

SPORT



Hockey league sees hope

SPORTS REPORTER

The ice between the warring clubs over the Premier Division Hockey League seems to have started to break after deputy sports minister Arif Khan Joy held a fruitful meeting with officials of the clubs and the Bangladesh Hockey Federation (BHF) yesterday.

The four clubs -- Mohammedan SC, Dhaka Mariner Youngs Club, Bangladesh SC and Wari Club -- who boycotted the last edition of the top-tier league and threatened to boycott this year too, have seemingly softened their stance a bit during the meeting with the minister held at the National Sports Council.

The four aforementioned clubs, who have been demanding dissolution of the current BHF executive committee, expressed their desire to play in the league on condition of 'creating an enabling environment through forming an acceptable ad-hoc committee'.

Other clubs such as Abahani, Usha, Ajax SC, Shadharan Bima and Sonali Bank have also expressed their desire to play but with the participation of all 12 teams and they are even ready to sacrifice some time so that all the teams could be brought under an umbrella.

"We have reached a consensus that the league will be held with participation of all the clubs. We now need to overcome the remaining 'disagreements' among the organisers and I hope those will be solved once we sit with the high-ups of the clubs."

Joy hinted that he would sit with the state minister for sports Biren Shikdar, Mohammedan's Lokman Hossain Bhuiyan, Abahani's Afzalur Rahman Sinha and Dewan Shafiqul Arefin Tutul to overcome the remaining issues.

Mushy safe for now but ...

NAIMUL KARIM



Bangladesh Cricket Board president Nazmul Hassan Papon has categorically said that Mushfiqur Rahim will captain the Tigers for the one-off Test against India next month. However, he also revealed that the board will fix a more definitive role for Mushfiqur in the Test team by the end of this year.

The president feels that the triple responsibility—batting, wicket-keeping and captaincy—is 'too stressful' for the player and that the board will discuss the matter with Mushfiqur.

"I personally felt that both the captaincy and the performance of our players in the last Test was poor. We are not happy. The mentality of the players wasn't right. One can't just hit the ball and survive two straight days," Papon told The Daily Star yesterday.

"With regards to Test captaincy, if we can get a substitute, we will think about it. But at this point of time we don't have any. We feel that for a player to keep, bat and captain a side together is too stressful. For him to stand behind the wicket all day and then play a long innings... the whole scenario can become a little demanding.

"We would want to lessen the burden on him. It's still not decided as to how we are going to do that. But the obvious move would be for him to compromise with either one duty; keeping or captaincy. We will discuss the issue with him before taking any steps," he added.

The BCB appoints the captains and vice-captains of the ODI and Test teams on a series-by-series basis. While Mushfiqur's roles as captain and wicketkeeper will be under observation, no changes are likely to be made prior to the India series in June.

"I don't think there needs to be any change prior to the India series. Let us see what happens. But we will definitely have to come to a solution by the end of this year," said Papon.

Following the captain and the team management's decision to bowl first in the second Test, Mushfiqur, not for the first time in his career, came under heavy scrutiny from various quarters.

The move was described as defensive and was criticised since the Tigers had fielded eight batsmen in the side. While there was grass on the wicket, the team management had selected just two specialist pacers in the second Test. The entire game-plan, on the whole, came under fire later on.

In his defence, Mushfiqur said that they had played young Soumya Sarkar as the third pacer in the side and that things 'could have been different' had Shahadat Hossain not been injured.

The other decision that raised a few eyebrows was regarding Mushfiqur's keeping. The skipper had hurt his ring finger in the first Test and that compelled Imrul Kayes, a part-time keeper, to stand behind the wickets for more than a day.

While a section of the team management reportedly wanted Mushfiqur to just play as a batsman in the second Test, the skipper however, reportedly didn't agree to the move. Mushfiqur, who scored just 44 runs in the series at an average of 11, later admitted that the injury did affect his batting to a certain extent.

Mushfiqur Rahim's role in the Test side will be under scrutiny this year.

PHOTO: STAR FILE

New teams in this BPL? Back and forth about a series with WI

SPORTS REPORTER



In an already busy schedule, the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) might add another series in November-December this year to their home itinerary if the West Indies accept their proposal.

"West Indies want to play five Twenty20 Internationals, but we have said that we want to play at least two ODIs and three T20 matches. We haven't received any response from them yet," BCB president Nazmul Hassan Papon told reporters yesterday.

It is assumed that the West Indies had proposed to the BCB to play the T20 matches in Bangladesh in sideline-meetings between the high-ups of the two boards during the World Cup down under, and also at the International Cricket Council headquarters in Dubai.

BCB's media committee chairman Jalal Yunus said they will need to adjust the proposed Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) dates in December if the West Indies Cricket Board agrees to the proposal.

The BCB is planning to stage the third edition of the trouble-hit BPL with a new structure so that they can avoid all the prob-

lems that had plagued the first two editions of the tournament. Papon said that there would be no scope for the old franchises to stay in the tournament as all of them are now defaulters.

"We have decided to move to a new format. The situation that is there till now is that almost everyone is a defaulter and it is not possible to ask for money time after time. They [franchises] have been served with legal notices long time ago. They are defaulters and there is no doubt about that. They did not even respond to the notices. Naturally, those franchises who are continuously faltering won't be able to stay in the field," said Papon.

"My opinion is that the franchises which came here had come for making profit. That was their main motive. But that was not the case. So we have decided that those who want to invest in the game and those who love the game will get priority," he added, making it clear that they would stage the third edition with new franchises.

Seven franchises took part in the first two editions of the tournament and Papon informed that they didn't have any plans to either increase or decrease the number of franchises for the upcoming edition.

INA NUTSHELL

Three-year-old McCullum!

INTERNET

A three-year-old boy from Hutt-Valley has become an internet sensation after a video of his cricketing skills was uploaded to Facebook.

Brooklyn Wratt is a big hitting, medium-pace bowling prodigy who has better hand-eye coordination than some adults.

Did we mention he's only three?

Wratt models his game on his favourite player, Brendon McCullum, and if he continues developing and improving at such an impressive rate, may one day be a Black Caps legend too.

'4 Kings involved in fixing'

INTERNET

Former Indian Premier League commissioner Lalit Modi has claimed that at least four players from the Chennai Super Kings franchise are involved in fixing.

Modi took to Twitter to reveal this, but refrained himself from revealing the names of the players. He believes that if the Supreme Court releases the list, it will contain some international players in it as well.

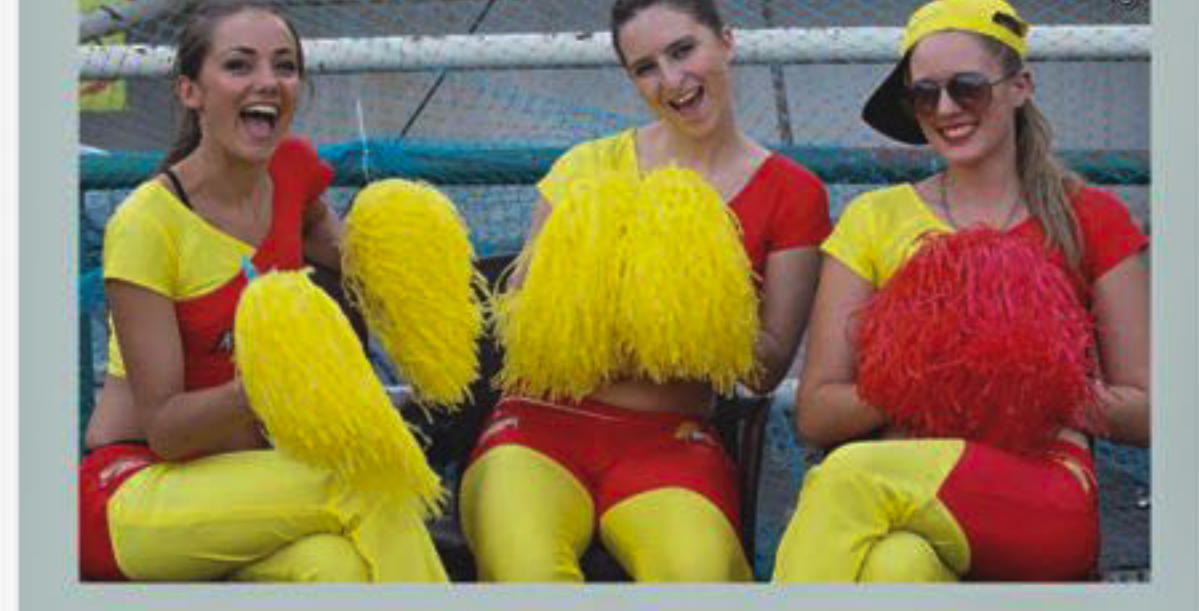
He has also taken a pot-shot at the Board of Control for Cricket in India, its secretary Anurag Thakur and former board president Narayanaswami Srinivasan apart from claiming that around 10,000 crore rupees are being used for betting during every single match.

Cheer girls' rooms raided

INTERNET

Indian Premier League cheerleaders were left in a state of shock, when the Raipur police on Wednesday raided their hotel rooms, that too without any warrant, said a report published in Times of India.

The cheer girls belonged to the Chennai Super Kings franchise that played an IPL match against



Delhi Daredevils at Raipur. Most of them hail from England and Australia.

In shock seeing police in their rooms, the cheer girls rang up the event management company that arranged their association with the IPL.

The Kotwali police officials were reportedly seen storming the hotel, where the girls were staying, and questioned them for almost an hour. According to the sources of TOI, the police did not have any raid warrant and called it a "routine check".

The hotel staff labelled it as "strong-arm tactics" without "any evidence".

ED summons SRK

INTERNET

Bollywood superstar and Kolkata Knight Riders co-owner Shah Rukh Khan was summoned by Enforcement Directorate (ED) over alleged over alleged violation of foreign exchange rules in connection with the Indian Premier League. ED has also sent notice to the co-owners and promoters of Kolkata franchise, which includes Juhi Chawla and Jay Mehta.

A recent audit had indicated that shares sold to a private company based in Mauritius had been undervalued. Audit had also found that Khan's company committed a forex violation of around 100 crore rupees. The issue has been under investigation by ED for a while and now the actor has been asked to appear before the ED by the end of May.

India okays Pak series

AGENCIES, New Delhi

Much to the delight of cricket fans across the world, Indian government on Wednesday gave green signal to an India-Pakistan series in UAE in December this year, according to reports.

The approval came after Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) chief Shahryar Khan met Finance Minister Arun Jaitley.

While the government was of the view that sports should not be mixed with politics, sources said there will be no compromise with Pakistan on issue of terrorism.

During the past few days, Shahryar also held meetings with Indian board chief Jagmohan Dalmiya and secretary Anurag Thakur.

Earlier in a ground-breaking move, cricket administrators from India and Pakistan agreed to play five bilateral series in eight years, first of which is tentatively scheduled to take place in December this year.

"The series will start in December as per schedule and it will comprise three Tests, five ODIs and two T20Is. The preparation is on in full swing. We have to overcome the final hurdle," Shahryar said.

'Deceived' KP IPL-bound

AGENCIES, New Delhi



After the door to the England cricket team was shut on Kevin Pietersen's face, he has decided to feature for Sunrisers Hyderabad in their quest to claim a playoff berth in the ongoing IPL.

Pietersen said that he would be flying to India on Friday and termed it a "good opportunity to cool down".

In his 'tell-all' column, Pietersen poured his heart out at being left in the lurch.

"I had given up my IPL contract to play in county cricket. Surrey did not have funds to pay me so I said I would play for a donation to charity,

and it is horrendous to feel I have been led down the garden path. They knew all along this was a dead end for me," he wrote.

Morning all, after a pretty bad day yesterday I've given it a lot of thought overnight. I'm applying for the coaching job! #StraussLogic

- KP's tweet to his 2.56 million followers Wednesday

"I am absolutely devastated that it looks like my hopes of an England coaching job as England are currently without a coach following the dismissal of Peter Moores last weekend.

been said and asked of me.

"They have used the word 'trust' to justify not selecting me. Trust is a two-way thing. I couldn't believe just half an hour after I had my meeting, the result of it was on the internet and on the BBC airwaves. Now I certainly didn't tell anybody, so who did? They say they don't trust me, but how can anybody trust them?"

The former England captain also confirmed that he turned down Strauss's offer to sit on an 'advisory panel'.

However, Pietersen did make light of the situation, joking on Twitter that he had applied for the England coaching job as England are currently without a coach following the dismissal of Peter Moores last weekend.



Briton Andy Murray plays a backhand return against Jeremy Chardy of France during the second round of Italian Open in Rome yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP