

We deserve better

AL-AMIN

Cricket Australia's decision on Friday to defer the scheduled tour of the Aussies to Bangladesh due to security concerns came as a bolt from the blue for a cricket-crazy nation that was gearing up to cap a memorable year of festivity, which incidentally started during the World Cup down under.

It all started after a travel advice update on Friday by Australia's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) for its citizens staying or travelling to Bangladesh. It states: "There is reliable information to suggest that militants may be planning to target Australian interests in Bangladesh."

And according to Cricket Australia's (CA's) CEO James Sunderland that advice prompted them to defer the departure of Steve Smith's men, who were set to fly from different parts of Australia for Dhaka today to play a two-Test series.

To assess the gravity of the situation in the 'hostile' territory the CA has sent its chief of security Sean Carroll, who is now in Dhaka and was reportedly having a series of meetings with the Australian High Commissioner in Bangladesh, the BCB officials and intelligence agencies.

"Our position is we want the tour to go ahead as planned. This has obviously come very suddenly and we've needed to make this response. Our preferred position is to continue with the tour, but the safety and security of our players and staff is the absolute priority and the first priority for us is to secure that. We'll be endeavouring to get some undertakings and understandings of what the situation is in Bangladesh before making any further decisions in regard to the tour," Sunderland was quoted by reporters on Sunday.

It's true that DFAT's Friday's updated advice was unusually specific about Bangladesh.

But it is not understandable the way CA reacted to that advice, which firstly and most importantly put Bangladesh in an embarrassing situation. We are not even sure whether the CA has maintained the proper protocol or standard practice before telling the whole world that they couldn't respect an agreed schedule due to a suspected threat to its players.

We don't know whether the CA has communicated with the Australian High Commission in Bangladesh and whether they have paid any attention to the response of the BCB prior to going public regarding an issue that many felt could have been handled in a respectable and professional way.

We don't want to ignore the security threat, fully aware of the fact that we are living in a world where terrorist attacks are a daily dose of our life. But at the same time we deplore any attempt of being bracketed as a militant-attack-prone zone without conclusive evidence.

Sunderland admitted that that advisory did not necessarily apply to the Australian cricket team since they are going to get the state-level security from Bangladesh, which has not only successfully hosted the T20 World Cup but also played host to three home series this year without even a single crowd disorder, let alone any militant threat. Sunderland might have not even noticed an Instagram post by South Africa fast bowler Dale Steyn, of him playing a game of soccer with some local youths outside the team hotel in Chittagong during the rain-interrupted first Test.

We don't want to get deep into the security threat because the onus is now on Australia to justify its claim. We also don't want to say how safe a place Bangladesh is when it comes to playing cricket. At the moment we are deeply shocked for being labeled as a potentially hostile place for cricketers, a label that we hardly deserve.



Bangladesh captain Salma Khatun speaks to reporters at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday ahead of the national women's cricket team's departure to Pakistan, where they will play two T20Is and two ODIs.

PHOTO: STAR

'We are not scared'

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh women's cricket team captain Salma Khatun and coach Janak Gamage brushed aside the security concerns related to their tour of Pakistan.

After weeks of deliberation, the Bangladesh Cricket Board, a day before Eid, finalised its decision to send the team to Pakistan to play two T20Is and two ODIs in Karachi. The team will leave here this afternoon.

"We were not pressurised by the board to go on this tour. I personally feel that the BCB has managed a secured arrangement for this tour. We are going there to play cricket and that's all that we be concentrating on. Our focus will be on the games," Salma told reporters in Mirpur yesterday.

The skipper further stated that the players in the team were given a choice with

regards to the tour.

"The BCB did ask us if we wanted to go to Pakistan, and we decided to go. We haven't played any match after the last Asian Games [in 2014] and we want to get ready for the World Cup. We just want to tour... it doesn't matter which country we go to," said Salma.

"I don't think it's risky. These kinds of issues are taking place everywhere, not just Pakistan. We are not scared because the place [Southend Club Cricket Stadium] where we will be playing is located far away from the danger area. There is no tension," she added.

When asked as to how the players' families have reacted to the tour, Salma said, "Initially most of them were a little scared. But once we talked to them, it all became okay."

"At the end of the day, we will be concerned about what we do on the field. Once we enter that field, we will forget

about everything else," she added.

Coach Gamage echoed Salma's sentiment and believed that situation in Pakistan at the moment is a lot better than it was before.

"I am not concerned about what will happen outside the field. That [the terrorist attack on Sri Lankan players in 2009] took place a long time ago. I think the situation is different right now," said Gamage.

"I have seen the security plan for us and I don't think any other cricket team has received such kind of security," he added.

The status of security for the visitors has been notched up to the 'VVIP' level, which, according to the team manager, is equivalent to the arrangement made for presidents and prime-ministers of different nations.

The series will begin on September 30 and will end on October 6. The team is scheduled to return home on October 7.

Baki, Robiul finish 7th

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladeshi shooters Abdullah Baki and Robiul Islam finished in seventh positions in their respective events of the 8th Asian Air Gun Championship, which got underway in New Delhi yesterday.

Baki, the Commonwealth Games silver medallist, qualified for the eight-man final round of the 10m Air Rifle (Men's Senior) event, where he eventually finished seventh with a score of 101.8 points, according to a message received from the Bangladesh National Shooting Federation. Robiul, on the other hand, finished seventh after scoring 100.5 points in the eight-man final round of the 10m Air Rifle (Men's Junior) event. The gold medals in both events were won by Indian shooters.

Siddikur's poor form continues

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh's premier golfer Siddikur Rahman's poor run of form continued as he missed the cut for the sixth time in this Asian Tour season on Friday. The 30-year-old golfer, who had used the mid-season break to go to USA in a bid to curing his nagging back injury, missed the midway cut in the Asia Pacific Open in Ibaraki, Japan by one stroke.

Siddikur carded two over-par (72) in each of the first two rounds for a joint 68th place finish as he failed to make the weekend rounds for the sixth time in nine appearances this season. A total 67 golfers made the cut, with Korea's KT Kim eventually winning the title with a score of nine-under-par (271). Siddikur will next play in the Mercuries Taiwan Masters which begins on Thursday.

ASIAN TABLE TENNIS BD team in third round

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh men's team qualified for the third round of the 22nd Asian Table Tennis Championship in Thailand yesterday, said a press release from the Bangladesh Table Tennis Federation.

According to the release, Bangladesh had lost against Malaysia and Mongolia in the preliminary rounds before going on to beat Myanmar and Oman to move into the third round.

The Bangladesh team, featuring Manash, Javed, Parag and Shahed, were scheduled to play against Philippines last night.

Niaz 20th in Malaysia

SPORTS REPORTER

Grandmaster Niaz Murshed finished 20th in the 12th IGB Dato Arthur Tan Malaysian Open Chess, which concluded in Kuala Lumpur yesterday, said a press release from Bangladesh Chess Federation. Niaz earned six points from nine rounds.

FM Fahad Rahman became 89th with four points. In the last round, Niaz drew against IM CRG. Krishna of India while Fahad lost against Chan Yi Meng Ryan of Malaysia. Meanwhile, Hanif Mollah became 34th with 5.5 points while Monir Hossain became 42nd with five points in another rated event in Malaysia.



Bangladesh under-19 team train at the Sheikh Jamal Dhanmondi Club Ground yesterday afternoon. Bangladesh will host Uzbekistan, Bhutan and Sri Lanka in AFC U-19 Championship Qualifiers, which begin on October 2.

PHOTO: BFF

Camp resumes with 29

SPORTS REPORTER



Bangladesh national team's Italian coach Fabio Lopez trimmed his 41-member squad to 29 members as the camp resumed at BKSP in Savar yesterday after two days of Eid break. The 42-year-old Italian retained only two of the seven youngsters initially called up for the camp ahead of October 13 World Cup Qualifier against Kyrgyzstan.

Team BJMC striker Nabib Newaj Jibon and Sheikh Russel forward Mohammad Ruman made the initial cut while Imtiaz Sultan Jitu, Towhidul Alam Sabuj, Shakil Ahmed, Rashedul Alam Moni, Sahel Miah were chalked off for not impressing the coach. Midfielder Mashuk Miah Johnny was

not considered due to his engagement with the under-19 team.

A total of 26 players joined the camp yesterday, with striker Zahid Hasan Emily, goalkeeper Shahidul Alam Sohel and midfielder Jamal Bhuiyan set to join in a few days. Sohel is currently recovering from an ankle injury and is likely to join the rest of the squad within three to four days while Jamal will join on his return from Denmark on September 29. Emily, meanwhile, Emily informed that he has taken leave as his personal doctor suspects him having a tumour in his abdomen. "I felt pain in my lower abdomen and went to the United Hospital. The doctors suspect a tumour and suggested that I should operate immediately," said the Sheikh Russel forward.

Meanwhile, there were a number of senior players, including defenders

Nasir Uddin Chowdhury, Kasto Kumer Bosh and Mohammad Linkon, midfielder Shahedul Alam Shahed and forward Enamul Hoque - who missed out on the 29-member list either due to injury or lack of fitness. Rezaul Karim, Wali Faisal and Faisal Mahmud were among the senior players who have made the initial cut after being recalled to the side.

National team's key midfielder, Hemanta Vincent Biswas, though was not considered for the curtailed squad due to playing in an exhibition match while being on recovery period at his hometown of Dinajpur, with the decision from national teams committee yet to be made.

The squad is likely to be brought down to 23 members by the first week of October before the team leave for Kyrgyzstan on October 9.

Manohar next BCCI president?

AGENCIES, New Delhi

According to sources, former BCCI president Shashank Manohar is all set to succeed late board chief Jagmohan Dalmiya who passed away in Kolkata on Sunday.

Manohar was board supremo from 2008 to 2011.

Manohar, a senior lawyer, who is known for his no-nonsense style of operation and clean image has emerged as a consensus candidate among East Zone units whose turn it is to nominate a president till 2017.

Earlier this week Jharkhand's Amitabh Choudhary had emerged as a candidate as East Zone wanted one of it's own members to replace Dalmiya. But in the game of numbers Choudhary seems to have lost out as the Sharad Pawar and Anurag Thakur factions wanted their man to become chief.

To become president of BCCI, a candidate needs at least 4 of the 6 votes from East Zone and Manohar, therefore, is the best possible consensus candidate under the circumstances.

Manohar's appointment is expected to be formalised in the Board's Special General Meeting, the date of which has not yet been fixed. As per BCCI's constitution a president must be chosen within two weeks of the death of a Board chief.

Six ducks and a Sabbir ton

SPORTS REPORTER



Six Bangladeshi players failed to get off the mark on the first day of their three-day encounter against India A in Bangalore yesterday and had Sabbir Rahman not scored an unbeaten century, the visitors would have already conceded a huge lead by the end of the day.

6 for 4; that's exactly how the scorecard read after six overs were bowled in the morning session at the M Chinnaswamy Stadium as Ishwar Pandey and Varun Aaron ran through Bangladesh A's top order. Anamul Haque, Soumya Sarkar and Liton Das were sent back to the pavilion before they could open their account, while skipper Mominul Haque scored two before getting caught behind.

Sabbir and Shuvagata Hom, then, shared a century stand to provide some respectability to Bangladesh's total. Sabbir scored an unbeaten 122 off 131 balls - an innings which featured 23 fours and a six.

Shuvagata, who is in fine form on this tour, scored yet another half-century before being dismissed for 62.

However, the revival from the middle order lasted for a very short period as once that partnership was broken, with Jayant Yadav sweeping through the tail.

From 182 for 6, Bangladesh A were bundled out for just 228. India's reply, in contrast, began in a dominating fashion. Openers Abhinav Mukund and skipper Shikhar Dhawan raced to a 150-run stand and covered three-fourths of the total in just 30 overs.

Dhawan remained unbeaten on 116 off 112 balls, hitting 16 fours and two sixes. Abhinav was dismissed at the fag end as the hosts reached stumps at 161 for 1.



SCORES IN BRIEF

BANGLADESH A: 228 all out in 52.4 overs (Sabbir 122 not out, Shuvagata 62, Nasir 32, Mominul 2, Anamul 0, Soumya 0, Liton 0; Yadav 4-28, Aaron 4-45)
INDIA A: 161 for 1 (Dhawan 116 not out; Shuvagata 1-37)