

SPORT

President-cum-selector!

BISHWAJIT ROY

Faruque Ahmed was all set to make a small piece of history on Sunday by becoming the only Bangladesh chief selector to announce two World Cup squads. But with a poker face the former Bangladesh captain, who is well-known for his gutsy approach, sat on the dais at the press conference room of the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur and witnessed a drama.

The all powerful Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) president Nazmul Hassan Papon read out the names of the 15-member final squad for the ICC World Cup.

Papon was not ready to finish with just the announcement. He further tried to expand by stating his technical knowledge on the selection issue, even though the person he hired to handle those issues (Faruque) was right there beside him.

That the BCB boss loves to talk about the technical aspects of the players is well known but what he did on Sunday was beyond anybody's imagination.

It's not like he broke the law. The constitution gives him absolute power to deal with any matter related to the board. There is however a norm in the gentleman's game that has been practised for years by every professional board.

The BCB itself has a committee with the technical persons to form the team and the

general practice is that the board president approves the selections. As Faruque put it during the press conference, there is nothing wrong with the board asking the selectors about the selection of the team. If the president believes that the Faruque and company don't have the ability to form the team then he can be relieved of the job. But the way the discussions were made public was not the right way to go about it.

In a last-minute drama, the board delayed the announcement of the team by more than two hours. To everyone's surprise Papon himself revealed that the last minute discussion was regarding two bowling spots. He said that since a lot of the board directors, coach Chandika Hathurusingha and captain Mashrafe Bin Mortaza were present in Mirpur, he wanted to know their opinions. In addition the BCB president further embarrassed the selection committee by stating that the panel virtually could not decide on a 15-member team and that they had submitted a 16-member side.

Firstly, the board's interference on such technical issues is an extremely odd practice; and even if there was a question of discussion, it could have been done internally, well before the announcement of the team rather than it being made public.

At the end of the press conference the question dominated the rounds was how a sturdy customer like Faruque managed to swallow a pill so sour.



An over-enthusiastic Bangladesh Cricket Board president Nazmul Hassan Papon (R) reads out the 15-man Bangladesh World Cup squad, pushing his chief selector Faruque Ahmed (L) on the sideline during a crowded press briefing at the BCB headquarters in Mirpur on Sunday.

PHOTO: STAR



Soumya Sarkar has every reason to sport a big smile on his face for just not guiding Prime Bank to their maiden Dhaka Premier League title but for winning a dream place in Bangladesh's final World Cup squad.

PHOTO: STAR

Dream comes true

NAIMUL KARIM



There are several stories ingrained in Bangladesh's World Cup squad. Six out of the 15 players, for instance debuted only last year, nine of them are set to play the event for the first time.

Nasir Hossain made a remarkable comeback; and an injury-free Mashrafe Bin Mortaza will finally get an opportunity to lead the Tigers in the mega event.

As a result, the emotion that poured out minutes after the squad was made public on Sunday was not a surprise.

Few players are happier than Nasir whose career had taken a steep fall last year.

"After getting dropped I went through a tough time. I talked to coaches and senior players to remain positive. Honestly speaking I never hoped of making the national team. I just tried to enjoy my time in the Dhaka Premier League (DPL).

It's a dream to be able to play the World Cup and I hope I can do well," said Nasir.

Opener Soumya Sarkar's inclusion in the squad, after playing just one ODI, was perhaps the biggest surprise. According to chief selector Faruque Ahmed, Soumya was taken for his form

and his all-round ability.

"Getting a chance to play for the World Cup after playing one match with the national team... I was surprised; did not expect things to happen so fast.

"Initially I played a few bad matches in the League; at that point I thought I won't make it. But then I figured that the more I thought about the national team the worse I played. That's when I decided to not think about it. I hope to live up to the challenge," said Soumya.

Middle order batsman Sabbir Rahman, who made his debut in November, dedicated the 'little achievement' to his father.

"It's a dream for me and my family, especially my father who really wanted me to play this time. I am confident that I can do well in Australia because I have practiced a lot," said Sabbir.

There were initially talks about how either Nasir or Sabbir would be included. However, with the duo putting up good performances in

WORLD CUP SQUAD

Mashrafe Bin Mortaza (Captain), Shakib Al Hasan (Vice-Captain), Tamim Iqbal, Mushfiqur Rahim, Anamul Haque, Mominul Haque, Nasir Hossain, Sabbir Rahman, Mahmudullah, Soumya Sarkar, Arafat Sunny, Taijul Islam, Rubel Hossain, Taskin Ahmed, Al-Amin Hossain

the DPL, the selectors decided to pick them both. Sabbir however, stated that there was no competition between the two.

"The funny thing is that when Nasir played well in the DPL so did I. The trend had become so common that when Nasir scored a century, I almost knew that I would do something with the ball and I eventually got a six-wicket haul in that match," joked Sabbir.

Taskin Ahmed, who surprised the Australians with his pace in the World Twenty20, wants to make a bigger impact in the upcoming event.

"I want to show the world that there is a pacer from Bangladesh who can compete and do well," said the youngster.

Taijul Islam reckoned that it was his hat-trick against Zimbabwe that encouraged the selectors to pick up while his partner Arafat Sunny barely found words to describe his feeling.

Pacer Al-Amin Hossain, who had to overcome the ICC's call for a suspect action described how difficult the phase was.

"I don't think the ICC's decision affected my form, but I needed some time. I also had to attend my exams because of which I had to travel all the way to Jessore. It was difficult to keep all that in balance. I did not have a good Zimbabwe series but I returned to form in the DPL," said Al-Amin.

Rubel not so Happy

SPORTS REPORTER

A writ petition was filed with the High Court, seeking its directive to remove pacer Rubel Hossain from Bangladesh's World Cup squad yesterday.

The writ was filed by cinema actress Happy, who had earlier filed a rape case against the pacer under the Prevention of Women and Child Repression Act.

Apart from a directive to remove the player from the team, the actress also wants Rubel's passport to be confiscated until the case is settled.

Home secretary, sports secretary, BCB president, Dhaka Chief Metropolitan Magistrate, Rubel, Women and Children Repression Prevention Tribunal-5 and the OC of Mirpur PS have all been accused in the writ petition.

Rubel, who is on an anticipatory bail, has been included in the Bangladesh World Cup squad announced by the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) on Sunday.

NBL becomes Bangabandhu Cup partner

SPORTS REPORTER

National Bank Limited (NBL) became the 'official partner' of Bangabandhu Gold Cup international football tournament when the commercial bank handed over a check of Tk 3 crore to the Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) yesterday.

Vice-presidents Nazmul Ahsan and Mir Mosharrar Hossain handed over the check to BFF president Kazi Salahuddin.

Meanwhile, Salahuddin will sit with the participating teams and finalise the date of the six-nation tournament during the congress of Asian Football Confederation in Melbourne on January 9 as the BFF boss will leave here for Australia today.

It's Prime-time

SPORTS REPORTER



Whatever slim chances Prime Doleshwar had of winning the title were blown away by an emphatic performance from Mahmudullah of the tournament's opening match.

Riyad, who had also captained Gazi Tank Cricketers to the championship last year, credited his side's 'all-round performance' throughout the League.

From Nasir Hossain's match-winning cameo to Rony Talukdar's comeback, from Soumya Sarkar's responsible knocks to Naeem Islam's all-round performance, the league was set alight during the SuperSixes.

Here's a roundup of the events that took place during the League:

DHAKA RETIRED LEAGUE

What do DPL clubs do when they don't have enough 'quality' players to play in the league? Simple; they ask players to come out of retirement! This season saw two former national players - Khaled Mashud and Mehrab Hossain—decided to pad-up again. While Mashud

played for Kalabagan, the team he coached, Mehrab featured for Mohammedan. Unfortunately, their comebacks were not sweet as they barely got runs.

BADAL'S BAN

Things went haywire when Legends of Rupganj chairman Lutfur Rahman Badal insulted Bangladesh Cricket Board officials and accused some of them of manipulating umpires. Consequently, cases were filed against Badal and he was eventually banned for life. An anticlimax considering Sachin Tendulkar himself had come to Dhaka to unveil the club this year.

OPENERS' OPPORTUNITY

Of the top five highest run-getters of the tournament four were openers. A delight, considering national selectors often struggle to find a

partner for Tamim Iqbal. Roney Talukdar was the pick of the lot. He averaged 104 in the League's last six games. There were also eight century stands for the opening wicket, including a record 214 between Talukdar and Mehedi Maruf.

ALLROUND NAEEM

Naeem Islam may not have been selected for the World Cup, but he was easily the League's best all-round performer. With the bat he was the third highest run-getter and boasted an average of 63.40. He also scalped 20 wickets with his off-spinners at an average of 17.17. He was both the highest wicket-taker and run-getter for Mohammedan.

JOYLESS JUBAIR

It's not common for a national player to return to the League and find out that he has no room in

TOP 5 RUN-GETTERS

Batsman	M	Runs	S.rate	Avg	50	100	HS
Rony Talukdar	16	714	83.12	51.00	3	2	132*
Liton Kumar	16	686	90.38	42.88	5	1	108
Naeem Islam	16	634	66.81	63.40	8	0	92
Soumya Sarkar	15	615	81.89	41.00	4	1	127

TOP 5 WICKET-TAKERS

Bowler	M	W	E.rate	Avg	5W	BBF
Elias Sunny	16	31	4.49	18.16	0	4/32
Asif Hasan	11	27	3.57	13.07	1	5/47
Enamul Haque	15	26	4.17	20.88	0	4/37
Nazmul Apu	13	22	3.78	17.86	0	4/14

SCORES IN BRIEF

Abahani: 160 all out in 44.2 overs (Nasir 55; Forhad 4-17, Enamul 2-25, Soumya 2-36)

Prime Bank CC: 163 for 1 in 27.3 overs (Soumya 97, Saykat 58; Abdul 1-16)

Result: Prime Bank won by nine wickets.

Kalabagan CA: 288 for 3 (Anamul 150 not out, Nafees 52; Fasial 1-34)

Legends: 250 for 6 (Junaid 50 not out, Nazmul 43; Bishwant 2-27)

Result: Kalabagan won by 37 runs.

Mohammedan: 220 for 9 (Mithun 45, Naeem 40 not out; Asif 3-29, Shafiq 3-37)

Prime Doleshwar: 223 for 7 in 48.5 overs (Rony 63, Mehedi 58; Nabi 2-30, Naeem 1-40)

Result: Prime Doleshwar won by three wickets

the playing eleven. But that's what happened with young leg-spinner Jubair Hossain, who was given just one game by Abahani. The management apparently considered his loopy deliveries as a threat for their bowling attack. It was an unfortunate move considering that Jubair's turners bamboozled the Zimbabweans in November.

Wickets not helping

SPORTS REPORTER



For Bangladesh national cricketers the Dhaka Premier League was their last stop before the World Cup in Australia and New Zealand. Understandably, many expected the wickets in the League to be bouncy and emulate the Australian conditions as much as possible.

However, what was eventually witnessed was nothing different from the previous seasons. Slow and low wickets helped slow left-armers dominate the League yet again.

It was an aspect that irked the national selectors.

"The wicket was on the lower side initially and it did get a little better gradually. But it would have been better if we had more bounce considering the World Cup ahead. Since this is a club competition, the clubs will always have a say in these issues," said BCB chief selector Faruque Ahmed.

"But I hope the National Cricket League will have more bounce and assistance for the pacers. If we don't get such wickets then it will be difficult for us to support our pacers and create a kind of bowler that we want to," he further explained.

National selector Habibul Bashar echoed Faruque's views. "The wicket was not good at all at the start of the season. It was supposed to be sporting towards the end but all we got was a batting wicket. This issue needs planning," said Bashar.

Fellow selector Minhajul Abedin reckoned that December-January would have been the 'ideal' time to support the pacers.

"We talk about creating wickets that will help us in Australia, but the ones we played on were not good enough. The wicket at BKSP was really flat and fast bowlers got no help. The game becomes difficult for them," said Minhajul.

SA need 115

AGENCIES, Cape Town



South Africa are in prime position for yet another Test win against the West Indies as they bundled the visitors out for 215 towards the end of day four.

Just before stumps though, the hosts lost Alvaro Peterson at the start of the fourth innings and finished the day on 9 for 1. They now require 115 runs on the last day.

West Indies' collapse was due to some fantastic bowling from Dale Steyn, who used the reverse swing to perfection. He began by bowling Jermaine Blackwood with a beautiful outswinging delivery in the last ball of the 72nd over. He got captain Dinesh Ramdin caught in the first ball of his next over and was on a hat-trick. He failed to dismiss Jason Holder in the next delivery but removed Suleiman Benn in the 78th over to complete a three-wicket haul.

Earlier spinner Simon Harmer and Mome Morkel ran through the visitors' top order. While Harmer ended up getting four scalps, Morkel finished with figures of 2 for 18. After getting reduced to 95 for 3, Samuels and Shivnarine Chanderpaul shared a 87-run stand to revived the visitors. However, the departure of Samuels for 74 led to their downfall.

SCORES IN BRIEF

WEST INDIES: 329 and 215 all out in 79.5 overs (Samuels 74, Shiv 50; Harmer 4-82, Steyn 3-75)

SOUTH AFRICA: 421 and 9 for 1 (Elgar 5; Benn 1-0)



Prime Bank cricketers are over the moon after winning their maiden Dhaka Premier League title with an impressive 9-wicket victory against Abahani at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur on Sunday.

PHOTO: STAR