

SPORT

Hospitality not enough

BISHWAJIT ROY

Bangladesh's reputation as a good host was enhanced with the successful ending of the ICC World Twenty20; the biggest tournament the country has organised, in which a total of 26 teams took part. With it has been cemented in the global cricketing consciousness what we as Bangladeshis always knew; that we as a people are generous and inviting hosts.

It is hard to imagine now that there was once doubt over the hosting of two international events -- the Asia Cup and the World Twenty20 -- due to security concerns, but both tournaments have been hosted in the right spirit and in a peaceful manner. For these successful endeavours all the concerned authorities and above all the people deserve some pats on their backs. Of course, the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) played the leading role behind the success to uphold the country's image as good hosts.

There have however been whispers about some irregularities, and cynics are saying that many were lining their pockets. Whether this is idol gossip or if it holds some water is something only the BCB can clear. Will the BCB boss Nazmul Hassan Papon be courageous enough to make all the expenditures public to clear the air? It is not healthy that questions have been raised about the involvement of a board director in the purchase of generators. The danger that such a conflict of interest can lead to was recently seen in Indian cricket.

Another important question the authorities must ask themselves is: Is the successful hosting of a tournament enough to improve the value of the country's cricket? Surely not. Being successful hosts will hardly serve the purpose of earning respect as a cricketing nation. One has to make sure that its players are competitive at the highest level of the game and their performances add some value to the game. Forget about our performance in the just-concluded ICC's global event, our overall performance and standard of cricket is far behind from where we should be on the global map. The issue of inadequate facilities always comes to the fore after every failure of the Tigers on the international stage but how much are we utilising available facilities is a bigger question. Do we have the proper management to capitalise on the available facilities? Are the right people in the right places?

How much time cricket authorities spend discussing the future of cricket is a harsh question that needs answering? It is widely believed that they prefer to spend their time on logistic affairs and cricket affairs always take the back seat; otherwise how is it possible that we do not have any long-term plans. After every debacle we sing the same song and hardly learn from the mistakes. The BCB president recently said that they were in fire-fighting mode with the big events and problems one after the other since they took charge and now they are going to make long-term plans. We want to believe that he will be true to his words. Chopping and changing is not always a good solution but the board has to bite the bullet; they can in no way hesitate to take any decision if they believe it is necessary for the long-term improvement of our cricket.

Domestic affairs may not hold the same appeal and glamour for many board members as international affairs do, but the solution remains the same; improve the standard of the domestic cricket and improvement at the international level will follow. We are a top level cricketing nation yet to fix a cricket calendar; how can one expect better than what we have seen?

A lot of water has gone under the bridge since Bangladesh's elevation to Test status 14 years ago, but the ugly truth is we are still well short of desired standards. It should be understood that no one will look at our record of hosting international events when it comes giving us opportunities in international cricket. As we bask in the roaring success of an event, it is imperative that we recognise the path to true cricketing respect.



Australia women's team captain Meg Lanning and Sri Lanka skipper Lasith Malinga pose with the ICC World Twenty20 trophies during a function at a city hotel yesterday.

PHOTO: CRICINFO

Sachin sings Yuvraj song

CRICINFO, Mumbai

Sachin Tendulkar has come out in strong support of Yuvraj Singh, who has faced plenty of criticism after a 21-ball 11 that sucked the momentum out of India's innings in the World T20 final against Sri Lanka on Sunday.

Yuvraj, man-of-the-tournament in the 2011 World Cup, has already lost his place in the ODI side, and his spot in the Twenty20 side is under scrutiny after a difficult World T20, but Tendulkar hoped Yuvraj would be a part of India's defence of the World Cup in 2015.

"Yuvi, one off day cannot undermine your tremendous contribution in many sweet memories over the years. You may be down today but you are far from being out," Tendulkar wrote on his Facebook page. "I want you to know that there are many like me in India and across the world, who keenly look forward to you being a part of the campaign to defend the ODI World Cup title in 2015."

There were reports that Yuvraj's house in Chandigarh was pelted with stones following the dismal performance in the World T20 final. Tendulkar urged fans to show their support for him. "Last evening, Yuvi had a tough day and he can be criticised. But he should not be crucified nor should he be written off."

Lanka to greet heroes today

AFP, Colombo

Sri Lanka prepared to throw its biggest party since the end of the country's ethnic conflict after beating India in the final of cricket's World T20 tournament, officials said Monday.

Cricket officials said arrangements were being made for a ticker-tape parade in central Colombo on Tuesday after an outpouring of jubilation in a country that has been at war for much of its post-independence history.

The victory on Sunday night in Dhaka came 18 years after Sri Lanka's triumph in the 50-over World Cup, which had been followed by a series of defeats in the

finals of major tournaments.

An official source said the authorities tried to fly the national team home on Monday, but logistical issues prevented an early celebration.

"We arranged two charter flights to take fans to Dhaka for the finals and there are no seats onboard those aircraft for the team to return," a cricket official told AFP. "Getting another aircraft has not been easy."

Sri Lanka Cricket (SLC) said it planned to hold a press conference at the airport Tuesday before driving the team in an open top bus to their main office and on to downtown Colombo where tens of thousands of fans are expected to give the players a heroes' welcome.

The team is also due to call on Sri Lankan President Mahinda

Rajapakse, officials said.

FITTING FAREWELL

Newspapers hailed the victory as a "fitting farewell" to a golden generation, including former skippers Mahela Jayawardene and Kumar Sangakkara who have already announced their retirement from T20 cricket.

On the eve of the final, the board announced the team would get a million dollar bonus if it could finally throw off its reputation for choking.

But veteran cricket commentator Ranjan Paranavithana bemoaned the prospect of local administrators claiming credit for the team's spirited performance after a series of management and pay disputes.

"Loads of empty heads will be

at SLC taking photographs with the trophy and the players," Paranavithana said on his blog.

The Daily Mirror newspaper said the victory was a dream come true for the country's two best players who will now concentrate only on Test match and 50-over cricket.

Sangakkara top-scored with a quickfire 52 while Jayawardene weighed in with a run-a-ball 24.

"Sangakkara and Jayawardene ended their T20 International careers with a dream script, playing the team's best two innings as Sri Lanka ended their world title drought in style," the paper said.

PRESIDENTIAL JINX!

Rajapakse phoned team members and officials to congratulate them shortly after the six-wicket win

which triggered an outpouring of joy unseen in Sri Lanka since the crushing of the Tamil Tiger separatist fighters in May 2009.

Motorists in the cricket-mad country took to the streets tooting their horns and waving the national Lion flag, while fireworks lit up the sky throughout the night.

Fans said the team may have thanked Rajapakse for being absent after he watched them lose the last World T20 tournament -- hosted by Sri Lanka in 2012 -- and their defeats in the final of the 2007 and 2011 World Cups.

Pundits also joked that the victory was only made possible by President Rajapakse's decision to stay away from the final after he had apparently "jinxed" the team in previous tournaments.

Siddikur wants golf at BKSP

SPORTS REPORTER

Country's ace golfer Siddikur Rahman believes golf has the potential to build a positive image of Bangladesh in outside world just the way cricket and ready-made-garments industry is doing currently.

He delivered his expectation during his reception, organised by the Bangladesh Professional Golfers Association (BPGA) at the National Press Club yesterday, following his brilliant performance in EurAsia Cup where Team Asia finished joint champions with Europe.

"We have many talents who are waiting for a chance. We need professional training and experienced coaches to improve our golf," said Siddikur who also urged to open a golf discipline at the Bangladesh Krira Shikkha Protisthan.

State minister for Water Resources Muhammad Nazrul Islam attended the programme as chief guest while BPGA vice president Brigadier General (rt'd) Salim Akhtar, Kurmitola Golf Club CEO Colonel Sardar Hassan Kabir were among other presents.



Salma tops the charts

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh women's captain Salma Khatun brought a rare delight for Bangladeshis in the ICC World T20 as her performance in the competition led to her topping the ICC bowlers' rankings with 650 rating points. Before the tournament she was ranked third.

Salma picked up eight wickets, the fourth-highest, at an average of 8.75 and an economy rate of 3.58 runs per over and moved ahead of Sri Lanka's Udeshiika Prabhodhani into the top place.

The Bangladesh skipper has also been included in the ICC women's team of the tournament as an off-spinning all-rounder batting at number eight.

While the Bangladesh women's side failed to reach the semis, they did however win many hearts by defeating Sri Lanka in their last game of the tournament. The win was even more highly rated as the Lankans had defeated India earlier. Among the T20 all-rounders, Salma is ranked third.

Don't single out Yuvraj, dad says

PTI, Chandigarh

Yuvraj Singh's father Yograj has come out in defence of his son, saying the left-handed batsman, who struggled for his 11 runs off 21 balls, should not be singled out for India's loss in the ICC World Twenty20 final.

"Yuvraj should not be singled out," Yograj said when asked if his son consuming 21 deliveries was the main reason behind India losing the title clash against Sri Lanka in Mirpur. Even as Virat Kohli struck his fourth half-century of the tournament, Lankan bowlers applied brakes on a struggling Yuvraj which certainly hampered the scoring rate to a large extent Sunday night.

Yuvraj was completely out of sorts which even frustrated the in-form batsman at the other end. The last four overs produced only 19 runs due to Yuvraj's failure to get big hits.

But Yograj said when a team loses, there is widespread criticism from all quarters.

MS named ICC's WT20 captain

IANS, Dhaka

The International Cricket Council (ICC) Monday announced the men's Team of the Tournament for the World Twenty20 in Bangladesh, with India's Mahendra Singh Dhoni as its captain.

The team includes four players from India, two each from South Africa and the West Indies, and one each from Australia, the Netherlands and Sri Lanka.

Chosen by a select group of experts, the team was aimed at being suited for Bangladeshi conditions, on the basis of performances at the just-concluded World T20 tournament. Statistics were used but were not the sole basis for selections.

Selection panel chairman and member of the Emirates Elite Panel of ICC Match Referees, David Boon, said: "It was a very difficult task for the panel to pick a team of 11 from the exciting players who featured in this tournament."

"As the selection criteria for the Team of the Tournament are the performances of players in the conditions during the ICC World Twenty20 2014, some of the best players in world cricket had to be left out of the team."

"Bowlers in particular performed strongly throughout this tournament, and the side we have selected includes three of the most impressive bowlers in Dale Steyn, Samuel Badree and Lasith Malinga."

"The team also contains six specialist batsmen, including Stephan Myburgh from the Netherlands as an opening batsman, as well as three all-rounders, including Dhoni as a wicket-keeper batsman."

The panel faced a difficult choice for a number of positions, and players who were considered but who did not ultimately make the team included India's Amit Mishra, Pakistan's Ahmed Shehzad, South Africa duo of AB de Villiers and Imran Tahir, Sri Lanka's Angelo Mathews and Rangana Herath, and West Indies' Dwayne Bravo and Sunil Narine.

Other members of the panel included Marais Erasmus of the Emirates Elite Panel of ICC Umpires, former Pakistan captain Wasim Akram, ex-England captain Nasser Hussain, former West Indies fast bowler Ian Bishop and Utpal Shuvro, one of Bangladesh's senior-most cricket correspondents.

Better to be dead!

AFP, Colombo

A Sri Lankan fruit seller suffered a massive heart attack and died after he lost a 300-dollar bet that India would win the cricket World T20 tournament, police said Monday.

SP Kumara placed the 40,000-rupee bet on the eve of Sunday's final, wrongly predicting that Sri Lanka would repeat its "choking" performance at three previous international tournaments and lose to India.

"He had gone to a bookmaker at Gampaha [town] and placed a fairly large bet on an Indian win and watched the match from there," a local police official told AFP.

"When Sri Lanka won the match, he could not believe it."

It was the second time the vendor had backed the wrong team.

Police said he bet 1,100 dollars on Sri Lanka to clinch the last World T20 title in 2012, only to see his home country lose to the West Indies.

Sri Lanka beat India by six wickets in Dhaka on Sunday.

The vendor collapsed and was pronounced dead on admission to hospital in Gampaha just outside Colombo, said the police official who declined to be named.

An inquest Monday was told that the man had no known medical condition, and police suspect the shock of losing the bet triggered the heart attack.