 13, 2007:** Ashrafu! engineers his only victory as captain, in Bangladesh's first match of the inaugural World Twenty20 against West Indies. He became the fastest T20 half-century at the time, reaching the mark off only 20. His 27-ball 61, along with Aftab Ahmed's 62 helped Bangladesh chase West Indies' 164.

**June 23, 2009:** Ashrafu! loses captaincy to Mashrafe Bin Mortaza.

**December 19, 2008:** Hits a seminal, unbeaten 158 against India in the second Test at the MA Aziz Stadium in Chittagong. Chasing a mammoth 540, he came in at the start of the third day with Bangladesh teetering at 54 for three. Over the next 194 balls and four and a half hours he dominated the Indian bowlers but could not avert the follow on as Bangladesh went on to lose the match by an innings and 83 runs.

**March 9, 2013:** Ashrafu! plays his best Test innings, and in all likelihood the last of his six Test centuries when he scored a chanceless 190 against Sri Lanka in the first Test at the Galle International Stadium. He was included in the tour as a last-minute injury replacement and was set to become Bangladesh's first Test double-century, an honour that later fell to skipper Mushfiqur Rahim in the same match. Ashrafu!'s innings raised hopes of a long-awaited maturing for the mercurial batsman.

**June 4, 2013:** A tearful Mohammad Ashrafu! publicly asked forgiveness from cricket lovers of the country for his wrongdoings. A few days ago, he had admitted to the International Cricket Council's Anti-Corruption and Security Unit that he was involved in corrupt practices during the Bangladesh Premier League T20, a fact that became public knowledge after the admission was carried in the local media.

## 'It's just sad'

**FARUQUE AHMED,** former chief selector

This guy was a prodigy. I don't know if these signs distracted him from the game. The young stars of today's generation need to learn from this example and need to be taken care of.

**ABDUR RAZZAK,** cricketer

It's just sad. We have been playing for so long. Maybe he was trapped and he couldn't get out. But it's just sad.

**NASIR HOSSAIN,** cricketer

He used to sit next to me in the dressing room. It's really quite shocking. I am not in a state to say anything more than that.

**SHAHRIAR NAFEEES,** cricketer

18 years we played cricket together. He was Bangladesh's biggest star. In my eight years of international cricket I never thought I'd ever see something like this.

**ASHFAQUE CHOWDHURY,** fan

There was a time in my teens when I wanted to be him, had his posters in my room. I always fought for him despite his bad run, always hoped at the back of my heart that he would perform. For what? For this?

**MASHRAFE BIN MORTAZA,** cricketer

I am extremely hurt. I can't explain the pain to any one. During my career, I think I have spent more time with him than my family. Today is not the day to say anything more than that.

**WAHIDUL GANI,** former batting coach

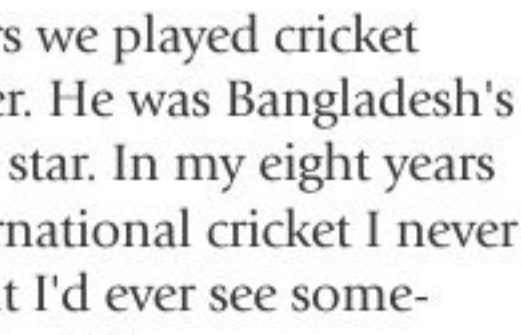
Whenever he was successful people tagged my name along, as I coached him. I think I am also responsible for this; maybe I couldn't help him get educated. I can't figure out how this happened. I never saw any bad elements in him. Maybe some one trapped him. I don't want the ICC to ban him for life, I hope he can come back to cricket even if its after ten years.

**MAYSUN FAISAL,** fan

His century in Cardiff against Australia, his 94 off 52 against England, and then his 190 against Sri Lanka. Can't believe we lost him just when he was getting back.

**ZAHID HASAN EMILY,** national footballer

I knew him personally. He is a friend. But I never thought he would be involved in fixing. I think he was compelled to do what his owners asked him to.



## People's prince turns pauper

AL-AMIN



Mohammad Ashrafu! dispelled the doubts, if there was any, that he has betrayed his millions of fans when he briefly appeared in

front of the public address system on Tuesday and confessed: "I have done a number of wrong things in my 12-year career. And I apologise to everybody for what I have done."

A small statement, yet the impact devastating. Is it the fall of the people's prince? Is it the crashing end of a career that started with a magnificent century on Test debut at the tender age of 17? Is it the answer to why Ashrafu!, despite his unbridled talent, was an enigma in international cricket? Were all those inexplicable shots Ashrafu! played more than just impulsive actions? Did he genuinely miss out on what could have been his first double-century in Sri Lanka earlier this year?

We might get a few answers or we might not. But one thing is for sure -- Ashrafu!, who emerged on the Bangladesh cricket scene as the brightest star, is destined to end as a pauper and perhaps will be recalled in the

future as a betrayer who opened the Pandora's box.

But for someone who had seen him growing up on the greens of the Bangabandhu National Stadium or at the Dhanmondi Cricket Stadium and has fallen in love with a genius, it is

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hard to gauge the harsh reality.

Hailing from a not-so-well-off family, Ashrafu!'s determination to be a professional cricketer was exemplary and those who closely followed him believed that the hardships he had undergone then would auger well for

him in the future. His first tour was in Sri Lanka as a member of the Bangladesh Under-19 team in 2000. On that tour Ashrafu! came across the luxury a cricketer can enjoy. The young players stayed at a hotel in Galle. It was a fort built by the Portuguese, which was turned into a luxury hotel to comfort a high-end clientele.

Ashrafu! was enjoying time with other players in the posh swimming pool of that hotel when a well-wisher came forward and whispered: "Don't look at the luxury you are enjoying here. It will be with you as long as you only focus on your cricket."

A year later Ashrafu! entered into real cricket in the same country in a fashion that others can only dream of. His century on Test debut was the first glimpse of what he was capable of and for Bangladesh cricket, it heralded a new dawn. A dawn with a new meaning -- we are no longer afraid of our imposing opponents and we are no longer fearful of playing our shots.

But it is hard to believe that the sun did not shine brightly after that; instead it burnt Ashrafu! to ashes. Perhaps it was the luxury he chose instead of playing cricket like a gentleman.

## Baridhara set for promotion

SPORTS REPORTER

Uttar Baridhara Club regained the lead in the Bangladesh Championship League after playing out a 3-3 draw with Farashganj SC at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

Baridhara, who have 24 points from 13 matches, just need a draw in their last match against Victoria SC to gain promotion to the Bangladesh Premier Division next season as third-placed Rahmatganj have 18 points from 12 matches. The champions and runners-up will be promoted to the Bangladesh Premier League.

Jibon slotted a hat-trick for Baridhara while Ripon, Shafiq and Sujon scored one goal each for Farashganj.

## That Kaushik may be the new coach

SPORTS REPORTER



After failing to rope in Indian coach Ajay Kumar Bansal, Bangladesh Hockey Federation is mulling a move for former Indian women's coach and Olympian Maharaj Krishon Kaushik. But even his appointment is seemingly uncertain over an alleged charge of sexual harassment against a junior player of the Indian women's team in 2010.

"We came to know about his sexual harassment through you (journalists) and now we will check the matter and then decide what we should do," said BHF general secretary Rahmatullah yesterday.

Rahmatullah yesterday afternoon informed that they were going to sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Kaushik for a one-year stint and he was supposed to arrive in Dhaka within three to four days.

The 58-year old Kaushik, who has a diploma coaching certificate on hockey from Patiala, India, was involved in coaching for ten years till 2010 with the Indian women's hockey team but subsequently stepped down from his post following the allegation.

Hockey India reportedly found him guilty of misconduct and the complainant's charges of sexual harassment credible.

## Cricketers' yes to grading system

*But only for this year*

SPORTS REPORTER

Country's cricketers under the banner CWAB (Cricketers' Welfare Association of Bangladesh) have decided to play the Dhaka Premier Division Cricket League as per the grading system only for this year.

A total of 122 cricketers including Mushfiqur Rahim and other national players met yesterday to discuss the new payment system and dues of the Bangladesh Premier League (BPL).

"The players are ready to play under the grading system but they are not interested in the rotation system. They wanted to choose their own club. We have prepared a proposal for the board and will submit it soon and hope that the BCB president [Nazmul Hassan Papon] will consider our proposal. We have full faith in him," said CWAB general secretary Debabrata Paul.

As per their proposal, the A-plus cricketers should get Tk 35-30 lakh, A Tk 25-20 lakh, B+ Tk 20-15 lakh, B Tk 15-10 lakh, C Tk 10-6 lakh, D Tk 5-3 lakh and E Tk 3-1 lakh.

They will also suggest for two foreign players instead of three. He also warned that the cricketers would go for tougher movement if they didn't get their BPL dues.

The Premier League is scheduled to start from July 1 and before that the new transfers take place on June 20.

## Hockey crisis close to resolution

SPORTS REPORTER

Following the announcement by BHF president and Air Marshal Enamul Bari, that he would sit with the players to solve the ongoing crisis in hockey, the revolting hockey players seemed to soften their stance against joining the national hockey camp for the Asia Cup.

"We have got an appointment to meet the BHF president on June 8 and we will let you know our decision after the meeting," said Rasel Khan Bappi, president of the hockey players' welfare association, after having a meeting at the Maulna Bhasani Hockey Stadium yesterday.

"I think the crisis will be solved after the discussion with the BHF president," said national striker Rasel Mahmud Jimmy. "We agreed in principle to join the preparation camp."

However, the preparation camp has been deferred by three days to start from June 10 instead of June 7.