



At least we had got one Australian to enjoy his moment at Bangladesh's home of cricket in Mirpur yesterday. Here Australian Ashley Ross, an ICC instructor, is having fun while conducting a Level - 3 coaching course at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium.

PHOTO: BCB

A suspect turns victim

AL-AMIN



So the fear of the millions of Bangladesh cricket fans turned real on Thursday when Cricket Australia postponed the Aussies' two-Test series against the Tigers citing security concerns.

"After six days of extensive deliberations and research, we've come to the conclusion that we have no other alternative than to postpone our tour to Bangladesh," Cricket Australia CEO James Sutherland said in an official handout. This statement is not something new as far as the Australian cricket team is concerned. There has been an instance of the Aussies pulling out from Sri Lanka during the 1996 World Cup.

But for Bangladesh it's the first instance a cricket team has postponed its scheduled trip, the far reaching impact of which may be debatable but one thing at the moment is strongly visible -- it bleeds Bangladesh cricket.

While justifying the decision Sutherland said, "It's not really appropriate for me to go into specific detail on this. But all I can say is that the threats were credible and real and targeted, not only against Westerners but against Australians."

He was actually referring to last Friday's security warning from the Australian government for its citizens in Bangladesh that was replicated by the United States, the United Kingdom and Canada on Monday when an Italian aid worker was gunned down in Dhaka, with multiple international media agencies since reporting that Islamic State claimed responsibility for the attack.

Sutherland also termed Bangladesh's wholehearted effort as 'nothing but outstanding' after the government promised to provide the touring Australian team with the kind of security reserved for the heads of states.

But that outstanding effort fell short of convincing Australia to tour a country that has been widely acclaimed as a very welcoming host and a safe place to be a bilateral series, an ACC or ICC event.

Bangladesh is not immune to security threats, which is a cause of concern for every country on the planet. The killing of an Italian aid worker in Dhaka's diplomatic zone on Monday was something which might have prompted Australia's decision. We deplore the killing in strongest possible terms and want the Bangladesh government do everything in its power to bring the killers to justice.

But at the same time didn't we expect a responsible reaction from all quarters including the foreign media and international agencies to cross-check a questionable claim from SITE that the attack on the Italian was carried out by ISIS?

We also do not rule that out but there is a thin line between a suspect and a convict. Unfortunately the suspect of a security concern eventually became a victim. And Bangladesh cricket has become the biggest victim for committing something beautiful this year -- a brilliant performance in the World Cup down under followed by three outstanding and trouble-free home series against the likes of Pakistan, India and South Africa.

We don't need to say how safe Bangladesh is when it comes to playing cricket and our biggest pride is that we don't like empty seats whenever or wherever an international cricket match is played in this sports fanatic country, perhaps the second best after India. We can proudly claim that there is not a single instance of a security breach ever since Bangladesh hosted the inaugural Champions Trophy in 1998.

After Australian's decision the world will definitely highlight the postponement of the tour focusing on the security concerns.

But is there anyone out there to explain why the image that Bangladesh cricket, that has been built over the years with a lot of hard work, dedication, passion and with some considerable

Siddikur makes a strong start

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh's premier golfer Siddikur Rahman put up a strong performance in the Mercuries Taiwan Masters to share the third position of the leaderboard on the opening day at the Taiwan Golf and Country Club in Taipei yesterday.

Siddikur bounced back strongly in his first tournament after recovering from his back pains to play a three-under-par 69, sharing third place along with Phachara Khongwatmai of Thailand, as Malaysian Danny Chai and Indian Rashid Khan grabbed the first and second positions with five-under-par 67 and four-under-par 68 respectively.

The two-time Asian Tour winner, who missed six cuts in nine appearances this season, surprised himself by playing one eagle at seventh hole and two birdies at sixth and 17th holes against a lone bogey at 10th hole.

"It's been a great day out there. I don't have any expectations this week. I have been working on my game since suffering from the back injury last year. It's very encouraging to return with a good round today [Thursday]," Siddikur was quoted as saying by Asiantour.com.

Papon questions CA's decision

SPORTS REPORTER



Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) president Nazmul Hassan Papon has said that he would discuss the postponement of the Australian cricket team's tour at length during the next ICC meeting, scheduled to take place on October 9 in Dubai.

In a press conference at his residence yesterday evening, Papon also said that BCB would do its best to reschedule the tour as soon as possible.

"Till now I am not exactly sure what made them postpone the tour. The security plan that we provided would have been accepted by any security expert in the world.

"I believe that this issue will be better understood once we sit and have a face-to-face discussion. There is an ICC meeting on the ninth and we will talk about it in detail then," said Papon.

"They haven't scrapped the tour, they have postponed it. We have a

good relationship with Cricket Australia and I am sure that we will be able to reschedule the tour as soon as possible," he added.

The BCB president also admitted that the postponement of the tour was a loss for Bangladesh cricket.

"It will definitely affect us all. I



believe that the entire nation was waiting for this series. So yes, from that aspect, it is a loss for the fans, the public, for us... for everyone. Everyone has been hurt," said Papon.

When asked if he tried to get help regarding the issue from the ICC, Papon said, "I had spoken to the ICC

chairman and I believe he tried to help us as well. I also spoke to Cricket Australia's president. At the end of the day, I think this is more of the Australian government's decision rather than Cricket Australia's."

Restating his disappointment Papon once again spoke of the comprehensive security measures that the BCB had planned to provide for this series.

"Terror threats are present in many countries, but does that mean we have to stop the game of cricket? Had we been unprepared for this event, then it would have been understandable, but that obviously wasn't the case.

"It's sad because in the last few months Bangladesh has been going through a very good phase," said Papon.

"In the Global Terrorism Index rankings, Bangladesh is ranked 23rd. After us is England [27th] and India is ranked sixth. So does that mean cricket won't be played in these countries? Terrorism can't stop cricket. And this is a major issue that I will be discussing in the ICC," he

Women lose T20 series

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh women's cricket team crashed to a 34 run defeat in the second and final T20I against their Pakistan counterparts at the Southend Cricket Club in Karachi yesterday.

Despite braving the hostile environment and travelling to Pakistan to play a series, the Bangladesh women's cricket team is yet to display that fearlessness on the pitch. They lost the previous game by 29 runs.

Pakistan won the toss and chose to bat first and that decision looked questionable as Javeria Khan was dismissed for just two runs. However, that brought out Bismah Maroof, who saw out the innings and finished with 44 runs off 38 deliveries.

While Maroof didn't get much help from her teammates, Aliya Riaz chipped in with a helpful 20 before being dismissed.

When Bangladesh came out to bat, they lost wickets at regular intervals. Salma Khatun returned to the number 4 spot, but she could only manage 10 runs. Rumana Ahmed top-scored with 27, but Bangladesh were dismissed for just 80 runs.

The ODI series will begin on Sunday.

SCORES IN BRIEF
PAKISTAN: 114 for 6 in 20 overs (Marina 33, Bismah 44 not out; Nahida 2-27)
BANGLADESH: (Rumana 27, Ritu 17, Salma 10; Sumaiya 2-9)

BCB turns domestic

SPORTS REPORTER



After Cricket Australia postponed their two-Test tour against Bangladesh yesterday, the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) quickly shifted its focus to the National Cricket League (NCL) while the national cricketers left the ground with heavy hearts.

The board instructed the players who were called up for the first Test to join their respective divisional teams for the second round of the four-day competition which will start from tomorrow at four different venues across the country, including the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur.

There was a training session for the national players yesterday afternoon but everybody was anxiously waiting to know the fate of the two-match Test series against Australia. "Have you got any news?" was the question from everybody. BCB CEO Nizamuddin Chowdhury was in constant communication with his Australian counterparts while reporters were waiting from the morning at the home of cricket in Mirpur to know Cricket Australia's final decision which finally came in the evening. Close sources informed that there had even been discussions about the possibility of one Test if not the full series, but ultimately CA broke the hearts of millions of Bangladeshi cricket fans by postponing the series.

On the streets outside the BCB office, a passing board official was stopped as his name was called from a car. Behind the driver's seat of that car sat Mahmudullah Riyad, who had just left the building. With the official stopped, Riyad asked how things were proceeding. However, when the official told him that the tour had been postponed, Riyad's complexion changed. His face was seemingly engulfed in disappointment and he left quietly a short while later.

Domestic cricket will now be the main focus for the Tigers in this year unless the board hurriedly arranges an international series ahead of the Tigers' next assignment against Zimbabwe at home in January next year.

"Everybody will play the second round of NCL. We will sit within next few days to take a decision about how we can utilize the coaching staff. We just got the decision from CA today and we will definitely work on whether we can arrange any international matches this year if Australia maintains its position," said Chowdhury.

"For international commitments we were unable to give our full concentration on domestic cricket, so we will now try to restructure it since we have got a chance," he added.

Shah spins Zim heads

AFP, Harare

Leg-spinner Yasir Shah returned career-best figures as Pakistan routed Zimbabwe by 131 runs in the first of three one-day internationals at Harare Sports Club on Thursday.

Chasing a target of 260 after a century stand by Mohammad Rizwan and Imad Wasim had rescued the Pakistan innings, Zimbabwe were bowled out for just 128 with Shah recording figures of 6 for 26.

The hosts had gained the upper hand in the morning by winning the toss and reducing Pakistan to 128 for five, but Rizwan and Wasim added 124 for the sixth wicket.

Both batsmen ended up scoring at a run a ball on a dry surface, with Rizwan finishing unbeaten on 75 and Wasim run out for 61 in the final over of the innings.

Zimbabwe attempted to build their reply with a steady start, but Shah struck in his first and third overs before going on to run through the middle order.

SCORES IN BRIEF
PAKISTAN: 259 for 6 (Sarfraz 44, Rizwan 75 not out, Wasim 61; Nyumbu 1-39)
ZIMBABWE: 128 all out in 37 overs (Williams 26, Chugumbura 22; Shah 6-26, Malik 3-30)
Result: Pakistan won by 131 runs.

Player-Of-the-Match: Yasir Shah



Bangladesh Under-19 captain Mashuk Miah (R) and his Sri Lankan counterpart Danushka Madushanka shake hands after a press briefing at the BFF House yesterday, ahead of their AFC U-19 group A qualifying match at the Bangabandhu National Stadium today.

PHOTO: STAR

Youths target Sri Lanka

SPORTS REPORTER



Bangladesh will have their eyes on a final-round berth of the AFC U-19 Championship when the hosts take on Sri Lanka in second match of Group A Qualifiers at the Bangabandhu National Stadium today.

The match gets underway at 6:00pm after favourites Uzbekistan play the opening match against surprise package Bhutan at 3:00pm. State-owned Bangladesh Television will telecast both matches live.

Eleven Group champions and five best runners-up will join hosts Bahrain in next year's final round, which will also act as the AFC Qualifiers for the 2017 FIFA U-20 World Cup in South Korea. The match against Sri Lanka is extremely important for the hosts because a win will put them in pole position to advance to the 16-team finals in Bahrain.

The Bangladesh U-19 team had

missed the flight to the finals of the AFC U-19 Championship two years ago despite finishing Group runners-up in the qualifying stage due to an inferior goal difference, but they are confident of a good start this time around.

"We have seen the capabilities of the players in the SAFF U-19 Championship in Nepal and considering those aspects we have designed the training for the boys to play aggressive football, especially in the first two matches against Sri Lanka and Bhutan.

"There is nothing to teach the boys at this stage but we have taught them the things which the boys need to succeed in the tournament and I think the boys are mostly ready," said head coach Saiful Bari Titu at the pre-match conference at the BFF House yesterday.

The coach also believes the boys in red and green can take heart from the fact that they will be playing on a familiar pitch in front of a home crowd.

The former Bangladesh international believes the teams from South Asia have a tendency to show that they have also been improving and that his charges will

be well aware of it on the match day.

"Sri Lanka and Bhutan will also be trying to prove themselves but the performance on the day is the most important. I will definitely not want the boys to play recklessly. Our first target is not to concede a goal and if that happens, there is a possibility to win the match and I am optimistic about my frontline," said Titu.

Titu's Sri Lankan counterpart Sumith Walpola is also hopeful of giving the hosts a run for their money as they have come here after playing the Asian School tournament in Mongolia where his charges suffered respectable defeats against China (1-0), India (4-0) and Thailand (1-0) and held Hong Kong (2-2) and Singapore (2-2).

Uzbekistan are considered the favourites with the preparation that saw the central Asian nation play three tournaments before coming to Bangladesh while Bhutan are expected to be a surprise package of the qualifiers with their noticeable improvement at the youth level, seen at the SAFF U-19 Championship last August.