

# SPORT

## Papon ponders selector's role for Chandika

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) president Nazmul Hassan Papon has said that he supports the idea of providing the national coach a say in team selection.

Speaking to reporters during an informal press meet at his home yesterday, Papon indicated that in the near future, coach Chandika Hathurusingha might just be included in the national selection panel.

"It would make things a lot less complicated. For instance, if the coach wants a particular player in but he is not in the squad, then he will have to come to me and I will have to speak to the selectors and this in turn becomes a very long process. "All this will become a lot easier if the coach has a say in the selection process. The issue will be solved at the start and it will have nothing to do with me," said Papon.

There have been a number of times in the past when there have been disagreements between the selection panel and the coach. Prolonged discussions regarding the inclusion of certain players, at times, even led to a delay in the announcement of the final team.

Leg-spinner Jubair Hossain, for instance, is one such player whose position in the side has reportedly been widely debated between the two parties.

Papon also spoke about the possibility of increasing the number of members in the selection panel. As of now, Faruque Ahmed leads the three-member selection panel with former cricketers Habibul Bashar and Minhajul Abedin.

According to the BCB president, the expansion of the panel will make it possible for the selectors to observe many more cricketers in domestic cricket.

On a different note, Papon said that the board is planning to begin a programme that would help them find good spinners with proper bowling actions at grassroots level.



The captains of the eight Indian Premier League (IPL) franchises -- (From L) Zaheer Khan, Suresh Raina, David Miller, Rohit Sharma, MS Dhoni, Gautam Gambhir, Virat Kohli and David Warner -- posed with the trophy before West Indies allrounder Dwayne Bravo, right, entertained the crowd with a rendition of 'Champion' during the IPL opening ceremony in Mumbai yesterday. The IPL gets underway today with a match between Mumbai and Pune at the Wankhede Stadium.

PHOTOS: ESPNCRICKINFO



## Shakib happy to have Narine back

PTI, Kolkata



Relieved after Sunil Narine's action was cleared by the ICC, Kolkata Knight Riders star allrounder Shakib

Al Hasan on Friday said it is a big boost to their campaign as the West Indies off-spinner is still the leader of their bowling attack.

"It's a big relief not only to me but to the entire team. He is a vital cog in KKR's wheel. He has always played a great role in KKR's success. So, it's a big positive for us," Shakib said on the sidelines of their practice session.

The Trinidadian had undergone a retest at

the Sri Ramachandra University in Chennai on March 28 and checked in the city ahead of KKR's camp but only to rush back home after his father's untimely demise.

Narine was reported during the third ODI against Sri Lanka on 7th November, 2015 in Pallekele and subsequently banned.

At the retest, it was revealed that the amount of elbow extensions in Narine's bowling action for all his deliveries that were tested was within the 15-degree level of tolerance permitted.

Shakib, however, said Narine would still command the same respect he's been getting all these years.

"I don't think it matters much for a quality spinner like Narine. Everyone

knows he's a world class bowler and batsmen give him the respect. I still think he will still lead the pack. Of course we will contribute in our way. His role is very important," said the Bangladesh allrounder ahead of their season opener against Delhi Daredevils on Sunday.

With KKR boasting legendary allrounder Jacques Kallis as their head coach, Shakib said the South African is way ahead of others.

"It's a new role for him. I'm sure he would do well with his vast experience. No coach in the world has so much experience as him. He is way ahead of others. I'm sure everyone will support him and will do well for us," he said.

Fresh from playing in these conditions in

the World Twenty20, Shakib said he's looking forward to contribute to the team's success.

"I feel proud to be able to play at the Eden in KKR's colours. I'm happy with my contribution in the last few seasons. I hope to contribute to their success in future. I think our team is stronger than before. We get together well. We all are focused and up for the challenge."

On whether fatigue would be a concern, he said: "Maybe it will be difficult for the ones who have played in the final. But as for me, I had about 8-10 days' off after our last match March 26. I think it was enough time for me to recover."

With no national commitments, Shakib will be available for all the KKR matches this season.

## PIONEER LEAGUE

### Arambagh FA clinch title

SPORTS REPORTER



Arambagh Football Academy emerged unbeaten champions in the Dhaka City Corporation (North & South) Pioneer

Football League with a 2-0 win over Gazipur City Football Academy in the final at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

After the barren first half, Mithu and Fahim struck one goal apiece in the 47th and 66th minutes respectively in front of 3,000 spectators to realise Arambagh FA's dream of reaching the 3rd Division Football League after their last three attempts went in vain. Although

Arambagh FA run the training of the local boys around the year, this time coach Ibrahim Khalil Kala picked some players from outside Dhaka and kept them with the local boys for four months before the start of the league in November and they gradually improved their performance match by match, posted 11 straight victories to clinch the title.

The atmosphere at the Big Bowl was vibrant as the youth supporters and the officials of Arambagh FA turned up in festive mood and inspired their side throughout the game by exploding crackers and fireworks. The boys of the Academy celebrated each goal with the 'Champion' dance made famous by West Indies cricketers. After the match, half the spectators entered the playing area to join

the champions in their celebrations, and later made the playground a 'selfie' zone.

Although other leagues in the lower tier are not regular, the Pioneer League has been held regularly over the last four years and so the question of whether the standard of play of the 16-year-old boys has improved comes up.

"The final match was not of a high standard and that may be because both teams played caution football to avoid the goal. But the semifinal clash between Bashundhara Kings and Arambagh FA was beyond my imagination and I have personally selected some five to six players from that match for the national U-16 team," said Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) coach Syed Golam Jilani, who guided the Bangladesh U-16 team to the SAFF Championship last year.

Jilani, an AFC A-licensed coach, however believes the overall standard of play in the league is not satisfactory as the players of each team are playing by their individual knowledge and there is virtually no game plan.

"If a qualified coach, such as AFC C license, had been tagged with each team, the standard would have been far better and the players could have known how to play and execute in line with a game plan before being selected for the age-level national team," said Jilani, who informed that the game's governing body has a plan to introduce a BFFD license for the grass-root coaches.

Meanwhile, runners-up Gazipur City FA and third-placed Bashundhara Kings have also been promoted to the 3rd Division Football League, effective from next season.



Arambagh Football Academy players run in unbridled joy after beating Gazipur City FA 2-0 in the final of the Dhaka City Corporation Pioneer League at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

## It was just complete devastation: Stokes

REUTERS, London



England all-rounder Ben Stokes says he was left devastated by his last over horror show in the World Twenty20 final against West Indies and has yet to watch a re-run of

Carlos Brathwaite hitting him for four straight sixes.

The 24-year-old was tasked with bowling the final over on Sunday in Kolkata with the West Indies needing 19 from it to win.

Brathwaite slugged the first four deliveries for sixes to give the West Indies their second World Twenty20 title and leave Stokes on his haunches looking close to tears.

"I thought, 'I've just lost the World Cup', couldn't believe it," Stokes was quoted as saying by The Daily Telegraph on Friday.

"I didn't know what to do. It took me so long to get back on my feet. I didn't want to

get back up. It was like the whole world had come down on me. There weren't any good things going through my mind. It was just complete devastation."

Stokes said he was still confident of closing out victory against the West Indies even after Brathwaite had clubbed his first two balls.

"After the first six I thought, 'Oh God', but I was backing myself. I had been in that type of situation for four weeks in all my training so it was not a case of holding anything back and thinking I hope I get this one in, because I knew I could do it," Stokes said.

"I haven't watched it back yet because I don't want to bring myself to do that at this stage so I don't know how much I missed it by but as a bowler you have a feeling as soon as you let go whether or not you have got a yorker right and it felt like I had."

"Some days they go well. Some days they don't," he added.

## Ernie forgets how to putt

AGENCIES, Augusta

Four-time major winner Ernie Els suffered a nightmarish start to the Masters, taking an incredible nine shots, including six putts, on the opening hole and virtually wrecking his tournament in the space of a few minutes.

Els looked set to save par on the 445-yard hole, however he missed from three feet and needed five more attempts to get the ball in the hole, the last two being taken with one hand as his frustration understandably soared.

"I can't explain it. I'm not sure what I did," Els said.

Els finished the round sharing 81st in a field of 89, while Jordan Spieth fired a six-under par 66 to seize a two-stroke lead.

## 'One no-ball does not make me a villain'

PTI, Mumbai

India off-spinner R Ashwin

said that he should not be made a villain for bowling one of the two no-balls which proved to be a crucial factor in India's World Twenty20 semifinal loss to the West Indies. Ashwin

was widely castigated in the media for bowling one of the no balls which gave Man of the Match Lendl Simmons a reprieve and helped him anchor West Indies' successful chase of a stiff target.

"The day I went back home my dog had heat stroke. He had fits. It just showed me what is more important. I did not turn up a piece of paper for next three days. I haven't read about what people had said," Ashwin said ahead of his new franchise Rising Pune Supergiants' opening IPL game against title holders Mumbai Indians.

"There have been good enough journalists and knowledgeable people who said I had not bowled a no-ball for ages and to have bowled one no ball, I don't become a villain," the bowler said at a media conference.

## A tonic for the World T20 heartache

### Mumbai-Pune opener today

AFP, New Delhi



The glitzy Indian Premier League (IPL) starts Saturday, helping to ease the heartache of millions of fans following India's

failure to win the World Twenty20 on home soil this month.

India's short-form extravaganza, famous for its fireworks and dancing cheerleaders as well as unwanted corruption scandals, gets under way with the Mumbai Indians taking on the Rising Pune Supergiants.

Fans hope the cash-rich league, featuring blockbuster stars including Chris Gayle and Virat Kohli, will soothe the pain of India's shock semi-final defeat to eventual World T20 champions West Indies.

India went into the tournament as favourites but seriously under-performed, losing to New Zealand and only beating Bangladesh on the last ball before prevailing over Australia to scrape into the final four.

"It was a below par performance by Dhoni and company. I hope IPL helps us overcome the pain of the semis loss," Kolkata Knight Riders supporter Nehal Ahmed told AFP.

The ninth-edition of the franchise-based competition, which has revolutionised world cricket, will see eight teams clash in 60 matches at 10 different venues across India.

"We Indian fans have a short memory. A

good two months of IPL and we will forget all about World T20," said fan Modit Dhasmana, another ardent admirer of IPL razzamatazz.

The IPL is the most popular domestic league in the world but has been plagued by controversies since its inception in 2008, with corruption and match-fixing cases often taking centre-stage.

A spot-fixing scandal in 2013 led to two teams -- Chennai Super Kings and Rajasthan Royals -- being suspended last year for two seasons.

They have been replaced by Pune and Rajkot-based Gujarat Lions, who will be making their IPL debut in this edition, which runs until 29 May, when the final is in Mumbai.

The IPL, which has spawned a host of similar leagues around the world, was the brainchild of cricket administrator Lalit Modi, who is refusing to return from Britain to India to face corruption charges.

Despite the controversies, the IPL has attracted a host of foreign players who have shaped or resurrected their careers and in turn have become household names in India.

Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) Secretary Anurag Thakur believes the success of the IPL in attracting global stars, sell-out crowds and massive television revenues has proved critics wrong.

IPL chairman Rajeev Shukla has insisted the reputation of the tournament remains intact despite the controversies.



On the occasion of his son's 'Akika' yesterday, Bangladesh opener Tamim Iqbal (L) poses with his mother, (R), who holds the baby in her arms, and wife at the Radisson Blu in Chittagong.

PHOTO: ANURUP KANTI DAS