

SPORT

BFF boss won't hand over the SAFF trophy

SPORTS REPORTER from Trivandrum

South Asian Football Federation (SAFF) president Kazi Salahuddin will not be present at Trivandrum to hand over the trophy of the SAFF Suzuki Cup to the champions on January 3. The SAFF president, who is also running his second term as president of the Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF), will not be present at the SAFF executive committee meeting here on January 2 either, informed SAFF general secretary Anwarul Haque Helal.

He said that he received an e-mail from the BFF general secretary which stated that the BFF boss would attend neither of the programmes due to illness. The e-mail, however, didn't mention whether there will be any representative from the BFF in the meeting.

Salahuddin had earlier publicly expressed that it would be a dream come true for him if he could hand over the SAFF Trophy to the Bangladesh team.

Unfortunately, his beloved team made a first-round exit from the championship and we are not sure if his illness is more physical than mental.

Meanwhile, the meeting will decide the hosts for the next SAFF Championship and the SAFF Women's Championship. Bangladesh, along with Maldives and Bhutan, are the likely bidders for the next edition, which will be held in 2017. The SAFF Women's Championship is scheduled to be held in 2016.

Coach charged of raping sprinter

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Benapole

Jessore police on Monday night arrested an athletics coach after a female athlete training under him brought a rape charge against him.

Srinibash Halder, a 42-year-old coach of the district, was also charged with robbing valuables from the sprinter, said officer-in-charge of Jessore Kotwali police station Sikder Akkas.

According to the case filed against Halder, the victim complained that the coach had physically harassed her several times and also tried to take advantage of her gullibility.

She also complained that Srinibash along with his associates took her to Jess Garden Park in Bahadurpur in the town on Monday noon and raped her there.

She also accused him and his associates of snatching two of her mobile phones and destroying all the evidences, such as messages and video footages, supporting her accusations.

Furthermore, she complained that Halder forcibly took five thousand taka and a gold ornament from her.

Meanwhile, OC Sikder said that they had done a medical test of the victim at the Jessore Medical College Hospital yesterday.

PCB keeps Ali from resigning

AFP, Lahore

Pakistan's cricket chief on Tuesday said he had refused to accept one-day captain Azhar Ali's resignation over the widely-tipped selection of convicted spot-fixer Mohammad Amir, saying the team could not afford a crisis at this time.

Ali had tendered his resignation to protest Amir's prospective return to the national team.

Speaking to AFP, Pakistan Cricket Board chairman Shaharyar Khan said he had changed 30-year-old Ali's mind.



The Bangladesh footballers wore a morose look as they spent time aimlessly at the Taj Hotel in Trivandrum yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

Booters left stranded

SPORTS REPORTER from Trivandrum

The players of the Bangladesh national football team and part of its coaching staff were left stranded at the Taj Hotel in Trivandrum, Kerala yesterday after most of the team officials left for Dhaka by an early morning flight.

Six of the team officials -- team leader Iqbal Hossain, team manager Amirul Islam Babu, media manager, team doctor, a Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) observer, a representative of a BFF vice-president and head coach Maruful Haque -- were part of the contingent which took the early flight.

Only four of the coaching staff -- assistant coach, goalkeeping coach,

physiotherapist and team attendant -- stayed back with the 20 players and they are expected to fly back to Dhaka in two phases -- 10 by a Thursday morning flight and the remaining 14 by a flight the following morning.

A BFF spokesman denied the suggestion that the players and part of the coaching staff were left behind without any responsible person there to handle the logistical affairs.

"It's not appropriate to say that they [the officials] have left the players," BFF general secretary Abu Nayeem Shohag said when contacted over phone. "All our tickets were booked for January 5 according to our initial plan. However, due to the unavailability of flights [air tickets] at this peak season, it was difficult to acquire so many

tickets for an earlier date.

"We could only manage seven tickets, which were assigned according to the serial of the team list made available to the airlines authorities, for the Tuesday morning flight. However, the authorities have assured us that they will try to arrange the other tickets if any vacancy opens up for a date earlier than December 31 or January 1.

This explanation, though, was hardly any consolation to the players, who had ended their sorry campaign with a 3-0 victory over Bhutan on Tuesday night. They players were visibly annoyed at being left behind and they either loitered around at the hotel lobby or stayed confined inside their rooms for most of the day before attending a recovery session in the afternoon.

One of the players, on condition of anonymity, said that it was quite unthinkable 'being left behind by their guardians who were supposed to be guide and shield them.'

Assistant coach Zulfiqar Mahmud Mintu, too, could not hide his frustration at the state of affairs. He however said that he would do his best to look after the fitness of the players, who are supposed to participate in the Bangabandhu Gold Cup International Football Tournament, scheduled to kick off on January 8.

"This is not how it should have been. Since our SAFF campaign is over, we will probably not get any practice facilities here in the remaining days," Mintu said. "However, I will conduct the recovery sessions in the hotel gym and swimming pool so that the fitness level of the players doesn't fall."

BD grouped with Malaysia

SPORTS REPORTER



Bangladesh's footballers will get a chance to redeem themselves after a disappointing show at the SAFF Championship when they Bangabandhu Gold Cup begins next month.

Last year's finalists, Bangladesh have been placed alongside holders Malaysia and South Asian opponents Nepal and Sri Lanka in Group A.

Whereas, Bahrain, Maldives Cambodia and Bangladesh U23 have been placed in Group B. The opening match will take place at the Shamsul Huda Stadium in Jessore between Bangladesh and Sri Lanka on January 8. Jessore will host four more matches after which the teams will shift to the Bangabandhu National Stadium in Dhaka.

The eight-team tournament is scheduled to end on January 20. The groupings were disclosed at a city hotel yesterday.

Like the previous edition, Malaysia and Bahrain will not be sending their main teams for the tournament. Malaysia will be sending a team under the banner Malaysia XI whereas Bahrain will send in a team entitled 'Bahrain football team'. The age-group and the level of both these teams are still not certain.

Bangladesh Football Federation president Kazi Salahuddin was confident that the national football team would be able to bounce back after the SAFF debacle.

"We are pleased to hold this tournament again and I want to thank the Prime Minister for her assistance. It will be a challenge for the national team to comeback after the SAFF Cup, but I am sure they are up for it," said Salahuddin.

Finance minister Abul Maal Abdul Muhith, the chairman of the organising committee of the Cup, revealed that the groups were settled during the AFC Award Night in Delhi in November, in which representatives of all the participating nations were present.

"We hope that country will get into a festive mood in the course of the tournament. It doesn't matter as to who wins or who loses, what is necessary is to take the initiatives. There will come a time when you will get the result if you keep taking initiatives for the betterment of the game," Muhith said at the event yesterday.

"Bangabandhu Gold Cup will turn into one of the best football tournament in Asia by 2018," added the finance minister.

GROUPINGS

Group A

Malaysia
Bangladesh
Nepal
Sri Lanka

Group B

Bahrain
Maldives
Cambodia
Bangladesh U-23

Salahuddin says sorry

SPORTS REPORTER



SAFF SUZUKI CUP 2015

Suzuki Cup.

Addressing the media during the draw ceremony of the Bangabandhu Gold Cup at a city hotel yesterday he said: "It was a sad day for us. I apologise to the nation and the federation for not being able to win the tournament, which was our main target.

In a disastrous run in Kerala, Bangladesh lost to Afghanistan 4-0 and were then thumped 3-1 by Maldives. They beat Bhutan 3-0 in their inconsequential third match.

Following the apology, the BFF Boss tried to focus on some of brighter aspects of the year.

"We emerged champions in the SAFF U-16 championship and reached the U-19 SAFF Championship semi-final. We also won the SAFF U-14 Championship. The developing activities seem to be going good. The future looks bright," reckoned Salahuddin.

"In line with the FIFA officials' recommendations we are trying to bring in professional coaches and staff members from outside as the local coaches are not good enough to produce world-class players," he added.

The under-fire BFF president further said that the BFF will soon tie up with Saif Power Tech to overcome the financial constraints hindering the BFF's academy, which is now closed to due to renovation.

"There is nothing to be disheartened as we are working hard and we hope to meet your desire within a short time of period," he concluded.

Finn strikes put Eng on course

AFP, Durban



AFP, Durban

Steven Finn took three crucial wickets, including two in successive overs, as England pushed for victory on the fourth day of the first Test against South Africa at Kingsmead on Tuesday.

Set to make 416 to win, South Africa were 136 for four at the close of play, facing a long struggle to bat out the final day to earn a draw and prevent England from going ahead in the four-match series.

England hopes soared when the tall Finn had South African captain Hashim Amla caught behind for 12 before removing the limpet-like Dean Elgar for 40. Elgar was caught at second slip by Joe Root.

AB de Villiers and Faf du Plessis batted through 103 minutes and 23.5 overs to raise hopes that South Africa might pull off another rearguard action to save the game as they have done against Australia, India and Sri Lanka in recent seasons.

But, in what proved to be the last over of the day, Finn struck again, having Du Plessis caught by England captain Alastair Cook at first slip off a ball that kicked viciously to glance off the shoulder of the bat.

Shahadat, wife charged

COURT CORRESPONDENT

Police on Tuesday pressed charges against national cricketer Shahadat Hossain and his wife Jesmine Jahan Nrittya in a case filed over torturing their 11-year-old domestic help.

Shafiqur Rahman, investigating officer (IO) of the case and also officer-in-charge (investigation) of Mirpur Police Station, submitted the charge sheet before a Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court of Dhaka.

In the charge sheet, the IO said the charges brought against them were primarily proved and the couple should be brought under trial under the Women & Children Repression Prevention Act.

The tribunal, which is dealing with the case, will decide after the annual vacation whether the charges will be accepted. On September 6, domestic help Mahfuza Akhtar Happy brought allegations of torture by Shahadat and his wife.

Draw ceremony & Press Conference



Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) president Kazi Salahuddin addresses the media during the draw ceremony of the Bangabandhu Gold Cup at a city hotel yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

Aussies take series

AFP, Melbourne



AFP, Melbourne

Australia beat the West Indies by 177 runs in the second Test to win the series and retain the Frank Worrell Trophy in Melbourne on Tuesday.

The Australians, who won the first Test in Hobart by an innings and 212 runs, dismissed the Caribbean tourists for 282 late on the fourth day after declaring their second innings on 179 for three with a 459-run lead.

The tourists were 146 for four at tea and despite a spirited 100-run stand for the sixth wicket between skipper Jason Holder and former captain Denesh Ramdin they quickly lost their remaining four wickets to crash to defeat 1.3 overs before the scheduled close.

Holder was out for 68 off 86 balls, while Ramdin chipped in with 59 off 90 balls in his best Test score for two years.

Spinner Nathan Lyon was named player of the match with seven match wickets while all-rounder Mitchell Marsh finished with four for 61 in the second innings.

The final Test of the three-Test series gets under way in Sydney on Sunday.

For a time Ramdin and Holder held the Australians at bay with a robust partnership until Ramdin was caught behind by Peter Nevill off Marsh.

He shared in a 100-run stand with Holder to resist the Aussies for 21 overs. It was the first century partnership of the series for the embattled Windies.

"I'm obviously proud of the way the guys showed some fight in this game," Holder said.

"I'm still disappointed we didn't put up a better fight but still credit to the way the guys played, especially Darren Bravo in the first innings and Denesh Ramdin in the second innings. I thought the bowlers tried (too)."

"A better effort in this game." Carlos Brathwaite could not back up his 59 in the first innings and was bowled by Lyon for two, the ball barely clipping the top of the off-stump.

SCORES IN BRIEF
AUSTRALIA: First innings 551 for 3 decl
WEST INDIES: First innings 271

AUSTRALIA: Second innings 179 for 3 decl
WEST INDIES: Second innings 282 (K Brathwaite 31, Chandrika 37, Ramdin 59, Holder 68; Pattinson 2-49, Lyon 3-85, Marsh 4-61)

Result: Australia won by 177 runs and lead 3-match series 2-0.
Player-of-the-match: Nathan Lyon.

Court clears Amir's return

AFP, Lahore

A Pakistani court on Tuesday rejected a petition against the inclusion of convicted spot-fixer Mohammad Amir in the national cricket team, clearing the last hurdle to his predicted comeback after a five-year ban.

Amir, 23, was one of three Pakistan players banned for arranging deliberate no-balls as part of a betting scam during a Test match in England 2010.

The two other were the then-Test captain Salman Butt and bowler Mohammad Asif. All three were also sentenced to six months in prison in Britain.

The prospect of the trio returning to national colours after serving their bans has polarised opinions, with one lawyer petitioning the Lahore High Court to issue a stay order against a recall for Amir.

Justice Shahid Bilal Hasan rejected the petition, according to the Pakistan Cricket Board's legal adviser Taffazul Rizvi.

"I pleaded the case on behalf of the PCB and our opinion is that Amir completed his ban and as per country's constitution he has every right to play cricket," Rizvi told AFP.

"The judge on hearing the arguments rejected the petition filed by a lawyer, Munsif Awan," he added.

Pakistan's selectors included Amir in a fitness camp staged to select the squad for next month's tour of New Zealand. Because of his extraordinary wicket-taking form Amir is tipped to be in the squad.

The squad for the three one-dayers and three Twenty20 internationals is likely to be announced in the next couple of days.