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BCB relieved by SC clearance

SPORTS REPORTER

The clearance from the Supreme Court to hold the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) elections under the 2012 amended constitution came as a huge relief for incumbent BCB president Nazmul Hassan Papon.

Soon after the verdict was delivered yesterday, the board called an official press conference at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur where a jubilant BCB boss said: "We had been going through a big crisis. The ad-hoc committee was formed to hold elections as soon as possible but we had problems with the constitution. The Appellate Division has given the verdict in the interest of the country. The International Cricket Council (ICC) has adopted this constitution, and the National Sports Council (NSC) has approved it. We can now hold elections under this constitution pending the full bench's approval. It is very good news, because the threat has been removed. We will hold elections as soon as possible and take all preparations from the June 29 board meeting."

When asked about what would happen to the elected body in case the full bench reversed the decision after the elections were held, Papon said: "It is very unlikely to overturn the ruling by the five judges. Unless it has very strong logic to the contrary, the leave to appeal won't take place. As a layman, I feel that if the constitution doesn't go with ICC's edict, we won't be able to play cricket. The country won't benefit from a change in this verdict."

NAZMUL HASSAN PAPON

The BCB boss was surrounded by some of his ad-hoc committee members including Mahbubul Anam, who believed that it would not be easy to dismiss the elected board in the future as the ICC will take action against such a move as FIFA is doing against their members.

Papon also blamed the previous elected body for the current mess. "The last committee didn't make changes according to ICC's directives, which the NSC had asked it to make. The court has asked BCB to make the changes, but that committee doesn't exist anymore. The previous directors didn't amend it for nine months. Who will take responsibility for making these changes?"

He also said that he was in no way a party to bringing the changes in the constitution.

"The major changes are the presidential election. In other boards, the executive body elects the president. Cricket players/organisers will get priority. The clubs went to the minister, complaining of a loss of balance. There are 71 votes from district councillors, 52 from Dhaka's. So now the Super League teams will get 2 votes each," he responded when asked about the four major changes in the constitution.

Asked about the chances of him contesting the election, Papon said: "I will have my own panel, but I don't think I will contest in the directors' election. As a president, I want to remain neutral. I don't want to join a panel. If there's more than one panel, I will directly contest for the president's election. Anybody can be a president. I have to see whether I have to be a director or directly president [as per 2012 amended constitution one has to be a director to contest the president's post]. I haven't yet decided. You have to understand that I was appointed through a gazette notification. I have to know from them (the government) what they think."

He couldn't care less

BISHWAJIT ROY

"To me the World Cup is top priority. It's good if we can arrange the Premier League but if we can't it doesn't matter," was what Bangladesh Cricket Board president Nazmul Hassan Papon said to reporters yesterday.

Obviously hosting an event like a World Cup is a huge undertaking for any sports governing body, which will be the case for the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) when it hosts next year's ICC Twenty20 World Cups. So there is nothing untoward in BCB president Nazmul Hassan Papon placing the highest priority on the successful staging of the global event. And certainly, a World Cup is a much bigger event than a domestic competition like the Dhaka Premier League (DPL).

On superficial examination of a country's cricketing activities, it may be deemed acceptable that the chief of a sporting body responsible for carrying out all manners of activities and initiatives only concern himself with the bigger events like World Cups. There are after all other personnel to look after the domestic side of things, which are nonetheless the bread and butter of the country's professional cricketers. But as the sorry state of domestic cricket proves, a chief cannot only concern himself with one particular task at a time; instead he has to have a solid hold on all the activities within the community that he is responsible for.

In light of that sentiment, his latest remark on the dilly-dallying with the country's lone 50-over competition during yesterday's press conference came as a shock.

"We are trying (to hold the league). The league is important but I have to look into bigger issues. You may think that there is no need for the World Cup and that the Premier League must take place. Work is ongoing at Mirpur, Fatullah, BKSP, and there will be an inspection in September. So August is a very important month for me. True, there is no point in sacrificing the Premier League but I firmly believe that the World Cup is more important than any domestic league," was the latest salvo from the BCB boss when asked about the uncertainty over the league.

Yes, we can sacrifice something for a bigger national cause but it should never have come to this in the first place. The league was supposed to be held in March but the BCB as usual bent to the all-powerful clubs and spent six months postponing the tournament repeatedly. The president seemed excited with the increase of councillorship for the six top clubs but he has not seemed to question whether it is desirable to give clubs more power when the same clubs have been reluctant to play the league, which is their only notable contribution to the country's cricket.

As host nation, Bangladesh's main job – there are no opening or closing ceremonies for the 2014 event -- is to provide venues for an ICC-sponsored event like the World Twenty20. The president however is willing to put aside all other cricketing activities for the upcoming mega tournament.

While many may pat Papon's back for his eagerness to successfully host the event, the reality remains that Bangladesh's profile as a cricket nation will increase only through improvements in performance of the national team, for which the good health of domestic competitions is key. In that regard, a similar drive to the one being undertaken with a target to doing well in the 2015 50-over World Cup in Australia will not go amiss.

So if someone terms the activities and choices made by the incumbent president as short-sighted, there are enough arguments to back up the claim.

BD booters to go to Thailand

SPORTS REPORTER

The Thailand Football Association finally agreed to host the Bangladesh national football team for two friendlies as part of Bangladesh's preparation for September's SAFF Championship.

The Bangladesh contingent will leave for Bangkok on July 28 and return home on August 5 after a nine-day tour.

"The dates of the friendlies have not been finalised but both matches will take place at the Rajamongola National Stadium," said Bangladesh Football Federation general secretary Abu Nayeem Shohag yesterday.

Germany-based Reasat Khaton will be touring with the national squad in Thailand but the 23-year old midfielder has no chance to play in the matches as he does not have a Bangladeshi passport.

Shohag informed that the federation has started the process of obtaining a Bangladeshi passport for Reasat following the instructions from Dutch coach Lodewijk De Kruif.

U-16s lose final group match

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh U-16 football side suffered a 2-0 defeat to India in their final group match of the SAFF U-16 Championship at the Nepal Army ground in Lalitpur, Nepal yesterday.

Bedashor Singh and Krishna Pandit struck goals in either half to help India emerge group B champions to set their semifinal clash against Afghanistan on Sunday while Group B runners-up Bangladesh will face hosts Nepal in the first semifinal on Saturday.

Having confirmed the semifinal berths, both Bangladesh and India started the final group match with an aim to avoid hosts Nepal in the semifinal, but it was India who drew first blood thanks to a free-kick goal from Bedashor.

Bangladesh had no alternative but to beat India in a bid to avoid Nepal, who have scored 11 goals in three matches, and they held their own against India before conceding a lead in the 43rd minute.

After resumption, Bangladesh pressed hard for an equaliser but Rene Koster's side could hardly split India's backline, instead conceding the second goal two minutes into stoppage time of the second half with Pandit sealing the fate of the game.

WC trophy coming to Dhaka

SPORTS REPORTER

Football fans in the country will get a rare chance to see the FIFA World Cup trophy up close when football's top prize will make a stop in Bangladesh in December for the first time since 2002.

The World Cup trophy is usually involved in a world-wide tour in the year before the tournament and ahead of Brazil 2014, Bangladesh features among the destinations. In 2002, a trophy was paraded at the Bangabandhu National Stadium, but it turned out to be a replica.

This time though, the real trophy will be on display at the Bangabandhu National Stadium on December 18, after arriving the previous day. It will leave on December 19. The schedule was finalised yesterday after Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) president Kazi Salahuddin met with Abhijit Datta and Debashish Dev, regional country manager, South East Asia and Bangladesh country manager of Coca-Cola respectively at his office yesterday.

"To make a buzz among football fans ahead of the FIFA World Cup, the trophy is being brought to country. The football fans will get a chance to see it from close and they will even be given opportunities to take pictures with the trophy," said BFF secretary Abu Nayeem Shohag.

Shohag also informed that Coca-Cola is trying to bring a former World Cup winning captain, most likely the German Lothar Matthaus, during the three-day tour of the trophy.

After the three-day visit in Bangladesh, the World Cup trophy will travel to Bhutan, Nepal and India before going to Thailand as part of the world-wide tour of the trophy that will end in Brazil in 2014.

SC gives go ahead to BCB polls

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Supreme Court yesterday cleared the way for holding the elections of the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) on the basis of its amended constitution.

A five-member bench of the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court headed by Chief Justice Md. Muzammel Hossain came up with the order after allowing a leave to appeal petition.

The apex court, however, said the legality of that elected BCB committee will depend on the 9-member full bench's final judgment in this case.

The BCB and the National Sports Council (NSC) recently filed the petition against a High Court verdict that declared the amendment to the constitution illegal on January 27 this year. In the ruling the HC said that the NSC had no authority to amend the constitution. The HC delivered the decision following a writ petition by Yousuf Jamil Babu, president of the Bangladesh District and Divisional Sports Organisers' Association, and Mobasher Hossain, a former BCB director, on December 13 last year.

Pakistan take series with 4-wicket win

AFP, *Gros Islet*

Pakistan scrambled a four-wicket victory off the penultimate ball in the fifth and final one-day international against the West Indies at the Beausejour Stadium on Wednesday.

Replying to the hosts' total of 242 for seven, skipper Misbahul Haq's innings of 63 again piloted the visitors to their target although they made heavy weather of it at the end, Kieron Pollard missing the stumps at the non-striker's end and Saeed Ajmal dashing home for the winning run to the relief of his teammates.

Pakistan take the five-match series 3-1 with one tied and now both teams shift focus to the two Twenty20 Internationals to be played on Saturday and Sunday in St. Vincent.

Misbah, who was dismissed at the start of the final over with the scores level, took both the player-of-the-match and the player-of-the-series awards.

Not for the first time over the five matches, the fate of the match hinged on his contribution with the bat.

But from the West Indies standpoint, they were left to lament a controversial moment when they were convinced that the Pakistani captain was caught off the glove by stand-in wicketkeeper Lendl Simmons off a fiery Tino Best.

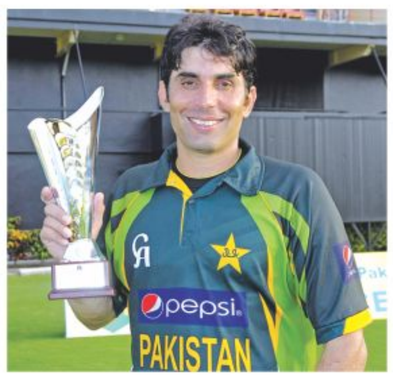

PHOTO: AFP

Pakistan captain Misbahul Haq poses with the player-of-the-series trophy at the end of the fifth and final ODI against West Indies in Gros Islet on Wednesday.

On 49 at the time, and with the score standing at 190 for four in the 43rd over, his dismissal then with 53 runs still needed could have been pivotal.

Umpire Paul Reiffel's not out decision was challenged by West Indies captain Dwayne Bravo but the Decision Review System (DRS) upheld the on-field verdict, much to the dismay of the Caribbean players on the field.

"A key decision went against us and that was the turning point in the game," said Bravo at the end of the match in a less-than-veiled reference to the Misbah incident.

"I don't think 3-1 for Pakistan was a fair reflection of the balance of power in the series."

SCORES IN BRIEF

WEST INDIES: 242 for 7 in 50 overs (Charles 43, Samuels 45, Gayle 21, Simmons 25, Bravo 48, Sammy 29 not out; Irfan 2-34, Junaid 3-48, Ajmal 2-57)

PAKISTAN: 243 for 6 in 49.5 overs (Jamshed 23, Shehzad 64, Misbah 63, Akmal 37; Best 3-48)

Result: Pakistan won by 4 wickets and clinched five-ODI series 3-1 with 1 tied.

Player-of-the-match: Misbahul Haq.

Player-of-the-series: Misbahul Haq.

WI name T20 side

AFP, *Gros Islet*

World champions West Indies have retained 10 members of the squad that lifted the World Twenty20 title last October in Sri Lanka for the weekend's back-to-back T20 Internationals against Pakistan in St Vincent.

From the 13-member party in St Lucia for the last three one-Day internationals of the five-match series, batsman Devon Smith along with fast bowlers Kemar Roach and Jason Holder have been omitted.

SQUAD

Darren Sammy (captain), Chris Gayle, Johnson Charles, Darren Bravo, Marlon Samuels, Lendl Simmons, Kieron Pollard, Dwayne Bravo, Christopher Barnwell, Sunil Narine, Tino Best, Samuel Badree, Shannon Gabriel.

Second ODI in Harare today

PTI, *Harare*

An expectedly comfortable win to start with, the young Indian team under Virat Kohli would look to continue asserting their supremacy over minnows Zimbabwe when the two sides clash in the second one-dayer of the ongoing five-match series here on Friday.

In a perfect start to the tour, India thrashed Zimbabwe by six wickets with Kohli leading from the front, scoring a hundred.

But the win was not without a few glitches with the inexperience of Indian bowlers exploited by a couple of Zimbabwean batsmen.

Sikander Raza nearly got a hundred while lower down the order Elton Chigumbura managed to torment the Indians for quite a while with a 34-ball 43 which included half a dozen boundaries.

In fact, India's lead pacer R Vinay Kumar ended up conceding at a rate more than six in his nine overs. But on the brighter side, the rest of the attack made up for his off day with spinner Amit Mishra picking up three wickets in his 10 overs.

The Zimbabwean batsmen did not exactly disgrace themselves and posted a decent total which was, however, no match to the sheer individual brilliance of Kohli.

Among others, Rohit Sharma and Shikhar Dhawan had a bad day but they too should get some big scores in the series which has been described as being terribly lopsided despite India being a depleted team.