

SPORT

Rubel discharged

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday finally discharged national cricketer Rubel Hossain from a case filed by film actress Naznin Akhtar Happy, who brought allegations of sexual abuse against him.

Judge Tanjina Ismail of the Fifth Special Tribunal for Prevention of Women and Children Repression rejected Happy's no-confidence petition and passed the order.

Earlier in the day, both the parties placed their arguments in support of granting their petitions. During yesterday's hearing, Rubel and Happy were present at the court.

Happy's lawyer Abdullah Al Mansur Ripon, told The Daily Star that his client would go to the High Court against the tribunal's order.

On May 17 Happy filed the no-confidence petition against the probe report submitted by the police in the case filed by her against the pacer of the Bangladesh national team.

Rajasthan eliminated

STAR SPORT DESK

Rajasthan Royals were eliminated from this year's Indian Premier League (IPL) after losing by 71 runs against Royal Challengers Bangalore in the eliminator at the Maharashtra Cricket Association Stadium in Pune last night.

Rajasthan were skittled out for 109 runs in 19 overs, with only Ajinkya Rahane making notable 42 runs, in reply to Bangalore's mammoth 180.

The Bangalore innings was compiled on a 38-run 66 from AB de Villiers and an unbeaten 54 from Mandeep Singh. Bangalore will face Chennai Super Kings in the second qualifier for a place in the final against Mumbai Indians.

SCORES IN BRIEF

BANGALORE: 180 for 4 (De Villiers 66, Mandeep 54 not out; Kulkarni 2-28)
RAJASTHAN: 109 all out in 19 overs (Rahane 42; Patel 2-15, Arvind 2-20)
Result: RCB won by 71 runs.



Bangladesh ODI skipper Mashrafe Bin Mortaza (L) seems to be in the midst of an impromptu strategic meeting with his vice-captain Shakib Al Hasan, Taskin Ahmed and Nasir Hossain during their fitness session at the SBNSC in Mirpur yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

41.41 crores for Tigers

SPORTS REPORTER



An improved performance on the field led to increased bids for the Tigers' sponsorship rights as the Bangladesh Cricket Board sold the rights for the next two years to media planning company Top of Mind for Tk 41.41 crores.

The bid from Top of Mind beat their closest rivals Grameenphone by Tk41 lakhs. This was the second time that Top of Mind won the sponsorship rights, after sponsoring the team during the recently concluded Pakistan series.

The BCB was pleased with the outcome of the bidding and credited the amplified response to Bangladesh's good performances on the field, which made the world take note.

"The entire credit goes to our national cricketers. Two years ago when Sahara received the rights, the bids from the local companies were nowhere near Sahara. This time we received bids which were much better than Sahara. And to receive such confidence from local companies is a great sign. I am really happy to see this," said BCB president Nazmul Hassan Papon.

Hassan Papon.

In 2012, Sahara Matribhumi, the Bangladesh subsidiary of Sahara group, had bid TK 73.1 crores for the sponsorship rights for four years. However, the deal was voided after the World Cup.

According to the BCB president, had the deal continued, the BCB would have received approximately TK 28 crores over the next two years from Sahara and that was the reason why the base price of the bidding yesterday was TK 30 crores.

However as opposed to the deal

signed with Sahara, Top of Mind will not get the sponsorship rights of the team for ICC events. They also won't be getting the rights of the Academy team. They will however, retain the sponsorship rights for the Asia Cup.

"We sold the rights for the national team, under-19 team, women's team and A team. We will auction the sponsorship rights for the T20 World Cup and ICC Under-19 World Cup later," Kazi Inam, BCB director.

Inam further stated that the BCB and Sahara had cleared all their finan-



BCB president Nazmul Hassan Papon (2nd from R) speaks at a press briefing yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

Eng-NZ first Test starts today

AFP, London

New Zealand's Tim Southee will return to the scene of one of his greatest triumphs on Thursday for the first Test against England at Lord's.

Two years ago, the swing bowler gained a coveted place on the Lord's honours board with a match haul of 10 for 108, but the Kiwis suffered a 170-run defeat.

However, Southee was on the winning side in February when his seven-wicket haul set up a victory for the Black Caps over England at Wellington during the World Cup. Now he is aiming to enjoy more in what will be the 100th Test between the sides.

The tourists have won just four of their previous 52 Tests in England.

"It's always nice to come back to a ground where you've had success. But you start on zero again on Thursday," said Southee.

Aamer 'fired up' after ban

AFP, Sydney

Pakistan's Mohammad Aamer admits he almost gave up cricket after being hit with a five-year ban for spot-fixing, but that he is now fired up to take wickets and repair his reputation.

The ICC relaxed his penalty in January after the Pakistan Cricket Board requested he be allowed to play domestic cricket before the ban officially expires in September.

"I must admit I have been given a new life," Aamer said on Wednesday.

"I will try my best to avail this opportunity. I am ready to put in the hard yards to serve Pakistan."

Aamer said he is aiming for a gradual return to international cricket.

"I am extremely pleased to see the crowd and fans supporting me after the comeback. It really is huge force of motivation for me.

"They have lot of expectations from me. Now it is my responsibility to not let them down. I don't have words to explain how tough last four years were. It is not easy when your bread and butter is stopped and you have no other income," he said.

"I was in a situation that I wasn't even allowed to touch a ball. It was really difficult," Aamer concluded.

Unprecedented security for Zim

AFP, Lahore



Bemused players said they hoped to take the focus off security and put it back on cricket after authorities mounted an unprecedented operation to guard insurgency-hit Pakistan's first home international in six years.

Thousands of police and paramilitaries have been deployed and helicopters will be buzzing over Lahore's Gaddafi Stadium, which has been turned into a fortress for Friday's Twenty20 game against lowly Zimbabwe.

The fixture is Pakistan's first on home soil since 2009, when militants launched a gun attack on Sri Lanka's team bus in Lahore, killing eight police and civilians and leaving seven players wounded.

Roads around the stadium will be closed and shops and restaurants have been shuttered for the duration of the series, consisting of two Twenty20s and three ODIs, all in Lahore.

Jammers are in use to cut out radio signals, hampering wifi at the stadium, and fans will have to go through metal detectors at three security checkpoints, raising the prospect of hours of queuing.

Zimbabwe have been under tight wraps since their arrival early on Tuesday, when they were whisked from the airport to their hotel watched by thousands of security personnel.

They are far from the usual arrangements for a cricket match, and Zimbabwe captain Elton Chigumbura said it was a new experience for him and his team.

"Yes, it's obviously something new for us," said Chigumbura. "But we know why it is like this and players are not worried because Pakistan have done this for us, to be secure and safe."

"For us the main thing is to play good cricket and I don't think it will affect us."

Pakistan captain Shahid Afridi hoped the first ball on Friday will refocus attention on cricket as he attempts to lift his team after a poor World Cup and series in Bangladesh.

"These (security) arrangements are necessary," said Afridi. "I am sure with the first ball on Friday all attention will be on cricket and fans will enjoy the game without any bother and I hope they come in big number."

'Bhajji deserved it'

PTI, New Delhi



Sunil Gavaskar on Wednesday welcomed the return of Harbhajan Singh to the Indian cricket team after more than two years, saying the off-spinner looks

in good form even though he doesn't need to prove anything to anyone with close to 700 international wickets under his belt.

"With Harbhajan's selection, the selectors have shown that they are picking players on current form. Whether senior or junior, if a player is doing well, he will come back (to the team)," Gavaskar told NDTV after Harbhajan was picked in the Test squad for the one-off match in Bangladesh.

Harbhajan, whose last India appearance came in a Test match in March 2013, has been bowling well in the ongoing IPL, taking 16 wickets in 14 games at 25.75.

Asked whether it made more sense to pick the feisty spinner in the one-day squad, Gavaskar said: "Well he has more than 400 Test wickets to his name, he doesn't need to prove anything to anyone or depend on his Ranji Trophy performance."

Sometimes it is not only about taking wickets, it is also about how you are bowling and Harbhajan looks to be in good form. He is bowling slow, getting the ball to turn, getting the bounce, selectors have taken note of that."

While Harbhajan's inclusion will not let Ravichandran Ashwin relax and breed healthy competition in the team, the fact that he has made a return doesn't give a good picture of the spin talent in the country.

"Yes, certainly, it is not a good sign. It shows that we don't have many good off-spinners on the domestic circuit," said Gavaskar.

Contrary to speculation regarding some players being rested for the Bangladesh tour, the BCCI selectors picked a full strength squad for the Test and three one-dayers.

Gavaskar said the selection showed India are not taking Bangladesh lightly.

"Bangladesh have played good cricket recently, whether beating Pakistan at home or in the World Cup. It could also be the case the players did not want to rest. One normally asks for rest when he is completely tired and not able to give his best for the country," he added.

There is this burning desire inside me to make it back to the Indian team. That is the reason why I am playing cricket. Playing for India is the biggest thing and the most satisfying thing for me. That is the biggest motivation for me.

Harbhajan Singh

'We need to work harder'

SPORTS REPORTER



Rubel Hossain must be a relieved man. The sexual allegations that were brought against him were finally put to rest by a Dhaka court yesterday and he was discharged.

However, while he has managed to win one battle, another remains. The pacer now has to ensure that he recovers from his side-strain in time for the India series which begins on June 10.

The Bangladesh national cricket team attended their first camp for the India series at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium yesterday with the members of the preliminary squad going through various fitness tests.

While Rubel couldn't attend the session since he had to be present at court, the team management will hope that the bowler can ace the second series of fitness tests due to take place today. Bangladesh's pace attack seems to be hanging by a thread, as both their key bowlers are struggling with injuries.

Apart from Rubel, Shafiqul Islam is the other bowler the team management will be looking to. Shafiqul though is still recovering from a finger injury. That leaves the team with Mohammad Shahid and Abul Hasan.

While Shahid did perform well in the last series, he took a major share of the burden due to injuries to Rubel and Shahadat Hossain and that's something the team management will hope does not happen again.

Apart from Rubel, Sabbir Rahman was the other member of the preliminary squad who wasn't present yesterday. He is currently in India for his father's treatment.

Trainer Mario Villavarayan expressed his optimism following Bangladesh's fitness session yesterday.

"It's been almost a year since I have been here and I am happy to see the change in attitude and their training habits in the last twelve months. But this year is going to be another busy year. So we have to keep working hard like we did before the World Cup," said the Sri Lankan.

"Taking into consideration that we played a lot of cricket recently, I am satisfied with the players. But there's still a lot of work to do," added Villavarayan.

Almost all the players expected to take part in the lone Test match against India from June 10 will be playing in the last round of the Bangladesh Cricket League which begins on May 24. It will be a round which could well provide a clear understanding of the players' injuries.

IN A NUTSHELL

The first of its kind?

AFP, London

An amateur cricketer from England is believed to be the first batsman to have been given out for handling a no-ball.

Bryn Darbyshire was batting for Lymington in Hampshire, southern England when the bowler overstepped the crease and the umpire declared a no-ball. In attempting a shot, Darbyshire only clipped the ball, but when he then picked it up and threw it to a fielder, the fielding team appealed and he was given out.

As Darbyshire did not have the fielding side's permission to handle the ball, he broke the laws of the game and even in an instance of a no-ball a batsman may be dismissed for handling the ball, hitting the ball twice, obstructing the field or being run out.

"I don't think the umpire did anything wrong, but I think it was bad sportsmanship on the part of our opponents. I had hit the same bowler for six off my second ball and was taking him apart. They

CSK India's most popular

AGENCIES, New Delhi

Facebook has released a 'fandom' map, which shows the most-liked teams on the social networking site across all Indian states and districts. Facebook has mapped the fans of each of the eight IPL teams across India and it shows that each team is the most supported one in its home state.

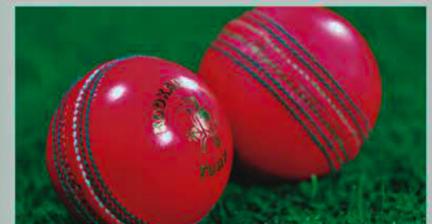
But in states that do not have a team, Chennai Super Kings dominates. CSK has also garnered maximum likes on Facebook.

Aussies practice with pink ball

AGENCIES, Sydney

Michael Clarke and his teammates will be assured of at least one pink ball tune-up before facing New Zealand in a day-night Test.

Cricketer Australia (CA) is yet to finalise plans for an inaugural day-night Test, but remain confident it will go ahead during the series against New Zealand.



Details are expected to be ironed out when officials meet at the ICC's annual conference on June 22-26.

"A number of players in the Australian Test squad have had no experience with the pink balls so we'd obviously be keen to get their feedback whenever they have the opportunity to take part in a proper trial," Australian Cricketers Association chief Alistair Nicholson said.

The ICC gave the green light to day-night Tests in 2012, leaving it up to nations to mutually agree on playing conditions.