

# SPORT

## 'Need to utilise good times'

BISHWAJIT ROY

The high-ups of Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) can stay happy campers following the national team's success in the last eight months in international cricket, especially in the ODIs.

But it is a well-known fact that only a good domestic structure can further enhance and strengthen the sport in Bangladesh and help players to perform in Tests.

However, that the BCB is yet to finalise the domestic calendar for this season, which began in July this year, cannot be good news.

The BCB had made promises of pertaining to a resolute domestic schedule for the coming years several times in the past, the dream however of a fixed calendar still seems quite distant.

BCB president Nazmul Hassan Papon admitted that the situation wasn't ideal for a cricketing nation, which has just begun to show its mettle in world cricket.

"I have called a board meeting on August 22 and in that meeting the highest priority will be given to fixing a domestic calendar for this season. We will also be speaking about our domestic structure at length," the BCB boss told The Daily Star over phone yesterday.

It will be a rather unique feat if the issues regarding domestic cricket, as Papon said, do indeed dominate the upcoming board meeting.

With no permanent domestic calendar and no pre-season preparation, players generally aren't able to give their best during the two first-class tournaments; the after effects of which are visible in Bangladesh's Test career.

"Domestic cricket will be given top priority from now on and I want to come out from the culture of making last minute decisions. We have to fix the calendar for the next few seasons.

"In my opinion, for the future of our cricket, we need to strengthen our domestic structure and there are no doubts regarding that. We are going through a good time, so it's time for us to capitalise on it since you are likely to get good and positive response from everywhere, with regards to whatever decision you plan to take," said Papon.

"I also want to give special emphasis on age-level competitions. I think we don't have proper monitoring in this level. I have heard stories of players getting chances mainly due to favours from the inside. That isn't a good thing.

"Another thing that I would like to find out is as to why we haven't been able to produce cricketers from regions like Chittagong and Mymensingh," he added.

While the BCB president's excitement, no doubt, is an encouraging sign, there are however, a number of obstacles that he may have to overcome in order to enforce his aforementioned wishes.

Some of which were described by BCB CEO Nizamuddin Chowdhury yesterday.

"We have to give priority to international commitments. We don't have enough grounds and every committee wants the best facilities to host their respective tournaments or leagues. But before everything we will have to fix the calendar. These are issues that will be discussed in the meeting."

The lack of sporting wickets in domestic cricket has been a perennial problem and in order to address that the BCB is planning to hire more curators.

"We don't have enough curators. We are currently looking to hire curators from our neighbouring countries. It's a move that I



Bangladesh national women's cricket team members take a breather following a gym session at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium yesterday. They have been training hard for their next month's series against South Africa.

PHOTO: BCB

## SAFF U-19 C'SHIP Bangladesh get Nepal, Bhutan

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh have been placed alongside hosts Nepal and Bhutan in Group 'A' of the inaugural SAFF Under-19 Football Championship, which will be held in Kathmandu from August 20 to 29.

Group B features India, Maldives and Afghanistan. The draw for the tournament was held in Kathmandu yesterday.

The seedings for draw was based on the latest AFC U-19 rankings. Bangladesh were the top-seeded side followed by India, Maldives, Nepal, Afghanistan and Bhutan.

Bangladesh will open their campaign against Bhutan on August 22 before taking on hosts Nepal on August 24. The final of the tournament will be held on August 29.

## Absolute garbage: Clarke

AFP, Sydney

Australia captain Michael Clarke angrily denied Monday claims that the disastrous England tour has been plagued by off-field dramas, saying it was "absolute garbage".

Clarke, 34, announced he was retiring after England completed a crushing innings and 78-run victory in the fourth Test at Trent Bridge on Saturday to take an unbeatable 3-1 lead in the five-match Ashes series.

He will play the final Test at The Oval on August 20 before the curtain comes down on a distinguished career.

But his departure has been met by rumblings of off-field unrest in the Australian media, with the Sydney Daily Telegraph claiming there was a long-running feud between the wives of two senior players which caused distractions.

It also claimed Clarke refused to travel on the team bus or socialise with teammates, while the sacking

of popular vice-captain Brad Haddin after time off for family reasons did not go down well.

"There is no disharmony in this group whatsoever. The players are as tight as any team I've been a part of," Clarke told Sydney radio station Triple M.

"Travelling in different cars? Wives and girlfriends being on tour is a distraction? That's absolute garbage," he added.

"I'll give back 10 of my Test 100s if it wasn't for my beautiful wife."

The newspaper had claimed it was "the year-long disintegration in the off-field relationship between Clarke and the rest of the team" that hindered any chance of Ashes success.

"He often chooses to travel by private car instead of the team bus and rarely attends team get-togethers," it said.

"On the night that he made his decision to step down, team members were stunned when he joined them for a rare drink in the hotel bar,

although he ended the night drowning his sorrows with former teammate Shane Warne rather than any of the current side."

Cricketer Australia chief executive James Sutherland has vowed a full review of the tour, and Clarke said the players had to accept blame.

"At the end of the day the players are the ones who walk onto the field, we have to perform and we haven't performed well enough," he said.

In a column for the Sydney Daily Telegraph on Monday, Clarke revealed it was a tough decision to walk away from Test cricket.

"My entire life has been about cricket. I've thought about the great game every day for as long as I can remember," he said.

"Definitely telling my grandfather was perhaps the hardest part and he was very emotional. Pop's made it clear to me over the past 10 years that watching me play cricket is a big part of what keeps him going.

"I tried not to let emotion overcome me -- I've done too much

## Hosts eye semis

### Nepal outplay Maldives

SPORTS REPORTER



Bangladesh are looking forward to start the SAFF U-19 Championship on a winning note as they take on Sri Lanka at the Sylhet District Stadium today.

An outright win against the Lankans will confirm the semifinal berth for the hosts from the three-team Group A as Sri Lanka have already lost against India (0-5). The boys in the red and green are upbeat ahead of their opener and are eager to confirm the last-four berth in their opening match.

"We are hopeful of making a good start. Compared to the other departments, the defence is a bit of a worry, but I am trying to rectify it. Sri Lanka use the long ball approach, but we will give emphasis on building up the game from behind and keep ball possession as long as we can," said Bangladesh coach Syed Golam Jilani, who trained his charges for the last 20 days at the BFF Academy.

Sri Lanka, on the other hand, are cannot afford to drop lose this match, as it would mean the end of their campaign.

"Bangladesh is a strong side but we have no alternative but to play for a win," said Sri Lanka coach Suzuki Chikashi.

Meanwhile, last edition's runners-up, Nepal, kicked off their campaign with a 5-0 win over Maldives in the first match of Group B yesterday. Prezen Tamang and Roman Limbu bagged a brace apiece while Laxman Pariyar scored the other goal for Nepal, who led the first half 3-0.

## 'We planned a new ICC'

AFP, Sydney

Former cricket boss Lalit Modi admitted Monday his involvement in a plot to overthrow the sport's establishment, aiming to create a new world governing body affiliated with the Olympic movement.

The ex-Indian Premier League chairman, who is wanted by police over allegations of money laundering linked to a lucrative television deal, said a detailed plan had been years in the making.

"We're talking about another cricketing system. There is a blueprint out there, it's got my rubber stamp on it," he told the Australian Broadcasting Corporation in an interview.

"I have been involved in it. I say it for the first time, I've been involved in putting that [blue] print together."

In the past, while acknowledging involvement in discussions to set up a new governing body, Modi had insisted he had walked away from the project.

"The plan that I have put together is a very detailed plan, it's not a plan that's come off the cuff, it's been taking years and years and years in the making," he said.

Modi, who lives in London after fleeing India in 2010 when tax and financial crime authorities raided his premises, has long been critical of the International Cricket Council's governance structure and financial model.

## India target Sanga party

AFP, Galle



India hope to end a 22-year wait for a Test series win in Sri Lanka when the three-match rubber marking Kumar Sangakkara's farewell opens in Galle on Wednesday.

The Sri Lankan batting great, whose 12,305 runs make him Test cricket's leading scorer among those still playing, is due to quit international cricket after playing in the first two Tests.

India captain Virat Kohli said his team plans to give 37-year-old Sangakkara a fond farewell -- but also make sure they do not allow the prolific left-hander to pile up big scores.

"Great man and a great cricketer, he deserves a very good farewell and we will prepare accordingly," Kohli said of Sangakkara. "But hopefully we will also get him out cheaply."

The tourists will not be distracted by the hype over Sangakkara's farewell series as they bid to end a barren phase in Sri Lanka since the 1-0 victory by Mohammad Azharuddin's men in 1993.

India have played four series on the island since, losing in 2001 and 2008 while drawing in 1997 and 2010.

The five-year gap since their last series means that 11 of the 15 tourists, including skipper Kohli, have not played a Test match on Sri Lankan soil before.

Opening batsman Murali Vijay and bowlers, Harbhajan Singh, Ishant Sharma and Amit Mishra, are the exceptions, although several others in the squad have played limited-overs games in Sri Lanka.

Kohli, regarded as one of the most accomplished batsmen in the modern game, is determined to make a winning start in his first full series as captain after taking over from Mahendra Singh Dhoni in Australia last year.



India cricketers getting ready for a practice session as team director Ravi Shastri looks on at Galle yesterday.

PHOTO: INTERNET

## BU edge past Feni

SPORTS REPORTER

A second-half brace from Nigerian forward Simon Ezeodika helped Brothers Union post a 2-0 win over Feni Soccer Club in their penultimate fixture of the Manyavar Bangladesh Premier League at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

The tenth win put Brothers Union in third position with 35 points, one ahead of both Mohammedan SC and Abahani while Feni Soccer remained in seventh position with 18 points.

Brothers Union, playing without their Indian coach Syed Nayeemuddin, saw Augustine Walson's attempt in the 63rd minute blocked by Feni goalkeeper Golam Mustafa Tohan, who however was partly to blame when Simon's powerful drive from outside the box crept into the net from between his legs in the 76th minute. The Nigerian then doubled the lead with an angular shot from outside that found the far corner of the net, with Tohan rooted to his position this time.

## Hockey clubs to sit today

SPORTS REPORTER

All the Dhaka-based hockey clubs, affiliated with the Bangladesh Hockey Federation (BHF), are expected to sit tomorrow to find a way out of the stalemate over non-participation of five rebel clubs in the Premier Division Hockey League.

Mohammedan SC, Mariner Youngs Club, Wari Club, Dhaka Wanderers Club and Bangladesh Sporting Club have continued their boycott of the league since the last season, in demand of dismantling of what they call an 'illegal committee' of the BHF.

"I have talked with officials of the five clubs, who are boycotting the league. They have agreed to sit with officials of 30 clubs from the premier division, the first division and the second division. As there is no objection about the other tournaments except for the premier league, we want a consensus to come out of the discussion," said Usha KC's general secretary Abdur Rashid, who is also a vice president of the federation.



Members of the Nepalese team celebrate their victory against the Maldives in the SAFF U-16 Championship at the Sylhet District Stadium yesterday.

PHOTO: BFF

## Vijay out of first Sri Lanka Test

PTI, Galle



India opener Murali Vijay has been ruled out of the first Test against Sri Lanka with a hamstring injury.

In Vijay's absence from the game beginning here on Wednesday, India are likely to open with Shikhar Dhawan and Lokesha Rahul.

"Vijay is not completely fit and since he is still under recovery, we don't want to take a chance with weather like this and slippery outfield. It is a big blow as he is an in-form player and has ability to play the long innings. We will miss his experience," said team director Ravi Shastri in a media interaction on Monday.

In the recent past, Vijay has been the most consistent batsman for India with successful outings in England, Australia and Bangladesh. In 32 Tests, Vijay has scored 2,338 runs with an average of 41.75 and six centuries.

India look likely to field a five-bowler attack and its combination will depend on the pitch on match-day. Shastri also hinted that Rohit Sharma will continue to play at the number three spot which means that Cheteshwar Pujara might not find a place in the eleven.

"Beyond that, playing five bowlers is always the first option. The endeavour is to take twenty wickets so you can win matches. You have to think in that fashion," Shastri said.