

SPORT

Arambagh escape suspension

Fined taka 30 lakh
SPORTS REPORTER

Arambagh Krira Sangha have escaped suspension but were fined Taka 30 lakh by the Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) yesterday.

The BFF took the punitive measures after it was proven beyond doubt that some rowdy fans of the Championship League club were involved in the vandalism of the BFF House, causing huge damage to the game's governing body's headquarters.

The hefty fine meant Arambagh KS, which is located in very close vicinity to the BFF House, would be able to return to action when the second round of the Championship league resumes next week. But the BFF has asked the club to pay the fine before their Championship League fixture on January 5. Non-compliance however will automatically enforce a one-year suspension from all activities related to football.

"Before taking this decision, we have analysed the findings of the probe committee, the statement of the club president and the general secretary, witness accounts and the reports carried in the media," said BFF senior vice president Abdus Salam Murshedy after emerging from the EC meeting, chaired by BFF president Kazi Salahuddin.

Murshedy also said that the club's glorious past and contribution to the country's football played a big role in the BFF's decision against tougher actions like suspension.

Murshedy however said that the disciplinary committee is looking into on-field matters on the December 22 game involving Arambagh and Bangladesh Police. Tempers flared in the match which Police won 3-2 and it was reported that Arambagh players and officials were involved in a scuffle after the game.

"The Disciplinary committee is looking into the incident which occurred after the match between Arambagh and Police AC and if anyone is found guilty, action will be taken in line with the disciplinary code," said Murshedy.

Viljoen in for Abbott

REUTERS, Cape town

Uncapped fast bowler Hardus Viljoen was added to South Africa's Test squad on Thursday after Kyle Abbott felt tightness in his left hamstring during the team's defeat in the first Test against England on Wednesday.



The passion for cricket burns brightly within the youths of our country and as a new year dawns, the frenzy for cricket will keep driving them, and indeed millions of Bangladeshi fans.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Kohli BCCI's player of the year

AGENCIES, New Delhi

Virat Kohli was on Thursday named 'Cricketer of the Year', in the Board of Control for Cricket in India's (BCCI) annual honours to be given on January 5 in Mumbai.

The 27-year-old batsman, who took over as captain in the middle of the Australia tour after Mahendra Singh Dhoni's sudden retirement, delivered some good results under his leadership.

Under Kohli, India ended a 22-year wait for a series win on Sri Lankan soil before battering world No.1 South Africa to give them their first overseas loss in nine years.

The right-hander has done well with the bat too, scoring 640 runs in 15 Test innings at an average of 42.67. In his 20 ODI outings this year, Kohli managed 623 runs at an average of 36.65.

Mithali Raj, on the other hand, will be presented with the women's honour.

Maruful aims to restore confidence

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Reappointed coach Maruful Haque's main challenge in the upcoming Bangabandhu Gold Cup will be restoring the players' confidence after their frustrating performance in the SAFF Suzuki Cup in India.

However, the 46-year-old coach will only get a short period of time to motivate his charges as he will start the camp in January before the eight-team tournament gets underway on January 8 in Jessore; where hosts Bangladesh and SAFF Suzuki Cup semifinalist Sri Lanka face-off.

"The main challenge for me is to revive the players' confidence following the disastrous performance in the SAFF Championship and I need to motivate them to prepare them for the tournament on home soil," said Maruful over phone.

The successful domestic coach also wants to focus on the players' natural performances in the Bangabandhu Gold Cup rather than result-oriented performances.

"I would love to see the natural performance of the players in the tournament. I will be hoping the players perform at their normal levels and showcase what they generally display," hoped Maruful.

Captain Mamunul Islam, who returned home yesterday afternoon along with nine other players from India, has backed his coach and said that only good performance in the Bangabandhu Gold Cup can console them a bit after the disappointing performance in the SAFF Championship.

"We can only come back through performances. Now we have to take the challenge in the Bangabandhu Gold Cup as we failed to perform well in the SAFF Championship. Everyone is criticizing us for our bad performances and all players should be seeking better performances at home," said Mamunul.

Mamunul believes they had enjoyed a good domestic season at the club level, but the end far from reflected those performances.

"We were successful in domestic and international competitions at the club level as Sheikh Jamal DC became champions in federation cup and professional football league and also qualified for the AFC Cup final rounds. Even Chittagong Abahani shone in the Sheikh Kamal International tournament," said Mamunul. "We had also played a lot of international matches this year but we could not shine in the end on a stage for which we toiled hard and sacrificed a lot."

PRAN-BSJA MEDIA CUP Tournament begins today

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Pran Frooto-BSJA Media Cup cricket tournament gets underway today at the Maulana Bhasani Hockey Stadium with some 24 media houses vying for the Media Cup title.

The participating teams, split into eight groups, will play round-robin matches with the top team of each group advancing to the quarterfinals, scheduled for January 4. The semifinals and final will take place on January 5 and 6 respectively.

Eight matches will be played on the opening day. BCB director and former captain Khaled Mahmud Sujon, BCB director Jalal Younus and sponsor Pran Beverage COO Anisur Rahman are expected to inaugurate the tournament.

Waqar excited by Amir return

AFP, Karachi

Pakistan's head coach Waqar Younis expressed excitement Thursday over the imminent return of Mohammad Amir following a five-year ban for spot-fixing.

Amir, 23, is favourite to get the selectors' nod for a tour of New Zealand, where Pakistan will play three Twenty20s and three one-day internationals.

Mash sets sights on T20 challenge

SPORTS REPORTER



On the eve of the New Year's celebrations, when Mashrafe Bin Mortaza talked about his New Year's wish, he came up with the same old mantra: "I do what my instincts tell me to do."

While he was talking to the Daily Star over phone from his home town of Narail, the only place that can give him back full freshness, last evening, he uttered the same old sentiment: "I never planned ahead for anything in my life. I never thought too much about success or failure."

Still he has a dream for the new year, which is to enhance the Bangladesh team's image in T20 cricket, as the start of 2016 will be dominated by the shortest version of cricket with the Asia Cup and ICC World Twenty20 on the cards.

"In the new year we have a challenge at hand; to present a new Bangladesh in T20 cricket. We have the Asia Cup and ICC World Twenty20 and we are looking forward to these major events. We will be back to business after our holidays conclude within next few days and then we will definitely set our goal and accordingly chalk out our plan to realise that goal," said Mashrafe, reflecting on the Tigers' poor performance in the newest

format of the game.

"I don't want to say that we will not think about our new challenges or goals for 2016, but I am against too much thinking. I would love to see everybody enjoy cricket in this new year," he added.

In terms of one-day cricket, the last year was like a dream for Bangladesh cricket and it was the charismatic leadership of Mashrafe

to maintain that. However, in reality sometimes you can achieve what you want to, but sometimes may cannot and you must accept that....it is true in every aspect of life. And that's why what I want to tell both the players and the fans again; let's enjoy cricket in the New Year," asked the brave-heart cricketer.

Under the leadership of



that realised that dream. Now with a new year on the horizon, the expectations from the cricket fans will be high, but Mashrafe asked for serenity.

"Yes, 2015 was like a dream and of course the expectations will be high and there is nothing wrong with that. In 2015 our performance reached a new level and we must try

Mashrafe, Bangladesh looked like a happy family in the past year after all those hiccups in 2014 and overcame all the challenges as a happy unit to make a name in world cricket. And nobody will be surprised if Mashrafe's dream of establishing his side as a force in T20 cricket is fulfilled in the new year.

India win a thriller Face 5-star Afghanistan in final

SPORTS REPORTER



India were made to work hard by Maldives in the first semifinal of the Suzuki SAFF Cup, but they eventually held on in a nail-biting to secure a 3-2 win. In the second semifinal, Afghanistan made light work of Sri Lanka, easing to a 5-0 win.

India dominated the first semifinal from the onset and scored off a corner in the 12th minute as Arnab Mondal's shot from inside the box struck Hali Charan before going into the net. However, amidst the celebrations the linesman had raised his flag for offside and India were denied.

The hosts continued to dominate proceedings and it finally paid off for them in the 24th minute as an unmarked Suni Chhetri headed in from 5 yards after Hali Charan played a good cross to find him.

Nine minutes later India doubled their lead when Charan played a wonderful ball over the Maldivian defence to find Lalpekhlu, who made no mistake from close range.

On the stroke of half-time, a lapse in

concentration cost India dearly, as maaaz Ahmed's lay off inside the box was converted by Ahmed Nashid to make it 2-1.

India again gained the foothold in the second half and extended their lead in the 65th minute. Chhetri played a pass inside the box to Lalpekhlu, who outmanoeuvred his defender before beating the keeper. Maldives again pulled one back in the 75th minute as Ali Amdhan headed in from a corner.

Withstanding some pressure, India held off Maldives to secure a spot against Afghanistan in the final.

In the second semifinal, the Lions of Khorasan were unperturbed by the Lankans, who however held on until the stroke of half-time. But once Sayed Mohammed Hashemi scored for Afghanistan in stoppage time of the first half, the floodgates opened.

Six minutes into the second half, Kanischka Taher doubled the lead before Khaibar Amani scored from the spot five minutes later. In the 78th minute, Afghanistan scored again as Ahmad Hatifi headed in Taher's cross. They added another in the 89th minute to complete the rout.

Lankans keep series alive

AFP, Nelson



A cracking 91 by Tillakaratne Dilshan after a fiery net session set Sri Lanka up for an eight-wicket victory over New Zealand in Nelson on Thursday to keep their one-day series alive.

Sri Lanka knocked off their 277-run target with 22 balls to spare in a remarkable turnaround after being outplayed in the first two matches.

In addition to Dilshan's heroics, Lahiru Thirimanne cracked an unbeaten 87 and Danushka Gunathilaka made 65.

Dinesh Chandimal was not out 27 at the end as the match followed the same formula as the first two where the team that lost the toss batted second and dominated.

New Zealand now lead the series 2-1 with two matches remaining.

In contrast to Sri Lanka's rollicking performance, the New Zealand innings showed signs of rust after so few batsmen had a chance to get in the middle in the first two games.

SCORES IN BRIEF

NEW ZEALAND: 276 for 8 (Guptill 30, Latham 42, Williamson 59, Santner 38; Pradeep 2-55, Chameera 2-38, Vandersay 2-55) SRI LANKA: 277 for 2 in 46.2 overs (Gunathilaka 65, Dilshan 91, Thirimanne 87 not out; McClenaghan 1-39) Result: Sri Lanka won by 8 wickets.



The India football team celebrate their hard-fought victory over Maldives in the first semifinal of the SAFF Suzuki Cup yesterday. India faced stiff resistance from the opposition, but managed to hold on for a 3-2 win, securing a place in the final against favourites Afghanistan.

PHOTO: SAFF