

Dalmiya to return as BCCI boss?

AFP, New Delhi

Veteran official Jagmohan Dalmiya is set to be elected head of Indian cricket's governing body, replacing the sport's world supremo Narayanaswami Srinivasan following a corruption scandal, reports said Sunday.

Dalmiya, a former head of the International Cricket Council, emerged as the front-runner amid back-room negotiations for votes at elections on Monday for the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI).

Dalmiya, 74, was the "consensus candidate" among rival factions for BCCI president, a position he held a decade ago, according to the Press Trust of India news agency, citing unnamed sources.

The Supreme Court barred Srinivasan from standing as a candidate for BCCI chief, although he can cast his vote, following its probe into a betting and fixing scandal surrounding the Indian Premier League (IPL).

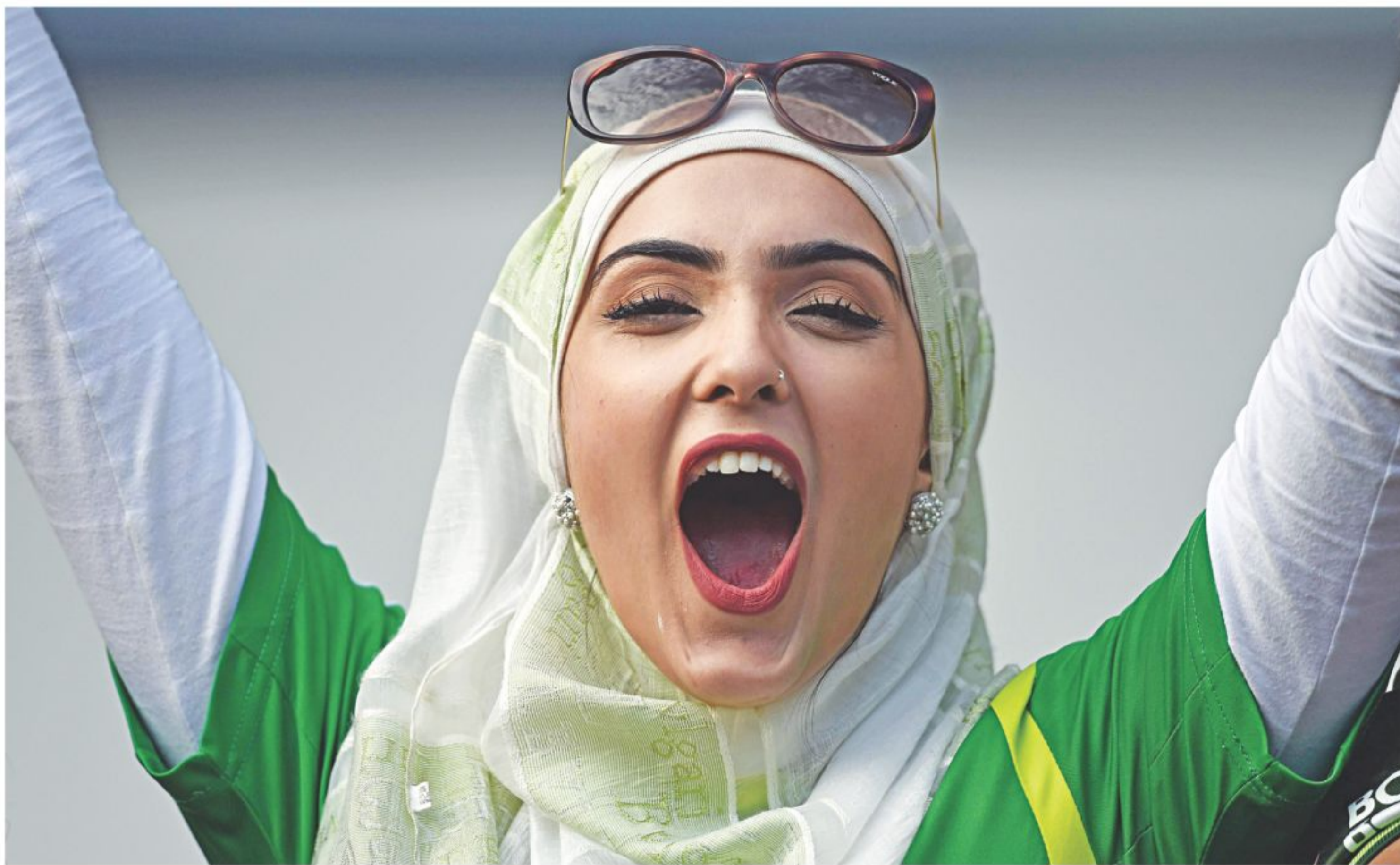
Ray of hope for Kevin

AFP, London

Incoming England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) chairman Colin Graves has given Kevin Pietersen a glimmer of hope that he may yet be able to resurrect his England career.

Pietersen, 34, has not played for England since the ECB effectively called time on his international career following the disastrous Ashes tour of 2013-14.

But with England touring at the World Cup and Pietersen having spoken of his eagerness to return to the team, Graves has suggested that a return to English county cricket could open the door for a dramatic comeback.



After two disappointing defeats there was something to cheer for Pakistan supporters against Zimbabwe at the Gabba in Brisbane yesterday.

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Why won't Eoin sing the anthem

SMH, Wellington

When Eoin Morgan, the England captain, failed to sing God Save The Queen at the World Cup, questions were asked.

Morgan is Irish, switching allegiance to England in 2009 in order to play Test cricket. Was his decision a political statement? A deliberate snub to the monarch?

According to his former mentor, the answer is more prosaic: Morgan is too shy to sing on camera.

Invited during a press conference in New Zealand to discuss his reasons, Morgan said it was "a long story" and "a personal thing", adding that he wouldn't sing the Irish anthem either.

He would not elaborate, saying only: "It's pretty simple. I have never sang the national anthem when playing for Ireland or England. It does not make me any less proud to be an English cricketer."

"I am extremely proud to be in the position that I am in and privileged to be captain of the World Cup side."

Kevin Jennings, the deputy headmaster who offered 11-year-old Morgan a scholarship to Dublin's Catholic University School and guided him through his school years, said his former charge was not political at all.

"He's a very shy fellow. I would imagine he'd be quite self-conscious singing in that context. I would say it's as simple as that. He certainly wasn't in the school choir," said Jennings, now retired, a friend of the Morgan family.

"I've known him since he was 11 and he was always very quiet and reserved. Where he was confident was going out to bat."

"I know people could read something into it, but I don't think it's political. He certainly isn't political to my knowledge."

Jennings said Morgan was always "well-mannered and polite but never an extroverted fellow. He wouldn't overdo the chat. When I see him do these press conferences now I think, he couldn't have done that seven or eight years ago. He must be coached for that."

'England were punished' Hailing Sangakkara

AFP, Wellington

England captain Eoin Morgan admitted his side had been "punished" by a rampant Sri Lanka on Sunday in a nine-wicket loss that left them on the brink of World Cup elimination.

Sri Lanka are now on the verge of the quarterfinals after three wins in four games while England's tally of two points means their last-eight hopes are hanging by a thread.

"We were punished today by a very experienced side. We were way off the mark," said Morgan, who has overseen defeats by Australia, New Zealand and now Sri Lanka with just one win, against non-Test Scotland, to show for England's efforts at this tournament.

"When we are bowling well, it's a good attack but you can pick it apart when we're not bowling well and we didn't bowl well."

Morgan's premier seamers James Anderson and Stuart Broad went for none for 48 and none for 67 respectively.

In four matches, Anderson and Broad have only taken two wickets each.

"At 'half-time' we went in thinking we had a more than par score," said Morgan.

"Joe Root was exceptional -- it sums up the year he's had. I was happy at half time."

Morgan however insisted he was still confident of reaching the quarterfinals, despite Sunday's "hard

to take" loss.

England's final Pool A matches against Bangladesh and Afghanistan now loom as must-win clashes but Morgan said he had not considered failing to make the last eight.

"It's not even a thought at the moment -- two games to win to get us into the quarterfinal," he said.

Morgan said the fact that England set a competitive 310-run target made the Sri Lanka loss more difficult to accept than the routs against Australia and New Zealand, when they were never in the game.

"When you don't turn up for a race like those first two games, it's scratch. But today, when we turn up and we're beaten in that fashion it's harder to take."

AFP, Wellington

Sri Lanka's Lahiru Thirimanne on Sunday declared teammate Kumar Sangakkara one of the best limited-overs batsmen of all time after his second successive century at the World Cup.

Sangakkara hit an unbeaten 117 as the 1996 champions thrashed England by nine wickets in Wellington, following up on his 105 not out against Bangladesh.

It was Sangakkara's 24th century in 401 one-day internationals and Thirimanne said the vastly experienced 37-year-old was a steady influence on the team.

Asked where Sangakkara, who is playing in his final World Cup, ranked in the pantheon of greats, Thirimanne said he was right at the top.

"At the current moment I think he's number one," he said. "I mean, he is batting really well."

"Not only is he rotating the strike, but hitting the boundaries as well. So it is very helpful for the team."

Thirimanne himself made an unbeaten 139 against England and said he was thrilled to carry his bat after only being promoted to open in the lead-up to the tournament.

He also has two half-centuries at the tournament, while Sri Lanka's potent batting line-up includes another two World Cup centuries in Tillakaratne Dilshan and Mahela Jayawardene.

But Thirimanne said Sri Lanka, finalists at the last two World Cups, could not rely on batting alone and had to improve other aspects of their game.

"Our fielding wasn't good... in this tournament you can't do it only batting and survive."

"You have to field, you have to bowl really well. So we have to improve on that side."

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WORLD CUP COCKTAIL

Sri Lanka fast bowler Suranga Lakmal was fined Sunday for firing two successive beamers at England's Jos Buttler, an action for which he showed "no remorse", the International Cricket Council said.

The incident happened in the 50th and final over of England's innings in their World Cup clash when Lakmal bowled a second consecutive high, full pitched ball to Buttler, after being given a first and final warning by on-field umpire Rod Tucker earlier during the same over.

Lakmal was stopped from bowling at Wellington's Westpace Stadium and reported to the match referee David Boon for dangerous and unfair bowling.

He was also fined 30 percent of his match fee after pleading guilty to breaching rules that relate to "conduct contrary to the spirit of the game".

"While making my decision, I took into account that it is was dangerous and unfair bowling, there were no mitigating circumstances, and there was no remorse from the bowler," said former Australia batsman Boon.

Sri Lanka won the match by nine wickets, although Lakmal ended with expensive figures of one for 71 from 7.4 overs.

Worst review in the history of cricket?

Sri Lanka have made a bid for the worst review of all time in their World Cup match against England.



The two countries faced off in Wellington on Sunday, with England

posting 309 thanks in large part to a century from Joe Root.

But it could be argued that Root's 121 off 108 balls (he was dropped on two), and Rangana Herath's hand injury after spilling a cracking caught and bowled chance off Jos Buttler, were not the main talking points of the innings.

That honour could well go to the review, called for after Suranga Lakmal sent in a full toss to Joe Root in the 39th over. As Root failed in his attempt to flick it away, the ball crashed into the batsman's leg and he and James Taylor ran a single, forcing a dive from Root that halted play.

"Seems as if there's a review here for lbw. That's ... optimistic," commentator David Lloyd said.

Replays showed that Lakmal's foot being behind the line was the only positive thing to come from the Sri Lankans' review. Root's leg was well outside leg stump, and the ball was angling away as it hit.

"That is the worst I've seen," Lloyd said.

The review sparked conversation on Twitter, with most bewildered that Sri Lanka even bothered.

'Popeye' McCullum gets all-clear

New Zealand are confident that captain Brendon McCullum will be fit for next Sunday's World Cup clash against Afghanistan despite taking a nasty blow on his left arm from Australia fast bowler Mitchell Johnson.

McCullum hit a quickfire 50 in Saturday's tension-packed one-wicket win over the four-time champions at Eden Park, but needed lengthy treatment on his swollen forearm.

However, coach Mike Hesson expects McCullum to be fit for the remainder of the pool stage matches even though the Black Caps have already made sure of their place in the quarter-finals.

"It's pretty swollen at the moment, he looks a bit like Popeye," Hesson said on Sunday. "We'll make another assessment in a day or so, but all signs are that he will be fine." --COMPILED

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LAHIRU THIRIMANNE

Thirimanne may well be described as the 'boy who lived' for Sri Lanka. Having survived a number of chances, it was only a matter of time before the 25-year-old would utilise those opportunities to make a big one. Against Bangladesh, he was dropped in the first over off Mashrafe Bin Mortaza and while he couldn't make the most of that chance, he made amends against England as he went on to slam his way to his career-best score; an unbeaten 139. Chasing a 300-plus score is never easy; in fact it's daunting to say the least. As a result, the start that Thirimanne provided the Lankans was perfect and a much-needed one.